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**From Bootstrap to Shoulderstrap:
Women Secretaries and Class, Culture, and
Voice in Contemporary Puerto Rico**

By

Geraldine J. Casey

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York**

2002

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Abstract

From Bootstrap to Shoulderstrap:
Women Secretaries and Class, Culture,
and Voice in Contemporary Puerto Rico

By

Geraldine J. Casey

Advisor: Ida Susser

The mobilization of working-class identities among secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the history of their trade union, *La Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente* (The Brotherhood of Non-Teaching Employees), are explored in this case study. Analysis of the *Hermandad's* public campaigns and internal programs of culture and labor education provide insight into this trade union's long-term project of "classing" gender and national identities in Puerto Rico. Ethnographic data collected at a national union convention, an emergency strike assembly, and by accompanying workers on picket lines during three strikes is woven together with personal interviews, secretaries' life-history narratives (*testimonios*), and participant-observation of secretaries at work.

The *Hermandad* ruptures traditional boundaries between class and gender identities by transforming women's demands for on-campus daycare centers and an end to domestic violence into trade union demands -- supported by male and female workers -- and by infusing class politics into the ritual cycle of secretaries, including National

Secretaries' Week and Mother's Day. With regard to national identity, the *Hermanidad* inserts economic struggles against "downsizing" of the public-sector workforce (which includes UPR personnel) and privatization of Puerto Rico's public corporations (colloquially called the "national patrimony") into broader campaigns that affirm Puerto Rican history and culture; locating trade union demands firmly within the larger project of cultural nationalism and defense of *la puertorriqueñidad*.

The experiences of secretaries within the *Hermanidad* is an example of Caribbean and Latin American trade unionism that challenges narrow conceptions of the borders among class, gender, and national identities.

Epigraph

Nada Más (Nothing More) by Pablo Neruda (1904 - 1973)
(translated by Alastair Reid [in Neruda, 1970: 1])

... *Quise ser como el pan:*
la lucha no me encontró ausente ...

... I wished to be like bread
The struggle never found me wanting ...

Amaneceres (Dawnings) by Julia de Burgos (1914-1953)¹
(translated by Jack Agüeros [in de Burgos, 1997: 22 - 23])

¡Amaneceres en mi alma!
¡Amaneceres en mi mente!

Dawnings in my soul!
Dawnings in my mind!

Cuando se abre la puerta íntima
para entrar a una misma,
¡qué de amaneceres!

When the intimate door is opened
to enter one's self,
What dawnings!

Recoger la hora que pasa temblando
a nuestro lado,
y hacerla presente,
y hacerla robusta,
y hacerla universal.

To gather the hour that passes trembling
at our side,
and make it now,
and make it robust,
and make it universal.

Y que cante;
y que grite;
y que se interne en todos los
rincones anónimos
despertando rebeldías;
y que barra la cara de los eternos
jorobados del tiempo
enfermos de no pensar;
y que cuelgue todas las canciones
de rumbo burgueses,
y rompa sus segundos en un
millón de himnos proletarios ...

And let it sing
and let it scream;
and let it penetrate in all the
anonymous corners
awakening rebellions;
and let it sweep the face of the eternal
hunchbacks of time
sick of not thinking;
and let it hang all the songs
of bourgeois ways
and break its seconds in a
million proletarian hymns ...

¹ de Burgos, one of the national poets of Puerto Rico, also worked as a secretary in Washington, D.C. during the 1940s.

Dedication

Hay hombres que luchan un día y son buenos.

Hay otros que luchan un año y son mejores.

Hay quienes luchan muchos años y son muy buenos.

Pero hay los que luchan toda la vida:

esos son los imprescindibles.

(Bertolt Brecht, translated by Silvio Rodriguez, 1975)

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, **Max Antonio Casey Mishler**, my compañero, **Paul Chaim Mishler**, my parents, **Frederick and Barbara Casey**, and my sisters, **Roberta Casey Cedrone**, **Frederica Gillespie**, and **Doreen Casey**.

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I want to acknowledge *Intercambio*, the CUNY-UPR Academic Exchange Program, for providing funding for this research, as well as the CUNY Research Foundation for the two PSC Faculty Development grants I received. Antonio Lauria Perricelli, Director of *Intercambio* during the period of my fieldwork, has been extremely supportive of my project from its inception.

In Puerto Rico, I received intellectual blessings and support from many people. I especially want to thank all the secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico who took time to share their ideas and stories with me. Your incredible insights and reflections inform this dissertation in immeasurable ways. Special thanks are due to three people who opened their hearts and minds to my research project and my family: Carlos Hernández Ponce, Rosita Montañez, and Carmen Angélica Pérez Herranz. I also want to acknowledge the contributions made of other scholars and activists at the University of Puerto Rico, including: Yamila Azize, Marie Esther Correa, Carlos Echevarría, Augusto Fidel Gandia, the late Angélica Meléndez, Ricardo Pérez, Ana Milagros Santiago, and Juan Vera. Jorge Duany, who agreed to serve as my outside reader, provided many supportive comments and encouragement. Together, these people assisted my research project and my understanding and respect for Puerto Rico, especially its working-class people.

A number of scholars and activists in New York City contributed to my project and helped shape the ideas in this dissertation, including: my colleagues in the CUNY Working Class Anthropology Project: John Antici, Willilam Askins, Geoffrey Bate, Julia Butterfield, August Carbonella, Sharryn Kasmir, and Warren Perry; and my sisters in the Genes & Gender Collective: Ethel Tobach, Betty Rosoff, the late Eleanor Leacock, Dorothy Burnham, Sue Gordon, and Tineke Vroman. Special thanks also go to June Nash, who taught me a great deal about conducting ethnographic fieldwork when I worked with her in Amatenango del Valle, in Chiapas, Mexico.

Faculty and staff at the Doctoral Program in Anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center provided a unique intellectual and social space where I was able to develop and explore the complexity of working-class studies. My heartfelt thanks go to the following people: Ellen DeRiso, Donald Robotham, Jane Schneider, the late Archie Singham, and Terri Vulcano. Special thanks are due to my advisor, Ida Susser, whose passion for scholarship and activism has been a constant support, since I first proposed a research project on secretaries in Puerto Rico.

I benefited from being a member of the community of scholars and students at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. As founding Director of the Women's Center at John Jay, I had a unique opportunity to create a working-class women's center and develop courses in women studies, grounded in anti-racism and multiple feminist perspectives. I want to express deep appreciation to my sisters at the Women's Center, Marietta LaFargue, and Darryl Westcott-Marshall. I also received support from many

Center at John Jay, I had a unique opportunity to create a working-class women's center and develop courses in women studies, grounded in anti-racism and multiple feminist perspectives. I want to express my deep appreciation to my sisters at the Women's Center, Marietta LaFargue, and Darryl Westcott-Marshall. I also received support from many faculty and staff colleagues, including: Avram Bornstein, Effie Cochran, Blanche Wiesen Cook, PJ Gibson, Amy Green, Betsy Hegeman, Dorothy Helly, Joan Hoffman, Suzanne Iasenza, Hilda Jones, Jacob Marini, Gerry Markowitz, Ted Pontiflet, Catherine Rovira, Natalie Sokoloff, and Ann Winton. The students at John Jay College enriched my life, shared in the process of mutual discovery, and contributed to the development of my ideas about working-class studies. Special thanks are due to Arlene Fussalva, Joselinne Mineya, Jason Pagan, and John Rodriguez.

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Without diminishing the contributions all these people continue to make in my life, it is a simple fact that I was only able to complete this dissertation with the sustained support – intellectual and personal – provided by CUNY Professor Gloria Waldman. Since we first met in Puerto Rico, while I was engaged in fieldwork research and Gloria offered to edit the first professional paper I ever wrote and presented in Spanish at the celebration for National Secretaries' Day in Cayey on April 25, 1990, through the final editing of this dissertation, Gloria's contributions have been consistent and generous. I continue to benefit from her deep knowledge of and love for Puerto Rico, and her profound belief in the liberatory power of education as a tool in the projects of personal growth and social justice. In her role as intellectual midwife and guide, Gloria Waldman helped me find my voice – and she helped me find my way to the completion of this dissertation.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Frederick and Barbara Casey and my three sisters, Roberta Casey Cedrone, Frederica Gillespie, and Doreen Casey. As one of the Four Casey Girls, I learned to take risks and break boundaries in order to grow. My father opened the worlds of history and learning for me; he encouraged me to read books and showed me how to read the historical landscape of industrial New England with the eyes of "the working man." Our family has experienced all the joys and hardships of working-class life in Boston, Massachusetts, imbued with Irish singing, storytelling, and spirits, and an enduring love.

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With profound love and appreciation for their willingness to share the richness and challenges associated with the fieldwork in Puerto Rico and my personal journey of “inter-class travel,” I dedicate this dissertation to my son, Max Antonio Casey Mishler, and to my *compañero* and great friend, Paul Mishler. Their insight and encouragement are a constant presence in my life, and their deep respect for Latin American history, women, and working people seasons this research from beginning to end, as it enriches all the facets of our lives.

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To my husband, comrade, and closest friend, Paul: you have shared in every aspect of this work, as an amazing historian, synthetic intellectual, excellent editor, wise counsel, my life partner, co-parent, and fellow activist. You never doubted the value of this research project or my ability to complete it, even in the darkest hours. You never seem to tire of all my stories and questions, and you are the person who first talked with me about Puerto Rico, beginning with the story of *el Grito de Lares*, more than twenty-five years ago. You are one of the kindest, smartest, and most incredible people I have ever known. It is an honor and delight to share a life with you that continues to follow the good advice your grandfather, Chaim Lessuck, gave to your mother when she was a child, “Nita, there’s a great big world out there – and it’s yours for the changing!”

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Map of Puerto Rico



Introduction

This dissertation explores the work world and life experiences of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the trade union that represents them, *La Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente* (The Brotherhood of Non-Teaching Employees). Based on twenty-two months of fieldwork in 1990-92,¹ the dissertation is designed to contribute to the growing field of working-class studies (e.g. Lincoln and Russo, 2001 and Zandy, 2001). I decided to study women workers, and more specifically, secretaries engaged in “white-collar” office work, in order to challenge older assumptions – often vague and only implicit, yet still pervasive – that white, male workers engaged in “blue-collar” industrial occupations fully represent working class experience.

Secretarial work has become known as “pink-collar” work, reflecting the high concentration of women workers in these occupations (Casey, 1988; Howe, 1977; Freeman 2000). My dissertation is the first ethnographic case study of secretaries in Puerto Rico. Together with Freeman’s (2000) ethnography on women workers in the pink-collar “informatics” industry of data entry work in Barbados, my dissertation expands the parameters of the literature on women clerical workers in the United States (Benet, 1972; Casey 1988, and 1991a; Cassedy and Nussbaum, 1983; Cohen, 1992; Davies, 1974, and 1982; Feldberg, 1980; Foreman, 1981; Fox and Hesse-Biber, 1984; Garson, 1988; Gilpin et al, 1988; Glenn Nakano and Feldberg, 1979; Hoos, 1961; Howe, 1977; Hurd, 1989, and 1992; Massachusetts History Workshop, 1985; McColloch, 1983; Mills, 1953; “9 to 5,” 1981; Sacks, 1988; Saltzman, 1988; and Tepperman, 1976) and Australia (see Pringle, 1988). My goal is to contribute to building a more nuanced and complex discussion of

contemporary working classes.

Since the 1980s, anthropologists have acknowledged the need to integrate the study of gender, race, and class; yet class remains the least-studied variable in this triplet of connected identities, and when it is examined, it is often reduced to an analysis of poverty.² As this dissertation will make clear, the categories of gender, race, and national identity cannot sufficiently explain the social position and personal experiences of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. To fully understand these women's experiences, class politics, working-class organizations, and class identities also need to be examined.

In his path-breaking work on the process of class formation in relation to the making of the English working class, E.P. Thompson (1963) noted that working-class people participate in the process of class formation through their collective action. Historically, Thompson identified this process with forms of mass action like food riots or political rebellions. In more contemporary contexts, the activities of political parties and trade unions are important arenas to study. My research in Puerto Rico explores secretaries' participation in the Hermandad trade union, the professional association, Professional Secretaries International (PSI), and women's organizations such as *la Organización Puertorriqueña de la Mujer Trabajadora* OPMT, churches and religious study groups, in addition to more ad-hoc activities.

Working-class culture and identity are not created exclusively by experiences at the workplace, in union meetings, or on the picket line. Family relations and community social life also have a profound impact, and women are deeply involved in and committed

to these activities. These arenas have been studied closely in feminist research on women workers in an effort to affirm the power of women's social lives and challenge the bias of earlier studies of the working class which too often ignored or trivialized the women's experiences and contributions to the process of class formation. At the University of Puerto Rico, women secretaries' class identity and consciousness emerged from the experiences of daily work, family and community life; including the spheres of production and consumption. The chronically high rate of male unemployment in Puerto Rico had a powerful impact on secretaries' class identity, especially for those women whose husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons – the supposed “heads of household” – were unemployed or under employed in the informal economy. Relations with family members who migrated to the United States also shaped these women's class experiences and class identities.

Any investigation of the process of class formation needs to include working-class people's descriptions and assessments of their condition, especially in literate societies like Puerto Rico. These sources of information also constitutes another form of social action. The dissertation pays close attention to the discourse developing by and about secretaries in Puerto Rico. And, as is true with all other aspects of class formation, this arena is clearly under contention. The process of a class “making itself” is complex and uneven. It is a multi-faceted dynamic filled with internal contradictions emanating from the workplace and community and family experiences. Changing work processes and social relations stimulate the production of innovative cultural elements. These developments coexist with hegemonic practices that reproduce older traditions and the

internalization of ideologies generated by the dominant groups in society. Affirmations of resistance collide with strategies of accommodation and collusion, within the same workplace, trade union, and oftentimes with the same worker.

In this context, it is important to clarify how the secretaries I studied conceptualized their class identity. While all the women I spoke with claimed their *occupational* identity as secretaries, some women considered themselves middle class, while others self-identified as working class. This reflects the fluid and contested nature of class identity among these workers. Yet, in the arena of social action, the overwhelming majority of these women supported the Hermandad's program; they respected the picket lines during *paros* and *huelgas*³ and beginning in January 1990, more than ninety-percent of all UPR clerical and technical workers individually agreed to a new weekly deduction from their paychecks to pay the agency fee, or *cuota*, to the Hermandad – even if they were not members of the trade union. Hermandad officers and grass-roots activists argued that participation in social action is the process by which workers develop working-class identity and consciousness. My research documents this process, and cautions against the imposition of a fixed nomenclature or rigid delineation of boundaries between working-class and middle-class, in order to respect the more fluid, open and sometimes contradictory nature of secretaries' class identity.

The daily work of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico also locates them within the tensions between Puerto Rican culture and Americanization – especially in relation to the introduction of computers and other automated office technologies from the United States. How does the colonial relationship between the United States and

Puerto Rico impact the lives of secretaries? What role does the issue of United States ethnic and racial minoritization⁴ play in the lives of Puerto Rican secretaries?

Mobilizations based on class identity co-exist with, and overlap with mobilizations of identities based on gender, racial, ethnic, religious, and national identities. How can an analysis of the gender, race, and national identities of these women strengthen our understanding of class processes and the development of working-class identity? And, conversely, what new insights can be gained about gender, race, and national identities by integrating an analysis of class issues into the research project?

With regard to working-class identity and class consciousness, the office is a contested work space, a divided zone where surface-level commonalities in the areas of job descriptions, dress codes, and daily life can mask profound differences among workers. The fluidity of class relations is particularly significant here. Does computerized secretarial work signify job deskilling, routinization, and proletarianization? Or does it constitute an economic advancement for women workers? Does it provide upward mobility for working-class women, especially for those women whose prior work experience was in factory and warehouse settings? Or does it constitute downward mobility, especially for women from middle-class families, who earned a college degree in the liberal arts and had professional job aspirations before they entered secretarial work? For younger women, is secretarial work just a transitional or “until” job?⁵ What has been the impact of the transfer of technology and the introduction of new office technologies, especially computers and the Internet, on the work experiences of secretaries at the UPR? What is the range of women’s responses to these

dramatic changes in the workplace? How do cultural and ideological constructs regarding women's roles, social status, and family responsibilities shift in response to new work practices? And what relationship does my case study have to the larger analysis of class formation and reformation in contemporary Puerto Rico? These questions framed my ethnographic research in Puerto Rico.

Often, scholars influenced by Marxian perspectives have privileged the category of class politics, and too often they have written as though class-based political action was the inevitable outcome of the logic of capitalism. In this dissertation, I take a somewhat different tack. While the basis for class-based politics at the University of Puerto Rico existed in Puerto Rican political economy and in women secretaries' experiences, the specific identification of UPR secretaries with the Hermandad's class politics did not develop "organically" or by itself. Rather, the emergence of class politics was the result of consistent grass-roots organizing over a long period of time, led by a cadre of ideologically-committed leftists at the University of Puerto Rico.⁶ In the early 1990s, this ongoing political mobilization engaged the government's intense campaigns for privatization and downsizing of the public sector, which includes the University of Puerto Rico. Class politics and the creation of working-class organizations are not necessarily inevitable, even in the context of economic crises and the structural underdevelopment of Third World societies like Puerto Rico. Working-class identities need to be named, claimed, and mobilized in the arena of social action. The task of the anthropologist becomes to investigate the particular conditions which trigger these mobilizations. This is the project I undertook in my research with secretaries at the

University of Puerto Rico.

In the spring of 1991, during the period of my fieldwork, two events at the Cayey campus of the UPR collided in a way that was to define my research, shedding light on class processes and the intersection of personal lives and union activism. A year earlier, shortly after arriving in Puerto Rico, I proposed organizing a conference on the history and current situation of secretaries at the Cayey campus during National Secretaries Week in April 1991; a conference co-sponsored and organized by secretaries, working in coalition with me. This proposal was accepted by Yamila Azize, Director of *Pro-Mujer*, the Center for Women's Studies at the UPR campus in Cayey, and in the fall of 1990 we began planning the conference, scheduled for Wednesday, April 25, 1991, "*Vamos a Contarnos Nuestra Historia: Las Secretarias Ayer y Hoy*" ("Let Us Tell Our Story: Secretaries Yesterday and Today"). All fifty-four secretaries at the Cayey campus, including fifty-three women and one man, plus students and faculty in the Secretarial Sciences Department and Center for Women's Studies, would be granted leave from their regular work hours to devote the entire day to analyzing the meaning of secretarial work and sharing their personal experiences on the job. As a way of reflecting on the history of office work, I arranged for a display of antique office machinery from two private collections, as well as a gallery of historical photographs of secretaries in Puerto Rico from the 1950s through 1990, which I had collected.⁷ These exhibits were designed to stimulate personal memories and encourage secretaries to critically reflect upon their work experiences, and to encourage younger students in Secretarial Sciences to ask questions of older workers about their work experiences.

One of my key objectives for the conference was to engage secretaries in the project of claiming public space for themselves as workers whose history was worthy of academic study, to facilitate the inclusion of secretaries in the historical pantheon of women workers in Puerto Rico – the tobacco workers, coffee harvesters, seamstresses, and garment workers of previous eras whose work histories and labor struggles were already established in the lexicon of Puerto Rican labor and women's studies. This orientation was a departure from traditional activities organized in Puerto Rico to celebrate National Secretaries' Week. The holiday began as National Secretaries' Day – celebrated as it is in the United States on the fourth Wednesday in April. In Puerto Rico, the holiday was transformed into a week-long celebration in the late 1980s, reflecting the importance of secretarial work within the Puerto Rican economy. The week is marked by elaborate dinners, concerts, cabaret performances, fashion shows, gifts, and flowers for secretaries, paid for by bosses and supervisors.⁸ Attending work-related seminars on topics ranging from improving computer skills, building self-esteem, and appropriate office fashion is another conventional way of celebrating National Secretaries Day. Although this is a much smaller and more recent tradition in Puerto Rico, it is the approach favored by the professional association for secretaries that is active in Puerto Rico, Professional Secretaries International (PSI).

The conference I planned for Secretaries Day on April 24, 1991 at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico was a very different kind of celebration. I created an Advisory Board and coalition of sponsors for the conference from different sectors of the college community, including: the Hermandad representative for the Cayey

campus, who was a secretary; representatives of the administration from the Office of the Rector (the local college president); the Director and Office Manager of *Pro-Mujer* (the Center for Women's Studies); and professors and students from the Department of Secretarial Sciences. To guarantee the participation of secretaries in shaping the content and format of the program, I formed a Conference Organizing Committee comprised of six interested secretaries working at the Cayey campus, including the Hermandad representative at the Cayey campus, and myself. Our first planning meetings took place in the fall of 1990. Starting in January 1991, the Organizing Committee began to meet every two weeks, and then weekly during March and April. We worked energetically and with excitement to prepare for the celebratory conference.

Yet as we worked on the conference, the Cayey campus became a center of militant labor activity sponsored by the Hermandad trade union. The Hermandad represents more than 3,000 non-teaching staff employees at all thirteen units of the University of Puerto Rico – eleven separate campuses and two administrative centers (see Appendix No. 1). Seventy percent of these workers are women, including the secretaries who are the focus of my dissertation. In response to the administration's demand for cuts in employees' medical benefits, the Hermandad initiated a year-long campaign to retain the benefits won in previous contracts. In February of 1991, at an Emergency National Assembly of the Hermandad, university workers voted overwhelmingly to go on strike, in the form of a work slowdown they called "*brazos caídos*" (literally translated as working with fallen arms). This strategy, called "working-to-contract" in the United States labor movement, means that workers refuse all requests for extra effort or longer hours, outside

the narrowest definition of their job descriptions. Student activists supported the Hermandad's campaign, and organized their own student strike in the spring of 1991 against the university administration's proposals for a steep rise in tuition and cutbacks in academic programs.

In the context of the Hermandad's strike, our Conference Organizing Committee in Cayey began to question whether or not to proceed with the conference. For campus secretaries, the labor struggle with management gave an extra impetus to the conference, which would document their contribution to the functioning and prestige of the university. At the same time, although the conference was never identified by the Hermandad as a violation of the union's decision to engage in a work slowdown, the viability of the conference began to be questioned; it entailed extra work on the part of campus secretaries and it was structured as a coalition project between workers and the administration. The first indication that the conference might be affected by the strike came in February 1991 when the keynote speaker, Doña Angélica Meléndez from the Río Piedras campus of the UPR, informed us that she planned to withdraw from the program if the Hermandad was still engaged in a labor dispute with management at the time of the April conference. The secretaries in Cayey quickly found another keynote speaker, a recently retired secretary who worked at the Cayey campus for more than twenty-five years. Then, on March 6, the Hermandad called a one-day strike (*un paro*) that paralyzed all eleven campuses and the two administrative units of the university. On April 11, thousands of workers and students participated in a mass march in support of the Hermandad in Río Piedras. It looked like the conference might become another arena in

which the labor dispute was dramatically played out. Would significant numbers of union supporters decide to boycott the conference? Would a successful conference undermine the Hermandad's strike efforts and be perceived as evidence of support for the administration?

Ironically, the very success I had achieved in creating a conference sponsored by diverse sectors of the college community in Cayey, including the secretaries trade union, *the college administration*, the Center for Women's Studies, and the Department of Secretarial Sciences, obligated both sides of the labor struggle to work together and, in the context of an intensifying labor struggle, the structural tension created by such a coalition became increasingly untenable. Secretaries, inside and outside the ranks of union activists, began to raise doubts about attending the conference. A growing number of women began to express their reluctance to participate in a program which included an elaborate luncheon at the Rector's home, paid for and ceremoniously served by administrators – the very people these secretaries accused of cutting their benefits and “taking food off our children's plates.” At this point, secretaries were clearly injecting the language of class and political action into relationships with their bosses, whereas only a few months earlier, many of them had used a more ambivalent form of speech. Ultimately, the only reasonable solution was to “postpone,” in effect cancel, the conference.

The conflict between the conference and the strike – discussed more fully in Chapter Three – provides a lens for looking at secretaries' daily lives, the Hermandad trade union, the larger issues of ethnographic methodology, and the project of building a

working-class anthropology. The conference/strike controversy enables us to ask questions about class identity, class consciousness, and the complex work lives of secretaries. While delving into these questions, I necessarily frame them as questions about gender, race and the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter One explores the dynamic tension between advocacy anthropology and the practice of dialogical or interpretive anthropology in the production of ethnographic knowledge. This discussion is then related to the process of creating working-class histories (see Green, 2000 and Zandy, 2001), paying special attention to methodological issues raised by feminist and post-colonial anthropologists (e.g. Asad, 1975; Behar, 1993; Behar and Gordon, 1995; Bookman and Morgen, 1988; Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Stack, 1996; Diane Wolf, 1996; and Zavella, 1989 and 1996). The process of creating inter-subjectivity is explored through discussion of ethnographic authority and the tension created by the multiple voices of subjects and anthropologists. I examine the production of ethnographic knowledge as a potential resource for our conversants and interlocutors, in addition to its role in the development of anthropology. Chapter One concludes with a review of the research conducted by three anthropologists involved with the production of life histories, including: David Stoll's (1999) critique of Rigoberta Menchú's (1984, 1997) autobiography and the recent debate over Menchú's book (Arias, 2001); Barbara Myerhoff's (1978, 1992)

ethnography, film and theater project on the lives of elderly Jewish-Americans in Venice, California and Marc Kaminsky's critique of Myerhoff's erasure of the political histories and ideological commitments of her conversants, in her efforts to foreground their religious beliefs and practices; and the publication of the life history of a Puerto Rican sugarcane worker, Don Taso Zayas, created by Zayas and anthropologist Sidney Mintz (1974, 1989). My work on the secretaries' conference, taken together with my interviews of secretaries and the ethnographic material presented in succeeding chapters of the dissertation, constitutes my response to the strengths and limitations contained in the work of these other anthropologists. As such, the dissertation represents my effort to contribute to the construction of a working-class anthropology, grounded in the specific history and culture of women workers and secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico in the early 1990s.

The title of Chapter One, "Don Taso's Granddaughters," refers to Mintz's (1974) effort to integrate the genres of autobiography, memoir, and political economy in the publication of a Puerto Rican proletarian life-history that focused on the work, political development, family life, and religious conversion of Don Taso Zayas. In this chapter, I metaphorically extend Mintz's project to encompass the working-class women secretaries I studied at the University of Puerto Rico in the early 1990s, more than forty years after the collaboration began between Mintz and Zayas. My meetings with Don Taso and his family in the spring of 1991 inspired this connection. Over the course of several visits, I was profoundly moved by the dignity, fortitude, and faith that guided Don Taso as I listened to his stories about work and his family in the years since he first met Mintz.

While some family members had migrated to the United States to live in Connecticut, other children and grandchildren still lived next door to Don Taso, who continued to live in the same house in Barrio Jauca, municipality of Santa Isabel where he resided in the 1940s.

By the 1990s, the sugar economy controlled by absentee United States sugar corporations, which had completely dominated all aspects of life in Puerto Rico, was long gone, although it was still easy to read the history embedded in the landscape and visible artifacts. On the long ride from San Juan to Don Taso's home, we passed abandoned cane fields allowed to go wild, the remnants of cement irrigation ditches crisscrossing the fields and plainly visible in cleared areas, a few abandoned truck-beds and wagons used to transport cane from the fields, sections of train tracks no longer in use, and the rusted and abandoned *arañas* (literally, spiders), the name given to the machines used to load cane – machines still considered new when Mintz published Don Taso's life story (Mintz, 1974: 281).⁹ Nearer to Don Taso's home, it is still possible to see two relics from an even earlier era of Puerto Rico's sugar economy, represented by the red-brick chimneys of the 19th century *ingenios de azúcar*, the more archaic sugar mills that predated the industrial sugar *centrales* of the early 20th century, set back from the road in the cane fields and still reaching up into the sky. These are icons of a past era, when the family-owned haciendas of the old, agricultural elite controlled the sugar economy and social life in Puerto Rico, before the United States assumed colonial control of Puerto Rico in 1898.

During one of my visits with Don Taso, I learned that his granddaughter, Lucía, was studying secretarial sciences at a college in the nearby city of Ponce. Her career

choice was understandable, and similar to the choices being made by young working-class women, given the more sophisticated technical skills required to obtain employment in economies increasingly dominated by financial and high-tech industries in the private sector and service industries in the public-sector. In consideration of these commonalities, and my desire to engage in a collaborative research project with secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico that resonated with the project between Mintz and Zayas, the title of Chapter One, “Don Taso’s Granddaughters” is intended to claim methodological connections and historical continuities.

Chapter Two uses the lens of social mobility to introduce the ethnographic setting and discuss the rise of secretarial work within the political economy of Puerto Rico. It opens with a discussion of the meaning of my dissertation’s title, “From Bootstrap to Shoulderstrap.” This lays the groundwork for an exploration of the rhetoric of upward mobility in Puerto Rican society, with a special focus on the power this ideology plays among secretaries. The concept of upward mobility finds expression in both the government’s programs for economic development implemented in the 1950s under the title, “Operation Bootstrap,” and in the values and beliefs of individuals. Visions of upward mobility shape many of the life choices made by working-class people, and the narrative structure they use in the stories they tell. This includes the secretaries in my research project.

The myths and realities of social mobility, including migration as a strategy for mobility, have been mobilized throughout the twentieth century in Puerto Rico in the form of public and government policy and development planning, as well as in terms of

the private decisions made by families and individuals. Chapter Two reviews Puerto Rico's rapid transition from an agricultural society to one based in industrial production in the 1950s and 1960s, revisits the country's second economic transformation of the 1970s and 1980s, as the society became increasingly dominated by finance and high-tech industries in the private sector and the service economy within the large public sector. The rapid rise in secretarial positions and clerical work, the exponential increase of women workers in these positions, and the intensification of gender stratification in this occupational field shaped the work experiences and expectations of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico.

Historical and political-economic analysis presented in Chapter Two provides the background for understanding why secretaries at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico would mobilize class identities and privilege their loyalty to the Hermandad trade union over the celebratory conference on secretarial work, which emphasized their professional and gender identities. Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, together with all women workers in Puerto Rico, encounter a variety of social challenges that can be categorized on three levels. At work, they have to contend with low wages and poor working conditions. As women living in a male-dominated society reinforced by institutional structures of discrimination against women and male supremacist belief systems, they face a double work that includes their primary responsibility for family and household work in addition to their jobs as members of the salaried workforce. And they are members of a civil society whose government cannot make any final decisions about Puerto Rico's budget, economy, migration, environmental protection, or political status;

their language, culture and history are belittled and dismissed in comparison with the United States; and their wages are kept artificially low through special arrangements between the Commonwealth government and the U.S. Congress. In connection with these conditions, it is significant to note that the period of my fieldwork coincided with increased political mobilizations in defense of Puerto Rico's national/ethnic identity as Puerto Ricans (*la puertorriqueñidad*), such as the 1990 preparations for a proposed plebiscite on Puerto Rico's political status, supervised by the United States Congress, and mobilizations of women's gender identity to defend and strengthen *Ley 54*, Puerto Rico's comprehensive law against domestic violence that was established during the period of my fieldwork in the summer of 1989. While UPR secretaries were actively involved in the political mobilizations based on gender and national identity, the class-based campaigns of the Hermandad were most successful in harnessing women workers' commitment and participation.

Chapter Three, "A Secretaries' Conference vs. A Secretaries' Strike," describes the before-mentioned process of creating an analytical and celebratory conference on the history of secretarial work at the University of Puerto Rico. I detail the parallel development of the secretarial strike, and I elaborate on the growing conflict between these two projects, which ultimately led to the demise of the conference. In presenting an ethnographic history of the strike, I show how key events, such as the university-wide general strike and the mass march, became mechanisms in the development of a working-class identity and a new class consciousness among secretaries.

The title of Chapter Four, “New Tappings on the Keys,” suggests the creative and innovative strategies UPR secretaries develop to mediate the complex demands on their time and energy, and their skill in negotiating computer technology and other features of the automated office. This chapter focuses on the culture and daily lives of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico to help explain why UPR secretaries would manifest solidarity with the Hermandad trade union and why they finally decided to cancel the conference for Secretaries’ week, a course of action not proposed by the Hermandad. Discussion of secretaries’ work world and the pressures of daily life facilitates an understanding of why secretaries would privilege class politics as the vehicle to advance their concerns. The choice of class needs to be examined because it may seem more unusual, given the highly gendered nature of secretarial work. Gender relations between male supervisors and female secretaries are invoked to manipulate secretaries to work harder and for longer hours to prove they are caring and loyal, like women, mothers, and female lovers *should* be; these issues are further described in Chapter Four.

The arbitrary and often unfair manner in which office resources (including the computers necessary to accomplish the required work) and personal privileges (ranging from tolerated absences and tardiness to actual gifts and services) are distributed by bosses and supervisors, both male and female, often leads to intense competition and distrust among women secretaries and clerical workers. I observed these practices during my participant/observation work in various UPR offices and I heard many stories about problems of this kind from UPR secretaries. The stereotypes about secretaries also call upon the ideology of gender, as when secretaries are described as fluffy-headed coquettes,

treated like simpletons who are unable to make decisions on their own, or considered unimportant players – often socially invisible – in the context of office politics. Given that many of the negative attitudes and structural constraints secretaries face are articulated through the idiom of gender inequality, it is especially significant to explore why UPR secretaries did not organize their struggle for workplace fairness and dignity primarily through the mobilization of their gender identity. This question is addressed more fully in Chapter Four.

The mobilization of words constitutes the primary focus of all secretarial work: words are simultaneously the tools secretaries use to do their work and the product of their work. I begin my discussion on secretaries' work worlds and relationships by examining the "keywords" of office work, drawing on Marxist critic Raymond Williams' (1983) approach to the study of language through an analysis of what he called "keywords," words that are ideologically laden and historically important terms. An analysis of the keywords used by UPR secretaries allows me to trace the trajectory of modern, automated office work and its gender, class, and colonial connotations in Puerto Rico. Chapter Four continues with a presentation of life in three very different offices at the main UPR campus of Río Piedras: the Study Abroad and Foreign Student Office; the Department of Secretarial Sciences; and the Social Research Center. While these offices represent different sub-cultures within the University of Puerto Rico, many significant similarities exist in secretaries' daily life and work culture throughout all three work settings. The final section of Chapter Four examines the cultural celebrations that constitute an annual ritual cycle for secretaries. Here, I explore the gendered relations

embedded in the exchange of gifts and favors, in a section of the chapter entitled, “candy, sex, and flowers in the office.”

Chapter Five, “*Hay Que Adobar la Huelga*” (“We Have to Spice Up the Strike”), focuses on the trade union, presenting an ethnographic study of the Hermandad at the University of Puerto Rico. I pay special attention to the political history and culture of the union, showing how its pro-independence and socialist politics have shaped the union’s culture. The information in Chapter Five addresses another facet of the answer to the question about why UPR secretaries would manifest class politics and working-class identity over professional and gender identity as the vehicle for advancing their rights. During the period of my fieldwork, I observed the Hermandad develop and enact a political program that was particularly sensitive to the larger social concerns of secretaries and other non-teaching employees at the University of Puerto Rico. One example of this would be the union’s support for *Ley 54*, Puerto Rico’s first law against domestic violence. The Hermandad was one of the initial endorsers of the law (*Claridad*, 1989), and when the law came under political attack soon after it was passed, the union mobilized its membership to march in support of this legislation.

In its on-campus organizing, the Hermandad skillfully combined traditional styles of working-class politics, such as marches, strikes and picket lines, with the practice of small-group meetings more closely associated with the women’s movement. For example, in the early 1990s, workers met in small groups to discuss concerns about occupational safety and health issues. As part of its educational and cultural work, the union consistently produced high-quality silkscreen posters every year in celebration of

traditional holidays like Christmas, Mother's Day, and Secretaries' Day – as well as posters celebrating more radical and less popular holidays such as International Women's Day and May Day. During the summer of 1991, the activities of the Hermandad included raffles, family picnics, and even a day-long cruise.

Chapter Five also discusses an alternative association for secretaries, Professional Secretaries International (PSI). While founded in the United States, the PSI operated seven chapters in Puerto Rico during the period of my fieldwork and included UPR secretaries among its members. In this sense, the PSI coexists with the Hermandad as an alternative organization for secretaries on university campuses. While the Hermandad organizes collective action to solve workers' problems, the PSI takes pride in being a professional association whose philosophy emphasizes individual comportment to achieve job security and career advancement.

Taking into consideration the methodological and theoretical points developed in Chapter One with regard to the importance of women's life stories for the creation of anthropological knowledge, I foreground the life history of Doña Angélica Meléndez, a university secretary for twenty-five years, a lifelong supporter of independence for Puerto Rico, and a founding member of the Hermandad. Doña Angélica's story opens Chapter Five, an approach that underscores the suggestion that working-class people have the capacity to engage in historical analysis, in addition to providing crucial information for anthropologists and other social scientists. This structure highlights one of the dissertation's key theoretical hypotheses: that larger issues of social history can be addressed through the telling of personal life stories.

The concluding chapter of the dissertation returns to the theoretical questions raised throughout the dissertation: How does the anthropologist produce knowledge in collaboration with the interview subject? How is class identity and consciousness transformed in the context of public political action, whether it be in the form of planning a conference or organizing a strike? How do we understand the intersection of gender, class, and colonialism through the daily lives of women secretaries? Throughout the dissertation, I chart the dialectical tension between history and historical memory on the one hand, and the specific actions chosen by an overwhelmingly female, secretarial work force, in colonial Puerto Rico on the other hand. Although these women workers would seem to have been erased by history and reduced to a position of social invisibility within the dominant culture, they managed to achieve – indeed, to create – social visibility through their actions. The obstacles they faced, the strategies they developed, and the final balance of their failures and successes are part of the project of creating an anthropology of the working class.

The final two sections of this Introduction present my orientation towards class analysis and working-class identity used throughout the dissertation. It also locates my research within the relevant anthropological literature on working-class women in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

My Approach to Class Analysis and Working Class Identity

The role of women in the white-collar world of office work has been a theme in

social science research, since the 1951 publication of C. Wright Mills' pioneering sociological study, White Collar. My work on Puerto Rican secretaries and their trade union organization draws upon the tradition established by Mills and two more recent studies: Carla Freeman's ethnography on women workers in the world of computerized data-entry work in Barbados (Freeman, 2000) and Lynn Bolles' study of the participation of women in the Caribbean trade union movement (Bolles, 1996). My research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico is located in the intersection between Bolles' work on women trade union leaders in the English-speaking Caribbean and Freeman's research on women workers in Barbados' informatics industry, in which she reports that these women were not interested in trade unions or the labor movement. My work from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean begins to suggest an explanation, grounded in Puerto Rican history, for ways to bridge the space between Bolles and Freeman. Bolles argues that women in the informatics industry focus their aspirations for upward mobility within the consumer culture and their ability to obtain status markers in fashion and personal style.¹⁰ While the same issues were prevalent among secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, these women workers increasingly came to view the trade union movement as an important vehicle to guarantee their job security and social advancement, including access to Puerto Rico's highly-developed consumer culture.

My perspective on class politics, and the formation of the working class in particular, is informed by the work of E. P. Thompson, and his proposal that class identities are grounded in relationships established at the workplace (1963). At the same time, class relationships based on differential power and decision-making in the sphere of

economic activity are also created and expressed in social, political, and cultural life outside the workplace. In addition to the Marxist emphasis on the sphere of production, my research also calls upon the Weberian approach to class, which is based on an evaluation of status markers such as income, residence, educational level, language, leisure activities, and patterns of consumption. This approach has been used to create the nomenclature of class identity according to the categories of upper-class, middle-class, lower-class, and lower-middle-class.

C. Wright Mills' study of white-collar workers in the United States (Mills, 1953) was larger in scope and more comprehensive than any previous studies of middle-class life. Mills applied aspects of Marxist theory concerning work, class-based political mobilizations, and alienation together with Weberian concepts of status markers and prestige claims (Mills, 1953: 239-249) in his study of United States white-collar workers in the middle of the 20th century. Mills' work pre-dated most anthropological research on this topic and set the tone for much of the work that followed. More recent work by sociologists and anthropologists studying white-collar workers, and work in general, continue to use Mills' framework as a point of departure for their research, paying particular attention to Mills' discussion of standardization, bureaucratization, deskilling, job fragmentation, routinization, increased automation, and workers' sense of an increasing loss of control over their work process, or what has become called the degradation of work (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; Braverman, 1974; and Gordon, Edwards and Reich, 1982).

Mills encompassed a wide spectrum of occupational categories under the rubric of

white-collar workers, including businessmen, salesmen, small shopkeepers, proprietors of family farms, and professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, academics and public school teachers. Mills discussed the particular condition of secretaries in two sections of his book, "The White-Collar Girl" (Mills, 1953: 198-204), and "The Secretary" (Mills, 1953: 207-209). However, it is significant to note that the data for these two sections – which were some of the only parts of the book that dealt with women workers – was not drawn from sociological or anthropological research, but from literary characterizations of secretaries created by male authors, such as Sinclair Lewis' *Una Golden*, Christopher Morley's *Kitty Foyle* and *Minnie Huzler*, and Booth Tarkington's *Alice Adams*. These literary figures functioned as the voices of secretary-informants in Mills' sociological description (Mills, 1953:198-204).

The most significant difference I have with Mills' perspective on white-collar workers, including secretaries, is his overarching pessimism and despair regarding the possibilities that white collar workers – especially women – could do anything to alter their situation, in the face of the increasing power, monopolization, and anonymity that characterized the large corporations which dominated the United States economy:

White-collar people, always visible but rarely seen, are politically voiceless. . . . the political problem posed by these people is not so much what the (political) direction may be as whether they will take any political direction at all.... . Estranged from community and society in a context of distrust and manipulation; alienated from work and, on the personality market, from self; expropriated of individual rationality, and politically apathetic – these are the new little people, the unwilling vanguard of modern society (Mills, 1953: xvii-xviii).

My disagreement with Mill's assessment can be explained historically. Writing in

the 1950s, Mills doubted that change was possible for white-collar workers. He was not wrong about the challenges they faced, especially in the 1950s when democratic trade unions were under attack by McCarthyism. Within the trade union movement, attitudes towards women workers reflected the dominant cultural attitudes of male supremacy. The prevailing attitude of organized labor regarding women workers at that time was that they were simply unorganizable. It was argued that women would not join trade unions because they did know how to act in groups, they had no loyalty during strikes, they had only a precarious relationship to salaried employment because of their family responsibilities, they were too dispersed in small shops or domestic work, and, in the case of secretaries, they relied too much on ties of personalism with their male bosses to ever identify with fellow workers and a trade union. Women workers were also so poorly paid that the trade union leadership saw no benefit in trying to organize them.

These sexist stereotypes had been successfully challenged in the period before Mills wrote his book on white-collar workers. Between 1937 and 1949, the Union of Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPWA) successfully organized thousands of women office workers. The onset of the Cold War and anti-Communist attacks against labor precipitated the demise of this project in organizing women workers. In 1949, UOPWA was expelled from the CIO as one of the “red” or Communist-led trade unions, under the guidelines of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act passed in 1947 (Massachusetts History Workshop, 1985: 62-67). The case study of UOPWA resonates with the discussion earlier in this introductory chapter, where I describe the role a cadre of committed activists can play in shaping labor history, as happened in the case study of the

Hermidad trade union at the University of Puerto Rico, beginning in the 1970s. The history of UOPWA demonstrates that political shifts in the history of organized labor render class politics fluid and uneven.

I would argue that C. Wright Mills was not wrong in his assessment about the position of white-collar workers in the 1950s – it is just that the lack of organization was not a permanent or totalizing phenomenon. The historical reality of the 1950s changed in the 1960s and 1970s with the upsurge of a new wave of feminist activism in the United States and in Puerto Rico. The 1970s women's movement changed the political landscape in academia and the labor movement. Pursuing a political commitment to rescue the previously hidden work of women, feminist scholars in the 1970s embarked on new research projects in history; in anthropology they created new ways of conducting ethnographic fieldwork (Etienne and Leacock, 1980; Leacock, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1978; Rapp, 1979; Reiter (Rapp), 1975; Rohrllich-Leavitt, 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974; Sacks, 1979; Stack, 1974; and Weiner, 1976). At the same time, feminist activists launched organizing campaigns among women clerical workers, health care workers, home health aides, daycare centers, waitresses,¹¹ and domestic workers; all of whom were engaged in necessary work that was low-paid, low-status, and socially invisible. In addition to these direct campaigns designed to organize women workers, the feminist agenda of the 1970s and 1980s also impacted women workers in a more diffuse manner. General notions about women's equality with men filtered into popular culture and entered the awareness of women who did not consider themselves feminists (Faludi, 1991). A general consensus grew among women, including older workers and women

who were not personally attracted to the feminist political agenda, about the right to equal pay for equal work, and job equity. Among secretaries, phrases like, “He can’t push you around just because you’re a woman,” or “You don’t have to smile, you just have to do your job,” and admonishments and encouragements such as “That’s personal work! You don’t have to make the coffee, or pick up the bosses clothes from the dry cleaners, or order the flowers for his wife; *that’s* not in your job description.”

The 1970s and 1980s were also periods of increased automation, mobility and flexibility within capitalist economic structures which also increased the economic, political, and social pressures experienced by white-collar workers, including the secretaries among them. This process was facilitated by the introduction of computerized office technologies which created a speed-up at work and decreased job security through the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs. In the 1990s, these processes only intensified with the globalization of the capitalist economy, supported by neo-liberal programs for privatization, economic restructuring, and drastic reductions in social services policies. Contemporary researchers studying post-Fordist work relations examine the casualization of labor (Kasimir, 1996), an employment strategy whereby positions that were formerly tenured and full-time are turned into temporary, part-time jobs. These pressures created additional support for organizing efforts among white collar workers and secretaries. One of the objectives of my research was to explore how these processes developed among secretaries in Puerto Rico in the early 1990s. In the specific context of secretarial work, the 1980s and early 1990s witnessed dramatic changes in office personnel and job descriptions. For secretaries in this period, the

process of proletarianization meant that an office which previously employed three full-time clerical workers – a secretary, receptionist, and file clerk – could be reorganized to collapse those three positions into a single position, the new Office Manager, someone who could be paid a lower salary than an experienced secretary, while being expected to do more work and possess greater computer and human relations skills than were expected of a receptionist or file clerk.

Returning to the world of academic scholarship, theoretical and methodological developments during this period document the specific ways new research by feminist anthropologists like Sandra Morgen (1988 and 1989) opened Mills' analysis of white-collar workers in three important ways. First, they gendered the analysis to include women workers, who were severely under-represented in Mills' book. Second, they challenged prevailing notions about where and how identities of class and gender are constructed, rupturing traditional assumptions that class relations were only constructed and reproduced in the workplace – the traditional domain of men, while gender relations were thought to be constructed and reproduced exclusively within the realm of the family and household – women's traditional sphere of activity and influence. To the contrary, feminist scholars in the 1980s documented that gender relations were also created and reproduced at work and class relations were created and reproduced in the family and household (Bookman and Morgen, 1988; Morgen and Bookman, 1988). This led to the proposal that research on gender, class and race should be integrated in order to trace the patterns of their articulation and disjuncture. And third, an important goal of feminist anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s, also discussed by Morgen and Bookman (1988),

was the commitment to hold onto the dialectical tension between two tendencies within scholarship on women and society: the research trajectory that focuses on the impact of institutionalized discrimination and subordination of women at home, work and in civil society and proposes strategies to address these problems; and the research trajectory that emphasizes and celebrates women's achievements, creativity, cultural innovations, and resiliency in the face of major obstacles to their full participation in society. On its own, *either tendency can lead to a distorted picture of women's position, as either desperately hopeless under the weight of male supremacy, or naively optimistic, based on the celebration of women's personal power, spiritual affirmations, and manifestations of sororal solidarity.*

The literature on secretaries and other clerical workers published as part of feminist scholars' project to study and reclaim women's work history and organizing abilities reflects these tensions. Some authors express a similar degree of pessimism and despair regarding the condition of white-collar workers that echoed Mills' conclusions, as in Mary Benet's (1972) description of the "secretarial ghetto," or Barbara Garson's (1988) metaphor for computerized office work as an "electronic sweatshop," and Louis Howe's (1977) discussion of the "pink collar ghetto." Other writers are cautious, but more hopeful, such as Ellen Cassedy and Karen Nussbaum (1983) who wrote a "guide to office survival," and Judy Foreman's (1981) who observed that secretaries want "raises, not roses," and Cynthia Saltzman's (1988) somber reminder that "you can't eat prestige." The literature also reflects a new appraisal of women's relationships with trade unions, as evidenced in Roslyn Feldberg's (1980) description of "union fever" among secretaries, or

Sue Cobble's (1999) assessment of the relationship between women workers and the labor movement, which she describes as "forging a new partnership," and the observation by Toni Gilpin et al, (1988) that clerical workers are "on strike for respect." Affirmations about the value of secretarial work and secretaries's pride in their accomplishments are found in the Massachusetts History Workshop (1985) assertion that "they can't run the office without us," in Jean Tepperman's (1976) explanation that secretaries are "not servants, not machines," and in Sharon Strom's (Massachusetts History Workshop 1985: 75) assertion about secretaries, "We're No Kitty Foyles" which directly challenges Christopher Morley's literary depiction of a secretary – one of the literary characters used by Mills in his discussion of secretaries, above.

Studies that focus on the perspectives of women workers pay close attention to the ways they describe their work, documenting secretaries' pride in their work and their sense of accomplishment, *as well as* their frustrations over work rules, speed-up, managerial control, low wages and benefits, and poor working conditions. A comparative study on African American domestic workers in the United States by Bonnie Thornton Dill (1988) documents the ways these undervalued, overworked, and underpaid women workers take pride in their work and their advice to women working in similar positions, expressed in the title of Dill's article, about "making your job good yourself." Among the studies of women clerical workers, the most successful research attempts to integrate women's gender and class experiences in the workplace with their experiences in the arenas of family, household and community. This approach, first developed by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (1994), was used by Karen Sacks (1988) in her ethnography on African

American clerical workers at Duke University Medical Center. Sacks traces the ways African American women workers invoke the networking approach they created through their church and club activities to create strategies for coping with problems at work. The title of Sacks' ethnography captures the dual nature of secretaries' work – affirming women's skills and commitment to help others amidst the pressures they face with increased speed-up and the push for lower wages – in very simple terms, “caring by the hour.”

Contemporary academics confront the issue downward mobility in their own lives and work, a process identified by Mills in the 1950s (Mills, 1953:129-136) and more recently by Katherine Newman (1989) who writes about “falling from grace” in her analysis of the proletarianization of contemporary middle classes in the United States. These workers live with constant anxiety over their job security and they face a losing battle to maintain the social status and patterns of consumption previously established for their sector of the professional middle class. Perhaps this personal experience has an impact on the theoretical orientation of some of the researchers studying secretaries and clerical workers who emphasize the hopelessness and despair caused by automation and deskilling.

The experience of downward mobility is not unique to academic researchers, however; this theme was also expressed in some of the interviews I had with secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. Women workers who came from middle-class families and/or achieved significant middle-class status markers by obtaining a college degree expressed frustration over their inability to achieve the status, salary, and work

satisfaction they aspired to while growing up or attending college. My dissertation takes this perspective into account and this is one reason why I describe the office as a “contested zone of class tension” between sectors of workers with different family class backgrounds and educational experiences who, while doing the same job and earning the same salary, maintain dramatically different interpretations of their work world.

Within the offices at the University of Puerto Rico that I studied, the emphasis on individual skill and striving that come from middle-class women’s experiences merged with the traditions of trade union organizing and political mobilization developed in working-class communities to create new personal and political possibilities for secretaries. While the secretaries I spoke with were aware of the limitations of their jobs, especially with regard to low salaries and the lack of opportunities for advancement, they were proud of the work they did and eager to create new techniques for improving their surroundings.

Comparative Literature from the Caribbean and Puerto Rico

In addition to reviewing the relevant social science literature on women office workers in the United States, it is important to locate this study within Puerto Rican and Caribbean research on the working class, and within the research on women office workers, in particular. Research in the Commonwealth Caribbean through the mid-20th century was dominated by research on kinship and social stratification. The emphasis was placed on social problems that impeded economic and social development in the post

independence period. Studies emphasized the presumed deleterious impact of matrifocal family structures and female headed households, and rigid status hierarchies associated with “color” and “race” in the Anglophone Caribbean. In addition, the complexities of racial and religious differences among Creoles of all color gradations, South Asians, and East Asians were also seen as cause for concern – especially in Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Social views of racial and ethnic differences between Creole and Mestizo populations in Belize, between island societies and Belize and Guyana on the mainland of Central and South America in the British West Indies likewise came under scrutiny (Vera Rubin, 1960; M.G. Smith 1974; Raymond T. Smith, 1960, 1988). These issues were identified as the key obstacles to the process of Caribbean national formation, decolonization, and West Indian regional federation in the 1950s and 1960s.

One of the best examples of this approach to Caribbean social development can be found in the concluding chapter of Michael G. Smith’s book, The Plural Society in the British West Indies (M.G. Smith, 1974: 304-321). A radical paradigm shift took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Informed by mass political mobilizations, popular culture, Black Power, anti-imperialism, and the movement of non-aligned nations, a new research agenda developed in the Anglophone Caribbean that returned to the themes of family structure, race and religion only to document the cultural innovations, richness, vitality, and resilience of Caribbean popular culture -- the same culture previously considered substandard, inferior and detrimental to social welfare (Bolles, 1986; Freeman, 1997; James, 1963, 1980; Gordon K. Lewis, 1968, 1983; López-Springfield, 1997; Munroe and Robotham, 1977; Robotham, 1998, 1999; Rodney, 1981; Sunshine, 1988).

The overarching historical and sociological framework of the mid 20th century subsumed class issues and the development of working-class organizations under the rubric of Parsonian models of plural societies and the elusive search for social cohesion and integration. For example, in his book, The Plural Society of the British West Indies, made only a brief reference to the massive social unrest and radical strikes that took place in Jamaica during 1938-1939 (M.G. Smith, 1974). Smith made no mention of the trade union leader of the strikes, Hugh Buchanan, and mentioned the Jamaican trade union and political leader Alexander Bustamante only in passing, dismissing him as a charismatic leader with no program for reform (M.G. Smith, 1974: 315). Most significantly, Smith placed responsibility for the lack of any substantive social change on the working-class masses, arguing that they “were accustomed to thinking about their position in fatalistic racial and magico-religious terms” (M.G. Smith, 1974: 315). Smith also completely ignored the work of Marcus Garvey in Jamaica.

Working-class politics in the Caribbean played a central role in the history of the region (see Munroe and Robotham, 1977; Sunshine, 1988; Bolles, 1996: 2-3, 50-54). For example, Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1927 after being imprisoned and then deported from the United States, receiving “a triumphant hero’s welcome from Jamaican workers” (Sunshine, 1985: 37). In the midst of tremendous government repression, he organized the first anti-colonial party in Jamaica’s history, the People’s Political Party (PPP), which ran candidates in the 1929 council elections before he departed for England in 1935. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, massive labor unrest took place throughout Caribbean, precipitating the growth of working-class organizations and political parties.

In 1933, a strike by oilfield workers in Trinidad was followed by a hunger march in 1935 and a general strike in 1937, led by Grenadian-born oil worker, Tubal Uriah Butler; the strike was only put down by the arrival of a British destroyer and contingent of British Marines (Sunshine, 1985: 38). In 1935, a strike by sugarcane workers in St. Kitts was violently repressed, food riots took place in St. Vincent, there was a strike by coal stokers in St. Lucia, and a strike by sawmill workers against the largest employer in Belize. Meanwhile, “the middle class was politely pursuing constitutional reform” (Sunshine, 1985: 37).

In the 1960s, many heads of state in the newly-independent nations of the English-speaking Caribbean espoused socialist convictions and pro-working class political platforms early in their careers, as did Governor Luis Muñoz Marín in Puerto Rico, only to abandon this commitment in favor of economic development and industrialization programs dependent on foreign capital investment, once they were elected.¹² This post-independence shift in political positions held by popular leaders was paralleled in the political history of Puerto Rico, in which Luis Muñoz Marín renounced his socialist and pro-independence positions in favor of industrialization and close ties with the United States once he came to power in 1948. Puerto Rico’s program for rapid industrialization, Operation Bootstrap, was inaugurated shortly thereafter. The ruling Popular Democratic Party began an intense campaign of repression against the Nationalist Party, led by Pedro Albizu Campos. The PDP demonized and criminalized both the political party and the idea of independence, forcing its leaders into jail and exile. The Puerto Rican model for economic development, “Operation Bootstrap,” was quickly exported to other Caribbean

settings, skillfully promoted by Arthur Lewis, an economist from St. Vincent (W. Arthur Lewis, 1950). The Operation Bootstrap model also became dominant in Jamaica, with the development of the bauxite industry by three giant United States aluminum corporations,¹³ and in Trinidad, where economic growth based on United States investment in the oilfields became dominant during the administration of Eric Williams. As Catherine Sunshine concludes, “By the end of the 1960s, it was clear to many in the Caribbean that industrialization is really the absentee owner transferred from agriculture to industry” (Sunshine, 1988: 49).

After decolonization and the establishment of politically independent nations in the English-speaking Caribbean in the 1960s, the new governments failed to resolve the problems of entrenched class structures and social inequality, regardless of their electoral promises and the programmatic platforms of their political parties. In response to this failure and the widespread social crisis and popular discontent that ensued, a new generation of scholars and activists emerged in the Caribbean, focusing on class issues, working-class political organizations, and popular culture as their primary research concerns. This research trajectory includes Walter Rodney’s (1981) book on the history of the working class in Guyana and the development of an anti-imperialist Black Power movement throughout the Caribbean; Trevor Monroe and Don Robotham’s research on the decolonization process and the history of working class struggle in Jamaica (Monroe, 1972; Munroe and Robotham, 1977); Rex Nettleford’s (1978) research on Jamaica’s cultural identity; and the collection of books and essays written by C. L. R. James (1963, 1980). This new body of Caribbean scholarship is comparable to the development of

CEREP, the *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña*, (Center for the Study of Puerto Rican Reality) in Puerto Rico in 1970 (CEREP, 1984).

In the context of Puerto Rico, social research begun in the early years of United States control focused on issues relevant to colonial administration and the Americanization of the Puerto Rican people. A new kind of research began to develop in Puerto Rico in the late 1940s – one that began to focus on the working class. The classic work by José Luis González (1990),¹⁴ Puerto Rico: The Four Storeyed Country, articulated a working-class retelling of Puerto Rican history. He identified *la plebe*, (the plebeian or proletarians) as a conscious, historical subjects, comparable to Herbert Gutman's (1977) approach to United States history and the American Working-Class History Project established at the City University of New York (CUNY). The work by González has been particularly illuminating for my efforts to conceptualize a working-class framework for studying secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico.

In the 1940s, most United States scholarship in Puerto Rico continued to focus on issues of poverty and colonial dependency, establishing the basis for an entire subfield in anthropology that developed in the 1960s by Oscar Lewis and became known as the “culture of poverty” tradition (Lewis, 1966).¹⁵ Yet, a new research trajectory emerged in United States anthropological research conducted in Puerto Rico in the late 1940s, focusing on holistic studies of local communities and working-class people, beginning with Julian Steward's (1956) anthology, The People of Puerto Rico. Within this volume, Sidney Mintz's work on proletarians in the dominant sugar economy (Steward, 1956: 314- 417) and Eric Wolf's study of workers in Puerto Rico's coffee economy (Steward,

1956: 171-264) are especially significant.¹⁶

Another anthropologist from the United States, Helen Safa, began her research in Puerto Rico in the 1950s, studying urban slums within the context of development models and Puerto Rico's political economy (Safa, 1974). Safa consciously chose to avoid the then-dominant framework of an essentialized vision of the culture of poverty, a naturalized and self-perpetuating subculture assumed to exist outside the productive realm of work and lacking a dynamic relationship or articulation with the high rates of structural unemployment endemic in Puerto Rico. Safa continued her research on Puerto Rican working women and their class-consciousness throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (Safa, 1980, 1985, 1986, 1995). Her most recent work on the myth of the male breadwinner is a cross-cultural comparison of women factory workers in three Spanish-speaking Caribbean contexts, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (Safa, 1995). Her analysis of the economic contribution of female workers in relation to male workers and in relation to women's family and household responsibilities challenges many long-held assumptions about the function of women's work in the household economy.

More recent work by Ida Susser in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico examines the linkages between family and household structures with the community's political struggle against Union Carbide (Kreniske and Susser, n.d.) and the role of women as social actors on issues of pollution, family health care and chronic unemployment (Susser 1985). Susser's focus on the mobilization of women and their growing leadership in this community struggle, and her ability to integrate the community into larger, transnational

processes is particularly relevant to my research on the political activism and growing leadership of women within the Hermandad trade union.

The social crisis of the 1970s that took place throughout the Caribbean region duly affected Puerto Rico, where the particular attributes of the crisis included economic stagnation, rising levels of poverty and unemployment, social dislocation, rural depopulation. The crisis also gave rise to social movements to combat these problems, including the university student movement against the draft and the U. S. war in Viet Nam; the women's movement; the squatters' movement or *rescates* (land rescues); and a revitalized, *independiente* trade union movement autonomous from the United States AFL-CIO labor federation. In response to the crisis, a new generation of Puerto Rican scholars and activists developed a rich body of interdisciplinary studies on the history of working-class Puerto Ricans. This is represented by the publications of *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña* (CEREP), the Center for the Study of Puerto Rican Reality and their first volume, *La otra cara de la historia* (The Other Face of History) by González and Rivera (1984). CEREP's research includes histories of specific industries, like the sugar economy, as well as more synthetic analyses of Puerto Rico's political economy as researched by such historians as Guillermo Baralt, Gervasio García, Fernando Picó, and Angel Quintero Rivera (García and Quintero Rivera, 1980, 1986; Quintero Rivera, 1974, 1976; Rivera Medina and Ramírez, 1985). This literature provided the grounding for my historical and political economic framework, and it is especially relevant to the topics discussed in Chapter Two.

Beginning in the 1970s, women scholar-activists documented the participation of

women workers in the development of Puerto Rican society. In the process they have created a rich body of literature in women's studies. Research by Puerto Rican women scholars on the issue of women and work includes two books by Edna Acosta Belén and Christine Bose (Acosta Belén, 1986; Bose and Acosta Belén, 1995) on Puerto Rican women in general, while Luz del Alba Acevedo, (1987, 1990, 1995) and Palmira Ríos González (1990, 1993, 1995) documented women's work within the 20th century process of industrialization in Puerto Rico. María del Carmen Baerga (1993), Lydia Milagros González, (1990, 1993), and Luisa Hernández Angueira (1993) focused specifically on the work of women within the needle trades industry. Alice Colón (1996) and Carmen Angélica Perez Herranz (1990, 1996) examined women workers in Puerto Rico's garment industry. Yamila Azize (1985, 1987), CERES (1986), and Norma Valle Ferrer (1990) created detailed histories of women workers, and their participation in political parties and the labor movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Liliana Cotto Morales (1987) and Blanca Silvestrini (1986) on women workers and the labor movement in the 1970s. Marya Muñoz-Vázquez (1996) documented the struggles of women factory workers battling occupational health issues in the city of Mayagüez. Janice Petrovich and Sandra Laureano (1987) focused on women in the informal economy. Alba Nydia Rivera Ramos (1991) explored the stress of women workers, and the perception of women workers in Puerto Rican society. Zoraida Santiago Centeno (1987) examined the impact of gender stereotypes on young women's career selections. During the period of my fieldwork, this robust body of literature was being incorporated into popular culture through radio shows, films and television programs by feminist journalists like Norma Valle Carmen Jovet, and

academics committed to popularizing scholarly research like Ruth Silva Bonilla and Yamila Azize, who would organize film screenings and art exhibits to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8th) in the main plaza of San Juan's most elaborate shopping mall, *Plaza de las Américas*. These themes were also incorporated into the program of the Hermandad trade union and its educational work at the University of Puerto Rico. Access to these resources allowed me to ground my research on secretaries at the UPR within the framework of established literature. For example, the biography by Valle (1990) on the life of Luisa Capetillo, a Puerto Rican labor organizer and feminist active during the first two decades of the twentieth century has been particularly influential on my thinking about the ways contemporary working-class women in Puerto Rico develop theoretically complex analytical frameworks.

Related literature by Puerto Rican women scholars on the issue of women and poverty complements the research on women workers. This includes the work of Nilsa Burgos, Doris Capello, Linda Colón, and Luisa Hernández Angueira on Puerto Rican women and the welfare state (see Capello and Casey, 1995), Linda Colón's work on women and poverty (1988), and the research of Rosa Torruellas, Rina Benmayor and Ana Juarbe (1996) on Puerto Rican women and welfare in New York City. Given the close connections between employed and unemployed members of the Puerto Rican working class and the expectations of mutual assistance among extended family networks, the information contained in these studies has a special resonance with my research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. Non-teaching researchers in women's studies at the University of Puerto Rico are also represented by the Hermandad trade

union and secretaries were intimately involved in the writing, editing and publication of these studies.

Another field of investigation pursued by women researchers in Puerto Rico during the 1970s and 1980s focused on women's bodies and violence against women. This includes works by Yamila Azize on sterilization abuse, abortion and reproductive rights; Sara Benítez on violence against women; Virgen Cáceres and Janette Rodríguez's work on sexual harassment, violence against women, and postpartum depression; publications by CERES on abortion and reproductive rights, and on the participation of women in society; publications by the Governor's Commission for Women's Affairs (*Comision para los Ascends de la Maguire*, 1989) on violence against women; Ana Luisa Dávila's work on sterilization, contraception, abortion and population politics; Annie Fabian's work on women and AIDS, and community consciousness; Lida Martine's work on gender stereotyping in the curriculum and educational practices of teachers; Mary Muñoz-Vásquez (1988) on divorce, sexual harassment, occupational and environmental health; Alba Nadia Rivera Ramos' (1991) work on the psycho-social aspects of women's lives; Carmen Rivera's work on domestic violence; Madeline Roman's work on criminality, the politicization of daily life, and women and the state; Ruth Silva Banally's work on sexual harassment, violence against women, abortion, and new reproductive technologies; and Esther Vicente's work on sexual harassment, domestic violence, abortion and reproductive rights.

Although not considered part of the traditional concerns of any trade union movement, these issues were crucial to the lives of the secretaries I studied at the

University of Puerto Rico. Consequently, the Hermandad trade union took strong positions on the issues of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and the double shift of women workers. As noted above, the Hermandad was one of the national sponsors of Puerto Rico's law against domestic violence, *Ley 54*, that was passed into law in the summer of 1989. The Hermandad's collective bargaining agreement contained strong language on the issue of sexual harassment. The union was also able to negotiate the right to establish onsite daycare centers, co-directed by union and management representatives and paid for by the university at campuses throughout the university system. This work by Hermandad activists and elected leaders meant that issues assumed to be strictly within the realm of "women's concerns" became *union* concerns. Thus they also became men's concerns as men joined the union's struggle to defend women's rights and family rights.¹⁷

My work is located within the parameters established by these scholars. Research on Puerto Rican labor history has a direct relevance to my study of women workers and their trade union. Research in women's studies identified many of the problems faced by women – including UPR secretaries – and the range of strategies Puerto Rican women continue to develop in order to resolve gender oppression and inequality. The primary objectives of my research are to learn more about the ways women workers analyze their problems and position in Puerto Rican society and to document the social action they undertake to change their situation. The analyses made by working-class women and the contribution of their stories to the production of ethnographic knowledge is one of the major issues explored in Chapter One.

Endnotes

1. My fieldwork was supported by the Dissertation Research Award program of Intercambio, the City University of New York-University of Puerto Rico Academic Exchange Program. *Intercambio* provided funding support for three periods of fieldwork research in Puerto Rico, including: six weeks of preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 1989, nineteen months of intensive fieldwork from January, 1990 through July, 1991, and another six weeks in May and June of 1992. I am especially indebted to Dr. Antonio Lauria Perricelli, in his capacity as Director of *Intercambio*, for the intellectual challenge and support he provided from the inception of my research, and his respect for my work in the CUNY Working Class Anthropology Project.
2. See, for example, Paul Rothenberg's (1992) anthology on gender, race, and class in the United States.
3. See the Glossary in Appendix VIII, below, for clarification of the Hermandad's use of the word *paro* and *huelga* in relation to labor strikes and work slowdowns.
4. See Baca Zinn and Dill (1994), Collins (1990), Higgenbotham and Romero (1997), and Mullings (1992 and 1994), For a more thorough discussion of "minoritization" as a process of social construction with regard to women of color in United States scholarship and public policy.
5. The concept of secretarial work as "until" work refers to women who work as secretaries while maintaining other career or personal goals, including: marriage, having children, beginning graduate school, obtaining a job in another, preferred career in the arts, or otherwise "finding" themselves. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Chapter One.
6. Here, I want to acknowledge the helpful contributions of Donald Robotham, who assisted my efforts to develop this point, drawing upon the Jamaican case study in which ideologically committed leftists organized a trade union among university buildings and ground workers.
7. The collection of antique office machinery I organized came from the private collections of Luis Arias, proprietor of Office Machine Specialists, located in the Puerto Nuevo section of San Juan and Jose Acevedo, one of the proprietors of Taller Acevedo, located in the Santurce section of San Juan. The collection of photographs came from the photo morgue of The San Juan Star, Puerto Rico's English-language daily newspaper. My access to the photo archives was facilitated by Marilu Meibers, a staff person in the paper's Art Department in the summer of 1990.
8. In addition to this particularly Puerto Rican permutation on this occupational holiday, a second transformation took place in the United States, beginning in the year 2000, when

the holiday began to be called "Office Administrators' Day" or "Office Manager's Day." This change reflects transformations in nomenclature and job responsibilities as the office secretary became an "office manager." The change was occasioned by the introduction of computers and other new office technologies that eliminated many of the jobs traditionally done by secretaries, such as taking dictation and simple typing work.

9. I am indebted to Carlos Hernández Ponce who accompanied me on the visits to Don Taso Zayaz' home, in addition to providing intellectual and personal support and a great deal of historical and cultural information about Puerto Rico, in general, and the Puerto Rican labor movement, which is his area of specialization.

10. The fact that Freeman does not mention Bolles' book on women trade unionists is somewhat puzzling, especially since five other publications by Bolles are listed in Freeman's references and High Heels and High Tech deals explicitly with the question of women workers' changing class identity. Fifteen Barbadian women with a long history of trade union experience are quoted at length in the Bolles book and two Barbadian labor federations are represented in the volume, the Barbados Workers Union (BWU) and the National Union Public Workers (NUPW). Furthermore, six of the women trade unionists in Bolles' book worked as secretaries, clerks or typists, challenging Freeman's conclusion that, by their association with computerized clerical work, women in the more industrially-organized informatics industry are ambiguously classed -- sharing many workplace traits with "middle-class" secretaries (the ability to wear street clothes at work, and working in air-conditioned offices). Freeman is absolutely correct to name the *ambiguous* nature of class in white-collar jobs, yet the fact that Barbadian secretaries, clerks and typists are organized into the trade union movement of Barbados would seem to suggest that the intersection of the informatics industry and working-class identity and political organization needs to be problematized for further study, at the same level of complexity and richness that Freeman develops in her analysis of women workers' consumption patterns and desires for upward social mobility.

11. See Dorothy Cobble's (1991) study of waitresses from the perspective of a labor historian.

12. The list includes Norman Manley of Jamaica, Eric Williams of Trinidad & Tobago, and Forbes Burnham of Guyana. The one counterexample is to be found in the person of Dr. Cheddi Jagan of Guyana who retained his socialist and political commitments when elected Premier of Guyana; only to have the United States orchestrate a coup that forced him from power and into exile. This lesson was not lost on other Caribbean leaders. It was not until 1979, when the New Jewel Movement under the leadership of Maurice Bishop created a peaceful revolution in Grenada, that another socialist government would gain power in the English-speaking Caribbean. The four-year revolutionary experience in Grenada ended with another United States invasion in October 1983, following a terrible internal crisis within the New Jewel movement, involving deceit, sabotage, and the assassination of Bishop at the hands of another top government leader, Bernard Coard.

13. Reynolds, Alcan, and Kaiser aluminum companies began buying large tracts of land in Jamaica in the 1950s. The bauxite was exported and processed outside Jamaica, and the policy of “transfer pricing” meant that the Jamaican government received artificially low taxes on the royalties for the raw ore mined in Jamaica. The bauxite industry replaced sugar as the dominant sector of the Jamaica economy, yet this development did little to address long-term problems of structural unemployment, since the mining industry was highly mechanized. This is another case in which rapid economic growth did not correlate with economic and social development for the Caribbean.

14. See also the introductory essay by Gerald Guinness (1990).

15. See Eleanor Leacock’s (1971) synthetic volume critiquing the “culture of poverty” theory.

16. For more discussion of the Marxist frameworks used by the researchers in Steward’s anthology, see Lauria Perricelli (1990), Mintz (1978), Roseberry (1978) and Eric Wolf (1978).

17. In their 1984-85 contract, the Hermandad fought for and won a new clause that obligated the university to work with the union to study the need for and viability of on-campus daycare centers for employee’s children. It took three more years of research and political pressure by the Hermandad to establish the first such daycare center at the main UPR campus in Río Piedras in 1987. During the period of my fieldwork, another on-site daycare center was inaugurated at the Cagney campus of the University of Puerto Rico in the summer of 1991. And the Hermandad continued working to establish daycare centers on other UPR campuses.

Chapter One

Don Taso's Granddaughters: Locating Puerto Rican Secretaries in the Intersections of Anthropological Theory & Methodology

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and methodological conceptual frameworks that shaped my research project on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico in the early 1990s. There are seven sections in the chapter. The first section explores the relationship between my personal history and social activism and the research project. Section two discusses the decision to concentrate my ethnographic fieldwork on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. The third section presents my research methodology and data collection. This is followed by a fourth section that reviews the theoretical conceptualization of the secretaries' conference planned for Cayey, Puerto Rico. The tensions between advocacy anthropology and dialogical anthropology are explored in the fifth section. The role of life histories in the production of ethnographic knowledge is the focus of the sixth section. And the concluding section of Chapter One presents a critical review of the life history narratives as used by anthropologists David Stoll, Barbara Myerhoff, and Sidney Mintz.

Advocacy Anthropology and the Connections Between Personal History, Social Activism and My Decision to Study Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico

My family background and social activism shape the ways I understand the relationships of class, gender, race, and national identities. These aspects also inform my orientation to issues of class, the way I approached my fieldwork project in Puerto Rico, and my general commitment to what Eleanor Leacock called "advocacy anthropology" in

which anthropologists work with the people being studied in their projects for social justice (Leacock, 1987). As one of four daughters growing-up in a working-class, Boston-Irish family and the only child to attend graduate school, I am intimately familiar with the tensions and contradictions involved in what Janet Zandy (2001) calls “inter-class travel.” My father worked as a machinist and my mother worked as a nurse. They both had high school educations. My sisters and I were part of the first generation of our extended families to attend college. Two of us earned Bachelor’s degrees, one sister earned an Associate Degree and the other sister has returned to college as an adult, pursuing a degree in business administration. For years, my sisters and I worked as waitresses, hotel chambermaids, clerical workers, insurance salespeople, nannies, and home health aides. Currently, one of my sisters owns her own gardening business, one is a nanny, and the other sister is unemployed.

I am the only child to pursue an advanced degree, and I coped with the experience of being one of those people Ryan and Sackrey (1984) call “Strangers in Paradise – Academics from the Working Class” by creating the CUNY Working Class Anthropology Project during my first year in graduate school, in 1986. This collective of eight women and men from African-American, Irish- American, Italian-American, Jewish-American families, plus a Canadian from a logging town, and one Californian, created a mutually supportive space for intellectual growth and support through the trials and tribulations of graduate school. We differed from the working-class academics whose stories are told in Ryan and Sackrey’s book, in that we did not want to focus only on the problems of negotiating the middle-class world of academia, we wanted to be

academics *for* the working class, which was the title of the first professional session we sponsored at the Northeastern Anthropology Meetings in 1987.

Our project was organized almost ten years before the first National Conference for Working-Class Studies and the establishment of a Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University in Ohio in 1995 (Linkon and Russo, 2001), which reflects, in part, the special conditions of the doctoral program in anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center, which has had a long tradition of historical and political-economic anthropology. Our Project sponsored panels at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, the American Ethnological Society, and the Society for Applied Anthropology, in addition to sponsoring workshops on pedagogy and providing a space for intense, creative intellectual collaboration and mutual support. This work helped to frame my theoretical understanding of the intersections between gender, race, and class. It also shaped my methodological approach to ethnographic fieldwork, and in particular, my decision to take on the additional project of organizing a conference for secretaries in addition to the other tasks required of an anthropologist engaged in fieldwork research.

All the members of my family are passionate about being Irish. My older sister and I attended Irish step-dancing school, long before *Riverdance* made it popular outside Irish-American circles, and we maintain ties with our family in Belleek, Ireland who are part of the Catholic minority living in the dominantly Protestant British colony of Ulster in Northern Ireland. My early involvement with the movement to unite Ireland and bring an end to British colonialism in Northern Ireland resonates with Puerto Rico's anti-

colonial struggle.

At home, while my father always talked about himself as a “working man,” and discussed current events from the perspective of what he believed was good for “the working man,” there was little discussion of class identity or class politics. The fact that my parents owned their own home, thanks to the Veteran’s Administration, led us to think of ourselves as “lower-middle class.” We were aware of the fact that we had less money than many of our neighbors. My father went through long periods of unemployment at several different times. My mother’s work was essential to the maintenance of the family. We took in boarders at different times to help maintain the household. My sisters and I began working part-time when we were twelve and thirteen years old and we were expected to earn all the money needed for our clothes and other expenses by the time we were in junior high school, although we never had to contribute to the household economy. The problems of alcohol and drug abuse that plague many working-class families were profoundly present in our home, especially on the part of my mother, one grandfather, both grandfathers and one sister. Today, my three sisters are married and own their own homes. I am the only daughter to have a child.

My concern for social justice developed through church activities that I shared with my sisters and my consciousness about working-class politics and class identity came through my involvement in political struggles for social change. I have experienced many of the problems and joys of working-class life – in the United States and Puerto Rico -- and this has increased my sensitivity to the complex nature of class identity and the ambivalent attitudes about class mobility that permeate United States society. I do not

consider class politics an obvious or easy strategy to pursue, and I recognize the simple fact that people who share the same family background and experiences do not conceptualize their lives in similar ways. When I began my fieldwork in Puerto Rico, I wanted pay to attention to the tensions, anger, doubt, as well as the accomplishments and hope that define working peoples' lives.

Before ever thinking about attending graduate school I worked for ten years as an organizer in the movements for social justice, especially the struggle against racism and in solidarity with Latin America. At one point, when financial resources in the movement became scarce and I needed to find a steady job, a sister activist told me about a friend of hers who worked at Boston University and was looking for secretary; I interviewed and got the position as the secretary to the Director of Student Affairs in the School of Theology. Like many other young secretaries, I thought of this job as "until work." In my case, it was not "until" I got married or moved to California, but "until" the movement for social justice could afford to pay me a salary. I did not go to work at Boston University, at the outset, because of the struggle to organize a union there among the 700 clerical and technical workers, however, my arrival coincided with efforts to organize the trade union and I was drawn in.

For the next two and a half years, while I worked full-time as a secretary, I became a union activist. I was an elected Shop Steward in the Boston University Local of District 65, United Auto Workers,¹ and I represented workers in grievances and other work disputes. I was also the Chairperson of the union's Culture and Education Committee, and a member of the Newsletter Committee. I also served as a member of

the Boston General Council of District 65, United Auto Workers.²

Through my union activism, I became involved in a public history project on the lives of clerical workers, sponsored by the Massachusetts History Workshop (1985). I joined the Oral History Committee established to conduct interviews with retired secretaries and I was a member of the Advisory Committee, which consisted of three academic historians, a group of younger clerical workers, and some of the retired secretaries who had been interviewed in preparation for the day-long conference.³ One of the most fruitful tensions within the Conference Advisory Committee was the struggle between the academic historians, who wanted more time for academics to speak at the plenary session, and the older, retired secretaries and younger clerical workers who wanted more time at the conference to be dedicated telling their stories. This tension illustrated the importance of having both perspectives, the theoretical voice of academics and the theoretical voices of secretaries. Neither academics nor the secretaries went into the project expecting the secretaries to make a theoretical or analytical contribution. The project organizers had hoped to gather secretaries' testimonies, which they – as academics – would interpret. Yet, at every turn, the secretaries offered alternative and often contesting frameworks which enriched the overall conference project. And, as one of the younger clerical workers and feminist members of the Advisory Committee pointed out, if the stories were *true*, they could function as part of the historical and sociological analysis.⁴ This process was the model I had in mind for the conference I organized in Cayey for National Secretaries' Week in 1991.

During this time period, I maintained the regular work life of a secretary: The

work was often repetitive and boring; the students I served could be incredibly rude and demanding; I made friends; I felt like I was losing brain cells every day I went to work; and I typed, xeroxed, filed, and edited paperwork. My supervisor, Nancy Richardson, was the Director of Student Affairs at the School of Theology; a feminist with deep commitments to Liberation Theology and the struggle against racism, who always acted towards me with respect and support for my organizing work. I found great pleasure teasing her, in public and private, about being “my boss” – in contrast to the reality of our relationship which was based on collegiality and sisterhood.

Yet the Dean of the School of Theology, who always made mention of the fact that Martin Luther King, Jr. received his doctorate from Boston University, proved to be a petty, mean and vindictive man. He mismanaged the student scholarship moneys my supervisor and I were responsible to administer by siphoning-off money for personal purposes, his poor interpersonal skills triggered numerous crises among students, faculty and clerical personnel, and he was named as the defendant in several legal suits. My supervisor could not protect me, or herself, from his administrative whims; this fact only served to underscore my understanding of the important role trade unions can play in protecting workers’ rights, when ties of personalism with deans and senior administrators run afoul. The School of Theology became a very difficult work environment, although union membership in this unit where I was the Shop Steward grew dramatically.

This situation resonates with a conversation I had in Puerto Rico with Rosa Maldonado on a Hermandad picket line at Bayamón Regional College where she was a trade union leader and the Hermandad’s Campus Representative on the National Board of

Directors. Rosa had ten years of organizing experience at the Bayamón campus, where she worked as an Auxiliary Librarian (*Bibliotecaria Auxiliar*). Explaining how she became a trade union activist, Maldonado explained that before working at the University of Puerto Rico, she worked for a religious educational institution run by the Dominican Brothers, “And the priests radicalized me.” In response to my question about whether she meant the priests were involved with Liberation Theology, Maldonado laughed and responded firmly, “Not at all! Because they were really oppressive. It was so bad, I almost became an atheist” (Interview with Rosa Maldonado, May 7, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

The fact that many of the younger secretaries and clerical workers at Boston University considered their jobs to be temporary or “until” work, made it harder to organize them into the union, and harder to involve them in the union’s programs once they agreed to join. Like the Hermandad trade union at the University of Puerto Rico, the Boston University union was organized as an open shop, with voluntary membership. This obliged union officers and activists to constantly recruit members, in a workforce that experienced a high degree of annual turnover. A wider range of job possibilities were open to clerical workers and secretaries in Boston during the 1980s than existed in Puerto Rico during 1990-1992. This is related to the high levels of chronic unemployment in Puerto Rico, that are connected with Puerto Rico’s structural position as a dependent and undeveloped society, vulnerable to the economic crises endemic to all Caribbean and Latin American societies and the specific constraints imposed by United States colonial control. The reduced availability of other employment opportunities may

account for the greater stability of the UPR clerical workforce and contribute to the decision by UPR workers to mobilize along class lines to pursue their individual goals of economic stability and personal development. The problem of employee turnover at the University of Puerto Rico is more prevalent among temporary workers hired as contractual employees.

District 65's victory at Boston University was one of the first and largest union organizing drives among private-sector clerical workers in the United States. After Boston University, successful organizing drives took place among clerical workers at Yale University (see Gilpin et al, 1988), Columbia University (see Hurd, 1989; and Saltzman, 1988), and Harvard University (Hurd, 1992). For an excellent ethnography of the unsuccessful union drive among clerical and technical workers at Duke University's Medical Center, see Sacks (1988). It is significant to note that all of these campaigns took place almost a decade *after* the Hermandad was established in 1972, after a militant strike to win union recognition.

In much the same way that UPR secretaries pursue their education at the University of Puerto Rico because their union contract gives them access to free tuition remission, while I was working at Boston University, I decided to take advantage of the free tuition-remission our labor contract guaranteed, and I took a couple of graduate courses in anthropology, on a part-time basis. Although some of the theoretical models I encountered were problematic, and imbued with an anti-working class bias and racism, like the "culture of poverty," and adaptationist approaches towards urban poverty, I found the theoretical modeling very compelling.

The exigencies of community and trade union organizing too often preclude systematic analysis of complex issues. While political activists are constantly engaged in rich and thoughtful discussion about the problems we work on, the intense demands for immediate action keep this analysis at an episodic or anecdotal level. I found anthropology especially compelling because it integrates the values and beliefs of individuals and communities into the historical study of politics, economics, and culture. But if I was frustrated by the lack of theoretical complexity in the world of social activism, I was equally disturbed by the lack of engaged social commitment on the part of many academics, including anthropologists. When Anthony Leeds brought Eleanor Leacock to speak at Boston University, I was moved by her ability to synthesize complex social reality and theoretical models in the context of a partisan, activist commitment to support the people she studied in their struggles for equity and social justice. Leacock's legacy of activism and rigorous theory was present in all her scholarly writing, from the time of her early research on the native peoples of Labrador, her research on African American and Puerto Rican children in New York City schools in the 1960s, or the people of Samoa, where she was conducting fieldwork at the time of her death in 1987. This was the orientation towards anthropology I wanted to develop when I made the decision to move to New York City and pursue a doctorate degree at the City University of New York.

The purpose of including these personal stories in the dissertation is to illuminate my project in anthropology, which is to contribute to the creation of a working-class anthropology. This does not mean a simple or facile approach to studying working-class

lives, or necessarily teasing out the class aspect of every social interaction. The personal history reported here is intended to demonstrate that I approached the research project with a deep understanding of the fluid and ambivalent nature of working-class identity and class-based politics, based on my family and work history. I also maintain few illusions about the complex and sometimes jagged contours of working-class life. I did not become an anthropologist in order to be politically active. In fact, I left full-time work as an organizer in order to pursue anthropology because I wanted to explore the multi-faceted and contradictory nature of working-class life. This research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico is part of that project.

The Units of Analysis: Studying Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico

Anthropologist David Hakken (1993) created a classificatory schema to distinguish four different sectors of work that combine to form what he calls the “computing industry.” This includes: industrial assembly of computer hardware and equipment; computer programming, which involves the creation of computer software; data entry work; and the incorporation of computers into automated office work. It is significant to note that all four levels of the computing industry are present in Puerto Rico: industrial production and assembly of computer hardware and the creation of computer software programs takes place at Digital and Hewlett Packard plants in several municipalities of Puerto Rico. Women also work in computerized data entry jobs, or what Carla Freeman calls the informatics industry; although language barriers have

slowed the development of this off-shore sector of Puerto Rico's economy, in contrast with other, English-speaking sites of concentrated off-shore data entry enterprises, such as Barbados and Ireland, where an explosion of the informatics industry took place, beginning in the mid 1980s (Freeman, 2000). Anthropologists have studied the industrial production and assembly of computer parts in United States and international contexts (see Hossfeld, 1990). Freeman (2000) studied women workers in the field of data-entry work, or what she calls the informatics industry in Barbados. My research on women secretaries, however, is the first study of this sector of the computing industry in Puerto Rico.

In Puerto Rico, my research on secretaries precluded a traditional community study, since the residence patterns of secretaries in the 1990s did not conform to any particular geographic area, as was the case earlier for industrial and agricultural workers, such as those studied by Wolf and Mintz (Steward, 1956). Mintz (1974:1-2) reported that in 1948 he could have selected any rural barrio near the cane fields on Puerto Rico's southern coast and be confident that the majority of residents would be working in the sugar industry. Similarly, in my previous ethnographic research experience with June Nash in the Maya community of Amatenango in Chiapas, Mexico in 1986 and 1987, it was possible to study women potters in the context of a more traditional community study, because all the women in the *municipio* were engaged in petty commodity pottery production. In Puerto Rico, however, starting in the late 1950s and 1960s, a worker's residence was not necessarily located near their place of work, as the automobile became a form of mass transportation, thousands of miles of highway and paved roads were

constructed throughout the island, and a proliferation of new housing developments were constructed along the pattern established by the Levittowns in the United States; in fact, *Levittown*, is the official name of a section of the municipality of Toa Baja, on Puerto Rico's north coast next to Bayamón and near San Juan⁵.

The dispersed residence patterns of Puerto Rico made it necessary to identify a particular enterprise and study the secretaries working there. One option -- and a research project that still deserves systematic research -- was in the *Mila de Oro* (Golden Mile) section of office and banking skyscrapers in Hato Rey, part of Río Piedras, which was formally an independent town before its incorporation into the City of San Juan. I had two interviews with representatives from the *Banco Popular* located in the *Mila de Oro*, who expressed interest in my project. I also investigated the possibility of focusing on secretaries working at *La Cruz Azul* (Blue Cross), one of the two largest health insurance companies in Puerto Rico, where one of the senior administrators expressed great interest in my research proposal and I conducted a long interview with Henrieta de Orlandi, an administrative secretary with seventeen years of experience working at *La Cruz Azul*. I was uncomfortable with both of these options because the restrictions imposed by the workplace settings would limit my possibilities for participant/observation research and or relaxed conversations with workers, outside the monitoring presence of supervisory personnel. This is a recurring frustration among researchers in the anthropology of work sub-field of anthropology (see Kasmir, 1996).

My decision to study secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico was based on four criteria. First, comparative research had already been done on university staff

workers and their trade unions in university settings in the United States, and I had personal experience in this particular realm of secretarial work. Research at the University of Puerto Rico would create the basis for cross-cultural comparison with literature from the United States. Second, UPR secretaries had trade union representation, which meant there was a group history to study and collective action to observe, in addition to dyadically-structured ethnographic interviews with individual secretaries. In fact, Doña Angélica Meléndez, a secretary at the Social Research Center at the Río Piedras campus of the UPR created and maintained a comprehensive archive of all *Hermanidad* publications, dating back to 1972 (Angélica Meléndez, n.d), which she made available to me. The existence of a group sodality for secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico facilitated my research on the diversity of opinions and experiences among secretaries within and outside the union. Analysis of group or collective experience is crucial for working class studies, since this identity is only fully mobilized in a group setting. It would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to study these aspects of work, politics, and daily culture in another secretarial setting, where research would be based almost exclusively on individual observations made by the anthropologist and one-on-one interviews with individual secretaries.

Third, the institutional structure of the University of Puerto Rico, with eleven campuses throughout the island of Puerto Rico and two administrative centers, allowed me to study secretaries in ten different cities and municipalities, in rural and urban areas, across the entire island of Puerto Rico. Secretaries at all the UPR campuses have the same job classifications and salaries, performing the same kind of work in similarly-

structured offices and academic departments. This structure permitted me to test another research hypothesis, the commonly-held belief in Puerto Rican popular culture that life in the metropolitan San Juan area, where more than forty percent of the total Puerto Rican population is concentrated, is dramatically and qualitatively different from life on *la isla* (communities outside San Juan), which is assumed to be more pure, more authentically “Puerto Rican,” than life in urbanized and assimilated San Juan. In addition to investigating the accuracy of this assumption, I wanted to explore the cultural values and meanings underlying this belief, a story told to me by academics, union activists, and workers.

Fourth, the more relaxed environment of a university setting, where visiting professors and foreign-exchange students are a normal, everyday sight, would facilitate easier communication with secretaries than is possible at other work places. My official status in Puerto Rico was that of a graduate student affiliated, with *Intercambio* the Academic Exchange Program between the University of Puerto Rico and the City University of New York (CUNY). While this identity facilitated introductions to UPR secretaries, it would have had little impact in another workplace setting.

Focusing on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico also created limitations for my research project. A university is not representative of the workplace settings of most secretaries, in Puerto Rico or the United States, due to the more open and relaxed atmosphere of a college campus. Research on secretaries in the banking, insurance, communications, or utility industries, or any other large-scale public or private company, would most likely have generated different information regarding work rhythms, labor

discipline, and secretaries' strategies of accommodation and resistance. At the same time, it is important to note that many UPR secretaries work in settings very similar to non-university enterprises, complete with centralized pools of clerical workers functioning in a cramped space, where increased standardization yields less control over the organization of work and less individual autonomy for individual secretaries. This was especially true for secretaries employed in the offices of the Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, and campus libraries. These workers experienced greater stress and pressure to maintain productivity quotas than was true for secretaries working in dispersed academic offices, with few co-workers and more control over their work routine.

Some academics in the United States and Puerto Rico questioned my choice of setting, arguing that the increased level of intellectual discussion on a college campus and the specific level of pro-independence and left-wing culture at the University of Puerto Rico influenced the realities of UPR secretaries, thereby creating a false or distorted picture. I considered this observation a legitimate research question, something to explore, rather than a reason to dismiss the University of Puerto Rico setting as a legitimate research site. In fact, the UPR secretaries I talked with, planned a conference with, and observed working, did the same work as other secretaries. They considered themselves authentic secretaries, and they had a much less idealized picture of what it means to work on a university campus.

The University of Puerto Rico's reputation as a radical, left-wing institution is partially true, and partially the result of an ideological campaign. The assumption that

leftist student politics and the ideological positions of some faculty members automatically translates into a radical, politicized staff is incorrect. For example, the New School for Social Research in New York City was founded by radical refugees from fascist Germany, yet their secretaries are not more radical or politically active than other secretaries in New York City. As Richard Hurd argues, the presence of a politicized, partisan trade union is a far more significant factor in shaping the political and class culture of university employees (Hurd, 1989 and 1992).

Conducting research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico allowed me to engage in sustained participant-observation. I was able to spend entire work days with secretaries. This would not have been possible in another setting. In fact, restricted access to workplace settings is a general source of frustration for researchers in the anthropology of work. They constantly face constraints on their ability to do ethnography because management frowns upon open-ended and continual access to the work setting. Researchers who do gain access to a workplace are usually only allowed to tour the plant or office at specific times, most often accompanied by management representatives. The most fortunate anthropologists are able to arrange specific times for scheduled interviews on-site. Visiting anthropologists are rarely allowed to just hang-out at work, all day long. Furthermore, because outside visitors are an unusual feature in most work settings, workers have a heightened awareness of their presence which can also skew their reactions. These features create another set of distortions, different from but comparable to my selection of the University of Puerto Rico setting.

In contrast to other workplace settings, the presence of foreign students, faculty

and researchers – especially from the United States – is a commonplace feature at the University of Puerto Rico. Workers who were not aware of the purpose of my work assumed I was just another outside academic. While I waited in offices to speak with someone or just sat on a chair taking notes somewhere, the secretaries, administrators and faculty present simply continued with their work. This allowed me a rare opportunity to engage in traditional anthropological participant-observation, comparable to the process of ethnographic research conducted in small, face-to-face village settings. My ability to secure office space and an on-campus phone at the Río Piedras campus was of crucial importance, enabling me to establish a presence and identity otherwise impossible. After a while, I became a familiar presence in offices, at union meetings, parties, and on picket lines. I often learned about programs at the last minute, when someone casually made mention of them, as my name and phone number were not on any union list or mobilizing phone-tree. Some workers teased that I was like their mascot – the anthropologist always chasing to catch up with the Hermandad's meetings or labor actions, where I would often arrive late, a bit flustered, and out of breath. As more secretaries became aware of my research project, their reaction is worth noting here. They were very familiar with social research projects, grant applications, articles and book publications – many secretaries typed and edited these kind of documents on a regular basis – and they were quite pleased that someone had finally come to study their work world.

My revised dissertation proposal of January 1990 stressed the benefit of studying secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico after the completion of contract negotiations between the Hermandad trade union and university administration in the fall of 1989. I

emphasized the importance of beginning my period of intensive fieldwork during a period of labor peace in the following paragraph:

The significance of this fact is that it will allow me to study the full complexities of secretaries' lives and work experiences, which are often flattened and reduced during periods of intense labor agitation, like strikes. Too often, working-class people are only studied when they are engaged in heroic acts or public events. I want to study secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico during a period of labor peace, because this will facilitate my ability to tease out the tensions, contradictions, and changing ideas secretaries have about their lives and their work worlds. (Casey, 1989-1992)

Yet, less than a week after my January arrival in Puerto Rico, the *Hermanidad* organized an unexpected one-day strike or *paro*, because the UPR administration abrogated the language of the negotiated contract by reneging on one of the newly-won clauses, concerning payment of an agency fee or *cuota* to the *Hermanidad*. Two months later, Puerto Rico would witness the largest general strike in over twenty years, *el paro del pueblo* on March 28, 1990 which brought together all the public-sector and private-sector trade unions in Puerto Rico for the first time, including *los independientes* (the independent, or Puerto Rican-based trade unions) and *los internacionales* (the international locals of AFL-CIO trade unions based in the United States), to support the telephone workers against the commonwealth government's proposals to privatize this Public Corporation, referred to by the striking workers and their supporters as part of the *patrimonio nacional* (national patrimony).

When I described my research project with secretaries and other people in Puerto Rico, and mentioned my desire to study the daily lives of workers in a period of labor peace, they laughed with interest when I explained my conclusion that it turned out the

daily lives of Puerto Rican workers (*la vida cotidiana*) included strikes and picket lines.

Research Methodology and Description of the Data Collection

The fieldwork data which forms the basis for this dissertation was collected during twenty-two months, including: five weeks during the summer of 1989, nineteen months of intensive fieldwork from January 1990 through the end of July, 1991, and six weeks in May and June of 1992. In the summer of 1989, I had three objectives. My primary goal was to identify the particular workplace that would become the focus for my research. I also wanted to survey existing library and archival resources, and introduce my research project to academics and activists in labor and community organizations. During these initial weeks of research, a brief encounter with Carlos Ramos, an anthropologist at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), proved to be very significant. He advised me that if I wanted to study secretaries in Puerto Rico, I must meet with Tati (Ana Milagros Santiago), who was then the President of the *Hermanidad de Empleados Exentos No Docente* at the UPR. Tati Santiago was informative, helpful, and very open to the possibility that I might study secretaries at the UPR University of Puerto Rico. Learning that the *Hermanidad* represented more than 2,000 clerical and technical workers at all the UPR campuses and that the union had a twenty-year history convinced me to concentrate my research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, a decision discussed in greater detail in Section 2, above.

My meeting with Yamila Azize, Director of *Pro-Mujer*, the Center for Women's

Studies at the Cayey campus of the UPR, was one of the most significant developments in this area. Her enthusiasm for my research translated into an invitation for me to be the keynote speaker at *Pro-Mujer's* annual program to commemorate National Secretaries' Week in Cayey on April 25, 1990 (see Appendices IV and VI). Azize was the only feminist academic in the UPR system who regularly sponsored programs on campus to celebrate National Secretaries' Week and she was frequently called upon to be a guest speaker at programs organized by Professional Secretaries International (PSI), where she would integrate statistics and cultural information about the current condition of secretaries with her historical research in women's history and the particular history of women workers in Puerto Rico (see Azize, 1985 and 1987). I attended one of Azize's public speaking engagements on Saturday April 13, 1991, at the PSI western regional conference to celebrate National Secretaries' Week, held at the Mayagüez Hilton Hotel, and attended by sixty-nine secretaries from private and public sector workplaces. Yamila Azize was the keynote speaker, and she opened her remarks by introducing me as "an anthropologist from Boston" and showing the audience her copy of the book on the history of Boston clerical workers that I worked on (Massachusetts History Workshop, 1985). Before she began her presentation, Azize explained that the title of her talk, "*Somos imprescindible en la oficina,*" was taken from the title of that book, "They Can't Run the Office Without Us."

Based on Azize's research and activism with secretaries, I proposed holding the public history conference on secretaries that I wanted to organize as part of my dissertation research, at the Cayey campus of the UPR (see Section Appendix V). My

proposal was accepted by Azize and *Pro-Mujer*, and the conference, *Vamos a Contarnos Nuestra Historia: La Secretaria Ayer y Hoy*, became the official program celebrating National Secretaries' Week at the Cayey campus of the UPR on April 24, 1991. Azize supported my efforts to obtain co-sponsorship from the college administration, and the Department of Secretarial Sciences. Azize also helped identify secretaries to involve in the project, provided me office space at *Pro-Mujer*, and created a regular meeting space for the Conference Organizing Committee in the *Sala Luisa Capetillo*, the women's studies library in Cayey.

In January, 1990, I began the intensive period of fieldwork, which continued for nineteen months, until I returned to New York City at the end of July, 1991. The majority of my time was spent at the central UPR campus in Río Piedras, where almost half of the entire UPR workforce of 2,000 workers were employed. My son Max, who was seven years old at the time, lived with me in Puerto Rico while my husband continued to work in New York City. As the single mother of a child in second and then third grades, I shared the daily pressures and responsibilities experienced by many of the secretaries I was studying, including the morning struggle with the rush hour *tapon*, the inconvenient school calendar which obligated me to leave campus in the middle of the afternoon to pick up my child at the hour of school. recess, only to rush back to the university to continue working, and the guilt I felt over the fact that my son would have to wait for me to finish work— like many other children of UPR workers – playing quietly in an office atmosphere, since I did not have any kin networks to help me with childcare. The truth is, my son's presence with me during fieldwork served to open up conversations and

friendships with many people, and even with all the difficulties, Max has continued a life-long connection to Puerto Rico and the friends we made there. The realities of our daily lives also served to deepen my understanding of the conditions faced by Puerto Rican working mothers, and my respect for the multiple ways they negotiated the competing pressures of work and family responsibilities.

My participant-observation research was concentrated at the Río Piedras campus and the Cayey campus of the UPR, although I visited all of the other campuses and interviewed secretaries and Hermandad activists there. In addition to Río Piedras and Cayey, I established close ties with secretaries, Hermandad activists, and the Departments of Secretarial Sciences at Carolina Regional College, located east of the metropolitan San Juan Area, and Bayamón Regional College, located on the western border of San Juan. At both of these campuses, I attended union meetings, thematic conferences sponsored by the administration, and picket lines, in addition to conducting interviews with individual secretaries, students, and campus leaders of the Hermandad.

My interview sample from the University of Puerto Rico campuses consists of formal and informal interviews with secretaries, other clerical workers, supervisors, faculty members, buildings and ground workers, students, and alumni. The majority of the UPR interviews are from the main campus in Río Piedras, followed by interviews at the Cayey campus and then Bayamón. My formal interviews with UPR secretaries contain data on work histories, daily schedules and time budgets, secretarial training experiences, education levels, residence and household composition, women workers' family responsibilities, and their family history, including parents' educational levels,

work histories, migration experiences and leisure travel. Questions about new office technology, the quality of inter-personal work relations, and the kinds of problems they encountered in the daily work were also discussed. The interviews included questions about these women's career aspirations and future hopes for their children. I also asked secretaries to evaluate and comment upon the status of secretarial work and sought out their opinions on a range of contemporary social problems, such as high rates of criminality, divorce, poverty, and unemployment, (see Appendix No.7 for a copy of the formal survey (*encuesta*) I developed and distributed to the fifty-five secretaries working at the Cayey campus of the UPR). All the interviews were conducted in Spanish and recorded in fieldwork notebooks. Eighteen of the formal interviews were also tape recorded.

The interviews with secretaries at the UPR capture a wide range of work and personal experiences, including older and younger women workers; single, married, and divorced women; women with children; permanent workers and temporary, contractual, employees; recent hires and women with more than twenty years of work experience; women whose work histories were exclusively within the secretarial sphere and women with prior experience in garment factories and other industrial work settings. During the course of my fieldwork, I only met one man whose job title was that of a secretary. He was also a Hermandad activist, and I interviewed him both at his workplace in Cayey and again in Río Piedras in April, 1991 when he brought his family to march in the Hermandad's national night march, *La Marcha de Antorchas*. With regard to race, only eight women in my interview sample self-identified as Afro-Puerto Rican and discussed

the issue of racism as a significant barrier on their work lives, career advancement, and salary increases.

A wide range of educational levels is also represented in my interview sample. Forty-eight percent of the secretaries I interviewed had college degrees at the Associates, Bachelors, and Masters degree levels. Eighty-six percent had completed educational training programs in secretarial sciences at colleges or secretarial training schools, the others had college degrees in the liberal arts or humanities, without specific secretarial training. Some women pursued secretarial sciences because their career goal was to be a secretary, while others chose this educational path because it was the shortest course of study required to obtain full-time employment, after completing high school with a degree in the business or commercial track.

While the overwhelming majority of the women in my interview sample were born and raised in Puerto Rico, I interviewed two women who were return migrants from the United States whose families left Puerto Rico in the 1960s and 1970s for New York and New Jersey. With regard to religious affiliation, while the majority of women were Roman Catholic, in accordance with the general population of Puerto Rico, I also interviewed eleven women who were members of Pentacostal and Evangelical Protestant churches, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventist, and Mormon Churches, and two women who belonged to locally-based, non-denominational, and non-sectarian evangelical churches that maintain a single congregation in Puerto Rico. My sample does not include interviews with members of mainstream, United States-based Protestant churches like the Presbyterian and Methodist churches that established a

significant number of congregations in Puerto Rico beginning in the early twentieth century, shortly after the United States assumed colonial control of Puerto Rico.

With regard to political affiliations, the majority of secretaries represented in my interview sample were affiliated to one of the two, dominant political parties of Puerto Rico, the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) which supports Puerto Rico's current commonwealth status and the New Progressive Party (PNP) which supports statehood for Puerto Rico. A significant number of secretaries, representing 20 percent of my interview sample were *independentistas* affiliated to the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), or the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP).⁶ In addition, I have interviews with women who identified as *independentistas* but were unaffiliated with any political party and other secretaries who explicitly rejection having any political identity, because of their religious commitments.

In addition to secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, I interviewed office supervisors, the director and faculty members in the Department of Secretarial Sciences in Río Piedras and Bayamón, other faculty members in social sciences and labor relations, the coordinator of the faculty union not officially recognized by university management, The Association of Puerto Rican University Professors (*Asociación Puertorriqueña de de Profesores*, APPU), leaders of the General Student Council (*el Consejo General de Estudiantes*), and workers in the buildings and grounds department, who are represented by a separate trade union, (*el Sindicato de Empleados UPR*). Within the Hermandad, I interviewed grass-roots activists and union officers at different campuses, the one full-time Hermandad organizer, Idalis Ruiz, and I met four times with the President who took

office in January 1990, Carlos Echevarria,

In order to examine issues of special concern to women workers at the University of Puerto Rico, I gathered information about the on-campus daycare center for employee's children and the center for employee counseling services run by the Graduate School of Social Work, both of which programs are situated at the Río Piedras campus. In 1987, the first UPR daycare center was established at the Río Piedras campus, *el Centro de Desarrollo Infantil*. I arranged for two on-site visits to the center at the beginning of the school day, so that I could observe parents and children saying goodbye and visit individual classrooms. I also interviewed the center's director, two teachers, four women whose children were enrolled at the center, and the Hermandad activist, Encarnación Rivera, who was one of the main initiators and leaders of the daycare center project. By the summer of 1991, 100 children were enrolled at the center, seventeen children on the waiting list and the Board of Directors had plans to add two more rooms to accommodate an additional twenty children. During the period of my fieldwork, I also attended the inauguration of another on-site daycare center at the Cayey campus of the UPR. Proposals for daycare centers at other UPR campuses were at various planning stages during the period of my fieldwork.

At the Center for Social Services for Workers and their Families (*el Centro de Servicios Sociales al Trabajar y Su Familia*) also located at the Río Piedras campus, I interviewed the director. The mandate for this counseling center, run by the Graduate School of Social Work, was to meet the social and emotional needs of workers and their families. The center offered individual, family, and marriage counseling services on a

weekly basis. These counseling services were available to all sectors of the UPR workforce, including staff workers, faculty, and buildings and ground workers, free of charge. The center also functioned as an on-campus site where graduate students in social work could fulfill their practicum training requirements, under supervision, as part of their professional development; this structure facilitated the cost-free nature of the counseling services, making accessible to a wider range of employees than would have been possible under a fee-for-service protocol. In addition to the counseling program, the center organized topical workshops for employees during regular work hours. These programs included numerous single-event seminars and workshop series. During the period of my fieldwork, I attended three of these topical workshops for employees.

Outside the University of Puerto Rico, I interviewed directors and faculty members at six secretarial training institutes and junior colleges with concentrations in secretarial sciences and two independent management consultants who ran workshops for secretaries at enterprises in both the public and private sectors of the economy. These workshops covered a range of topics, including learning new office technologies, appropriate office fashion, professional comportment and phone manners from the perspective of scientific management and industrial psychology. In all of these settings, I took notes on the office design and student body and collected copies of curriculum and promotional materials.

In addition to interviews, on-site visits and participant-observation work, I conducted library and archival research on the history of secretarial work, and economic and social development in Puerto Rico at several different institutions, including the

General Archives of Puerto Rico and the archives at the *Fundación Muñoz Marín* which includes vast holdings of reports, documents, and photographs related to Luis Muñoz Marín and Operation Bootstrap. At the University of Puerto Rico, my library research was concentrated on the main campus in Río Piedras. I worked in the Puerto Rico Collection in the central library, as well as the library of the Institute for Labor Relations, and the Graduate School of Public Administration. At the Cayey campus, I did library research in the *Sala Luisa Capetillo*, which contains *Pro-Mujer's* extensive holdings in women's studies. Outside the UPR, I did research in the library collections of the Governor's Commission on Women's Affairs and the Division of Statistical Information of the Department of Labor and Human Resources. In addition to these public archives, I received permission to study the holdings of three private collectors, including: Doña Angélica Meléndez's comprehensive archives on the literature published by the Hermandad from 1972 -1992, the private collection of antique office equipment, pamphlets and photographs of secretaries first established in the 1960s by Luis Arias, proprietor of Business Machine Specialists, and the private collection of José Acevedo, one of the proprietors of *Taller Acevedo*, the second-largest family firm engaged in sales and repairs of office equipment in San Juan, whose holdings included antique office machinery, historical photographs and promotional pamphlets for secretaries published in the 1950s and 1960s.

In addition to my own photographs, I studied archival photographs and films, including those developed by DIVEDCO, the state agency that produced films for the government's Division for Community Education, and historical photographs in the

holdings of the Puerto Rico Collection at the UPR, the General Archives of Puerto Rico and the *Fundación Muñoz Marín*. I also attended the four-week women's film series sponsored by the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño*, in the winter of 1991, where the film screening was followed by lectures and discussion with the women film makers. I also attended the premiers of three films made in Puerto Rico during the period of my fieldwork, including: the 1990 film produced by the Women's Commission on domestic violence, *A flor de peil*, Sonia Fritz's 1990 film about Dominican women migrants to Puerto Rico, *Visa para un sueño*, and *Show of Force*, the Hollywood feature film made about the *Cerro Maravilla* case in which two young *independentistas* were entrapped and murdered in 1979.

Conceptualizing a Conference for UPR Secretaries in Cayey

The idea of organizing a public history conference with secretaries, while not a normal part of ethnographic research, was an explicit and integral part of my fieldwork research plan. I conceptualized this project prior to identifying a specific research site (the University of Puerto Rico) or any institutional affiliation for the conference. It did not matter much to me whether the conference was sponsored by a professional association such as PSI, a women's group, or a university; the important issue was to attempt to create a collaborative environment where a group of secretaries would meet to discuss their work and personal lives. This would complement the research I gathered through the more traditional means of dyadic interview and participant-observation.

When Yamila Azize, Director of *Pro-Mujer* at the Cayey campus of the UPR responded with interest to the conference proposal, I focused attention on Cayey and began to build the conference for National Secretaries Week scheduled for April 24, 1991 “*Vamos a Contarnos Nuestra Historia: La Secretaria de Ayer y Hoy*” (Let Us Tell Our Story: The Secretary, Yesterday and Today)⁷ as a public history project, similar to the one I worked on in Boston (Massachusetts History Workshop, 1985). I had several goals for the conference. I wanted to create a program of self-affirmation for participants. I also wanted to support the political agendas of Professional Secretaries International (PSI) and the *Hermandad* trade union who work – each in their own way – to increase public respect for secretaries, who are too often dismissed as “unimportant” or socially invisible.

I hoped the conference might help place secretaries more firmly on the map of Puerto Rican labor history and women’s studies. In my role as an academic anthropologist, I wanted to insure the broadest participation of secretaries and an unrestricted flow of ideas in order to create a rich, complex and multi-faceted portrait of secretaries in Puerto Rico. I also wanted to listen carefully, from the first meetings of the Organizing Planning Committee, to the analytical observations and critiques secretaries made about their work and lives. Too often in academic research, our conversants’ contribution is restricted to their answers to questions we ask -- what about *their* questions, *their* commentaries, and *their* disagreements with each other and with me? For this reason – and to maintain my feminist commitments to inclusive and collaborative research – I created the Conference Organizing Committee, made up of interested secretaries at the Cayey campus and myself, and began to convene meetings in the fall of

1990, six and a half months before the conference. This project would not only strengthen the quality of my ethnographic fieldwork data, it also constituted a solid case study to test two fundamental theoretical hypotheses of my dissertation. First, that working-class people are capable of, and interested in, developing their own analyses of social history; and that one task of the anthropologist is to facilitate, probe, and record this process. And secondly, to test my research hypothesis that the theoretical modeling and methodological protocols developed by social scientists to study working-class and poor communities could be enriched tremendously by an infusion of working people's perspectives. This could constitute another antidote to some of the more onerous theories developed by academics about the working-class, theories Eleanor Leacock first criticized in her 1967 article, "Distortions of Working Class Reality in American Social Science" (Leacock, 1967).

Two Interpretive Traditions:
Advocacy Anthropology and Dialogical Anthropology⁸

My research is located in the intersection between two theoretical traditions in anthropology, the trajectory Eleanor Leacock (1987) called "advocacy anthropology," which is grounded in historical and political-economic analysis, and dialogical anthropology, which is grounded in the traditions of symbolic and interpretive anthropology. As Sandra Morgen (1989) documents in her synthetic essay on the development of the anthropology of women and gender studies, this sub-field of anthropology is characterized by a similar division between two semi-autonomous and

sometimes oppositional trajectories, which Morgen categorizes as feminist political economy and feminist cultural analysis (Morgen, 1989:6-9).

The tradition of political-economic and historical anthropology focuses on the process of class formation, structures of inequality, and the exploration of social life and community structures within historically-specific world systems. Advocacy anthropologists most often locate themselves within this trajectory. Research by advocacy anthropologists pursues two simultaneous objectives; to document the historically-specific social conditions operating in the communities they study, and to challenge other academics, students, and the general public to actively support the struggles of the people being studied in their confrontation with local and regional elites, foreign colonial and neo-colonial states, and the impact of transnational capitalist corporations, or what is currently referred to as global capitalism.

A seemingly contradictory trajectory within anthropology, that of phenomenological and interpretive anthropology, focuses on a more intimate and interpersonal arena of social action, urging anthropologists to focus on their interpretive practices and the voices of the “subjects” of their research, concentrating on the moment of dialogue between the anthropologist and her/his interlocutors. Dialogical anthropologists argue that this site of social interaction is crucial to the process of constructing ethnographic knowledge and that data collection is not a simple act of harvesting information. The interview process requires careful examination, including attention to the power exerted by the anthropologist’s role. This refers to the anthropologist’s multiple identities as: a university-trained professional; a culture-bearing

individual from another society, laden with a range of conscious and semi-conscious moral and ideological commitments which impact the dialogue; as a professional with career aspirations and training requirements to fulfill; and most often, as a person with different age, gender, race, ethnicity, and class identities from the people being studied. The intentionalities and multiple identities of the anthropologist's conversants likewise shape the moment of dialogue.

Interpretive models offer significant insight and correctives for the methodological practices of anthropologists who study movement for social change. The challenge for politically-active anthropologists is to become more conscious of the ways methodological frameworks and styles of conducting research impact our work. The method of inquiry and forms of interpretation shape the meanings and conclusions elicited from ethnographic research. Ironically, the advocacy anthropologist's intention to affirm the validity of social change movements being studied, which in the case of my research would include the Hermandad trade union movement and Puerto Rican women's organizations such as the *Comisión de Asuntos para la Mujer* (CAM) and *La Organización Puertorriqueña de la Mujer Trabajadora* (OPMT), can be undermined when disempowering social science methodologies are used to describe transformational social experiences. The rich complexity of participants' actions and beliefs, and their contradictory strategies of accommodation and resistance can fall flat when traditional methodologies are employed in the process of conducting fieldwork and later, in the process of analysis and interpretation.

Anthropologists who want to report and analyze moments of structural transition

and the process of fomenting social change often unintentionally recreate relationships of alienation and objectification with regard to the groups we study by using fieldwork methodologies that rupture the possibility of equality between ethnographer and interlocutors, thereby recapitulating the alienating practice of mainstream social science. When advocacy anthropologists appropriate established social science modalities, that tool kit of terms, writing styles and ways of interpreting social phenomena that emanates from the philosophical tradition of rationalism and positivism, on which empiricism and the modern social sciences are based, (Fabian 1979, and Berteaux. and Kohli 1984). This can negate the original intension, which was to include and affirm the voices of the people being studied.

Dialogical anthropology, on the other hand, is explicitly concerned with the process of communication, the search for authentic inter-subjectivity between conversants, the power dynamics embedded in ethnographic research, and the meanings encoded in the interview process and academic styles of presentation. Dialogical, or interpretive, anthropology is grounded in the orientations of philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology (see for example, Gadamer 1977, and 1982; Geertz, 1973; Ricoeur 1974, 1981; and Schutz, 1967). The focus here is on textual analysis and examination of conversational events that take place between ethnographer and interlocutor(s) (see for example, Clifford and Marcus 1986; and Marcus and Fischer, 1986).

Considering the common moment of their formation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it seems incongruous that these two trends, advocacy anthropology and dialogical anthropology, would be viewed as oppositional. Both emerged as part of the general

"rethinking" in United States anthropology which began with a condemnation of anthropology as a child of imperialism (Gough, 1967, 1968), and public exposure of anthropologists' collusion with the United States military aggression against the peoples of Southeast Asia (Wolf and Jorgensen, 1970). The impact of these two events on the discipline of anthropology was influenced, in turn, by powerful, sweeping changes taking place in the realm of culture, politics, and social life in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, student movement, and counter-culture within the United States, and national liberation movements, internationally. The 1970s were a period of heady hopes and angry demands as anthropology engaged in a period of critical reflection, self-doubt, new proposals, rethinking, and reinventing itself (see for example, Asad, 1975; Berreman, 1968; Boon, 1977 and 1982; Davis, 1977; Diamond 1974, and 1979; Huizer and Mannheim, 1979; Hymes, 1974; Lewis, 1973; Nader, 1974; and Worsley, 1970). The critique was twofold. At a macro, or world systems level, it reconsidered anthropology's direct compliance with and/or indirect acquiescence to the systems of colonialism, imperialism, and racism which controlled the lives of people traditionally studied by anthropologists. On a more micro level, the critique expressed frustration with the lack of attention to the power relations embedded in ethnographic practice and sensitivity to the voices of the anthropologist's interlocutors, defined as "informants"⁹ within the lexicon of mainstream structural-functionalism, which dominated the first half of the twentieth century.

The absence of dialogue between advocacy anthropologists and dialogical anthropologists stemmed from an initial difference in the focus of their response to the

critique of the late 1960's, a critique which developed two different, although not intrinsically oppositional, trajectories. The "political-economic" trajectory focused on issues of power, fair play and access, and put forth a number of demands, including: a democratization of intellectual power; a renewed commitment to the ethics of fieldwork practice; an assertion of the anthropologist's responsibility to support community empowerment movements and self-determination for the people they studied; and the inclusion of more women and racial/ethnic minorities in the profession. The "epistemological" trajectory focused on qualitative issues and called for a reexamination of the content of anthropological research, the underlying ideologies and assumptions inscribed in interpretative frameworks, and the meanings gleaned from that information. Advocacy anthropology is rooted in the political economic critique, while dialogical anthropology emerged from the epistemological rethinking.

The political-economic critique argued that given the political constraints and structural inequality governing relations between the western capitalist nations and countries of the Third World in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the anthropologist had to choose to be either a part of the solution, or remain part of the problem. Not choosing sides was understood to be a silent vote for the status quo. Instead of being the "handmaiden" of imperialism, anthropologists were challenged to become partisan supporters of the people they studied. The role of the anthropologist was reconstructed from that of the impartial observer assumed to be collecting social facts for inclusion in a monograph or museum collection, to that of a participating advocate. According to this vision, the traditional opposition projected in anthropology between one's "self" and "the

other” could be eradicated as the two sides united to reject the inequality of their relationship and to combat social inequalities.

The relationship between “self” and “the other” also framed the development of the second, epistemological level of critical reflection in anthropology. This approach emphasized the distortions created in the quality of our “knowing” which resulted from inaccurate understandings of the relationship between the anthropological investigator and his/her conversants. A host of political implications are contained in this rethinking, especially given the positionality of the majority of anthropologists at that time: the anthropologist “self” was most often white, male, from the United States or Europe, professional and middle class; while the “other” was rarely white, of western descent, professional, or middle class.

The epistemological critique voiced strong opposition to the naivete inherent in mainstream anthropologists' attempts to approximate the natural sciences by imposing laws of objectivity, falsification and generalization developed for researches into physics, chemistry and astronomy. Anthropologists adhering to this homology or metaphor objectify and subordinate their data base. The people being studied are stripped of their vitality and agentic potential and assumed to be passive, inarticulate, unreflective of their own social practice, and incapable of constructing their own interpretations of reality. This unintentional and/or unconscious approach resonates with the policies and perspectives articulated by the proponents of global capitalism in the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund, who make the same basic assumptions about the people in question.

On the contrary, when anthropologists acknowledge that the people they study are the makers, the doers, the active subjects of their own history, s/he is confronted with an articulate and mobilized entity, people who talk back, disagree, and are riddled with internal contradictions. Reliance upon the artifice of "scientific objectivity" is a form of protection against the alternative mode which promises to be complicated, incomplete, and unpredictable. Yet, it is undesirable to ignore the open-ended, malleable, and interactive quality of social science inquiry based on conversations. The quest for rich and sustained intersubjectivity between interlocutors needs to be a sustained, diagnostic feature of all ethnographic research.

Rather than deny, minimize, or obfuscate the interactive essence of social research, dialogical anthropologists determined to investigate the process of that interaction, concentrating on the talking across or between, as Tedlock phrased it (1979:4). The resulting text became the point of departure for a deeper study of *how* it is that we come to know whatever we claim to know about another social group. Dialogical anthropology engages in the study and interpretation of texts, following the tradition of biblical exegesis and philosophical hermeneutics. This has led to elaborate discussion about the process of making interpretations, something related to but separate from the concerns of phenomenology, per se. Much of the discussion has been grounded in metaphysics and has led to another form of Kantian idealism, beginning with the Bible and progressing through the work of German philosophers like Dilthey, Husserl and Heidegger (see Linge 1977 and Schutz 1967).

The theological underpinnings of this school of thought and the reification of de-

historicized "texts" seems far removed from the advocacy anthropologist's milieu of social change and activism. Even prior to the ascendancy of postmodernism in the late 1980s and tendencies within this framework towards deracinated textual analysis, the Geertzian (1973) approach to cultural interpretation in the 1970s and the intensely personal reflexivity proposed by Rabinow (1974 and 1977) created a new space for idealism in anthropology. This became, among other things, a refuge for academics seeking a quiet space for personal reflection and private psychological musings, safe from the turmoil, noise, and excitement created by the demands and new proposals put forth by women and people of color and the new sub-fields of women's studies and ethnic studies they formed (for a more detailed perspective on this critique of postmodernism, see Mascia-Lees et al, 1989). In this context, it is understandable that engaged or advocacy anthropologists might feel alienated by, and slightly contemptuous of interpretive anthropology.

While the original philosophical orientation of hermeneutics was one of idealism, and the emphasis on textual interpretation has often led to a-historical or deracinated discussions, it is my contention that interpretive or dialogical anthropology still has tremendous potential to inform the activist trajectory. Anthropologists committed to an engaged, politicized interpretation of texts began to call for a "sociological hermeneutics" to replace philosophical hermeneutics (see Berteaux and Kohli 1984; Briggs, 1984; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; and Marcus and Fisher, 1986).

The utility of the sensibilities developed through textual analysis, in this context, emanates from reflection on the practice of advocacy anthropology. In the effort to

restructure the anthropologist's role away from that of the nineteenth century advisor and confidant to colonial administrators, towards that of a partisan advocate, it is important to avoid a new role as "social workers" for other peoples. A pattern of unintended inequality is created when the anthropologist assumes the role of public spokesperson for a community of people assumed to be passive and without voice. It is precisely at this juncture that the framework of a dialogical anthropology can help to interrupt the monologue and point towards new ways of telling.

At the stage of analysis and interpretation, after the anthropologist returns to the university setting, the pressure exerted by traditional academic protocols means that even less attention is paid to issues of textual authority, representation and ownership of the jointly-created fieldwork "data," which becomes alienated and claimed as private property by the anthropologist, a treasure of raw gems to be knocked around in an intellectual tumbler, clarified, and polished through the anthropologist's private, individual analysis and publication. When we do this, we create a dynamic of exploitation that unwittingly parallels the "colonial encounter" described by Tala Asad (1975) more than twenty-five years ago, recapitulating at an intellectual level the general historical outline of European primitive accumulation and appropriation of raw materials.

Advocacy anthropologists need to reconsider *our* practice and role in the production, distribution, and consumption of ethnographic knowledge; we need to develop new ways "of telling." Examples of a more collaborative approach to the production of ethnographic knowledge can be found in the writings by feminist scholars, (see for example, Christine Eber, 1995 and 1999; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Ong,

1991; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Stack, 1996; and Wolf, 1996). My project of organizing a secretaries' conference at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico in April, 1991 was designed to create another study of this kind.

Life History Narratives:
A Matrix for Exploring the Dialogue
Between Interpretive and Advocacy in Anthropology

Life histories provide the matrix for an investigation of the dialogical possibilities between interpretive and advocacy anthropology (see Crapanzano, 1984). Both sub-fields in anthropology make ample use of life histories, but for a different purpose. In a review article on the use of life histories, Bertaux and Kohli identified and distinguished the two types of studies:

The first focuses primarily upon the symbolic in social life and meaning in individual lives ... The second main trend considers interviewees as informants - in ethnographic fashion. Bertaux and Kohli (1984:215)

The accuracy of this assessment must be reevaluated. How real is the assumed cleavage between personal meaning/symbolic worlds and the study of social systems in "ethnographic fashion"? Bertaux and Kohli elaborate on the meaning of "ethnographic fashion" as follows:

The aim is to get accurate descriptions of the interviewees' life trajectories in social contexts, in order to uncover the patterns of social relations and the special processes that shaped them. Bertaux & Kohli (1984:215)

Yet, the only way these descriptions become available to the ethnographer is through the mediated and interpretive statements of individuals, statements that are embedded in and

expressed through symbolic selectivity. It becomes clear that there can be no absolute separation between symbolic life histories and sociological life histories, since the former study is grounded in political and historically specific settings while the latter is constructed upon symbolic interpretations.

Life histories straddle the professional chasm between symbolic and sociological studies because of the nature of their construction. Unlike other forms of personal documents available to historians and other academics (such as letters, census reports, marriage and death records, journals and diaries), life stories are created out of a joint endeavor between two conversants, both exerting an influence on the course of development and the content expressed. Based on the unique circumstances which form a life history, Berteaux and Kohli call for a "systemic distinction" between life histories and other types of data, arguing that "the form that social science thinking takes is not independent of the methods used" (1984:216). Echoing this point, Fabian (1971:1) defined the unstructured fieldwork interview as "a communicative event" not to be considered "as an instrument of observation and data collection, which are problems of method." There is something special about a life history, contained in the nature of its formation. This is what Tedlock (1979:20-21) means when he argues that interpretive or dialogical anthropology is not a method but a mode, a way of doing work. In rejecting the strictly scientific notions of oral histories as pieces of "raw data," anthropologists and others are moving away from naive empiricism towards what Berteaux and Kohli call an "interpretive conception" (1984:216):

Life stories are shown to be a rich ground for the formulation of substantive theories, which are conceived of as interpretations rather than as scientific explanations.

In other words, empiricist social science is no longer assumed to hold the exclusive franchise on substantive theorizing. The purpose of this "interpretive theorizing" varies. Bertaux and Kohli (1984:219) list three different orientations:

- An orientation toward academic discourse - implying a constant preoccupation with theoretical abstraction and scientific legitimacy
- A humanistic-literary approach, some of whose advocates place much greater emphasis on the links established during the inquiry between the sociologist and his or her subjects ... a plea for 'con-ricerca' i.e. searching together.
- Others emphasize the sociologist's role as a 'publisher' of life stories aimed at the general public and thus as an advocate of people and groups who would otherwise have no chance to be heard publicly.

Unfortunately, real life studies do not maintain the kind of analytical distinctions that Bertaux and Kohli note. Most studies embrace or include aspects of all three orientations. Nevertheless, it is helpful to refer to the typology provided by Bertaux and Kohli, because those different purposes require different methods of presenting information. Hence we end up manipulating life histories in several ways, depending upon our purpose or eliciting frame. Acknowledging the interventions made by investigators is meant to be an observation, one not loaded with blame or regret. It simply means that we need to become more cognizant of the purposes we mean to pursue and the various methods we employ to reach them. As we sharpen our skill at identifying the range of methods employed in pursuit of a dialogical mode, the idea of "methodology" will become less reified, less charged. As Tedlock (1979:21) promises:

In the writing of a dialogical anthropology, methods will be seen in their full range from happy accident to utter disaster.

Anthropologists have long used life histories to record the life ways of nonliterate peoples. Paul Radin was one of the earlier proponents of this approach in the United States. His work with Sam Blowsnake (1920) is one of the first and only authentic autobiographies ever published by an anthropologist. Radin's work with the Winnebago Indians, as well as his more theoretical writings (Radin 1933,1957) form part of an alternative trajectory in early 20th century anthropology. Contemporaneous with the work of American particularism associated with Boas, Benedict and Mead, and the structural-functionalism associated with Radcliffe-Brown and British social anthropology, writings by Radin and other historical anthropologists like Robert Lowie were nonetheless obscured or minimized in the struggle to establish anthropology as a "legitimate," i.e. scientific branch of social science. Toward this goal, anthropologists worked hard to erase the presence of their conversants in "scientific" writings. Tedlock provided a humorous and insightful description of the machinations anthropologists developed in their efforts to appropriate the role of a natural scientist while in the field. In order to maintain the purity of the anthropologist's theorizing, and to avoid recording the "tainted" interpretations or theories constructed by conversants in the fieldwork setting, anthropologists were admonished "to play dumb with smart informants and play smart with dumb ones" (Tedlock 1979:21).

Undaunted by the rise of scientism in anthropology, Radin began his volume on the method and theory of ethnology with a quotation by F.W. Maitland, "By and by anthropology will have the choice between being history or nothing." (Radin 1933:viii) The kind of history envisioned by Radin was grounded in subject oriented texts or documents:

In elucidating culture we must begin with a fixed point-one that has been given form by a member of the group described, and not by an alien observer! (Radin 1933: 186)

These texts were not assumed to be able to stand on their own as anthropological data. Radin argued that "cultural facts do not speak for themselves" (1933:9). They require interpretation. And so, more than fifty years ago, we can read about Radin's explorations into an interpretive anthropology, one based on the dialogue between investigator and conversants. In his chapter on the role of the individual and reconstruction from internal evidence, Radin described the difficulty in trusting the text as the basis for generalization and interpretation. In discussing the peyote cult, he acknowledged, "we might feel inclined to pay little attention to the differences between the three prayers and indulge in meaningless remarks upon the dynamics of conversion or the adjustment of a new rite to the older cultural patterns, etc." (1933:200-201). In other words, the desire to fit ethnographic material into established academic categories involving "patterns" and "social systems" provides a rationale and an excuse for not considering the complex and confusing texts/material.

The logic of idealized and abstract social science constructs protects us from engaging the internal logic of the ethnographic material we gather. This exercise in intellectual acrobatics occurs in all social science disciplines, as well as in historical research. But it is particularly difficult for anthropologists to execute with finesse, because traditionally our only source of data has come from conversations with people and observations of their worlds, with only a minimal buffer provided by archives, colonial records and missionary accounts. These documents come so laden with

ideological values that the anthropologist studying them must again confront the "internal logic" of the texts, in this case the teleology of progress, modernization and development ideologies, racism, paternalism etc. Again, anthropologists find themselves thwarted, unable to remove themselves from the turbulent waters of "native texts" and conversants' interviews onto the safe banks of academic interpolations.

Considering the peculiar content and context from which anthropological data emerges, it becomes easier to understand how and why the discipline would play such a key role in the development of two very different and antagonistic approaches to the study of the social world: a quantitative, "scientistic" approach, meant to obliterate the imperfections of anthropological data and erase the voice and presence of our conversants, on the one hand, and semiotics and deconstructionism on the other hand. Given the pioneering work done by Radin in an effort to immerse himself in the native texts and stories as a means of eliciting their internal logic and meaning, perhaps he should be considered a forerunner in anthropological deconstructionism and cultural studies. Radin was one of the first anthropologists to realize and affirm that the oral histories and interviews we collect are simultaneously units of meaning and products of social interaction. Other interpretive anthropologists have continued to search for intersubjectivity in their investigations (Geertz, 1973; Griaule, 1965; Rabinow, 1977; Fabian 1971, 1979, 1983). Some interpretive anthropologists have returned to the work done by Radin, claiming continuities and commonalities with his approach and rescuing his work from the obscurity imposed on him by mainstream, scientistic anthropology (Tedlock, 1979; Diamond, 1981).

Rather than be embarrassed by the form and quality of our data, Tedlock urges anthropologists to resist the temptation to remove "the tell-tale marks of our own tools" (Tedlock 1979:18). The dialogue between anthropologist and conversant is the foundation for all anthropological knowledge. It is the "talking back and forth," the "between-ness of the world of the dialogue" (1979:4) that creates meaning. Radin's work never appeared in the bibliographies of graduate level surveys on the history of anthropology in my experience. Bertaux and Kohli (1984:232) elaborated this point when they noted:

Behind every native autobiography there is an anthropologist who asked questions that were later erased: behind the children of Sanchez's speech is Oscar Lewis's searching mind.

Tedlock (1979:5) exhorts anthropologists to end the practice of negating anthropological dialogue in favor of "analogical anthropology" in which "Ana-logos, in Greek, literally means 'talking above,' 'talking beyond,' or 'talking later,' as contrasted with the talking back and forth of dialogue." It is Tedlock's opinion that: "the circumstances of anthropological discourse, whether that discourse comes from the field, the armchair, or the podium, should be kept in open discussion rather than being hidden away in footnotes, appendices, and unpublished manuscripts." (1979:1). We have to include the dialogue, both voices, our questions and mistakes. The text is more than a data base for future evaluation, it is the record of an interpretive event already constructed by the participants.

Moving away from the reductionist idea of a single interpretive relationship existing between the anthropologist and the text, I would like to identify the multiple

relationships of interpretation that shape an oral history or anthropological dialogue. The fundamental interpretive relationship is the dialogue between the two conversants. This event stimulates the private interpretations pursued separately by each participant. The conversation/interview requires the anthropologist to reconsider preconceived notions and personal life experience in relation to the comments made by the interviewee. At the same time, the interviewee is prompted to reflect upon past experiences. Stimulating this reflection are the actual words and phrasings contained in the investigator's questions, the connotations these have for the interviewee, and the setting in which the interview takes place. All of these forces are evocative and exert a presence, shaping the content of the interview. Oral historian Ronald Grele (1975:135) describes the process as follows, "The recorded conversations of oral history...are joint activities, organized and informed by the historical perspectives of both participants," and that "the final form of any interview is neither a transcript nor a tape, but a particular set of structures or patterns, behind which exists some human relationship." Grele formulated a less politically/ideologically charged name for this kind of joint activity. As opposed to "interviews" with "subjects" and "informants", he speaks of "conversational narratives:"

conversational because of the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, and narrative because of the form of the exposition - the telling of a tale (Grelle 1975:135).

This is the same kind of joint activity that Tedlock calls "talking between two worlds" or that Schutz (1967) described in his essays on human intersubjectivity. In discussing the simultaneity of "the other's stream of consciousness" with "my own", Schutz pointed out:

When I become aware of a segment of your lived experience, I arrange what I see within my own meaning-context ... everything I know about your conscious life is really based on my knowledge of my own lived experience. (Schutz 1967:106)

The moment of mutuality or sharing which occurs during the oral history conversation allows both participants to cross over and "talk between" their worlds. As Schutz explained (1967:106), "It is only because of this that, when I look backward, I am able to synchronize my past experiences of you with your past experiences."

And what is the result of this coming together, this momentary and imperfect mutuality? In addition to the relationship described by Grele there is a product, a tracing of the relationship is contained in the fictios thus constructed. When Geertz first coined the term "fictio" (1973:15) he was uncharacteristically precise in his explanation, arguing that anthropological writings are "fictios" in the sense that they are 'something made, 'something fashioned' – the original meaning of fictio – not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments." In a similar vein, when talking about the work of Studs Terkel, Grele explained that "his work is not history but memory, and he is searching not for fact, but the truth behind the fact," (1975:129). And in the same volume, Terkel provides his own argument, arguing, "Maybe facts are not truth" (Grelle, 1975:13). Historian Alice Kessler Harris elaborated on this point in relation to her work among Russian-Jewish immigrants to the United States:

You need a past of your own... you really can't live in the future unless you know where you come from, ...it's especially important to reconstruct or create myths about your own past which may or may not be true. (Grelle, 1975:67)

In addition to the construction of a relationship and a fictio, the oral history conversation includes silences, pauses and holes. Additionally, all the life history narratives we know of contain two more dialogues which evolve after the initial conversation. Here I am referring to those conversations that were intended to move beyond the time and space of their formation in an office, living room, kitchen, or patio to another, academic location where they would be typed up, indexed and transformed into an academic paper or archive. It is important for us to realize that this is not the only occasion when life histories are told. Grandchildren interview their grandparents before bedtime, college roommates grill each other about their past lives, and abbreviated versions of life stories are often told on long train trips or airplane flights. Historians and social scientists do not have a monopoly on this kind of activity. Perhaps we should study the style of these informal interviews for possible insights into the format followed by more academic discourse, but in any case, we need to realize that people are more experienced in the art of asking and telling life stories, social science "methodology" notwithstanding, than we (and they) normally assume. In the telling, retelling of these stories, speakers are engaged in a fifth dialogue, their own interior dialogue which entails critical reflection, analysis, and the hierarchical ordering of importance as they sift through their memories of lived experience in order to construct a narrative.

In those circumstances when the conversational narrative is conducted in a more formal manner, with the explicit goal of using the interview for historical or social scientific purposes, the interviewer takes the notes and/or transcript away to be reassembled in another form. This reworking entails another interpretive dialogue, what Tedlock calls the "armchair dialogue" (1979:5). It develops between the researcher and the text. In order to make sense of the material, the investigator must impose a structure,

editing, organizing, finding the points to highlight and those to leave out. This involves dialogue and interpretation. The researcher has to listen and argue with the material. Through this process, new ways of understanding the material, one's discipline and its theoretical models emerges. One's sense of self is also affected.

Corresponding to the subsequent dialogue of interpretation pursued by the researcher, another interpretive dialogue occurs for the interviewee. This is the fifth dialogue contained in oral history interviews. It has not received adequate attention from historians and social scientists; in fact I have no evidence to suggest that it has been considered a significant part of social science research. And yet it surely exists, at least as a logical possibility, considering the "armchair dialogue" that is recognized and valued among academics. Calling upon the commitment to inclusion and affirmation espoused by advocacy anthropologists, a closer examination of this dialogue becomes an imperative. The fifth, or hidden dialogue, has been ignored, subordinated and marginalized by the academic process of creating ethnographic knowledge. The conference for National Secretaries' Day in Puerto Rico was designed to be a test case in bringing this "hidden dialogue" of my interlocutors into prominence.

The hidden dialogue involves all the reflections and reinterpretations which develop within the interviewee, subsequent to the oral history interview. The experience of the conversational narrative triggers changes and reconsideration of one's private estimation and one's public presentation of self. Models of empowerment need to consider interviewees as active, interpreting agents beyond the moment of the oral history. The rationale for this demand refers back, once again, to the fundamental issue of the paper – the need to integrate political-economic and epistemological concerns in anthropological research. Therefore, one impetus for expanding our work to include

discussion of the fifth and hidden dialogue is simply to extend the range of access and empowerment. Secondly, I want to argue that this approach holds great promise for the future of interpretive and textual anthropology. If we acknowledge the ongoing dialogue and interpretation that occurs for our conversants, we can work to elicit the structures and models they contain, what Grele calls the "historiography" or "historical cognition" of our interviewees (1975:141). In the role of intellectual midwife, anthropologists can struggle with and support the efforts of the people we work with to express their views of historical change, personal life trajectories, issues of causality, and the evolution of institutions ... in short, their understanding of how the past has been ordered and rationalized, their understanding of their present condition, and their visions for the future. We can then engage our interlocutors in another dialogical inquiry with us, regarding our differing models and assumptions. Not only is this a more equal relationship between conversants, it also has the potential to transcend the flaws and limitations of theoretical modeling and interpretation as currently practiced by academics, in which our models are imposed on the material and often flatten its dynamic meanings. As Grele (1975:140e) warns:

...if we fail to see our interviewees as bearers of a culture and thus people with their own view of the past... we will, because the information must be structured, infuse our own vision of the past into the interview.

A promising alternative to this dilemma is also identified by Grele (1975:142):

Our aim is to bring to conscious articulation the ideological problematic of the interviewee, to reveal the cultural context in which information is being conveyed, and to thus transform an individual story into a cultural narrative..."

I am calling for a more radical move, however, and that is to include our conversants and their historical cognition in the development of our interpretations and

generalizations. The dialogical mode can be expanded to include the hidden dialogues of our conversants, their interpretations and analysis. This was a major goal for my conference on secretarial work in Puerto Rico.

Tensions over Life History Narratives:
The Work of Menchú, Stoll, Myerhoff and Mintz

The preceding analysis of the theoretical issues embedded in ethnographic methodology can be applied to a review of three research projects grounded in life history narratives: the Rigoberta Menchú Tum controversy, triggered by the publication of anthropologist David Stoll's (1999) critical re-study of Menchú's *testimonio*; anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff's research with elderly Jewish people in Venice, California; and anthropologist Sidney Mintz's collaboration with Don Taso Zayas in the construction of the first autobiography of a working-class Puerto Rican sugarcane worker, Worker in the Cane (Mintz, 1974, 1988, and 1989). These anthropological studies illuminate the strengths and weaknesses contained in ethnographic studies based on life history narratives. They are, therefore, directly related to my research project on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, including the conference I planned for National Secretaries' Week in April, 1991 at the Cayey campus of the UPR, and all the other interviews and participant-observation work I conducted with secretaries at other campuses of the University of Puerto Rico.

The Rigoberta Menchú controversy documents the powerful impact life histories, or *testimonios*, as they are called in Spanish, can have upon readers and world opinion;

the controversy also highlights the limitations that emerge when the story and historical memory of a single individual is projected to represent collective lives and community history. Anthropologists, especially in women's studies and Latin American studies, have devoted significant energy to this field of research and writing.¹⁰ In her essay, "The Politics and Practice of Testimonial Literature," anthropologist Lynn Stephen argued that within Latin American area studies, the concept of *testimonio* and testimonial literature has always been understood to be something much more, and different from, recorded interview(s) focused on the report of historical facts (Stephen, 1994).¹¹ Stephen explained that testimonial literature emerged in the Latin American context as a mobilizing tool of revolutionary movements (Stephen, 1994: 223).

Anthropologist Kay Warren concurs with Stephen's definition of testimonial literature in the Latin American context:

Testimonios have always had a political edge. They are designed to describe state violence, corrosive poverty, and inhuman working conditions in a way that makes a compelling case for dramatic change. The *testimonio* genre attempts to make abstractions – violence, poverty, and degrading living conditions – real, by personalizing their effects and recounting heroic stories of individual resistance to entrenched inequities. (Warren, 2001:199-200)

Testimonios are political and literary acts of claiming personal authority and naming the hidden or undervalued histories of subaltern people – women, indigenous people, peasants, and national minorities – in order to claim public space for the culture and experiences of these people within the dominant, mainstream historical record. This structural relationship simultaneously creates an urgency and a burden for the text as "the story that must be told because of the struggles it represents" (Stephen, 1994:224).

In the case of Rigoberta Menchú Tum, a series of interviews conducted between her and French anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos Debray in 1982 were transformed into a best-selling book published in English in 1984 and translated into 20 languages.

Menchú's story, which combines her personal experiences with the collective history of her Maya people in Guatemala, was quickly integrated in college courses in women's studies, anthropology, and Latin American studies throughout the United States.¹² In 1992, a decade after the book first appeared in French, and in recognition of Menchú's consistent work on behalf of indigenous people in Guatemala and the struggle for peace in that country, Rigoberta Menchú Tum received the Nobel Peace Prize. Then, in 1999, United States anthropologist David Stoll published a strong critique and rebuttal of Rigoberta Menchú's story, accusing her of falsifying aspects of her life and distorting community history (Stoll, 1999).

The ensuing media frenzy and the attacks on Menchú and academics who included Menchú's book in their college classes created a polemic described by Stanford professor Mary Louise Pratt (2001) as part of the ongoing "Culture Wars." Right-wing neo-conservative academics and journalists condemned Rigoberta Menchú as a "pitiful liar," called her book "a monstrous hoax," and lambasted the "corrupt media," "left-wing ideologues," and "fellow-traveling" Nobel Committee in Sweden that refused to revoke Menchú's Nobel Peace Prize (David Horowitz, 1999; Martí, 2001:81; Poniewozil, 1999; Rohter, 2001). In response, Menchú's supporters argued that Rigoberta's *testimonio* was created within the indigenous tradition of telling a collective story, and her defenders

wrote about “larger political truths,” “textual truth vs historical truth” and “poetical truth and technical lies” (Sommer, 2001:240).¹³

David Stoll never denied the fact that Rigoberta Menchú’s father, mother, and brothers were killed by the Guatemalan military, and that her entire community was destroyed; he just insisted that she did not actually witness certain events she talked about, and that her brother was not burned alive, but merely shot and dumped in a common grave with other villagers. In his article, “Let’s Shoot Rigoberta,” Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano dismissed Stoll’s criticisms of Menchú as mere “specks in the milk” (Galeano, 2001:100).

Most recently, Arturo Arias edited an anthology of articles on the Menchú controversy with contributions by thirty-one authors, including Latin American journalists, organizations of indigenous Maya people from Guatemala, and five United States anthropologists (Arias, 2001). Victor Montejo, another Maya from Guatemala who, like Menchú, went into political exile in the early 1980s and later earned a doctorate in anthropology in the United States,¹⁴ wrote an illuminating article that represents another version of events in Guatemala and argues against using one person’s story to stand for an entire people (Montejo, 2001). Montejo wrote his own accounts of the Guatemalan government’s war of genocide against the Mayan people in two other books (Montejo 1987,1999).

Warren (2001: 201) makes a distinction between “realist representation and the Latin American *testimonio*.” She takes the Menchú controversy very seriously, not at the level of fact vs. memory, but in her discussion of David Stoll’s anxiety and anger over

the fact that a subaltern person, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, dared to tell her truth and provide an analytical assessment of Guatemalan history and politics. According to Warren, Stoll was deeply troubled and affronted by the proposal that an indigenous Guatemalan woman could have developed a sophisticated critique of her society. This act violates the belief held by many middle-class academics, journalists and readers, that an authentic representative of any subaltern constituency cannot, by definition, possess the analytical tools and communicative frameworks of the dominant society in which they live. John Beverley (2001) investigates these issues further in his critique of David Stoll:

It would be yet another version of the 'native informant' to grant a narrator such as Rigoberta Menchú only the possibility of being a witness, but not the power to create his or her own narrative authority and negotiate its conditions of truth and representativity. This would amount to saying that the subaltern can, of course, speak, but only through *us*, through our institutionally sanctioned authority and pretended objectivity as journalists or social scientists... (Beverley, 2001:233)

For David Stoll and his supporters in the "Culture Wars," any effort at theoretical analysis and social interpretation of their lives negates an individual's right to claim membership in a subaltern group -- because such groups are defined, precisely, on the basis of their "outsider" status. Members of these groups cannot develop fluency and skill in using the language and intellectual models of the dominant society and remain subaltern. Such essentialist conceptions of identity are not only racist and tautological, they also obligate adherents to insist that members of subaltern groups must remain disconnected from and untainted by education, ideology and political action. This

orientation has a direct impact on my research with working class women in Puerto Rico, in relation to the assumption that the *truly* “authentic” worker is to be found drinking in a neighborhood bar, not attending a meeting in the union hall.

The Rigoberta Menchú controversy demonstrates both the power of testimonial literature to educate outsiders about political, economic, and cultural realities beyond their experience and the controversy underscores the limitations of *testimonios* to function as precise and totalizing histories. Any *testimonio* or life history narrative needs to be

evaluated on the basis of the power of its rhetoric and the significance of its presentation of historical memory; they cannot be expected to function as complete histories of a community, political struggles, or entire group of people. With regard to my research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, this truism is the major reason why I wanted to create a group project (the secretaries’ conference) that would be in its structure multi-vocal. Although I realized the entire universe of perspectives on what it meant to be a secretary in the early 1990s would not be included, at least this kind of organizational format would not inappropriately burden one person’s story with the responsibility of representing an entire community.

In 1978, anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff published the award-winning text, Number Our Days, based on her work with elderly Jewish people in Venice, California.¹⁵ (see Myerhoff, 1978 and 1992). Marc Kaminsky edited the posthumous collection of Myerhoff’s essays, and in his introductory essay in which he made the salient critique that Myerhoff erased the profound socialist political commitments of her interlocutors, even

as she worked with diligence and creativity to include their voices in the mounting of public conferences, the creation of a film and theater production, and community art exhibits (see Kaminsky, 1992). In my organization of the secretaries' conference, I wanted to avoid the problems such as those Kaminsky identified in Myerhoff's work, where the expressed social and political views of her informants were neglected when these did not match her own interests or theoretical analysis. I neither wanted to erase the radical ideology of some of the secretaries involved in the conference project, on the grounds that their radicalism made them "atypical," nor did I want to evade the fact that other participating secretaries were pro-statehood, anti-independence, and uncritical of the United States consumer culture in which they increasingly participated.

In the 1950s, Anthropologist Sidney Mintz returned to Barrio Jauca in the municipality of Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico, where he had conducted fieldwork research for his dissertation on the rural proletariat of Puerto Rico's sugar economy in 1948-1949 (Mintz, 1956). During this period, Mintz became close friends with Eustaquio Zayas Alvarado, or Don Taso, as Zayas was called by family and friends (Mintz, 1974:4-6). Mintz's decision to pursue more research was prompted by his desire to understand what forces had compelled Don Taso to convert to the Pentecostal Church of God, shortly after Mintz left Puerto Rico in 1949.¹⁶ This collaboration between Mintz and Zayas led to the creation of Worker In the Cane: A Puerto Rican Life History, the first working-class autobiography and proletarian life history published in Puerto Rico (Mintz, 1974).¹⁷ The volume presents Don Taso's two autobiographical statements,¹⁸ a photograph of one of his hand-written pages, and a record of the Mintz-Zayas interview sessions, which

sometimes read like the conversation between two friends.¹⁹ Also included is Mintz's analytical essay, "History Within History" (Mintz, 1974:253-270), which locates Don Taso's life-history narrative within the development of Puerto Rican society in the twentieth century. I have similar goals for my dissertation on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, and Chapter Two represents my effort to locate these working-class women within the history and political economy of Puerto Rico, and within the now-dominant service-sector of the economy.

Mintz understood his role in shaping the research and the resulting text, including his recognition that without his proposal that they work together on the project, it was unlikely Don Taso would ever have written his life story.²⁰ In response to textual analyses and critical reviews of his role in the production of the Don Taso book, Mintz expressed frustration and a slight amusement at what he called, "the illusion of moving, while standing still" (Mintz, 1989). When the book was first published in the 1970s, Mintz was criticized for being too close to Don Taso and for not maintaining greater sociological distance from his informant, then in the 1980s, Mintz was taken to task for imposing himself too much in Don Taso's text. Both statements are true, and not only in relation to Sidney Mintz in Puerto Rico, but in relation to the entire ethnographic enterprise. As anthropologists, we will always play a powerful, intrusive role in the dynamics of research: as stranger and friend; as academics among interlocutors or conversants; between insiders and outsider. There is no way to resolve this conundrum. Rather, our task is to *engage* the contradictions, holding onto the dialectical and dialogical tensions it creates as long as possible.

One of my primary objectives for the research project on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico was to consciously live with this tension, paying close attention to the moments of awkwardness, surprise, mistakes, and embarrassment I encountered on a daily basis as an outsider, a North American, and an academic. Sidney Mintz also attempted to work from this positionality. In the introductory essay to the story of Tazo Zayas' life, Mintz is quite open and frank with his readers, explaining that the idea of pursuing the book project emerged from his feelings of confusion and uncertainty in response to Don Taso's religious conversion. Mintz wanted to understand the meanings of this dramatic change for the life of his closest interlocutor and good friend (Mintz, 1974:6). Ultimately, it is from this awkward positionality that the richest ethnographic insight can emerge.

The insights gleaned from this review of Menchú, Myerhoff, Mintz and Stoll illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of using life-history narratives in the production of ethnographic knowledge. It is significant to note that chronology does not necessarily correlate with theoretical advances. Sidney Mintz's work with Don Taso was the earliest project, conducted in the 1950s and published in the 1960s. It is my assessment that Worker In the Cane is more successful than the Menchú and Myerhoff projects, with regard to the theoretical issues framing ethnographic methodology. Menchú's *testimonio* and Myerhoff's book, film and theater projects about elderly Jewish people in California were less successful in retaining the dialectical tensions between conversants' opinions and analysis and the anthropologist/editor's analysis. It is hoped that my dissertation on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico will follow the approach established by

Mintz, locating women's voices and concerns within the historical development of Puerto Rico's political economy.

Endnotes to Chapter One

1. District 65 no longer exists as a separate trade union; it was dissolved into the United Auto Workers in the mid 1980s.
2. For more information on my research with secretaries in Boston and the trade union at Boston University, see Casey (1985, and 1988) and Massachusetts History Workshop (1985).
3. These documents are now part of the Oral History Archives at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
4. I am indebted to author, playwright and theater director Rachel Kranz, for this insightful comment, and for the great work she went on to do as a trade union activist with the District 65, United Auto Workers organizing drive at Columbia University and for her creation of the character of Rosie, a feminist trade union organizer in New York City in the 1990s, in her novel Leaps of Faith (Kranz, 2000).
5. For more information on the proliferation of suburban housing developments (*urbanizaciones*) in Puerto Rico, see John Stinson-Fernández' (1995) detailed case study of this process in the town of Bayamón, Puerto Rico.
6. In 1993 the PSP was dissolved and reformed as the New Independence Movement (NMI).
7. The structure of the Spanish language assisted my efforts to highlight the reflexive gaze, since the act of self-reflection is made explicit when the verb *contar* is conjugated in the first person plural as *contarnos*, for which the literal English translation would be **to tell ourselves**. The more impersonal English language does not attach personal pronouns directly to verbs, thereby projecting more generalized action in the world. Likewise, the Spanish word *historia* is significant, because of its dual meaning as both **history**, in the sense of public, recorded history, and **tale or story** (Peers, Barragán, Vinyals, and Mora, 1968: 246-47; 472).
8. In this chapter, I focus on the literature which framed the beginnings of a hermeneutical tradition in anthropology, rather than engage in a debate with the more contemporary "postmodern" turn in anthropology.
9. Anthropologists use a range of terms to identify the people they work with in the production of ethnographic knowledge. The term "subjects," used more often in the past, calls upon scientific imagery in an attempt by anthropologists to metaphorically link ethnographic studies with laboratory experiments. "Informants," is another label, one that acknowledges the helpful role of individuals who provide important information to the anthropologist. This term still reflects distance and inequality between an objectified "other," who provides information-as-data, and the anthropologist, who synthesizes and

interprets this data in relation to academic models and established bodies of literature. This term also has unfortunate connotations with the activities of police departments and intelligence agencies who recruit “informants” to work in groups deemed dangerous and deserving of investigation, infiltration, disruption, and control.

The term “interlocutors,” which I use in my writing, was designed to create a sense of equality between two participants in the moments of their conversation within an interview event. It is interesting to note, however, that within the United States popular usage of the word “interlocutor” refers to the Minstrel Show, which beginning in the 1830s, presented “a distorted and exaggerated vision of African American plantation life to many people across the nation, through music, comedy, dramatic sketches, and oratory speeches. The lampoon was further heightened by white minstrel entertainers who appeared on stage in blackened faces” (Lornell, 2001:142). For more discussion of this issue, see Eric Lott’s (1993) book, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class. The Interlocutor was the “straight man” stationed at the center of the stage, with minstrel performers in Black-face on either side whose performances projected white people’s racist perceptions of African Americans.

Another term that I also use, “conversants,” is also problematic. It conveys a relationship of equality between two or more people engaged in conversational activity. Yet this affirmation of equality belies the inequality of intentionality and purpose which exists between the two speakers; for one, the anthropologist, all the “talking” is integrally connected to the job of harvesting ethnographic data for the purpose of pursuing academic research and professional careers (see Marcus, 1986: 262-263), while the other conversant is assumed to be *simply* sharing stories. As yet, the problematic relationship of differential power and purposes between anthropologists and the people we talk with has not found adequate nomenclature in academic language.

10. See, for example, June Nash’s book and film project with Bolivian tin miner, Juan Rojas, (Rojas and Nash, 1976); Lynn Stephen’s collaboration on the *testimonio* project with Salvadoran human rights activist, María Teresa Tulu (Tulu, 1994); the autobiography and *testimonio* of Domitilia Barrios (Barrios de Chungara, 1978); and Roque Dalton’s (1987) *testimonio* project with Salvadoran revolutionary leader Miguel Marmol.

11. For more discussion on the relationship between *testimonio* and political movements see, for example, John Beverly and Marc Zimmerman’s (1990) book, Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions and the Latina Feminist Group’s (2001) anthology, Telling to Live: Feminist Latina Testimonios.

12. See Carol Smith (2001), for an example of the ways anthropologists integrated Menchú’s life story into their college courses.

13. For examples of the views of Menchú’s supporters and the subtle differences in their approaches, see: Aceituno, (2001); Pratt, (2001); Sarti, (2001); and Smith, (2001).

14. Victor Montejo is currently an Associate Professor of Native American Studies at the University of California, at Davis.
15. In addition to the monograph, Myerhoff worked with film director Lynn Littman to produce the film, Number Our Days, which won an Oscar for best short documentary (Littman, 1977, video format, 1983). In 1981, Myerhoff adapted the text into the play, Number Our Days that was produced at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.
16. The role of Pentecostal and evangelical Protestant churches in Puerto Rico has a complicated history. Missionary and evangelizing efforts by mainstream Protestant denominations began immediately after the United States wrested colonial control of Puerto Rico from the Spanish in 1898. Protestant religions were considered a major vehicle in the process of acculturation and Americanization in Puerto Rico and they received direct support from the United States government. Since the 1960s, Protestant churches have grown dramatically in Puerto Rico and developed a more solid grounding in Puerto Rican society. There has been a rapid rise in the number of non-sectarian, evangelical churches organized only at the local level, with a single congregation and church building, as well as dramatic growth among United States-based evangelical churches such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. The growth of these churches is most pronounced among poor and working-class people, in barrios and towns experiencing extremely high unemployment and a series of associated social and health problems, including drug addiction, AIDS, domestic violence, and high rates of incarceration. While most of these churches have strict rules against political participation of any kind, this was changing during the period of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico. Some of the UPR secretaries I interviewed were Evangelical Christians *and* members of the Hermandad, including the Campus Representative of the Hermandad at Aguadilla Regional College, Teresita Nuñez. For more discussion on the role of popular religion in political movements in Latin America, see Stephen (1990).
17. Worker In the Cane was first published in 1960 by Yale University Press, and reprinted in 1974 by W.W. Norton and Company. The text was translated into French and published as Taso: la vie d'un traveilleur de la canne in 1979. Almost a decade after the French edition appeared, the text was finally translated into Spanish when Ediciones Huracán published Taso: trabajador de la caña as the fourth book in their Colección Clásicos series in 1988. At the time of my fieldwork in 1990-1992, Mintz's book was still very popular among students and faculty at the University of Puerto Rico.
18. Zayas wrote his autobiography in two sections. In 1953, he produced the first text of 850 words covering the period from his birth in 1908 through 1945. In 1956, Zayas wrote a second text of 780 words, covering the period from 1945 through 1949 (Mintz, 1974:27).
19. The quality of this enduring relationship between interlocutors, and its significance for Don Taso was evident during one of my visits with him and his family in Barrio

Yauca during the summer of 1991. At one point in the afternoon, Don Taso decided he wanted to share the contents of a recent letter he had received from Sidney Mintz, mailed from Munich in July 1991, with me. He asked me to read aloud the three-page letter, filled with news about different family members, a brief description of the academic work Mintz was doing at the time, and questions about Don Taso and his family. It was an intimate and comfortable letter, another communication between two friends written forty-three years after the two men first met in 1948.

20. This point is related to my exploration of the anthropologist's role as a midwife (Casey, 1991b), working with the people we study to help them give birth to their stories and their evaluations of the society they live in. While Mintz might not feel as comfortable as I do with this gendered analogy, his work reflects similar theoretical commitments and methodological approaches.

Chapter Two
Brincar el Charco (Jumping the Puddle):
Using the Lens of Mobility to Introduce the Ethnographic Setting

Locating secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico within the larger social context of Puerto Rico's political economy and cultural history – in which the theme of social mobility figures prominently as an ideology and as social experience – illuminates some of the conditions that encouraged these women to pursue class politics and working-class identity, thus adding another dimension to the exploration of how and why UPR secretaries would privilege trade union activity as the vehicle for advancing their claims for an improved standard of living and social position, rather than articulating these claims through language and political mobilizations based on their gender identity as women, mothers, and heads of households, or their professional identity as secretaries, or their national identity – their *puertorriqueñidad* (Puerto Ricaness). Issues of gender, race, and national identity figure prominently in these women's self-concept and daily lives, yet it was through the vehicle of a working-class discourse and collection plan of action that these women organized in 1990-1992 to improve their lives and protect the gains they had already won. Chapter Two, therefore, presents a discussion of Puerto Rico's political economy in the 1990s: tracing the ongoing debates over political status and the impact of United States colonial control; exploring the issues of race, migration and national identity as these impact women secretaries; and documenting the rapid rise of clerical occupations beginning in the 1960s, and the intense gender stratification within this sector of the economy. All of these factors combined to both facilitate and constrain

the available options for social action on the part of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico in the early 1990s.

The ideology of social mobility, and the contradictory patterns of high unemployment, migration and downward mobility which challenge this ideology, are threaded or marbled through all these aspects of Puerto Rican society. The myths and realities of mobility shape workers' social position and identities in complex and multi-layered ways, including secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. The issue of mobility structured the narrative form of many personal life-stories people shared with me. It was embedded in the language of instructional booklets and guides to career advancement for secretaries (Professional Secretaries International, 1989), and it was a pervasive theme in many of the religious services and meetings of women's groups I attended.

Secretaries, as an occupational group, and universities, as social institutions, are especially laden with the promise of upward mobility. Issues of mobility in relation to secretaries are explored in greater detail later in this chapter, but it is useful to note here that there is a prevalent belief among many women workers and researchers that secretarial work constitutes upward mobility from factory work.¹ Secretarial work requires higher education levels, offers a safer, cleaner and less dangerous work environment, and allows greater expression of individual preferences, with regard to office fashions and work-space decorations, than is permitted in industrial settings that require uniforms and restrict the amount of "personal space" available to workers (Freeman, 2000). The University of Puerto Rico, as an institution, also resonates with the

ideology of upward mobility.² Higher education is considered one of the diagnostic and most important features of upward mobility and middle-class identity within the tradition of Weberian sociology and in popular culture. Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico become, therefore, an especially significant group of workers to study in order to examine the issue of mobility.

Working with these women, I found a range of dynamic and ambivalent attitudes towards their class position, including: a rejection of class politics; passivity and tentative involvement; as well as vocal, partisan commitment. The fact that the Hermandad's class politics take place on the campuses of Puerto Rico's premier, national university also generated diverse reactions. These ranged from embarrassment and anger on the part of those professors, students, and workers who found the Hermandad's militant marches and picket lines offensive, a noisy interruption and threat to the liberal arts project of learning, self-discovery and professional development. There was also a much larger group of workers, joined by faculty and student supporters, who found inspiration and political commitment through their solidarity with the Hermandad. Is it ironic, or surprising, that the oldest and most prestigious university in Puerto Rico, an institution identified as a crucial resource in the process of upward social mobility, would also be the home of a militant trade union? Is it an aberration for secretaries, who are considered middle-class by many people in Puerto Rican society, as well as academics studying workers, and significant numbers of secretaries, to engage in trade union politics and claim a working-class identity? While these provocative questions fueled my research, this dissertation explains why there is no fundamental contradiction here. Political

conditions and cultural traditions specific to the University of Puerto Rico may highlight the underlying tensions of class processes, but it is within the same vortex of uneven development, ambivalence, and dissension among workers, that social action designed to address inequality always takes place. The remaining sections of Chapter Two discuss the ethnographic setting in which the individual lives and the social drama I studied took place.

"From Bootstrap to Shoulderstrap:"
The Issue of Social Mobility in Puerto Rico

The title of my dissertation, "From Bootstrap to Shoulderstrap," refers to both the national projects for economic development and upward mobility for Puerto Rico as a society,³ and the personal project of upward mobility pursued by individuals and families during the twentieth century. This includes Puerto Rico's economic transformation from an agricultural society to one based on industrial production in the 1950s and 1960s, and a second change in the 1970s and 1980s when the industrial economy was transformed into a service economy.

The image of mobility in the form of an upward body movement was explicitly encoded in the political ideology of "Operation Bootstrap," Puerto Rico's campaign for rapid industrialization and social modernization of the 1950s.⁴ Operation Bootstrap mobilized the Puerto Rican people, as a collective body, to raise themselves up "by their bootstraps." Such an exercise is physically impossible, since any attempt to lift oneself up by the bootstraps only causes a person to fall flat on their face, or turn head over heels.

In either case, the protagonist is being asked to attempt an impossible maneuver and to risk looking completely ridiculous, regardless of the outcome. Ironically this metaphor aptly expresses the unequal power relations of the colonial ties between the United States government and Puerto Rico. For more information on the "social levitation" in the body politic required by Operation Bootstrap see Bonilla and Campos (1984).

My dissertation is meant to be a permutation on the theme of social mobility: moving upwards from the leather straps on the laborer's boots used in heavy agricultural work in the first half of the twentieth century, to the contemporary shoulderstrap bags and purses women workers carry every day on their way to work in modern offices.

The secretaries I interviewed at the University of Puerto Rico referred to the process of social mobility as *brincar el charco*, literally meaning "to jump over the puddle." The phrase is figuratively used to refer to the move from one social class to a higher social class. I first heard the words, *brincar el charco*, from UPR secretary Doña Angélica Meléndez who used the colloquial phrase to explain the concept of upward class mobility in relation to women office workers at the Puerto Rico. The phrase is most often used, however, to refer to the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States, and the aspirations of upward mobility for proletarian Puerto Ricans embedded in that migratory process. For more discussion on the process of Puerto Rican transmigration see Bonilla et al (1998), Bose and Barceló-Miller (1995), Duany (1995), and Rivera (1986). This trope has found prominent expression in Puerto Rican political rhetoric, social development programs, literature, films, and popular music throughout the twentieth century.⁵

The rhetoric of upward mobility and profit are part of all the economic development plans crafted by the United States and Puerto Rican governments. In these narratives, Puerto Rico is positioned in the center of the doorway between the United States and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, giving Puerto Rico a pivotal role in regional political geography. This is documented in all the promotional literature published by *Fomento*, Puerto Rico's state agency for industrial development since the 1950s, in which Puerto Rico was alternately described as "The Showcase for Development," "Profit Island, USA," and "The Doorway to Democracy," in relation to the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America. The pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico, while strongly rejecting United States political control and aspects of U.S. culture, nevertheless projects its own version of upward mobility in its vision of an independent, and in some cases, socialist Puerto Rico. In these scenarios, however, the goal of upward mobility remains a dream deferred until Puerto Rico breaks its colonial tether to the United States and finally achieves the nineteenth-century dream of political independence.

Issues of Race, Migration, and National Identity in Puerto Rico Race, Color, and Racism in Puerto Rico

Issues of race, color, and racism are also important in the lives of secretaries in contemporary Puerto Rico.⁶ Racial identity is a very complex issue in Puerto Rico. Questions on racial classification were eliminated from the U.S. Census in 1950, making statistical analysis difficult. Social science discussion is often anecdotal and rarely

systematic. Racial categories are fluid, contextual and based on self-perception.⁷ The existence of racism is often denied. Puerto Ricans often cite the fact that under Spanish rule racism was never institutionalized in the jural-political structures of the island, as occurred in the United States. Racial nomenclature is, likewise, fluid and sometimes contradictory.⁸ In popular discourse, various terms are used to describe Afro-Puerto Ricans, including: *negro*, and *moreno*, (literally translated as black and brown), as well as *trigueño*, and “*café con leche*” a mixed-race nomenclature translated as “wheat-colored,” and “coffee-with-milk,” respectively. The category for white people of European/United States ancestry is “*blanco*.” Yet this term has taken on another set of meanings in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. The words “*blanquito*,” and “*muy blanquito*” (white or “whiteys”) are used as derogatory terms for rich people or other individuals who project arrogance and wealth - regardless of the skin color of the particular individual in question. And the words *negro/a*, and *negrita/o* (black) are used as intimate terms of endearment, again, regardless of skin color; a man may call his lover *negra*, and a woman may refer to her boyfriend as *mi negrito*.

On many separate occasions, people I spoke with would cite these examples from popular culture and go on to describe the ease and cultural openness between phenotypically-diverse groups in Puerto Rico as the basis for their belief that racism does not exist in Puerto Rico. Yet, in response to my questions about race and racism in United States, these same people would tell me about those “other” people who still want to “whiten” the race or hide their own African or mulatto heritage.⁹ And the majority of people I interviewed acknowledged that Puerto Rican people who would be called

African-descended or Black in the United States, were concentrated in the lowest economic strata of the Puerto Rican population. Yet, the dominant explanation of this reality that I heard was that it reflected class oppression, not racial oppression; my conversants argued that most Afro-Puerto Ricans are working-class or poor and this is why they have not moved into the middle class and professional occupations.

Racism is a dynamic process, one that changes historically. The recent wave of undocumented immigration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico shaped the development of racism in the 1990s, as Dominicans became social scapegoats, identified as a major cause of rising crime and social decay.¹⁰ The fact is that this immigration is taking place during a period of rising unemployment in Puerto Rico, as manufacturing plants close down operations, and employment generated through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) shrinks. Another source for the reconfiguration of racial values and identity in Puerto Rico in the 1990s was the proliferation of U.S. movies and television via the explosive growth of cable television channels, satellite disks and movie video rentals.

In the world of work, the shift from an industrial economy to a service economy generated new expectations and job classifications on the part of personnel management which seem to have an impact on the level of racist discrimination. In the world of office work, employers emphasize standards of "conviviality," the ability to get along well, and physical appearance, as criteria for evaluating the employability of a woman worker. These criteria may explain why Afro-Puerto Rican women are employed in white-collar office work at a lower rate than their proportion in the general population. For example, I

never encountered an Afro-Puerto Rican woman in the position of Executive Secretary or Private Secretary in any of the private-sector firms I visited. In the manufacturing sector, personal connections were also important vehicles to secure employment and promotion, however the actual work process of electronic assembly or garment production emphasized productivity, manual dexterity and speed over interpersonal relations. In the world of office work it is just the opposite, supervisors list skills in human relations, conviviality, and the ability to get along with other workers as the most important criteria for employment.

In secretarial occupations, a woman worker's physical appearance is used as both a race and class filter, a barrier to employment and promotion. While it is not possible to pursue the issue of race more fully within the parameters of this dissertation on secretaries, the discussion presented here makes it clear that race and racism impact the lives of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. Additional empirical and ethnographic research is required to create a more comprehensive and systematic study of the issues of race, color, and racism in Puerto Rico and to understand how racism operates within the world of secretarial work.

Migration Myths and Proletarian Resilience

Puerto Rican popular culture is profoundly proletarian, reflecting the class position and daily experiences of the vast majority of citizens, including those working as salaried employees in the formal economy, and the large percentage of able-bodied adults categorized as "out of the workforce" and engaged in a wide range of activities within the

informal sector referred to as *chiripeo*. Puerto Rican popular culture is a hybrid mixture of *jibaro* (country people) traditions, projected and maintained by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the Muñoz Marín/ Popular Democratic Party beginning in the 1940s, United States culture, and Spanish tradition, as these cultural traditions are mediated by and incorporated into working class daily life.

Within this proletarian popular culture, the myth of migration, as a vehicle for upward mobility, has been a powerful theme for more than a century, ever since the United States assumed colonial control of Puerto Rico in 1898. Campaigns promoting migration were proposed as a means of reducing rural poverty and resolving what became defined as the problem of “over-population,” as soon as the United States military government assumed control of Puerto Rico. Government sponsored migration of Puerto Rican agricultural workers to the United States and Hawaii began in 1900.¹¹ These projects coexisted with, and were integral to, all other development programs for the island’s economy. Historical memory and collective consciousness about the promise and reality of migration was very much alive in the minds of secretaries and other people I spoke with in Puerto Rico in the 1990s.

The migration from rural to urban areas in Puerto Rico, and from Puerto Rico to the United States – especially the 1950s Great Migration to New York, where the streets were definitely *not* paved with gold, nor welcoming to Puerto Rican migrants – is understood to have been a failure of the rags-to-riches promise. Life for migrants in the urban centers of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican communities of *los nuyores* (as the migration to New York City and the northeast United States was called) meant a

continuation of under-employment, unemployment, racial and ethnic discrimination, and poverty. This experience finds ample expression in Puerto Rican poetry and songs, including *El Lamento Boricano* by Raphael Hernández, *El Negrito Bonito* by New Song *trovador* Roy Brown, and the Salsa song, *Juan Albanil* about the construction worker who goes to San Juan to help build the tourist hotels he knows he will never be allowed to enter. Popular awareness of the limits of migration to achieve economic stability and social mobility was literally brought home to Puerto Rico with the first wave of return migrants from the United States in the 1960s; working-class families and individuals who returned to the island without having achieved success, only to be viewed with suspicion and distrust and then blamed as the cause of increased crime, drug-use, and social problems in general by their compatriots who had remained on the island (Maldonado Denis 1980).

By the time of my fieldwork in the early 1990s, New York was no longer the preferred destination among Puerto Rican migrants due to the prevalence of high unemployment and the availability of mainly minimum wage, unskilled, low-end service and factory work. At the University of Puerto Rico I was able to observe this feature directly, in the work of the Student-Exchange Program where I maintained office space. Students seeking a study-abroad program overwhelmingly selected colleges outside New York City, even though a very active student exchange program existed between the UPR and the City University of New York (CUNY). When I asked individual students about their preferences, their responses were uniformly negative towards New York. Beyond the world of privileged university students, the same preferences were expressed with

regards to migration. The 1980s witnessed a dramatic shift in the focus of migration away from New York City, even though the majority of Puerto Ricans in the United States still reside in the metropolitan New York area and it is a general rule of thumb that migrants usually congregate in areas where enclave immigrant communities have been established. Instead, in the 1980s, there was a rapid rise of migration from Puerto Rico to Florida – especially the Orlando-Kissimmee area, where jobs existed for Puerto Rican migrants in the tourist and hospitality industry associated with Disney World and other massive theme parks in the area. Every year, tens of thousands of people from Puerto Rico travel to “Disney,” as the Orlando, Florida area is colloquially called. Florida -- both the Orlando and Miami areas -- has become a preferred site for migration, and the stated reasons for this preference include the fact that Florida’s climate and culture are more familiar and comfortable for Puerto Ricans, and the area lacks the crowded housing, urban decay, crime rate, population density and high unemployment rates associated with New York and the northeastern United States. Nevertheless, in Florida the majority of jobs available to Puerto Rican migrants remain firmly within the low-paying, unskilled service sector of the economy.

Among the secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico I interviewed were two young women who had moved to Florida with the expectation of finding secure employment as bilingual service and sales representatives (one worked in a car-rental agency in Orlando, the other at a travel agency), only to return to Puerto Rico when their work in Florida proved to be part-time and temporary in nature. This fact demonstrates the resilience of Puerto Rican workers and their continued drive to take risks in order to

succeed; even though Puerto Rican migrants to Florida remain overwhelmingly proletarian. When New York turned out to be a “failed” migration solution, people turned to other areas of the United States. The continued inability of Puerto Ricans, at the aggregate level, to achieve the promise of social mobility and economic security encoded in the migration strategy, became one more reason why secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico would stand firm in their loyalty to the Hermandad trade union. Given the contradictions and limitations of the “emigration dialectic” (Maldonado Denis, 1980), the alternative choice to remain in Puerto Rico and pursue the path of class politics can be seen as a better vehicle to guarantee economic stability – not only for those women who explored the migration option, only to return to Puerto Rico, but for all the other UPR workers who did not embark on the migration path, themselves, yet heard the stories told by returning migrants who were their co-workers, neighbors, and family members.

The resilience of working-class Puerto Rican people is reflected in their willingness to mobilize in large numbers in response to each successive wave of development strategies pursued by the commonwealth government during the past century of United States colonialism, albeit with a growing sense of distrust, doubt and irony, based on the collective historical memory of the promise vs. the realities of these projects as an authentic vehicle for social development and working class advancement.

National Identity in Puerto Rico

The discourse on Puerto Rican national identity developed steadily in the 1990s, as reflected in the proliferation of books and articles published on this topic [Bonilla et al

(1998); Davila (1997); Duany (1997); Haslip-Viera(2001)]. New conceptual frameworks were introduced, influenced by the post-modern turn in history, anthropology, and the other social sciences. These writings focus on the dual processes of declining political nationalism, as reflected in weak electoral returns for pro-independence political parties, and rising cultural nationalism. Discussing the creation of a hybrid Puerto Rican/United States culture in Puerto Rico, Duany analyzes a shift in nationalist orientation away from a strict rejection of all aspects of United States culture and uncritical support for Puerto Rican traditions towards a more comfortable acceptance on the syncretic nature of Puerto Rican popular culture. He argues that the tension and rigidity between two previously polarized positions have been resolved through a more relaxed attitude, as evidenced in: holiday celebrations that include Santa Claus and *Los Reyes* (Three Kings' Day); musical appreciation of *salsa* music and rock music; and the enjoyment of traditional Puerto Rican foods (*la comida criolla*) and American fast foods (Duany, 1997:10).

I would add the fact that two events during the 1990s triggered a mobilization of sentiments and activities in the realm of national identity in Puerto Rico: October 12, 1992, which marked the 500th Anniversary of the European *discovery* of the New World, or *encounter* with the New World, depending on one's sense of history and political point of view; and July 28, 1998, which marked the centennial anniversary of Puerto Rico's colonial absorption by the United States. The meaning of these two dates was hotly contested by supporters of opposing political perspectives on the issue of Puerto Rico's national identity, most notably between assimilationists and *independentistas*.

Intellectuals, artists, musicians, and political organizations on both sides of the debate

were mobilized in response to these two dates with a proliferation of diverse cultural productions designed to celebrate, critique, condemn, or simply report on the scheduled activities, yielding an intensification of debate and reflection about the nature of Puerto Rico's national identity.

It is also important to note that the decline in political nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s was precipitated by a combination of internal weaknesses within the pro-independence and nationalist political parties in Puerto Rico, which began in the 1980s, and external forces, including political repression of these movements and a rapid decline of international support for all national liberation movements after the demise of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 1990s.

The political status question has dominated Puerto Rico's intellectual life since the beginnings of a Creole nationalist consciousness in the last half of the nineteenth century (Gordon, 1973; Maldonado Denis, 1971; Lewis, 1963; Silén, 1971; and Wagenheim, 1970). This debate was carried forward in the twentieth century by Antonio Pedreira's (1934) seminal work, *Insularismo* (Insularity), which defined Puerto Rico as caught in a perpetual state of anxiety and immaturity because of its historical marginality in relationship to both colonial powers, Spain and the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, writers and intellectuals, the Generation of the Fifties, challenged this characterization of an essential Puerto Rican identity. Most relevant for my research on secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico are found in Juan Gonzalez's (1990) effort to construct a working class approach to the question of national identity, which he defined as the view *de la plebe*, the working, or plebeian class.

The observation that Puerto Rican national identity was more rigidly constructed in the 1970s is not unconnected to the fact that the 1970s was a period of heightened political power and public presence of the pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico. The ascendance of the socialist and pro-independence movement, represented by the Marxist-Leninist Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) and growth in the older Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), helped to shape a political landscape in which working class Puerto Ricans were organized and mobilized to contest for power, concrete social and political power, and not just an imagined power or social construction of power. In addition, there was a groundswell of nationalist and pro-independence sentiments among thousands of unaffiliated *independentistas* among the ranks of workers, cultural artists, and academics. Pro-independence, socialist, and progressive political organizations witnessed rapid growth during this period, including: the UPR staff workers who formed the *Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente* in 1972; academics from the left at the University of Puerto Rico who organized the Association of Puerto Rican Professors (APPU) and unsuccessfully attempted to organize faculty into a trade union, and the pro-independence university students organization, *La Federación Universitario Pro-Independencia* (FUPI). The FUPI helped to spark a general upsurge in leftist political action in the 1970s through a number of successful campaigns, including: national student strikes against compulsory military training and the presence of the Reserve Officers Training Corps, ROTC on the University of Puerto Rico campuses;¹² against the United States Navy's continued occupation of the Puerto Rican islands of Culebra and Vieques;¹³ and against compulsory military service for Puerto Rican men who fought and

died in the United States war against Viet Nam in much higher than the ratio of Puerto Rican people within the United States census.

While the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico maintained the *independentista* tradition of boycotting elections as a protest against the ultimate United States control over all decisions made by governing bodies in Puerto Rico, the two other pro-independence political parties, the PIP and the PSP, achieved significant electoral victories, placing candidates in the Puerto Rican Legislature and Senate. The PIP has retained its electoral franchise to the present day, and continues to elect at-large candidates to the Senate. During the period of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico, the *pipiolo* Senators (as the PIP representatives are called) had widespread support and were popularly perceived as “whistle-blowers” against government corruption. Citizens frustrated by the policies of embezzlement, corruption, and the game of sectarian party politics, which is referred to as *la política partidista* or simply, *la politiquería* (loosely translates as the mess of politics, or dirty politics), which takes place in Puerto Rico across party lines within both majority parties, the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) and the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD), would call the pro-independence PIP senator, David Noriega, to expose government fraud and corruption. These citizens included politically unaffiliated people and members of both ruling parties. In short, the 1970s was a time when the pro-independence political movement made powerful claims, achieved significant political power and earned the right to represent Puerto Rico in a number of international forums, including: the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization; the Movement of Non-Alligned Nations; and OSPAAL,

the Havana-based Organization of Solidarity Between the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In the year 2002, cultural nationalism is the dominant vehicle through which the struggle for national identity is played out in Puerto Rico. However, supporters of political independence have played a leading role in the international struggle to force the United States Navy off the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. And the issue of Puerto Rico's political status is still not resolved. It is likely that the complex factors and convoluted trajectories shaping the question of Puerto Rico's national identity, combine to influence secretaries at the University of Puerto to privilege class issues over national identity.

The Rise of Clerical Work and the Formation of Secretaries in Puerto Rico

Why is it that the particular political economy of clerical work in Puerto Rico—an overwhelmingly female occupation, and virtually the only occupation available to women—was a significant factor in the choice of women clerical workers at the University of Puerto Rico to choose class, rather than gender, as the means through which to express themselves? The very rapidity with which clerical work became an all-female profession, and at the same time, virtually the only occupation available to women, was a significant factor in preserving the working-class outlook of many secretaries. An historical review of employment statistics reveals how quickly clerical work became women's work. From 1899-1930, the majority of employed women in Puerto Rico were

concentrated in domestic work (78.2% in 1899 and 29.7% in 1930) or in manufacturing (13.5% in 1899 and 52.3% in 1930). During this time, mono-crop sugar production dominated the agricultural economy, accompanied by high rates of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and other diagnostic features of colonial underdevelopment. By 1930, although less than 2% of all employed women were reported to be working in clerical occupations, this figure was equal to the percentage of men working in clerical occupations, although there were twice as many male as female clerical workers.

Table 2.1
Clerical Occupations Among the Gainfully Employed Population
by Sex, Ten Years Old and Over, 1899 to 1930.
 (See Rios, 1990:162-164)

	1899		1910		1920		1930	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	n.a	---	2,624	0.6	5,279	1.2	9,995	1.9
Males	n.a	---	2,435	0.8	4,333	1.3	7,495	1.9
Females	n.a	---	189	0.2	937	1.1	2,500	1.9

From 1910 to 1930, there was a dramatic increase in the number of clerical jobs in Puerto Rico, and in the ratio of women to men in these occupations, establishing the pattern of gender stratification that persists to the present time. In 1910, 7.2% of all women workers had clerical jobs; in 1920, the percentage had risen to 17.7%; and by 1930, the figure was 25.0%. These figures represent a dramatic increase both in the number of clerical jobs and in the degree of gender segregation in that field.

In order to understand these statistics, including the fact that we have no data for 1899, it is important to place clerical work in the context of Puerto Rico's economic history. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the economy and social relations of work were dominated by the *hacienda* system and sugar plantation economy (see López, 1974; and Quintero Rivera, 1974). In a world dominated by mono-crop sugar production, based on centuries of slavery and indentured servitude known as the *jornalero* or passbook system, literate workers were few and the role of clerical work in counting houses and banks was minuscule, albeit important. The fiction of Rosario Ferré (1988) provides a more fully nuanced description of life among the land-owning 19th century sugar elite on the southern coast of Puerto Rico. Ferré's collection of short stories, Sweet Diamond Dust, about loyalty and betrayal in family and romantic relationships, vividly portrays the disappearing way of life of the old *hacendado* rural elite showing, as well, the way clerical work was integrated into the responsibilities of the *hacendados*, their sons, and their trusted lieutenants. In those days, clerical work was associated with literate, powerful men. In the cities of San Juan and Ponce, the job of a clerk was a gentleman's position, an almost exclusively male job often assigned to the less prosperous sons of the old sugar elite or to the offspring of the old Spanish military regime. Mintz's (1974) work on the daily relations among rural sugar-cane workers in the 1940s and 1950s also provides peripheral ethnographic information about the growth of clerical work in association with the development of modern political parties and government bureaucracy, associated with the rise of Luis Muñoz Marín's monolithic Popular

Democratic Party (PPD). Mintz shows that the local PPD Party Secretary – the person taking notes at meetings, enrolling voters, and distributing services – was always male.

Table 2.2
Rise of Women Clerical Workers in Puerto Rico
Typists and Stenographers, 1899 -1960

	<u>1899</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>
Total	n.a	225	839	2,309	3,787	9,347	14,391
Female	n.a	113	506	1,553	2,556	6,938	12,520
% women	n.a	50.2%	60.3%	66.3%	67.4%	74.2%	86.9%

As the era of *hacendados* and mono-culture faded, there was a dramatic increase in the number of clerical work positions in Puerto Rico, from only 225 total positions in 1910 to more than 14,000 in 1960. We can also trace the dramatic rise in women's concentration in clerical work, from 50.2% of all typists and stenographers in 1910 to 86.9% of secretaries by 1960.

Table 2.3
Major Occupation Group of Employed Workers, Total and by Sex, 1940-1980
Table by G. Casey, based on statistics presented in Rios (1990:182-184).

	<u>CLERICAL AND KINDRED WORKERS</u>				
	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>
Both Sexes:	15,604	27,485	41,817	72,562	100,227
Males:	10,325	15,245	19,689	29,807	38,105
Females:	5,279	12,240	22,128	42,755	72,122

As Table 2.3 demonstrates, the turning point in clerical work as a female occupation occurred between 1950 and 1960, reflecting the constant increase in clerical work positions associated with Operation Bootstrap's economic development in the 1950s and 1960s. This trend created more clerical jobs for men as well as for women. But women were increasingly employed in these jobs, and the percentage of male workers

began to drop off in both absolute and relative terms. Even before 1960, the first time when the census data listed the majority of clerical workers as female, women workers were more concentrated in clerical occupations than men. While most clerical workers were still men in 1940, this sector represented only 2.7 of all male workers, since most male workers were concentrated in agricultural production. Female clerical workers represented 4.1% of all women workers, as most women workers were still employed as domestics and home workers in the needle trades. Nevertheless, the percent of female clerical workers in relation to all female workers was almost double the ratio of male clerical workers to all male workers. This difference continued to grow at a geometric rate in the ensuing years. In 1950, women clericals were 9.3% of all women workers, while male clericals represented only 3.6% of all male workers. In 1960, women clericals represented 16.4% of all women workers, while male clerical workers constituted only 4.7% of all male workers. In 1970 these figures were 21.7% for women and 6.8% for men, and in 1980, clerical workers constituted 26.8% of all women workers and 8.1% of all male workers. During this same time period, clerical workers of both sexes had increased their share of the labor force from 3.1% of total workers in 1940 to 15.0% of all workers in 1980.

Table 2.4
Women as Percentage of Total Workforce
 The data presented in this Table is taken from Ríos González (1990:195)

	1980	1970	1960	1950	1940
Employment of women workers, expressed as % of total workforce	36.5	30.8	24.4	23.4	25.2
Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers	55.1	56.3	47.8	47.6	49.3
Farmers and Farm Managers	3.2	2.4	2.0	2.2	6.4
Managers, Officials, and Proprietors	26.1	15.1	13.3	10.2	8.5
Clerical and Kindred Workers	65.4	58.9	52.9	44.5	33.8
Sales Workers	27.5	22.0	18.0	12.5	10.8
Craftsmen, Foremen, and Kindred Workers	9.0	6.3	3.4	1.3	0.8
Machine Operatives and Kindred Workers	31.4	40.7	39.9	55.8	69.7
Domestic Workers, Private Households	94.4	93.4	94.3	90.1	89.7
Service Workers, Except Domestic	38.5	36.5	36.4	35.9	28.8
Farm Laborers	3.4	2.3	1.6	1.7	1.6
Laborers, Except Farm and mines*	----	5.2	2.7	0.2	1.3
Not Reported**	----	33.5	49.3	36.3	26.0

* Included in Operators category in 1980.

** Eliminated in the 1980 Census.

One of the criteria used to measure the expansion of women's economic opportunities since the 1960s has been their level of participation in "non-traditional occupations"--those occupations which have traditionally had a high rate of male workers. Women have, in fact, entered these occupations in Puerto Rico. But the percentage of women workers reported to be engaged in manufacturing jobs is actually misleading (see Table 2.4, above), as these figures tend to mask a large number of women clerical workers employed in manufacturing companies. For example, the 1970 Census of Population listed women workers as 3.5% of all workers in the construction industry, yet 52% of all those women were employed as clericals (Rios González, 1990:178). In the trucking industry, women comprised 4.3 of the workforce, yet 65.2% of those women were employed as clerical workers in trucking firms. On the one hand, these figures represent women's inclusion in a more varied work world. On the other hand, women's actual work experience remains concentrated within the highly gendered world of clerical work. It is essential to disaggregate the data in order to get a clearer picture of women's distribution in the labor force. Table 2.5 (see below) indicates the percent of women working in primary industrial manufacturing firms who are actually employed in clerical positions.

Table 2.5

Occupational Distribution of Employed Women Clerical Workers, as Percent of Total
Women Employed in Selected Manufacturing Industries, 1970

(This table was developed by the author from data presented in Ríos González, 248-250)

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Percent of Employed Women Working in Clerical Positions</u>
Furniture and Lumber	21.9%
Stone, Except Glass	42.7%
Fabricated Metal	25.8%
Machinery, Excluding Electrical	43.9%
Electrical Machinery	10.8%
Food	17.7%
Paper	31.5%
Printing	62.2%
Chemical	27.6%
Rubber	71.0%

The information presented in Table 2.5, above, would seem to suggest that women workers in Puerto Rico have not been successful in breaking out of the "pink-collar ghetto." Yet these statistics also reflect a general pattern towards increased clerical work in the manufacturing sector as production is increasingly automated (see Braverman, 1974; Garson, 1988; and Glenn Nakano and Feldberg, 1979). The significance of this point is underscored by the fact that in Puerto Rico, in 1970, while 7.9% of all women employed in manufacturing industries were clerical workers, fully 6.5% of all workers (of both sexes) in the manufacturing sector worked at clerical positions. The occupational category, Secretary, is highly gendered in Puerto Rico, more than almost all other gender-stratified job classifications, and more in 1980 than in 1970.

Table 2.6, below, presents a detailed comparison of the ten occupations with the lowest male-to-female ratio, taken from a total of forty-one occupations. As reported in the statistical data, the category, Secretary, reflects greater gender segregation than eight

of the ten other job categories with the lowest male-to-female ratio, and is equal only to the ratio of male to female workers in the category, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher. Female concentration in secretarial work is far more gender-segregated than most of the male-dominated occupational categories in industrial manufacturing. In 1970, the ratio of female to male workers for major industrial occupations was greater than the ratio of male to female workers for clerical occupations during the same period.

Table 2.6
Gender Stratification Among Secretaries and Other Occupations
with High Concentrations of Female Workers, 1970-1980
 (This table is developed from statistics reported by Rios, 1990: 199-201)

	<u>1980</u>			<u>1970</u>		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>M/F Ratio*</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>M/F Ratio*</u>
1. Secretaries:	1,178	39,377	0.02	1,390	18,953	0.07
2. Domestics:	222	3,810	0.05	687	9,655	0.07
3. Registered Nurses:	448	5,776	0.07	429	4,561	0.09
4. Dieticians:	101	1,000	0.15	27	219	0.12
5. Teachers, Pre-K:	17	628	0.02	17	599	0.02
6. Teachers, Elementary:	6,981	23,603	0.29	4,002	14,251	0.28
7. Social Workers:	1,727	4,514	0.38	845	2,084	0.40

* Male-to-Female Ratio

Table 2.7, below, presents the data on the female-to-male ratio in the six occupations with the greatest rate of male-domination in Puerto Rico in 1980.

Table 2.7

The Female to Male Ratio in Six Male-Dominated Occupations in Puerto Rico, 1980
(Table constructed by the author, from statistics reported by Ríos González, 1990: 251)

<u>Male-Dominated Occupations</u>	<u>Female-to-Male Ratio</u>
1. Packers and wrappers	0.90
2. Cutting operatives	0.79
3. Solderers	0.47
4. Welders and flame cutters	0.12
5. Oilers and greasers	0.07
6. Precision machine operator	0.04

In 1980, the ratio of female-to-male workers in four of the six reported male-dominated industrial occupations was greater than the ratio of male-to-female workers for secretarial work listed in Table 2.6. For the fifth male-dominated occupation, "oilers and greasers," the female-to-male ratio is 0.07, which is equal to the male-to-female ratio reported for Secretaries in Table 2.6. Only in the occupational category of "precision machine operator" is the female-to-male ratio smaller (0.04) than the male-to-female ratio reported for "secretarial work." In general, the pattern of gender stratification for women workers in secretarial occupations is greater than the concentration of male workers in male-dominated occupations.

Female labor force participation rate in Puerto Rico has remained relatively stable during the past forty years: 25% in 1947; 28% in 1980; and 31% in 1990. However, there

has been a dramatic shift in the deployment of women in the workforce. In 1940, 50% of all working women were employed as machine operators, assemblers or inspectors in factories, while only 4.1% were office workers. Previously, women workers were concentrated in the manufacturing sector as machine operators in the textile, food processing, garment, and electronics industries, a legacy from Puerto Rico's campaign for rapid industrialization initiated in the 1940s and 1950s known as "Operation Bootstrap."¹⁴

By 1970, however, the number of women employed as clerical workers surpassed the number employed as machine operators. In 1980, 17% of working women were employed in manufacturing jobs, while 27% were office workers (Acevedo, 1987:57). And by 1990, more than thirty percent of all employed women workers in Puerto Rico were employed in clerical occupations, exceeding their rate of participation in all other sectors of the economy.¹⁵ In 1990, there were 103,000 women clerical workers in Puerto Rico and 54,000 female production workers (Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources (1991), Serie Histórica del Empleo, Desempleo, y Grupo Trabajador en Puerto Rico: 1947-1990). Today, the percent of women workers in clerical occupations exceeds 30%.

The expansion of clerical work in the 1960s and 1970s was facilitated by several factors: the demise of Operation Bootstrap, as manufacturing firms left Puerto Rico in search of cheaper wages in the Dominican Republic, other Caribbean countries, Costa Rica, Mexico and countries in Asia; a dramatic growth in the public sector, where one out of every three workers in 1990 was employed by the government; and the rapid rise of the electronic banking and communications industries in the 1980s, associated with Puerto Rico's position as the financial center of the Caribbean Basin Initiative and off-shore investment strategies linked to Section 936 of the IRS Tax Codes.¹⁶ By the 1990s,

clerical work had become an integral part of the "high-tech" electronics, communications, and financial industries that characterize Puerto Rico's "post-industrial" service economy. Today, women's participation in clerical work outstrips even women workers' participation in sectors of the service economy that have traditionally had high levels of gender stratification, such as education and healthcare.

As a result of the rapid feminization of the clerical work force, the ideology of gender was also rapidly mobilized to maintain labor discipline. Faced with similar conditions, women in the United States chose to mobilize around gender, as happened with the organization for women office workers, "9 to 5," which refused to pursue a trade union approach in Boston in the late 1970s, because they believed women would feel intimidated and reluctant to join trade unions and they believed, not unjustly, that existing trade unions were not inclusive of women or sensitive to their needs.¹⁷ Yet gender was not the preferred language chosen by UPR secretaries to express their needs. Rather, they chose the language of class, as expressed in their participation in a class-based organization, the Hermandad. The Hermandad was 70% female, and its members could perhaps have insisted that their union adopt a primarily gender-oriented approach. Instead, despite the many ways in which battles over gendered language and gendered demands were fought within the union, class remained the primary language through which most UPR secretaries chose to express themselves and their demands. So the question remains, why? – particularly when most female clerical workers in the U.S. chose gender over class as their dominant language.¹⁸ To understand why UPR secretaries made a very different choice from many of their U.S. sisters, we have to explore the colonial conditions of Puerto Rico.

The Impact of Colonialism on the Class Position and Class Identities of
Puerto Rican Female Secretaries

In the United States and England, the growing participation of women in the workforce – including as secretaries – led to the creation of feminist organizations in which women expressed their demands in the language of gender. Characteristic of these movements was the call for "equal rights" for women, with women demanding pay, benefits, and working conditions equal to those of men. In the colonial context of Puerto Rico, however, "equal rights" was hardly a meaningful demand for most working-class women, given that the position of Puerto Rican working-class men was perceived as undesirable in so many ways. Because of colonialism, Puerto Rican men received lower wages, faced harsher working conditions, and were more likely to be unemployed than their U.S. counterparts.

The language of upward mobility was especially prevalent during Operation Bootstrap, when women workers were mobilized to enter the workforce in large numbers. Operation Bootstrap was structured and organized according to a development model based on social engineering and large-scale government intervention via public ownership of key resources and government distribution of social services. During Operation Bootstrap, women who were mobilized to enter the salaried workforce were concentrated in manufacturing jobs. They were employed as machine operators, packers, inspectors, and seamstresses (see Acevedo, 1987). Massive public funding supported extensive infrastructure development in utilities, transportation, and plant construction, as well as social programs in education, health, and housing; and all of these initiatives were designed to improve the productivity of labor and create an attractive climate for U.S. investors seeking to relocate production out of the United States.¹⁹

Although Operation Bootstrap's educational emphasis was on training for industrial production, clerical workers also received educational support during this period. Women workers who graduated from the University of Puerto Rico with Associate Degrees and Bachelor Degrees in Secretarial Sciences, for example, were eligible for full tuition scholarships and stipends from the Puerto Rican government to pursue graduate courses in business management and teacher training programs in secretarial sciences at universities in the United States. Operation Bootstrap actually facilitated a certain amount of upward mobility for women workers, but when the language of upward mobility was invoked during the 1980s and 1990s, the fabric of working women's social lives had changed dramatically. In the 1980s, the Puerto Rican economy changed development models, adopting a new policy of economic restructuring, reduced government spending and the privatization of public resources and social services. The resulting efforts to "down-size" the economy and shrink public sector employment had a profound impact on the quality of women clerical workers' lives.

The Puerto Rican government's educational and ideological campaigns of the 1990s mobilized women to participate in the world of computerized secretarial work with an Operation Bootstrap-like intensity, yet the social and political conditions were significantly different. In the 1950s and 1960s, the social engineering projects of the Popular Democratic Party under Governor Luis Muñoz Marín relied upon large-scale political mobilization and social spending in education, housing construction and public health. In the early 1990s and in contemporary Puerto Rico, that approach to mobilizing labor has been replaced by privatization and sophisticated media campaigns that promote individual choice and promise career advancement to those who choose to take personal responsibility for their lives. Recruitment and training are no longer considered the social

responsibility of the Puerto Rican government or its political parties. Instead of attending free government schools and training workshops fully paid for by the government, contemporary women secretaries must pay for their own job training. As a result, it becomes more tempting for secretaries to see themselves as upwardly mobile middle-class individuals, and more difficult for them to identify as working-class clerical workers who would logically turn to a union to redress their grievances.

At the same time, however, there was a dramatic rise in unemployment among clerical workers. While the number of secretaries nearly doubled between 1975 and 1990, from 54,000 to 103,000, the unemployment rate for these workers also rose during the same period, from 18% to 23%. The 1990 unemployment figure for secretaries and other clerical workers was higher than the unemployment rate for women service workers (14%) and for women machine operators (23%), even though these latter workers in the private-sector industrial jobs faced the constant threat of plant closings as manufacturing firms leave Puerto Rico in search of cheaper wages in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.²⁰ Ironically, the same office technology that raised the prestige of secretarial and clerical work in Puerto Rico in the 1980s and 1990s also eliminated thousands of clerical jobs.²¹ So, while the language of upward mobility has been invoked to mitigate working-class identification with collective organizations, the actual social conditions of secretaries in colonial Puerto Rico have pushed them in the direction of working-class identification and union activism – or at least, tolerance of and basic acceptance of the union.

Old Myths and New Technology for Secretaries in Puerto Rico

In the 1990s, images of the new office technology permeated the mosaic of Puerto

Rico's popular culture. In metropolitan San Juan, secretarial training schools and business institutes lined the avenues, promising jobs and affluence to those who enrolled. In rural areas, cars with loudspeakers attached to their roofs circled town plazas and side streets blaring the schedule of upcoming classes. Popular magazines codified the appropriate styles for office fashion and furnishings. Images of "computadoras," "word-processors," and "máquinas de FAX" filled store windows, advertisements, and the airwaves. There was great interest among women workers on the island to pursue secretarial careers.²²

Computerized secretarial work also figured prominently in contemporary narratives of individual upward mobility. Entrepreneurs – anxious to tap into this ideology – established computer training institutes throughout the island. One person commented that these enterprises sprung up like *cuchifrito* (fried pork) stands along the side of the road. In fact, job placement rates for graduates of these institutes were low. This, however, appeared to be of secondary importance to the owners and managers of these institutes, whose primary goal was to harness the substantial profits to be made from federal guaranteed student loan programs.

The penetration of secretarial images and computer icons into popular consciousness goes beyond such visible symbols as the proliferation of secretarial schools and computer training institutes throughout the island. The work world of secretaries has also been integrated into popular culture. Dominican singer and songwriter, Juan Luis Guerra, is one of the best-known and most popular singers in Puerto Rico today. He wrote and published two hit songs between 1990 and 1998 which explicitly refer to the work secretaries do. The musical trajectory of this composer over an eight-year period underscores the significance of secretarial work in popular Puerto Rican culture. It also

documents the rapidity with which computer equipment and computer logic have become internalized so that they are now a source of metaphors for some great music.

CDs and albums recorded by Juan Luis Guerra and his *Grupo 440* consistently reach the Number One position on Popular Music charts in Puerto Rico. On Sept. 14, 2000 at the first Latin Grammy Awards, Juan Luis Guerra won three prizes for his 1998 release, *Ni es lo mismo ni es igual*, including Best Merengue Album, Best Engineered Album, and Best Tropical Song (*canción tropical*) for *El Niágara en bicicleta*. In addition to his fame as a singer-songwriter of popular music, Juan Luis Guerra has developed his own version of socially-conscious *Nueva Trova* (New Song Movement). This genre of protest music was created by politically active musicians and singers in Latin America in the 1960s, including Roy Brown from Puerto Rico; Victor Jara from Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile (1970-1973); Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés from Cuba; and Violeta Parra from Chile; and Mercedes Sosa from Argentina. This style of music combines political commentary with lovesongs in a way that resonates with the topical, witty and biting commentary woven into the *Plena* songs of Puerto Rico in the late nineteenth century, and with the contemporary West Indian musical traditions of Reggae and Calypso, which also recount and criticize current events and social inequality, as in the music of one of the most famous Calypso singers, The Mighty Sparrow.

The popularity of Juan Luis Guerra raises two interesting points about popular culture in Puerto Rico. It reinforces the assertion that Puerto Rican popular culture is multi-national and multi-ethnic (see Flores, 1995). It also highlights the fact that, as a colony of the United States, Puerto Rico has no control over immigration policy, which is

part of that complex bundle of legal structures, values, and behaviors politically progressive Puerto Ricans refer to as *el coloniaje*²³. Puerto Rico is home to tens of thousands of immigrants from Latin America, including a very large and growing Dominican community concentrated in the Santurce section of San Juan, with significant communities in many other towns. The migration from other parts of Latin America to Puerto Rico has been class-stratified, according to nationality. While most of the Venezuelan and Columbian immigrants, for example, come from highly educated, middle class families to work on contracts as engineers and managers in the private sector economy, the Dominican migration to Puerto Rico has been overwhelmingly proletarian. The Dominican migration has generated a number of complicated responses from Puerto Ricans, including a increase in racism towards Dominican people (see Duany 1995, 1996 and Hernández, 1995). Simultaneously with the rise of xenophobia and racist jokes directed against Dominicans, the genre of music that signifies Dominican culture, *Merengue*, permeates the radio airwaves, night clubs, bars, and private homes in Puerto Rico. Dominican *Merengue* is the most popular form of music among people under twenty-three years of age in Puerto Rico. Among this age group, *Merengue* has even surpassed the popularity of Puerto Rican Salsa music, perhaps because the music is faster than Salsa, generating an intensity that parallels the rhythm and pace of urban Puerto Rican life.

The words to Juan Luis Guerra's two songs dealing with secretarial themes are reproduced below. *Carta de Amor* (Love Letter) was one of the songs on his 1990 best-selling album, *Bachata Rosa*. The words of the song read, verbatim, like a dictated letter - complete with spoken words to indicate punctuation marks and new paragraphs

(see below). More recently, on his 1998 CD entitled, *Ni es lo mismo ni es igual*, (It's Not the Same, Nor is it Equal) another song appears, *Mi PC*, which again resonates with the world of secretarial computer work. In the more recent song, *Mi PC*, Guerra weaves computer imagery into a love song, using words like modem, gigabyte, and mouse to express the degree of his love. Significantly, the words referring to computer parts are retained in their original English, not translated into Spanish -- further evidence of the penetration of English into the daily life of Puerto Ricans and other Latin American people. Guerra's use of English also echoes the discussion presented earlier in this chapter about the ways secretaries in Puerto Rico are expected to internalize the logic of English, as well as adopting words and phrases in English in order to master contemporary computer technology.

Words to Juan Luis Guerra's Two Songs About Secretarial Work

1. *Carta de Amor* (Love Letter), 1990

<u><i>Carta de Amor</i></u>	<u><i>Love Letter</i></u>
Querida mujer (dos puntos) no me hagas sufrir (coma) hoy me decido a escribirte cartas de amor sincero tu cariñito es un agujero que me atraviesa el querer y sin tu besos en mi chaleco nada me cubre la piel (punto y seguido) Querida mujer (dos puntos) no me hagas sufrir (coma) es la segunda carta que escribo y no recibo nada de ti ya no me importa si secretaries hay luz en el barrio o aumentará la inflación tan solo vivo por refugiarme desnudo en tu corazón (punto y aparte)	Dearest Love (colon) don't make me suffer (comma) Today I decided to write you sincere love letters your love is like a tidal wave that pierces my desire and without your kisses in my jacket nothing can cover my skin (period, same paragraph) Dearest Love (colon) don't make me suffer (comma) this is the second letter I write and still I receive nothing from you Now, it doesn't matter to me whether there's electricity in the barrio or a rise in inflation -- I live only to take refuge, naked, in your heart (new paragraph)

2. *Mi PC* (My PC) 1998

<u><i>Mi PC</i></u>	<u><i>My PC</i></u>
Niña, te quiero decir que tengo en computadora un gigabyte* de tus besos y un floppy de tu persona.	Honey, I want to tell you that I have a gigabyte of your kisses on my computer, and a floppy disk all about you.
Niña, te quiero decir que sólo tú me interesas y el mouse que mueve tu boca me <i>formatea**</i> la cabeza.	Honey, I want to tell you that you're the only one I'm interested in and the mouse that moves your mouth formats my mind.
Niña te quiero decir que el internet de mis sueños lo conecté a tu sonrisa y al modem de tus cabellos.	Honey, I want to tell you that the Internet of my dreams is connected to your smile and to the modem of your hair.
Y yo quiera mandarte un recadito ábreme tu e-mail y enviarte un diskette con un poquito de mi cariñito bueno para amarte.	And I want to send you a message, open up your e-mail and send you a diskette with a tiny bit of my affection, which you know is good enough to love you.
* All words in bold are English words, integrated directly into the Spanish text.	
** <i>formatea</i> is not a Spanish word. It adopts the English word, "format," and gives it a Spanish ending.	

Returning to the issue of education and recruitment of clerical workers, I found that while the goals of service organizations and advocacy groups for poor, unemployed women were different from the goals of the computer-training institutes, they also identified computerized secretarial work as a vehicle for women's empowerment. For example, in 1989 the *Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz* (The Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace), a national ecumenical organization involved in social advocacy work, proposed establishing small-scale cooperative word-processing workshops for unemployed women.²⁴ Poor women themselves have internalized the notion that computerized secretarial work constitutes a viable strategy for economic success, as revealed in sociologist Linda Colón's 1988 film, Desigualdad Social y Pobreza (Social Inequality and Poverty), which included interviews with members of "Atrévete," a grass-roots group of women residents in the Luis Llórens Torres public housing project in San Juan. As these women discussed the role of computer training programs in their self-help agenda, the camera captured a row of new computers lining the rear wall of the community room where the interviews took place.²⁵

For women employed in blue-collar manufacturing jobs, the promise of white-collar clerical work constituted a powerful narrative of social mobility. This plot found poignant expression in the research by Puerto Rican anthropologist Carmen A. Pérez Herranz (1990) on women garment workers in western Puerto Rico during the 1980s. When asked about their aspirations for the future, the majority of women in her sample responded that they would like to be secretaries. If they thought they were too old to change occupations, they hoped their daughters would be able to become secretaries (Pérez Herranz, 1990:124, 329).

The narrative of upward mobility, then, was not merely a propaganda tool promoted by U.S. and Puerto Rican business and political leaders. Secretaries themselves embraced the hope that their white-collar office work would provide a kind of social mobility that would move them out of the working class and into the middle class. Yet when they considered their actual experience, they had a range of contradictory feelings about whether this journey had been successfully accomplished. The secretaries I interviewed—at the UPR and elsewhere—expressed a diverse range of opinions about their job status, depending on their skill and educational levels, their prior job histories, and their aspirations. Almost all of the secretaries I interviewed did, however, share an overriding concern about the low salaries, job insecurity, and limited opportunities for advancement associated with their employment.

One recurring theme I found was secretaries' sense of social invisibility on the job. One woman described a day when someone from management entered an office and gazed around in search of a particular colleague before looking directly at the secretary and saying, "I guess nobody's here right now." A number of public- and private-sector secretaries from across the island had their own version of this story to tell me. Although the sheer number of secretaries working in the economy would seem to contradict this sense of social invisibility, women nevertheless expressed frustration over their low status in the eyes of managers and middle-class professionals.

The tension between secretaries' sense of their skills versus their perceived lack of status in the eyes of others finds clear expression in the experiences of Margarita Pérez, National Director of the Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace. Before her commitment to liberation theology led her to change careers and eventually assume leadership of the Caribbean Project, Margarita had been an executive secretary for a U.S. paper company

who succeeded in working her way up to a managerial position as Director of Personnel. One of her functions as Director of the Caribbean Project was to receive visiting scholars and delegations to Puerto Rico. She described the reaction of her visitors when she told them about her previous work experience as a secretary:

They seem so embarrassed and surprised in response. They say things like, "Oh, I thought for sure you were trained in sociology or history." And that is meant to be a compliment. As though that was the only way to become an organizer, a leader. And they talk as if I should be proud they thought that of me.

Margarita, on the contrary, valued her secretarial background and stated that she believed her leadership skills, including her analytical abilities, were developed while she worked as a secretary. She said it was elitist for anyone to think that it was impossible for a secretary to become a political leader. Her story is an example of one woman's efforts to resolve the tension between the high level of skills developed by secretaries and the low status perceptions others have about their work.

In part, because the development of the clerical work force had been so rapid, many women retained a strong sense of working-class identity even as they moved into apparently middle-class office jobs. For example, Luci Arroyo was forty-three years old and had been working as a secretary at the Río Piedras campus of the UPR for twenty-three years. Ms. Arroyo expressed to me her opinion that secretarial work was just another form of working-class occupation, regardless of her educational level or the more middle-class style associated with office work.

Arroyo's rejection of the notion of upward mobility is especially meaningful in light of her life history. Although she has lived in San Juan for more than half her life, she was born and raised in a rural town on the north coast of Puerto Rico and continues to affirm this historical connection. For example, in response to a simple demographic

question about the year of her birth, she noted, "I was born in 1947, behind some sacks in the sugar refinery" (*detrás de unos sacos de la Central*). This phrase is part of popular culture, affirming close ties with the rural agricultural economy that used to dominate Puerto Rico. Seeing my confusion at her response, Ms. Arroyo clarified her phrase, explaining that it meant she was not born in a hospital but at home with the help of a midwife. She then went on to describe growing up under very difficult economic conditions. Her father worked for the sugar refineries and her mother died when she was a young woman. Ms. Arroyo revealed that her personal work history reflected substantial changes in her employment, education, and social position; in addition to obtaining secretarial training, she earned an Associate's Degree in Secretarial Sciences and has completed thirty credits towards her B.A., including all the basic courses plus classes in education and the humanities.

At the time of our interview, her three-year-old child had just been accepted into the on-campus daycare center initiated by the Hermandad. Thus it is revealing that Luci Arroyo did not believe her job as a secretary constituted upward mobility:

Gerrie, it's a job. It's just a job. I worked in the shoe factories in Barceloneta when they had work, full-time, until the companies left. Then I was unemployed. I went to secretarial training school in Manatí... but I couldn't find work. There were no jobs. So I came to San Juan. I got a job as a secretary and I went to stay with my Aunt in Río Piedras. I lived with them for eight years, because that's where I could get a job. (Interview, June 14, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

Reflecting upon the differences between her job and the jobs of her sisters who worked in manufacturing jobs in Puerto Rico's pharmaceutical plants, Ms. Arroyo observed:

There is much less pressure on you here [at the UPR] than in the pharmaceutical companies. Of course, they get more money. But there is no security. My benefits here are better, very good. But they give us starvation wages ("*sueldos de hambre*") and there's no place to go. (Interview, June 14, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

For some women like Luci, then, secretarial work is not a middle-class "profession," but just another way of making a living, with no more status, nothing more to offer, than any other working-class job.

On the other hand, for Elizabeth Correa, a UPR secretary in her early twenties, being a secretary was her professional aspiration. Correa was a member of Professional Secretaries International (PSI), the voluntary association with roots in the United States which now has chapters in seven cities and towns of Puerto Rico. The organization stresses technical skills and professional office styles as vehicles to career advancement. PSI workshops in technological competence are combined with fashion shows that promote the "appropriate image" for professional secretaries. PSI events are imbued with the ideology of upward mobility as the organization strives to counter the portrayal in popular culture of secretaries as fluffy-headed, sexy coquettes.

PSI helped inspire Elizabeth Correa with the desire to become a Licensed Professional Secretary (LPS), so she registered for the eight-part exam invented and administered by PSI as part of their efforts to "professionalize" secretarial work. The PSI perspective is in conflict with that of the Hermandad, which organizes political mobilizations and mass actions to achieve its goals. For example, when a group of loudly protesting university workers with Hermandad picket signs passed our office in March 1990, and I asked Elizabeth what she thought. She was not impressed:

Look at them. They are so vulgar, with their chants and picket signs, marching through the campus like that, in sneakers and Tee-shirts! That's not right. That's not the way to do things. (Interview April 5, 1990 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

Yet trade union activists within the Hermandad doubt the capacity of voluntary professional organizations like PSI to advance the position of clerical workers. Ana

Maria Perez, a thirty-year-old secretary at the Rio Piedras campus and a national officer in the Hermandad, commented:

You can act like a professional, you can dress like a professional, but that doesn't mean the boss is going to treat you like a professional, or pay you like a professional. All the technical training and style – that's no guarantee for respect. It doesn't mean very much without a written contract. (Interview, February 8, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

Correa's own faith in professionalism as a route to upward mobility was ultimately somewhat shaken. After she passed the PSI exam and received her Licensed Professional Secretary Certificate, she transferred to another office on campus in search of career advancement. At the time of our next conversation, one year later in the summer of 1992, Elizabeth was working in the private sector, but only in a temporary contract position. She reiterated her belief in the need to professionalize secretarial work, but she also expressed frustration over her inability to secure full-time work and career advancement. Paying careful attention to the PSI guidelines for professional success had not resolved some of the fundamental social and economic problems she faced. These problems are not unique to Puerto Rican secretaries, of course, but they are exacerbated by the particular colonial conditions of Puerto Rico.

Another UPR secretary, Marisol Rivera, had eighteen years of secretarial work experience at the Carolina campus of the University of Puerto Rico. She supported the goals of both organizations as an active Hermandad member and an active member in the metropolitan San Juan Chapter of PSI. Ms. Rivera believed her commitments to both organizations were interrelated:

I'm a professional secretary. And I'm a professional with my trade union. That is the only way we're ever going to get anything. (Interview, May 12, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992]).

Thousands of women are now training to become secretaries in Puerto Rico.

However, rising unemployment and underemployment is forcing many of them to migrate to the United States in search of work,²⁶ another example of the ways that colonialism profoundly affects their experience of themselves, their work, and their class identities. Even in the United States, secretaries and other middle-class workers may be subject to economic upheavals and other types of job insecurity. In a colonial situation, however, even the illusion of middle-class stability is hard to come by, as women watch their female and male colleagues struggle with the economic difficulties that plague every class in Puerto Rico.

The difficulties of secretarial life in Puerto Rico were exemplified by one of the women who participated in the more in-depth life history interviews of my research project. Twenty-three year old Millie Pizarro had been working as a secretary for three years at the Rio Piedras campus without a permanent contract. She could not enjoy the same salary, educational, or health-care benefits given to permanent workers, nor did she have access to vacation days or sick days. When Pizarro decided to leave the University, she could not find any work and so decided to migrate to Orlando, Florida, where she worked for eighteen months in the travel business as a bilingual office worker before being laid off again. She then returned to Puerto Rico, unemployed Interview June 16, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1991]).

Even with computer training, secretaries do not believe their current jobs guarantee upward mobility or job security. In 1990, the unemployment rate for secretaries and clerical workers was twenty-eight percent. This was higher than the unemployment rate for women machine operators (23 percent) and women in other service occupations (14 percent).²⁷ Low salaries were a pervasive concern among all the women secretaries I interviewed. The chart below provides information on the hourly

rate for secretaries and other clerical workers in 1986.

Table 2.8

Average Hourly Wage Rates for Clerical Workers In 1986:

Statistics taken from the Puerto Rico Bureau of Labor, Area Wage Surveys 1986:47

<u>Job Category</u>	<u>Hourly Wage</u>
Secretaries	\$ 5.64
Receptionists	\$ 4.67
General Office Occupations	\$ 4.25

In the summer of 1992, job listings posted at the Departments of Secretarial Sciences at the Río Piedras and Bayamón campuses of the UPR offered wages of \$5.00 and \$5.50 an hour for secretarial positions that required competency in word processing and English/Spanish bilingual skills. Clearly, secretarial and clerical work has not been a panacea for women workers on the island.

The Choice of a Class-Based Language to Channel Secretaries' Self-Expression

To many women clerical workers – including the vast majority at the UPR – a class-based organization seemed like the only vehicle that could adequately express their needs. This was true even when women's needs centered on gender issues. Even when women had gender-based demands to make, such as day care centers, protection against sexual harassment, or the shift to gender-neutral language, they chose to make these demands within the framework of the Hermandad, rather than in a separate group organized explicitly around the issue of gender.

The analysis of social class position, working-class identity, and working-class consciousness among women secretaries in Puerto Rico presents particular challenges.

Transformations in the labor process for white collar workers were given specific

consideration in the pioneering work by Mills (1953). More recent examinations of changes in the world of secretaries and women clerical workers have been undertaken by Glenn Nakano and Feldberg (1979); Garson (1988); Massachusetts History Workshop, (1985); and McColloch (1983). In my research at the University of Puerto Rico, I found that a significant number of secretaries described their secretarial jobs as an advance, particularly those who came from blue-collar working class families, where the previous point of reference for female employment was industrial production in the manufacturing and assembly plants created by the *Manos a la Obra*, Operation Bootstrap program. Secretaries who came from middle class families and/or who had obtained a college degree in the liberal arts and developed professional expectations as a result of those experiences would describe this same position as a "dead-end" job. Yet both types of secretaries chose to use a class-based organization to win the demands that mattered to them—better pay and working conditions as well as gender-specific demands around childcare, personal treatment, and language. Gender solidarity across class lines can also be observed in U.S. clerical workers' unions. Yet the colonial conditions of Puerto Rico—the perceived difficulties of upward mobility, the poor conditions enjoyed by Puerto Rican men, the constant "glass ceiling" imposed by the U.S. colonial presence—made such linkages across class lines far more common in Puerto Rico than in the U.S., and help explain why women from all backgrounds turned to the Hermandad.

One office at the UPR campus in Cayey provides a vivid example of how women of all backgrounds and aspirations ended up with a joint interest in the Hermandad. In the Purchasing Office, a woman secretary who was a single mother and the head of her household worked next to another woman whose husband worked as a salesman in the private-sector banking industry. These two women shared the same office space, did the

same job, and brought home the same salary. Yet they experienced very different social realities. The life of the first woman had much in common with previous generations of working-class women, while that of the second woman could be described as "middle-class." Clearly, class identity among contemporary women clerical workers is shaped by factors outside the workplace as well as within it. Yet both women supported the campaigns of the Hermandad, despite their different experiences.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of historical information on women's labor force participation rates and deployment within the work force in order to trace the process of increased gender segregation and gender specialization within clerical occupations during the 20th century. A review of popular assumptions about the social status and economic importance of secretarial work, from outside the world of secretaries, was presented and then contrasted with the experiences and assumptions women secretaries have about their jobs, especially with regard to their social status and chances for upward mobility and sense of job satisfaction. These assessments – from outside and from within the world of secretarial work – are contradictory. Some women view secretarial work as proof positive of upward mobility and personal progress, while others view it as a dead-end job with little possibility for advancement. The significance of this information has nothing to do with who is correct, but in the very existence of such profound differences. These differences provide important information about a work-world and society in transition, moving from an agricultural economy to an industrial

economy and then a post-industrial finance and service economy in the course of a single generation, from 1940-1990.

Women secretaries participated in this process, and are quite capable of reflecting upon its impact on their lives, with regard to their work histories, educational level, family and class background, and cultural expectations. As such, the information presented in Chapter Two provides the background for the ethnographic data presented in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Chapter Three provides a detailed exploration of many of the themes raised in Chapter Two, as they were played out in the context of two important events for secretaries at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico in the spring of 1991: plans for a secretaries' conference and the development of a secretaries' strike. Chapter Four will tease out the multiple ways the statistical, historical and ethnographic data reported here in Chapter Two shape the structure and rhythm of the work, daily life, culture, and social relations of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. Chapter Five will then consider how these historical trends shape the program and vision of the Hermandad trade union for UPR secretaries and other staff workers.

Endnotes to Chapter Two:

1. For more discussion on the issue of class mobility among secretaries and clerical workers, see: Benet (1972); Casey (1988); Cassedy & Nussbaum (1983); Cohen (1992); Davies (1982, and 1974); Foreman (1984); Freeman (2000); Garson (1988); Hoos (1961); Howe (1977); Massachusetts History Workshop (1985); McColloch (1983); Mills (1953); 9 to 5 (1981); Newman (1989); Professional Secretaries International (1989); Sacks (1988); Saltzman (1988); and Tepperman (1976).

2. In 1900 the United States colonial government established the Normal School in Fajardo, Puerto Rico and began an intensive, short-term teacher-training program to build a corps of primary school teachers capable of teaching basic literacy and spreading the value of American citizenship to an overwhelming rural population with an illiteracy rate of between 80-90% (de Jesús Colón, 1990:27). In 1901, the Normal School was moved to Río Piedras. In 1903, the school was transformed into the University of Puerto Rico, and the Normal School became the UPR's School of Education. In 1911, a second campus of the UPR was established in the west coast city of Mayagüez, specializing in applied technical and agricultural sciences related to the sugar industry. Other campuses of the UPR were established as Regional Colleges in the 1960s and 1970s.

The political and cultural history of the University of Puerto Rico has been the subject of many books and articles. Ruth Reynolds (1989) documented the role of the university in the political struggles for and against independence and the repression of the Nationalist Party in the 1940s and 1950s. More recent political and cultural struggles at the UPR have been documented by Nieves Falcón et al (1982) and Picó, Pabón, and Alejandro (1982). Today, the UPR retains its image as a center for radical political thought and pro-independence sentiments *and* as the premier institution of higher education in Puerto Rico.

3. This dissertation uses the words "nation," "island," and "community" interchangeably to refer to the polity of Puerto Rico. While acknowledging that Puerto Rico is not, in fact a sovereign nation, this nomenclature is, nevertheless, common practice in social scientific and literary writing in Puerto Rico. The confusion and ambivalence concerning the correct term to use when describing Puerto Rico as a political entity dramatizes the contradictions of national and colonial identity.

4. In Puerto Rico, the Operation Bootstrap campaign for industrial development was called *Manos a la Obra* (literally translated as "putting hands to work").

5. For a literary treatment of this phenomenon, see the short story by Puerto Rican author, Luis Rafael Sánchez, "*La guagua aérea*" ("The Air Bus"), in the Museo del Barrio publication of 1992, and the eponymous film from 1994.

6. For more discussion on the issue of race, see *La Unión de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Negras*, (1994); Valle (1994); and my article (Casey, 1994), "Changing Images of Race and Racism in the Office Culture of Women Clerical Workers in Puerto Rico."

7. See, for example Unión de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Negras. Umupuen Informa. Año 2, No. 1: 2, 1994.

8. Here it is important to caution against the facile ilposition of categories imposed by United States scholarship on a very different Caribbean and latino context. At the same time, reliance on what some ethnographers call the "native point of view." It would not be appropriate to accept the assertion that there is no racism in Puerto Rico, simply because people said reported this in their conversations and interviews with me.

9. It also finds expression in Puerto Rican popular phrases or *refranes*, the most famous being "... y tu agüella adonde 'sta?" (and your grandmother, where is she?) which chides the striving, self-denigrating man who denies his family's African heritage in an effort to improve his social standing.

10. This anxiety finds expression in racist jokes against Dominican immigrants which marks them as ignorant, backward, overly sexual and Black.

11. For more detailed information on the role of migration as an integral part of development projects in Puerto Rico, and for more specific histories of the successive waves of migration in the twentieth century, see Bonilla and Campos (1986); Bonilla et al (1998); Campos and Bonilla (1982); Carr (1984); Center for Puerto Rican Studies. History and Migration Task Force (1979, 1983); Dietz (1986); Flores (1989); Heine (1983); Gordon K. Lewis (1963); Adalberto López (1980); López and Petras (1974); Maldonado-Denis (1972, 1980); Edwin Meléndez, (1993); and Rivera (1986), *passim*. Personal chronicles of the early migration from Puerto Rico to New York can be found in Jesús Cólón (1961); and Bernardo Vega (1976). In addition to the vast body of literature on the Puerto Rican migration to New York, there is a growing body of literature on migration to cities and regions outside the metropolitan New York area, including: the eleven expeditions of agricultural workers who left Puerto Rico as contract laborers to work in the sugar plantations in Hawaii between 1900-1901, and the still-vibrant Puerto Rican community they established in Hawaii (Camacho Souza, 1982, and 1986; López and Forbes, 2001; and Medina, 2001); the Puerto Rican migration to California, which was initiated by the first migrants to Hawaii (Piñeiro, 1986; Santiago Hernández, 1981; and Harry Turner, 1980); the Puerto Rican community in Lorain, Ohio created in the 1940s by laborers contracted to work in the United States steel industry (Arroyo, 1986; and O'Brien, 1954); the Puerto Rican community established in Southern New Jersey by contracted agricultural workers (Pérez, 1986); and the Puerto Rican community in Chicago Padilla, (1985, and 1986).

12. ROTC was forced to relocate its office off the main campus of the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras.

13. This movement was successful in forcing the Navy out of Culebra in 1975, after pitched street battles between the Navy and Vieques fishermen, supported by students and radicals from the main island. While the struggle to force the Navy off the island of Vieques was not successful in the 1970s, the issue remained a volatile one, and came to the forefront once again in 1999 when a civilian security guard, David Sanes, was killed by an errant Navy bomb. This incident propelled organized resistance by Viequenses and other Puerto Ricans, with broad support from politicians, peace activists and community organizations in the United States and internationally, that continues in 2002.

14. For more information on women's economic participation in Operation Bootstrap see Safa (1986), Acevedo (1987) and Perez (1990).

15. Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, 1991. Serie historica del empleo, desempleo y grupo trabajador en Puerto Rico, 1947-1990. Negociado de Estadisticas, Sobre el Grupo Trabajador. Rio Piedras, PR: Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, Departamento de Trabajo y Recursos Humanos. Pg.5.

16. For more discussion on the demise of Operation Bootstrap, see Safa, Helen I. The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.

17. In the 1980s, the "9 to 5" organization changed its position and began to organize women office workers into trade unions in the United States.

18. For more discussion on feminist initiatives to improve women workers' position through the mobilization of gender identities, see Cassedy & Nussbaum (1983); Davies (1982, and 1974); Foreman (1984); Howe (1977); and 9 to 5 (1981).

19. See Bonilla and Campos, 1986; Dietz, 1986; Rivera, 1986.

20. The shrinkage of manufacturing jobs in Puerto Rico can also be read in the colonial government's decision to reduce -- and practically eliminate -- *Fomento Industrial* (the government agency responsible for the promotion of manufacturing enterprises in Puerto Rico), which was replaced by an intensification of promotion of Puerto Rico's tourism and hospitality industry.

21. This pattern follows the process of deskilling described by Braverman, (1974) in Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

22. See Puerto Rico Business Review, 1987: 19.

23. See the section on Keywords in Chapter Four, below.

24. *Proyecto Caribeno de Justicia y Paz*, Nuestra Palabra Vol. 3, No.1 (1989). Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.

25. See Linda Reyes Colon's film, (1988) Desigualdad Social y Pobreza. A documentary film in three parts. Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico, CEDME.
26. See Ortiz, 1986; and Puerto Rico Planning Board, 1986 for more information on the migration patterns among contemporary secretaries and women clerical workers.
27. See Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, (1991) Empleo por Grupo Ocupacional – Hembras – Años Naturales 1954 al 1990. Tablas Nos. 29-32, Pp:57-64.

Chapter Three

“Vamos a Contarnos Nuestra Historia”/Let Us Tell Our Story: A Secretaries Conference vs. A Secretaries Strike

Introduction

While I was doing my fieldwork, I took it upon myself to organize a major activity: a conference focusing on the history of clerical work that would be located at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico. I saw the conference as implementing the theoretical goals I laid out in Chapter One: creating a genuine opportunity for secretaries to engage in an active dialogue with me, presenting their analysis as well as their “raw data”, while providing a forum for a multitude of voices that went beyond the dyadic relationship of anthropologist and conversant.¹

The conference at the Cayey campus was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 25, 1991 during National Secretaries’ Week. I had high hopes for the conference. I wanted to involve secretaries in the process of designing, leading and evaluating a conference on the history and present condition of their work world. This participatory approach was directly related to my theoretical commitment to include the working-class women I was studying in the process of creating ethnographic knowledge – the dialogical approach I describe in Chapter One. Rather than testing a specific research hypothesis, I was searching for the multiple voices of women secretaries about their work and their position in Puerto Rican society.

Yet despite what I still consider an enormously successful planning process, the conference never took place. As it happened, when I began organizing the conference,

the Hermandad was in the process of considering a work slowdown as part of an effort to organize a strike. The conference I had organized involved women from all levels of the Cayey campus, including both administrators and secretaries. Thus it offered women an opportunity to identify on the basis of gender, or, alternatively, on the basis of professional affiliation—after all, the conference was designed to celebrate clerical work as part of National Secretaries' Week.

Notwithstanding despite their earlier enthusiasm for the conference, the women clerical workers at the Cayey campus eventually chose to cancel that event in favor of supporting the strike. My commitment to celebrating the silences, gaps, and misunderstandings inherent in the anthropological dialogue was deeply challenged. I found myself sharing an experience with the Cayey secretaries in ways I'd never expected, and I was forced to confront the power of my co-creators/conversants to significantly reshape our joint project. When they chose their way of celebrating secretaries' power over my own, I learned about the dialectical power of negation as a form of affirmation. In negating my vision of their work world, they had affirmed their own.

This experience clearly offers many lessons about the larger questions of anthropological methodology. It also significantly contributed to the reshaping of the thesis of this dissertation, leading me to see that at the University of Puerto Rico, despite a wide variety of options, women clerical workers nonetheless chose class as the vehicle through which to mobilize themselves. In this chapter, I will present my original vision for the conference, which was initially greeted with enthusiasm by a number of

secretaries on Cayey campus in the spring of 1991. I will then explain how events involving the Hermandad and the secretaries' conference, led the women, who had initially been committed to a multi-class conference organized around gender and professional identity, to rejecting participation in this conference in favor of supporting a strike called by their union.

My Vision for the Conference

The 1991 secretaries' conference was intended to be an experiment in applying the theoretical and methodological frameworks presented in Chapter One of this dissertation. As determined by my theoretical commitment to a dialogical approach to anthropology required, I planned to share the ownership and control of the conference with an Organizing Committee made up of conference participants – primarily secretaries at the Cayey campus, but also including a number of administrators.

A conference is both larger in scope and more open-ended than a doctoral dissertation. I therefore saw it as an opportunity to expand the relations of difference, reciprocity and mutuality which existed between the secretaries with whom I had been working and myself, in the role of the outsider academic. Many anthropologists have been struggling with ways to break the asymmetrical power relations embedded in traditional ethnographic dyads (see Mintz, 1989). However, it is difficult to engage people in a project which they see as being ultimately “our” work, and not “theirs.” Karen Sacks confronted this problem directly in the thoughtful and self-revealing preface she wrote for her study of clerical and technical workers at Duke University Medical

Center:

To ask those with whom I was working to share in my research was easier and more democratic in theory than it was in practice. Such participation demands more work from people than the most thoughtful interview... Those who read and criticized drafts did me a great and time-consuming favor. But the facts are that for most workers this project had very low priority, and they hadn't the time for it. (Sacks, 1988: vii-viii)

Mindful of Sacks' and other's critiques, I wanted to develop another strategy for involving secretaries in the process of research and analysis. I wanted to create a collective environment, something that could replace the dyadic structure of the ethnographic interview and open up the space for disagreement, difference, and contradiction. Challenging someone's statement in a dyadic conversation can have a chilling and silencing effect. When there are only two voices present, a disagreement or challenge becomes, effectively, a rejection. This is especially true when the conversation is grounded in the unequal power relations that exist between professional academics and interviewees, no matter how we attempt to obscure or mitigate that power differential. A workshop setting, on the other hand, includes many voices. Multiple experiences and contrasting opinions are expected. In the exchange of workshop discussion, opposing views are seen as fruitful contributions, additional elements to use in the construction of a multi-faceted reality. I also wanted to transform the terms of ownership with regard to the public history and ethnographic knowledge produced by the conference.

The significance of these theoretical and methodological concerns can be

underscored through a reminder of Marc Kaminsky's criticism (1992) of Barbara Myerhoff's work with elderly Jewish people in California during the 1970s. Kaminsky charged that the anthropologist ignored the explicit political commitments of the people she studied even while drawing attention to the vitality of their lives, applauding their struggle against age-discrimination, and affirming the richness of their religious beliefs and rituals. In other words, Meyerhoff focused only on the aspects of their world that she herself embraced personally and in her academic work (see Myerhoff, 1978 and 1992), while leaving out parts of their lives that were highly significant for them. I wanted to build a conference that would avoid this pitfall, by creating a project in which the class politics of the Hermandad (HEEND 1991, 1990, and 1986) would share space with the professional commitments of the Department of Secretarial Sciences and Professional Secretaries International (see PSI, 1989; and Universidad Interamericana, 1986).

Likewise, I wanted to choreograph a conference in which the myths and realities of upward mobility for secretaries (see Acevedo, 1995; Foreman, 1981; Fox and Hesse-Biber, 1984; Freeman, 2000; Hoos, 1961; Howe, 1977; Newman, 1989; Safa, 1995; and Strom, 1983) would collide with the images from social scientific research on deskilling and proletarianization in relation to secretarial work (see Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; Braverman, 1974; Davies, 1982, 1974; Feldberg, 1980; Garson, 1988; Glenn Nakano, and Feldberg, 1979; Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, 1982; McColloch, 1983; Mills, 1953; Rothstein and Blim, 1991; and Ward, 1990); a conference that would even make room for the stereotypes of secretaries as fluffy-headed coquettes working in the pink-collar ghetto of office work.

In order to highlight secretaries' analytical and evaluative powers, I developed a written survey for distribution to all secretaries on the Cayey campus prior to the conference (see Appendix No. 6). The questions included the issues that the secretaries working on the Conference Organizing Committee had identified as most important. We planned to use the survey responses to develop a composite profile or sketch that could be distributed in written form at the start of the conference. The sketch would present some of the major features of women's experience and the problems they themselves considered most crucial in their work and family lives. The sketch would provide the basis for discussion in the conference workshops, and enable people to think about the issues before the conference, so that secretaries could begin to formulate their own analyses. In that way we could go beyond the purely descriptive level to which workshops are usually limited, as people share only their personal experiences and anecdotes, and not their analyses and critiques. To this end, I helped develop and administer the survey, which I distributed to every secretary on campus in order to make a personal connection and reinforce our publicity and outreach efforts. The goal of the conference was to engage secretaries in a critical review of their work history. Our success in this endeavor would simultaneously provide me with rich primary source material on the lives of women secretaries and document the fact that working-class women have the intellectual powers necessary to analyze Puerto Rican society and their place within it.

This last point has received less attention from academics in the second half of the twentieth century as institutions of public education and post-secondary schooling

assumed control over the education of working-class people, which had previously been developed and controlled (although not universally available) by the trade unions, proletarian mutual aid societies, socialist and communist political parties, and progressive settlement houses in urban slum areas. In the case of Puerto Rican working-class history, no one doubts the fact that Luisa Capetillo was a trade union leader, anarchist and feminist in the style of Emma Goldman in the United States (see Findlay, 2001; Ramos, 1992; and Valle Ferrer, 1990 on the writings and life of Luisa Capetillo). Luisa Capetillo worked with the Federación Libre de Trabajadores and the Partido Socialista, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, to organize women workers in the tobacco, needle trades and coffee industries of Puerto Rico. Capetillo was a militant organizer, a firm believer in free love and women's autonomy, an eloquent journalist, and a playwright, as evidenced in the four books she wrote, which include her plays, journalistic articles, and critical essays (see Capetillo, 1907, 1910, 1991, and 1916). Nor does anyone challenge the notion that Capetillo remained a loyal working-class intellectual. This is in stark contrast to the contemporary situation of working-class intellectuals, who develop their voice and writing skills and are often assumed to be making the successful passage to the middle class, without any return ticket for the voyage home.

My goals for the conference were ambitious, and I worked for months preparing the groundwork. It was especially challenging – and important – to build a group of involved secretaries at every stage of the planning. To that end, beginning in January 1991, I spent an increasing amount of time at the Cayey campus, working out of the offices of *Pro-Mujer* and the Luisa Capetillo Room in the campus library.

Background to the Hermandad's Strike of 1991: Health Care Under Attack

Meanwhile, events were moving forward in ways that I never suspected, as class tensions throughout the University of Puerto Rico heated up in the spring of 1991, eventually culminating in a strike that would derail the conference. This strike had its roots in events that went back to 1989, in a dispute between the Hermandad and the UPR management over health care benefits. Negotiations over such benefits are settled separately from all the other economic and non-economic clauses in the contract, and this round of negotiations did not begin until the fall of 1989, after all the other issues in the Hermandad's latest contract had been settled and ratified by the membership.

The health-care portion of the contract proved to be far more difficult to settle than the rest of the contract had been, because it was in this area that the University administration demanded substantial "take-backs" from the union. As discussed above in Chapter Two, salaries for employees at the University of Puerto Rico – public-sector workers, paid by the commonwealth government – were kept artificially low, making the struggle for high-quality benefits even more important for workers.² Despite bitter management opposition, the Hermandad had managed to win free high-quality health care coverage for employees and their families in their previous contracts. The health care plan for UPR workers was one of the best in Puerto Rico, and it was 100% employer-paid. Workers could choose between the two best insurance companies in Puerto Rico, the *Cruz Azul de Puerto Rico* (Blue Cross, not related to the Blue Cross Insurance Company in the United States) and *Triple S*.

However, the 1991 health-care proposal from University administration involved significant reductions in the quality of coverage, as well as an imposition of a monthly employee co-payment of at least \$55.00, employee co-payments for prescription drugs, and the institution of a fee-for-service charge for every medical appointment. This move on the part of UPR administrators coincided with the rise of neoliberalism and related economic restructuring programs throughout the United States and Latin America. The three elements of this process, as articulated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, include privatization or shrinking the public sector economy; lower salaries; and drastic reductions in benefits and social services (see Rothstein and Blim, 1991; Safa, 1995; Spalding 1991; and Ward, 1990). In addition to reducing the salaries and benefits of full-time, permanent employees, these programs for "economic restructuring" advise governments to increase the number of part-time, contractual or "casual" laborers who work for even lower salaries and receive no fringe benefits. At the UPR, the number of contract workers increases each year.

After six months of negotiations, the Hermandad's Negotiating Committee was able to win reinstatement of the high-quality health care plan and a reduction in the proposed co-payment schedule, but they could not retain the 100% employer-paid health plan. Consequently, on February 21, 1991 an extraordinary National Assembly of the Hermandad was convened in the theater of the main UPR campus in Río Piedras to consider the final report of the Negotiating Committee. The Negotiating Committee and National Board of the Hermandad presented management's final offer, which they believed would not improve, given the prevailing political climate on the island.

Spokespersons from both the pro-commonwealth (PDP) and pro-statehood (PNP) political parties, together with the media, were calling for the privatization of the public corporations in Puerto Rico. They had also started a smear campaign against public workers who were characterized in newspaper articles and on TV talk shows as lazy and greedy people who threatened to strike at any minute and without just cause. In addition, the University Administration hired a management consultant firm to break down contract negotiations, weaken the union, and generate a hostile cultural environment through a sophisticated media campaign against the union. This ideological campaign permeated the ranks of UPR workers, so that the Negotiating Committee believed that workers would not vote to go on strike over the health care plan. Therefore, when the Committee presented the final proposal, it included a detailed history of the negotiation process – and recommended that the proposal be accepted.

After a long and heated discussion, with passionate speeches from more than a dozen rank- and-file workers, the Hermandad membership voted overwhelming to reject Management's final offer. Immediately after, there was a call for a strike vote. Seated in the theater, I was amazed to observe this exercise in trade union rank-and-file democracy. While the Hermandad leadership understood more clearly than the membership exactly how costly and difficult it would be to win a strike of this nature, they stood calmly at the front of the theater, accepting the challenges raised by rank and file members. Leadership never balked at this unforeseen *descarga* (blow-up) by the membership, nor did they flinch at any of the rhetorical challenges to their leadership abilities implied by the questions raised by the membership. The leaders asked the members to be realistic about what they

were about to do, and they offered their own opinions based on months of detailed negotiations with the administration, but they also listened quietly and carefully to the membership. Finally, the strike vote was taken. Workers voted 726-135 in favor of a strike. In the world of class struggle and trade union politics, great losses can result from an initial victory, and victory can emerge from an initial loss. No one present in the UPR theater that day knew what the final outcome would be.

From that point on, the Hermandad was engaged in a systematic slowdown known as "*brazos caídos*," (working with fallen arms). The National Board of the Hermandad decided to call this campaign an "internal strike," meaning that employees would continue to go to work and complete their daily hours, in contrast to an "external strike," referring to the more traditional understanding of a strike as a complete halt of work and a closing down of the company or enterprise involved. The job "slow-down" campaign was organized at all campuses and units of the UPR, working in coordination with a student strike against proposed tuition increases and program reductions, and with faculty efforts to win union recognition. In addition to the work slowdown and localized activities on various branch campuses, the union organized a series of national demonstrations. There were three "*paros*" (a *paro* is a one-day work stoppage, in contrast with an indefinite strike, or "*huelga*"). There were also numerous rallies, several marches to the Department of Labor, and a torchlight demonstration at night that marched through the student barrios of Río Piedras to the highway, culminating at the central administration offices of University.

As the strike developed, all twelve campuses of the UPR became involved,

including the Science and Engineering campus at Mayagüez, which had the reputation of being an apolitical or conservative campus. Also, for the first time in Puerto Rico's long history of labor politics, the staff and students at the Medical Sciences campus in Río Piedras enthusiastically joined the movement. And, in another new development, workers and students at the Regional Colleges produced some of the most militant and creative activities, reflecting a more politicized climate among provincial workers outside the metropolitan San Juan area. In fact, people commented to me about the relative calm at the main University campus in Río Piedras, the traditional hot-bed of worker and student militancy. A particularly jubilant demonstration at the Bayamón Technical College shut down the campus with chants and drums as several TV cameras followed the picket line led by the Hermandad's Representative, a woman who was eight months pregnant at the time. Reflecting on this scene, from the sidelines, an administrator observed to me:

You know, we used to be able to say, "When there's smoke at one of the Regional Colleges, Río Piedras must be in flames," but that is no longer the case. Now the fire is out here. (Interview with Wilfredo Fuentes, May 6, 1991 [Casey, 1989-1992])

Class Tensions Heat Up in the Cauldron of the Cayey Campus

The strike vote had been taken on February 21, but throughout the spring, "business as usual" coincided with union organizing on most UPR campuses, including the campus of Cayey, where I was engaged in organizing my conference, scheduled for April 25. Although I would never have deliberately chosen an activity that directly

conflicted with a strike or involved crossing a picket line, in February and March, it seemed eminently possible to continue with the conference planning process, since the strike was taking the form of a slowdown rather than of a total work stoppage. My sense of the compatibility of conference and strike was reinforced by the participation of several active Hermandad members on the Conference Planning Committee. These union activists were evidently quite enthusiastic about the prospect of the conference, and I was pleased that, throughout the process, a number of secretaries from a wide spectrum of political views came to view the event more and more as “our” conference rather than “my” conference.

When I first conceived the project of a secretaries’ conference, I had many reasons for choosing to locate it at the Cayey campus. First, the Cayey campus is located about an hour away from the main UPR campus in Río Piedras, San Juan, in the eastern section of the Cordillera Central mountain range. Locating the conference there allowed me to study secretaries outside the metropolitan area and gave me an opportunity to test the accuracy of a recurring theme in my research: People from San Juan were constantly telling me that life was very different, somewhat backwards, and therefore, more authentically Puerto Rican, *en la isla*--out on the island, away from the capitol.

Secondly, Yamila Azize, Director of the Center for Women’s Studies at Cayey, *Pro-Mujer*, was very interested in my research project.³ Indeed, Azize was one of only two woman academics in Puerto Rico who had an immediate and positive response to my proposal to study secretaries, perhaps reflecting some of the general attitudes and assumptions people make about the importance of secretarial work, as discussed in

Chapter Two, above. Secretaries learning about my project did not question why I wanted to study secretaries.⁴

Finally, Professor Azize was the only academic in the University of Puerto Rico system with an established practice of sponsoring programs on her campus for National Secretaries' Week. (Azize also gave lectures at PSI seminars and workshops.) After our initial meeting, during my preliminary Puerto Rican fieldwork in the summer of 1989, Dr. Azize had invited me to be one of two keynote speakers at the program for National Secretaries' Week in Cayey on April 25, 1990 (see Casey, 1990).⁵ Therefore, it seemed logical to approach her to sponsor the 1991 event.

My participation in the Cayey program for National Secretaries' Week in April of 1990 was excellent preparation for my plans to sponsor a conference the next year, not the least because it gave me the opportunity to meet Elizabeth Rivera, a secretary at the Cayey campus who attended my presentation on April 25, 1990. Elizabeth River was a twenty-eight-year-old secretary working in the Budget Office of the Cayey campus, and a mother of two young children who lived close to the campus in the town of Cayey. She approached me as I took my seat in the audience after making my presentation, which focused on the history of secretaries and clerical work in general, and its relevance to secretaries in Puerto Rico. My presentation had followed a long line of greetings from key university administrators, faculty and organizers. Their formal greetings followed the same formula that opened every public gathering I attended in Puerto Rico, from political parties to women's organizations. While few people in the audience seemed to pay attention to the words said by each successive speaker, they were adamant about the need

to follow the protocol, as I learned during my own efforts to organize a Conference a year later.

After completing my presentation at the 1990 event and receiving a nice round of applause, I noticed a dramatic increase in audience animation as program organizers began the raffle, a distribution of more than twenty elaborately wrapped gift baskets. Even though more than one in five of the attendees received a raffle present in exchange for their attendance, when each number was called, it was greeted with shrieks of laughter and recognition. I realized that the women had been polite but reserved during my talk because the secretaries had been looking forward not to a lecture, but to a celebration that conformed more to the elaborate ceremonies taking place in the elite hotels of San Juan's Condado section, where fashion shows, high-class dinners and cabaret performances were scheduled to celebrate National Secretaries' Week in the private sector.

As I was sitting down, Elizabeth Rivera came over to introduce herself. I commented on how lovely the gifts looked, each one wrapped with numerous ribbons and delicate flourishes of tissues and sparkles. Elizabeth leaned over to me, all the while keeping a vigilant eye on the number of her raffle ticket. "Believe me, I know exactly how much time and effort it took to wrap those presents." She recounted how she had been up past midnight the night before, wrapping all the gift baskets her husband had to prepare for the secretaries in his office. It had taken Elizabeth forever to get the multi-colored ribbons tied just right. Her husband was a banker with the Island Commerce firm. How interesting that the same woman could participate on both sides of this gifting ritual that is such an important part of National Secretaries' Week in Puerto Rico! As

June Nash noted in her book From Tank Town to High Tech (see Nash, 1989) class identity becomes more complex when the aperture of our analytical gaze is widened from a strict focus on the individual to include an entire family or household: A husband/father can work for a monopolistic industrial firm, while the wife/mother works in a competitive industrialist firm, at the same time as their children work in various low-paying service sector jobs. I looked again at Elizabeth, sitting next to me and dressed in a beautiful cream-colored, two-piece silk suit, and I saw another indication of how complicated my project of placing the world of secretaries into a class framework would be.

When I returned to Cayey to organize my conference in the spring of 1991, Elizabeth became a key person on the Organizing Committee. She was highly respected by her coworkers and supervisors. Her work space at the budget office was as modern and brilliantly adorned as she. As a member of the Organizing Committee, she was always confident, punctual, and prepared. When she first came to work with me on the conference, Elizabeth was not a member of the Hermandad, nor did she participate in union activities. She did respect the Hermandad's picket line, however, and became a kind of passive Hermandad supporter in an interesting way, as we shall see.

In the early spring of 1991, however, becoming active with the Hermandad was the farthest thing from Elizabeth's mind—just as the ultimate impact of the strike on my conference was the farthest thing from my mind. Of course, I was interested in the way that Cayey workers were participating in the strike, which I was able to observe firsthand while I worked on the conference. Pressure grew very intense at Cayey, sometimes threatening to explode against the idyllic rural backdrop of mountains and low hills. In

April, the energy propelling the strike grew to a crescendo. First, the Rector of the Cayey campus, Dr. Margarita Benítez, violated established university protocol by calling the police onto campus to arrest student demonstrators during a picket line against tuition increases. Her action also violated the national protocol against calling police onto any UPR campus – a procedure that was established after the politically embarrassing National Guard violence during the student strike of 1981.

The Rector's next move was to unilaterally dock the salaries of all workers who participated in the one-day work stoppage, including workers who were not active in the union, but who simply refused to cross the picket line. Workers were outraged, especially since the Hermandad's contract stipulates that salaries cannot be docked until all time accumulated for sick days, personal time, and holidays has been exhausted. The Rector's actions infuriated employees, mobilizing more of them into the strike. Benítez's actions were called illegal and arbitrary, and she became a personal focus for student and worker hostility.

Significantly, many of the secretaries who did not join the picket-line also did not cross the line. To avoid conflict with fellow workers and also to avoid losing their pay, two of the secretaries working with me on the conference – including Elizabeth – decided to arrive at the entrance gates to the Cayey campus early on the morning of the strike, with a sign-in sheet they could post outside the campus gates. They thought up this device as one way of documenting the fact that workers were present but unable to go to work. Calling upon traditional feminine concerns over the possibility of violence and invoking the repeated history of National Guard brutality against university workers and

students, the women who signed the sheet were saying in effect that they were afraid to go to work. It remains unclear whether this was a form of creative passive resistance, collusion with gender stereotypes, or both.

Later, in a conversation with the president of the Hermandad, Carlos Echevarría, I asked his opinion about the meaning of this grass-roots response to the one-day strike. I was concerned that it only served to reinforce two kinds of negative stereotypes; first, that unionized workers and their strikes are dangerous threats to workplace security, and secondly, that Puerto Rican women are frail and delicate and must be protected from the threat of violence. In response, President Echevarría asked me a question, “But, did they cross the picket line?” In his further elaboration of this question, he explained that changing the underlying discourse was a long-term project – and of secondary importance; the more important step, for the sake of the union and for the development of individual workers’ consciousness, was that workers respect the strike and not cross the picket-line.

Over the course of the spring semester, workers and students in Cayey developed a series of dramatic activities in responses to the Rector's intransigence. One of the most creative actions was a funeral march lamenting “The Death of University Dialogue.” The march was staged during lunch hour so that the entire campus workforce and student body could observe and bear witness to this public shaming of Dr. Benítez. A formal funeral procession marched through the campus. Participants were dressed in black: black dresses or pantsuits with black heels for women workers, and black T-shirts and shorts for both male and female students. Marchers carried a full-sized wood coffin

draped in black and covered with store-bought funereal wreaths with real flowers (*coronas de muerte*). A list of the specific violations committed by the Chancellor were written in gold and silver paint on long purple and silver satin ribbons that flowed down from the wreaths. Normally these ribbons are filled with salutations to the departed loved one from friends and family members.

The march paraded through the campus in a parody of the traditional Roman Catholic funeral procession. Specific saints were called upon to intervene with University administrators and redress the workers' grievances in a series of chants and laments, paralleling church liturgy ("*Ah, San Tomás... Ah, Santa Marta...*"). In the tradition of carnival inversions and cross-dressing, a middle-aged man draped in a graduation gown and wearing a blond wig played the role of the grieving widow and wept loudly into his veils.

The procession came to a halt in front of the Rector's office. A short service was held there, repeating the list of workers' grievances. Margarita Benítez was one of only two women Rectors in the entire University system, so she was especially chided for betraying her own history. One of the Hermandad speakers at the rally interjected class-consciousness and pro-independence history into the demonstration when he reminded listeners that Margarita Benítez had been a progressive feminist and supporter of the workers' cause when she was a student in the 1970s. She was compared to her father, Jaime Benítez, a national political leader during the heyday of the Popular Democratic Party from 1940-1968 and a close personal friend of then-Governor Luis Muñoz Marín. Jaime Benítez was also a liberal educator who became the first Puerto Rican Chancellor

of the University of Puerto Rico when the United States relinquished direct control of the University. In 1948, he intervened to break the student strike with brutal National Guard repression – a strike that had been precipitated by his refusal to allow students to welcome Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos at the UPR theater in Río Piedras upon his release from federal prison (Reynolds, 1989). "Like father, like daughter," the Hermandad speaker admonished. When it started to rain, the speaker concluded his remarks by raising his head to the sky and shouting, "Even the skies cry out for her."

The two funeral wreaths were then laid at the door of the Rector's office, where they remained in place for some time. In response to my inquiries as to why, people said no one wanted to take responsibility for removing the wreathes for fear of the bad luck it might cause. Resistance, phrased in the form of feigned naivete, kept these symbols of protest on public view for four days so that the entire college community could bear witness and watch the satin ribbons blowing in the wind, periodically flashing out the words of lament and shame.

In conversations with me, workers accused the Rector of trying to run the publicly owned campus like her private plantation ("*como su finca privada*"), a direct reference to the 19th- century hacienda owners in Puerto Rico, who ran their sugar plantations like feudal lords. The ideological and political constructs framing Puerto Rico's twentieth-century modernization projects engineered by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) were grounded in a complete rejection of this hated class of sugar *hacendados*. The moral authority and political legitimacy of the PPD and its leaders, Luis Muñoz Marín and Jaime Benítez, had been based on the projection of a new source of cultural and

ideological authenticity and the identification of new national heroes: the agricultural workers and small, independent farmers who comprised "*la gran familia puertorriqueña*." Puerto Rico's transition from an agricultural society to an urban and industrial one has been so rapid that the image of the *hacendado* class remains a potent symbol in popular culture. The Hermandad's efforts to project an analogy between Margarita Benítez and this despised class of landowners struck a deep and powerful chord among workers. Thus the memory of historical struggles of workers and pro-independence activists in Puerto Rico were called upon to mobilize workers for a contemporary labor conflict.

Canceling the Conference – Having the Voice to Say “No!”

As the spring of 1991 unfolded, planning for the secretaries' conference in Cayey and following the Hermandad's strike activities proceeded simultaneously, as the Cayey campus became a center of worker and student activity. The pressure grew intense, threatening to explode against the backdrop of the idyllic, rural landscape of the mountains of Cayey. As the semester progressed, hostile emotions and class antagonisms grew, culminating in a widespread objection among workers to the Rector's calling of the National Guard and docking the workers' salaries after their one-day work stoppage.

Because I had wanted to represent a wide range of people at the conference, both the Rector of the Cayey campus and the Hermandad union were co-sponsors of the

Conference on the History of Clerical Work. The conference Organizing Committee consisted of eleven people: an administrator representing the Office of the Rector; the faculty chairperson of the Department of Secretarial Sciences; the Director of *Pro-Mujer* and her Administrative Assistant; the elected Representative of the Hermandad at the Cayey campus, who was also a secretary; three rank-and-file campus secretaries, women not affiliated with the union, but also unwilling to cross the Hermandad's picket lines; two undergraduate students in Secretarial Sciences; and myself.

My ability to organize this diversity represented an important step in my efforts to change the power relations between middle-class academics and administrators and working-class employees. It was significant that women secretaries could sit at the same table with members of the faculty and administration to plan a conference about their lives and work. The composition of the Committee reflected my commitment to insure the participation of secretaries at all levels of decision-making: naming the important issues, planning the workshops, and executing the conference proceedings. Under so-called "normal" circumstances, this would have been an entirely positive development. Yet given the political tensions and class hostility that developed between university workers and administrators, the composition of the Organizing Committee turned the conference into another venue where the class struggle was carried out.

Clearly, the social relations of the Conference Organizing Committee were embedded in larger social relations, included those of class contradiction. My success in facilitating workers' participation at a leadership level did nothing to alleviate those class tensions, as liberal social-participation theorists might expect. On the contrary,

secretaries' full participation in the Organizing Committee only enhanced their ability to give voice to their labor concerns. Having lunch at the Rector's home during Secretaries' Week had become an annual event, an almost expected "treat" highly enjoyed by secretaries and therefore included in the conference program. But in 1991, Hermandad activists became critical of this event, arguing that the lunch represented an act of deference, just like in the old days when sugar cane workers would go to the home of the hacienda owner for a Christmas meal, while he starved them during the rest of the year. I started to hear secretaries arguing this position informally – though not at Conference planning meetings-- saying they were not going to lunch at the Rector's home as long as she illegally docked their salaries: "How can I eat off her plates when she's trying to take the food off my children's plates?"

This was powerful poetry and political history, which eventually led to the cancellation of the conference. The conference project unraveled as tensions surrounding the strike grew and labor-management hostility escalated. First, a few secretaries active in the Hermandad vowed to boycott the conference in an effort to shame the Rector and demonstrate their non-compliance with any program with which she was involved. This took place after the Rector decided unilaterally to dock employees salaries for the one-day strike, even though the contract language in the Hermandad's collective bargaining agreement explicitly states that, before docking pay for missed work, all the vacation days and sick days accrued by an employee must first be docked.⁶ As more secretaries said they could not, in good conscience, participate in any event sponsored by the Rector, members of the Organizing Committee worried that the conference would become

another arena in which the labor struggle played out. I sought an off-campus facility where the conference could be held and explored the possibility of canceling the luncheon at the Rector's home, but these efforts on my part could not resolve the problem of joint sponsorship of the conference. Rector Benítez heard about the plans to boycott the conference and she understandably wanted to save face and avoid the embarrassment a low turn-out would create. She communicated her concerns, and we decided to "postpone," or cancel the event.

Although I was devastated over the cancellation of the conference, it was still possible to appreciate the irony of the situation. In true dialectical fashion, I watched the unity of opposites unfold. My very success in making the conference the shared property of workers, faculty, and administrators, insured its ultimate failure. For the secretaries at the UPR campus in Cayey, having the right to participate and give voice also meant having the right to say, "No!" A friend from New York wrote to offer sympathy and solidarity over my predicament. At the time, his letter was in no way soothing or persuasive. But now, with the benefit of distance, I think his words provide a good summary:

Maybe the cancellation of this celebration is a reminder that moments of public recognition, of self-pride, of workers' defining and claiming their own history do not come easily. The reality of exploitation, and the requisite struggle against exploitation often pre-empt the fleeting moments of commemoration.⁷

In conclusion, we can see how the ethnographic description in Chapter Three provides a concrete example of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico choosing to privilege their class identities over their gender and professional identities.

Endnotes:

1. This conference, modeled on a similar event I had helped organize among academics, union activists, and secretaries at Boston University (see Massachusetts History Workshop, 1985), was intended to provide me with a rich source of data on Puerto Rican women clerical workers, much as the Boston conference had done for the academics involved, James Green and Susan Reverby.
2. See Appendix No. 1, Salary Scale for Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico, and Appendix No. 2, Average Hourly Earnings for Secretaries and Other Clerical Workers in Puerto Rico's Private Sector, 1984.
3. My first communication with Yamila Azize, proposing a conference on the history and present situation of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico was written on March 23, 1990, as I prepared my presentation as a Keynote Speaker at the program celebrating National Secretaries Day at the Cayey campus of the UPR on April 24, 1990 (see Appendix No. 5, Casey's Letter to Azize, March 23, 1990).
4. The other person was the anthropologist Carmen Angélica Perez Herranz, whose dissertation on women factory workers in western Puerto Rico found that, if these women could choose another profession, they wished to become secretaries or, if they felt they were too old to change jobs, they wished their daughters would become secretaries (see Perez Herranz, 1990 and 1996). At the time of my fieldwork, 1990-1992, research on women conducted by Puerto Rican academics fell into three general areas; women and work, women and poverty; and research on women's bodies that focused on the problems women faced in relation to violence, (both domestic violence and rape), healthcare, and reproductive rights. On the topic of women's work, research focused on the history of the needle trades and garment industries in the early twentieth century, a reconsideration of the impact and contribution of women's non-salaried work within the sugarcane economy, studies of contemporary women employed in industrial and assembly work, including the large concentration of women workers in the tuna-packaging canneries in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, and women working in the informal sector of the economy, engaged in what Puerto Ricans call *chiripeo*. Within the realm of women and poverty, research focused on women and the welfare state, self-help groups, and women with zero income. And in relation to women's bodies, violence and healthcare in Puerto Rican society, research focused on domestic violence, abortion and reproductive rights, women in poverty, and women in the criminal justice system.
5. A copy of the twelve-page paper I presented at the Cayey program for National Secretaries' Week on April 25, 1990 is included as Appendix No. 5: "La trayectoria histórica y los cambios en la vida de la mujer oficinista."
6. The Hermandad later initiated a class-action grievance on behalf of all workers in the UPR system whose salaries were docked for the one-day work-stoppage.

7. Letter from William Askins to the author, April 22, 1991.

Chapter Four:
New Tappings on the Keys: Work Culture and Daily Life
of Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the daily lives of secretaries. For the women clerical workers I studied at the University of Puerto Rico, work culture and daily life were a kind of double-edged sword. On the one hand, the cultural life that women created at their workplaces empowered them as both women and workers, and, I believe, facilitated their choice of the *Hermidad*--a predominantly female class-based organization--as their vehicle for mobilization. On the other hand, that same cultural life had many elements that mitigated against identifying on a class basis, and instead tended to push the women I studied to identify on the basis of their gender, professional identities, or *puertorriqueñidad* (their national identity or Puerto Ricanness). By the same token, women's support networks and cultural formations both encouraged them to stand up for themselves--on whatever basis--and facilitated their acceptance of existing social relations. This double effect of daily life helps us see what obstacles women face in their efforts to mobilize on any basis, and on a class basis in particular.

In this chapter, we will see how women secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico participated in and helped create a rich cultural life centered in the workplace, and that while these conditions had multiple effects, one of their many effects was to facilitate women's choice to join and/or support the *Hermidad* at a moment of crisis in their working lives.

Keywords

Secretarial work is filled with and shaped by words. This chapter begins, therefore, with a discussion of the "keywords" in the work world of this sector of the Puerto Rican working class. Understanding the language used by secretaries and union activists at the University of Puerto Rico becomes a vehicle for entering this domain of working-class reality and learning about the actual work secretaries do, the social matrix of relationships in the clerical work office, and the ways secretaries participate in naming, claiming, and analyzing their work worlds.¹ This section of the chapter calls upon Raymond Williams' (1983) critically important concept, in which he analyzes language as a dynamic and contested zone in the production of cultural meaning, an arena in which key changes in social life are recorded, evaluated, and challenged. All citizens in a social polity engage language and participate in its elaboration and change, and working-class people are no exception. In fact, creative linguistic innovations, including new words and dialects, are often initiated by working-class and poor people. Exploring the keywords of Puerto Rican secretaries thus works toward the larger theoretical concerns of the dissertation, the creation of a working-class anthropology.

Language figured prominently in the work world of UPR secretaries--and in Puerto Rico in general--in the last decade of the twentieth century. After all, words are the tools secretaries use to do their work. Words are also the products of their work. Throughout the workday, secretaries are immersed in the world of words; they create, type, edit, mail, and file written words. Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico also work for and with faculty members, administrators, other employees, and students, all of

whom are also engaged in the world of language. Language constituted an arena of daily struggle for secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. They negotiated regularly with professors and supervisors about the preferred choice of words to use and the length of a lecture, memo, or article to be typed. Secretaries also evaluated, and sometimes challenged, the words of administrators received in the form of memos, regulations, and newsletters. UPR secretaries responded to the written language of university students, expressing a range of reactions to student language, especially to student slang or *jerga* – reactions that ranged from humor, interest, and appreciation to shock (see Josefina Claudio de la Torre, 1989).

Three specific debates over language emerged during the period of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico in 1990-1992. First, there was the ongoing campaign to create gender-inclusive language and/or gender-neutral language. This campaign began in the 1970s by academic feminists and women activists. At the end of the 1970s, this campaign was taken up by women activists in the Hermandad trade union at the University of Puerto Rico. The second debate emerged in the context of the legal battles and media frenzy that exploded in response to Governor Rafael Hernandez Colon's initiative to make Spanish the official language of Puerto Rico in 1991. Until that time, both English and Spanish were considered to be the official languages of Puerto Rico. However, while courses in English are mandatory in the educational system, the vast majority of Puerto Ricans have never been fluent in English and do not speak it outside of certain formal settings, such as court sessions and other encounters with the criminal justice system.

Bilingualism and code-switching from Spanish to English was part of daily life for the secretaries I observed at the University of Puerto Rico. In the course of their workday, secretaries were constantly negotiating between spoken Puerto Rican Spanish flavored with *puertorriqueñismos*, and more standard Spanish, the language required for all their written communications. Many of these secretaries also had to negotiate between Spanish and English. In addition, all secretaries using computers were required to adopt the underlying logic running computer programs, including commands and function keys that were created from the English language. At a very basic level, UPR secretaries had to internalize English language logic in order to produce documents and files in Spanish.

The third arena of debate over language concerned the Puerto Rican peoples' ongoing anxiety about their Spanish language, in the context of their colonial status and hybrid national identity as neither an independent nation nor an integral part of the United States. This is expressed as an intense preoccupation or worry over the loss of *correct* or *proper* Spanish, especially with regard to spoken Spanish. As such, it can be understood as another manifestation *el coloniaje*, the internalized sense of inferiority created by colonialism. Even *Claridad*, the pre-eminent pro-worker and pro-independence weekly newspaper published by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, runs a regular column on how to speak correct Spanish (see *Claridad*, 1990-91).

A particular style of ribald, risque, flowery, sexualized street-Spanish has developed in Puerto Rico over the past hundred years. This Spanish is based on an oral tradition, most fully developed by the popular classes, especially within Afro-Puerto Rican communities, as represented by the songs and poems of Juan Boria, and with the

music and dance of *Bomba y Plena*, a cultural tradition originating in Afro-Puerto Rican culture that has now become the national dance of Puerto Rico. Examples of this rich "street" language can be found in the work of Puerto Rico's premier writer, Luis Rafael Sánchez, in his award-winning novel, *La Guaracha de Macho Camacho* in the 1960s. It is seen, from the 1970s through the present, in the more contemporary writings of Ana Lydia Vega, from a feminist, pro-independence, irreverent, earthy, and passionate writer (see Waldman, 1979 and Vega, 1994).

Historical changes in the Hermandad's use of gendered language can be read as a barometer of the union's growing respect for women workers at the University of Puerto Rico. Likewise, the union's incorporation of Puerto Rican slang (*jerga* and *modismos*) in newsletters, pamphlets, songs, and other publications reflects an effort to affirm working-class cultural identity, even while the Hermandad's membership includes significant numbers of people with college and graduate-level educations. What follows is a review of some of the most important "keywords" for secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico and for their trade union.

La Hermandad: As with all Romance languages, words in Spanish are gendered, assigned either a masculine or feminine essence; adjectives and pronouns must also have gender agreement; and normative or generalized words are most often expressed in the masculine form. In Puerto Rico, for example, written and oral references to the general concept of human beings is most often expressed by the word *el/los hombre(s)* to designate mankind, instead of using the more neutral term, *seres humanos* (human beings). This is true in the speech of women as well as men. Thus, the English

translation of the word "Hermandad" is Brotherhood. The Spanish translation for the English word "sisterhood" is also "hermandad," making it impossible to describe a collective of women outside the confines of maleness, reflecting a cluster of historically gendered meanings (see Simon and Schuster's Spanish-English Dictionary, 1997:695).

La Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente: A literal English translation of the name for the trade union for clerical and technical employees at the University of Puerto Rico would be The Brotherhood of Exempt, Non-teaching Employees. I have used the word Hermandad when referring to this organization. Borrowing Raymond Williams' lens for looking at language, we must notice that this group of workers is defined by what they are not. Employees covered by the Hermandad constitute a pool of clerical and technical workers and researchers who cannot work in confidential positions with access to managerial information protected by labor relations law; and they cannot teach classes as part of their regular work responsibilities. While the UPR administration has primary responsibility in the classification of job titles and positions, this process is hotly contested by the Hermandad, which was constantly filing grievances against the arbitrary removal of positions from the bargaining unit during the period of my fieldwork. Secretaries and union activists repeatedly told me about cases in which management decided to make certain positions "confidential" solely in order to "get rid of" union activists, who were then forced to choose to between changing their job or leaving the Hermandad.

El coloniaje: This is the word used by leftist pro-independence political activists, journalists, academics, and cultural critics to refer to the entire complex of values,

behaviors, internalized worry, and doubt developed over one hundred years of United States colonialism, on top of four hundred years of Spanish colonialism. The term expresses a generalized sense of insecurity about national identity, fears that one, or one's people are inadequate (see Franz Fanon, 1963 and 1967). Puerto Rican people express a great deal of anxiety over their hybrid language, knowing that they speak neither the English of the United States nor the Spanish of other Latin American countries, for which they receive sharp criticism from both quarters. An alternative belief, shared by this author, is that Puerto Ricans have created their own, adaptive and innovative Spanish.

***Compañero*:** The most direct, literal translation of this word into English would be "comrade," signifying a friend, co-worker, or someone who "shares the same road" as the speaker. However, in Puerto Rico as in the rest of Latin America, the word *compañero* lacks the associations with communism that have made the word seem rather sinister in many parts of the world, including the United States. In Latin America, the word *compañero* is not weighted with the same negative meanings and limited references. Use of the word *compañero* became even more widespread in Latin America in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, although the term enjoyed wide, popular usage in Puerto Rico and elsewhere before the era of Fidel Castro and Ché Guevarra. The terms *compañero* and *compañera* are also used to denote one's lover, common-law spouse, or even a legally married partner. This usage of the word grew dramatically among young people during the 1960s counter-culture and university student movements of Latin America, including Puerto Rico, for several reasons: to de-emphasize the power of the state in intimate relationships; to affirm the autonomy of

women and reject the widespread structures of male supremacy that sought to relegate women to the role of some man's wife, and to diminish the moral judgment and shame attributed to common-law relationships and illegitimate children of those unions, the vast majority of which occurred among poor, peasant, and working-class communities whose economic marginality made church or state weddings prohibitive and whose geographic isolation in the countryside often precluded people's access to priests. Married couples who used the term *compañero* to signify their partners were thus showing their solidarity with working-class movements and/or their rejection of bourgeois formality.

The trade union movement in Puerto Rico, including the Hermandad, always uses the word *compañero* to refer to union members. In this sense, the word is closer in meaning to the phrase "brothers and sisters," the term always used by the U.S. trade union movement when referring to members or workers in general. In this sense, and as it used in Puerto Rico, the word *compañero* can also be translated as "fellow worker." Since its inception as an organizing drive to create a trade union at the University of Puerto Rico in 1972, the Hermandad has always used the word *compañero* in written communications and conversation to union members, fellow employees, and all Puerto Rican citizens, except anti-labor government officials and representatives of management.

The Hermandad has passed through a fascinating process of change with regard to the use of the word *compañero*. First, it shifted from *compañero(s)* to *compañero/a* & *compañeros/as*. This language morph finally became official policy for the Hermandad in the early 1980s, after having been proposed by women activists within the Hermandad and other feminists in the late 1970s. The concept then went through a complicated

process of tentative acceptance, trivialization, derision, rejection, and finally, general acceptance as the most normal and correct way to address members, fellow workers, and union leadership. By the time I arrived in Puerto Rico in 1990, members of the Hermandad always took the extra time to say or write "*compañeros and compañeras*" every time they referred to the union's members, other parts of the labor movement, and students at the UPR. Activists explained to me that this change was not an easy process. While the leadership did not trivialize the feminists' proposal, the suggested change generated a lot of teasing, jokes, discomfort and hurt feelings among both male and female workers. Only after several years was the concept completely integrated into the culture of the Hermandad, reflecting the union's growing sensitivity to women workers, who constituted the majority of their members. By 1990, though, this form of address and self-reference was a source of pride within the union.

Second, the term shifted from *compañero/a & compañeros/as* to *compañer@*, *compañer@s*. Beginning in 1994-95, as the Internet was penetrating Puerto Rico, the Hermandad adopted this simplified way to use gender-neutral language. The possibility of using @, the symbol for *arroba*, existed long before the creation of the Hermandad, since the *arroba* sign was a key symbol in the sugarcane economy of Puerto Rico: the record of cut cane was always measured in units of *arrobas* (a weight of about twenty-five pounds). Using @ quickly became normative in all publications by the Hermandad, as well as in writings by feminists and progressives. This occurred because the political and cultural battle for gender-inclusive language had already been won. This second

transformation is another indication of the generalized affection Puerto Ricans have for all technological innovations and for anything new, hip, and from the United States.

Two associated words, *compadre* and *comadre* (godfather and godmother), enjoy wide usage in Puerto Rico, and the rest of Latin America, both in the narrow use of the terms to signify religious or ritual co-parenthood between a father and his child's godfather, and between a mother and her child's godmother, and in non-religious contexts, when the terms are used to signify close same-sex bonds between men and women. The word *compadre* is also shortened to *compa* and '*pana* in colloquial usage and as a greeting to one's intimate friends, as in the salutary greeting, "*¡Hola! mi 'pana, mi broder.*" (The word "broder" used here is an *anglicismo* - for the English word "brother"- (referring to words borrowed directly from the English language and given a partial Spanish structure or pronunciation) for the English word "brother.") In the summer of 1991, as my fieldwork was coming to a close, one of the UPR secretaries in *Humanidades* (Humanities) at the Río Piedras campus created another innovative play-on-words when she transformed the slang word for *compadre* – *mi compai* – into a pet-name for her computer, *mi compu*. The final permutation on the word *compañero* and *compadre* that I am aware of is the slang phrase – *mi pana* or *mi panita* – which is also used to address a close friend or buddy, although the word may be another *anglicismo* derived from the English word "partner."

The Hermandad's efforts to develop gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language is a key example of the union's efforts to be inclusive of women workers, and one reason why women secretaries would chose to support a class-based organization as

the vehicle to express their concerns about gender as well as class. One can imagine counter-examples in which women would have formed a separate women's group, encouraged female clerical workers to leave the Hermandad, or formed a gender-based workplace organization, on the model of the U.S. organization "9to5". One can also imagine a scenario in which the (predominantly male) leadership of the Hermandad insisted upon the "primacy of class over gender" and rejected the feminists' demands for gender-neutral/inclusive language as divisive or diversionary.

Neither of these alternative scenarios took place, however. Instead, through the struggles of feminists and women workers at the University of Puerto Rico, the class-based Hermandad took up the issue of gender (at least with regard to language) as its own. Treating women with equality became defined as a class-based issue, just as joining the union became defined as a feminist action. These new definitions of class and gender would make it easier for women at UPR to choose the Hermandad as the vehicle to express their concerns in a wide range of areas, thus facilitating their support of the Hermandad in the 1991 strike.

It is also significant that the subject position of Puerto Rico as a colony played a role in the particular form of gender-inclusive language that was chosen. The choice of @ as a useful symbol reflects a wish to "catch up with" the United States, and to overcome *el coloniaje* by proving oneself "au courant" with the latest technological trends from *el Norte*. As with many aspects of work life in Puerto Rico, pride, anxiety, self-realization, and self-denial are mingled, forming indivisible aspects of many cultural choices.

Keystrokes

In addition to exploring keywords, a study of secretarial work in Puerto Rico in the 1990s must also consider "keystrokes"—the range of ways secretaries engaged the tools of their work. I am coining the term "keystrokes" to refer to that bundle of computerized technology and software programs – including the function keys, formatting commands, and networking capabilities of computers – which were introduced into offices in Puerto Rico on a grand scale in the early 1990s and that rapidly became the dominant occupational tool kit used by secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. My fieldwork took place on the cusp of this technological transformation, which was experienced as another invasion from the United States, this time of a technological nature. In the ten years since I did my fieldwork, the process of conceptualizing cyberspace, the Internet, virtual realities, and global networks on the electronic superhighway has become commonplace in the lives of university personnel, including secretaries, professors, administrators, and students in both Puerto Rico and the United States. Taking for granted secretaries' current fluency with this logic and language, however, minimizes the profound, tumultuous, and rupturing impact created by its introduction into the office landscape from 1989 to 1992.

This new technology required major transformations in previously held notions of space and time. I observed secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico welcome, reject, ignore, struggle with, and master the new office technologies. These divergent responses recapitulated earlier economic transformations that accompanied United States control over Puerto Rico in 1898. In the beginning of the twentieth century, modern United

States capitalist ventures transformed the Puerto Rico's more diversified agricultural economy and hacienda social system into a virtual mono-crop economy based in sugar and the creation of a rural proletariat (see Mintz, 1956, and 1974; Wolf, 1956; and Quintero Rivera, 1976). Puerto Rico went through a second series of rapid changes again in the 1950s and 1960s, when Operation Bootstrap programs attracted massive United States investments in industrial production, accompanied by a geometric growth of the state sector of Puerto Rico's economy through the formation of the Public Corporations involved in both production and delivery of services. These developments transformed Puerto Rico's mono-crop sugar economy into an industrial economy, with an industrial working class. At the time of my fieldwork in 1990-92, Puerto Rico was responding to a third shift, as many industrial plants moved to other locales in the Third World, in search of cheaper labor costs and raw materials, rendering Puerto Rico a service economy.

Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico manifested different attitudes towards both words and the new technologies used to produce them. Some projected a comfortable and relaxed attitude towards language, born out of their close and constant connection with words and their growing comfort and skill in using desktop computers. Others maintained a stiff or reverent respect for words, as representations of Spanish tradition, power, and proper comportment. Some secretaries evidenced a somewhat deferential or distanced relationship with the new office technologies and the concepts of progress and modernity they represented. Still other secretaries described feeling overwhelmed by the sheer number of words they had to type in a day, and expressed their confusion over the complicated rules of grammar and logic embedded in

the new office technologies. On any particular day, the same secretary could manifest multiple and contradictory relations with this world of words and technology, depending on the type of work being done, the social and political context of that work, and the quality of the personal relationships involved.

Secretaries also developed innovative ways of using and thinking about their computers. They created a series of *puertorriqueñismos*, including new nicknames for their computers and, as we have seen, they found a creative way to capture the ubiquitous "@" used for all Internet and "*punto com*" (dot com) communications to resolve a problem of creating gender-inclusive language. Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico are not only receptors of the new office technology, they add their own rhythm and flavor to create a permutation on the standard office procedures and protocols recommended by scientific management consultants. This is reminiscent of the way Puerto Rican Salsa music simultaneously incorporates and transforms traditional jazz music.

Just as the same secretary might manifest many different responses to the rapid and disruptive process of technological change, from quiet confidence to hysterical panic, so might the same secretary turn to any one of a number of identities for social and personal support in the face of this change. A secretary might respond by becoming more religious, or by focusing on her professional identity, and indeed, the ranks of the evangelical churches and the membership of the PSI grew during this period. A secretary might also turn to her Puerto Rican national identity, her gendered identity, or her class identity. I would argue that many secretaries partook of several of these responses,

simultaneously or in turn. What is interesting, as we shall see in Chapter Five, is the extent to which, despite the presence – indeed, the importance – of these other choices within the daily life of secretaries, at a moment of crisis, a majority of the secretaries also chose to support and/or participate in the strike called by the Hermandad in 1991. The choice of a class-based organization to represent their concerns did not negate secretaries' other responses, nor did it contradict the fact that much of their workplace culture was not defined through the lens of class. Yet despite the presence of these competing, multiple identities, the clerical workers did, at that key historical moment, choose to define themselves on the basis of class.

Participant-Observation in Three Offices at the Río Piedras Campus

The remainder of this chapter presents ethnographic data on the rhythm of daily life and office/work culture in four different UPR offices. This data provides insight into the dynamic interplay of gender, ethnic, and class identities and the issue of Puerto Rico's colonial status as these themes are expressed in the culture of daily life and the work world of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. In the process of conducting fieldwork, I had an opportunity to work in three offices located on the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico for a substantial period of time²: the Study Abroad & Foreign Students' Office, (OSOEI, *Oficina de Servicios y Oportunidades Educativas Internacionales*), the Department of Secretarial Sciences (*Ciencias Secretariales*), and the Center for Social Research, or CIS (*Centro de Investigaciones*

Sociales). All three offices had ten or more employees working in them, including at least three secretaries. The number of employees in these three offices places them within the largest and best-funded third of all units of the Río Piedras campus. Yet the offices evinced wide variations with regard to their mission, the amount and quality of resources available to them, and the culture and social-political ambiance of each setting. The concerns, and preoccupations of secretaries, administrators and faculty members working in these offices also differed, according to the individual's position within the political economy of the university and the status their area of work held within the larger Puerto Rican society.

The significance of mistakes, surprises, and unintended consequences played a major role in the production of ethnographic knowledge in all four cases. In each instance, I gained access to the particular office or department in order to work on another project, and only by coincidence was I able to observe the daily life of secretaries, the interactions between secretaries in the same department, and the dynamics between secretaries and other office personnel, including faculty, administrators, graduate and undergraduate students, and student staff workers.

The Study Abroad & Foreign Student Office, OSOEI, (*Oficina de Servicios y Oportunidades Educativas Internacionales*) was the office responsible for information and support services for all UPR students in Río Piedras who wanted to register for Study Abroad programs in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. This office was also responsible for meeting the academic and social needs of all incoming foreign students: OSOEI provided orientation, class registration materials, housing assignments,

and other support services. When I first arrived in Puerto Rico, the Director of OSOEI, Profesora Sylvia Santiago, was also the UPR liaison to Intercambio, the CUNY-UPR Academic Exchange Program that funded my fieldwork research. I was the first graduate student to receive the Intercambio Dissertation Fellowship (1989 -1992); as such, I did not fit into the previously established categories of foreign exchange professors and undergraduate students. As a researcher, I did not teach or take classes at any branch of the UPR. Consequently, the system could not allocate me any living space on campus, a benefit automatically extended to all undergraduate students and professors in the exchange program.

As Director of OSOEI, Professor Santiago took pity on my predicament, all the more so because my seven-year old son, Max, would be living with me and attending second and third grade in Río Piedras and we were obliged to rent an expensive studio apartment in the nearby community of University Gardens, an *urbanización* (a neighborhood district) of Río Piedras. Professor Santiago decided to offer me an office within the OSOEI complex of suites, complete with a desk, bookcases, and an internal UPR phone line. This office provided me with a more concrete UPR identity and base of operations within the Río Piedras campus of the UPR. The business card I produced to introduce myself, Puerto Rico's obligatory *tarjeta de presentación*, listed my UPR post office box and my UPR phone number. Thus I acquired a quasi-official status among UPR faculty and staff, resolving one of the major challenges I encountered constantly while living in Puerto Rico: no one in Puerto Rico will talk with you unless you are already "known" to them, preferably through family connections. Having a UPR address

and phone extension was therefore a major advantage, as it gave me a familiar and acceptable identity. I maintained this office at OSOEI from January 1990 through the end of July 1991, when the staff celebrated my return to New York City with an office-wide Bon Voyage party.

From my office at OSOEI, I was able to observe and participate in the daily life of this department, which had one director, three project directors, three secretaries, and a number of student staff. I observed people at work, staff meetings, and all the informal discussion of topics ranging from family health, travel plans, current events, and office gossip. I also had a bird's-eye view of staff members' responses to University initiatives and the Hermandad's actions.

OSOEI is one of the privileged offices on the Río Piedras campus, housing is a special and fashionable project of the University Rector. As a result, OSOEI received more money and new office technologies. Yet the budget was always taken from discretionary administrative funds of grant money, which meant there was no security for programs from year to year. Likewise, many OSOEI employees were working on contracts, without any promise of permanent positions with job security. As long as OSOEI remained one of the Rector's favorite pet projects, working conditions were stable. But there was no guarantee and therefore no structural job protection for most staff members working for the program.

At CIS and the Department of Secretarial Sciences, my other two sites of observation, I was only afforded the opportunity to engage in participant-observation because of the denial of my original request to borrow certain archival materials, held in

the departments' private document collections and unavailable at any other UPR library. The items I wanted were reports, theses, and published articles about secretarial sciences, as well as the personal archives of twenty years worth of materials produced by the Hermandad maintained by Doña Angélica Meléndez in the Center for Social Research.

In both departments, I was able to negotiate access to these documents only under the provision that I read them in the department's main conference room and that the materials not leave the department under any circumstances. Ironically, it was in the process of trying to protect their department's security and confidentiality that these two departments gave me access to observe secretaries' daily life. Based on the responses I received to other, similar requests, I am quite sure I would have been denied the right to enter these offices for the express purpose of observing daily life, a request that would doubtless have been interpreted as an affront to the pervasive protocols surrounding privacy and respect in Puerto Rico. Such a proposal would also have increased secretaries' distrust of me and my research project. On the other hand, the secretaries in both departments were very comfortable with the idea that I should study their historical archives, published articles, and reports: they believed their work was important, meriting the same degree of formal research as other academic themes.

The Department of Secretarial Sciences projected an image equal to the most modern offices in the United States. It was painted in pastel colors. All the office equipment – staplers, tape dispensers, pencil holders – were of a set, in colors coordinated to match the paint. Even the file folders in Departmental filing cabinets were arranged according to color codes. The professors wore tailored suits, with matching skirts,

jackets, and vests. The Professional Secretaries International (PSI) orientation towards job security and career advancement was evident everywhere. The department sponsored a student club for prospective secretaries, affiliated to Secretarial Students International (SSI), which is the official student organization of PSI.

The Social Research Center (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociales*) at the University of Puerto Rico has been the center for pro-independence scholars and pro-Hermandad trade unionists at the Río Piedras campus since the 1970s. The Center was home to some of the most- published and best-known researchers in Puerto Rico, such as the Marxist historian Angel Quintero Rivera, one of the founders of CEREP (the pro-independence Center for the Study of Puerto Rican Reality) in the 1970s, and Center Director Carmen Majoral, whose major works focused on the colonial case of Puerto Rico within the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Nations Movement.

Every day at lunchtime, the Center's library was cleared out of all faculty and students, and taken over by the five departmental secretaries. I was the only person allowed to continue working in the library, perhaps because Doña Angélica Meléndez took a personal interest in me and my work, or perhaps because she liked the idea of a North American academic traveling to Puerto Rico to study a bunch of secretaries. I worked in the library of the Social Research Center two or three hours a day over the course of several months, and was present during many lunchtimes. I was able to smell the amazing scents of homemade foods brought in and reheated in the Center's microwave oven (*la microhonda*). I tried hard to understand the complicated process by which recipes were exchanged among these knowing chefs, always conducted in a rapid,

short-hand manner. Only on occasion was I offered a taste, I think it was very important to these women that they *not* be required to take care of anyone else during their lunch hour. Failing to share was *not* a hostile act on their part; I was simply expected to take care of myself and *not* take up any psychic or social space. In return, I was allowed to observe all the interactions taking place in a group of secretaries away from the demands of work, outside the presence of supervisors and faculty members, and without the pressure to accommodate researchers' requests for all kinds of assistance.

When these women were on duty, they were called upon to type and edit manuscripts, find a pair of scissors, and fix the jammed paper in the xerox machine, as well as the more subtle demands of demonstrating interest in faculty stories and worries, mediating conflicts between other office personnel, and actively helping out their colleagues after work hours on a range of projects, including delivering food to the home of a sick worker, helping a researcher move over the weekend, discussing the divorce proceedings of a faculty colleague, and trying to resolve the legal problems of another worker's troubled adolescent son. On duty, these women were more staid and proper, much less likely to tell jokes or personal stories.

At lunchtime, though, as soon as the food was finished, out came the board games that provided the most lively and animated focus of every lunchtime gathering. Among themselves, surrounded by walls of bookcases filled with historic documents and irreplaceable books, these secretaries were sharp, competitive, and irreverent. Two of these women were close to retirement age, two were middle-aged (between forty and forty-five years old), and one woman was in her early thirties. An informal hierarchy of

rank and age was evident in the respectful and deferential attitude that the younger women displayed towards senior members. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of their lunchtime interaction was the complete indifference other secretaries had towards the one senior member of the group who cursed constantly during the game playing and who told off-color stories between rounds. This behavior was in stark contrast to the professional, quiet, and discreet manner all five women displayed during regular work hours. Maybe their loudness and bawdiness served as another means of signifying their lunchtime autonomy, their right to let their hair down and relax a little. I never observed any cursing or loud talk in the Center at other times.

My participant-observation work afforded me immeasurable insight into secretaries' lives, particularly into the subtle variations in their styles of talking and thinking. This assisted my communication with them and other UPR secretaries. It afforded me a degree of fluency in the logic and tone of secretaries' language and value system. I learned to respect the boundaries for certain kinds of discussion. And I came to understand what were the appropriate contexts for talking about union issues, workplace problems, personal issues, and secretaries' hopes and aspirations.

These three departmental units were very different with regard to their structural makeup, their position within the institutional flow chart of the UPR, the content of their work areas, and the flavor or local culture of their centers. Yet in each case, there was a structural inability for the center and offices to respond to many of the secretaries' basic needs, such as salary increases to match the rising cost-of-living in Puerto Rico, comprehensive and affordable health care coverage, and the possibility of working on a

flexible schedule that would ease the rush-hour pressure on women workers to get children to school and daycare, before arriving at their own workplaces.

To address these problems, many secretaries tended to turn to personalism and mutual ties of obligation, expecting their bosses to help them and treat them fairly simply because they were working together in a fairly intimate context, or because the secretaries were doing good work. And indeed, some secretaries were able to solve some of their work problems on the basis of their supervisors' good will. Yet personalism and mutual ties of obligation could only go so far. Secretaries discovered that the most sympathetic or respectful supervisor in the world could not make the individual decision to provide quality day care, offer flexible time, contravene system-wide changes in working hours, provide health care benefits, or give access to free university classes via the tuition remission program. Whatever identity secretaries chose to adopt – and there were many, whatever political allegiances they had – and there were many of those as well, many of them eventually came to see that only the *Hermanidad* trade union could negotiate for improvements in these system-wide areas of concern to secretaries.

This explains why, in a group as socially, politically, and personally diverse as the female clerical workforce at the UPR, the *Hermanidad* became the vehicle women chose to express their concerns. Even though for many months, even years, the *Hermanidad* was of little interest to many secretaries, or did not seem to command their loyalties, in the time of crisis, represented by the 1991 strike, women clerical workers turned to the *Hermanidad* to solve their concerns.

Candy, Sex, and Flowers in the Office:
The Ritual Cycle of Secretarial Work in Puerto Rico

Anthropologists have always argued for the importance of ritual life and holiday cycles as an integral part of any group's culture and society. Logically, this area of ethnography should be considered just as important in urban anthropology. In order to understand how the Puerto Rican working class makes and remakes itself, the study of holidays and the ritual cycle can be particularly illuminating, following the path-breaking work established by Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson in the making of the English working class, as well as in the efforts of Puerto Rican scholars who explore the links between social class development and Puerto Rican popular music.³ The ritual process, according to Victor Turner, Bakhtin and others, allows us to examine many of the central contradictions in a society, as they are embodied in the ritual--called upon and successfully mediated when hegemony can be preserved, and called upon and disrupted or distorted during moments of qualitative change. In either case, a full range of social and cultural contradictions are displayed and worked through as part of the ritual cycle. Given the fact that most working women in Puerto Rico today are concentrated in clerical work in the service economy, an exploration of the cultural contradictions in this arena should illuminate some of the major class, gender, and colonial contradictions embedded in contemporary working class practice and consciousness.

I will examine three segments of the secretarial ritual cycle in Puerto Rico which includes: St. Valentine's Day, National Secretaries' Week, and Mother's Day. I will then briefly discuss the responses of two organizations of women clerical workers to these

holiday celebrations: the Professional Secretaries International (PSI), which has seven chapters organized across Puerto Rico, and the Hermandad, which represents 3,000 clerical and technical workers employed at eleven campuses of the University of Puerto Rico, seventy percent of whom are women.

The cycle of holiday celebrations is marked by the exchange of highly gendered gift items such as boxes of chocolate candy, greeting cards, elaborate floral arrangements, and for National Secretaries' Day off-work-site programs including dinner shows, cabaret concerts, and fashion shows at luxury hotels. The gift-giving is uni-directional, directed toward the secretary and coming from the boss. St. Valentine's Day emphasizes romance and sexuality, and Mother's Day celebrates women's maternal, traditional roles. Neither of these holidays has any intrinsic relationship to office work, yet they have become occasions for elaborate office parties and intense gift-giving directed towards secretaries and other women clerical workers. Other management employees do not receive the same display of gifts and may not participate at all, or if they do, participate only in a subordinate way, in the form of financial contributions.

The celebration of National Secretaries' Day in April, a "created" holiday invented by secretaries in the United States during the 1950s who wanted to increase the social status of their occupation, has also become romanticized and sexualized, following the pattern established for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. Print media for National Secretaries' Week in Puerto Rico are filled with ads for perfumes, jewelry, and clothes, projecting the secretary as a sexy, alluring coquette, someone to buy for, someone to please. Male supervisors provide their secretaries with elaborate gifts of candy and floral

bouquets. They sponsor outings to fashion shows, concerts, dances and romantic dinners for their secretarial staff.

The changing nature of Puerto Rico's managerial labor force is reflected in the fact that there are a growing number of women managers. These supervisors participate in the holiday "gifting cycle," but at a much reduced level: perhaps one box of candy placed on the receptionist's desk for the whole office to share, while parties in such offices may become pot-luck lunches. Such a shift often elicits dismay from women clerical workers, who comment on the differences from when a man was in charge or note the generosity of display in offices where men are still in charge. Having a female supervisor also removes the sexual nuances from the holiday. In part, this shift reflects the inability of women managers to participate in the gendered nature of romance and sexual encounters embedded in holiday celebrations. It can also suggest the weaker buying power of women supervisors.

My findings from Puerto Rico are congruent with Rosemary Pringle's analysis of secretaries in England (see Pringle, 1988). Gifts and parties hosted by women supervisors are much less elaborate and usually kept within the office space, again signifying the underlying gendered nature of these celebrations. In exchange for these gifts and parties, it is expected that women workers will subordinate their judgements, needs, and desires to those of their gift-giving supervisors, following Marcel Mauss' famous analysis of The Gift. The ritual cycle functions, in part, as a form of labor discipline on the part of supervisors who desire to maintain their authority and prerogatives.

The campaign to bring emotions, cultural celebrations, and personal life into the workplace, however, is not simply a manipulation on the part of supervisors. Clerical workers have also struggled for the right to bring their private lives and celebrations into the public workplace. Family responsibilities and cultural proscriptions against unsupervised socializing means that women clerical workers in Puerto Rico have neither the time nor the cultural permission to gather together after work, as men often do. So women struggle for the right to display family photos, plants, and mementos on their desks. They also bring their celebrations into the workplace, via office parties and luncheons. Office celebrations of holidays, birthdays, and wedding showers likewise signify a workers' victory.

In part, this development signifies the transition from an industrial economy to the service economy. Workers' desks thus provide an opportunity for some "personal work space," beyond the lockers for changing clothes in factories. Office work also demands that workers give of their mental abilities, decision-making and human relations skills - as identified by fifteen CEO's as the most important skills a prospective secretary should have - which also brings the personal into work space. For the most part, however, the underlying control of office celebrations, especially the uni-directional nature of the gift-giving, reinforces managerial authority. It reminds women workers that they are mothers and lovers, that their traditional roles are caretaker, nurturer, and behind-the-scene support person, that they shouldn't leave at the end of the work day if there is still more work to do, that they shouldn't operate according to a contract, because their relations are open-ended and they themselves are supposed to be always available.

The image of a secretary sitting on the boss's knee is still pervasive in the popular culture of Puerto Rico (see Alegriá Ortega 1987; and Frambes-Buxeda 1987). Several different meanings are embedded in this cultural icon: it confirms managerial (male) desire to have a young, attractive and attentive female secretary at their service; it suggests that the only way a woman can maintain her job is through her sexual powers; and it encourages women workers to view other women as competitors and sexual predators. The activities and symbols called upon during National Secretaries' Week also call upon these assumptions. A dramatic expression of this attitude was projected on the advertising banner of one of the motels on the Old Road to Caguas (on the outskirts of San Juan) which cater to the somewhat illicit afternoon trade. In April 1990, the *cruzacalle* (banner) strung across the highway announced in bold letters, "We Guarantee the Lowest Rates for Secretaries' Week."

Two separate organizations of women clerical workers have challenged this dominant practice. Their differing approaches reveal their underlying assumptions about gender and class equity. Professional Secretaries International (PSI), functions like many similar business and professional associations. Founded and headquartered in the United States, PSI has established chapters in five different towns of Puerto Rico (PSI 1989). A number of the UPR clerical workers I interviewed were PSI members in San Juan, Arecibo, Mayaguez and Carolina. The PSI philosophy for clerical success stresses individual responsibility for upward mobility, professional dress codes, technical expertise, and standardization (see Universidad Interamericana, 1986). In addition to the PSI-administered exam to earn the Licensed Professional Secretary certificate, PSI also

runs workshops and training sessions on "assertiveness training," "stress management" and "*auto-estima*" (self-esteem). A favorite PSI slogan, recorded in their literature and heard in all the group meetings is: "Act like a professional, and they will treat you like a professional."

The Hermandad employs a dramatically different approach. As a trade union, the Hermandad tends to define problems as structural and emphasizes collective action. The union argues that, in institutional settings like the University of Puerto Rico, decisions are made outside the framework of individual offices, therefore, the union insists, personal style and good relations with one's supervisor cannot guarantee equity on the job.

Although many secretaries, including several at the UPR, belong to both groups, it is instructive to see how each offers a different response to the problems of secretaries in general and to the phenomenon of Secretaries' Week in particular. Professional Secretaries' International encourages secretaries to boycott the lunches and fashion shows, and to campaign for bosses to spend the same amount of money on a professional seminar their secretary can attend. Sometimes PSI takes a more activist approach as well. During the April 1991 PSI-sponsored conference to celebrate National Secretaries' Day, which took place at the Hilton Hotel in Mayagüez, I told the secretaries in my group about the "lowest rate for Secretaries' week" banner. The sign and its implications were immediately challenged by a group of women who decided to organize a picket at any motel displaying that kind of sign, even though they expressed great discomfort at the idea of even being in the vicinity of these establishments. It is interesting to note that this proposal came from a secretary at the Mayaguez campus of the UPR, where the

Hermanidad is active. Perhaps the Hermanidad's presence had led PSI members to adopt its more militant approach as a vehicle for expressing their own more professional concerns.

For its part, the Hermanidad organizes alternative celebrations for Secretaries' Day and Mother's Day, producing posters and greeting cards that emphasize women's collective work and their history of participation in Puerto Rico's social struggles. They produce original poems and art work created by university workers to underscore their political position that workers create art and critical thinking. Poems by famous Latin American poets such as Pablo Neruda and Nicolás Guillén are also incorporated into the cards and posters, along with refrains from popular or plebian culture (*música popular*, "*de la plebi*").

As we can see, the gender and class relations embedded in clerical workers' holiday celebrations are clearly in contention in contemporary Puerto Rico. Moreover, in addition to the PSI and the Hermanidad's organizational positions, women clericals also maintain their own interpretations of gender and class identities. For example, significant numbers of women identify with the traditional images of women as subordinate caretakers projected by management – even women who belong to PSI and/or to the Hermanidad. Likewise, some women believe that acquiescence and cooperation are effective strategies to enhance their position. Other women disagree with management decisions, privately, yet affirm the right of supervisors to set policies and define cultural norms in the workplace. Still other women decide to challenge prevailing assumptions. They build and participate in new organizational forms, including professional

associations like PSI and trade unions such as the Hermandad.

Conclusions

This chapter explored the word world of secretaries and the ways they mobilize to respond to the positive and negative aspects of their jobs. The introductory analysis of "keywords" represents another attempt on my part to foreground the voices of working class people, specifically secretaries and union activists, as the interpreters of their lives. The language secretaries use, and the ways that language changes over time, illuminates a number of key issues impacting their work situation and world views. The section of participant/observation in three offices provided information about secretaries' daily life. The annual ritual cycle of secretaries documented the ways secretaries celebrate and are celebrated by their bosses and supervisors. And the final section provided one example of the ways secretarial work has entered the popular culture of Puerto Rico.

As we have seen repeatedly throughout this chapter, any one secretary may partake of some – even of all – the available social identities (as a woman, a secretary, a Puerto Rican person, a working-class person, and a union member) throughout her working life, and it is also common for women to maintain some or all of these positions simultaneously, or to alternate frequently among them. Rather than schematize these responses as discrete patterns of behavior, it is more useful to see how different interpretations of identities based on gender and class are mobilized.

Endnotes:

1. This approach is an example of what I described in the Introduction and Chapter One of the dissertation as a primary goal for my project of developing a working class anthropology: bringing the voices of people we study into the process of creating the ethnography. Chapter Five begins with a section on the keywords of secretaries and union activists to foreground their voices.
2. I also spent a great deal of time in the offices of Pro-Mujer and the Luisa Capetillo Room of the University Library which hold the largest collection of feminist writings and books by or about women in the entire University of Puerto Rico system. These offices formed my base of operations at the Cayey campus, and the site for all the conference planning meetings and work sessions related to the secretaries' conference scheduled for April, 1990. I was present on the Cayey campus every two weeks from the fall of 1990 to the winter of 1991, when I began working in Cayey at least one full day a week. A more complete discussion of the office ethnography appears in Chapter Three, above.
3. See, for example, Angel Quintero Rivera's work on the history of the *danza*, Juan Flores' work on the roots of *plena* music, and Jorge Duany's work on the development of *salsa* music in Puerto Rico.

CHAPTER FIVE

"¡Hay Que Adobar La Huelga!" (We Have to Spice Up the Strike!): The History, Structure, and Politics of the Hermandad

In this chapter, I show the extent of the Hermandad's support among women clerical workers at the University of Puerto Rico, and identify some of the factors specific to the Hermandad that led to women choosing this union as the vehicle for pursuing their concerns. Women secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico were conscious of and mobilized around their multiple identities and multiple concerns. They often chose religious, professional, gender, or national identities as their primary self-concept, and they often affiliated with groups organized on bases other than class. Yet when the 1991 strike heated up, women clerical workers overwhelmingly chose to support it, whether actively, by participating in the Hermandad, or passively, by refusing to cross the picket line.

To clarify the nature of the Hermandad and show why it was able to elicit such a broad case of support, this chapter presents an overview of the union's history, locates the Hermandad within the context of labor law in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican trade union movement, and discusses the twenty-five year history of the Hermandad in the context of the larger political culture of the University of Puerto Rico. I begin, however, with the words of a secretary at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Doña Angélica Meléndez's story is emblematic of the Hermandad's history. Besides being evidence of the capacity of secretaries to engage in critical analysis and reflection of their lives and work worlds, Meléndez's story also helps us understand why,

ultimately, women secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico chose to organize themselves on the basis of class.

My Interview with Dona Angelica (March 13, 1990)

I had asked to interview Doña Angélica about her own life history. Yet she chose to begin her personal story via the story of the Hermandad, revealing the way in which this class-based organization was indeed viewed by secretaries themselves as playing a central role in their own identities. At the time of our first interview, Doña Angélica was the Administrative Secretary for the Social Research Center (El Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, CIS) located at the main campus of the UPR in Río Piedras. She had been working at the UPR for twenty-five years, employed at the CIS for the entire period. She began working at the UPR in 1965, when she was forty years old, and she planned to retire at the end of 1990.

The Center for Social Research (CIS) occupies a large suite of offices and maintains its own library in the Social Sciences buildings, a complex of two buildings with classrooms, libraries and offices. CIS is home to more than twenty faculty members and investigators working on funded research. Doña Angélica's desk and office space is located in an open area directly in front of the office of Center Director, Professor Carmen Mayoral. In addition to being the Administrative Secretary for the entire Center, Doña Angélica also serves as Executive Secretary to the Director.

My three interviews with Doña Angélica took place in her office at the CIS during

her lunch hours, beginning on a Monday in March 1990. It is interesting to note that even though everyone in the Center knew that I had come to interview Doña Angélica, and anyone approaching her office area could see that I was taping our conversation and taking extensive notes, faculty members, researchers, and other support staff were not deterred in the least from interrupting our interview sessions to implore Doña Angélica to attend to their pressing needs. Nor did it appear to matter that Doña Angélica was on her lunch hour and not supposed to be available to them. During our first interview, we were interrupted five different times. First, someone just barged in, saying, "I need the key!" The next person was more polite, saying, "Excuse me, but this mail isn't mine. It belongs to someone else." The third person who interrupted us looked very distracted and a little bit frantic. Holding a bunch of papers, he said, "I need to write the report, can you please explain what this form means?" A short while later two women came in to announce, "We have to go over to *Humanidades* to deliver a book." The Humanities Department was located on the other side of the Río Piedras campus. After they departed, Doña Angélica whispered to me, "Those women really want to go to the bank on campus. I know, because that one already asked me if I could take her deposit over earlier this morning, but I said no." The final interruption, and perhaps the most emblematic expression of how people treat secretaries, came from one of the woman researchers who poked her head in, acting apologetic for interrupting, but nonetheless was determined to get Doña Angélica's attention. Without directly asking Doña Angélica to fix the office copier, this woman chose a more passive approach, simply stating, "Look, the xerox machine is out of ink!" (¡Mira! La máquina falta tinta). At this point Doña Angélica

sighed and her face revealed a growing exasperation as she replied, “Well then, put some ink in it, or go ask Coco” (another office worker).

These scenarios take on added meaning in light of the fact that the Center for Social Research had a reputation as a bastion of left and progressive politics. A number of Marxist and feminist researchers worked there, including some of the most famous historians in Puerto Rico, and all the women researchers in CERES (*Centro Coordinador de Estudios, Recursos y Servicios a la Mujer*, the Center for Women’s Research, Services and Resources). The fact that women are always interrupted from their work by requests to attend other people’s needs, in both workplace and household settings, has been identified as a diagnostic feature of women’s oppression. Yet these same power relations and interpersonal dynamics operated in a UPR Center that was self-consciously committed to both workers’ rights and women’s rights.

When I asked Dona Angélica to tell me about her life and work history, she began by explaining to me that workers at the University of Puerto Rico had won trade union representation in 1972-73. In the 1980s, the workers elected a woman, Ana Milagros Santiago – or Tati, as she was affectionately called by everyone – to be the National President of the Hermandad. By the time I arrived in Puerto Rico, Tati – who was also Doña Angélica’s daughter -- was on leave from both the UPR and the Hermandad, in order to complete the fieldwork practicum for her Masters Degree in Public Administration. Carlos Echevarría was the National President of the Hermandad during the period of my fieldwork, from January 1990 through July 1991, and during the summer of 1992. Consequently, the first question I asked Doña Angelica was why the

Hermanidad's National President was a man, given that the majority of UPR workers were women. Doña Angélica responded that it was a question of development, that women workers at the UPR were less developed in terms of organizational skills, political strategy, and general theoretical development. She also said women faced extra hardships because of their heavy family responsibilities. Every women worker's time outside the work day was consumed with family pressures, she explained.

Doña Angélica's story

Carlos Echevarría is President of the Hermanidad now, and he is a good president. He also works at the *Centro de Investigaciones*. He is the Centro librarian. He has two Masters degrees, one in History and one in Library Science. During his term as president of the Hermanidad, he will be on leave from the UPR, but he will come back once his term is over. He worked closely with Tati, who also happens to be my daughter, when she was president. Tati is single and does not have children, so she is able to give her full attention to running the Hermanidad. Right now, Tati is on leave, working in the administrative offices of *la AMA (la Autoridad Municipal de Autobuses, Puerto Rico's public bus company)*. Once she finishes her year, she will come back to the UPR and the Hermanidad.

Tati is my youngest child. She was a UPR student during the Hermanidad's first strike in 1973. At that time, she organized the students to support our strike and she has been working with the Hermanidad ever since. My son, Raúl (Santiago Meléndez), is now

the lawyer for the Hermandad. He was a sociology professor at the UPR at the time of the 1973 strike. Only twenty-eight professors from the entire campus respected our strike and refused to cross the Hermandad's picket lines. And all twenty-eight professors lost their jobs, immediately. They had to go into private enterprise or get a government job. They were forbidden from teaching full-time at the UPR, although they could get a part-time teaching contract. After he lost his job as a professor, my son decided to become a lawyer, to concentrate in labor law. His firm now represents the Hermandad. My oldest child, Mari Lou (María de Lourdes Santiago Meléndez), is also active in the trade union movement. She lives in California, where she is an Organizer for "9to5," the union for secretaries and women clerical workers. Everyone in our family believes in the workers' cause.

I have worked at the University for twenty-five years, since 1965. After I got married, I did not go back to work until my youngest child was thirteen years old. From the time I was nineteen and a half years old, until I was forty, I did not work. When the kids were young, it was a issue of what was good for the kids, and the problem of machismo. But then my husband died. He died very early. He was only forty-four years old. He had a heart attack (*un infarto de corazón*).

We both come from Ponce, on the south coast of Puerto Rico. There, I completed all four years of high school, taking the commercial course. When I was eighteen years old, I graduated from high school in May and got married in December. I worked as a secretary in a Ponce school and also for a U.S. firm located at Losey Field, a U.S. military base in Guayanilla, a town near Ponce. My husband was a teacher and then the Registrar

at a vocational school in Ponce. He also became very active with *los Populares* (the Popular Democratic Party, led by Luis Muñoz Marín). In the year 1952, when my youngest child, Tati, was only forty days old, we moved from Ponce to San Juan. The government asked us to come, so that my husband could become the Sub Director of the newly formed Miguel Such Vocational School. The government needed trained teachers and they brought us here, to San Juan. We had two brothers and a sister already living in the metropolitan area [of San Juan], so were not alone.

For the next nine years, we rented a house in *Urbanización Valencia*, while we constructed our own house in *Los Maestros*, close to the vocational school. When I went back to work in 1965, I got a three-month contract at the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales at the UPR. I kept getting a three-month work contract until I finally got a one-year contract. Then, after three years of working under contract – which means you have no job security and you receive no benefits – the Director of the Centro finally got me a permanent position (*una plaza*). The UPR still uses that process now, you know. You have to work under a contract for long time before you get a permanent position. Contract workers (*con un contacto de servicios*) can be members of the Hermandad, although the University administration gets away with not giving them many of the benefits won by the Hermandad for full-time, permanent workers.

I am an Administrative Secretary, Level 4. There are five levels for an Administrative Secretary, A.S.1-5. We have the same job classification system that is used for all public sector workers in Puerto Rico. However, the UPR's Job Classification System (*el Plan de Clasificación*) specifies that Level 4 is the upper limit for

Administrative Secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. Most of the secretaries at the UPR are Level 3; you only get a Level 4 in a major center or very large academic department. Here at the Centro, there are lots of researchers, so I was able to advance to Level 4. The Psychology Department also has Level 4 Administrative Secretary, because they have many different graduate and undergraduate programs. Another job title for the secretaries at the UPR is Executive Secretary. My daughter, Tati, was an Executive Secretary in the office of the Dean of Administration. Her job was to monitor and direct all third-party contracts of the University. When she was elected National President of the Hermandad, she took a leave from her job to work full-time at the union's national office. That right is part of our Contract (*el convenio*). When she completes her internship with *la AMA* she will get her Master's Degree in Public Administration, and maybe she will be able to get a promotion and a salary increase. To make ends meet, Tati works as a private secretary after regular business hours.

I have been an *independentista* all my life. But, my consciousness was not fully formed. Once I came to the University and to the Centro, I grew a lot. The leadership of the Centro has always been progressive, the worse Director we ever had was a *Popular*. They would never put a pro-statehood person in charge here. Working at the Centro is like getting a university education. When we first met, my husband and I were both *independentistas*, but he became a *Popular* when he got his job as an assistant principal in the vocational high school.

When I began working in 1965, my salary was two hundred dollars a month. Shortly afterwards, the Puerto Rican government agreed to increase the salaries of public

workers. The proposed increase ranged from fifteen to twenty-five dollars a month.

However, the University of Puerto Rico called upon its autonomy from the government to offer its workers a salary increase of only five dollars a month, or nothing. The first struggle of the UPR workers that I can remember was over the right to get the same salary increase as other government workers.

In those years we had no protection – if they wanted you to work extra on a Saturday, you came to work. We had no right to study – if you wanted to go to college, you had to pay for it yourself and take all your classes after regular working hours. We had no health insurance or medical coverage. The working conditions were very bad and there was lots of pressure. Even if your kids were sick, you had to come to work. The Hermandad changed all of this.

There was no trouble when it came to organizing women into the union. After all, they were the most oppressed workers on the campus. In that regard, when Tati became President of the Hermandad, she always understood that her image very important. She had to project the image of the union in front of the workers, the press, and the whole country. She always dressed impeccably. She represented the working women of Puerto Rico (*la mujer trabajadora puertorriqueña*). There was a real renaissance of the union under Tati's leadership. Through television reports and other press coverage, the Hermandad became known as a serious union, one with a national vision, one that deserved respect.

The Centro where I work is really very good, it is like the vanguard of all UPR offices when it comes to workers' rights. But there can still be problems.

During the negotiations for our most recent *convenio* (union contract) last fall (of 1989), the Hermandad negotiated a new clause that gives the union the right to have dues (*la cuota*) deducted from workers's paychecks. Any worker who did not want to participate in the dues check-off program only had to write a letter stating their position. Ninety percent of all UPR employees -- counting all the campuses -- agreed to accept the paycheck deduction (*la cuota*). University Management (*el patrono*, the bosses) simply could not believe it, that the workers would agree to pay, so they just decided not to implement the dues check-off. But this was negotiated and agreed to; it was written into our last union contract (*el convenio*). And we have to defend our union. So, the Hermandad organized a *paro* (a one-day strike or work stoppage) and then they listened to us. We won the *cuota* and now we are preparing for the national *Paro del Pueblo* (the one-day general strike called for March 28, 1990 to protest the government's plans to privatize the publically-owned Puerto Rican Telephone Company).

Next weekend, the Hermandad is going to run a three-day education and training seminar in Mayagüez. It is planned for the Board of Directors, which includes the six National Officers and the Local Presidents (*Representante*) of every UPR campus, as well as all the Union Stewards (*Delegados*). According to the Hermandad's by-laws, one Steward is elected for every twenty five members of the union. The Hermandad is a very democratic trade union and believes in the power of rank-and-file members. The *Delegados* guarantee democracy and grass-roots participation. So the training this weekend, that will focus on how to process a worker's grievance, is very important.

Our union is more democratic than many other trade unions. In addition to

protecting worker's salaries and benefits, we take positions on social issues. Most recently, the Hermandad became one of the sponsors of *Ley 54*, a new comprehensive law against domestic violence. But our work is not over, because there are still many repressive supervisors at the UPR, and many workers still lack a developed consciousness.

As workers, we have union recognition. We have our rights. And we are part of this University. And now, our President is Carlos Echevarría. He has a very long history of working with the union. And more importantly, he comes from a working class background (*el es de extracción obrera*). Doña Angélica then ended her story with the following words:

We say that the University of Puerto Rico is not a university *in* Puerto Rico; it is the university *of* Puerto Rico -- for Puerto Rico. And if the University of Puerto Rico is the school for the students of Puerto Rico, then the Hermandad is the school for the workers of Puerto Rico.

"¡La Huelga va!" (The Strike is On!): The Structure and History of the Hermandad

How do people become involved with the union?' It's the little things. During the first strike in 1973, they needed someone to carry food and water to other picket lines, and I was the one with a station wagon. It starts with concrete tasks - like carrying water and helping out other people - then you start to do for yourself.

Awilda Ríos July, 1991
National Secretary of Trade Union Education
Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente

The history of the Hermandad helps us understand why secretaries were so willing

to ally themselves with it, choosing this class-based organization over groups mobilized on the basis of gender, religion, professional identity, or national identity. Founded in 1972, the *Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente* (the Brotherhood of Exempt, Non-Teaching Employees) represents 3,000 clerical and technical workers at eleven different campuses of the UPR. This includes the main campus in Río Piedras (San Juan), the Medical School (also in Río Piedras), the Engineering Campus in Mayagüez, and eight regional colleges located throughout the island. The University of Puerto Rico has a highly unionized work force. Buildings and Grounds workers are represented by a separate trade union and faculty members are organized into two competing faculty unions, although neither faculty group has been able to win recognition from the University Administration to date. Women comprise more than 70 percent of the non-teaching clerical and technical work force and more than half of the *Hermandad's* national membership.

This history opened the parameters of my research beyond the confines of traditional, synchronic participant-observation of routine office work and events during 1990-1991. Archives and document collections maintained by different members of the *Hermandad* and interviews with founding members and past presidents allowed me to study the development of secretaries' changing attitudes towards work, family and personal identity. In addition to historical depth, the existence of a trade union created an alternative social field for research, a kinetic, collective structure and a group process to complement and enlarge the interview data collected from individual women that was, by definition, conducted in a private, dyadic context removed from the field of social action.

The legal status of the Hermandad is that of a "Bonafide Organization," a form of labor organization created by the Puerto Rican Legislature in the 1970s to extend collective bargaining rights to public sector employees. This group had been excluded from collective bargaining rights under the previous labor laws (see Cotto Morales, 1987). The 1970s - when the Hermandad was first established - was a period of increased labor militancy in Puerto Rico as a whole, especially among the rapidly expanding ranks of public-sector employees.

The Hermandad was first established in 1972 on the main UPR campus in Río Piedras after a militant strike and many public mobilizations. The UPR clerical and technical workers have a history of labor militancy and political radicalism that exceeds the political practice of other organized public sector office workers on the island (see Nieves Falcón et al, 1982; and Picó, Pabón, and Alejandro, 1982). The initial organizing campaign of the Hermandad in 1972 focused on poor working conditions and low salaries (see Appendix No. 1 and Appendix No. 2). While the majority of UPR clerical employees were recruited from off-campus, a significant number of former students also joined the UPR work force after they graduated - a pattern that has continued into the present. Hence, there is a history of close ties and strong working relations between the student movement and the Hermandad.

Reflecting this organic connection, one of the trade union's initial demands-- coinciding with the demands of the student movement of the 1970s-- was their call for the de-militarization of the University of Puerto Rico. This was during the Viet Nam War, and the student anti-war movement in Puerto Rico was highly organized and very

militant. Their focus was on draft resistance and forcing the ROTC off-campus. When the University of Puerto Rico was established by the United States in 1900 as a "Land Grant" college, it was legally required to house military education and training programs such as the ROTC. Yet there was mass popular support for efforts to stop Puerto Rican youth from registering for the draft and fighting in what was defined as a colonial war against another Third World country on behalf of a United States president for whom Puerto Ricans could not vote.¹ The Hermandad developed its political orientation in this context.

Throughout the twentieth century, beginning shortly after the United States invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898, the island's labor movement was dominated by United States trade unions. Various AFL-CIO International unions established local affiliates on the island, from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to the United Auto Workers (UAW) (see Quintero Rivera, 1976). These unions came under strong criticism in the 1970s from Puerto Rican labor activists who argued that the "*Internationales*," as they are called in Puerto Rico, were politically and economically dependent on a faraway AFL-CIO bureaucracy which conducted its operations without any real understanding of or respect for the needs of Puerto Rican workers. Their style was considered condescending towards workers on the island. Hermandad President Echevarría instructed me on the history of the U.S. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and Taft-Hartley laws that were imposed on Puerto Rico to supersede the more progressive code of labor legislation established in Puerto Rico under Muñoz Marín in the early 1940s.

In an effort to break the colonial nature of labor relations, most of the trade unions established in the 1970s affiliated to the Latin American and Caribbean labor movement, outside the AFL-CIO. This shift also resonated with the political strategy of pro-independence forces, who wanted to establish ties with social movements in Latin America as a means of affirming their nationalist agenda and furthering the independendista cause. The Hermandad joined these "independent" trade unions, as they are called in contradistinction with the "Internationals" of the AFL-CIO. The Hermandad affiliated to Puerto Rico's Labor Institute for Trade Union Education (ILES), which maintains membership in the Latin American trade union movement. As part of this connection, the Hermandad sends a delegate to the annual trade union education training school in Mexico every summer.

The growth in trade union organizing during the 1970s was closely related to the rise in pro-independence political organizing led by the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). In fact, these two political parties provided the leadership and resources for most of the trade union organizing undertaken during this period. In the case of the Hermandad, while 80 percent of the work force are identified with the two dominant colonial parties, the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PDP), and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP), all four national presidents of the Hermandad during the union's twenty-year history have been associated with either the PIP or the PSP.

Gender Issues in the Union

Understanding how gender issues were dealt with by the union will further help the reader understand why UPR secretaries would choose this union to represent them, rather than an explicitly gender-based organization. Gender issues had figured prominently in the union's internal culture and trade union practice since its founding in 1972. The *Hermanidad* had a tradition of making contract demands and of undertaking long-term projects to meet women workers' needs. These included the first on-site workplace childcare center and protection against sexual harassment. Changes in contract language were adopted in order to be more gender-inclusive. The *Hermanidad* also participated in campaigns outside the University around gender issues, including the struggle against domestic violence, support for undocumented Dominican women immigrants, and campaigns to help women living in poverty.

The role of women in leadership of the *Hermanidad* is especially significant. Ana Milagros Santiago--Tati--was the third National President of the *Hermanidad* (1980 - 1989) and she became president again in 1992. Santiago is one of only a handful of women presidents in the history of the Puerto Rican trade union movement (see Frambes-Buxeda, 1987). The *Hermanidad*'s National Executive Board is composed of fifteen people, more than half of whom were women in 1990-91.

The large number of women within the University work force and the emergence of an independent women's movement in the 1970s combined to challenge the union to incorporate a range of gender issues into its contract demands and internal operating procedures. Since that time, there has been a special effort to promote women in

leadership positions as union delegates, campus representatives and national officers of the Hermandad. One example of this is the Hermandad's practice of always sending a woman member to the annual ILES summer labor education training institute in Mexico, while the overwhelming number of other national delegates are men.

On a symbolic level, it is significant that a full-length photograph of the Hermandad past-President, Ana Milagros Santiago, was included in Aline Frambes-Buxeda's (1987) photographic essay on the history of Puerto Rican women. The photo was taken during the tumultuous student strike of 1981, a strike characterized by so much state violence that it contributed to defeating the governor, Carlos Romero Barceló in his next bid for re-election (Picó et al, 1982). In the photograph, Santiago is dressed in jeans and stands before a microphone, addressing striking students and the workers who came to defend them against the armed troops of the National Guard. Workers and faculty created a human chain between students and the National Guard troops in a successful attempt to stave off further violence.

Seeking to increase women's participation, the union often made changes in meeting times and locations. After-work meetings and informal gatherings in bars that could be more easily frequented by male labor activists were replaced with daytime meetings on campus, out of respect for the schedules of working wives and mothers. The shift in venue helped the union break away from the more masculinized culture of traditional labor politics, while the shift in timing facilitated greater participation on the part of women workers with home and childcare responsibilities.

The discourse of the Hermandad also became more gender-conscious in the late

1970s, as the Hermandad became the first trade union in Puerto Rico to adopt gender-inclusive language in public speeches and written documents. This process can be traced by comparing leaflets in the Hermandad archives from 1972 and 1978. Documents from the early period that called upon workers to participate only used the word "compañeros" (the male form of "comrades") as the term of address. By 1978, all written documents used gender-inclusive language such as "trabajadores/as" (male/female workers) and "compañeras y compañeros" (the male and female form of "comrades"). The union's struggle for an on-site childcare center with space for one hundred children in 1987 was framed as a union-wide demand rather than being construed as a special women's issue. Hermandad officers of both sexes described the difficulties they encountered in their efforts to convince male workers that the childcare center was also their demand. The Hermandad engaged in a protracted educational campaign among its membership and a political battle with the University administration to win contract language that specifically prohibited sexual harassment on the job. The union worked on a series of other social issues with special relevance for women workers. When the Center for the Wellbeing of the Worker and Her/his Family was established at the Río Piedras campus, it offered small-group workshops to discuss worker health and safety issues and free family counseling services.

Attention to issues of gender equity also found expression in the cultural life of the union. The Hermandad sponsored workshops for members in poetry and other kinds of writing, the production of silkscreen posters, and the traditional Puerto Rican music of "*la bomba y plena*." Challenging the traditional presentation of *bomba y plena* music as a

male experience, the union sponsored special workshops to train a group of women performers who gained notoriety as "*Las Plenaras de la Hermandad*." These women wrote their own topical material about union issues and current political events, and they performed on all the instruments, including the *pandereta* - a percussion instrument that resembles a large tambourine and that had traditionally been the exclusive province of male performers (see Flores, 1994:129).

The union also took positions on issues of women's rights outside the University context. In 1989, the Hermandad was one of the initial sponsors of Pubic Law 54, the first piece of legislation in Puerto Rico that defined domestic violence as a social crime with specific sanctions, and not a private, intimate matter between a man and a woman (see CLARIDAD, June 30, 1989; Vicente, 1989; and *Comisión para los Asuntos de la Mujer*, 1989). At the Biannual National Convention of the Hermandad in December 1990, statements of solidarity with Dominican women workers on strike were made and a financial collection was taken. Support for women living in poverty and undocumented immigrants was also proposed and passed.

Under labor law, the Hermandad is structured as an "open shop." This means that union membership is strictly voluntary, although all workers in the bargaining unit receive whatever benefits the union wins through its negotiations with University administration. This structure obligates the Hermandad to engage in a constant effort to win and consolidate members, making internal education an ongoing high priority.

One example of the Hermandad's educational efforts on gender issues can be read

in the slogan chosen for the 1991 strike, “*¡Hay que adobar la huelga!* (We have to spice up the strike!) The word “adobar” means to season or flavor food. The choice of this cooking metaphor was a playful way to bring women's work into the forefront of union activity. It was designed to encourage more women to join the ranks of strike supporters and to urge men to claim women's work and language as their own. The slogan was painted on large banners and written up in songs. It was also printed on stickers in black ink against an orange day-glo background. These were plastered on walls and office doors, and worn by both men and women workers during marches and demonstrations, when multiple stickers were placed on jeans and shirts.

Perhaps as a result, secretaries were crucial participants at all levels during the three separate one-day work stoppages (*paros*) that took place during the period of my fieldwork in 1990-91. They participated on the Contract Negotiating Committee, helped to organize the teams of picketers at the various gates and entrances to the university, wrote leaflets and songs, and argued passionately in favor of or against the different action proposals at union meetings. They helped create and present the various educational and agit-prop theater skits designed to build support for the union among workers and students, and they mobilized for the picket lines every morning at 5:30 a.m., holding their ground against the many cars and trucks that tried to ram through the lines.

Militancy and Education within the Hermandad

During the strike of 1991, Hermandad leaders felt it was especially important to teach university workers and students about the history of an autonomous and powerful

workers' movement in Puerto Rico during the 1930s. They wanted to counter the negative ideological forces directed against the Hermandad as part of the national campaign for "privatization" of the public sector, including a direct attack on public sector workers. One example of this type of educational effort took place during a one-day student strike in Río Piedras on May 1st. The first of May has been celebrated as "May Day" on a world-wide basis since it was established as International Workers' Day by the socialist and labor movements in 1913. At three different points along the picket-line, the Hermandad union set-up portable kiosks, each one about five feet tall. All three kiosks were covered with captioned photographs and accompanying text documenting the Puerto Rico's militant labor history. The kiosks created a bright visual presence on the picket lines and provided many young students and workers with information they had never before known.

The torchlight demonstration, "La Marcha de Antorchas," which took place on April 16, 1991 was another example of the Hermandad's creative efforts at labor education in the midst of the ongoing slowdown or "internal strike" (*brazos caídos*) over health care issues. It was another project that generated respect and support from secretaries, encouraging them to emphasize their working-class identity. The main purpose of the march was to demonstrate the union's strength, draw press attention to the strike, and garner more support from students and residents in the surrounding community.

The march originated at the main campus of the University in Río Piedras where two thousand students and workers -- many accompanied by their spouses and children --

listened to music and speeches about workers' rights and stories about the bosses' injustice while they waited for darkness to fall. In addition to a mass turnout from the metropolitan San Juan area, there were caravans of buses and cars from all the regional colleges. Two busloads of workers and students came all the way from Mayagüez - two and one half hours away, at the opposite end of the island. Eighty-five workers and students came from the campus in Cayey, located an hour away in the mountains. The night-time setting created an unusual sense of excitement, resonating with the Puerto Rican tradition of *serenatas*, *trullas* and *parrandas*, occasions when groups of troubadours travel from home to home singing for food and drink. There was a festive spirit to the gathering, marked by sounds of greeting and reunion between co-workers and old friends from distant campuses.

The marchers waited until it was completely dark and then began their procession through the narrow streets of the surrounding student barrio on their way to the grounds of the Botanical Gardens, where the central administration buildings of the University of Puerto Rico are located, two miles away. At one point, the line of marchers surged onto the main east-west highway from San Juan to the eastern tip of Puerto Rico in Fajardo, the *65 Infanteria*, which is a four-lane divided highway. The arrival of the Hermandad protesters stopped all traffic, going in both directions, for more than twenty minutes. Hundreds of kerosene-soaked torches brightened the night sky and gave off a pungent, old-fashioned smell. People carried picket signs and musical instruments. Demonstrators sang, chanted slogans, and devised impromptu dances. They did not stay on the sidewalk, as the march permit specified, but marched in rows of ten to twelve people abreast, filling

the width of the Río Piedras streets.

There was another objective for the torchlight march, as explained to me by Hermandad President Carlos Echevarría. The union leadership had decided to name the demonstration “*La Marcha de Las Antorchas*,” in memory of the labor journal published by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Humacao in 1929. *La Antorcha* was produced during a period of mass social unrest and labor mobilization (see Quintero Rivera 1976:229). In the spring of 1991, the Hermandad wanted to conjure up the history of an earlier generation of Puerto Rican unions that had engaged in militant class struggle and to locate the Hermandad firmly within this tradition. The historical nature of the march was further emphasized by the old-fashioned typeface used in the printed stickers announcing the march.

On a regular basis, symbols from Puerto Rico’s labor history were claimed by the Hermandad in an effort to identify a shared tradition as workers that could mediate sharp differences in social and political beliefs and party affiliations among union members. While there are no statistics on this matter, all of the informal estimates I received from Hermandad activists concerning the political loyalties of UPR workers indicated that about eighty-percent of the union membership was almost evenly divided into supporters of the pro-Commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PDP) and supporters of the pro-Statehood New Progressive Party (PNP). At the same time, leading members and officers of the Hermandad trade union have been, since its inception in 1972, affiliated with pro-independence and socialist parties, most especially the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). These two political parties represent

less than 10% of the voting electorate, although support for independence is larger than election results would indicate, in part because of the long tradition among independence supporters of boycotting elections, which they consider a sham, since the United States still retains all decision-making power in Puerto Rico. In response to my questions about how the union tried to handle the volatile tensions of partisan politics, the response was always the same, that the Hermandad does not take a position on Puerto Rico's political status, because that would divide the membership. The union fights to advance unity among all the university workers, to improve their working conditions and lives.

The National Executive Board of the Hermandad had a discussion about the history of the labor journal, *La Antorcha* before taking a vote on the name. The fifteen members of this leadership body included one representative elected from each unit and the national officers. While this group included some of the union's founders, people with strong pro-independence and socialist politics, most of the members of the Board have political views that reflect the orientation of the workforce: two members were activists with the pro-statehood New Progressive Party, while the Representative from the regional college in Aguadilla was a devout, evangelical Christian woman. Her car was covered with bumper stickers that alternated between announcements that "Christ Is Coming" and warnings to the UPR President Saldaña that "The Strike Is On! ("*Saldana, La Huelga Va!*"). From my interviews with these three women, it was clear they were not intimidated by the left politics of other members of the Hermandad. They participated fully in the discussion about the torchlight march and joined in the vote in favor of

naming it after the radical newspaper from 1929.

Hermandad leaders with socialist and/or pro-independence political views made a point of retelling the process of their own political development in their interviews with me, underscoring the point that if their view could change, so could those of other workers. This attitude is also reflected in the quote that appeared earlier in the chapter, in which Awilda Ríos stresses that political involvement often begins with concrete tasks tied to immediate demands.

The range of Hermandad activities I observed during my fieldwork, as discussed here in Chapter Five, created a trade union culture among the staff workers at the University of Puerto Rico and served to increase working-class consciousness among secretaries and other employees. The union's ability to win on its demands and actually wrest better salaries and working conditions from management generates a wide range of support, ranging from an active and partisan commitment to the union on the part of activists to a more passive respect. Even people who do not agree with the Hermandad's style of trade union organizing, including some of the secretaries I spoke with and students and faculty outside the union's bargaining unit, acknowledge the results won by the union for university workers. In addition to its stated mission on behalf of university workers, the Hermandad's ability to organize creative and innovative programs imbued it with a vitality and playfulness – often missing from the more traditional “bread and butter” approach to salaries and working conditions espoused by the more conservative unions in Puerto Rico and within the AFL-CIO labor federation in the United States – also served to solidify the allegiance of secretaries and other UPR workers. This

combination of sophisticated legal and political ability and cultural creativity accounts, in large part, for the loyalty secretaries at the Cayey campus demonstrated towards the Hermandad, during the spring when we were planning the conference for National Secretaries' Week.

Endnotes to Chapter Five:

1. From the time Puerto Rico became a United States colony in 1898, the shrinkage of available employment for men led many people into the U.S. Armed Forces. This pattern increased in 1917, when U.S. citizenship was unilaterally imposed on Puerto Rico, against the express will and votes taken by the Puerto Rican Legislature. That made military service obligatory for all Puerto Rican men and large numbers of Puerto Ricans were immediately drafted to fight in World War I. The number of Puerto Ricans who fought and died in every war since World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Viet Nam War, and the Persian Gulf War of 1991 has been higher than their ratio in the population as a whole (Nieves Falcon et al, 1982; Pico et al, 1982; and Reynolds, 1989).

Conclusions

Towards an Anthropology of the Working Class

This dissertation presented the work culture and daily life of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico and their trade union, the *Hermanidad de Empleados Exentos No Docente*, during a period of intense labor militancy in 1990-1991. The conflict between the *Hermanidad*'s strike and the conference I organized for National Secretaries' Week at the Cayey campus of the UPR constituted a case study for examining the multiple identities of secretaries as workers, women and secretaries. The secretaries' decision to emphasize their class identity over their professional and gender identities was elaborated throughout the dissertation. Chapter One discussed the theoretical and methodological issues that facilitate a more complex study of the relationships between gender, national identity and class. Chapter Two located the world of secretarial work in the 1990s within Puerto Rico's political economy and history. Chapter Three presented the case study of the conference and strike activity at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Chapter Four explored the work culture of secretaries in order to illuminate the pressures experienced by secretaries on a daily basis that moved them in the direction of class politics and working-class identity with the programs of the *Hermanidad*. Chapter Five examined those features of the *Hermanidad*'s history and structure that enhanced this organization's ability to claim the loyalty – in action, if not always in sentiment – of secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico. These themes had

particular relevance for my exploration of the ways secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico locate themselves within their work worlds and within the Puerto Rican working class: how gender is embedded in the everyday work worlds of secretaries; how public, political action shapes workers' identity and consciousness; and how Puerto Rico's colonial status shapes the politics of secretaries and the trade union.

In Chapter One, I presented an argument for integrating political-economic and advocacy anthropology with the concerns of interpretive and dialogical anthropology in order to foreground the experiences and perspectives of the people we study. This approach is crucial to the building of an anthropology of the working class. I demonstrated how an ethnographic study of secretarial work enables us to make issues of gender central to our understanding of class.

Chapter Two used the lens of mobility – as ideology and historical experience – to introduce the ethnographic setting and history of secretarial work in Puerto Rico. Mobility was considered on two levels, individual/family mobility, and social development, as expressed in the development models and modernization projects pursued in Puerto Rico since the mid-twentieth century, with the initiation of Operation Bootstrap, Puerto Rico's development program for rapid industrialization. The issue of upward mobility in Puerto Rican history and popular ideologies was used to frame the specific history of the rise of secretarial work in Puerto Rico. Since my case study was located at the University of Puerto Rico, the colonial status of Puerto Rico also became

an important issue in order to understand working class identity and consciousness.

Historical information on Puerto Rican women's participation in the workforce allowed me to trace the growth of the "pink collar" niche of secretarial work in Puerto Rico's dominant service economy. Chapter Two also included discussion of the development of myths about secretarial work, as seen by outsiders and by secretaries, themselves.

Chapter Three shifted the focus of the dissertation to a very specific time and place, the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico in the winter and spring of 1991. Analyzing this process allowed me to focus on my own role as an ethnographer. The case study presented in Chapter Three documented the growing tension that developed between building a secretaries' conference and secretaries' increasing involvement in the Hermandad's strike. Begun as an experiment in foregrounding the voices and concerns of secretaries, the conference became, ultimately an arena in which those secretaries asserted themselves by saying "no" to the conference. They rejected the opportunity to create a historical and celebratory conference in order to demonstrate their anger at managerial aggression and their growing allegiance to the Hermandad trade union.

Chapter Three also recorded the parallel development of the Hermandad's strike. I showed how in planning the conference in the context of the strike, women not only told their stories but transformed how they understood themselves as women and workers.

One example came from Elizabeth Rivera, a member of the organizing committee for the conference in Cayey, who originally agreed to participate, because one of the administrators gave us her name. As I recounted, at the first meeting she said, "I don't really think that there is a whole lot to talk about. It's just my job, and I do it well."

Elisabeth was a devout Protestant and identified with the professional, rather than trade union dimensions of her job. She identified herself with management. Yet as the strike developed, during a planning meeting for the conference, she offered the more militant workers a strategy for protecting workers who did not cross the picket line. This example, as well as the implicit contradiction that I document between the union's collectivist approach and the Professional Secretaries International's individual approach to job security and advancement, show the ambivalence and contradictions of class identity and consciousness in a secretarial setting. More information about the Hermandad was required to help us understand the growing allegiance secretaries felt towards their trade union, which was the focus of Chapter Five.

In Chapter Four, I presented the work culture and daily lives of the secretaries I studied. The work performed by UPR secretaries is conducted in a particularly Puerto Rican way that weaves humor, irony, cultural affirmation, and improvisation into the smallest task or most simple conversation, suggesting the jazz improvisation and permutations embedded in Puerto Rican salsa music. For this reason, the title of the chapter is, "New Tappings On the Keys." I used Raymond Williams's (1976) notion of

key ideologically-laden words to trace the trajectory of modern, automated office work and its gender, class, and colonial connotations. Here again, the computer, and its assumption of English dominance, is a central workplace technology that inscribes colonialism. My close examination of ritual events such as Secretaries' Day and the sexual politics of office work, showed the intersection of class, gender and national oppression in my informants' lives. During the course of my study of secretaries, key themes emerged that showed the central contradiction of individual versus collective strategies in secretaries' lives. This drama is one of the foremost ways that the tensions of class are experienced, and they make up an important part of the life stories of my informants and my ethnography of secretarial work. Occupational mobility, improving the social status of secretaries as a strata of white-collar (or "pink-collar") clerical workers is a key concern.

As I showed in this dissertation, the PSI emphasized individual strategies: the ambitious secretary needed to develop new areas of technical, social and psychological skills in order to advance in her profession. According to PSI literature and seminars, in order to be successful, the modern secretary had to carefully polish and refine her sense of self, projecting a professional style of comportment and dress to the outside world, and strengthening self-esteem in her interior world. The PSI also stressed that secretaries must constantly improve their level of occupational skills, taking advantage of every workshop on computer literacy in order to master a variety of computer languages and

software programs. This is in addition to the already existing pressure on Puerto Rican secretaries to master the English language in order to qualify for entry-level secretarial positions. Furthermore, in response to growing management expectations that secretaries function as Office Managers, the PSI encouraged secretaries to develop their expertise in the realm of human relations and industrial psychology. These skills never figured in the curriculum of traditional secretarial science programs. In the office of the 1990s, secretaries were increasingly expected to take on a series of executive functions, including personnel management. To respond to these new demands, the PSI organized classes in public speaking and human relations. It also emphasized the need for secretaries to improve their self-esteem, to give secretaries the energy necessary to engage in these personnel management and negotiations. In each instance, the individual secretary remains the only unit of analysis. Her upward mobility depends on her personal abilities.

And yet, nowhere in their publications or seminars, did the PSI explain exactly *how* secretaries were supposed to find the free time and money to pay for all this learning and professional development. However, since the PSI unit of analysis and source of change always remained the individual secretary, it must be assumed that the individual secretary was expected to shoulder all the financial and time burdens associated with improving her career. The structurally low level of pay scales for secretarial work created a serious and unresolvable conflict, a conundrum for secretaries with aspirations for advancement.

How was she going to pay for the courses and workshops, and the more expensive professional clothes? How was she going to find time to take all the workshops? Would she have to forego marriage and having children? Would she have to economize further on her groceries? Would she have to remain at home, living with her parents, and forego her dreams of owning her own home? Since an automobile is obligatory for transportation in Puerto Rico, what other corners could be cut? As the dissertation documents, the trade union approach put forth by the Hermandad is directed towards answering these questions, on a collective – not individual – basis.

As new office technologies were exported to Puerto Rico, secretarial work became a contested arena of both anti-colonial struggle, and capitulation to U.S. dominance. For example, the function and command keys for word processing are in English, requiring that secretaries translate part of their work world into English. The very work they do is laden with colonial power. Significantly, their resistance takes on colonial power, beyond the borders of the office and the university. As I showed, the Hermandad structure and political actions are grounded in the political traditions established by Puerto Rican *independentistas* and socialists who founded the Puerto Rican trade union movement.

The class-based program of the Hermandad followed a different approach to addressing the pressing needs of secretaries. Some issues, like office fashion, were left to individual workers' preferences. However, the union transformed many of the critical

concerns identified by secretaries into **public** demands of an entire **group** of workers, to be solved by **collective action**, instead of considering them **private** concerns of **individual** employees, to be resolved through **interpersonal negotiations** between a secretary and her supervisor. This change replaced secretaries' traditional reliance upon personal deference, savvy, and individual skill in negotiations with supervisors, with an orientation and strategy based on collective negotiations and codified uniform standards in the areas of job performance, probation periods, career advancement, and grievance procedures, as documented in the collective bargaining agreement.

The Hermandad had a different approach to providing secretaries and other UPR employees with new skills for advancement. The union won, for all members in the bargaining unit, whether or not they were union members, the right to one hundred percent free tuition remission for workers and their families, to attend all campuses of the university, covering all degree programs from the Associate Degree level through the Baccalaureate, Masters, and Doctoral degree programs, including the prestigious University of Puerto Rico Law School. There is a direct correlation between higher education and improved social and economic status, in terms of popular visions of mobility and social scientific data. In addition, the Hermandad negotiated for university workers to be able to take advantage of free skills development workshops, during the regular work day. With regard to psychological issues related to work stress or family stress, UPR employees had free access to work-site counseling services provided by the

Social Services Center for Workers and their Families. These rights were available to all university employees, regardless of the individual's level of self-promotion and self-esteem. The theme of the individual vs. the collective is one of many tensions explored in the dissertation that demonstrates the complex and ambivalent nature of class identity and experience. This study also shows how ethnography and a conscious methodology can capture the complexities of that experience.

The issues of ethnographic authority, voice, and ownership were recurrent themes in the dissertation. They figured prominently in Chapter One which locates my research within the relevant anthropological theory and method and again in Chapter Three, where the strengths and limitations of a more dialogical approach to the construction of ethnographic knowledge were examined in connection with my efforts to create a public history project on secretaries at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico in 1990-1991. In order to pursue a more open-ended analysis of the complex interplay between class, gender, race, and national identity in the lives of UPR secretaries, I found it absolutely necessary to include the reflections and social analyses of the women I was studying. These women, like working-class people in general, engage in complex social analysis in addition to providing data and ethnographic information about their work experiences and personal lives. To ignore this rich and important source of information leads to more simplistic characterizations of working-class life, often distorted by the preconceived notions and unreflective biases about class embedded in the dominant

conceptual frameworks of American social science (see Leacock, 1967).

The dissertation does not propose some kind of academic neutrality or silencing of the anthropologist's voice. Not only would such a proposal be impossible to implement, it would also limit the research and negate the important role the researcher plays in the production of ethnographic knowledge. Rather, I suggest that the effort to create inter-subjectivity between anthropologists and interlocutors requires conscious examination of the gender, ethnic, and class positionalities and biases of all the participants involved in ethnographic research; including the conversants on both sides of the anthropologist's tape recorder. Reflecting on the responses of other feminist scholars to this dilemma in fieldwork (Eber, 1995, 1999; Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; Leacock, 1987; Mascia-Lees et al, 1989; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; and Diane L. Wolf, 1996), I explicitly organized the secretaries' conference in Cayey as a concrete experiment in creating a more dialogical framework. I shared ownership of the conference with women secretaries in Cayey who were co-sponsors and members of the Organizing Committee. And in order to open the parameters of ethnographic authority, I worked carefully to foreground the participation and perspectives of different secretaries in decision-making at all levels of the conference preparation, including issues of both content and format.

My use of the oral history of Doña Angélica Meléndez to begin Chapter Five, about the Hermandad trade union, is another illustration of this argument regarding ethnographic methodology and the need to foreground the voices of the people we study.

Doña Angélica was a university secretary for twenty five years, a life-long supporter of independence for Puerto Rico, and a founding member of the Hermandad. Her life story, as she chose to share it with me, constituted an excellent introduction to the trade union. Throughout the dissertation, and most explicitly in Chapter One, I make the case for anthropological methodology as praxis. I argue that the very act of engaging working-class women as interlocutors, presenters and analysts of their oral histories creates a new way of knowing. I make the case that the anthropologist does and should do more than collect data, but she should also act upon data in a conscious way. These exercises in dialogical anthropology can contribute to the process of developing an anthropology of the working class, acting upon these words and texts is a political process.

My ethnography of Puerto Rican secretaries provides a case study for building a theoretical basis for an anthropology of the working class. This intellectual project is implicit in the work of anthropologists such as Kasmir (1996), Lauria and Chomsky (2001), Mintz (1974), Nash (1990), Sacks (1988), and Saltzman (1988) as well as other scholars working in the inter-disciplinary field of working-class studies (see Zandy, 2001). I have presented a close-up view of working class life, including the ways in which the intersections of race, class, gender and colonialism shape that experience. My intention was also to explore the ways in which anthropology, both as a process of knowledge and a knowledge product, can contribute to an understanding of working-class lives cross culturally, and specifically in relation to my case study in Puerto Rico.

Drawing on these insights, I was able to identify important steps in the process of constructing an anthropology of the working class.

Appendix I.

Thirteen Administrative Units of the University of Puerto Rico: (*La Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente Represents All Non-Teaching Staff*)

Two Administration Centers (Non-campus sites, located in Río Piedras)

1. The Central Administration of the UPR (*La Administración Central*)
2. The Regional Colleges Administration (*La Administración de Colegios Regionales*)

Three University Campuses (Offering undergraduate, master, and doctoral degrees)

1. *El Recinto Universitario de Río Piedras*. Established in 1903,¹ the Río Piedras campus is the oldest and largest unit of the University of Puerto Rico.
2. *El Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez*. Originally established in 1911 as a technical college that focused on agricultural engineering and applied sciences related to the sugar industry, this is the second-oldest campus of the UPR. It retains an emphasis in science and engineering.
3. *El Recinto de Ciencias Médicas*. The University's Medical School and Health Sciences campus, is located in Río Piedras on a separate campus affiliated to a teaching hospital.

Two University Colleges (*Colegios Universitarios*, offering Associate and Bachelor Degrees)

4. *El Colegio Regional de Humacao*. In 1962, the first Community College (*Colegio Regional*) in the UPR system was established in Humacao, offering a two-year course of study leading to the Associate Degree. In 1975, this campus expanded to include a four-year program leading to completion of the Bachelor Degree. The campus then became the *Colegio Universitario de Humacao*, governed by the Central Administration of the UPR.
5. *El Colegio Universitario de Cayey*. In 1968, the second UPR *Colegio Regional* was established in Cayey. In 1970, this *Colegio Regional* expanded to become a *Colegio Universitario*, offering Bachelor Degree.

¹ In 1900, as part of the United States military government's educational plans for Puerto Rico, the *Escuela Normal* (Normal School) was established in Fajardo, Puerto Rico to create a short-term program of teacher training. Graduates from this program were expected to provide basic literacy skills to the general population and extend the program of "Americanization." In 1901, the *Escuela Normal* was re-located to Río Piedras where, in 1903, it was transformed into the University of Puerto Rico, with an intended emphasis in the commercial and technical skills in addition to the basic teacher-education program (de Jesús Colón, 1991:29 and Osuna, 1949:253).

Appendix I : Continued

Three Colegios Universitarios Tecnológicos, (Technical University Colleges)

Three UPR campuses were first established as Regional Colleges, offering a two-year program of study, leading to the Associate Degree. Over the years, these colleges expanded their course offerings and degree programs to include a four-year course of study leading to the Bachelor Degree. In 1982-83, all three campuses were reorganized as Technical University Colleges, offering Associate and Bachelor Degree programs. They are governed by the Regional Colleges Administration.

6. *El Colegio Regional de Arecibo* was established in 1968. Today it is *El Colegio Universitario Tecnológico de Arecibo*.
7. *El Colegio Regional de Ponce* was established in 1970. Today it is *El Colegio Universitario Tecnológico de Ponce*.
8. *El Colegio Regional de Bayamón* was established in 1971. Today it is *El Colegio Universitario Tecnológico de Bayamón*.

Three Colegios Regionales (Regional Colleges)

These campuses offer a two-year course of study, leading to the Associate Degree.

9. In 1971, *El Colegio Regional de Aguadilla* was established.
10. In 1974, *El Colegio Regional de Carolina* was established.
11. In 1979, *El Colegio Regional de la Montaña*, was established in the Central Mountains Region, in **Utado**.

Appendix II.

Salary Scales and Probation Periods for Secretarial Positions at the University of Puerto Rico, as of January 25, 1990

There are thirteen different Job Titles for secretaries employed by the University of Puerto Rico. The chart below lists the Code, Job Title, Job Category, Monthly Pay Scale, and Probation Period for each of these job titles.

Distribution of Secretarial Employment at the University of Puerto Rico The Data Used in This Chart is Taken from the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Administración Central, Oficina de Recursos Humanos, January 25, 1990 (RH290:37 pages). Pages 22-23. English translation by the author.				
<u>Code</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Monthly Salary Scale</u>	<u>Probation Period</u>
1. 11401	Administrative Secretary I	05	790 - 1,085	6 months
2. 11402	Administrative Secretary II	06	820 - 1,115	8 months
3. 11403	Administrative Secretary III	07	850 - 1,145	8 months
4. 11404	Administrative Secretary IV	08	880 - 1,230	8 months
5. 11405	Administrative Secretary V	09	950 - 1,300	10 months
6. 11426	Secretary of Records	11	1,020 - 1,370	8 months
7. 11416	Secretary to the President of the University	16	1,210 - 1,615	12 months
8. 11409	Secretary to the President of University Colleges	14	1,130 - 1,535	12 months
9. 11411	Secretary to the President of University Campuses	15	1,170 - 1,575	12 months
10. 11406	Executive Secretary I	12	1,055 - 1,405	12 months
11. 11407	Executive Secretary II	13	1,090 - 1,495	12 months
12. 11421	Medical Legal Secretary I	09	950 - 1,300	8 months
13. 11422	Medical Legal Secretary II	10	985 - 1,335	8 months

Appendix III.
Table of Area Wage Survey Report for Secretaries and Other Clerical
Workers in the Private Sector

<u>Average Hourly Earnings for Secretaries and Other Clerical</u> <u>Workers in Puerto Rico's Private Sector, 1984</u> (Table developed by the author, from statistics presented in the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 1984:114-117.)				
<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers¹</u>			<u>Average Hourly</u> <u>Wage, in Dollars ²</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	
Secretaries	2,168	3	2,165	6.75
Secretary I	408	2	406	5.92
Secretary II	511	-	511	6.54
Secretary III	779	1	778	6.78
Secretary IV	371	-	371	7.61
Secretary V	96	-	96	7.84
Typists	874	17	857	4.75
Typist I	783	14	769	4.70
Typist II	91	3	88	5.16
File Clerks	289	120	169	4.63
File Clerk I	213	99	114	4.50
File Clerk II	64	20	44	4.76
Receptionists	88	-	87	4.62
Switchboard operators	267	10	257	4.88
Key Entry Operators	730	102	628	5.12
Computer Operators	303	201	102	6.47

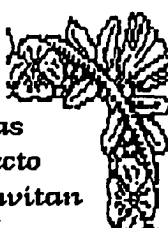
1 All numbers listed in this Table are in thousands.

2 These wage rates do not include premium pay for overtime, weekend, or holiday work, nor any bonuses or lump-sum payments.

Appendix IV.

Flyer Announcing the Program for National Secretaries Week:
Cayey Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, April 25, 1990





Con motivo de la celebración de la Semana de las Secretarias, el próximo miércoles 25 de abril el Proyecto de Estudios de la Mujer y la Oficina de la Rectora le invitan a participar del taller de mejoramiento profesional.

Nuestras conferenciantes invitadas lo serán la Sra. Geraldine Casey, candidata doctoral de la Universidad de la Ciudad de New York y la Sra. Ivette Cáliz de Profesional Secretaries International.

Hemos planificado la mañana de la siguiente manera:

9:30 a.m. -Matricula y café

9:45 a.m. -Saludos

* Dra. Janice Gordils

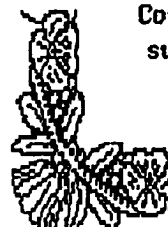
*Dra. Margarita Benitez

10:00 a.m. -Charla: "La trayectoria histórica en la vida de la mujer oficinista", Sra. Casey

11:00 a.m. -Charla: "La secretaria moderna: asertividad y profesionalismo", Sra. Cáliz

12:00 m. -Almuerzo en la Residencia Oficial

Confiamos puedas estar con nosotras. Favor de confirmar su asistencia antes de 24 de abril a la extensión 2184.
 Contamos con tu participación.





Appendix V.

G. Casey's letter to Y. Azize, Director of Pro-Mujer, Proposing a Conference on the History of Secretarial Work for Secretaries Week in April, 1991, Dated March 23, 1990

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Dra. Yamila Azize, Director
PROMUJER, CUC

DATE: March 23, 1990

FROM: Gerrie Casey, CUNY

SUBJECT: Discussion for Proposed Conference on the History & Contemporary Situation of Women Clerical Workers in Puerto Rico

The following points reflect my notes from our meeting on March 19. PROMUJER's established track record of sponsoring conferences on women and work (in health and science, for example) strengthens the project's potential ability to secure funding, develop a rich and varied program, and to mobilize a large and enthusiastic audience. I am very excited about the project's potential. I hope to be able to start the search for funding and outreach/sponsorship in the near future; especially since some funding agencies have a May 1st deadline.

1. THEME: History, Social Change, and Contemporary Problems in the Lives of Women Clerical Workers in Puerto Rico.
2. DATE: April 1991, during National Secretaries' Week.
3. TARGET AUDIENCE:
 1. Contemporary Clerical Workers, including those with organizational affiliation (unions or associations like PSI) and those without affiliation.
 2. Retired secretaries and office workers, who participate in order to share their work histories.
 3. Academics and activists (feminists and trade unionists) interested in the topic.
4. POSSIBLE SPONSORS:
 1. PROMUJER
 2. CERES
 3. The Oral History Taskforce of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College
 4. HEEND
 5. PSI
5. ENDORSEMENTS AND OUTREACH TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:
 1. Secretarial Training Schools and Business Institutes.
 2. Unions: public employees, 1199, Legal Services...
 3. Women's Groups with an interest in clerical work. This would include: Atrevete, who emphasize word-processing as part of their economic self-help project for women; The Proyecto Caribeno por la Paz y Justicia, which studies word-processing skills as a strategy for women's development; The Women's Commission; Women and Cooperative s; and OPMT.

5. ENDORSEMENTS AND OUTREACH TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. cont'd:

4. Academic research groups involved with women's studies, including: CEREP; Sagrado Corazon; Aline Frambes-Buxeda's groups at Universidad Interamericana;

6. ORGANIZATION AND EMPHASIS:

Based on our discussion, I was able to sketch out a draft proposal of what aspects the conference should include.

A. Formal presentations by academics and organizers (from Secretarial training schools, unions, organization). These could include:

1. History of clerical work.
2. Contemporary training and orientation.
3. Present economic and political position of clericals.
4. Cultural issues (the symbol of the secretary in popular culture; questions about consumerism, and upward mobility.
5. The existence of mechanisms (social/political groups) to deal with clerical workers' problems such as discrimination, sexual harassment, occupational safety, and union organizing at the workplace.

B. Extensive time for Small group discussion, for women to have a chance to present their personal work histories, discuss the problems they confront as office workers, to comment upon the more formal (academic) presentations, and to build informal networks. This segment of the Conference requires advance planning and organization to be most productive. Prior to the Conference, small-group discussion leaders (pulled from the various supporting organizations, see above) should meet with the Conference Organizers in order to: discuss the goals for this segment of the conference; review the role of a group leader and appropriate discussion techniques; and to develop a set of common discussion questions to guide and encourage discussion on the day of the Conference.

C. Cultural Exhibit, to include (possibly):

1. Old photos of office work.
2. An exhibit on changing technology and the development of office machines (from IBM or some computer company).
3. An exhibit of cartoons and advertisements that picture the image of secretaries in Puerto Rican society.
4. A video on the history of clerical work - something similar to the one done by PROMUJER on women in Nursing.

D. We would also like to be able to video the Conference, to add segments of the discussion and small-group work in the final version of the video.

E. Conference plans should include money for a commemorative publication, for distribution to participants and a wider audience.

Appendix VI.
Questionnaire (Encuesta) Developed by G. Casey for Distribution to
Secretaries at the Cayey Campus of the UPR, Spring, 1991

Gerrie Casey, Antropóloga
 City University of New York (CUNY)

15 de febrero, 1991

¡Vamos a Contarnos Nuestra Historia!: Las Secretarias Ayer y Hoy
La Conferencia para Celebrar la Semana de las Secretarias
Colegio Universitario de Cayey, UPR, 24 abril, 1991

ENCUESTA

I. Información Demográfica

2. Lugar de nacimiento:
 ¿Y por qué vive Ud. en la región de Cayey?
3. ¿Dónde vive ahora?
 - A. Area residencial: en el pueblo o en un barrio del campo (rural)
 - B. Tipo de residencia: Apartamento o Casa
 - C. Aquilando o Dueño/a de casa
4. La composición social del hogar:
 - A. ¿Vive con sus padres?
 - B. ¿Vive sola?
 - C. ¿Vive con su marido y/o sus niño@s?
 - D. ¿Vive con compañer@s de apartamento?
5. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar, normalmente? (Incluyendo a su esposo, sus niños, sus padres, sus herman@s, otros parientes, hijos de crianza, etc.)
6. Edad:
7. Nivel de educación:
 - A. ¿Cuál es el/los nombre/s de la/s institución/es educativa/s que asistió (después de los cuatros grados)?
 - B. Si estudió al nivel universitario, ¿cuál fue su concentración?

8. Estado Civil: (Soltera, Casada, Separada, Divorciada, Viuda)
9. Si Ud. tiene nin@s:
 - A. ¿Cuántos niños tiene? (y sus edades)
 - B. ¿Cuántas niñas tiene? (y sus edades)
 - C. ¿Hay otr@s niñ@s que viven con Ud. (como, hijo de crianza, sobrín@, nieto, etc)
10. ¿Cuál es su salario mensual?

A. \$ 650 - \$ 800	E. \$1,250 - \$1,400
B. \$ 800 - \$ 950	F. \$1,400 - \$1,550
C. \$ 950 - \$1,100	G. \$1,550 - \$1,700
D. \$1,100 - \$1,250	H. \$ más de \$1,700

II Historial Familiar

1. ¿Cuál es el lugar y fecha de nacimiento de su padre?
2. ¿Cuál el lugar y fecha de nacimiento de su madre?
3. ¿En qué trabajan sus padres?
 - A. Su padre:
 - B. Su madre:
4. ¿Qué nivel de educación tienen sus padres?
 - A. Su padre:
 - B. Su madre:
5. ¿Cuánt@s herman@s tiene?

<u>Sexo</u>	<u>Edad</u>	<u>Ocupación</u>	<u>Familia</u>	<u>¿Viven cerca de Ud?</u>

6. Si está casada (separada, divorciada, o viuda):
 - A. ¿Qué edad tuvo cuando se caso?
 - B. ¿Qué edad tiene su esposo?
 - C. ¿Cuál es el lugar de su nacimiento?
 - D. ¿Qué nivel de educación tiene?
 - E. ¿En qué trabaja su esposo?
 - F. ¿Cuál es su ingreso mensual?
7. ¿Hay otr@s personas que contribuyen al ingreso familiar?
(Quiénes son, y cómo contribuyen)
8. ¿Cuál es el ingreso total de la familia, anualmente?

A. . . . menos de \$10,000	F. \$30,000 - \$34,999
B. \$10,000 - \$14,999	G. \$35,000 - \$39,999
C. \$15,000 - \$19,999	H. \$40,000 - \$44,999
D. \$20,000 - \$24,999	I. \$45,000 - \$49,999
E. \$25,000 - \$29,999	J. . . . más de \$50,000

III. HISTORIAL PROFESIONAL

1. ¿Dónde trabaja Ud.?
2. ¿Por cuántos años?
3. ¿Cómo consiguió su trabajo? (Por un anuncio, amiga, referencia profesional, etc.)
Explique:
4. ¿Por qué decidió ser secretaria?

5. ¿Cuál es su título de plaza?
6. ¿Trabaja por tiempo parcial o tiempo completo?
7. ¿Trabaja por contrato o con permanencia?
6. ¿Cuántas personas trabajan en su oficina?
7. ¿Cuáles son las responsabilidades y las tareas de su oficina?
8. ¿Cuáles son sus responsabilidades en el trabajo?
9. ¿Qué preparación o educación tiene para este trabajo?
10. ¿Cuáles son las máquinas, las computadoras, y otra nueva tecnología en su oficina?
11. Al introducirse la nueva tecnología en su oficina, ¿cuál fue su primera reacción?
12. Cómo aprendió usar/operar la nueva maquinilla en su oficina? Sea específica cómo, por ejemplo, un curso, un libro de instrucciones, o trabajando con otra secretaria.
13. En su opinión, ¿qué áreas de adiestramiento son las más importantes para superarse en el trabajo secretarial?
14. ¿Qué clase de cursos o seminarios secretariales tuvo Ud.

<u>Año</u>	<u>Título de Curso</u>	<u>Escuela o Programa</u>
15. En su opinión, ¿cuáles son las posibilidades de superarse dentro los niveles de escala en su trabajo?
16. ¿Hay algunos problemas con el proceso de superarse? Explique:
17. Si no fuera una secretaria, ¿Qué sería su trabajo?
18. ¿Qué trabajo deseaba cuando era más joven?
19. Antes de su trabajo presente, ¿cuáles fueron sus posiciones?

<u>Años</u>	<u>Título</u>	<u>Compañía o Empresa</u>

20. ¿Por qué Ud. trabaja? Explique:
- A. Por la necesidad económica:
 - B. Para su satisfacción personal:
 - C. Otra razón:
21. ¿Cuáles son los aspectos más interesantes en su trabajo?
22. ¿Cuáles son los problemas más apremiantes en su trabajo?
23. ¿Pertenece a alguna organización para las secretarias cómo, por ejemplo, la Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docente (HEEND) de la UPR, o Professional Secretaries International (PSI)?
24. Si pertenece a alguna organización profesional o laboral, ¿cuál es el nivel de su participación?
25. ¿Pertenece a alguna organización social, político or religiosa?
26. ¿Cuáles son los intereses y las actividades más importantes en su vida, fuera de su trabajo?

IV. PROBLEMATICAS SOCIALES

Nos gustaría saber su opinión con respecto a algunos de los asuntos más apremiantes en el Puerto Rico de hoy.

1. En el contexto del proceso plebiscitario reciente, ¿endosa alguna opción de "status" particular para Puerto Rico?
 - A. Estado Libre Asociado
 - B. . La Estadidad
 - C. La Independencia
 - D. Sin opinión
2. ¿Cuál es su opinión con respecto a la reciente legislación que hace al español el idioma oficial de Puerto Rico?
3. ¿Cuál es su opinión con respecto a la posibilidad de una mujer gobernadora en Puerto Rico?¹
4. ¿Cuáles son los problemas de más importancia a los que se enfrenta el Puerto Rico de los 1990s?

♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

Muchas gracias por su cooperación.

¹ In 1991, Victoria Marín Mendoza, daughter of former Governor, Luis Muñoz Marín, became the first woman to run for Governor (the highest electoral office in Puerto Rico), as the candidate of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD). Marín Medoza was defeated by the pro-Statehood candidate, Pedro Rossello of the New Progressive Party (PNP). In the most recent elections of 2001, Sila Calderon (PPD) became the first woman ever elected to the position of Governor of Puerto Rico.

Appendix VIII.

Glossary of Puerto Rican Organizations and Key Spanish Terms*

* The Organization or phrase is listed first in Spanish, followed by the definition and/or explanation in English

1. AFL-CIO, The American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial

Organizations. National federation of trade union organizations in the United States.

2. *Ateneo Puertorriqueño, Encuentro de Mujeres Cineastas* – The Encounter with

Women Film Makers. Located in San Juan, this program sponsored by the *Ateneo*

Puertorriqueño presented fourteen films and hosted discussions with sixteen

contemporary women film makers during four weeks in February, 1991. I attended all programs in the series. The *Ateneo* published a seventeen-page Guide for this program.

3. *Organización Bona Fide* – Bona Fide Organization. This term refers to the

Certified Associations of public employees in Puerto Rico, organized according to the legal guidelines established by Law 134 of 1960 and Law 139 of 1961. Large-scale

efforts to build *Organizaciones Bona Fides* among Puerto Rico's public sector workers did not commence until a decade later, in response to the economic crises of the 1970s.

Many of the initial organizing drives were initiated by pro-independence activists, who entered public-sector jobs with the express purpose of creating trade unions (Cordero Rodríguez 1978; Cotto Morales, 1987; García and Quintero Rivera, 1979; Miles, 1979; Nieves Falcón, 1982). The Hermandad at the University of Puerto Rico, organized in 1972, is an *Organización Bona Fide*.

3. *La Comisión de los Derechos de la Mujer* – The Governor's Commission on

Women's Rights. This organization was the predecessor to the Governor's Commission on Women, *CAM*, founded in 1973 (see below). In 1978, the Commission produced one of the earliest films on the history of women's participation in Puerto Rican society, *Siempre estuvimos aquí*, a 30-minute documentary film.

4. *La Comisión para los Asuntos de la Mujer (CAM)* – The Governor's Commission for Women's Affairs. This organization was created by *Ley 57* (Law 57) of May 30, 1973 and amended in 1979. It is directed by a group of Commissioners appointed by the Governor, including the Hermandad's past-President, Ana Milagros Santiago Meléndez. The Commission maintains a library and staff of researchers and organizers assigned to thematic units, including: Affirmative Action; Prevention of Violence Against Women; Research and Statistics; Sexual Harassment; Women in Crisis; and Women, Work, and Family. During the period of my fieldwork, the CAM was highly mobilized on the issue of Domestic Violence, in the aftermath of the campaign to pass *Ley 54* (see below). One of their more ambitious projects during this period was the production of a feature film on domestic violence, *A Flor de Piel*, commissioned by the CAM and directed by Marcos Zurinaga. The film premiered in Puerto Rico on November 25, 1990 as a multi-channel television transmission, shown simultaneously on Channels 2, 4, 6, 7, and 11, with much advance publicity and great critical acclaim. Two related organizations are:

A. *La Oficina de Asuntos de la Mujer, Municipio de San Juan*, The Women's Commission of the City of San Juan, located in the Hato Rey district of San Juan..

B. *La Oficina de Asuntos de la Mujer, Municipio de Caguas*, established in Caguas.

These organizations carry out the programs of the CAM at the local, municipal level.

5. *La Casa Protegida Julia de Burgos* – The Julia de Burgos Safe House. This was one of the first shelters for battered women established in Puerto Rico. The home is located in Río Piedras.

6. *El Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña (CEREP)* – The Center for the Study of Puerto Rican Reality. This research center was established in 1970 by a group of pro-independence, socialist scholar-activists whose research was informed by a Marxist, anti-imperialist theoretical framework. CEREP continues to be an interdisciplinary collective comprised of scholars working in history, political science, economy, sociology, literature, art, and film criticism, inside and outside of university settings (Milagros and Angel Quintero Rivera, 1984:i). The research trajectory of CEREP includes histories of specific industries, like the sugar economy, and more synthetic analyses of the development of Puerto Rico's political economy as researched by historians like Fernando Picó, Guillermo Baralt, and Gervasio García.

7. *El Centro de Recursos y Servicios a la Mujer (CERES)* – The Center for Research and Services for Women. This research center is one of the projects housed at the Center for Social Research, (see CIS, below). CERES was the main center for women's studies at the Río Piedras campus, directed by Alice Cólón, during the period of my fieldwork.

8. *El Consejo de Educación Superior (CES)* – Puerto Rico's National Board of Higher Education. The Council supervises the University of Puerto Rico and all private institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico. At the time of its creation in the 1940s, the Chairperson of the *CES* was simultaneously named as the President of the University of Puerto Rico. Dr. Jaime Benítez, a close personal friend of Governor Luis Muñoz

Marín and leader within the Popular Democratic Party, was the first person to take on both roles (Benítez, 1962). This situation of dual responsibilities persisted until the struggle for university autonomy achieved partial victory with the creation of an independent President for the University of Puerto Rico, although the person holding this position is still appointed by, and responsible to, the CES.

9. *El Consejo General de Estudiantes (CGE)* – The General Student Council, the official student union at all campuses of the University of Puerto Rico. Each school and college within the UPR system elects representatives to the CGE. Different UPR campuses maintain autonomy with regard to leadership and programs. The CGE is organized by faculty and academic departments, and each representative is required to take all proposals to their membership for discussion and voting. Therefore, when a unanimous decision is taken, it reflects the participation of rank and file students, organized within their academic discipline. During the period of my fieldwork, the CGE organized student participation in the *Paro del Pueblo* in March 1990, organized the National UPR Student Strike of 1991 against tuition increases and cuts in academic programs, and supported labor actions of the Hermandad trade union at the University of Puerto Rico. My relations with the CGE were concentrated on five campuses: the main UPR campus in Río Piedras; Bayamón Technical College; the University College in Cayey, Carolina Regional College, and the UPR campus in Mayagüez (RUM).

10. *La Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT)* – The General Federation of Workers. This labor federation was established on March, 1940. It emerged in response to the tremendous social crisis created by the Great Depression in Puerto Rico and the

dissolution of the previous workers' federation, the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores, FLT*, (The Free Federation of Labor, see below). The CGT was founded by Communists and trade unionists from the *Asociación de Choferes* (The Drivers' Association) and the *Unión de Empleados de Hoteles, Cafés y Restaurantes* (The Union of Hotel, Café, and Restaurant Workers). From 1940-1945, the CGT maintained a policy of militant labor action. It was the first Puerto Rican trade union federation to call for political independence as a necessary element of the workers' struggle for economic security. In 1945, the CGT was effectively taken over by the *Partido Popular Democrático (PPD)* [see below], and became known as the *CGT Gubernamental*. The organization then became the trade union apparatus of the PPD, serving three main functions: enforcing labor discipline among workers throughout the island, in alliance with the PPD industrialization program (Operation Bootstrap); organizing trade unions within the newly-formed Public Corporations; and running election campaigns for the Puerto Rican legislature, creating a corps of "*legisladores obreros*" or workers' representatives. This last element was crucial to Muñoz Marín's campaign to create a new political bloc of technocrats and workers, in alliance with North American companies, and finally eliminating the residual political power of the old, landed aristocracy.

11. *El Concilio General de Trabajadores* (CGT '1) – The General Workers' Council.

This labor federation was established on May 1, 1983, based on the efforts of the *Comisión de Trabajo Intersindical* (CTI) which was founded in 1981. It was part of the "New Unionism" movement of the late 1970s, a campaign to wipe out union corruption and the lack of rank and file democracy within the AFL-CIO International Locals that had

dominated Puerto Rico since the 1950s. At the time of my fieldwork research, the CGT¹ included eleven trade unions within its organization. The CGT¹ was a founding member of the COS (see below). The Hermandad at the University of Puerto Rico is a member of this trade union federation.

12. *El Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS)* – The Social Research Center located at the main UPR campus in Río Piedras. This is the oldest social science research center in Puerto Rico. The Center houses between fifteen and twenty-five full-time researchers and maintains a staff of eight to ten full-time clerical and administrative staff. In addition to the researchers' independent scholarship projects, the *Centro* publishes a journal, *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*.

13. Conexiones – Connections. The official newsletter of the Governor's Commission for Women's Affairs in Puerto Rico (see CAM, above).

14. *El Comité de Organizaciones Sindicales (COS)* – The Committee of Trade Union Organizations. This Puerto Rican labor federation, established in June of 1985. During the period of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico, and for the first time in the history of Puerto Rican labor federations, a woman was the Chairperson, Luisa Acevedo. The COS was the first labor federation to successfully unite all sectors of the labor movement in Puerto Rico, including *los Internacionales* (the International Locals of United States-based trade unions, see below) and *los Independientes* (the Independent, or Puerto Rican-based trade unions, see below), as well as public-sector and private-sector unions. In order to accommodate the different political philosophies of member organizations, the COS established a programmatic framework based on “unity in action.” The COS sponsored

the successful one-day General Strike, (see *El Paro del Pueblo*, below), of March 28, 1990 to protest government plans to privatize and sell *la Telefónica*, (the Puerto Rican Telephone Company), a profitable Public Corporation. Two labor federations are also members of the COS, the CPT (see below) and the CGT¹ (see above). In May of 1989, the COS unanimously passed a resolution on the colonial status of Puerto Rico, calling for an authentic process of de-colonization and self-determination, in accordance with international law and supervised by the United Nations, as outlined in United Nations Resolution 1514. The Hermandad at the UPR is part of this labor coalition.

15. *Claridad* – Clarity. Name of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's (PSP) newspaper, founded in the 1960s, by the Movimiento Pro-Independencia, predecessor to the PSP.

16. *El Central Puertorriqueña Trabajadores (CPT)* – The Union of Puerto Rican Workers. This labor federation was founded in November, 1982, as a reformulation of the *Congreso Puertorriqueño de Trabajadores*, which was organized in May of 1979. By 1992, the CPT had twenty unions in its network. The CPT belongs to the COS, and was one of the organizers of the General Strike of March 28, 1990 (see *El Paro del Pueblo*, below).

17. *La Federación Libre de Trabajadores (FLT)* – The Free Federation of Workers. This labor federation was founded in 1899 and affiliated to the United States AFL (American Federation of Labor) in 1901. The FLT was founded by Spanish anarchist Santiago Iglesias Pantín. The feminist and trade union organizer, Luisa Capetillo, was another leading member of the FLT. In 1915, the FLT founded the first workers' political party in Puerto Rico, the *Partido Socialista* (Socialist Party), see below.

18. *La Federación Universitario Pro-Independencia (FUPI)* - The Pro-Independence Student Federation. While this organization exists on different campuses of the UPR, the main campus in Río Piedras had the largest membership and greatest influence on campus affairs. The *FUPI* was established in the 1960s, and its adherents are called *Fupistas*.

19. *El Grito de Lares* – The Cry of Lares. This refers to the first attempt to establish an independent Republic of Puerto Rico on September 23, 1868, with an uprising that began in the Western Mountain town of Lares, during Spanish colonial rule. While the uprising was quashed, supporters of independence date the beginnings of their movement from this event. Public commemoration of *Grito de Lares* became institutionalized by Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party in the 1930s. Every year on September 23, *independentistas* throughout Puerto Rico make the pilgrimage to Lares, for speeches and cultural presentations by various pro-independence parties. While the *Hermanidad* does not send an official delegation to the annual event commemorating *El Grito de Lares*, many *Hermanidad* activists participate.

20. *Hermanidad de Empleados Exentos No Docente HEEND* – The literal translation is the Brotherhood of Exempt, Non-teaching Employees. Founded in 1972, the *Hermanidad* is certified as the Bona Fide Organization (see above) representing the 3,000 clerical and technical workers at all branches of the University of Puerto Rico. Officially, the *Hermanidad* is not a trade union, because public workers are not allowed by law to go on strike; in practice, the *Hermanidad* and other public-employee organizations have been the most militant sector of the labor movement since the 1970s. This organization is referred

to as the *Hermanidad* in the text of the dissertation. All secretaries at the University of Puerto Rico are represented by the *Hermanidad*, whether or not they are members.

21. *La Huelga* – Strike. In Puerto Rico, this term refers to a work stoppage called by a trade union for an indefinite period of time.

22. *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP)*– The Institute for Puerto Rican Culture. This is the official government body responsible for protecting the “national patrimony” of art, architecture, and archeological sites. The *Instituto* also manages local offices of the ICP in every Puerto Rican municipality on the island.

23. *El Instituto Laboral de Educación Sindical (ILES)* – The Labor Institute for Trade Union Education. This is an umbrella organization for many of the Independent Trade Unions (*los independientes*) established in Puerto Rico during the 1970s. ILES runs a series of courses and topical workshops for union activists. It is an explicitly Marxist and pro-independence organization, affiliated with the independent Latin American and Caribbean trade union federation. ILES is critical of the history of AFL-CIO International Locals in Puerto Rico and opposes all programs run by the United States’ American Institute for Free Labor Development, AIFLD, in Latin America and the Caribbean, under sponsorship from the AFL-CIO and guided by the United States Central Intelligence Agency as part of the Cold War against labor. Every summer, ILES organizes the Puerto Rican delegation to the annual *Universidad Obrera de México* (The Mexican Workers’ University). Each trade union belonging to ILES selects a delegate to attend the University, studying with representatives of members other trade unions in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The *Hermanidad* at the University of

Puerto Rico belongs to ILES and has made a commitment to send a woman activist to the Workers' University each summer (see Ríos Ramos, 1989).

24. *El Instituto Puertorriqueño de Derechos Civiles (IPDC)* – The Puerto Rican Institute for Civil Rights. During the period of my fieldwork research, the IPDC was highly active, engaged in the following campaigns: against domestic violence and support for Law 54; against racism; protecting the rights of immigrant; defending popular land rescues (*rescates*); and the campaign against political repression of *independentistas*, forcing the Puerto Rican government to release the illegally maintained files, *las carpetas*, of more than 3,000 individuals in 1992. In all of these campaigns, the IPDC worked closely with the Legal Aid Society of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican Bar Association.

25. *Los Independientes* – The Independents. This term refers to those labor unions in Puerto Rico that are not affiliated to any United States trade union, including organizations within the AFL-CIO, and those outside the AFL-CIO, such as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, known as *los trunquistas* in Puerto Rico. By 1992, *los independientes* represented 65% of organized labor in Puerto Rico (Surez 1992:6).

26. *Los Internacionales* – The Internationals. This term refers to those trade unions established in Puerto Rico as International Locals of United States trade unions. During the heyday of Operation Bootstrap, many AFL-CIO unions established International Locals in Puerto Rico, including: the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, ILGWU; the United Auto Workers, UAW; the International Association of Machinists,

IAM; the American Federation of Teachers, AFT; the United Food and Chemical Workers Union, UFCWU; the International Union of Electrical Workers, IUE; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, IBEW; and the Federal Postal Workers' Union. Outside the AFL-CIO, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, *los trunquistas*, also organized International Locals in Puerto Rico.

These initiatives were supported by the United States and Puerto Rican governments as a form of imposing labor discipline, expanding Cold War sentiments, and mitigating against trade union democracy in Puerto Rico. During the years 1955-1965, the AFL-CIO represented 80% of all organized workers in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican workers who belonged to International Locals were not allowed to elect their leadership, often North Americans, nor were they allowed to participate in contract negotiations, or ratify their collective bargaining agreements which became known as "sweetheart contracts," structured in favor of employers' interests. Union organizing drives were even subsidized by United States companies who wanted to establish subsidiaries in Puerto Rico and the commonwealth government. These experiences created a significant down-turn in the Puerto Rican labor movement during the 1960s, as workers became dissatisfied, disaffected and alienated from organized labor. By 1992, *los independientes* represented only 35% of organized labor in Puerto Rico (Suárez, 1992:6).

27. *El Jíbaro* – A country farmer or peasant. This term is used to describe the independent farmers of rural Puerto Rico who dominated the countryside in the late 19th century. The Popular Democratic Party, under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín, portrayed the *jíbaro* as the national cultural symbol of Puerto Rico's strength, autonomy,

and tradition. Ironically, this was taking place at the same time that Muñoz Marín's government was heralding in Operation Bootstrap, the program for rapid industrialization of Puerto Rico, which was the final blow to the rural economy and culture of small farmers, or *jíbaros*, in Puerto Rico.

28. *Ley 54, Ley para la prevención e intervención con la violencia doméstica* – Puerto Rican Public Law 54, for Prevention and Intervention of Domestic Violence, passed by the Puerto Rican Legislature in August, 1989. The Hermandad at the University of Puerto Rico was one of the official sponsors of this legislation.

29. *El Movimiento Obrero Unido (MOU)* – The United Workers' Movement, established by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) in the 1970s. It preceded the establishment of the *CGT*¹, the *CTI*, and the *COS*.

30. *La Organización Puertorriqueña de la Mujer Trabajador (OPMT)* – The Puerto Rican Organization for Working Women. Josie Pantojas was the President during the period of my fieldwork research, 1989-1992. *Mujeres en Marcha* is the name of *OPMT*'s newsletter.

31. *El Paro* – A Work Stoppage, or One-Day Strike. In Puerto Rico, this term refers to a labor action called by a trade union for a specific 24 hour period.

32. *El Paro del Pueblo* – The one-day General Strike, organized by the *COS* (see above) which took place on March 28, 1990 to protest government plans to privatize and sell *la Telefónica*, the Puerto Rican Telephone Company, a profitable Public Corporation. It was the largest and most successful labor action in twenty years, effectively shutting down all industry, transportation and government work centers in Puerto Rico. It forced

the *PPD* government of Rafael Hernández Colón to drop the privatization initiative, although the successive government, run by the pro-statehood *PNP* under Governor Pedro Roselló, went ahead with the sale. The Hermandad was an enthusiastic sponsor of the *Paro del Pueblo* and organized thousands of university workers and students to participate in the demonstration.

33. *El Partido Independencia Puertorriqueña (PIP)*– The Puerto Rican Independence Party, founded in 1948. Rubén Barrios was the President of the PIP during my fieldwork. The PIP participates in insular electoral politics and has established an electoral franchise. The PIP has consistently won elections, sending candidates to the Puerto Rican Legislature and Senate. The PIP representatives enjoy large-scale popular support, as they are considered “whistle blowers” (*los pitirres*) and champions in the fight against government corruption. The PIP played a leadership role in the struggle to get the United States Navy out of the smaller islands of Vieques and Culebra, winning victory in Culebra in the aftermath of armed resistance in 1975. The PIP is affiliated with the Socialist International. The Party’s color is green and their members and supporters are called, *Pipiolos*.

34. *El Partido Nacionalista* – The Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico was founded in 1920, and its most famous leader was Don Pedro Albizu Campos. The Nationalist Party stood for the unconditional independence of Puerto Rico from the United States. The Nationalists earned tremendous support from sugarcane workers as a result of the Party’s support for the cane workers’ strike of 1936. The Nationalist Party faced intense repression by the United States government, which imprisoned and tortured Party leaders;

Albizu Campos languished in a federal penitentiary for more than fifteen years, during which time his health was broken. The Nationalist Party was organized in all cities and towns of Puerto Rico. It boycotted electoral politics in Puerto Rico, defining them as a colonial hoax. Members were fined and imprisoned for refusing to register with the United States Selective Services and serve in the United States Armed Forces. On Palm Sunday, 1937, the Ponce Massacre took place in Ponce when the Puerto Rican Police and National Guard opened fire on a peaceful march of unarmed Nationalist Party members, killing dozens and wounding hundreds of people. Young people of *Los Hijos/Las Hijas de la Libertad*, the youth organization of the Nationalist Party, were especially hard-hit, having been at the front of the march.

In 1950, the Nationalist Party organized a popular uprising against United States colonialism with armed struggle in the towns of Arecibo, Jayuya and Utuado. The United States responded with aerial bombings of the towns. Severe repression followed and all the Party leadership was imprisoned. Support for independence was defined as a seditious act. In March, 1954, five armed Nationalists, led by Lolita Lebron, entered the United States Congress and opened fire, calling for a free Puerto Rico. In the aftermath of violence and repression, the Nationalist Party lost much of its earlier power. The Nationalist Party continues to exist in Puerto Rico, experiencing a renaissance in membership and prestige in the 1980s, after President Carter granted an unconditional pardon and release to the four surviving members of the 1954 attack on Congress in 1979, after they had been imprisoned for twenty-five years. The Party's flag is black with a white cross and their members and supporters are called, *Nacionalistas*.

35. *El Partido Nuevo Progressista (PNP)* – The New Progressive Party, a pro-statehood political party founded in the 1960s. This party has alternated control of Puerto Rico's Commonwealth Government with the PDP or *populares* since 1972. Their symbol is a white palm tree on a blue background, which is their color. Members and supporters are called, *Penepos*.

36. *El Partido Popular Democrático (PPD)* – The Popular Democratic Party, founded in 1940 by Luis Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rico's first elected Puerto Rican governor and leader of Puerto Rico for more than twenty-five years. Since 1968, the PPD has alternated control of Puerto Rico's commonwealth government with the PNP (see below). Their slogan is *Pan, Tierra, Libertad* (Bread, Land and Liberty), their symbol is the *pava* (straw hat) of the *jíbaro* and sugarcane worker. Members and supporters of the Party are called, *Populares* and their color is red. The *Populares* were in control of the government during the period of my fieldwork, 1989-1992.

37. *El Partido Socialista (PS)* – The Socialist Party of Puerto Rico was founded in 1915 by the FLT (see above). The Socialist Party was the first authentic workers' political party in Puerto Rico. The Socialist Party fought for workers' rights, public education, the elimination of private control over natural resources, and female suffrage. In the colonial elections of 1920, the *Partido Socialista* won almost 25% of the vote. In 1932, the Party, together with the FLT, formed a coalition government in Puerto Rico with factions of the Republican Party of Puerto Rico. The party and the FLT began to lose their base of support among workers, as the Coalition government pursued a political program that stood in opposition to workers' needs.

38. *El Partido Socialista Puertorriqueña (PSP)* – The Puerto Rican Socialist Party, a Marxist-Leninist and pro-independence political party, was founded in 1972, out of the *MPI, Movimiento Pro-Independencia*, the Pro-Independence Movement, that was established in 1959. Juan Mari Bras, *independentista* lawyer from Mayagüez and leader of the Student Strike of 1948 at the University of Puerto Rico was the General Secretary from 1959-1981. In the 1970s, the PSP developed a large following, electing members to the Puerto Rican Legislature and Senate. The Party was also organized in Puerto Rican communities within the United States, including: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C.. In the 1970s, the PSP established an Office to the United Nations and was granted official Observer status by the Movement of Non-Alligned Nations. Internationally, the PSP was affiliated with Socialist and Workers' Parties. Its newspaper, *Claridad* was published weekly, then daily in Puerto Rico, with a weekly Section on events in the United States, and a section printed in English. Its color was red and its flag was red, with a single, small white star in the top-left corner. Members of the PSP were called *pesepos*. In 1991, the PSP disbanded, to reform as the *Nuevo Movimiento Independentista*, NMI, or New Independence Movement in 1993.

39. *Pro-Mujer, El Proyecto de Estudios de la Mujer* – The Center for Women's Studies at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico. It was founded in January, 1986 by an agreement reached between the Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education (CES) and the University of Puerto Rico. The Center was established to address three areas of work: developing new academic courses on gender issues; establishing a Research &

Documentation Center; and building a program of community service. This organization was my base of operations at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico. *Pro-Mujer* was one of the sponsors of the Secretaries' Conference I tried to organize for National Secretaries Week in April, 1991.

40. Professional Secretaries International (PSI)– A voluntary professional association for secretaries, established in the United States and maintaining seven chapters in cities and regions of Puerto Rico.

41. Tejemeneje – A colloquial phrase meaning to spin a web or network, to discuss, plot or concoct. This is the name of the official newsletter of *Pro-Mujer*, the Center for Women's Studies at the Cayey campus of the University of Puerto Rico. The newsletter was established in 1988.

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