CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A Gendered Tale of Two Barrios

On a cold, rainy Chicago morning in late October 1997, I left my Humboldt Park apartment and drove my red pickup truck south on California Avenue. From Armitage Street, I went past the Western Union billboards, Moos Elementary School, and the Wright College Extension Campus directly across the street from the single-room occupancy hotel on the northwest corner of North and California Avenues. I continued south along the eastern entrance of Humboldt Park, which faces a row of impressive greystones, each housing multiple families, many of them proudly displaying large Puerto Rican flags from their windows. On a typical morning, this area of the park bustles with the quiet activities of people sleeping in the park, younger folks jogging or walking along the park's pathways, and older Latino and African American men — occasionally accompanied by young boys — fishing in the lagoon.

Turning east onto Division Street, I passed a Kentucky Fried Chicken on my left and then, across the street, Lily's Record Shop, which sells a wide range of music in Spanish — *salsa, merengue, música jíbara* — and hundreds of T-shirts, with everything emblazoned on them from the Puerto Rican flag to a *pava*-wearing *coquí* dancing with an animated creature draped in the Mexican flag. Plastic and ceramic *recuerdos de Puerto Rico,* including a plate of *arroz con habichuelas* in shiny plastic miniature, dolls, and musical instruments, crowd the small, cramped store, which pipes loud music to the street on most afternoons. This section of Paseo Boricua, the popular name of the six-block area between the two fifty-ton Puerto Rican flags on the eastern and western ends of Division Street, is

filled with dollar stores, small family-run grocery stores, barber shops, restaurants, and the Boriken Bakery, providing the best *pan de agua, quesitos,* and *pastelitos de guayaba* in Puerto Rican Chicago. I continued east under the Puerto Rican flag, past Roberto Clemente High School and the St. Elizabeth's Hospital complex, beyond the new, hip restaurants and bars frequented by young white professionals, students, and artists, all newcomers to the area. Finally, I passed the old Polish bakery — a reminder of the neighborhood's earlier ethnic composition — before turning south onto Paulina Street, where I drove three blocks to pick up Aida Rodríguez and her teenage daughter, Milly Vargas, at their second-floor apartment in the quickly gentrifying West Town neighborhood.[1]

Aida has lived in this two-story wooden house almost all her life. Her father bought the building in 1977, after renting various apartments within West Town and the adjacent neighborhood, Wicker Park. In fact, except for the three years in the mid 1980s when she lived in Brooklyn with her husband, Eli, and their children, and the short time she was sent to live with her paternal relatives in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, Aida has lived all her life within a four-block radius of this home. In 1990, no longer able to pay taxes on the building, her father sold the family house and moved Aida's mother and their youngest children to a rented apartment nearby. The following year, Aida rented a second-floor apartment from the new owner. I visited her there, where she would remain until December 1999, when she and her five children would move to the Belmont Cragin neighborhood, northwest of West Town.

Music filled the narrow stairwell as I climbed the stairs to Aida's small apartment, where she and her three daughters were watching hip-hop videos in the living room. As we waited for Eli and their two sons to return from repairing a flat tire, Aida and I played Pacman on her son's Gameboy, and Milly and her sisters chatted about the music videos and their favorite performers, including the rap artist Tupac and *salsero* Jerry Rivera. Shortly after Eli arrived, Aida, Milly, and I left the apartment, squeezed into the cab of my truck, and drove to Aida's parents' house on Shubert Avenue in Logan Square, just as her father and younger brothers finished their breakfast of fried eggs, deli ham, and white bread, and prepared to move more boxes to a newly rented home down the block. Aida's mother, Magda Quiñones, was excited about the move, saying that it would be the third house they'd lived in on that same block — perhaps even on the same side of the street. She was confident that as long as the owner didn't sell the house, she and her husband and youngest daughters would live there quite comfortably for a long time, since the new house

had not been subdivided into smaller apartments for multiple renters and thus provided ample room. Aida had invited me to spend the day with her and her family, something we have done together on countless occasions, and she was particularly excited about introducing me to her cousin Mayra, who lived directly across the street. Mayra, Aida, and I spent most of the day together, talking about the usual topics — problems with children, health, housing, and jobs, and their hopes and dreams for a better life for themselves and their children — before returning to her parents' home later in the evening, where Magda and her husband, Carmelo, were watching Spanish-language television in their living room. Milly had spent the day trying on clothes with one of her *tías* — Aida's youngest sister, who was slightly older than Milly.

As soon as we walked in the door, Magda offered us *café con leche.* Carmelo asked Aida if she would take a look at some papers he had just received from public aid, and Magda invited me into the kitchen while she made the coffee. I have known Aida and her extended family for more than two years and have celebrated holidays, birthdays, weddings, and other special events with them. On several occasions, I asked Magda if I might interview her, since Aida frequently directs me to her mother when I have questions about her family's history in Chicago and Puerto Rico. Each time I approach Magda, however, she refuses, insisting she has nothing interesting to say and instructing me to speak with her husband, who, she assures me, will provide information that would be of greater interest to me. But today Magda ushers me into the kitchen, quickly closing the door behind me. She says to me suddenly and quite seriously, "*Ahora* te voy a dar mi historia" (*Now* I will tell you my story).

"Aida is raising Milly too strict," she begins in English, suggesting that Aida is likely to push Milly into making bad decisions. When I suggest that Aida simply wants the best for Milly and is trying to prevent her from making the same mistakes Aida made as a teenager — getting pregnant and not finishing high school — Magda shakes her head and insists that Aida is making the same mistakes she herself did with Aida and her sisters: being too strict, unreasonable, and, in the end, pushing them to do things behind her back. "Se van a meter las patas igual" (They'll get pregnant anyway), she says sadly. "Yo apretaba demasiado con mis muchachos, y mira como salieron" (I was too strict with my children, and look how they turned out), referring to the fact that, despite her best efforts, her three oldest daughters were teenage mothers. This, she explains, is part of her own sad story of *sufrimiento,* which began with her migration from Utuado, Puerto Rico, to Chicago at the age of ten to live with an aunt

who needed help raising her family in the absence of extended kin. "Fue un infierno. Y yo era una esclava" (It was hell. And I was a slave), she says mournfully. Not only did Magda have to do all the work in her aunt's home, but she was also forbidden to leave the house alone, since her aunt felt responsible for protecting her. Magda eventually fled her aunt's home in the middle of the night. She stayed with a neighbor until she was able to contact a woman from her home town who was also living in Chicago and who had given Magda her phone number, saying to call if she ever needed help. The woman allowed Magda to stay with her, but it proved to be more of the same. She paid Magda ten dollars weekly for doing the same work she had been required to do at her aunt's house, but she still had no freedom. It was at this time that she met Carmelo, who was ten years older. They were permitted only short visits, and eventually she married him in order to leave the house and have more autonomy.

As Magda told me her story, she connected it to her own decisions on how to raise her children. "Yo apretaba demasiado con mis muchachos," she repeated sadly. When Aida was thirteen, Magda was so worried about her daughters getting pregnant that she sent Aida to Puerto Rico to live with family for a short time, *para que no se dañara* — so she wouldn't be ruined. Despite Magda's best efforts, Aida returned from Puerto Rico after only a month — she describes her stay in Puerto Rico as horribly traumatic — and got pregnant with Milly the following year. Life in Puerto Rico, Magda explained, is *más sana* — healthier, safer, and purer — than in Chicago. On the other hand, Chicago provides employment and broader economic and educational opportunities, and for these reasons, Magda insisted on remaining in Chicago, while preserving good relations with her own and her husband's kin in Puerto Rico through letters, phone calls, and hosting family and friends. As for many Puerto Rican families, this connection to the island has become an important resource that Magda — and even Aida — can draw upon when necessary. These ties, however, are episodic, intensifying and fading according to the changing needs of families. While remaining firmly rooted in Chicago, Magda and Aida imagine themselves as belonging to something beyond the city's borders that provides meaning and important possibilities in their lives.

The implications of Magda's actions became clearer to me after I moved to Puerto Rico the following year and met people like Willy Arroyo, who had equally complicated experiences of place and belonging. Born and raised in San Sebastián, a small town in the northwestern region of Puerto Rico, Willy moved with his mother and sisters to Chicago when he was fifteen and lived on Chicago's Near Northwest Side for six years. In 1993,

Willy returned with his girlfriend, Raquel Ramos, and their one-year-old son to live with his maternal aunt, Antonia, in the brightly painted, modest cement home she owns near the center of town. Unlike his mother, Mercedes Rubio, Willy has lived a relatively settled life in San Sebastián, having been raised primarily by Antonia, who has never lived outside of Puerto Rico but whose home is filled with glossy photographs, posters, and ceramic figurines with the names of U.S. cities — Chicago, New York, and Orlando — emblazoned on them. Despite having lived primarily in San Sebastián, Willy's connections to Chicago are strong: He follows Chicago sports teams religiously, his walls are filled with Chicago Bulls championship pennants, he and his son, Tito, stroll around town in matching Bulls jerseys, and he often talks nostalgically about the places he visited, the friends he made, and the jobs he had while living in Chicago. His main reason for returning to Puerto Rico was his problems with gangs. He was never involved in a gang, he assured me repeatedly, but young men hassled him as he walked the streets, accused him of belonging to opposition gangs, and once fired into his apartment when he, Raquel, and Tito were sleeping. Shortly after the shooting, they returned to San Sebastián, eventually renting a small wooden house from his uncle, who moved in temporarily with Antonia. In the six years since Willy returned to San Sebastián, the composition of his household has fluctuated dramatically as he took in his sisters and their children and his mother and her youngest children, and as they moved around San Sebastián and between San Sebastián and Chicago. He has held a number of poorly paid jobs and is now steadily employed as a messenger for a local doctor, making some three hundred dollars a month, far less than he would like to earn.

That is probably the main reason why, one sticky afternoon in April, Willy announced, to everyone's surprise, that he was thinking of returning to Chicago. Willy's brother-in-law, Ralphy, had mentioned earlier that Willy was spending time with Richie, an old friend from Chicago who was visiting his family and friends in Lares, a town just east of San Sebastián. According to Ralphy, Richie had been boasting about how much money he was making in Chicago. He encouraged Willy to go to Chicago with him, promising to help Willy find a job where he could make much more money than he currently did — "Maybe even a thousand dollars a week," Ralphy explained to me. He elaborated, "Willy was thinking, 'If I can make a thousand a week there and only $120 here, why should I stay?'" Willy later explained to me that all that prevented him from leaving was the gangs and the fear of raising his son in a dangerous place like Chicago. But now, with Raquel working three part-time jobs

just to make five hundred dollars a month and him making even less, the allure of going to Chicago for a better-paid job was strong and had become a source of tension between him and Raquel.

The stories told by Magda, Aida, and Willy of urban fear, migrant aspirations, and interminable strategizing are familiar to many poor and working-class Puerto Rican families both on the island and on the mainland. It is not uncommon to hear older Puerto Ricans — the first generation of migrants, who left the island in the late 1940s and 1950s, at the height of Puerto Rican emigration — tell stories of their journeys to cold northern cities, such as New York and Chicago, the sacrifices they made leaving kin and friends in Puerto Rico in order to find jobs and *mejor ambiente,* a better life abroad, and their struggle to raise families in those new places. Their adult children, whether in Puerto Rico or the United States, have decidedly different migration tales, frequently involving forced relocation to live with grandparents, aunts, and uncles on the island because of real or perceived danger. Or living with the constant *possibility* of being sent away in moments of crisis. At other times, they speak of perhaps migrating themselves — for better jobs, improved housing, reliable healthcare. Many second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans have never migrated, but they still think about these other places in their lives, which are often animated by the stories of older kin, and they understand their lives and themselves in relation to these places because of their emotional connection to them. It is impossible to understand life in either community without taking the other into account. Over time, migrants and their children have been actively involved both in creating a transnational community and in building meaningful place in marginal economic circumstances.

Puerto Ricans' enduring connections with multiple communities typify the behavior of late-twentieth-century immigrants, who sustain long-term transnational ties with sending and host communities. Emotional, cultural, social, and economic connections between island and mainland communities have persisted over several generations and, in some cases, have been strengthened by the participation of second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans. These connections are certainly facilitated because of the ease with which Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens, can travel between the island and the United States, but they are not exclusive to them. Advances in telecommunication technology and transportation, as well as government recognition of the rights of migrants abroad, have transformed the ways migrants remain connected to sending communities around the world. Moreover, because these ties and ways of understanding often involve being firmly rooted in one place and they are used by people who may have never even visited the island or left Puerto Rico, it is clear that mobility is

not necessary for one to feel part of a transnational community. Transnational practices and imaginings have gradually become interwoven with the fabric of a community, binding it up with other places and people, who fasten and loosen ties as necessary.

This book is about these ties between places and people, connected by a long transnational history of circulating people, capital, information, and ideologies. In subsequent chapters, I explore the impact of migration on two communities — Chicago, Illinois, and San Sebastián, Puerto Rico — and their residents, and the ways in which transnational practices and imaginings have shaped the cultural, economic, social, and political landscapes in both places. I focus specifically on how people create rich, meaningful lives in marginal circumstances, and how several generations of Puerto Rican families fashion ideas of place, culture, and migration critical to sustaining their families, households, and communities. Because my primary concern is to present a portrait of daily life in one kind of transnational community, I emphasize the role of power in shaping the terrain of human activity, past and present, and explore how people respond to, accommodate, and resist its various manifestations. Migration, whether voluntary or involuntary, is fundamentally about power relations — between countries, economies, and individuals — and it raises important questions about the nature and scope of power hierarchies, including those of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation. Why do people move, and who benefits from this movement? Under what circumstances do people forge transnational connections, and how do they change over time? Do these ties affect all people equally? In what follows, I foreground one of these power hierarchies, that of gender, in order to advance our understanding of how gendered power relations shape transnational practices, including men's and women's distinctive experiences in local labor markets, their often divergent opinions regarding migration and return, and their differential access to resources, such as education, housing, and kin networks, that are critical for their survival. In doing so, I reveal that the history of Puerto Rican migration and displacement is simultaneously a narrative of gender, and show its embeddedness in development ideologies, labor history, place-making, and ethnic identity construction in a transnational context.

A Gendered Reading of Puerto Rican Migration

Magda Quiñones and Mercedes Rubio come from a long line of women who, until recently, have been all but invisible in migration studies.

Their stories of displacement are sobering, a reminder of how women's productive and reproductive work is absolutely critical for economic and social policy on both local and global levels. Magda Quiñones, for example, is just one of many Puerto Rican girls who migrated to Chicago in the 1950s in order to assist female kin with the reproductive tasks of a newly migrant household reliant on men and women's wage labor outside the home. Two decades later, Mercedes Rubio would follow a similar path, following an older sister to Chicago and sharing a residence with her as they both struggled to find jobs and raise children in a new environment. In Chicago, both women changed residences frequently, moving into different households, sometimes establishing their own, but almost always doing so in marginal economic conditions, in response to rising rents, inadequate housing, and the consequences of uneven urban development, including urban renewal projects and gentrification. These experiences of displacement in Chicago stem from a series of public policy decisions and economic shifts in Chicago and Puerto Rico that made women's postwar migration to Chicago both possible and necessary.

In Puerto Rico, the decades-long concern with the island's perceived overpopulation problem prompted the Puerto Rican government to promote migration as a strategy for ameliorating the demographic pressures allegedly hampering Puerto Rico's economic development. Overpopulation, Laura Briggs persuasively argues, was a key economic narrative in the postwar era, not only in Puerto Rico but throughout the developing world, as U.S. policymakers worried that "excessive, uncontrolled reproduction was an obstacle to capital formation," or, in other words, "development."[2] U.S. philanthropists, social scientists, and policymakers regarded international family planning — more specifically, modifying and regulating Third World women's sexual behavior — as one way of advancing economic development. In the case of Puerto Rico, these powerful interests also encouraged emigration to the mainland, the unofficial policy that, along with family planning, became the cornerstone of the island's economic development policy.

In 1947, for example, the Puerto Rican government established the Bureau of Employment and Migration, which later became the Migration Division of the Department of Labor, a new government office charged with encouraging Puerto Rican migration to the United States by providing information about employment opportunities abroad and job training, even helping to secure employment through contract labor programs. This planned migration strategy was accompanied by the implementation of Puerto Rico's export-oriented industrialization program,

later named Operation Bootstrap, which based the island's economic development on foreign and domestic private investment, encouraged by tax holidays, loan assistance programs, and wage and rent subsidies. Puerto Rico's industrialization project served as a template for the later capital importation — or *maquiladora* — model familiar throughout the developing world, an economic arrangement that feminist scholars have shown is contingent on women's labor and their "emancipation" from "traditional" constraints, such as family, land, and community.[3] The developmentalist ideology guiding Puerto Rico's industrial policy, as well as its migration program, was deeply gendered, as poor women of childbearing age were both encouraged to migrate to U.S. cities like Chicago and recruited to work in new factories throughout the island.[4]

In Chicago, equally powerful policy and economic concerns encouraged the arrival of Puerto Rican migrants. In 1946, single young Puerto Rican women were recruited by a Chicago-based employment agency to remedy the city's "maid shortage." The abundance of industrial work for both men and women further encouraged Puerto Ricans' arrival. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, a feminist reading of Puerto Rican economic and migration history, as well as an analysis of postwar U.S. economics, politics, and family ideologies, throws in sharp relief how gendered power relations support, rationalize, and advance economic development programs, public policy, and migration on the island and the mainland.[5]

The social conditions enabling Puerto Rican women and men to be mobile subjects — or at least imagine themselves as flexible actors — are the result of historically specific processes conditioned by Puerto Rico's persistent colonial status, as well as a longer history of exploration, conquest, and empire characterizing the entire Caribbean region. A distinctive feature of the Caribbean, for example, is that it is a region in which countries simultaneously experience emigration and immigration.[6] Puerto Rico is no exception to this regional trend. Since the 1940s, the island has witnessed the displacement of more than 1.5 million people to the United States, where, according to the 2000 census, nearly half of all Puerto Ricans now reside. This massive displacement from the island is accompanied by substantive immigration to Puerto Rico, with more than 9 percent of the island's current population classified as foreign born, a statistic that includes children born to Puerto Rican parents abroad as well as Dominicans, Cubans, and others.[7] Scholars have employed a variety of metaphors to capture this tremendous mobility, referring to Puerto Rico as "a nation on the move" or the "commuter nation," and to Puerto Rican

migrants as "passengers on an airbus." Such metaphors are useful in highlighting tremendous mobility, but more importantly, they point to how the geographic displacement of Puerto Ricans, whether forced or voluntary, has come to define Puerto Ricans' social and political identity. Like Mexican Americans who either crossed international boundaries or had borders "cross them," the consequences of Puerto Ricans' displacement, past and present, loom large in historical memory and contemporary local and national politics.[8] The internationally visible struggle around the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, for example, is not only about demanding an end to military operations off the island; more profoundly, it concerns historical and contemporary Puerto Rican displacement as a result of land concentration and subsequent land expropriation in the service of American capital and military power.[9]

The U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898 and the subsequent consolidation of U.S. agrarian capitalism and shrinking small-scale subsistence cultivation helped set in motion population movements to places like Hawaii, Arizona, California, and, most notably, New York City. Between 1900 and 1940, more than ninety thousand Puerto Ricans left the island, although many returned after working in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.[10] As a result of the Migration Division's efforts and the structural changes in the rapidly industrializing Puerto Rican economy, the exodus from the island increased sharply in the early postwar years, peaking in the 1950s, as Puerto Ricans went to cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, where there was great demand for low-wage workers in manufacturing industries. Approximately one-third of the island's population circulated or emigrated to the United States between 1955 and 1970, as Puerto Ricans continued to leave the island in large numbers. By the early 1970s, however, deindustrialization in Northeastern and Midwestern cities resulted in a decline in manufacturing jobs, making emigration a less attractive option for working-class migrants until the mid 1980s and 1990s, when migration from the island increased once again. And while cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia continue to serve as home to large Puerto Rican populations, 2000 census data confirm a geographic dispersal of Puerto Rican migrants and communities to such destinations as Florida beginning in the 1980s.[11]

Puerto Rican migration, however, has not been unidirectional. Return migration beginning in the mid 1960s increased dramatically by the early 1970s and in some years even surpassed emigration from the island, a trend that continued through the early 1980s.[12] A number of studies have documented this flow of return migrants and have analyzed its impact on the island, focusing largely on economic and cultural effects of return migra-

TABLE 1. Puerto Rican Population in the United States by State, 2000

State	Puerto Rican Population	State	Puerto Rican Population
New York	1,050,293	Oklahoma	8,153
Florida	482,027	Louisiana	7,670
New Jersey	366,788	Missouri	6,677
Pennsylvania	228,557	Minnesota	6,616
Massachusetts	199,207	Kentucky	6,469
Connecticut	194,443	Alabama	6,322
Illinois	157,851	New Hampshire	6,215
California	140,570	Kansas	5,237
Texas	69,504	Oregon	5,092
Ohio	66,269	New Mexico	4,488
Virginia	41,131	Utah	3,977
Georgia	35,532	Mississippi	2,881
North Carolina	31,117	Iowa	2,690
Wisconsin	30,267	Alaska	2,649
Hawaii	30,005	Arkansas	2,473
Michigan	26,941	District of Columbia	2,328
Maryland	25,570	Maine	2,275
Rhode Island	25,422	Nebraska	1,993
Indiana	19,678	West Virginia	1,609
Arizona	17,587	Idaho	1,509
Washington	16,140	Vermont	1,374
Delaware	14,005	Montana	931
Colorado	12,993	South Dakota	637
South Carolina	12,211	Wyoming	575
Nevada	10,420	North Dakota	507
Tennessee	10,303		

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1

tion and, to a lesser extent, on its political consequences.[13] Still others emphasize the circular nature of Puerto Rican migration, one in which the flow of goods, people, ideas, and capital connect island and mainland communities.[14] Like many late-twentieth-century migrations, Puerto Rican migration has evolved to include a variety of new destinations, multiple movements, and sustained connections among different places, a phenomenon popularly regarded as a "va y ven" (or *vaivén*) movement, an experience of coming and going familiar to many Puerto Ricans, and one that has provoked serious debate both inside and outside the academy.

For some scholars, the *vaivén* tradition is a result of economic changes

both on the island and on the mainland and has become a culturally conditioned way for migrants to improve their economic and social position; as sociologist Marixsa Alicea has noted, it is a way for migrants and their families to create and make use of "dual home bases."[15] Other writers, however, argue that the continual circulation of Puerto Rican migrants is a key contributor to increased economic immiseration and poverty among Puerto Ricans on the mainland, since such movement disrupts families and people's participation in the labor market.[16] More recently, scholars like anthropologist Jorge Duany have re-engaged with this debate, arguing that circular migration — or "mobile livelihood practices" — is, in fact, a flexible survival strategy enhancing migrants' socioeconomic status. In response to poor economic conditions on both the island and the mainland, Puerto Rican migrants have created and make use of extensive networks, including multiple home bases in several labor markets. These transnational practices, he argues, not only compensate for the fact that economic opportunities are unequally distributed in space, but they also undermine "the highly localized images of space, culture, and identity that have dominated nationalist discourse and practice in Puerto Rico and elsewhere."[17] The complicated patterns of migration, return, and subsequent movement present theoretical and methodological challenges to traditional ways of analyzing migration and migrant practices. For this reason, new debates proposing a transnational approach to migration are useful in capturing Puerto Ricans' lives both on the island and abroad.

Migration Studies and a Transnational Perspective

For the past decade, writers both inside and outside of the academy have invoked the term *transnationalism* to refer to everything from the unfettered circulation of North American companies and capital to the movement of people, commodities, information, and ideas. Within the social sciences, the term has been particularly visible, appearing in the titles of countless conferences, working papers, articles, and presentations, where it has been linked to a variety of traditional areas of academic inquiry, such as transnational labor, transnational capital, transnational feminisms, and transnational migration. Frequently, *transnationalism* and *globalization* (perhaps an equally ubiquitous term) are used interchangeably, an unfortunate tendency that often mystifies rather than explains important social phenomena that are certainly related but analytically distinct processes.

Transnationalism refers to those processes that are "anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states," while *globalization* involves processes that are "largely decentered from specific national territories and take place in a global space." The conflation of these terms says a lot about late-twentieth-century sensibility, in which transnational corporations push us to think of ourselves as part of a "global village."[18] In short, *transnationalism* is "in the air," and its proliferation within the social sciences matches the term's increasing ambiguity.[19]

This is particularly true in migration studies, where, since the late 1980s, some scholars have advanced the idea of "transnational migration" to capture the different ways in which immigrants integrate themselves into their new environment while creating and sustaining ties with the communities from which they come. This transnational perspective keeps in focus immigrants' border-spanning activities, including political activities, various income-generating practices, and the reconfiguration of families and households involving migrants and nonmigrants alike. And although migration scholars still struggle with the proliferation of terms used to capture these complicated migration processes (transnational circuits, transnational communities, trans-localities, transnational villages, and transnational social fields and contexts, to name a few), it is clear that the transnational model is an important corrective to earlier migration theories, which have traditionally treated migration as a unidirectional flow of people who eventually settle permanently into host societies.

Borrowing from economic theory, for example, the neoclassical equilibrium approach to international migration — the "push-pull" model — emphasizes the individual motivations of migrants as they are "pushed" from poor industrializing economies characterized by labor surplus, and "pulled" to developed, labor-scarce countries. Historical-structural models, on the other hand, focus on the structural consequences of a global capitalist system organized by an international division of labor and a global political hierarchy that in turn creates mobile populations moving from poor nations on the "periphery" to developed "core" countries. The direction of these migration flows — from Jamaica to Great Britain, Algeria to France, and the Dominican Republic to the United States, for example — is not arbitrary. Instead, they reflect the political and economic expansion of countries whose colonial, imperialist, and/or military interventions have had the unintended consequence of stimulating international migration. Migrants' networks increase the likelihood that movement will continue, as nonmigrants draw on the social ties of kinship and friendship connecting them to migrants and former migrants and pro-

viding them with the knowledge and resources necessary for their own movement. Taken together, neoclassical and historical-structural migration theories, as well as migrant network analysis, help to explain both the structural and individual forces shaping migration processes and patterns. But, as sociologist Douglas Massey aptly notes, such models were developed during the industrial era and do not adequately explain "a more complex migration regime" involving more people, more destinations, faster communication and travel, and "rising government intervention and greater circularity of movements."[20]

A transnational approach to migration has proven a useful frame for understanding the complicated ways in which individuals, communities, organizations, and even countries simultaneously shape (and are affected by) migration, and for explaining the persistence of ties across generations. In their seminal 1992 edited volume on transnationalism and migration, anthropologist Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues defined transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement."[21] This perspective no longer regards immigrants as "uprooted" people who are eventually "transplanted" in a new environment.[22] Instead, the transnational frame provides a far more complicated portrait of migrant life, including migrants' simultaneous participation in the economic, social, and political life of both the society from which they came and their new community of residence. Rather than sever ties with sending communities, "transmigrants" are understood to live their lives "across international borders," establishing "transnational social fields" consisting of dense migrant networks and connections that become institutionalized over time.[23] Invariably, migrants and nonmigrants alike are enmeshed in these transnational social fields, and over time migration becomes part of the fabric of places, as people begin to imagine themselves as part of a larger community that extends beyond their place of residence. This happens in concrete, historically specific ways, through, for example, cultural festivals in which migrants are honored, the proliferation of institutions like travel agencies and money-wiring businesses that help facilitate movement and communication, and political parties, community organizations, and sports clubs that bring together, physically and/or psychologically, people from different places. Thus, while transnational migration draws our attention to the border-spanning activities that shape people's lives and the communities in which they live, we cannot forget that these practices are "embodied in specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at

historically determined times."[24] In other words, the transnational cannot eclipse the local, and we need to reflect on the different power hierarchies in which transnational practices are embedded. We need to conceptualize place-making within transnational migration.

It is in this regard that attention to Puerto Rican migration is extremely relevant and revealing. To date, much of the literature focusing on U.S. transnational migration has drawn on examples from the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America — an understandable trend given the proliferation of immigrants from Latin America, the long-standing relationship between the United States and the Caribbean, and the region's proximity to the United States.[25] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, slightly more than 50 percent of the county's foreign-born population hails from the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America, a demographic trend that has prompted media, policy experts, and social critics to speculate on the consequences of this new latinization of the United States.[26] Moreover, many immigrants, particularly *mejicanos,* have lived "transnationally" for more than a century, starting long before the term was popularized, and long before, as anthropologist Carlos Vélez-Ibañez notes, "that imaginary political division called the U.S.-Mexican border" came into existence.[27] Despite recent theorizing of Latin American and Caribbean transnational practices, however, critical attention to Puerto Rican migration is noticeably absent. This is surprising, since it is arguably one of the longest sustained migrations to the United States, and therefore offers a unique opportunity to examine the construction, maintenance, and reconfiguration of transnational social fields over several generations. Some scholars may be reluctant to consider Puerto Rican migration as a transnational phenomenon, since Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and do not cross the geopolitical — or international — boundaries that define one's legal status. The absence of international boundaries, the logic goes, allows Puerto Ricans to move easily (and, more importantly, legally) between the island and the mainland, and therefore renders their experience qualitatively different from undocumented immigrants residing in the United States.

These concerns are certainly valid. As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans do not cross political boundaries in quite the same way as other immigrants, nor are they enmeshed in the discourse of illegality that stigmatizes undocumented immigrants and increases their exploitability. In fact, Puerto Ricans often use the stigma of illegality to distance themselves from Spanish-speaking immigrants and make claims to economic, political, and civil rights based on their citizenship status.[28] Puerto Ricans do,