

La Operación: United States Imperialism of Puerto Rican Motherhood

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Abstract

The transition of imperial power to the United States in Puerto Rico transformed sociocultural definitions and ideals of gender, race and family structure. In an effort to implement a model democracy, the United States emphasized the institution of capitalism in which women were expected to be involved in the workforce. The shift of women's labor from the home to a structured work environment was accompanied by a new standard of a nuclear family structure. Women were allocated the responsibility to limit their fertility, and the state further enforced this with a narrative of population control as being beneficial to the wellbeing of families and the economic wellbeing of Puerto Rico. In this framework, imperial values of whiteness and class were implied as markers of responsible motherhood and henceforth womanhood. Sterilization was introduced as a method for population control in the 1930s and gained popularity throughout the twentieth century. To examine the effects of this form of imperialism, this research explores trends of fertility and sterilization rates relative to class and race using secondary analysis of census data and studies on sterilization conducted by state officials, economists and social scientists in various fields. The findings of the research demonstrates the ways in which imperial sociocultural values of race and class impacted the fertility and sterilization rates of demographic groups during the twentieth century.

1. Introduction

The transition of imperial power to the United States in Puerto Rico transformed sociocultural definitions and ideals of gender, race and family structure. In its effort to establish a successful capitalist economy, the United States propagated an ideal of womanhood which emphasized the value of women's involvement in the workforce. In this economic structure, the workplace shifted from the home to factories where women worked for low wages. Parallel to the perceived ethic of institutionalized labor, women were assigned the responsibility of fertility control. Work ethic and reproductive responsibility became the doctrines of the "good mother." The good mother functioned as the rock of the economy; supporting economic growth by reproducing minimally (so as to not contribute to overpopulation on the Island) and balancing paid labor with her familial duties, such as being the primary provider of childcare. This model of motherhood corresponds to the American middle class ideal of a nuclear family, the prototype of which is characterized by whiteness. In the imperial cultural narrative, class status and race are mechanisms of upwards socioeconomic mobility in Puerto Rico and women who did not attain these attributes were unfit for motherhood. Subsequent to United States imperialism, sterilization was introduced as a method of fertility control. The official purpose of the procedure was to aid women with medical difficulties relative to fertility, though the procedure was unofficially motivated by Malthist discourse which promoted the sterilization of low income women. Economic specialists, government officials and medical professionals were often in support of sterilization as a means to amend the economy and control the threat of overpopulation. Studies conducted by social scientists have shown sterilization to be culturally acceptable as this method of birth control has been favored and commonly practiced by Puerto Rican¹.

This research examines the possible relationship between the imperial sociocultural construct of the "good mother" and demographic rates of fertility and sterilization from 1910 to 1967. This research has been conducted through the

analysis of census records; identifying patterns between marital, employment and education rates with fertility rates amongst white and nonwhite female populations during the early twentieth century. These trends are then compared to quantitative studies on fertility and sterilization conducted during the later decades of the mid twentieth century. The purpose of this study is to access the impact of the imperial sociocultural values of marriage, employment, whiteness and limited reproduction on fertility, family structure, and the cultural construct of motherhood for white and nonwhite females in Puerto Rico.

2. Literature Review

The most important factor in analyzing race in Puerto Rico post-United States occupation is understanding the shift in the classification of race rather than raw statistics of race. Loveman and Muniz analyze the whitening of the Puerto Rican population from 1910 to 1920 in which a surplus of nearly 100,000 whites was reported in the 1920 census². This shift is not due to immigration of a white population, but rather the phenomenon of “boundary shifting” defined by Loveman and Muniz as the movement of racial boundaries across individuals³. In the context of United States imperialism this shift is accredited to the reclassification of race based in the change of cultural criteria, predominantly the factors of marital and educational status. The research conducted in this study compared a sample group of Puerto Ricans who self-reported their racial identity in both the 1910 and 1920 census. It is evident that the clearest indicator of racial identification is the race of one’s parents. The whitening of children who were reported as black or mulatto corresponded to the race of the child’s mother more so than paternal lineage. Despite the extraordinary trend of whitening, children with black mothers and white fathers were the only population more likely to be designated as black in 1920 versus 1910⁴. A significant indicator of parents’ racial identification of their children was their marital status; the children of parents who were in either a consensual union or legal marriage were more likely to be classified as white in 1920. The educational status of parents also weighed heavily on children’s reported race, the research found a strong relationship between the completed levels of education and the whitening of children⁵. Loveman and Muniz infer the influence of these social elements in race is due to the cultural impact of U.S. imperialism, namely the morality campaigns which propagated an ideal of modernization with the foundations of educational reforms constructed in part by eugenic social thought as well as the importance of the sanctity of marriage promoted by highlighting the perceived evils of promiscuity⁶. It is also crucial to note that in 1917 Puerto Ricans gained U.S. citizenship. Loveman and Muniz suggest the shifting boundary of whiteness “may be one manifestation of a broader proto-nationalist reaction by Puerto Rican educated classes to integration into U.S polity and society on racially subordinate terms⁷. ”

Colon Warren comes to a similar conclusion of Loveman and Muniz on the whitening of the Puerto Rican population, theorizing that the steep decline of the black and mulatto population from 38% to 23% in 1899 and 1940 respectively is a result of dichotomous racialization imposed by the U.S to establish rigid racial hierarchies⁸. Colon Warren continues to demonstrate how imperialism influenced the racialization of determining adequate performance of Puerto Rican mothers. Mothers who were “irresponsible over breeders” were held accountable for being the causes of poverty and hence responsible for the Island’s underdevelopment. These women were deemed by society to be “demon mothers,” coded by race and class status⁹. The antithesis to the “demon mother” according to Colon Warren was, of course, the redefined “good mother.” This ideal of motherhood was structured by imperial values of responsible fertility; women were not to reproduce if unable to provide their children with an improved quality of life¹⁰. This corresponds with the propagation of the image of the ideal middle class nuclear family characterized by reduced fertility and dually employed parents. Ultimately, Puerto Rican motherhood in the early twentieth century was constructed by the aggressive immersion of capitalism via colonialism. The U.S. designated Puerto Rico as a project to establish a “showcase democracy,” a model for the development of an international division of labor. Emerging industries in Puerto Rico demanded female labor; low wage workers in sectors such as manufacturing increasingly became predominantly female¹¹. Ramírez de Arellano examines the environment of and discusses the parallel of social changes and female employment in industrial sectors as being “associated with routine, discipline and exacting the nature of “women’s work.¹²” She further delves into the connection of female employment and the idealized image of motherhood. The new cultural expectation of women to engage in structured paid labor caused a conflict with reproduction; women were considered to be better candidates for stable employment if they were sterilized¹³. Female employment and sterilization projects emerging in the early twentieth century mutually reinforced one another. As sterilization was a possible means of maintaining employment, employers often promoted sterilization through enforcing the “economic rationality” of birth control amongst their employees.

Sterilization projects in Puerto Rico were initiated during the 1930s. A 1937 law which regulated sterilization in Puerto Rico specified sterilization was only to be acceptable if patient was suffering from “health reasons” associated with fertility¹⁴. Mass argues that the ambiguity of “health reasons” in the legislation allows for doctors to make vague reports on health to justify the sterilization of low income women¹⁵. A passage from the bill supports Mass’s analysis: “Maldistribution of Puerto Rican lands and its growing absentee ownership must realize that these problems are growing more and more serious through our existing surplus population and its constant growth. The inevitable consequence is increasing unemployment, growing poverty [...]”¹⁶. Poverty and underemployment remain the perceived consequences of overpopulation throughout sterilization campaigns in Puerto Rico. Mass poses two theories on this discourse: American corporations in Puerto Rico thought population control would protect their economic security and attributing poverty to low income mothers would normalize their sterilization¹⁷. Mass critiques population control theory as neo-Malthusian; a racist and classist effort to control the “lower members” of society¹⁸. Presser et al. supports the claim of physicians targeting low income women for sterilization¹⁹. The first legitimate sterilization program was in the San Juan Presbyterian Hospital, where the procedure was reserved for patients with therapeutic needs. Physicians involved in the process reported their support of the sterilization of women with low levels of education as a mechanism to reduce the negative consequences on health and welfare associated with large families²⁰. Briggs situates the narrative of bettering health and welfare into the larger debate of population control efforts²¹. In the framework of modernizing nationalism, the state of the family was principal in the wellbeing of Puerto Rico. Those who engaged in this nationalism believed the reduction of the fertility rates of working class women would be crucial to improve the state of the economy. Briggs identifies Clarence Gamble, the orchestrator of early sterilization experiments, as a champion of this theory. Gamble subscribed to elitist nationalism and used his resources to focus on strategizing how to limit the working class population²².

Loveman and Muniz and Colon Warren examined the nuances of race in Puerto Rican society; especially in regard to economic status^{23 24}. This is contextualized in the fertility debate by Combs and Davis who analyze trends in fertility rates in relation to race, income and educational level²⁵. During the decades between 1899 and 1940, the ratio of children to mother decreased in the white population and remained stagnant in the non-white population²⁶. The authors propose that the decrease in fertility rates of whites would have been more significant had the phenomenon of what Loveman and Muniz referred to as “boundary shifting” had not occurred. Previous research in a 1946 study revealed a direct relationship between fertility rates and both income and educational level in Puerto Rico²⁷. Women are likely to have fewer children if they belong to a higher income household. Women who reported having an income below \$500 had on average 5.2 births per mother in comparison to the 3.6 birth per women whose income exceeded \$2,000. This trend is consistent with the finding which revealed women with more years of education were likely to have less children. Women who had never attended school had on average 6.1 births per mother as compared to 3.1 births per mother for women who attended school at least throughout the sixth grade²⁸. The researchers, based on their findings, conclude that urbanization and a higher standard of living, including educational standards, will reduce fertility rates. This is rearticulated in a racial context, “Because the most favoured economically and socially are found among the white group, first evidences [of a decrease in fertility] are naturally to be expected there²⁹.” Presser references population studies conducted in 1953-54 and 1965 which demonstrate disparities in income are also apparent in sterilization rates in Puerto Rico³⁰. The comparison of these studies revealed that in 1965 low income women were sterilized at lower parity than in 1953-54; 51% of low income women were sterilized in after 2-3 births in 1965, a staggering increase from 31% in 1953-54³¹.

The restructuring of the economy facilitated the conditions for sterilization; the social condemnation of the poor population who did not successfully assimilate into the economic structure became prime candidates for sterilization. Two social theories primary to supporting this socioeconomic narrative of sterilization are neo-Malthusian and the culture of poverty. Lopez delves into the origins of and consequences of the popularization of these theories³². Malthus formulated his theory on the “great biological law” which argues the rich are genetically superior to the poor³³. During the early twentieth century this social thought incorporated Social Darwinism, a theory used to promote the expansion of capitalism and colonialism as well as explain inequality as a result of hereditary factors. In the framework of Neo-Malthusian, the high birth rates in the low income population is an excessive production of a population which strains economic resources and therefore burden those with more wealth³⁴. Malthusianism was introduced in the late eighteenth century and has endured as influential in social, political and economic theory. The culture of poverty is a more contemporary theory, Lewis published his first work in the early 1960s and in 1966 applied this theory to the case of Puerto Rico³⁵. Lewis suggests that the reproduction of poverty is due to social factors which enforce irresponsible and delinquent behaviors. In the case of Puerto Rico, he finds this behavior to be rooted in sex and marriage. Female headed households, he resolves, are unfit as single mothers are unable to “save, plan or defer gratification,” and therefore likely to instill immoral behavior in their children³⁶. Lewis asserts there is a distinct

difference in the sex patterns of the poor and their middle class counterparts; he continues to argue there is also a racial disparity in the sex patterns of the poor.

Colon Warren interprets the “good mother” as a construction of U.S. imperialism, supporting this by demonstrating the association of this concept to imperialist capitalist interests³⁷. This theory is reflected in the work of Ramírez de Arellano as she notes the rise of female employment opportunities factored into the societal forces which redefined this ideal of womanhood³⁸. Mass mentions the propagation of sterilization by employers in female employee dominated work sectors which attests to the influence of the social expectation of employment on the structure of womanhood³⁹. The influence of imperial social forces is exemplified by Combs’ and Davis’ argument that heightened levels of education, employment and urbanization are essential in reducing the birth rate which would subsequently bolster wellbeing of the Puerto Rican economy and population⁴⁰.

The application of the social thought behind this argument is found in the 1953-54 and 1965 study presented by Presser which reveals trends in earlier parity for sterilization for low income women (associated clearly with employment)⁴¹. Presser displays further evidence of the influence of the imperial stigmatization of unemployment and low levels of education; in this piece, physicians are reported to favor sterilization for women with low levels of education to improve conditions associated with income⁴². Education, income and marital status are, according to the research of Loveman and Muniz, indicators of the shift of the boundary of whiteness in Puerto Rico during the early stages of U.S imperialism⁴³. Lopez delves into the imperial value of whiteness by referencing Malthus as an influence in Puerto Rican population control discourse and practices⁴⁴. The contemporary theory of the culture of poverty contextualizes the factor of race in poverty. Lewis contends black low income women are most likely to engage in sex practices which contribute to the reproduction of poverty⁴⁵. These texts present population theories, empirical evidence and demonstrations of U.S imperial influence which contribute to the understanding of the redefining of motherhood in Puerto Rico and the sterilization projects associated with this definition.

3. Methodology

The U.S. census classifications of racial and ethnic identity are inconsistent throughout the decades studied. First, there is a significant reduction of the categories for the class of population for color and nativity elements from 1910 to 1950. Second, the classification of racial identity for black Puerto Ricans changes throughout the decades from black to colored to nonwhite. The most diverse class of population for color and nativity elements are found in the 1910 census which accounts for white, black and mulatto populations amongst other racial categorizations. The white population is also divided into three categories: native white with native white parentage, native white with mixed parentage of native white and foreign white and foreign white. Despite the diversity of nonwhite racial groups for the population characteristics section of the census, the gainful workers section only includes two identifications for nonwhites of “Negro” or “Japanese and Chinese.” The interchangeable terminology for black Puerto Rican continues in the 1920 census in which black, Negro and colored are used interchangeably. This is problematic because the population previously identified as Mulatto must identify either in accordance to these categories or as white. The identification of race and ethnicity become more convoluted in 1930, when the broad categories, white, colored and “other races.” The subcategories of “other races” include Mexican, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Hindi; although seemingly more diverse these ethnic groups make up only 71 members (0.000045%) of the total Puerto Rican population⁴⁶. The most significant change in the census records occurs in 1940, in which there are only two categories for racial identity- white and nonwhite. This binary of racial classification continues throughout 1950. I initially intended to continue census analysis throughout the decade of 1970, but class of population for color and nativity elements in the census records are nonexistent. This is possibly due to the United States qualifying Puerto Rican as a racial or ethnic group within itself.

Because of these issues in the data, I will quantify race as white or nonwhite. From 1910 to 1930, the vast majority of nonwhite Puerto Ricans either self-identified as black or mulatto which is exemplified previously in the 1930 census. The nonwhite population for 1910, 1920 and 1930 in this study is comprised of the black and mulatto populations. Due to the lack of mass immigration or emigration in subsequent decades, it is inferred that the nonwhite population in 1940 and 1950 is predominantly made up of populations formally classified as black or mulatto. Because of this, the variation in the nonwhite demographic from 1910 to 1950 is minimal. The irregularity of racial and ethnic classification in the census records continue to be problematic in relation to the sections of marital status, education status and employment status. Racial and ethnic characteristics of the “status variables” are included in the census records from 1910 to 1930, but are undocumented in 1940 and 1950. Race, as defined by the census, is accounted for as a characteristic for the population by age distribution. Therefore, I will only be able to examine the impact of U.S.

imperialism on marital, employment and education rates prior to the introduction of sterilization in Puerto Rico, using these rates as conditions for the subsequent trends of fertility rates.

There is also a minor inconsistency in the age ranges respective to the “status variables.” This does not pose any complication to this study as the variation in age ranges are appropriate to the variables. Employment status, or persons gainfully employed, account for female populations ten years of age and over. Education status, determined by school attendance in this study, accounts for female populations 6-20 years of age. The marital status of female populations account for female population 15 years of age. There is also a variation of marital status in the U.S. census of Puerto Rico. There are two types of marital unions accounted for: marriage and consensual marriage. Consensual marriage is defined as a consensual union of partners established without the formality of a marriage certificate. Due to structural racism, including economic disadvantages of nonwhite populations, consensual marriage may have been a more viable option of marital structure for nonwhite populations. This is demonstrated in the 1930 census which reported that 23% of all married white women were in consensual marriages, whereas 35% of all married black women were in consensual marriages⁴⁷. Consensual marriage is recognized by the U.S. census and therefore will be accounted for in the statistic of marital status. The change of racial classifications in census records and the definition of marriage are factors which must be considered when determining the reliability and validity of this study.

Fertility rates will further be examined using supplementary data derived from studies published in social science fields including economics and political science spanning from 1946 until 1967. The studies referenced for fertility are all considered to be representative, as most of the data is from census records. An exception to this is a 1946 survey on fertility patterns which accounts for the differentials of fertility in relation to income and education. The sample of the survey is 1,044 families from all sections of Puerto Rico. Though representative of the population, of those surveyed a limited group qualified as being in the highest income and educational bracket in the survey⁴⁸. A more complex study on fertility rates uses a “corrected crude birth rate⁴⁹.” This is calculated using a backward survival method; the population of 5-9 years olds are used to estimates births 5-10 years prior to the collection of census data. This formula is used due to unreliability of census birth rates as birth registrations were grossly incomplete in Puerto Rico prior to 1940. This information is used in the comparison of the crude birth rate of the total population and that of the population presently in marital unions. The age standardized marital birth rate used in this comparison is computed by using the 1950 schedule of age specific birth rates per 1,000 presently married females to indirectly standardized the marital birth rate for previous decades. The child woman ratio is computed by children under 5 years of age per 1,000 women of childbearing age, or 15-49 years of age. This ratio is the standard I use in my research, as is used in research published in 1951 on demographic fertility in Puerto Rico⁵⁰. Data on sterilization in Puerto Rico is limited, and of the studies presently available, none include demographic information in regards to race. Much of the research instead is focused on sterilization in relation to parity. The earliest study on sterilization referenced is focused on the parity of women when they received sterilization, using a sample population of Puerto Rican women married during the years of 1920 to 1947⁵¹. A more representative sample is used in a 1953-1954 study which sample population is derived the Out Patient Department sample⁵². The purpose of this research is to find the percent of women in marital unions by their parity level when they were sterilized. A 1965 study continues this research in collecting data from the Master Sample Study which is comparable to that used in the 1953-1954 study⁵³. There is only a slight difference in these sample populations; the years of education for the population vary by a year.

In this study, I will identify whether or not there is a relationship between the “status variables” and birth rates amongst white and nonwhite female populations in the decades prior to the first legitimate sterilization project in Puerto Rico in 1937 and if fertility rates are interrupted in the subsequent decades until 1967. In doing so, I will first find the proportion of white and nonwhite female populations to the total female population in Puerto Rico for each respective decade. These proportions will be the standard of reference for the proportion of white and nonwhite female populations’ reported marital status, employment status and education status. Trends of these variables will then be evaluated in relation to the fertility rates of the white and nonwhite populations. The first portion of the data will be from 1910, 1920 and 1930. I will explore whether or not demographic trends were consistent in the decades prior to the practice of sterilization in Puerto Rico. I will apply this method to the collected data of fertility rates from 1940 and 1967. The division of these datasets facilitates the examination of a deviation in demographic trends of fertility caused by the practice of sterilization. The purposes of this research are as follows: 1) to assess a difference in marital status, education status and employment status of white and nonwhite female populations 2) to examine whether or not there is a relationship between these trends and the birth rates of white and nonwhite female populations and 3) to determine whether or not the practice of sterilization changed these trends.

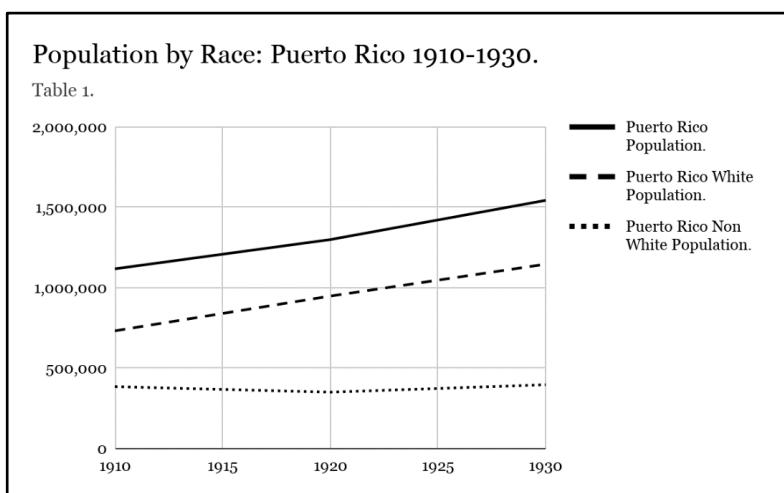
4. Findings

4.1 1910-1930

Between the decades of 1910 and 1930, Puerto Rico experienced substantial population growth of 38.1%. The growth of the white and nonwhite populations are disproportionate during this period; the white population increasing by 56.5% and the nonwhite population by 3% (Table 1.) In accordance to this growth, the proportion of white females to the female population grew significantly whilst the proportion of nonwhite females steadily declined (Table 2.) The proportionate trend of the white and nonwhite female populations to the total female population is parallel to the marital, employment and education status of the total female population.

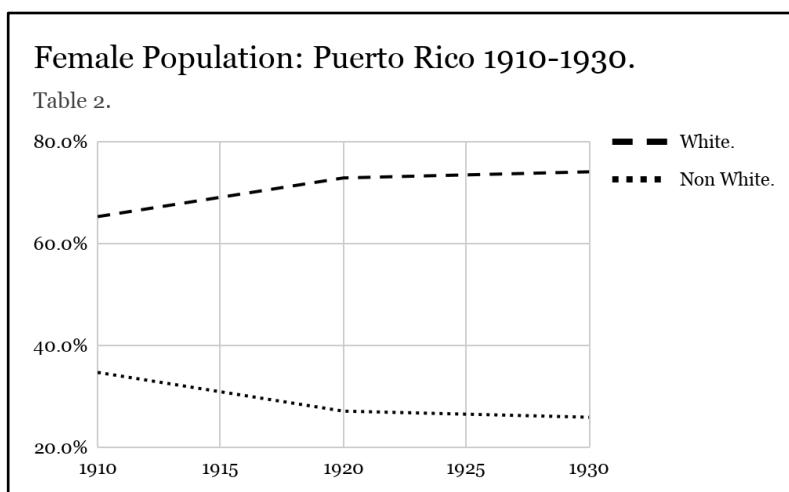
As seen in Table 3, the amount of employed white females grew in great magnitude. White females also accounted for a much higher proportion of the female population engaged in marital unions and school attendance (Table 4 and Table 5.)

Table 1. Population by Race: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.



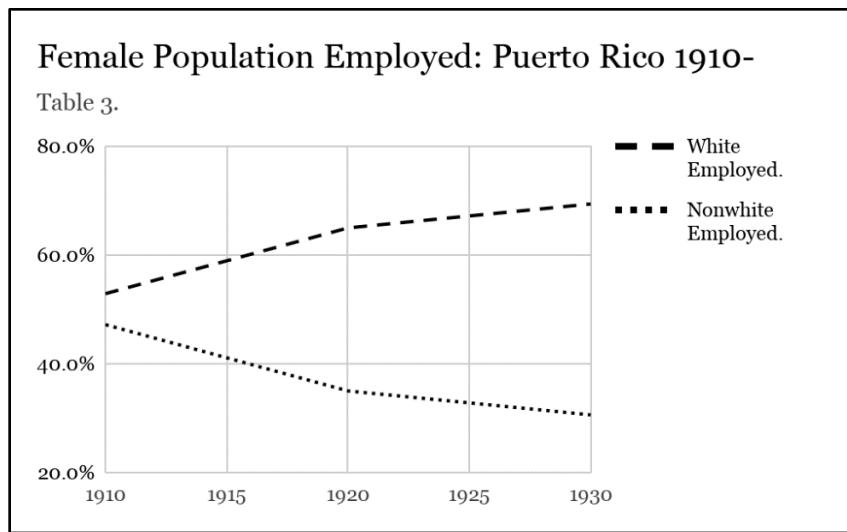
U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 2." 143. *Color, Nativity, and Sex, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930, 1920, and 1910.*

Table 2. Female Population: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.



U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 2." 143. *Color, Nativity, and Sex, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930, 1920, and 1910.*

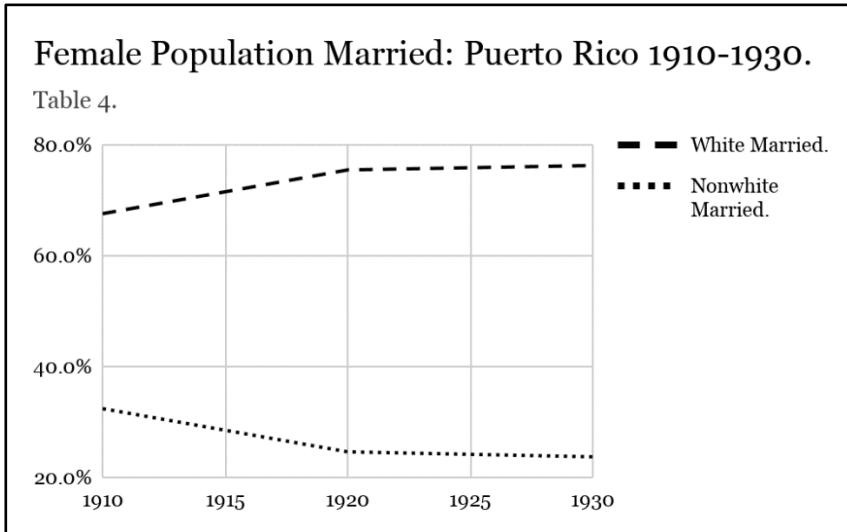
Table 3. Female Population Employed: Puerto Rico 1910-1930



U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 26." 170. *Persons 10 Years and Over Engaged in Gainful Occupations, by Sex, Color, and Industry Groups, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930.*

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1923. "Table 29." 1287. *Number and Proportion of Persons Occupied, For Each Principal of the Population: 1920 and 1910.*

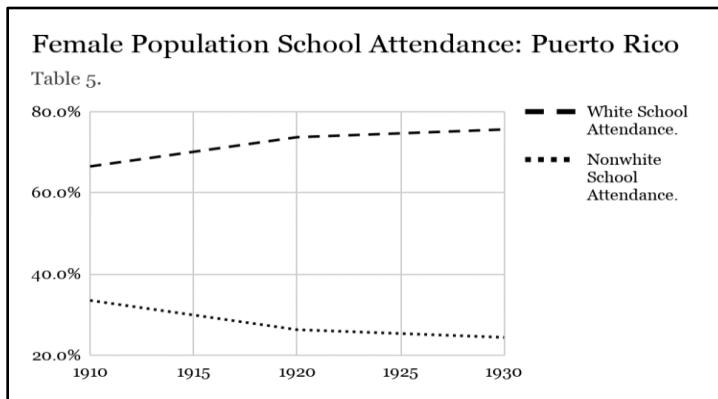
Table 4. Female Population Married: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.



U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. "Table 17." 22. *Marital Condition of the Population: 1910.*

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 10." 143. *Marital Condition of the Population 15 Years Old and Over, by Sex, Color, and Nativity, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930 and 1920.*

Table 5. Female Population School Attendance: Puerto Rico

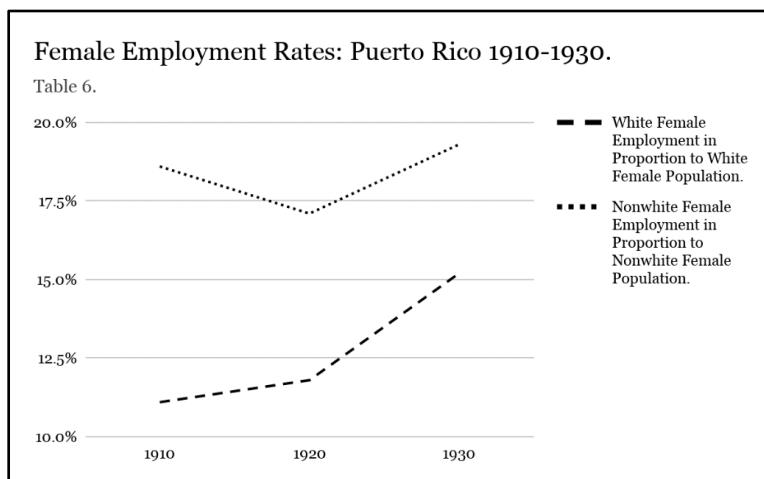


U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 6." 140. *School Attendance for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930 and 1920*. U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. "Table 26." 25. *School Attendance: 1910*.

There is an evident pattern of the increase of the white female population to the total Puerto Rican female population and the proportionate rates of white and nonwhite females in the variables of marital, employment and education status. The demographic trends in the marital rates and education rates are nearly identical, however, there is a similarity in the proportionate rates of employment compared to the other sets of variables. White and nonwhite females made up nearly an equal proportion of employed females in 1910 whereas in the other variables, there is a more significant disparity in rates during this decade. This finding is striking, as it suggests that the imperial form of capitalism involving the propagation of women's worth through employment influenced white females' involvement in the workplace in 1920 and 1930.

Table 6 displays employment rates of white and nonwhite females in proportion to the white female population and nonwhite female population, respectively. Nonwhite females consistently had higher rates of employment, but between 1910 and 1920 the amount of employed nonwhite women per the nonwhite female population decreased by 8%. Though the employment rates of white females were lower, during the span of 1910 to 1930 the rates relative to the white female population increased by 4.5%. This trend may either be a byproduct of the boundary shifting phenomenon in which Puerto Ricans who previously identified as nonwhite reclassified their racial identity to white. This trend may also indicate the possibility that employers found white females to be more favorable candidates as they entered the workforce.

Table 6. Female Employment Rates: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.

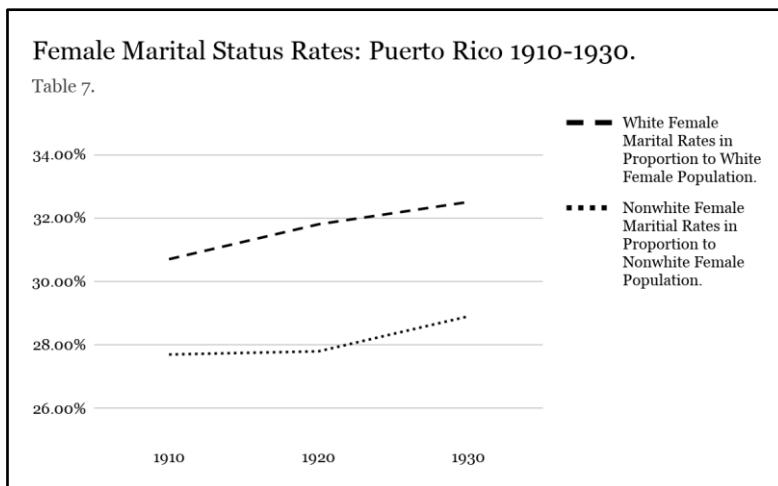


U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 26." 170. *Persons 10 Years and Over Engaged in Gainful Occupations, by Sex, Color, and Industry Groups, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930.*

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1923. "Table 29." 1287. *Number and Proportion of Persons Occupied, For Each Principal of the Population: 1920 and 1910.*

As explained, the marital rates used in this study include consensual marriages. Nonwhite women were more likely to be involved in consensual marriages compared to their white counterparts. With this considered, white women still had much higher rates of marriage as shown in Table 7. There is not a great variance in the school attendance rates for white and nonwhite females. However, though slight, in 1930 there is a greater difference in these rates than the former decades; the white female population attended school at a 1.1% greater rate than nonwhite females (Table 8).

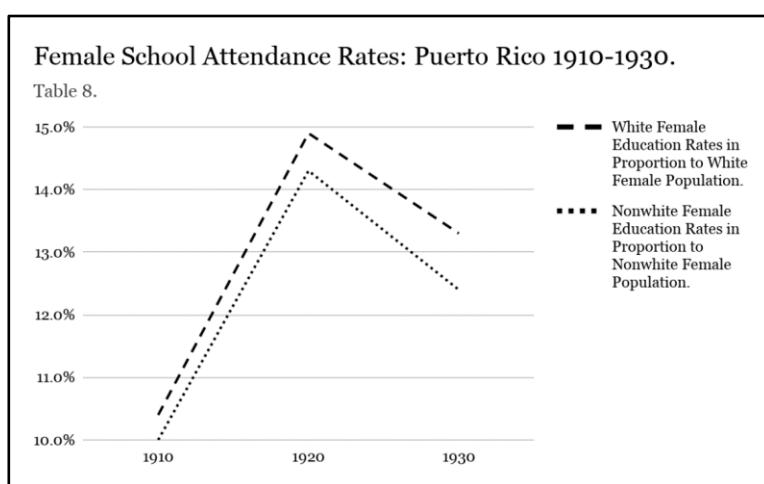
Table 7. Female Marital Status Rates: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.



U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. "Table 17." 22. *Marital Condition of the Population: 1910.*

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 10." 143. *Marital Condition of the Population 15 Years Old and Over, by Sex, Color, and Nativity, for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930 and 1920.*

Table 8. Female School Attendance Rates: Puerto Rico 1910-1930.

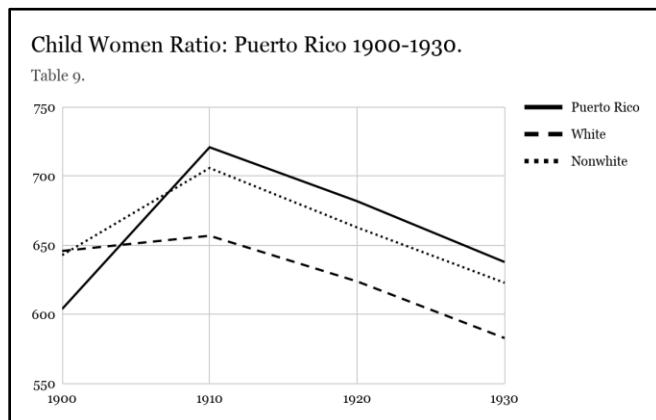


U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 6." 140. *School Attendance for Puerto Rico, Urban and Rural: 1930 and 1920.*

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. "Table 26." 25. *School Attendance: 1910.*

Table 9 exhibits an unexpected trend in the child-woman ratio which conflicts with the demographic population growth of Puerto Rico. There is steady fertility growth for all populations at about -11.5%. The fertility rates of the white and nonwhite population are -11.8% and -11.3%, respectively. However, the white population consistently has about 50 less children under the age of 5 per 1,000 women of childbearing age. The nonwhite CWR corresponds to that of the total population. The lowest CWR for every population is in 1900, and the only increase of the CWR occurs between 1900 and 1910. In the subsequent decades the CWR constantly declines. The U.S. occupied Puerto Rico in 1899, and therefore the sharp and continual decline of the CWR post 1910 indicates the imperial ideals of the nuclear family and minimal reproduction almost immediately impacted fertility patterns. The lower parity of white women indicated by the CWR may also demonstrate the readiness of white females to assimilate into the imperial construct of the “good mother.”

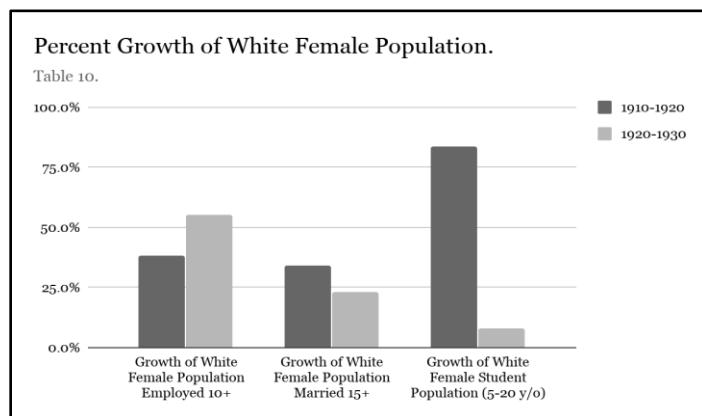
Table 9. Child Women Ration: Puerto Rico 1900-1030



Combs, Jerry W., and Kingsley Davis. 1951. “Table 1.” “Table 5.” 105, 112. Vazquez, Jose L. 1968. “Table 3.” 856.

Despite the similar fertility rates, the population growth of the white and nonwhite population between 1910 and 1930 is 56.5% and 3%. Given this inconsistency, the rates of the status variables found in Tables 6, 7, and 8 do not fully represent the accurate demographic growth rates as the proportions are affected by the skewed population growth. Table 10 demonstrates the percent growth of the white female population’s marital, employment and education rates. The largest growth occurs between 1910 and 1920 for education. Though the growth is not as strong during the subsequent decade for marriage or education, the percent growth for employment continues to increase. Table 11 shows the percent growth for the nonwhite female population. There is a striking difference between these tables as the nonwhite female population actually has decades of decreasing rates. The growth in rates for this population is minor compared to that of the white female population, and the growth that does occur is counteracted by the accompanying negative growth.

Table 10. Percent Growth of White Female Population

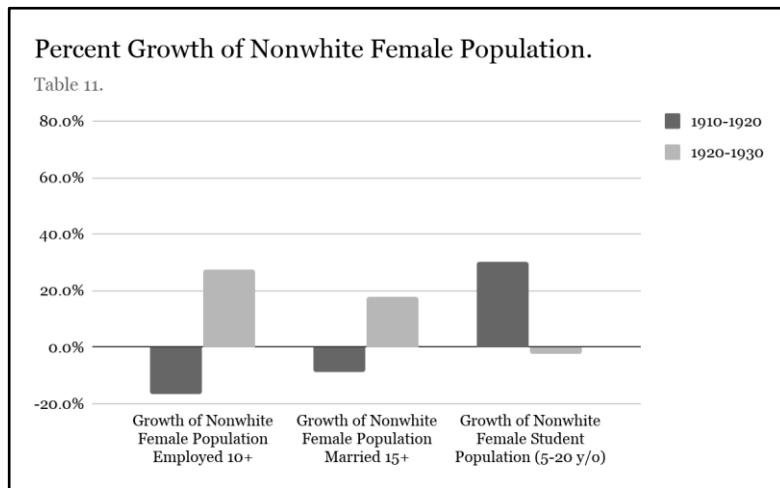


U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. “Table 17.” “Table 26.” 22, 25.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1923. "Table 29." 1287.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 6." "Table 10." "Table 26." 140, 143, 170.

Table 11. Percent Growth of Nonwhite Female Population.



U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1913. "Table 17." "Table 26." 22, 25.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1923. "Table 29." 1287.

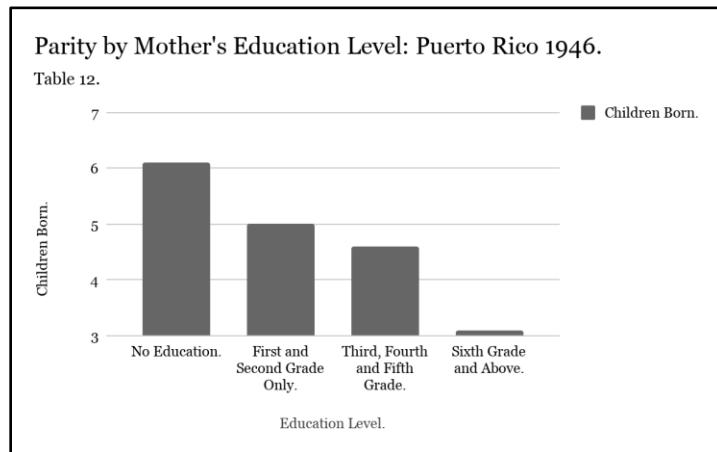
U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1932. "Table 6." "Table 10." "Table 26." 140, 143, 170.

The conditions of the white and nonwhite female populations prior to the 1937 introduction of sterilization signify key findings. The white females' heightened involvement in the structured workplace and declining parity rates demonstrate their receptiveness to the imperial construction of the "good mother," which central features are employment and limited parity. The inconsistency between the white population growth and fertility rates reinforces the validity boundary shifting in which previously self identified nonwhite individuals self reclassified their race as white in the census. This does not necessarily indicate that Puerto Ricans embraced whiteness as a value, but rather as a mechanism of upwards socioeconomic opportunity. This is supported by the decline of nonwhite female employment rates and increase of white female employment rates between 1910 and 1920. Nonwhite females had more employment experience, yet their white counterparts were employed at exceeding rates.

4.2 1940-1967

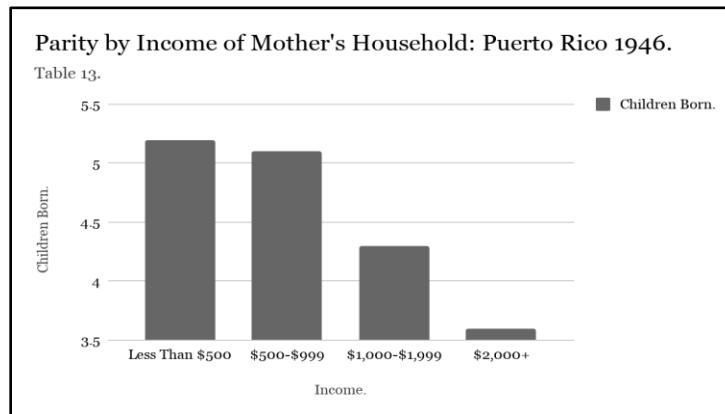
Tables 12 and 13 display the findings of a study conducted in 1946 on levels of parity in relation to education and income in Puerto Rico. In the sample of this study, women who completed more schooling and had higher household income were more likely to have less children. Women who completed at least sixth grade had on average 3.1 children. Women who reported not having any education had an average of 6.2 children. Similarly, women with a household income of over \$2,000 had 3.6 children whereas women with a household income of less than \$500 had an average of 5.3 children. There is no data available on the education nor income of white and nonwhite women during this period, yet if the increasing rates of white females' school attendance in the prior decades continued without interruption, white females would be more likely to have more school completion than their nonwhite counterparts. The typical nuclear family includes 2 or 3 children. Therefore women with greater school completion and household income were likely to be in families' resembling the nuclear family model. Chart 14 exhibits the 1948-1949 sterilization rates of women by parity. The highest rate of female sterilization is of women who have had 2 or 3 children. Women were most likely to receive a sterilization after they've had an amount of children which, again, corresponds to the nuclear family ideal.

Table 12. Parity by Mother's Education Level: Puerto Rico 1946.



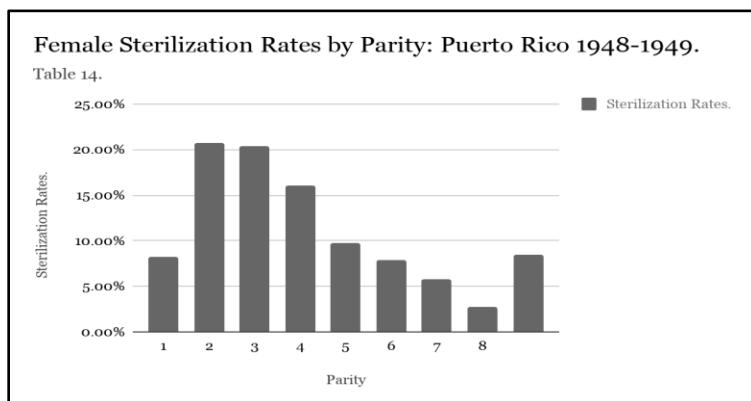
Combs, Jerry W., and Kingsley Davis. 1951. "Table 5." 112.

Table 13. Parity by Income of Mother's Household: Puerto Rico 1946.



Combs, Jerry W., and Kingsley Davis. 1951. "Table 4." 111. Source: Roberts, Lydia J., and Stefani Rosa Luisa. 1949. "Table 33." 289.

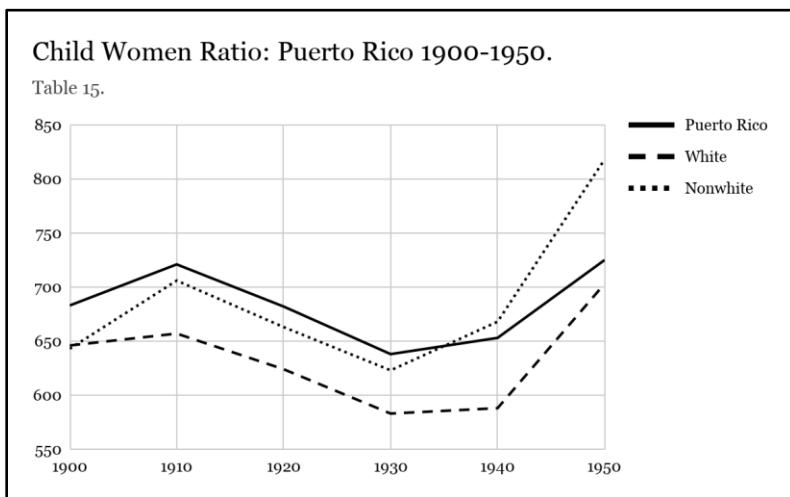
Table 14. Female Sterilization Rates by Parity: Puerto Rico 1948-1949.



Presser, Harriet B. 1969. "Table 6." 348. Source: Hatt, Paul K. 1952. "Table 320."

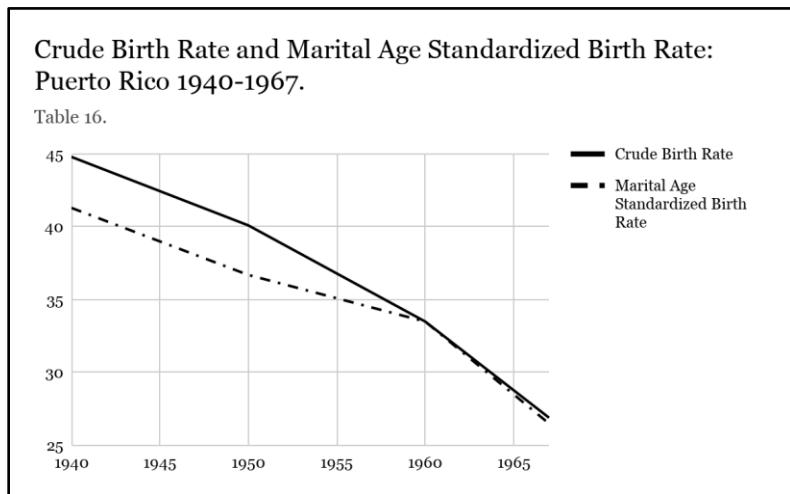
The child-woman ratio of Puerto Rico until 1950 is shown in Table 15. The CWR remains stable from 1930 to 1940, and steeply increases in 1940 until 1950. Within this period the nonwhite CWR surpasses that of the total population. The CWR growth may be due to the promise of economic prosperity after the Great Depression. It is assumed there were more employment opportunities and heightened incomes post-Depression, and families' felt they were better able to financially support their children. Tables 15 and 16 reveal the difficulty in accurately measuring fertility rates. The formulas utilized to measure fertility vary, and hence produce various results; these results serve as estimates. The conflicting data is problematic, but for the purpose of this study the data presented in these tables function to compare separate variables: race and marital status. The child-woman ratio is used to demonstrate that during the mid-twentieth century, the fertility rates of nonwhite women were greater than their white counterparts. Table 16 displays the marital age standardized birth rate is lower than that of the entire Puerto Rican population. The white female population reported significantly higher rates of marital unions in 1910 through 1930. Deducing that this pattern continued through 1967, white women were more apt to be married and henceforth had lower levels of parity.

Table 15. Child and Women Ration of Puerto Rico



Vazquez, Jose L. 1968. "Table 3." 856. Combs, Jerry W., and Kingsley Davis. 1951. "Table 1." 105.

Table 16. Crude Birth Rate and Marital Age Standardized Birth Rate:



Vazquez, Jose L. 1968. "Table 13." 862.

These studies on levels of parity in relation to education, income and marital status further demonstrate the possible relationship between reproduction patterns and other attributes of the "good mother." Women with higher levels of academic achievement and household income as well as women engaged marital unions were more likely to have

lower parity levels which align with the nuclear family model. Women were most likely to receive sterilization after having 2 or 3 children. It is probable that women engaged in marital unions and with higher levels of education and household income received sterilizations to uphold the imperial ideal of the nuclear family.

The percent change in fertility between 1940 and 1967 is shown in Table 17. The most notable decrease in fertility occurs between 1960 and 1967; the period of the height of sterilization in Puerto Rico. In 1965 and 1967, sterilization rates were at 34% and 35.5% respectively. A staggering increase from 6.6% in 1947 (Table 18.) Table 19 displays sterilization rates of women engaged in marital unions in relation to parity. Interestingly, in 1953 to 1954 the majority of the women surveyed reported being sterilized after having 2 to 6 children; 31% after 2 or 3 children and 34% after 4 to 6 children. This is at a slightly higher rate of parity than in the previous 1948-1949 sample referenced. However, in 1965 51% of women were sterilized after their 2nd or 3rd child, aligning with the nuclear family model.

Table 17. Percent Change in Fertility Rates by Age of Mother: Puerto Rico 1940-1967

	1940-1950	1950-1960	1960-1967	1940-1967
15-19	13.40%	-3.30%	-19.6%	-11.90%
20-24	-1.10%	-1.50%	-27.5%	-29.40%
25-29	-14.90%	-8.30%	-22.0%	-39.00%
30-34	-21.10%	-22.00%	-25.2%	-54.00%
35-39	-12.00%	-25.00%	-28.1%	-52.50%
40-44	-0.80%	-1.50%	-41.9%	-42.30%
45-49	5.70%	-14.30%	-21.9%	-29.20%

Vazquez, Jose L. 1968. "Table 8." 859.

Table 18. Sterilization Rates: Puerto Rico 1947-1968.

	Sterilization Rates.
1947-48	6.6%
1953-54	16.0%
1955	16.5%
1965	34.0%
1968	35.5%

Mass, Bonnie. 1977. 77.

Table 19. Percent of Women in Marital Union by Parity: Puerto Rico 1953-1954, 1965.

	1953-1954	1965
1	6.1%	1.1%
2-3	31.0%	51.1%
4-6	34.0%	36.7%
7-8	14.1%	6.7%
9+	14.4%	4.4%

Presser, Harriet B. 1969. "Table 7." 349. Source: Hill, R, Stykos, J.M., & Back, K. W. 1959. "Table 89." 392.

5. Conclusion

United States imperialism affected fertility, family structure and the cultural construction of motherhood in Puerto Rico. The impact of imperialism differed for the white and nonwhite female populations. The white female population's rates of marriage, employment and education increased considerably whilst their fertility declined. This population also had a consistently lower child woman ratio. These factors indicate the white female population was receptive to the imperial ideal of motherhood. The nonwhite female population experienced a slight increase in rates of employment, marriage and education, though these rates were offset by negative growth, likely due to the phenomenon of boundary shifting. The self reclassification of racial identity indicates Puerto Ricans identified as white as a mechanism of assimilation and social upwards mobility; in the imperial framework whiteness is associated with class status and higher moral standards. The trend of overall declining fertility and significantly increasing sterilization rates demonstrate the impact of imperial overpopulation narratives and morality campaigns. After the introduction of sterilization, the demographic groups most likely to have lower levels of parity were women with high levels of education and household income as well as women in marital unions. Women in marital unions were also more likely to receive sterilization after having an amount of children which aligns with the nuclear family model. White females were more likely than their nonwhite counterparts to be in these demographic groups as they were more likely attend school and be in marital unions.

In the case of Puerto Rico, sterilization must not be perceived as a dichotomous issue. Within two decades, sterilization rates increased from 6.6% to 35.5%. Impacted by imperial influence, sterilization became culturally acceptable in Puerto Rico. Sterilization was the only means of birth control for Puerto Rican women for most of the early to mid twentieth century. Using birth control allowed women to have control over their parity, without relying on their male partners to use practices such as the pull out method. Sterilization was also a mechanism to achieve higher class and social status in imperialized Puerto Rico. Despite the complex and problematic origins of sterilization, the agency women gained from this method of birth control must not be discounted.

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