

Some Social Differences on the Basis of Race Among Puerto Ricans

RESEARCH BRIEF

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Puerto Ricans are a multiracial people. This is given by the fact that the Puerto Rican population is composed of people from different categories of socially differentiated and defined racial groups, and also because not an insignificant number of Puerto Rican individuals share ancestry derived from multiple racial groups. Yet, the analysis of social difference and inequities among Puerto Ricans on the basis of physical difference is largely avoided, and when it is conducted its findings are often neglected.



This avoidance and neglect among Puerto Ricans tends to exist because the subject of race is generally fraught and uncomfortable, often sidestepped by allusions to color-blindness couched in racial democracy arguments or by claiming that in an extensively miscegenated population not any one person or any one group of people could claim superiority over any other on the basis of physical attributes.¹ Moreover, social inequities on the basis of physical differences also tend to be avoided and neglected as a subject of meaningful discussion and engagement for the sake of group or national solidarity.²

The brief analysis that follows seeks to shed light on current socioeconomic conditions among Puerto Ricans and highlights how physical differences denoted by socially defined racial categories may affect those conditions.

One immediate issue to raise is how to categorize racial difference among Puerto Ricans. By and large, the most extensive sources of data available for the analysis of social conditions for Puerto Ricans rely on data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and other agencies of the United States government, which in turn conform to directives by the Office

of Management and Budget to establish racial categories in the United States. Presently, and since the 1970s, these categories have been listed broadly as American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and White. The Office of Management and Budget has also made a provision to include an open ended residual category to capture other racial categories or designations that those listed may not (i.e., Some Other Race). Moreover, since 2000, at least for census purposes, the Census Bureau allows for multiple racial designations so that an individual may select more than one racial category with which to identify himself or herself.

The appropriateness and validity of these official governmental categories to describe the Puerto Rican population (and other Hispanics) as well as other population has been challenged.³ But in the absence of as extensive and as reliable sources of data and given the official nature of these categories, and therefore their weightiness in public policy, the analysis will proceed using them.

Based on Census Bureau data from the past two decades, one can observe that most Puerto Ricans in the United

States identify as white.⁴ This was the case in 2000, when 47 percent of Puerto Ricans chose this category to identify themselves, as well as in 2010, when the majority of Puerto Ricans (53%) did so (see Table 1). In 2014, the latest year for which such data are available, the proportion of Puerto Ricans who identified as white was 58 percent.

The second most frequent response to the racial identification question among Puerto Ricans in the United States involved people who did not choose any of the racial categories provided by the Census Bureau, but rather chose to identify themselves with another term. The category *Some Other Race* captured about 38 percent of Puerto Ricans in 2000, about 28 percent in 2010 and close to 26 percent in 2014. In most cases, people who chose this category tended to write in Puerto Rican or Boricua. Aside from such ethnonational terms, respondents also used terms such as mixed, *criollo*, *trigueño* and so forth.

Puerto Ricans who marked more than one racial category on the census questionnaire represented almost 8 percent in 2000, about 9 percent in 2010 and about 8 percent in 2014. Puerto Ricans who identified as black did so in approximately similar proportions as those who identified using multiple racial categories for the years under analysis (about 6%, 9% and 7%, respectively). Less than one percent of

Puerto Ricans identified as American Indian or Alaska Native or as Asian or Pacific Islander.

A somewhat different racial identification pattern holds among Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. An overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans on the island has in fact identified as white, whether it was 80 percent in 2000, 76 percent in 2010 or 70 percent in 2014 (see Table 2). Much smaller proportions of islanders chose not to identify with any of the categories provided or chose to use more than one racial category. In 2000 about 7 percent fell in this *Some Other Race* category; about 8 percent in 2010 and 11 percent in 2014. Similarly, 4 percent fell in the multiracial category in 2000, 3 percent in 2010 and 11 percent in 2014. Puerto Ricans on the island identified as black at a rate of 8 percent in 2000, 12 percent in 2010 and about 8 percent in 2014. About one-half of one percent or lower identified as American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander.

At first blush, then, the majority of Puerto Ricans chose white as the category to identify themselves racially in these government forms. This proportion is much higher among Puerto Ricans on the island than among those in the United States. Yet while this proportion is higher on the island, it appears as if Puerto Ricans are converging in recent times in terms of this racial identification, with the

Table 1: Race Among Puerto Ricans in the United States

	Total Population	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
2000	3,406,178	47.2	5.9	0.5	0.6	37.9	7.9
2010	4,623,716	53.1	8.7	0.9	0.8	27.8	8.7
2014	5,022,077	58.2	7.1	0.6	0.7	25.5	7.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, decennial censuses of the population 2000 and 2010, and American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate.

Table 2: Race Among Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico

	Total Population	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
2000	3,808,610	80.5	8	0.35	0.2	6.8	4.2
2010	3,725,789	75.8	12.4	0.5	0.1	7.8	3.3
2014	3,487,138	70.2	7.5	0.3	0.2	10.9	11

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, decennial censuses of the population 2000 and 2010, and American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate.

proportion of whites decreasing in Puerto Rico while it is increasing in the United States.

Secondly, those Puerto Ricans in the United States who had not chosen before one of the established governmental categories to identify themselves racially (i.e., some other race) appear to be selecting one of them as time passes. Moreover, the established category chosen by those Puerto Ricans who had previously chosen some other race appears to be the white category; as there had been a decrease of ten percentage points in “Other” between 2000 and 2010, and an increase of nearly six percentage points in the white category during the same period. Between 2000 and 2014, the decrease in Other was 11.8 percentage points and the increase in the white category was 10.9 percentage points.

Thirdly, a corresponding change in the convergence of preference for the white category among Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and those in the United States, involves a decrease in white identification in Puerto Rico. This decreasing identification as white among Puerto Ricans on the island has been accompanied by an increase in the proportion of respondents who chose multiple racial categories to identify themselves as well as those who chose another racial term besides those offered by governmental authorities. A possible reason for the increase in the proportion of Puerto Ricans choosing these alternative forms

of racial identification may be given by the migratory experience of Puerto Ricans, who in their travels to and from the United States may adapt their racial identification.⁵ This increase in the proportion of those identifying with multiple racial categories as well as those using other racial terms also appears to be accompanied with a fluctuation in the proportions of those who identified as black. The increase in the proportion of Puerto Ricans who chose to identify as black between 2000 and 2010 may have been the result of aware-raising campaigns by civil rights and anti-racism organizations.⁶ Those Puerto Ricans identifying as Asian or American Indian show some statistical stability both in Puerto Rico and in the United States.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS AMONG PUERTO RICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

There is a vast literature on how race has structured life in Puerto Rico, affecting negatively Puerto Ricans of African descent and specifically black Puerto Ricans.⁷ Such literature is sparser when it comes the analysis of social outcomes according to racial difference among Puerto Ricans in the United States.⁸ But those findings are consonant with the more difficult social outcomes for Puerto Ricans of African descent. Therefore, the expectation for the present analysis is that non-white Puerto Ricans will not perform as well as white Puerto Ricans along a number of socioeconomic indicators both in Puerto Rico and in the United States. Evidence from data from 2014 bears this expectation.

Table 3. Educational Attainment and English Proficiency among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Puerto Rican	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Educational attainment</i>							
Less than HS	23.7	21.4	21.7	28	18	30.3	18.9
High school	29.5	28.9	27	26.9	28.8	32	26.4
Some college or associate degree	29.7	30.5	33.9	33	33	26.2	33.1
Bachelor's	11.3	12.5	11.1	7.5	13.2	8.2	13.7
Graduate/professional degree	5.8	6.7	6.3	4.6	7	3.3	7.9
<i>English language proficiency</i>							
English only	37.6	37.8	55.2	38.5	71.9	25.2	61.2
Language other than English	62.4	62.2	44.8	61.5	28.1	74.8	38.8
Speaks English less than "very well"	15.5	15.9	10.6	15.1	6.7	17.8	8.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

Among Puerto Ricans in the United States, one observes a number of differences along a number of indicators of social capital such as education and proficiency in the English language depending on how those Puerto Ricans identified racially (see Table 3). By and large white Puerto Ricans tended to be slightly overrepresented in categories of schooling that indicate higher educational attainment relative to Puerto Ricans overall.⁹ If 29.7 percent of Puerto Ricans indicated they had some college education or associate's degree, and 11.3 percent indicated they held a bachelor's degree, and 5.8 percent had graduate or professional degrees in 2014, self-identified white Puerto Ricans indicated they had these levels of higher education at 30.5 percent, 12.5 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively. But black Puerto Ricans as well as those who identified as Asian, American Indian, or with multiple racial categories were also slightly overrepresented in these categories of schooling. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans who chose other terms to identify racially showed an underrepresentation in higher educational attainment categories (26.2%, 8.2% and 3.3%, respectively).

In terms of proficiency in the English language, white Puerto Ricans in the United States were represented evenly with Puerto Ricans overall in the category that indicates lower level of proficiency (i.e., "speaks less than 'very well'"). Puerto Ricans who identified as Asian, with multiple racial categories or as black showed notably lower levels in that category (6.7 percent, 8.7 percent and 10.6 percent, respectively), indicating a self-assessed ability to speak the English language with more proficiency. This was not the case for those who chose another racial identification term (17.8%).

Despite some indicators that may lead observers to expect some non-white Puerto Ricans to be able to translate their social capital into material capital, this does not appear to be the case.

The rates of employment and unemployment among self-identified white Puerto Ricans were, respectively, slightly above and slightly below the rates for all Puerto Ricans in the United States, suggesting a better position in the labor mar-

Table 4. Employment Status and Occupational Category for Puerto Ricans in the U.S. by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Puerto Rican	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Employment status</i>							
In labor force	62.3	62.5	63.9	60.1	66.7	61	64.6
Civilian labor force	62	62.2	63.6	59.5	66.1	60.7	64.3
Employed	53.3	54.5	52	47.5	57.1	50.8	53.7
Unemployed	8.7	7.6	11.6	12	9.1	9.8	10.6
Unemp. as pct. of civilian labor force	14	12.3	18.2	20.1	13.7	16.2	16.5
Armed forces	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.5	1.6	0.7	1
Not in labor force	37.7	37.5	36.1	39.9	33.4	39.1	35.4
<i>Occupation</i>							
Civilian employed population 16 years and over							
Management, business, science, and arts	26.1	28.3	24.8	23.6	31.6	21	27.8
Service	23.4	21.9	27.2	26.6	19	26	23.1
Sales and office	29	28.8	30.4	27.1	30.4	28.6	30.7
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	7.5	7.6	5.8	9.9	8.9	7.9	6.4
Production, transportation, and material moving	14	13.5	11.8	12.8	10.2	16.4	12.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

ket for white Puerto Ricans (see Table 4). Non-white Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, did not seem to be as well placed in the labor market as white Puerto Ricans. Black and Native American Puerto Ricans, and those who identified with other racial terms had lower employment levels (52%, 47.5% and 50.8%, respectively) as the Puerto Rican population in the United States as a whole (53.3%) and white Puerto Ricans (54.5%) in particular. (Puerto Ricans who identified as Asian or with multiple racial categories were evenly represented or overrepresented among those employed. This was given generally by their overrepresentation in the labor market.) Moreover, all non-white groups, saved for those Puerto Ricans identified as Asians, had higher unemployment rates than Puerto Ricans overall (14%) and white Puerto Ricans (12.3%) in particular.

The disadvantage faced in the labor market by Puerto Ricans self-identified as black, Native American or by other racial terms relative to all Puerto Ricans of working age in the United States was also evident in their proportion of employment in occupations that tend to aggregate the workers with the highest wages and salaries: management, business, science and the arts. Whereas 26.1 percent of Puerto Ricans of working age were represented in this occupation sector in the United States, Puerto Ricans identified by other racial terms participated at 21 percent; Native American Puerto Rican did so a 23.6 percent and black Puerto Ricans were represented at a 24.8 percent. On the

other hand, Puerto Ricans who identified themselves with multiple racial categories were overrepresented, if slightly, at 27.8 percent of employment in those occupations with higher earnings overall, as were white Puerto Ricans (28.3%) and Asian Puerto Ricans (31.6%).

Perhaps the starkest contrasts in material disadvantage most non-white Puerto Ricans in the United States face in the aggregate relative to white Puerto Ricans is in terms of income. Using median household income as the basis for comparison, the \$42,674 white Puerto Rican households reported in income was more than ten thousand dollars higher than the median household income reported by Puerto Ricans identified as Native American (\$30,738), by other racial terms (\$31,759), or black (\$32,576), and more than two thousand dollars higher than the median household income reported by Puerto Ricans identified by multiple racial categories (\$40,212) (see Table 5). Only Puerto Rican households by those identified as Asian had higher median income (\$51,035) than white Puerto Rican households. A similar pattern is evident when the measure for comparison is average earnings among full-time workers employed year-round. However, when using per capita income all non-white Puerto Rican groups in the aggregate underperformed white Puerto Ricans.

One outcome of these differences in income is the higher proportion of non-white Puerto Ricans in the United States

Table 5. Income* and Earnings for Puerto Ricans in the U.S. by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Puerto Rican	White	Black	American Indian	Asian Pacific Islander	Other	Multi-Racial
<i>Household</i>							
Median household income	\$38,700	\$42,674	\$32,576	\$30,738	\$51,035	\$31,759	\$40,212
Median family income	\$44,791	\$50,000	\$36,090	\$31,580	\$56,093	\$36,811	\$45,127
<i>Individuals</i>							
Per capita income	\$15,213	\$16,917	\$11,650	\$11,603	\$16,177	\$13,814	\$10,757
<i>Mean earnings for full-time, year-round workers</i>							
Male	\$40,000	\$41,245	\$35,791	\$39,183	\$41,671	\$36,843	\$40,001
Female	\$35,573	\$36,589	\$34,747	\$32,524	\$37,121	\$32,930	\$35,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate
 Note *: Income in the past 12 months (in 2014 inflation-adjusted dollars)

who live at or below the poverty level. All non-white categories have higher poverty rates than it is the case among white Puerto Ricans, whether measured among all families or all people (see Table 6). The biggest differences in poverty rates among white and non-white Puerto Ricans is seen in those who identified as American Indian, used other racial terms or as black. The smallest differences in poverty rates between white and non-white Puerto Ricans appears among those who identified as Asians or using more than one racial category.

Income constraints also affect other facets of a person's quality of life given by their purchasing power. This is the case with housing. Most Puerto Ricans in the United States do not own the home they live in (see Table 6). Only 37.3 percent are homeowners. However, white Puerto Ricans had a higher homeownership rate (43.2%) than any other group of Puerto Ricans. Moreover, the value of the homes they owned was higher for white Puerto Ricans (\$185,000) than for Puerto Ricans overall (\$181,000), and higher than for Puerto Ricans identified as American Indian (\$160,000), as black (\$170,000) and those who used another racial term to identify themselves (\$175,000). For Puerto Ricans identified as Asian or with more than one racial category, the value of their homes was higher, even if their homeownership rate was lower than for white Puerto Ricans.

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Table 6. Poverty and Homeownership Among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Puerto Rican	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asian/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Poverty</i>							
All families	23.7	19.8	32.9	35	20	30	24.4
All people	26.4	22.7	33.6	36.6	22.8	32.6	26.5
<i>Housing</i>							
Owner-occupied housing units	37.3	43.2	26.1	29.2	40.1	27.3	34.8
Median value of home	\$181,000	\$185,000	\$170,000	\$160,000	\$280,000	\$175,000	\$200,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

Table 7. Educational Attainment and English Proficiency Among Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Population	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Educational attainment</i>							
Less than HS	27.9	27.8	27.5	30.9	33.1	28.2	27.9
High school	27.2	26.5	29.7	26.5	26.4	31.2	25.8
Some college or associate degree	21.6	21.3	23.2	23.3	21.7	20.4	24.1
Bachelor's	16.9	17.6	14.5	14.1	14.2	14.9	16.3
Graduate/professional degree	6.5	6.9	5.2	5.2	4.7	5.2	6.0
<i>English language proficiency</i>							
English only	5.0	5.6	9.3	4.7	0.7	1.7	1.3
Language other than English	95.0	94.4	90.7	95.3	99.3	98.3	98.7
Speaks English less than "very well"	79.7	78.3	79.8	75.4	82.3	84.7	84.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS AMONG PUERTO RICANS IN PUERTO RICO

The profile of selected socioeconomic conditions for Puerto Ricans on the island resembles that of Puerto Ricans in the United States in some respects but with some variations. Puerto Ricans who identified as white in Puerto Rico tended to be evenly represented in educational attainment with the Puerto Rican population as a whole, if slightly overrepresented among those who had earned a bachelor's degree (see Table 7). For other Puerto Ricans on the island, however, the pattern of educational attainment was more disparate than was evident among Puerto Ricans in the United States.

On the island, Puerto Ricans who identified as black were evenly represented with Puerto Ricans overall and white Puerto Ricans among those with lower levels of schooling (i.e., no high school degree), but were somewhat overrepresented among those who had graduated from high school as well as those who had attended college or

earned an associate's degree, and were somewhat underrepresented among those with a college degree. Those Puerto Ricans who identified with more than one racial category were also evenly represented among those with less than a high school education, somewhat underrepresented among those with a high school degree, but overrepresented among those with some college education, both relative to the population as a whole as well as white Puerto Ricans. However, those identifying with multiple racial were about as evenly represented among those who had earned a college degree or a graduate degree as the Puerto Rican population as a whole, but somewhat underrepresented in these education categories relative to white Puerto Ricans. Those who identified as either Asian, American Indian or with another racial terms were also generally underrepresented in the higher educational attainment categories.

How this pattern of educational attainment affected their placement in the labor market was also varied. Generally, white Puerto Ricans reported being slightly underrepre-

Table 8. Employment Status and Occupational Category for Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Population	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Employment status</i>							
In labor force	44.9	43.5	46.6	47.1	44.7	49.2	48.5
Civilian labor force	44.9	43.5	46.6	47.1	44.7	49.2	48.5
Employed	36.6	35.7	36.3	38.1	33.9	39.1	40.2
Unemployed	8.3	7.8	10.3	9.0	10.9	10.1	8.3
Unemp. as pct. of civilian labor force	18.4	17.8	22.1	19.2	24.3	20.6	17.1
Armed forces	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not in labor force	55.1	56.5	53.4	52.9	55.3	50.8	51.5
<i>Occupation</i>							
Civilian employed population 16 years and over							
Management, business, science, and arts	29.5	31.0	25.7	24.6	31.0	25.0	27.8
Service	20.6	19.2	24.0	32.6	24.9	24.8	21.8
Sales and office	28.4	29.2	26.9	24.6	33.0	24.7	28.4
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	10.3	9.6	12.4	8.3	5.1	12.8	11.1
Production, transportation, and material moving	11.2	11.0	11.0	9.9	6.1	12.7	10.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

sented in the labor force in Puerto Rico (43.5%) relative to the population as a whole (44.9%) and non-white Puerto Ricans (see Table 8). White Puerto Ricans, consequently, had slightly lower levels of employment in the economy (35.7%) than the population as a whole (36.6%) and any other group with the exception of those identifying as Asians (33.9%). However, white Puerto Ricans also had the lowest unemployment rate of any group (17.8%), with the exception of those identifying with more than one racial category (17.1%). Puerto Ricans identifying as American Indian, by a different racial term, as black or as Asian had notably higher levels of unemployment (19.2%, 20.6%, 22.1% and 24.3%, respectively) than the population as a whole and white Puerto Ricans in particular.

This relative advantage that self-identified white Puerto Ricans seem to enjoy in the island's labor force was also evident in their overrepresentation relative to other Puerto Ricans in the occupational sectors that provide higher wages and salaries (with the exception of Asian Puerto Ricans). While 31 percent of Puerto Ricans identified as white held jobs in management, business, science and art occupations, 24.6 percent of those identified as American Indian, 25 percent identified by another racial term, 25.7 percent among those identified as black, and 27.8 percent identified with multiple racial categories did so.

This relative advantage for white Puerto Ricans in the labor market translated in turn into a notable advantage in income and a slight advantage in poverty status. Household

Table 9. Income* and Earnings for Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico by Racial Identification,

	Total Puerto Rican	White	Black	American Indian	Asian Pacific Islander	Other	Multi-Racial
<i>Household</i>							
Median household income	\$19,311	\$19,591	\$18,948	\$17,591	\$11,495	\$17,839	\$19,717
Median family income	\$24,700	\$25,003	\$23,800	\$17,800	\$13,200	\$22,700	\$24,747
<i>Individuals</i>							
Per capita income	\$7,599	\$7,759	\$7,011	\$6,766	\$4,959	\$7,092	\$7,541
<i>Mean earnings for full-time, year-round workers</i>							
Male	\$32,587	\$34,199	\$27,502	\$22,369	\$24,998	\$19,921	\$30,860
Female	\$29,762	\$30,443	\$27,759	\$29,142	\$25,903	\$21,448	\$29,141

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate
 Note *: Income in the past 12 months (in 2014 inflation-adjusted dollars)

Table 10. Poverty and Homeownership Among Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico by Racial Identification, 2014

	Total Population	Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Am. Indian	Percent Asia/PI	Percent Other	Percent Multi-Racial
<i>Poverty</i>							
All families	42.1	40.8	42.9	53.7	65.1	46.8	44.4
All people	45.6	44.6	45.5	53.8	57.7	49.7	47.6
<i>Housing</i>							
Owner-occupied housing units	70.2	72.1	68.2	55.7	43.8	66.1	63.6
Median value of home	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$110,000	\$102,000	\$107,000	\$105,000	\$125,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimate

income for white Puerto Ricans (\$19,591) was higher than for Puerto Rican household overall (\$19,311) and any other type of household save for those identified with multiple racial categories (\$19,717). This advantage white Puerto Ricans seem to have relative to other Puerto Ricans was manifest when measured on a per capita basis as well as when observing the mean earnings of full-time year-round workers (see Table 9).

Given their relative disadvantages in employment and unemployment, it is not unexpected to see that nonwhite Puerto Ricans live in poverty at relatively higher levels, notwithstanding the fact that poverty levels in Puerto Rico are inordinately high across the board (see Table 10). The poverty rates among Puerto Ricans on the island overall was 45.6 percent; for white Puerto Ricans it was one percentage point lower (44.6%); 45.5 percent for blacks, 47.6 percent for those identified with multiple racial categories, 49.7 percent for those identified with other racial descriptors, 53.8 percent for those identified as American Indian, and 57.7 percent for those identified as Asian.

The majority of Puerto Ricans on the island (70.2%) live in homes they own. Puerto Ricans identified as whites, however, have a relatively higher home ownership rate (72.1%) than any other racial group on the island, ranging from 43.8 percent among Puerto Ricans identified as Asian to 68.2 percent among black Puerto Ricans (see Table 10). Not only did more white Puerto Ricans own the home they live in, but the value of that home was higher (\$120,000) than for any other group of Puerto Ricans identified along racial lines, save for those identified with multiple racial categories (\$125,000).

IN CLOSING

In the aggregate, self-identified white Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico appear to have a material advantage over most nonwhite Puerto Ricans. These white Puerto Ricans, as a group, tend to perform better in terms of job opportunities, income, poverty rates and rates of homeownership. This might be the result of their relative advantage in educational capital. Why would white Puerto Ricans have an advantage in educational attainment is however a matter for further research. In a society that purports to practice racial democracy, where its largely centralized governmental institutions presumably deliver services irrespective of a person's phenotype, why would there be differences in the level of schooling Puerto

Ricans receive?¹⁰ Moreover, there is some evidence showing the inability of some non-white Puerto Ricans to translate their educational capital into material capital, unlike some white Puerto Ricans.¹¹

For Puerto Ricans in the United States, dynamics internal to the Puerto Rican community, evident in the analysis in Puerto Rico, appear to be connected with dynamics within the society at large that also seem to favor white Puerto Ricans. For instance, while white Puerto Ricans as a group tend to have more educational attainment than some nonwhite Puerto Ricans (i.e., American Indians and those of some other race), they were at parity or did not show more attainment than other non-white Puerto Ricans (e.g., black, multi-racial). Yet, white Puerto Ricans tended to perform materially substantially better than those non-white Puerto Ricans over which they had an advantage in social capital, but also over those over which they did not have such an advantage. The schooling advantage white Puerto Ricans as a group manifest is seemingly slight, suggesting that there may be other factors (e.g., bias) that favored them in the U.S. labor market, particularly when compared in the aggregate to, for instance, Puerto Ricans who identified with multiple racial categories, who were not able to translate their advantage in education attainment into a material advantage in the same measure.

A factor to consider when analyzing the impact of race on social conditions, and a caveat for this analysis, is the direction of the causal effect. The present analysis has proceeded with the presumption that it is racial identification that may impact some socioeconomic conditions. However, the causality may be reversed, so that it may be that one's socioeconomic status affects how one identifies racially. Among Latin Americans there is a perception that money may whiten an individual socially.¹² Among Puerto Ricans there is some evidence that suggests higher educational attainment and higher occupational status may increase the likelihood some individuals may identify as white.¹³ However, the magnitude of this effect of socioeconomic achievement on racial identification is rather muted, indicating that there are other explanations for why a person may identify racially with a particular designation.

Overall the general observations about the impact of race on some social conditions among Puerto Ricans made herein have been based on cursory descriptive analysis

of aggregate data. In order to disentangle the effects that these and other intervening variables may have on the material conditions of Puerto Ricans, further analysis of individual-level data is needed. In the meantime, what is discernable is the pattern of material assortment that, on the whole, different groups of Puerto Ricans differentiated by their own definition of racial identity exhibit. White Puerto Ricans, as a group, appear to be in a relatively better material position than other Puerto Ricans, whether in the United States or in Puerto Rico.

NOTES

¹ Betances 1972, 1973; Blanco 1985; Duany 2002; Dávila 1997; Godreau 2015; Guerra 1998; Jiménez Rómán 1996; Rodríguez 1994, 2000; Torres 1998; Vizcarrondo 1976.

² Géliga-Vargas 2015; Rodríguez-Silva 2012; Roy-Fequiere 2004; Thomas 2010.

³ Rodríguez 2000; Landale and Oropesa 2002; Duany 2002; Godreau 2008; Haslip-Viera 2009; Loveman 2007; Loveman and Muniz 2007; Vargas-Ramos 2005.

⁴ For most of its history, enumerators for the decennial censuses recorded the racial category household members fit based on criteria stipulated by government authorities. Since 1970 respondents to the census have chosen that racial category they preferred. In Puerto Rico, this practice of racial self-identification began with the 2000 census, after the race question was reintroduced in census questionnaires on the island after a fifty-year absence.

⁵ Roth 2012; Vargas-Ramos 2014.

⁶ El Nuevo Día 2011.

⁷ Rogler 1948; Seda Bonilla 1961, 1973; Tumin and Feldman 1971; Franco Ortiz 2003; Godreau et al. 2008; Rivero 2000; Santiago-Valles 1996; Godreau 2013; Dinzey-Flores 2013; Lloréns 2014; Rodríguez-Silva 2012; Roy-Fequiere 2004; González 1985; Zenón Cruz 1974; Pedreira 1934; Withey 1977; Gravlee et al. 2005.

⁸ Kantrowitz 1971.

⁹ Measured among those 25 years of age and older.

¹⁰ Cf. Godreau et al. 2008.

¹¹ Vargas-Ramos 2005.

¹² Schwartzman 2005.

¹³ Vargas-Ramos 2014.

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