

# Colonialism

## *Familiar Territory*

The term *globalization* is a placeholder, a word with no exact meaning that we use in our contested efforts to describe the successors to development and colonialism. Few would argue that the aggregate result of military interventions in the name of humanitarian concerns, free-trade agreements, and new forms of internationalization of labor and capital ought to be called colonialism, but many would insist that these things have something to do with exploitation, that some nations and territories benefit to the detriment of others. Others would insist that, on the whole, globalization is a good thing, that the “New World Order” redounds to the benefit of all. And there is, of course, a triumphalist version that holds that globalization is the ultimate victory of capitalism over communism. Historical studies can contribute to this conversation by offering a perspective on what came before globalization. *Reproducing Empire* seeks to do that. It looks at the ways that first colonialism and then development were elaborated in Puerto Rico, and at the systems in which they were imbricated in other empires and in the mainland United States. If we want to understand what is at stake in the forms in which globalization takes shape, we need to look to how these earlier models developed, especially at what some would call the good effects of colonialism: changes in family forms, women’s rights, and science and medicine. This book explores with some skepticism the assurance with which these things were promoted as a social benefit and examines the politics beneath these issues—and sometimes quite explicitly on the sur-

face. It argues that a great many debates centered around family, reproduction, and sexuality also served as an opportunity to work out much broader cultural questions about poverty, ideology, nationality, race, and gender.

The book is centrally interested in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a good place to think about the meanings of colonialism and globalization because it has for a century been where the U.S. has worked out its attitudes toward its own expansionism. These attitudes have wavered between celebration and denial, most often managing an unlikely combination of the two. In 1898 Puerto Rico was the “good” territorial possession (unlike Cuba and the Philippines), where people appreciated the United States and the gifts it had to offer its less fortunate neighbors. Political cartoons from the period depict Puerto Rico as a polite schoolchild, sometimes female, in contrast to the ruffian boys Cuba and the Philippines (who were rudely waging guerrilla wars against the U.S.).<sup>1</sup> In the late 1940s and early 1950s, as the Third World became a Cold War battleground, Puerto Rico became (largely through massive federal-government subsidies) a political showcase for the prosperity and democracy promised by close alliance with the United States.<sup>2</sup> Puerto Rico was a proof-text for assertions about the benevolent mission of the United States overseas. Puerto Rico has also been the site of profound denial and silence (the U.S.?—expansionist?). How many non-Puerto Ricans in the United States could describe the island’s status vis-à-vis the mainland? Some would go so far as to insist that Puerto Rico is not part of the United States.<sup>3</sup> That people get it wrong is not an accident. This ignorance is produced and maintained through silences in the media, in popular culture, and in the teaching of U.S. history, which exist alongside a prominent public narrative in which the U.S. is a major anti-imperialist force in the world, the nation that insists upon the integrity of national boundaries and that is the protector of victimized populations within national boundaries (these latter two assertions, of course, are fundamentally at odds, but that is another story).

The more than three million Puerto Ricans living on the mainland have also helped inaugurate another feature of globalization: a particular, late-twentieth-century form of the racialization of that part of an internationalized labor force that comes to the United States. In her work on the multiple ways that elite Hong Kong-ers negotiate identity and establish citizenships, Aihwa Ong has shown that it is entirely possible, and not even that unusual, for a person’s business to have its home in one nation, for his or her passport to belong to another nation, and for that

person's teenage children to live in a third nation. The work of trying to include such people, when they arrive in the United States, in the political or social identity of "Asian American" that was constituted in relation to a particular Chinese-American and Japanese-American history of race dating to the late nineteenth century, creates odd ironies and incongruities, to say the least.<sup>4</sup> While this kind of movement of an international business elite is considerably different from the migration of working-class laborers (as Ong well knows<sup>5</sup>), it also points up the essential constructedness of race and the ideological work required to define international migrants who come from internally heterogeneous nations as members of a small (though not fixed) number of "races" in the United States.

While this is not a process new to the twentieth century, the work of incorporating new nationalities into modern racial categories did change in the post-World War II period with the implementation of policies encouraging migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland, and after 1965, with the lifting of some immigration restrictions. Two features distinguished this change. First, this ideological work was accomplished through social science (as well as the older sites of racialization, science and medicine). Second, public policy related to labor migrants has had to contend with the neoconservative narrative of race, which locates racialized minorities as not-very-successful immigrants in the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mold. (The Hmong, for example, who were referred to as a "Stone Age tribe" when the CIA recruited them as allies during the U.S. war in Indochina, and who later became "refugees," were by the late 1990s construed as "failed wage workers" in the context of the U.S. welfare-reform debate<sup>6</sup>). The neoconservative position argues that the structural and systemic barriers to political and economic success in the United States are not very great, and its proponents cite the present-day success of those Irish, Italians, and Jews whose ancestors immigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Neoconservatives further suggests that there is something about the members of racialized minority groups themselves—particularly how they form families and raise their children—that produces their lack of political and economic success as groups.

Two forms of this argument began to circulate in the 1950s and were fairly well codified by the late 1960s: the position associated with the Moynihan Report, the contemporary shorthand form of which is the "welfare queen," and the notion of a "culture of poverty." Though these ideas have now become so closely linked as to be inseparable, initially the

former was about African Americans, the latter, about Puerto Ricans. These notions became entwined through a reciprocal, cyclical process: the racialization of Puerto Ricans as “Negroes” (“Hispanics” emerged later) and the inscription of both groups’ principal characteristic as their “bad” families. This work of turning immigrants into racialized minorities in the United States assumed its characteristic, neoconservative-inflected form through this conflation of “culture-of-poverty” Puerto Ricans and “matriarchal” African Americans.

*Reproducing Empire* tracks the changes in the form and content of colonialism through the lens of reproduction and sexuality. From the exotic, tropical prostitute (seductive but brimming with disease), to the impoverished, overlarge family (produced by ignorance and brainwashing by the Catholic Church), to overpopulation, to the notion of the “culture of poverty,” Puerto Rican sexuality has been defined by its deviance, and the island as a whole has been defined by its sexuality. Methodologically, this book contends that forms of sexuality are crucial to colonialism, from imperialism to development, from U.S. involvement overseas to the migration of the refugees of these processes to the mainland. Scholars have helped us see how reproduction has been central to the work of racialization on the mainland (“the welfare queen” and her antecedents participated in defining the meaning of “blackness” for generations in the United States, for example). Equally so, reproduction and sexuality have defined the difference that makes colonialism in Puerto Rico possible and necessary, what makes “them” need “our” regulation and governance.

#### “BAD” PUERTO RICAN FAMILIES AND THE WORK OF COLONIALISM

Two examples from the late twentieth century suggest something of the importance of thinking of family as an axis of colonialism. In 1991 a book by the neoconservative, Linda Chavez, *Out of the Barrio*, suggested the ways Puerto Ricans mattered to the neoconservative argument. She argued that Mexican and Cuban Americans were following the trajectory of earlier immigrants toward assimilation and success in the United States (an argument that is easier to make for relatively well-off Cubans than for conspicuously undereducated and underemployed Mexican Americans, but so be it). The “Hispanic” group that was not making it she termed “the Puerto Rican exception.” Why, she asked, were Puerto Ricans on the mainland doing so badly? She recounted the flight, in the 1950s and ’60s, of garment industry and other manufac-

turing jobs that had been held by many Puerto Rican women from the major northeastern cities, where Puerto Ricans mostly settled. “But Puerto Rican families, by and large, chose to stay, and many ended up on welfare,” she wrote. (Were they supposed to follow the garment industry to the free-trade zones of the Dominican Republic or Indonesia?) Chavez continued:

The fact that so many were eligible for welfare reflected another aspect of their life in the United States: their growing propensity to form families without benefit of marriage—a tradition with roots on the island but which has transmogrified into welfare dependency in the United States. . . . By tradition, fathers of such children were expected to provide for their welfare. . . . The “adaptation process” [to the U.S.] saw many Puerto Rican fathers abandoning responsibility for their children to the state.<sup>7</sup>

There is a subtle slippage that is revealing here: Puerto Ricans have been made into immigrants in this passage, people whose lives were changed (for the worse) by leaving the “traditions” of the island and coming to the United States. Yet Puerto Rico is part of the United States, and there was (then) an AFDC program on the island. If AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the federal program that Chavez is calling “welfare”) made bad families, it ought to have done so just as much on the island as on the mainland. Chavez quotes L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, who made this mistake explicitly: Puerto Ricans, they wrote, were “the first immigrant group who unwittingly moved into . . . a welfare economy.” As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans were not immigrants, and it is at least as plausible to argue that it was the island, not New York, that was turned into a welfare economy in the fifties, through the deliberate work of development officials in destroying its agriculture in favor of wage-labor and government subsidies.<sup>8</sup> However, it is important to Chavez’s argument, and the neoconservative position in general, to turn everybody into immigrants, whether they arrived in chains as slaves or had their land seized economically and militarily, like Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Mexicans. As Chavez continues, we learn that what makes Puerto Rican families fail to (re)produce Horatio Alger-style striving is a “surprisingly strong family attachment and traditional family values” and a reluctance to send their children to day care, and hence an inability of single mothers of young children to stay continuously in the paid labor force. This was a startling diagnosis in 1991, coming just a year before the Republican convention in which “family values” provided such an overwhelming trope of everything good that was endangered in the U.S. as to

become almost a self-parody. It was also only a few years after what some have called a “moral panic” about day care, in which media coverage and prosecutors focused obsessively on questions of sexual-abuse and even satanic-ritual-abuse cults in day-care centers. In other words, at precisely the moment when family values and rejection of day care were being congealed into a fetish and symbol of white America, Chavez was condemning Puerto Ricans for embodying these ideals too strongly.

Yet, as peculiar as this seems on the face of it, the fact is that no matter where Puerto Ricans have lived or what form their families may have taken, the Puerto Rican family structure has been pathologized. Writers like Chavez, or even the more sympathetic ethnographer of Puerto Rican crack dealers, Philippe Bourgeois,<sup>9</sup> have assumed that the “problem” of disorganized Puerto Rican families only emerged after they arrived in New York. Yet North American, middle-class Puerto Rican, and even Spanish commentators on the lives of working-class people on the island have *always* argued that their families were a problem, back at least to the middle of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the prescriptive literature on what the Puerto Rican family should look like has encompassed an endless series of double-binds. In the science of reproduction and the medicine of sexually transmitted diseases and birth control, in demography, history, and sociology, Puerto Rican families have been either too close or too fragmented, too big and cohesive or too limited and fractured. Puerto Rican sexuality and reproduction have been reputed to produce disease, literally and metaphorically. Early in the twentieth century, military officials and reformers diagnosed the island as suffering from an epidemic of venereal disease caused by prostitution, adultery, and the passing of the disease from immoral husbands to innocent wives and children. In this discourse, women have used birth control and sterilization excessively or not enough. In public policy, overpopulation was blamed for the poverty on the island during the Depression (with eugenics the cure). The excessive birth rate was blamed for the slowness and limitations of industrial “development” on the island, and for contemporary Puerto Rican poverty on the mainland. At the same time, in the symbolic economy of nationhood, woman has been the mother of the nation; woman’s sexual deviance has been about the failure of nationhood. For U.S. colonialists, Puerto Rican nationalists, and reformers both on and off the island, these ways of thinking about the island as a nation or a failed nation (or as part of the United States or a failure as part of the United States) have been terribly productive. They have generated significant controversies at regular intervals, controversies that

have realigned political power, public policy, meanings of gender and race, and the direction of economic initiatives.

Further, right-wing attacks on Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans, even more virulent than those of the neoconservative Chavez, have been common, particularly in response to the growing pro-statehood movement. Conservative newspaper columnist Don Feder, for example, explained the reasons that he objected to statehood for the island.

Current caps will come off federal welfare spending for the island. . . . We need more non-English speakers in this country like we need more welfare recipients, higher crime rates and an alien culture—all of which we'll get with Puerto Rican statehood. The issue is such a no-brainer that only a multiculturalist, a welfare-state Democrat or a pandering Republican could possibly support Puerto Rican statehood. English First . . . Executive Director Jim Boulet Jr. sardonically notes, "Puerto Rico is as proud of its language and culture as the United States used to be of ours."<sup>10</sup>

While Feder and Boulet seem to be under the mistaken impression that Puerto Rico is not part of the United States as a Commonwealth, their panic about what would happen should it become part of the U.S. under conditions of equality makes clear their investment in thinking of the island as permanently inferior to and essentially outside of the United States.

One of the key ways that this Puerto Rican "difference" has been produced is one that Feder implicitly alludes to with the reference to welfare: they are poor because they are (all?) women with children but no husbands. Feder's piece termed Puerto Rico a "Caribbean Dogpatch." Dogpatch was, of course, the home of comic-strip hillbilly L'il Abner and a band of poverty-stricken, congenitally stupid people with an agrammatical dialogue—including Mr. and Mrs. J. P. McFruitful and their forty children and Miss Ann Yewly Fruitful, head of the Militant Unwed Mothers (MUMS).<sup>11</sup> Chavez makes Feder's implicit point explicitly: the reason that Puerto Ricans are not succeeding politically and economically is their fatherless families. Yet, if welfare and single motherhood (which conservatives argue is *caused* by welfare) have emerged in recent years as the explanation for why Puerto Ricans are poor, other social-structural diagnoses have equally been hung on the family. On the island in the 1940s and 1950s, early efforts to turn a profit in state-sponsored industrialization failed. The industries were kept alive through significant federal subsidies, including AFDC and food stamps, which expanded the monetarized consumer economy. Meanwhile, policy experts tried to

explain what was wrong with the island's economy. In the context of the Cold War, U.S. colonialism did not emerge as a politically popular answer, but "overpopulation" did. Women were having too many children and there was not enough food to go around—this, in spite of the fact that rises in per capita income were far outstripping increases in population and the birthrate was dropping. The policy response to this "problem"—the development of new birth control technologies and the widespread use of surgical sterilization—was pioneered in Puerto Rico. And while overpopulation was a new discourse to the mainstream of public policy and the "development" establishment in the postwar period (previously, it had been confined to politically marginal birth-controllers), it was not new to Puerto Rico. The language of overpopulation had dominated the political and public health landscape in Puerto Rico in the 1920s and 1930s, pioneered by U.S. eugenic scientists like Raymond Pearl and funders like Clarence Gamble in their research on the island, where they had worked alongside an emergent class of Puerto Rican professionals, especially physicians and social workers. Even before the 1920s, moral reformers, the military, and colonial officials had located what was wrong with the "natives" in sexuality, as they targeted venereal disease, prostitution, and immoral sexual relations as key arenas for reform if Puerto Ricans were to become citizens.

Unlike some studies of colonialism, this book does not look to either the economy or public policy as the a priori keystones to the story. These kinds of analysis represent well-worn pathways and form the outlines of work done by many brilliant scholars, including insightful Marxist histories of the economies of imperialism and countless histories of the public policy of diplomacy, international relations, and the relationship between individual nations or regions. These two approaches have more often than not been at odds, with practitioners on both sides seeing the others as ideologues or as missing the point. Postcolonial studies, however, has suggested that the economy and public policy are neither mutually exclusive nor the whole story. In a real sense, Edward Said inaugurated the field of postcolonial studies when he argued in *Orientalism* that the way Europeans produced "the East" as inferior, lacking, and hence in need of colonization was by making it into a subject of literature and scholarship—in science, linguistics, history, geography, and so forth. In a passage that is iconic for his entire project, Said points out that when Napoleon and his army arrived in Egypt, they immediately set up a research institute. The ability to think and manipulate knowledge about Egypt was necessary to either invade or rule it. Said's method-

ological innovation was to point out that the concept of *culture*—be it “high” culture, academic knowledge, or mass-media(ted) culture—is inseparably imbricated in both economy and policy; it is neither a weak echo of the economy (as its superstructure) nor an essentially trivial influence on the important work of public policy-making or diplomacy. It is in this sense of the term *culture* that we can locate the historical, political work done by scientific and social scientific ideas about family, reproduction, and sexuality in Puerto Rico.

In both Chavez and Feder, Puerto Rican “inferiority” is produced through knowledge about the bodies and behavior of Puerto Rican women. Puerto Rican “difference” is represented in popular culture and public-policy debate through women’s sexuality and reproduction: through their inordinate attachment to family, lack of work ethic, and excessive use of welfare (Chavez), and in their promiscuous sexuality, in the island’s overpopulation, and in the “culture of poverty.”<sup>12</sup> In Edward Said’s sense, the necessity for U.S. rule of Puerto Rico (a rule that precludes inclusion on egalitarian terms, but does not permit Puerto Ricans simply to go their own way, either) is produced through both a popular culture and an academic knowledge of Puerto Rican sexuality. The U.S. has established more than a few research institutes since its invasion, and in fact, U.S. academics have often referred to the entire island as a social-science laboratory, or a “test tube.” The language is telling. It is precisely through science and social science that Puerto Rican difference has been produced and located in women’s sexuality and reproduction. Because both are understood to be progressive (in both senses—as politically liberal and as crucial to progress), creating Puerto Rican difference within these kinds of idioms and activities makes it possible to conceive of these meaning-making activities as exclusively benevolent.

#### NONE OF THE ABOVE: THE STATUS QUESTION

In terms of the importance of the state (or lack thereof), Puerto Ricans have repeatedly made the case for the essential impotence of state forms in organizing their relationship with the United States. The political status of the island has long been one of the most important questions for Puerto Rican politicians: whether the island’s relationship with the United States should be one of independence or statehood, or whether the island should maintain its current, Commonwealth status (also called “colony” status by its opponents). Yet, in a December 13, 1998, plebiscite, voters took a look at the available options and voted for “none of the

above.” Perhaps “none of the above” is the right answer to this multiple-choice question—that political rhetoric notwithstanding, very little has been resolved since 1898 in terms of the status question. There have been struggles over power, to be sure, but it is not so clear that they have been won or lost in relation to status. While most commentators took the plebiscite results to be an endorsement of Commonwealth, one can also take “none of the above” literally, or at least metaphorically. As the proliferation of plebiscites makes clear, Commonwealth is an unsatisfying compromise, a stopgap that makes no one truly happy. While it was manipulation and backroom dealing that kept the Commonwealth, or the *Estado Libre Asociado* (literally, Free Associated State) off the ballot, there was a time when no amount of maneuvering could have bested its defenders, the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD), which governed the island virtually unchallenged for decades. Its absence from the ballot suggests a real decline in the dominance of those who support the Commonwealth option. At the same time, on the mainland, the liberal architects of Commonwealth status have clearly lost sway as well. During his presidency, George H. W. Bush suggested that independence would be a good thing for the island, evidently with the intention of getting rid of U.S. responsibility for an impoverished island full of people who don’t even speak English. President Bill Clinton went further, ending one of the foundations of the island’s economy under Commonwealth status—the enabling legislation that had permitted corporations to avoid paying federal taxes. Clinton’s move precipitated a significant de-industrialization of the island.

Another sense in which “none of the above” seems a poetically accurate expression of an appropriate refusal by Puerto Ricans to believe that anything important could be resolved in a status plebiscite was the fundamental uncertainty about whether a vote for a change in status would have any chance of being honored. Because of opposition in the U.S. Senate, the 1998 plebiscite legislation included no mechanism through which a Puerto Rican demand for statehood, had it won, could even have been considered. At the same time, independence activism has been so repressed that it would be difficult to argue that there has ever been open debate on independence on the island. In the 1930s, police opened fire on a nationalist march, killing seventeen and wounding hundreds more. At mid-century, independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos suffered long imprisonment. There was also documented disruption of nationalist activities in the 1960s by COINTELPRO, the FBI’s counterintelligence program. In 1978

police in Puerto Rico ambushed and murdered two young independence activists on a hilltop at Cierro Maravilla (and a subsequently admitted Justice Department cover-up of the incident also lent credence to suspicion of FBI involvement).<sup>13</sup> Lest we think those days are past or that repression is confined to the island, Puerto Rican independence activists who participated in a bombing campaign in the 1970s and '80s were still in mainland jails in 1999, sentenced as “terrorists” to exceptionally long prison terms, despite the fact that all they were charged with was minor property damage. A Clinton pardon generated the charge that he was soft on terrorism, which elicited an incompetent to nonexistent white liberal defense. In Boston in August 1999, Steve Fernández, an activist with a group called Latinos United for Social Change, was arrested at that city’s annual Puerto Rican festival for participating in a picket line where demonstrators carried signs naming Puerto Rico as a colony of the U.S. and for protesting the U.S. Navy’s use of the island of Vieques as a weapons testing ground, including killing a resident and bombing with nuclear materials. Throughout the century, even to speak about independence has invited a high degree of scrutiny, harassment, and even physical violence from insular and mainland officials. That a plebiscite vote for independence—or statehood—would in itself result in change seems unlikely.

Even so, independence has been a distinctly unpopular option among Puerto Ricans on the island, to a degree that seems hard to understand strictly in terms of repression. In the 1998 plebiscite, independence drew just 2.5 percent of the vote. The extent of the opposition to independence on the island seems inexplicable to many U.S. Anglos, especially those on the left who are steeped in the mythology of Patrick Henry and Ché Guevara. This liberal “commonsense” about independence has generated a condescension toward Puerto Ricans that is in some ways no less withering than the open contempt exhibited by conservatives like Feder and Chavez. A *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial days after the plebiscite captures this attitude memorably:

Residents of Puerto Rico have a range of rights and limits. They are American citizens but pay no taxes and cannot vote in presidential elections. The island’s 4 million residents have a great degree of self-government though their single representative to Congress is a non-voting observer. They may serve in the U.S. military and use the Postal Service, but can have their own Olympic teams and use Spanish and English as official languages. This crazy-quilt of special deals and subordinate status apparently suits many Puerto Ricans. It may puzzle many Americans who

feel ashamed that the territory lingers in the colonial existence, where it has been since the Spanish-American War. But the outcome suggests there is no groundswell for change.<sup>14</sup>

What seems to escape the editorial writer—though not, one suspects, most Puerto Ricans—is the possibility that independence could bring an end to the “special deals” without simultaneously ending the “subordinate status.” It is not so much that the “subordinate status . . . suits many Puerto Ricans” while shaming (mainland) Americans, but rather that most Puerto Ricans believe in the inevitability of American domination, whereas (purportedly ashamed) Anglos prefer to think that a century of domination can be ended with the establishment of a separate government on the island. There are many in Grenada, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Colombia—to take some recent examples of U.S. military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean—who would take issue with that account.

Further, some argue that status *per se*—the form of the state—is a red herring, that the question is, rather, the economy. This so-called post-nationalist position in Puerto Rican politics, as exemplified by Ramón Grosfoguel, suggests that the island’s economy has been so thoroughly integrated into the U.S. economy that it is best thought of as a regional economy of the United States, not one that could be separated with the advent of a new government—that is, it is more like Mississippi, say, than like China, with all that that suggests about the value of independence. This is a process that to varying degrees describes all of Latin America; there is no Latin American political or economic entity that exists completely “outside of” international capitalism or of the U.S. economy. If Grosfoguel is right, then the best strategy for Puerto Rico would be to accept the inevitability of its subordinate status with respect to the U.S. economy and cut the best deal it can with the United States.

In the current Caribbean context there is no space external to U.S. hegemony. . . . Even the most “independent” republic cannot escape U.S. control. Any attempt to subvert this order is militarily or economically destroyed. . . . The Puerto Rican people’s strategy has been pragmatic rather than utopian; that is, they are not struggling to be freed from imperialist oppression (which is highly improbable and perhaps even undesirable under the present circumstances) but are instead attempting to struggle for a milder version of this oppression. They would rather be exploited with some benefits than be exploited with no benefits.<sup>15</sup>

While Puerto Rico’s \$8,000 per capita annual income is only half that of Mississippi, the poorest state in the union, it is about twice that of the

nearby Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic shares a great deal of Puerto Rico's history with both Spanish and U.S. administrations, and many fear Puerto Rico would share a fate similar to the Dominican Republic's if independence from the United States were in its future. The \$10 billion Puerto Rico receives in federal aid, while far less than the island would be entitled to were it a state, stands in striking contrast to the \$190 million the Dominican Republic owed in 1998 just to service its more the \$4 billion in foreign debt.<sup>16</sup>

An account of the economy cannot tell us very much about the content of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the mainland United States. One still needs to describe how most Puerto Ricans and North Americans think about this relationship, the content of conflict over it, and the crucial importance for the mainland U.S. of being able to identify the federal role on the island as one of performing good works. Questions of economy and status are not and have not been very productive arenas in which to debate the U.S. role. Instead, U.S. Anglos—and Puerto Ricans in response—have consistently discussed the relationship of the island and the mainland in terms of one of the two great modernist narratives, and often both: women's rights and scientific progress. The U.S. has understood itself as bringing public health, science, technology, and improvements in the status of women to the island. These stories have been especially powerful when the two could be said to be happening at the same time; for example, the United States in the 1950s and '60s (and again, recently) has promised that better birth control technology could free women from unwanted childbearing while ridding Puerto Rico of inadequate housing, crime, and poverty caused by overpopulation. The power of this narrative is suggested by the fact that the term *overpopulation* could drive rhetoric and policy among Puerto Ricans and North Americans without any empirical evidence at all that rising population caused—or was even historically correlated with—rising rates of poverty, unemployment, or any of these things. The force of the belief that the U.S. was “doing good,” and that women, sex, and reproduction were a fulcrum of modernization made this story tremendously effective, a bulldozer that leveled all counterevidence in its path. At the same time, such narratives have provided resources for Puerto Rican thought across the political spectrum, from offering a model for how to improve life on the island to a symptom of how U.S. imperialism works by, for example, robbing Puerto Rican women of their reproductive ability. Sex, science, and reproduction have been tremendously important as the subjects of negotiation and controversy for the relationship between island and mainland.

## SCIENCE, SEX, AND GENDER

In quite different ways, both the liberal author of the *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial and the conservative columnist Don Feder express a belief in Puerto Rican inferiority and a disavowal of North American responsibility for the situation on the island. Feder cannot imagine why the U.S. should be forced to include these Spanish-speaking, welfare-seeking, crime-ridden folks of alien culture (imagining them fundamentally as immigrants); the *Chronicle* writer thinks all Americans live in the mainland United States—not throughout the American hemisphere, or even throughout the United States, which would include Puerto Rico—and that they are shamed by the island’s colonial status (imagining Puerto Ricans as people whose political traditions and desires are less democratic than those of people from the mainland, people who sorrowfully wish the U.S. could treat them better, but who recognize that that is not possible until they improve). Both writers take up the major themes of U.S. political discourse about Puerto Rico throughout the century. The “difference” of Puerto Ricans is expressed, in conservative terms, as horrifying, as utterly alien; in liberal terms, as assimilable but in need of “our” help. In both cases, the possibility of any U.S. role in creating the situation on the island is rejected out of hand.

This book is interested in these two questions. How has Puerto Rican difference been produced, and how has the U.S. role on the island been denied? These two impulses work together, as both cause and effect. Puerto Ricans’ difference (inferiority, inadequacy) makes them not Americans. If Puerto Ricans are poor, it cannot have anything to do with the United States or colonialism. But if Puerto Rican poverty is caused by something about Puerto Ricans themselves, then they need the United States to help them. Together, these ideas re-inscribe Puerto Ricans as (inferior) Americans while at the same fundamentally rejecting them as alien. It is this kind of double bind that Homi Bhabha had in mind when he said of colonial authority that it “repeatedly turns from *mimicry*—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to *menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite. The twin figures of narcissism and paranoia repeat furiously, uncontrollably.”<sup>17</sup> It is exactly this back-and-forth movement among kinds or degrees of Puerto Rican difference that characterizes the U.S. story about and images of the island.

Science studies scholars, in books like *The Leopard’s Spots* and *The Mismeasure of Man*, have helped us see that scientific ideas are one important way by which racial difference was produced, maintained, and

made sense of, especially in the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> However, this scholarship has understood the production of racial difference to be something that science did primarily to male bodies, especially those of Africans, African Americans, and indigenous men. At the same time, scholars of women and gender in the United States and Great Britain have shown how extensively medicalized women's bodies have been, and through ideas about things like hysteria and premenstrual syndrome, how extensively the cultural meaning of gender has been influenced by scientific ideologies of the female body.<sup>19</sup> With respect to Puerto Rico, we need to bring these stories together, to discover how science, medicine, and social science have produced racial difference through descriptions of and interventions upon women's bodies, particularly through their sexuality and reproduction. Eileen Findlay has argued for nineteenth-century Puerto Rico that sexuality "becomes explicitly politicized at certain historical moments. This seems to be particularly true in times of change and transition."<sup>20</sup> One can extend that insight to say that sexuality and reproduction are used to *produce* change and transition. The "tropical" and "colonized" bodies of Puerto Rican women have been tremendously useful for an astonishingly broad array of players seeking political power, authority, and legitimacy in Puerto Rico. For feminists, nationalists, the U.S. military, the federal government, philanthropists, and academic scientists and social scientists, it has been important to "know" Puerto Rican women's bodies, and to rescue, condemn, or defend working-class women. This fact has been important to the U.S. imperial project on the island.

With respect to women's history and feminist work in general, this book responds to a tradition that regards women's complicity with colonial projects with disappointment and moral disapprobation. It seeks to show how this complicity was shaped, not by bad politics or moral failings exactly, but by specific political contexts and, more generally, by the uncritical approval of intellectual and political paradigms that centered particular understandings of "the people," and of working-class, Puerto Rican women's sexuality, as having been shaped by victimization and hence available for "rescue." This is an extended elaboration of Gayatri Spivak's insight about the problem of leftist and feminist intellectuals "speaking for" rather than "speaking to" colonized women.<sup>21</sup> It is also an opportunity to make the history of Puerto Rican feminist activism much more prominent than it has often been in the writing of U.S. women's history, where the extensive reliance on paradigms of Puerto Rican women's victimization (by machismo, the Catholic Church,

and/or colonialism) has often rendered Puerto Rican feminism as either nonexistent or always already co-opted.

Some of the best resources for beginning to think about ideologies of family, sexuality, and reproduction as animating imperial and racial projects lie in the writings of scholars of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, who have begun to greatly expand our imagination of how “the colonial” works. Colonialism, in this account, is a modernist institution, fundamentally a practice—not of atavism in savage lands, as the *Heart of Darkness* narrative would have it—but of producing modern citizen-subjects in metropolises as well as colonies. *Reproducing Empire* begins with a specific narrative familiar to scholars of colonialism, but still strange in histories of the metropole. It provides a re-reading of the great international prostitution reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—movements that were organized against public-health measures, libertine men, and “white slavery,” and that were designed to provide answers, not to a series of merely “domestic” problems in the U.S. or England, but to local issues that had extensive roots in imperial questions. The book explores how, at one moment in the quest for modernizing empire, armies, colonial officials, and reformers made prostitution reform and ways of organizing domesticity into technologies of empire. The first chapter disputes a number of commonplace, if not always fully articulated, assumptions about colonialism: that it primarily involved men, militarism, and economics; that it was an unfortunate thing that happened “over there,” far from the quotidian concerns of the metropole; and that U.S. colonialism was either (for left commentators) among the worst in the history of the world or (for its mainstream minimizers) principally benevolent. *Reproducing Empire* argues that colonialism was powerfully about the marked-female questions of sex and domesticity; that imperial prostitution policy was as much about making England or the United States modern as it was about domesticating India or Puerto Rico; that colonialism was systemic and coordinated, not disjointed; and that the ways in which the United States was imbricated in it were unremarkable, neither better nor worse but simply another specific form of colonialism.

Studying sex and family opens up new windows on how colonialism works. As Ann Stoler suggests, one of the insights it provides is that the Manichaeism of colonialism—the dividing of the world into colonizers and colonized that sees little heterogeneity within these groups—is itself an ideology of colonialism, a dualism imposed upon a far more com-

plex world. Chapter 2 explores how, in Puerto Rico, making Americans and Puerto Ricans into two different, opposed groups required considerable work. Puerto Ricans and some North Americans insisted on seeing themselves as the same—common participants in New World political traditions based on “rights-of-man” liberalism, revolution from Europe, ethnic and racially mixed populations, labor-union-based socialism, and universal manhood suffrage. Prostitution policy shored up two North American strategies for differentiating Americans from “natives.” One held that Puerto Ricans were, by definition, sick and needed to be kept at arm’s length from our soldiers and sailors, who could be infected by them and thus endanger wives and children on the mainland. A second, more liberal view held that Puerto Rican prostitutes were vectors for disease that endangered innocent Puerto Rican women and children, and that Puerto Ricans were thus in need of assimilation into North American medical and public-health administration, which could save them from themselves. Both of these strategies relied on a constitution of the public sphere as male and the private as female; in both cases, it was the work of U.S. modernism and science to protect, not an explicit (public) colonialism, but (private) women and children. This public/private dichotomy, however, engendered two kinds of misappropriation—one anti-colonialist, the other feminist. Puerto Rican men offered to protect Puerto Rican women from the North Americans by opposing the incarceration of prostitutes, while elite North American and Puerto Rican women also tried to rescue prostitutes through reform work inside and outside prisons.

Chapter 3 explores how, in the decades of the twenties and thirties, other battles over reproduction and sexuality, specifically, battles over birth control and eugenics, became staging grounds for struggles over class and nationalism. In the 1920s, U.S. Republican administrations withdrew from giving the island much attention, and then, in the 1930s, New Deal liberals took a renewed U.S. interest in the island with a vengeance. Neither impulse was well received on the island, but the combination contributed to a vigorous nationalist movement that initiated a decades-long tendency to associate birth control and efforts to limit women’s fertility with U.S. influence, even in the absence of U.S. mainland support for birth control. At the same time, other political alignments developed that were neither exactly opposed nor congruent: feminist nationalists who fought for birth control; North American feminists who supported Puerto Rican woman suffrage, the establishment of the female professions of nursing and social work, and ultimately birth

control clinics through them; scientific modernizers, male and female, who found in eugenics a language to shift the terrain of debates about Puerto Rican unfitness from one of geography, in which Puerto Ricans were tropical, hence racially not-white and therefore unfit for independence, to one of class, in which poor Puerto Ricans required help from their (Puerto Rican) social betters and encouragement to have smaller, eugenic families. As Gladys Jiménez-Muñoz has observed in her study of the suffrage struggles of the 1920s, this was a period in which gender was the symbolic language of politics. One could also add that sexuality and reproduction provided a related terrain upon which scientific modernizers and nationalists contended with each other for authority (with feminists found on every possible side of the debate), and that the ability to produce the most compelling narrative about working-class-women's sexuality and reproduction was important to this battle.

The second half of the book takes up the period roughly from 1940 to the 1970s. In the 1940s, on the island, the importance of North American support for the scientific, modernizing elite—increasingly educated in the United States—became clear. In the context of Third World decolonization and the Cold War, development became an anti-Communist policy, and one of the first places it was tried was in the “laboratory” of Puerto Rico. It relied on four key components: population control and a centralized state, and export-substitution industrialization and a rising standard of living, the latter two predicated on U.S. aid and loans. In retrospect, it is clear how development policy fostered not only Cold War battlegrounds in places like Vietnam, Korea, Angola, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, but also how it gave rise to the Latin American debt crisis and ongoing civil wars throughout Africa, by making the capture of the colonial state the *sine qua non* of decolonization struggles and keeping in place the essentially arbitrary colonial map of Africa. The Puerto Rican policy innovation, of persuading U.S. firms to employ a (largely female) work force outside the mainland and away from U.S. consumers and the mainland's apparently reliable political and physical infrastructure, was deemed a success—and contributed to the current situation, whereby virtually all manufacturing for U.S. markets is done in the Third World. Yet, for all that this is the hard language of policy and economy, it is important to note the extent to which it was accomplished under the rubric of solving the problem of overpopulation. Explicitly, the poverty of the Third World was seen not so much as the legacy of colonialism—the former colonial powers composed a significant segment of NATO, after all, and could hardly be identified as the problem

in U.S. development rhetoric—but rather as a problem of overpopulation, which would be solved through a combination of industrialization initiatives, techno-scientific solutions (from the birth control pill to the Green Revolution in agriculture), and modernization of the state.

Chapter 5 looks at the politics of sterilization. The charge of genocide was leveled at modernizers by nationalists, who contended that the modernizers wished to end Puerto Rican existence within a generation by limiting fertility. Although the charge was not literally true, it certainly captured memorably the extent to which reproduction and women's role was rendered the battleground of the Cold War in the Third World. One of the few places where one can find the rhetoric of women's rights in the United States in the 1950s is in the pronouncements of social scientists about what needed to change in Puerto Rico—namely, the culture of *machismo*—the only Spanish word that every North American knows. Chapter 6 takes up the massive postwar Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. mainland, significantly, to New York, and the specific ways that it re-staged debates about race, class, and anti-poverty policy in New York and nationally. The social science of Puerto Rican women and families—that women are oppressed, that families are too big, that fathers do not marry the mothers of their children—shaped the social science of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. This is unsurprising, given the dominance at the time of Robert Park's idea of a "race-relations cycle" that stresses stages of assimilation and the essential comparability of all immigrant groups. Puerto Ricans were thus compared to the other group of racialized migrants that came to New York in large numbers at about the same time: African Americans. The hostility that generally greeted Puerto Rican and black migrants took a familiar form: the charge that they were a drain on the city's welfare system. This, even before a significant number of Puerto Ricans or blacks were eligible for welfare. By 1966, the New York struggles over Puerto Ricans, African Americans, welfare policy, and family structure were taken up in the Moynihan Report as a problem for federal policy. At the same time that they damned Puerto Rican and black family structure, however, federal anti-poverty initiatives opened up new possibilities and new arenas for activism, both literally and symbolically, by giving War on Poverty funds to activists in and among urban working-class people and by making sex and reproduction, again, an explicit battleground. These groups included the Welfare Rights Organization, the Young Lords Party, and various short-lived New Left- and Black Panther-inspired groups like La Brecha. Unlike most nationalist groups dedicated to racial justice of the period, Puerto

Rican groups made feminism and reproductive rights foundational to their politics.

This argument, I hope, begins to point up some of the possibilities of thinking about gender, sex, and reproduction as a framework for understanding Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico was a key place in which U.S. colonialism was honed, a kind of colonialism and racialization we are now reaping as globalization.