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Honors Thesis

*Political Status Preference of Puerto Ricans who reside in the United States and Its
Relationship with Assimilation, Acculturation and Ethnic Resistance.*

**Ivelisse Cuevas Molina
801-03-1967**

Prof. Luis Raúl Cámara Fuertes

Para Mami y Papi.

Gracias por enseñarme a ser puertorriqueña.

I love you.

Content

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	4
Theory	6
Puerto Rico's Status Issue and its Three Traditional Alternatives .	15
Puerto Rican Identity	19
Puerto Ricans in the United States	21
Hypothesis and Method	24
Conclusions	38
References	41
Appendixes	44
Notes	59

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Introduction

This thesis is an effort to explain the relation between social psychological change in social group identity and political preference. There are many types of group identity and I have chosen to work specifically with ethnic identity of Puerto Ricans who live in the United States and its effects on their political preference as the status or self-determination issue of Puerto Rico. Specifically, this study takes a look at this issue by focusing on the relationship between three types of social psychological adaptations; Assimilation, Acculturation and Ethnic Resilience; and the preference for the three traditional political status options for Puerto Rico: Statehood, Independence and Commonwealth. The option of Free Association, which is currently gaining popularity, was not included in this study because it was not available in the data set.

After defining and explaining the effects that Assimilation, Acculturation and Ethnic Resilience have on social group identity, a set of variables was constructed to measure each psychological adaptation. Each adaptation is paired with a political preference. Based on the specific theory underlying each social psychological transformation, three hypotheses are presented: 1) Assimilation in Puerto Ricans living on the mainland will result in a greater likelihood of preferring Statehood; 2) Acculturation in Puerto Ricans residing in the mainland will result in a greater likelihood of preferring Commonwealth; 3) Ethnic Resilience in Puerto Ricans living on the mainland will result in a greater likelihood of preferring Independence. Finally, the statistical method used to test these hypotheses was logistic regressions. Logistic regressions will reveal the overall likelihood of preferring one option to the others vis a

vis a specific social psychological adaptation. The regressions will also display those variables that are most significant in affecting the political preference of Puerto Ricans who live on the mainland.

I also take a look at those who did not choose any of the three traditional status alternatives and answered “Don’t know/Don’t care” in a fourth regression; to control for the possibility of increased likelihood to choose this answer being related to any of the three social psychological transformations.

This research attempts to fill a gap in understanding the psychology of Puerto Rican political behavior. It uncovers the importance of knowing how Puerto Ricans as individuals and as a group, in the United States develop their preferences in politics. By explaining this aspect of the Puerto Rican political mind I believe that this knowledge would help the Puerto Rican people as a whole to resolve its long journey towards a definitive act of self-determination. Moreover, it could affect the possibility of participation of Puerto Ricans who live in the United States in the self-determination process. Puerto Rican politicians could become more effective in campaigns through producing better messaging to gain support for their status of choice, and public policy on the status debate would be more efficient by better understanding what constituents view as important issues in the debate.

Theory

Individuals invest a substantial part of their lives in building a satisfactory self-image that results in the person's identity. People have a need to identify themselves with a group or multiple groups in order to categorize themselves as part of a *social group* through a sense of belonging. A person's *social identity* is formed by a self-image drawn from the knowledge of being part of a group that has a specific set of values, emotions, and behavior. The *social identity* formed by this sense of self as defined by Tajfel's *Social Identity Theory* (1984) is a way of finding a role in society conditioned by what or who an individual believes he/she is as opposed to what or who "others" are.¹ Social Identity Theory defines the identities of members of groups through *social interaction* among individuals. According to Hogg et. al. (1995) "social Identity theory is intended to be a social psychological theory of intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self" (p. 259).

In Social Identity Theory the *group* is the entity with meaning for the individual, and its members have a set of common qualities that construct their own identity. Simon and Klandermans (2001) call this "collective identity". Each person has a multiplicity of groups to which they belong. These groups as stated above come with specific characteristics that identify the way of being of its members, such as socio-economic status, gender, sexual preference, race, etc. All of the groups' attributes and how they differ from other groups condition the feelings, attitudes and behavior of the individual; and are the foundation of the individual's self-image and the makeup of social identity.

The definition of a person's social identity is very important to his/her self-esteem since it affects the satisfaction the individual has with himself/herself. People personally invest themselves in the construction of an identity that allows them to live a productive life, with the least amount of problems. But social identity is not an immutable fact in the individual; it has great potential for change. When a person feels unsatisfied with his self-image of being part of a specific group he/she will most probably start to modify his/her behavior in order to assume another identity. The new identity he/she assumes is one that increases self-esteem and is a better fit with his/her present environment in which he/she is living. A person reacts to stigmas that are associated with his/her original social identity by adapting his/her behavior to a new identity, passing from being a member of one group to another and being accepted as such by the members of the new social group.

Modifying social identity occurs through *social mobility* or *social change*. *Social mobility* is "psychologically passing from one group to another", while *social change* is "psychologically changing the self-evaluative consequences of [the] existing in-group membership" (Hogg, et al, 1995, pp. 260). This means that in social mobility the individual changes his/her original social group identity to a new one. On the other hand, social change implies a transformation of the meaning of his/her original identity. An example of social mobility would be to change from being Pentecostal to being Catholic; the person has not stopped being Christian, but changed the Christian group he/she belonged to (though there may be more extreme examples). Social change does not make the individual change from one identity to another, but takes him/her to

a positive reevaluation of the characteristics and history of his/her identity while reinforcing it. Using the same example of religion, in some societies being part of a specific faith leads to discrimination and that may affect self-esteem of members of that faith. Social change would help those who have felt dissatisfaction with their religious identity to redefine its meaning into a positive one. Christian conservatism can be viewed as a negative trait, but social change can make Christian conservatives feel pride in the values they keep and create a negative view towards those who try to damage their identity.

Dissatisfaction with one's social identity can come from the dissatisfaction with the individual's role in society. Being part of a lower income class, having less political power, suffering from discrimination, and feeling disadvantaged vis a vis others can cause negative attitudes that can lower an individual's self-esteem. In Social Identity Theory there are two paths to achieve satisfaction with *the self* when someone becomes dissatisfied with his/her current identity, social mobility and social change. By becoming part of the dominant group, through social mobility, and feeling he/she is equal to the members of that group the individual will no longer feel at a disadvantage while acquiring a higher self-esteem. In maintaining one's original identity and reinforcing its validity and positive image, through social change, the individual will have a greater sense of self. Also, a more positive self-image can be produced viewing the members of the out-group as less valuable and even as a negative counterpart.

Viewing the individual's group as more important will make the individual prefer his/her group over any other group while looking out for its benefit only, and

creating *inter-group competition*. Social identities tend to make an evaluative comparison to create differentiation between the *in-group* and the *out-group*, which is advantageous for the in-group. This is how competition and discrimination come about. Thus, in this frame of mind the in-group is positive and the out-group is negative and can be understood at times as a threat to an individual's identity (Howard, 2000). Hogg and his colleagues (1995) state that "when a specific social identity" becomes the most relevant in a particular context this provides the opportunity for *inter-group competition* and discrimination.

One of the many groups that form in social identity is the membership in an *ethnic group*² (Howard, 2000). *Ethnic identity* can be defined "as a multidimensional concept including language, behavior, values, knowledge of ethnic group history, and subjective identification" (Rogler, et al., 1980). When the members of an ethnic group are dissatisfied with their ethnic identity they can assume another one through assimilation, a form of social mobility. This will most likely occur when their ethnic group is dominated by an outside society. When the ethnic group is an immigrant group they can assume the ethnic identity of the host society through assimilation. But there are also other adaptations that may occur that will be explained subsequently, like acculturation, another type of social mobility, and ethnic resilience, a type of social change.

Assimilation is and has been the principal form of ethnic adaptation studied by social scientists (such as Sarah E. Simons) since the beginning of the twentieth century. Assimilation can be understood as the process of transformation in social identity

through the modification of ethnic identity. In Social Identity Theory it would be identified as a type of social mobility. *There are many different definitions of assimilation*, but most treat it as a process (Alba & Nee, 1997; Richardson, 1967; Kivisto, 2004; Hirsch, 1942; Teske & Nelson, 1972; among many others). Park and Burgess defined assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.” I believe Park and Burgess’s definition can serve to exclude ethnocentric underpinnings that can contaminate the description of assimilation as a social phenomenon. Historically assimilation theories have been criticized because of assumptions made about the host society and the immigrants that are inserted into it. The host society has been assumed to be superior to that of its immigrants, and assimilation started to be viewed solely as a positive adaptation, thus making assimilation theory an ethnocentric discourse. The intense debates surrounding the ethnocentric bias of assimilation theory have worked to rid it somewhat of these errors (Rumbaut, 1997).

We now know that assimilation is not a completely one-way process and that though the host society is not necessarily superior it wields domination over the immigrant’s original way of life. This dominance causes changes in the immigrants’ persona and one of the outcomes of these changes is sometimes assimilation.

Another notion that has generated discomfort is the way assimilation became a synonym of *Americanization* (Rumbaut, 1997). This association is difficult to overcome

because of the very fact that studies on assimilation have been almost completely dominated by American social scientists, such as Simmons (1901), Gordon (1964), Park (1914, 1921, 1930, 1950, 1969), Mayo-Smith (1890, 1894) and many others since the nineteenth century. However, in this study that is not a problem because the subject of research in this thesis is Puerto Ricans as immigrant group within the United States. The assimilation these subjects undergo is in itself Americanization, becoming an American and being part of American society.

Milton Gordon had a particular way of understanding assimilation. From his perspective the final product of assimilation is “identificational assimilation”. Gordon points that the individual’s core identity is transformed by identifying himself as being completely and exclusively a member of the new society. From this perspective assimilation creates a desire to become American and to be accepted as an American in the United States’ society. (as cited in Rumbaut, 1997) Gordon’s point of view helps understand assimilation as a transformation of social identity. No longer being Puerto Rican and solely accepting the category of “American” is an example. The immigrant assumes the American identity producing an “extinction” of the former nationality.

Richardson (1967) describes three levels through which an immigrant achieves assimilation in a new social and acquires a new ethnic identity. First, the individual acquires positive feelings toward his/her host society and the life he/her has in it. Second, after having this “feel good” experience with the out-group he will start to identify himself as part of the host society. This change in immigrants is usually motivated by the benefits of adopting characteristics of the host society, and also by

increased interaction with members of the out-group. Finally, the third level of assimilation is acculturation. Richardson defines acculturation as a prerequisite for assimilation, but other authors use both terms interchangeably to describe the same process.

There is an ongoing debate about the difference between *acculturation* and assimilation. Acculturation and assimilation have come to be used as synonyms, but there are some social scientists that believe both, although related, are not completely congruent. Teske and Nelson (1974) cogently argue that acculturation and assimilation are not the same. Acculturation consists of “a process of adaptation to new conditions of life”, while assimilation requires acceptance by the host society (Broom and Kitsuse, 1955) and “a positive orientation toward the out-group”. Porter and Washington (1993) also state differences between each term by explaining that acculturation refers to the “acceptance of new cultural traits” while “[a]ssimilation refers to economic, political, and social integration of the ethnic group into the mainstream society”. These authors define acculturation as a part of assimilation, but **not** as synonyms. This means that one can be acculturated and not assimilated at the same time, but never assimilated without being acculturated. In acculturation the individual modifies his behavior to his own benefit, but does not become part of the host society and does not have to identify himself positively with its members. Acculturation is a behavioral adaptation, not a change of identity, which would include a change in attitudes and emotions.

When an ethnic group does not acquire the out-group’s identity this form of adaptation behavior in immigrants is understood as *ethnic competition* or *ethnic*

resilience, a form of social change. *Ethnic Competition Theory* (Porter & Washington, 1993) explains a kind of reverse assimilation. In this model the immigrant resists assimilation and remains attached to his *original ethnic identity*. This occurs as a result of negative feelings towards the host group that come from a dislike of the host society's culture, experiences of discrimination, and feeling that the host group threatens the wellbeing the immigrant's group. Moreover, there is a sense of competition between the groups for social benefits which also fuels the affirmation of the immigrant group's identity (Citrin, et al, 1990).

However, Howard (2000) argues that strengthened group identification does **not** necessarily generate inter-group hostility. But I believe that the increased positive view of the in-group comes from contrasting differences with host society that in turn can cause conflict. The individual always uses his/her point of view or position as a mechanism of evaluation. Thus he sees others as different, as not similar to whom he/she is or to the members of his group. This behavior is also consistent with *Realistic Group Conflict*, an umbrella theory of inter-group relations based on material interests which is a theory drawn from Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Sears et al, 2000). This structural theory explains how different groups become conflictive because of unequal social and material circumstances like employment, taxes, education and others (Citrin, et al, 1990).

Ethnic group identity has important political implications. Since group identity affects an individual's social attitudes it also affects political attitudes and preferences. Changing one's ethnic identity for another or reinforcing one's original identity can also

change political views. Assimilation, acculturation and ethnic resilience are social psychological processes that can strengthen collective ethnic identity. The creation of a strong sense of ethnic identity and belonging can open the door to *a political group consciousness* that is used as a basis for developing collective ethnic movements or a set of collective ethnic political goals.

“In-group favoritism” influences the members of an ethnic group to have political attitudes in favor of *their* group. They will prefer political positions that tend to reinforce their identity as a group, and pass on the characteristics of their group in order to set the foundations of the group’s continuity (Sears, et al., 2003). However, the type of social adaptation also informs the relation between ethnic identity and political preference. Assimilated individuals would, in their original identity, naturally defend their group and its political values. But by changing their identity they will start to position themselves in politically favorable ways towards their new group. Ethnic resilience will require the members of an ethnic group to take political positions that oppose separation of their culture and their original values and at the same time in some ways oppose their host society. Acculturated individuals are a political middle ground where their original identity is cherished, but they have no inhibitions in embracing political views that can favor the out-group.

Puerto Rico's Status Issue and its Three Traditional Alternatives

For over one hundred years Puerto Rican politics have been synonymous with political status politics. Puerto Rico has been a United States colonial protectorate since 1898. This political relationship was established in the Treaty of Paris of the same year as a consequence of the Spanish-American War (Meléndez, 1988). In 1952 Puerto Rico became the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, this was interpreted by some as the execution of the people of Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. The United Nations legitimized this interpretation by classifying Puerto Rico as a self-governing territory.³ However, political status still determines island politics, because the commonwealth is seen as a colonialist formula by independence and statehood supporters, and more recently by even some supporters of Commonwealth itself. Statehood, Commonwealth and Independence are the three traditional status formulas. Each option is represented by one of the three principal political parties on the island, and have also been included in every consultation since the 1967 plebiscite. (Quiñones Calderón, 2002)

The Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) is the main promoter of Statehood, the admission (or annexation) of Puerto Rico to the United States as a state of the union. The Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) supports the Commonwealth or the Estado Libre Asociado (ELA), the current territorial formula with an autonomic government. The Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP) is the Independence party, which argues for the definite separation of Puerto Rico from the United States and the declaration of independence of the Republic of Puerto Rico. (Falk, 1986)

The Statehood Movement started decades before General Miles and his troops invaded the island through Guánica Bay during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Becoming one of the states of the United States of America was an aspiration of a very small group of secessionists during the last decades of the nineteenth century while Puerto Rico was still under Spanish colonial rule. At the beginning of the twentieth century annexationism already had two political parties, the Puerto Rican Republican Party and the American Federal Party.

Over time annexationism evolved into a strengthened political position in island politics; the cyclical formation of one statehood party after another, ended with the current statehood party. The New Progressive Party (PNP) that was founded by Luis A. Ferré during the status plebiscite in 1967 in which the statehood alternative lost against the ELA. In 1968 the PNP won their first elections and from that moment on have been alternating political power with the PPD in Puerto Rican elections. The PNP electoral victory marks the consolidation of statehood as the second most supported status formula on the island, trailing the commonwealth formula.

From the beginning of the movement, assimilation was considered a necessary requisite for the achievement of statehood. Statehood supporters worked in favor of economic, ideological, cultural, linguistic and political Americanization of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican society had to find the way to fit into the “American model”. However, in the 1960’s Luis A. Ferré put forth the idea of “*estadidad jíbara*” or “Creole statehood”. This idea posited that assimilation is not a requisite for statehood and that Puerto Rico

will be able to maintain its cultural identity intact within American federalism.

(Meléndez, 1988)

Statehood supporters see their efforts as a defense of their rights as U.S. citizens. They believe that Puerto Rico has the right to become a state of the union. This includes giving Puerto Ricans representation in the Federal Government, and participation in US presidential elections. Becoming a state would also reassure the permanence of Federal aids for the poor and for industrial economic growth on the island.

Independence is the oldest status ideal, joined by the struggle for an autonomist government. In September 23rd, 1868, “el Grito de Lares” or the “Cry of Lares”, Puerto Rican revolutionaries revolted to free the island of the Spanish colonial rule that had been imposed on its citizens for four centuries. The uprising failed, but it established the foundations of future independence support. The first independence party was founded in 1912 called “Partido de la Independencia de la Isla de Puerto Rico” (Party of the Independence of the Island of Puerto Rico); founded by Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, a former pro-statehood leader who came to be convinced that the U.S. would not support statehood for Puerto Rico.

The contemporary pro independence party is the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño that was established in 1947 and continues to defend this status formula that has the least amount of partisans on the island. (Quiñones Calderón, 2002)

Independence supporters argue that the island has the potential to become a prosperous republic by forming alliances with countries all around the globe. They reject the continued subordination of Puerto Ricans under the U.S. government.

Furthermore, they work to affirm Puerto Rico as a distinct Nation, with its own culture, traditions, music, food and language.

The Commonwealth is a creation of the PPD, which was founded in 1938. The Commonwealth has its precedents in the fight for autonomy that began in the nineteenth century and culminated in the “Carta Autonómica” of 1897; that conceded autonomy to Puerto Rico under the Spanish Crown. However, it was never implemented because of the American invasion in 1898. The PPD was founded by independence supporters thus it was initially considered an independence party. After the party’s president Luis Muñoz Marín became the first elected Puerto Rican governor, he set out to resolve the status issue and putting an end to colonialism in Puerto Rico.

In 1950 the US Congress enacted Law 600 that authorized Puerto Ricans to hold a referendum to ratify the constitution of the “Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico” (Commonwealth of Puerto Rico), which was established July 25th, 1952. According to commonwealth supporters this autonomic government stripped Puerto Rico of its colonial nature. Nonetheless, the status issue is still considered an unresolved problem even though the Commonwealth formula has won every subsequent status referendum and plebiscite. Commonwealth supporters contend that Puerto Rico is in an enviable situation in that Puerto Ricans are able to maintain their culture and distinctiveness while simultaneously having U.S. citizenship, the dollar as currency, and Federal benefits such as food stamps, and Federal student aid for college.

Puerto Ricans Identity

Puerto Rican Identity has become a major issue in Puerto Rican politics. Each of the three parties has a different interpretation of Puerto Rican Identity, but this also is part of the ongoing discussion of the national question “Is Puerto Rico or are Puerto Ricans a nation?” this discussion is beyond the scope of this research. However, it is important to state that there **is** a Puerto Rican Identity though it is a very abstract concept. This collective identity is mostly based on a self-categorization of what Puerto Ricans recognize as “Puerto Ricanness” .

During most of the twentieth century expressing any kind sentiment of “Puerto Ricanness” was considered an act of subversion on the island. The use of patriotic symbols, such as the Puerto Rican flag, was reason for incarceration, but that changed after the 1950’s. The Puerto Rican flag, whose design was inspired in the Cuban flag, was named the official flag of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952. This was the start of the institutionalization of cultural nationalism carried out by the Puerto Rican government led by the first elected Puerto Rican governor Luis Muñoz Marín, founder of the PPD. This cultural nationalism looked to counteract political nationalism developing “a love of the country” rather than a desire for a nation state (Dávila, 1997). Ángel Israel Rivera Ortiz (2007) on the contrary states that all nationalisms are political, and as such all expressions of nationalism in Puerto Rico have been political. I agree with Dávila who defines political nationalism as one that leads to the desire for national independence. Moreover, the cultural nationalism of the PPD did nothing to advance Puerto Rico’s self-determination; it served the purpose of maintaining the colonial

status.

At the beginning of the twentieth century after the Spanish American War the United States government set out to Americanize Puerto Rico by establishing English as the official language, thus making English the language of instruction through out the island, as well as changing “the monetary, legal and economic systems” (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). But the Americanization process met with political action and cultural resistance on the island.

The character of Puerto Rican identity at the beginning of the 20th century was based on an opposition to the invader’s culture. “Puerto Rican culture was associated with the ‘positive values’ of strong kinship bonds, hospitality, respect for elders, and a strong sense of Christian religiosity” (Davila, 1997). This has not changed much, but has stopped being a construction opposed to American culture. As Dávila (1997) states, “Puerto Ricaness” is now based on emphasizing food, music and other folkloric aspects in a more commercial way, none the less *Puerto Rican culture*.

Puerto Rican Identity in the end is a combination of values, traditions, music, food, language, physical characteristics and a demeanor that other Puerto Ricans accept as the essential traits of being a member of the Puerto Rican community.

Puerto Ricans in the United States

Puerto Ricans have been established as a community in the U.S. mainland since the nineteenth century. The first settlement was a politically driven group in New York members of the Puerto Rico Section of the Cuban Revolutionary Party. These mainly included nationalists who sought secession and independence from Spain, although among them there were some who sought annexation to the United States.

After the 1898 invasion Puerto Rico became officially linked to the United States facilitating migration of islanders to the new metropolis. The different waves of migrations were produced by the mobilization of contracted Puerto Rican workforce, while others argue that they functioned as an escape valve to deal with overpopulation on the island. By 1920 forty-five states reported the presence of Puerto Ricans in their territories. But the most important migrations of Puerto Ricans to the United States occurred after World War II between the late 1940's and 1960's, significantly increasing the Puerto Rican population in New York (Sánchez Korrol, 1994) and other cities such as Chicago (Padilla, 1987), Hartford (Cruz, 1998) and Philadelphia (Whalen, 2001).

Migration towards the mainland was a mainly caused by economic factors. The situation in Puerto Rico had declined severely since the Great Depression through World War II. Puerto Ricans were recruited to work in the growing U.S. economy, causing the creation of the Migration Division of Puerto Rico's Department of Labor in New York City in 1948. This office worked to help the establishment of permanent Puerto Rican settlements in the United States (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). Puerto Ricans consequently became an *ethnic group* in the United States not unlike those formed by

many other immigrants from around the world. They became a group of individuals in the United States who have their own culture and worldview different from that of mainstream Americans.

Ramón Grosfoguel (2003) describes Puerto Ricans in the United States as colonial immigrants, immigrants who share citizenship with their metropolis making the immigration process easier. Moreover he says that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mobilize as an “ethnic identity”. But there are other social scientists that disagree. Jorge Duany (2002) defines Puerto Ricans as members of a transnacional and translocal nation. This is a vision where the Puerto Rican community in the United States and Puerto Ricans in the island are one nation. But he also recognizes “...the mobile livelihood of Puerto Ricans challenges static approaches to national identity...” and that most of the work done on the subject has “...neglected how identities are transformed and reconstructed in the diaspora.” And Felix Padilla (1987) uses the term *internal colony* to describe the Puerto Rican community in the United States, because of the ethnic oppression they suffer in the United States.

During the 70’s the United States experienced an economic recession that also affected Puerto Rico and caused return migration to the island. The slow recovery from the recession started a new wave of migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. during the late 70’s and early 80’s (Ortiz, 1986).

The development of Puerto Rican communities on the mainland has increased Puerto Rico’s ties to the United States, but at the same time these communities have kept strong ties with the island. Puerto Rican politics is one of the umbilical cords that

keep mainlanders in contact with the island. The creation of political status movements in the United States shows how important status politics is for all Puerto Ricans. Groups like the Young Lords, the Nationalist Party, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (originally the “Movimiento Pro Independencia”), and the “Ejército Popular Boricua- Los Macheteros” were some of the principal supporters of independence in the mainland. Most of these groups were island based. (Cruz, 1998)

Hypothesis and Method

Puerto Ricans are an ethnic group among many immigrant groups in the United States, with the peculiarity that they are American citizens (Michelson, 2003). As immigrants they can experience each of the three social psychological transformations under discussion. The members of this group may become Acculturated, Assimilated into American society, or exhibit Ethnic Resilience. Since, Puerto Ricans are an ethnic group in the United States and have the *potential* to go through the three social psychological processes, they can also demonstrate changes in their political attitudes as a consequence of the changes in their social/ethnic group identity.

The political status issue is the most important political problem that unites all Puerto Ricans and has been a motive of political mobilization of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. This issue directly affects ethnic group identification because each of the formulas lean towards a different position in respect to what should be the definitive identification of Puerto Ricans. Statehood supporters believe that Puerto Ricans should become part of the United States, become Americans and be recognized as Americans. Commonwealth supporters believe in keeping Puerto Rican identity and at the same time being American citizens who cherish their relationship with the United States. Independence supporters want Puerto Ricans to be solely Puerto Rican in identity and citizenship.

My first hypothesis is that Americanized/Assimilated mainland Puerto Ricans will favor statehood over commonwealth and independence to resolve Puerto Rico's political status problem. These Puerto Ricans identify themselves primarily as

Americans and will be more likely to prefer Puerto Rico to increase political ties to the United States by becoming the 51st state. The second is that mainland Puerto Ricans that are in ethnic resilience will be more likely to prefer independence instead of statehood and the commonwealth. These Puerto Ricans have gone through experiences that heighten their Puerto Rican identity and simultaneously have develop negativity towards the U.S. leading them to believe that Puerto Rico is be better off being an independent nation. The third hypothesis is that mainland Puerto Ricans who are in the acculturation stage are more likely to support maintaining the commonwealth, because they want Puerto Rico to maintain its cultural distinctiveness and at the same time maintain economic and political relations with the U.S.

In this study I use logistic equations to test these three main hypotheses. Equations will allow me to control for the effects of third variables. This gives me the opportunity to see the effect of *each* independent variable, without the intervening effect of the other independent variables. In this way equations control for spurious relationships, a problem with dichotomous tables. Logistic equations are used when the dependent variable is dichotomous. This is the case of this study because I will be comparing one status alternative to another status alternative. The equations will be computed with data from the **Latino National Political Survey of 1989-1990** with a sample of five hundred and eighty nine self-identified Puerto Ricans who responded to the questionnaire. There will be four equations that will use the same set of independent variables that measure the three forms of identity adaptation that I believe influence the political status preference in mainlander Puerto Ricans.

I would like to remind the reader that the option of Free Association is not included in the hypotheses or as an dependent variable in the regressions due to the absence of this option in the questionnaire of the Latino National Political Survey of 1989-1990, and its recent popularity. Moreover, this survey was done with different purposes than those of this study; consequently, the variables and data used in these regressions may not be the ideal ones in all instances and will affect the results of the logistic regressions. Aside from this inherent weakness, the use of each variable is theoretically pertinent to the measurement of each one of the social psychological adaptations under study.

Each regression has dummy variable⁴ (dichotomous variable) dependent variables. One logistic regression compares those who prefer Statehood to the Commonwealth. The next regression uses a dummy of those who prefer Independence to the Commonwealth, and the third regression's dummy presents those who prefer Independence to Statehood. The fourth logistic regression has the same independent variables as the first three, but the dependent variable is a dummy of those who answered that they "Did not know or did not care" rather than choosing one of the three status options. I believe it is important to include those who did not choose an option to see if Acculturation, Assimilation or Ethnic Resilience affects the likeliness of choosing an option or not choosing one at all. The Commonwealth option is not used as an indicator in any of the regressions because the effects on the variables are already shown in the first and second regression. If I were to use it as an indicator again the results in the regression would be the same but with inverted signs.

Table 1. Acculturation Variables- Frequencies

Acculturation		
Ability to speak Spanish		Percent Distribution
Less ability		73.5
Average ability		22.1
More ability		4.4
Index of Use of English		Percent Distribution
No use	0	21.6
	1	17.3
	2	15.2
	3	9.1
	4	9.3
	5	11.6
English only	6	15.9
Social Interaction with Anglos		Percent Distribution
All Puerto Ricans	0	32.2
	1	41.5
About half and half	2	15.8
	3	6.0
All Anglos	4	4.3
Married to an Anglo		Percent Distribution
Not married to an Anglo		96.1
Married to an Anglo		3.9
Follows what is going on with Puerto Ricans		Percent Distribution
Most of the time		47.7
Some of the time		26.7
Only now and then		16.6
Hardly or Never		9.0

Acculturation will be measured with a combination of variables that are based on the measurement done by Melissa Michelson in her work on acculturation and political trust in Puerto Ricans (2003). This includes an index that measures Puerto Ricans' use of

the English language constructed using three variables: 1) language used at home, 2) language of the interview, and 3) preferred language of receiving news. I also use Michelson's social interaction index, which indicates the ethnic identity of those with whom Puerto Ricans have more contact. It was constructed by combining four variables 1) people at parties, 2) friends, 3) peoples at places the respondents goes to relax, and 4) the amount of contact the respondent has with people of Puerto Rican or Anglo origin. As acculturation is a behavioral adaptation I also included a separate variable of Spanish proficiency, a measurement of how much the respondent follows "what is going on with Puerto Ricans", and a variable of intermarriage with Anglos. An acculturated individual would have a higher use of the English language, a higher amount of contact with Anglos, a lower proficiency in use of the Spanish language, and follow less "what is going on with Puerto Ricans", and a higher incidence of intermarriage with Anglos.

Assimilation is an identity change that influences attitudes and feelings. To measure this adaptation I used five variables. The first is an index created by combining "how proud the respondent is of being an American" and "how strong is the love the respondent has for the United States", since both variables are highly correlated. As a second measure of assimilation I included a dummy variable where the label "American" was preferred over any other ethnic identification. To clarify, the sample of 589 Puerto Ricans used in this study was chosen by the first question in the survey where the respondent answered if he/she is Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or other. This variable of "preferred ID" comes from a subsequent question that asks which is the

preferred label of the respondent among many options such as Nuyorican, Puerto Rican, Chicano, American, etc. Third and fourth, two feeling thermometers were used: one measured how they felt towards Puerto Rico and the how they felt towards the United States. The fifth and final variable is a variable of Linked Fate, this is a concept that defines a sentiment of belief that whatever happens to the members of my group, in this case Puerto Ricans, will also happen to me. These variables represent an assimilated individual that is very proud of being American and has a great love for the U.S., feels very warmly towards the U.S., does not feel very warmly towards Puerto Rico, and has a low sense of Linked Fate.

Table 2. Assimilation Variables-Frequencies

Assimilation		
Love and Pride for the U.S.		Percent Distribution
Less Love and Pride	0	2.6
	1	3.4
	2	13.4
	3	18.0
More Love and Pride	4	62.2
Preferred ID is American		Percent Distribution
Preferred ID is NOT American		94.4
Preferred ID is American		5.6
Puerto Rico Feeling Thermometer		Percent Distribution
Cold	0	0.9
	1	7.0
	2	10.1
Warm	3	82.1
U.S. Feeling Thermometer		Percent Distribution
Cold	0	0.9
	1	4.6
	2	5.3

Warm	3	89.3
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Table 3. Ethnic resilience Variables- Frequencies

Ethnic Resilience	
Ethnic Resilience	Percent Distribution
No Ethnic Resilience	96.3
Ethnic Resilience	3.7
Has felt Personal Discrimination	
Percent Distribution	
No	71.8
Yes	28.2
View of discrimination against Puerto Ricans	
Percent Distribution	
None	12.3
A little	17.9
Some	36.1
A lot	33.7
Linked Fate between Puerto Ricans	
Percent Distribution	
Agree	77.9
Neither agree or disagree	3.9
Disagree	18.2
Plans Return to Puerto Rico	
Percent Distribution	
No	82.3
Yes	17.7

Ethnic resilience is measured first of all by a re-codification and combination of both feeling thermometers used to measure assimilation, this variable identifies those who feel very warm towards Puerto Rico and very cold towards the United States. I also included two variables on discrimination. One explores if those surveyed have been discriminated against and the other indicates if Puerto Ricans feel that they as members of a group are discriminated against. I also added a final variable that asks the respondents if they plan on returning to live in Puerto Rico.

Finally, age, race, income, education, gender and place of birth are used as control variables. Age is recoded into five age groups that go from eighteen years old to eighty-nine years old, this variable will show if there is any difference in political attitudes between younger and older age groups in Puerto Rican mainlanders. Race becomes a dummy variable when identifying as white goes against every other racial identification. Race plays an important role in making assimilation easier for different groups. In the United States immigrants that are racially white/Caucasian have greater ease to fit into the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) mold that dominates American culture. (Alba & Nee, 1997)

Dale C. Nelson includes socioeconomic status (SES) as an indicator of assimilation, the higher the level of SES the higher the level of assimilation (1969). This fits with the idea presented by Kivisto of assimilation as a means to a better social position. Nelson argues that socioeconomic mobility moves immigrants closer to middle and upper class people who set the “dominant social norms” in society. Thus income works as a measurement of identity modification, because it indicates social mobility within the members an ethnic group such as Puerto Ricans. Education is also considered as an indicator because it works as one of the greatest agents of dissemination of American culture. The assumption is that higher levels of education provide increased socioeconomic mobility that in turn results in higher levels of acculturation. One must be careful when using it as a measurement. Where the immigrant received most of his/her education can influence the results. This does not cause any problems when studying Puerto Ricans; since the Puerto Rican educational

system includes United States History class and English class starting at elementary school. (Nelson, 1982)

Gender was recoded into a dummy variable where male was used as the base, because inside assimilation theory men from ethnic groups are more prone to experiment modification in their social identity through higher levels of contact with the host society. Place of birth works as division between those who were born in the United States and those who were either born in Puerto Rico and other locations. Being born in the United States should produce a stronger inclination to identifying as an American rather than identifying as Puerto Rican.

Table 4. Puerto Ricans' Status Preference Frequency Distribution

Status Alternative	Frequency	Percent
Statehood	153	25.98
Independence	18	3.06
Commonwealth	397	67.40
Don't know	21	3.57
Total	589	100.00

Before analyzing the logistic regressions, it is important to note that each regression will exclude two groups of answers reducing the total sum of subjects in each regression. For example the regression that compares Statehood to Independence will leave out supporters of Commonwealth. The total sample in this study is 589, of these 153 prefer Statehood, 18 prefer Independence, 397 prefer Commonwealth, and 21 stated they "Did not know" which one of the alternatives of status they preferred. The fact that there are only 18 supporters of Independence is statistically a weakness, the same is the case for the Don't know answer. Though this proportion of support is consistent with historic results of status plebiscites in Puerto Rico (Quiñones Calderón,

2000). If there were a larger amount of respondents who chose these answers the results in the regressions would be more definitive.

Table 5. Logistic Regression #1- Preference of Statehood to Commonwealth

Variable	B	Standard Error	Significance
Acculturation			
Ability to speak Spanish	.078	.198	.695
Use of English	.064	.072	.374
Social Interaction with Anglos	.119	.119	.318
Married to an Anlgo	.324	.543	.552
Follows what is going on with PRs	.112	.112	.317
Assimilation			
Love and Pride for the US	.208	.132	.115
Preferred ID is American	.033	.491	.947
Puerto Rico Feeling Thermometer	-.199	.196	.311
US Feeling Thermometer	.766	.473	.105
Ethnic Resilience			
Ethnic Resilience	-.148	1.427	.918
Personal Discrimination	.332	.244	.173
View of discrimination against PRs	-.129	.114	.256
Linked Fate	-.350	.309	.257
Return to Puerto Rico	-.273	.325	.401
Demographics			
Race is White	-.276	.218	.206
Age	.142	.085	.095*
Education	.120	.136	.377
Income	-.056	.035	.115
Born in the US	.303	.301	.315
Male	.326	.233	.162

Chi Square 37.34, Nagelkerke Rsquare .108

*p<.100⁵

The first logistic regression indicates the likelihood of mainland Puerto Ricans preferring Statehood to the Commonwealth if in all of the three social psychological

adaptations. According to my hypothesis we should expect the variables used to measure Assimilation to be significant. Maintaining all other variables constant the only variable that is statistically significant is “age”, this variables was not especially part of any of the three adaptstions. But it tells us that “older” Puerto Ricans are more likely to prefer Statehood to the Commonwealth, and that this is the only major difference between Statehood supporters and Commonwealth supporters. Moreover, having greater “Love and Pride for the US”, feeling warmly towards the US, and having a low income come very close to being statistically significant. Two of these variables measure assimilation (Love & Pride for the US, and the US feeling thermometer) and they appear to increase the likelihood of the respondents’ preference for Statehood over the Commonwealth. Also both of these variables support my hypothesis that Puerto Ricans who live in the U.S. and are in assimilation are more likely to support Statehood.

The second regression compares those who prefer Independence for Puerto Rico to becoming a state of the union. Everything else being equal nine variables are significant. The results show that holding all other variables constant those who have a higher ability to speak Spanish, have a high use of the English language, have low levels of social interaction with Anglos, have very little love and pride for the US, feel coldly towards the US, are older in age, and have a high education are more likely to prefer Independence to Statehood.

Two of the variables in Table #6, the belief the Puerto Ricans as a group are discriminated against and Linked fate, are specifically used to measure Ethnic Resilience. These variables support the hypothesis that those who are in Ethnic Resilience are be more likely to prefer Independence to solve Puerto Rico’s status. In Assimilation theory more education would be an agent of increased identity modification, but in this case more education increases the likelihood of being an Independence supporter. Curiously those who do not follow what is going on with Puerto Ricans seem to be more likely to support Independence, when one would think that those who are very aware of the Puerto Rican community’s situation would be in this position.

Table 6. Logistic Regression #2- Preference of Independence to Statehood

Variable	B	Standard Error	Significance
Acculturation			
Ability to speak Spanish	4.844	2.366	.041**
Use of English	1.202	.548	.028**
Social Interaction with Anglos	-1.306	.824	.113
Married to an Anlgo	-25.554	9251.544	.998
Follows what is going on with PRs	-1.245	.680	.067*
Assimilation			
Love and Pride for the US	-2.112	.761	.006**
Preferred ID is American	.913	1.527	.550
Puerto Rico Feeling Thermometer	.482	1.084	.656
US Feeling Thermometer	-4.347	2.042	.033**
Ethnic Resilience			
Ethnic Resilience	-.953	21.926	.965
Personal Discrimination	-1.887	1.296	.145
View of discrimination against PRs	3.189	1.368	.020**
Linked Fate	2.404	1.447	.097*
Return to Puerto Rico	-2.434	2.146	.257

Demographics			
Race is White	.039	1.049	.970
Age	.926	.492	.060*
Education	1.412	.810	.081*
Income	.127	.155	.413
Born in the US	1.665	1.471	.258
Male	.454	1.268	.720

Chi Square 55.35, Nagelkerke .645

*p<.100

Table 7. Logistic Regression #3- Preference of Independence to Commonwealth

Variable	B	Standard Error	Significance
Acculturation			
Ability to speak Spanish	1.664	1.066	.118
Use of English	.482	.247	.052**
Social Interaction with Anglos	-.203	.383	.595
Married to an Anlgo	-19.899	10068.962	.998
Follows what is going on with PRs	-.689	.429	.108
Assimilation			
Love and Pride for the US	-1.112	.340	.001**
Preferred ID is American	.445	1.152	.699
Puerto Rico Feeling Thermometer	-.275	.658	.676
US Feeling Thermometer	1.054	1.100	.338
Ethnic Resilience			
Ethnic Resilience	2.549	2.552	.318
Personal Discrimination	-.128	.796	.873
View of discrimination against PRs	.571	.497	.251
Linked Fate	-.102	.804	.899
Return to Puerto Rico	-1.497	1.296	.248
Demographics			
Race is White	.208	.684	.761
Age	.400	.269	.137
Education	.470	.385	.223
Income	-.010	.097	.916
Born in the US	1.538	.911	.091*
Male	.403	.746	.589

The third regression compares those who prefer Independence to Commonwealth. It has three statistically significant variables, “use of the English language”, “being born in the US”, and “love and pride for the US” with a negative coefficient. *Ceteris paribus*, those who have a high use of English, were born in the US, and very low love and pride for the US are more likely to prefer Independence to the Commonwealth. None of the Ethnic Resilience variables come close to being significant, but the ability to speak Spanish and following what goes on with Puerto Ricans also come close to being significant. These last two variables show that a higher ability to speak Spanish and a low tendency to follow news about the Puerto Rican community help increase the likelihood of preferring the transformation of Puerto Rico into a nation-state to maintaining the Commonwealth status. It is again curious to find that having a low tendency to follow news about Puerto Ricans and not being born in Puerto Rico increases the likelihood of support for Independence.

The fourth and final logistic regression has the purpose of trying to find if any of the three social group identity transformations can explain preferring to answer don't know/don't care rather than choosing between the three status options. Holding all other variables constant the only variable that is significant is that of gender. It shows that women are more likely of not choosing either of the three status alternatives and saying that they don't know or don't care. This could be due to the fact the women in general are less involved in politics and also vote at smaller rates than men. Kira

Sanbonmatsu (2003) states in her work that many studies show that “women tend to know less about politics than men”. This does not mean in any way that women are less intelligent than men, but that socially and historically they have been left out of the political world. Therefore, they are less informed about the different political options offered to them and are more likely to have difficulties to make a decision of this kind. It would be interesting to more research on the subject in the case of Puerto Rico’s status issue.

Table 8. Logistic Regression #4- Do not know/Don’t care to any status formula

Variable	B	Standard Error	Significance
Acculturation			
Ability to speak Spanish	-.180	.537	.737
Use of English	.125	.206	.544
Social Interaction with Anglos	-.159	.408	.697
Married to an Anlgo	1.075	1.420	.449
Follows what is going on with PRs	.230	.316	.468
Assimilation			
Love and Pride for the US	.101	.359	.778
Preferred ID is American	.054	1.375	.969
Puerto Rico Feeling Thermometer	-.218	.596	.714
US Feeling Thermometer	17.641	5817.010	.998
Ethnic Resilience			
Ethnic Resilience	37.403	11634.021	.997
Personal Discrimination	.735	.678	.278
View of discrimination against PRs	.202	.373	.587
Linked Fate	-1.278	1.226	.297
Return to Puerto Rico	.996	.847	.239
Demographics			
Race is White	.046	.657	.945
Age	-.062	.266	.817
Education	-.153	.382	.688
Income			

Born in the US	.103	.098	.292
Male	.402	.887	.651
	-1.492	.865	.084**

Chi square 18.089, Nagelkerke R square .175

p<.100

Conclusion

This thesis paper set out to primarily test and explain the relationship between social group identity and political preference, which may help us understand changes in political preference when social group identity is transformed. In this sense I chose to work with Puerto Ricans who live in the United States as research subjects as an immigrant ethnic group they experience adaptations as to their social identity, specifically regarding their ethnic group identity.

Three ethnic group identity adaptations were studied: Assimilation, Acculturation and Ethnic Resilience. Assimilation makes immigrants in the US-- and in this case Puerto Ricans--discard this original identity and adopt being American as their new identity. Acculturation is an adaptation of behavior where Puerto Ricans start to engage in the same activities as Americans while retaining their Puerto Rican identity. And Ethnic Resilience results in the reaffirmation of the Puerto Rican identity with the rejection of American culture.

The effects of these adaptations on mainland Puerto Ricans' ethnic identity suggested three main hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that Assimilation would increase the likelihood of mainland Puerto Ricans preferring Statehood as the political status of Puerto Rico. The statistical analysis shows that the sense of affinity through positive identification and pride in being part of the United States are the main factor in increasing the likelihood of preferring this status alternative over the other alternatives. Therefore, my first hypothesis is confirmed while Assimilation includes behavioral changes it is mainly a change in the sense of belonging and self-identification of the individual with their host society. Puerto Ricans who are assimilated, who have come to identify themselves primarily as Americans, *are* more likely to support Statehood over Independence and Commonwealth.

The second hypothesis states that Puerto Ricans in Ethnic Resilience would have a greater likelihood of preferring Independence to resolve the status issue. The statistical analysis makes clear that the principal characteristics of Ethnic Resilience such as negative views towards the United States, feeling discriminated against, and feeling linked to all Puerto Ricans; increase the likelihood of preferring Independence over Statehood and Commonwealth.

The third hypothesis states that Acculturated Puerto Ricans in the US would most likely prefer the Commonwealth. This study revealed that Statehood supporters and Commonwealth supporters are only different in the fact that Commonwealth supporters do not have the same positive identification with the United States as measured by the U.S. Feeling Thermometer that Statehood supporters have. This

confirms that Acculturated Puerto Ricans are more likely to prefer the Commonwealth. Acculturation is a behavioral adaptation that is not accompanied by changes in the individual's self-identification nor their views towards the host society.

The results of this study clearly show that social psychological change in social group identity affects political preference, specifically in the case of ethnic group identity. Overall, in the case of Puerto Ricans who live on the mainland and their political preference in respect to the status issue, the constant in determining the preferred alternative is the positive or negative feelings and views towards the United States. Mainland Puerto Ricans with very positive views towards the US and positive identification with US, the main characteristics of Assimilation, are most likely to support Statehood, permanent union to the United States of America. Those who have adapted their behavior but have not developed positive views towards the US nor a positive identification with American identity, Acculturation, are more prone to prefer Commonwealth. And Puerto Ricans that resist changing their behavior and have negative views towards the US have a greater likelihood of preferring Independence.

This thesis paper has made a contribution to Social Identity Theory by applying its principals and establishing a relationship between transformations in social group identity and political preference. It has widened the spectrum of scientific explanations of political preference in Puerto Rican politics by searching beyond traditions of economics and colonialist mentality. It has also produced knowledge that politically can influence the decision of what kind of participation Puerto Ricans who live outside the island should have in the election of Puerto Rico's political status.

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Notes

¹ There is a debate. We can find that Identity theory deals with the self, but is different from Social Identity theory in its microsocial nature. Stets and Burke (2000) believe that Social Identity theory and Identity theory are not that different from one and other. They propose a future fusion of both theories into one, but this does not mean that they do not identify each as separate theories. Their work reinforces the fact that these are two different theories though they have things in common.

² Others groups are gender, social class, disability/ability, sexual preference, and age. (Howard, 2000)

³ Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section. (October 2004). *Map of the World Today*. Map No. 4136 Rev. 4 United Nations. <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/other/world00.pdf>

⁴ A dummy variable is simply a dichotomous variable that compares one characteristic to another. For example in an equation, gender is a dummy variable, where “male” is compared to “female”.

⁵ The established benchmark of significance for this study is .100, but levels of .05 and .01 are also identified.