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**Mainland Puerto Rican male identity: A grounded theory  
derived from poetry**

Holman, Warren Dana, D.S.W.

City University of New York, 1994

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MAINLAND PUERTO RICAN MALE IDENTITY:  
A GROUNDED THEORY DERIVED FROM POETRY

BY

WARREN DANA HOLMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare, the City University of New York

1994

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare.

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Abstract

MAINLAND PUERTO RICAN MALE IDENTITY:  
A GROUNDED THEORY DERIVED FROM POETRY

by

Warren Dana Holman

Adviser: Professor Irwin Epstein

[Text of Abstract]

This study attempted to understand mainland Puerto Rican male identity through an analysis of selected mainland Puerto Rican poetry written between 1969 and the present. Poems that addressed the issue of identity were examined through the constant comparison technique of grounded theory methodology. Two interdependent, core categories of mainland male Puerto Rican identity emerged from the analysis of the poems--an oppressed identity and an ethnocultural identity. In addition, a third category, an existential identity, or searching for identity, was expressed by an appreciable number of the poets. These three categories of identity were integrated into a grounded theory statement of mainland Puerto Rican male identity, which was compared with existing theories of that identity. Implications for social work theory building, practice, and education were discussed.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION  
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The author's interests in social work theory-building, education for culturally sensitive practice, and culturally sensitive practice itself contributed to the formulation of this study. From many years of practice in East Harlem, he perceived a need for social work, despite its genuine efforts to increase sensitivity to the Puerto Rican client, to expand its understanding of the Puerto Rican experience. If the study could extend existing theoretical knowledge of mainland Puerto Rican identity, it would offer the profession a broader epistemological path, in both method and material, and a firmer foundation on which to base curriculum for teaching culturally appropriate practice with Puerto Rican clients.

The methodology of grounded theory (Glaser and Straus, 1967; Glaser, 1978) was chosen for the study in keeping with the intent to get close to the mainland Puerto Rican experience. While there is much literature that analyzes Puerto Rican life deductively from psychological and sociological hypotheses, there is little that attempts to gain an inductive, "experience-near" (Pine, 1985, 22) understanding of mainland Puerto Rican life. "Experience-near" concepts take shape from interactions with people and their culture,

rather than being constructed from the distance of pre-existing theoretical positions. It is a sine qua non of grounded theory methodology that subjects describe their own life experiences in their own words.

The decision to use Puerto Rican poetry as the data from which to derive the grounded theory was made for several reasons. First, as literature written by Puerto Ricans about Puerto Rican life, it fit both the study's wish to remain close to the Puerto Rican experience and the requirements of grounded theory for primary source material. The researcher also wanted to assess the value of the poetry as data for theory-building. Goldstein (1990) has suggested that "the kinds of creative, imaginative, and reflective thought that are required to grasp the world as it is interpreted by the client can be stirred by the humanities" (41).

Finally, by using Puerto Rican poetry for the study, the researcher would compile an extensive bibliography of poems with two potential applications. One would be in the social work curriculum for teaching culturally sensitive practice. The other, related, use would be in bibliotherapeutic interventions with Puerto Rican clients. Bibliotherapeutic work using Puerto Rican literature has been reported as being highly effective in lifting self-esteem and conveying a sense of empowerment in Puerto Rican clients (Greenbaum and Holmes,

1983; Costantino, Malgady, and Rogler, 1986).

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many Puerto Ricans, when asked in passing how they are, will reply, "En la lucha"--"In the struggle." Mainland Puerto Ricans, in general, do struggle. They are seen as confronting a particular combination of stressors including minority status, low economic standing, and bicultural conflicts (Costantino, Malgady, and Rogler, 1988). Among all American Latino groups, Puerto Ricans consistently fare worst in the areas of employment, household income, presence of two parents in the home, independence from public assistance, and years of completed education (Gibbs, Huang, and associates, 1989).

Very recent findings concerning all Hispanic males were announced in the Eleventh Annual Report on Minorities in Higher Education (De Palma, 1993). The report found that in 1992 "the school completion rate for Hispanic boys dropped to its lowest level, 47.8 per cent, since such figures were first collected in 1972" (A14).

The conditions in which Puerto Ricans attempt to succeed in this country show no indication of improving, and the mainland Puerto Rican population continues to grow rapidly.

This combination of factors does not augur well for the future.

The services that social work offers Puerto Rican clients to help them with their struggle are founded upon the profession's conceptualization of their identity. Social work has based this understanding of Puerto Rican identity on its basic omnium gatherum of established identity theories, most notably that of Erikson (1959/1980, 1968). Several authors (Longres, 1973; Ghali, 1982; Mizio, 1983; De LaRosa, 1988; Zayas, 1988) have suggested adjustments to attune the model to the Puerto Rican "ethnic reality" (Devore and Schlesinger, 1981, vii). These efforts have also generally followed the traditional paths of the social sciences in both material and method.

The present study considered whether the theoretical understanding of mainland Puerto Rican identity that social work has gained from its traditional ways of knowing (Imre, 1991) might be extended by an analysis of the presentation of Puerto Rican identity in mainland Puerto Rican poetry. In its grounded theory method, and its use of indigenous literature as data, the study was seen as a promising model for work to further the understanding of other ethnocultural groups.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE  
INTRODUCTION

Four concepts of identity are cited as being essential to an understanding of mainland Puerto Rican identity. One is the idea of ego identity (Erikson, 1959/1980, 1968), which is a personal, internal synthesis of the individual's significant life experiences. The term reflects Erikson's adherence to the tenets of psychoanalytic ego psychology. The ego is the mental construct that evaluates, organizes, and synthesizes both psychological and social experiences. One of the ego's major tasks is to establish and maintain a coherent, stable sense of identity for the person. Ego identity is understood to be achieved to some degree by all individuals irrespective of socioeconomic and ethnocultural factors.

The remaining three identity concepts relate more specifically to the mainland Puerto Rican experience. They are ethnic identity, minority identity, and bicultural identity (DeJesus-Rueff, 1986). In this chapter, selected literature on these four concepts of identity will be reviewed and summarized. The relevant literature on grounded theory will be reviewed in the chapter on methodology.

## EGO IDENTITY

In a recent work, Kroger (1989) suggests that identity formation may be conceptualized in five ways: as a psychosocial synthesis; as a second separation-individuation process; as a cognitive-development process; as an advance in ego development; and as a process of making meaning of experience. These are clearly not mutually exclusive processes but are closely interdependent. They can be thought of as five different windows giving onto a single room.

As described above, the first perspective from which identity is viewed in the study at hand is Erikson's (1959/1980, 1968) psychosocial synthesis. It has been chosen as the central organizing framework for the study because the equal emphasis it grants to the social as well as the psychological seems necessary for an attempt to understand the mainland Puerto Rican identity.

### Defining Identity

The concept of identity has been resistant to precise definition. Kroger (1989) believes that the trouble began with Erikson, whose "unclear or unprecise formulations have been the source of numerous difficulties for many of his readers" (32). Breakwell (1986) finds the term "highly

problematic," and sees it in company with others "such as character, the self-concept, and personality, which attempt to delineate a unique syndrome of social, psychological, and behavioral characteristics which differentiate one person from another" (10). Douvan and Adelson (1966) state that "technically speaking, the concept is not altogether satisfying, since it is allusive, complex, and connotative" (15). Finally, Rizutto (1992) claims that "identity as conceptualized by Erikson and as it is frequently used in clinical theorizing is a vague descriptive concept without a specific referent" (437).

Identity may be the kind of word Humpty Dumpty had in mind when he said, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less" (Carroll, 1957, 247). To which Alice replied, in a comment germane to this study, "The question is, whether you can make words mean so many things." In this particular conversation, Humpty Dumpty's last words can be taken as a comment on the entire issue of an exploration of mainland Puerto Rican identity: "The question is, which is to be master, that's all" (Ibid). Who, that is to say, is to define Puerto Rican identity?

As will be seen, there is disagreement about who the master of understanding mainland Puerto Rican identity is. A

sizable body of literature has been produced by psychologists and sociologists debating the issue. The point of this study was to see how the theoretical literature compared with the views of the people about whom it was written.

### Erikson's Formulation of Identity

Erikson's biographer, Robert Coles (1970), does not believe that Erikson was particularly interested in defining identity (82). Although he has continued to examine and explicate the process of identity formation (1946, 1951, 1954, 1966, 1970), even in his major works on the subject--Identity and the Life Cycle (1959/1980), and Identity: Youth and Crisis (1968)--Erikson does not offer an exact, consistent definition of identity. In a workshop on identity in 1966, Erikson acknowledges that "the usage of the word has been so varied and its content so expanded that we may well feel the need for...a final delimitation" (Coles, 263). "And yet," he continues, "by its very nature, what bears such a definite name, as yet eludes definition" (Ibid.).

Later in the same talk, Erikson states:

(If) social scientists try to come closer to the essence of the concept by quantifying the question "Who am I?" then

one sees no reason to be profusely thankful for the thing having been made accessible to scientific enquiry at last (Coles, 264).

Erikson may have approached study of the concept of identity in the spirit of W.H. Auden, an admirer of his, who adjured his readers not to "sit with statisticians nor commit a social science (Auden, "Under Which Lyre," quoted in Borenstein, 1978, xxix).

While critics of Erikson's formulation of identity have been unsatisfied with its being "connotative" (Douvan and Adelson, 15), Erikson himself says that he "can attempt to make the subject matter of identity more explicit only by...letting the term speak for itself in a number of connotations:

At one time, then, it will appear to refer to a conscious sense of individual identity; at another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character; at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis; and, finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (1980, 109).

Even without a precise definition, it is clear that for Erikson identity encompasses two primary realms--the psychological, or individual, and the social, or group.

"Identity," Erikson states, "is a psychological process reflecting social processes; but with sociological means it can be seen as a social process reflecting psychological processes" (1963, 11). Both psychological and social processes operate in the life of each individual. Their particular interplay in each person's existence is what gives the unique stamp to his or her identity:

It is this identity of something in the individual's core with an essential aspect of a group's inner coherence which is under consideration here: for the young individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others-- those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him. The term "identity" expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others (1980, 109).

Erikson (1980) sees identity formation as a lifelong process that "has grown throughout childhood, and continues to re-emerge in the crises of later years" (122). He believes, however, that identity "meets its crisis in adolescence" (1963, 11). For Erikson (1980), adolescence is the period in which:

the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous commitment to physical intimacy (not by any means always overtly sexual), to decisive

occupational choice, to energetic competition, and to psychosocial self-definition (133).

In adolescence, the young person must face the crisis of "identity versus identity diffusion" (1980, 94). This is the fifth of the eight crises that Erikson says the "healthy personality" (51) needs to pass through in the course of life. The strengths and limitations the individual brings to this crisis depend in part on how successfully he or she has resolved the previous crises of trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, and industry versus inferiority (129). Erikson stresses that the resolutions need not have been perfect, but only achieved with "favorable ratios" (1963, 271) towards the desirable outcomes. If successful in facing the identity crisis, the individual gains "an assured sense of inner continuity and social sameness which will bridge what he was as a child and what he is about to become, and will reconcile his conception of himself and his community's recognition of him" (1980, 120).

While identifications with significant others from the young person's past play a major role in forming his or her identity, identity proper "begins where the usefulness of multiple identifications ends" (122). Identity is more than the sum of its parts.

The individual who cannot gain a favorable balance toward the establishment of a firm identity suffers the anxiety of identity diffusion. Erikson quotes Biff in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman as an example of the lost, uncommitted quality of someone who has failed the crisis of identity versus identity diffusion: "I just can't take hold, Mom. I just can't take hold of some kind of life" (97). The identity-diffused individual is particularly vulnerable to being pulled back toward conflicts and crises from earlier stages of development.

In order to avoid the anxiety of not being able to take hold of an identity acceptable to their particular society, some young individuals embrace a "negative identity--i.e., an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented to the individual as most undesirable or dangerous, and yet as most real" (141). Drop-outs, addicts, and criminals all have identities. The wider society may not like who they are, but they at least know, to some extent, who they are.

Erikson believes that societies have established adolescence as a period of "psychosocial moratorium during which the young individual through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society..." (120). The length of this moratorium varies from society to society, but

Erikson believes that the central process of role experimentation must be experienced if the person is to establish a truly individual identity. During the period of psychosocial moratorium, says Erikson (1980), "extremes of subjective experience, alternatives of ideological choice, and potentialities of realistic commitment can become the subject of social play and joint mastery" (175).

At the conclusion of Identity and the Life Cycle, Erikson states that in his attempt to "circumscribe the problem of identity" he has been "all over the map" (175). His admitted diffuseness makes a neat summary of Erikson's conceptualization of identity difficult. The key seems to lie in the core quality of commitment that characterizes the individual who has managed to resolve the crisis of identity versus identity diffusion. As Kroger (1989) puts it, "fidelity or commitment to a vocation, a set of meaningful values, and a sexual identity are the observable cues indicative of a more or less successful identity resolution during late adolescence" (34).

#### Breakwell's Analysis of Identity

Breakwell (1986) proposes a framework for identity formation that brings into sharper focus some aspects of

Erikson's thinking. She suggests that identity formation can be understood through an analysis of three central elements: components, processes, and principles.

The components of identity have two dimensions--content and value:

The content dimension comprises the defining properties of the identity, the characteristics which the individual concerned considers actually to describe himself or herself, and which, taken together as a syndrome, mark him or her as a unique person, different in psychological profile than all others (12).

The value dimension refers to the positive or negative importance, always being revised, that each element of identity content has for the individual at a given time. These values are attributed to components "on the basis of social beliefs and values in interaction with previously established personal value codes" (19).

Using Piaget's (1952a) schema, Breakwell sees the two processes of identity formation as being assimilation and accommodation--the taking in of experiences deemed valuable for identity, and the making room for them in the identity as it exists at the time. The identity processes, for Breakwell, "are regulated by the principles, which specify the end states

which are desirable for identity" (24). From a review of studies on self-definition, Breakwell identifies three prime principles that guide the processes of assimilation and accommodation toward the end of identity formation: "uniqueness or distinctiveness for the person; continuity across time and situation; and a feeling of personal worth or social value" (24).

Breakwell is concerned with "understanding the social context of identity" (35). She sees this context as having two core dimensions--structure and process. The structure of the social context is made up of group memberships and relationships. The process, involving interactions among the groups, "generates the ideological substance" (37) of the social context. Breakwell believes that each group in society "arrives at an interpretation of reality which suits its own interests and intentions and then... tries to convert other individuals or groups to its views" (37).

Breakwell is particularly interested in "threatened identities" (1983a, 1986). Threats to identity come on two levels: challenging the content of personal or social identity, or challenging the evaluation of personal or social identity. The challenges may attack the individual, his or her group memberships, or his or her group itself (1983a, 14). The result of threats is that two crucial end-states for identity

development are shaken--the sense of being consistent, and the maintaining of self-esteem.

Breakwell's framework of the components, processes and principles that contribute to identity formation, all existing in a critical social context, is a valuable organizer of some of Erikson's more diffuse formulations.

#### Empirical Studies of Identity Achievement

Despite Erikson's (1966) caveat about the attempt to quantify the concept of identity, a large body of quantitative research has been generated on the subject. Marcia (1966) laid the groundwork with his development of an interview instrument designed to measure the achievement of identity. Following Erikson, Marcia "assesses identity achievement on the basis of two criteria--crisis and commitment" (Newman and Newman, 1987, 400). Marcia sees crisis as a requisite period of experimentation with various roles leading to commitment in the areas of religion, political belief, and occupational choice.

Marcia's data, culled from college-student samples, reveals the existence of four stages of identity status: identity diffusion; foreclosure; moratorium; and identity

achieved. The first, third, and fourth of these derive directly from Erikson. The second, foreclosure, is more Marcia's own, although it is suggested in Erikson's work. Foreclosure describes those individuals who "have not experienced a crisis but demonstrate strong occupational and ideological commitments" (Ibid.).

The identity-foreclosed individual is seen as having a more rigid identity, largely based on childhood identifications with parents and family, than the person who has emerged from the struggle of crisis with his or her own hard-won sense of self. Marcia's thinking here is in line with Erikson's (1980) statement that true identity "begins where the usefulness of multiple identifications ends" (122). Marcia's model implies a desired progression from identity diffusion through foreclosure and moratorium to the end-state of identity achieved.

Using Marcia's model, many investigators have attempted to determine the particular factors that influence the achievement of identity. Stark and Traxler (1974), again using a college-student sample, find that older (21-24) students are less identity-diffused than younger (17-20). Similar results on the variable of age are reported by Protinsky (1975), interviewing high school and college students, and Adams and Fitch (1982), comparing college freshmen and seniors.

Protinsky and Wilkerson (1986) find that identity achievement is positively related both to higher grade level and the development of formal operational thought. The latter, a Piagetian (1969) concept, is the culminating stage in cognitive development, in which the individual moves free of thought tied to concrete objects and into the realm of abstraction.

In another study related to the factor of age, Hart (1988) sees that younger adolescents give more importance to a social network of relationships in determining identity, while older adolescents place more importance on psychological factors. As Erikson believed, toward the end of adolescence the individual consolidates a more independent, internalized sense of who he or she is.

Newman and Newman (1988) cite the need for active role experimentation during Erikson's moratorium period before identity can be established. They see this as having particular value in this "era of great diversity of basic life roles" (557). Similarly, Grotevant (1987) proposes a process model for identity formation that focuses on identity exploration; and Peterson (1987) discusses the importance of adolescents' experiencing and mastering various role transitions en route toward identity achievement. Peterson's work relates to Havighurst's (1972) thesis that the

individual's identity accrues as he or she masters a series of developmental tasks.

The vicissitudes of earlier experiences are noted as influencing the adolescent's progress toward identity formation. Blos (1967) sees a crucial process in adolescence as being the "second individuation" (162), paralleling the original separation-individuation process of early childhood (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975). Lucente (1988), in a single-case report, demonstrates how the original "merging, separating, and individuating" (158) patterns of the first separation-individuation phase are re-enacted in the transference during the treatment of an adolescent boy.

As noted earlier, Erikson himself holds that the successful resolution of the identity crisis in adolescence is, like the resolution of all life-cycle crises, dependent to some extent upon how well the individual has managed all preceding crises. To paraphrase Kroger (1989), the young individual is best positioned to face the crisis of identity versus identity diffusion if he or she is basically trusting, secure in his or her autonomy, able to initiate activity without being hobbled by guilt, and capable of mobilizing a sufficient degree of industry with which to work on the business of life (27).

Many reports identify the adolescent's past and present relationships with his or her family as playing a significant role in promoting or hindering identity formation. Broadly conceived, the focus of these studies is the continuum from relatedness to separation, the underlying assumption being, once again, that a critical process in adolescence is that of a second individuation (Blos, 1967).

Grotevant (1986) finds that the adolescent must start with a secure attachment to his or her parents; from this solid base, he or she can move away toward a separate identity without a hindering anxiety. Kamptner (1988), from a college sample of 410, sees that the adolescent's sense of security in his or her family relations enhances identity formation both directly and indirectly, the latter by building the social confidence the adolescent needs for experimentation and exploration. A lack of family support can hamper the adolescent's attempts to establish a separate identity (Newman, 1987).

Several authors point out the important distinction between the adolescent's security in his or her family and being too involved in its workings. Anderson and Fleming (1986) find that the more adolescents see themselves as enmeshed or triangulated in their families of origin, the less convinced they feel about their own identities. However,

adolescents who are dissatisfied with the interactive quality in their families, yet satisfied with how their families make decisions, are found to score high on identity-exploration measures (Papini, Sebby, and Clark, 1989). The optimal familial conditions for the adolescent's achievement of identity are found by Campbell, Adams, and Dobson, (1984) to be a combination of emotional attachment to parents and parental encouragement of a striving for independence.

The ability of the family system to adjust to the adolescent's move toward increasing independence is seen as a central influence on the development of his or her identity (Carter and McGoldrick, 1980). Sabatelli and Mazor (1985), and Allison and Sabatelli (1988), suggest that the transitions for both the individual and the family during adolescence are highly interdependent and cannot be understood or facilitated separately. If the family system does not adapt to the transition of adolescence with a satisfactory re-alignment of its structure, the developing adolescent will be hindered in his or her attempts to achieve an identity in which he or she can be both independent and still positively connected to the family.

In summary, the quantitative studies examine a range of factors for their influence on the process of identity achievement. These include age, cognitive development, role-

experimentation, the degree of resolution of earlier psychosocial crises, and family involvement and support. There are no surprises in these studies. In general, the achievement of identity is understood to be facilitated as the adolescent grows older, attains more sophisticated cognitive abilities, has and experiences the opportunity to try out various nascent identities, utilizes the strengths gained from the relatively successful resolution of earlier crises, and receives consistent, but not engulfing, support for identity development from his or her family. In short, adolescents achieve identity by achieving identity. (If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck.)

It may be a duck. Identity may be so constituted and so achieved. However, there is a tautological quality to much of the quantitative research on identity formation that suggests that Erikson (1966) was right in his reluctance to be enthused about its potential worth. It is notable that he has nowhere devoted any time to discussing the outpouring of hard data from studies based on his ideas--as of 1989, over 150 studies using Marcia's model alone had been published (Kroger, 1989).

The research on identity formation, and the concept of identity itself, have been cited as having shortcomings. The next section of this literature review discusses some of the

criticisms, and their relevance to the rationale for the present study.

### Criticisms of the Empirical Studies

Marcia's (1966) model of identity achievement, which has served as the basis for the preponderance of the empirical studies, has been challenged by Côté and Levine (1983) on two counts. Côté and Levine claim, first, that Marcia's model--i.e., the four stages of identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement--is an inadequate operationalization of Erikson's formulation. Second, they believe that the implication of a progressive continuum through Marcia's four stages of identity is not valid for all populations. This second concern was felt to be of particular importance in analyzing the identity formation of mainland Puerto Ricans, who stand outside the dominant society.

Wearing (1984) suggests that the traditional view of identity development, which informed Marcia's (1966) model, no longer fits the realities of American society. Wearing believes that changes in family composition and structure require a re-definition of the identity-framing tasks of autonomy from the family, sex-role and occupational commitment, and internalized morality.

Throughout the empirical research on identity achievement, as Waterman (1982) notes, there has been a consistent sampling bias. Beginning with the studies from which Marcia (1966) developed his identity status interview, the great majority of subjects have been college students. This has certainly been a marriage of convenience. Researchers are usually academicians, and in students they have a ready, research-socialized, captive pool of subjects. However, as a sample, college students are an unrepresentative population in some significant respects.

First, the college population is predominantly white. In 1990, of a total of 13.7 million college students in the country, 10.6 million (77.9 per cent) were white (Chronicle of Higher Education, March 18, 1992, A35). Second, there is in all college students a socioeconomic bias that cuts across racial and ethnocultural lines. Families who send their children to college, and students who choose to attend college, subscribe to a certain set of values concerning education and mobility that may not be shared by the non-college population. Also, they have the means, or the understanding of how they can be obtained, to finance the realization of those values.

### Criticisms of the Concept of Identity

Erikson's (1963; 1980) understanding of identity formation has been challenged on three basic counts. The first, which has been discussed, is its lack of precision (Douvan and Adelson, 1966; Breakwell, 1986; Kroger, 1989). This has not been either a universally held or an especially restricting opinion, witness the large and still proliferating number of studies based on its operationalization (Kroger, 1989). Indeed, it has been argued that "the breadth of phenomena captured through Erikson's formulation make it particularly available for exploration" (Bourne, 1978a, in Kroger, 33).

A second criticism of Erikson's concept of identity formation is that it is male-oriented. Gilligan (1982) argues that the Eriksonian model, stressing separation and autonomy, does not comprehend the development of women, which is driven by the wish for relatedness and involvement. Franz and White (1985) faults Erikson for not paying sufficient attention to the processes of interpersonal attachment in the development of both women and men. Germain (1991) finds that Erikson's model of identity formation has not only a male bias but a "heterosexual bias" (449) as well.

The third major criticism of Erikson's model is that it

is culturally biased (Kagan, 1984; Longres, 1990; Germain, 1991). The central target of the cultural bias charges is Erikson's (1963; 1980) use of the epigenetic principle of embryology as a model for psychosocial development. Erikson (1980) posits that the human individual, like the physiological organism:

develops according to steps predetermined in the growing person's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with, a widening social radius, beginning with the dim image of mother and ending with mankind, or at any rate that segment of mankind which "counts" in a particular individual's life (54).

Erikson mapped out his psychosocial development plan in an "epigenetic chart" (1963, 273), which he originally called "The Eight Stages of Man" (247), a title dropped in later works.

It is the phase-specific, deterministic implications (Kagan, 1984) that have been found most problematic to critics of Erikson's developmental plan. They argue that Erikson bases his model on the norms of a Western, traditional-family, middle-class, Protestant-ethic society, and that he does not give adequate acknowledgement to the possibility of variations or discontinuities in the developmental process, or of altogether different paths of identity formation.

A careful reading of Erikson (1963; 1980) shows that he urges caution in the acceptance of his developmental schema at face value. Speaking of his epigenetic table (1963), he states that:

any one chart delimits one schedule (of development) only, and it must not be imputed that our outline of the psychosocial schedule is intended to imply obscure generalities concerning other aspects of development--or, indeed, of existence (270).

More tersely, Erikson (1980) states that such a chart of development "can be recommended to the serious attention only of those who can take it and leave it" (128).

As is often the case when charges of theoretical dogmatism are launched, it is not the formulations of the original thinkers, but the more simplistic or rigid shapes into which they have been cast by later exigiters that invite criticism. Many of Freud's ideas have suffered this fate. In Erikson's case, it is the "operationalizations" of some of the quantitative researchers that have distorted his thoughts. Also, it needs to be remembered that the setting up and burning of straw figures to light the road of one's own advancement is common practice in the academic and professional worlds. The purpose of this study, however, is neither to bury nor to praise Erikson, but to consider the relevance of his formulations as a framework within which to

understand identity formation in mainland Puerto Rican adolescent males.

The theme of the criticisms of the work on identity formation is that both the identity concept, and the empirical research on identity achievement, operate within and perpetuate a closed system. Their defining elements and processes are seen as having been derived from only a particular, limited sample of the dominant groups in society; and they may thus preclude an understanding of the process of identity formation in other populations.

For example, in Marcia's (1966) model, one of the way stations on the road to identity achievement is "foreclosure." This term refers to the setting of one's identity before one has experienced the implied next stage of "moratorium," in which it is seen as necessary that the "window for role experimentation remain(s) wide open" (Newman and Newman, 1988, 557). The foreclosed identity is based more on identifications with the values of one's parents or family than on beliefs that one has worked out for oneself in a time of moratorium. The implication is that the foreclosed identity is inferior to one achieved post-moratorium.

This may be more Humpty Dumpty talk, a self-serving attempt of the dominant society to define its superiority of

identity over those who cannot afford or do not choose a moratorium period of role experimentation, or whose cultural mores view identification with one's family as desirable. It certainly implies that some identities are more equal than others, and that traditional research methods can keep proving this.

Gilligan's (1982) criticisms point to the same closed-system issue. Her claim that Erikson's perspective on identity is male-biased may not rule out its use in the present study on male identity formation. However, the awareness that women may achieve their identity based on their own values and via their own paths raises the question of whether other populations different from the dominant society may not similarly find their identities according to "a different voice."

#### PUERTO RICAN IDENTITY

This study is concerned with Puerto Rican identity, rather than with the broader Latino identity. Puerto Rican identity is seen as being unique among Latino groups due to the particular relationship the Commonwealth has had with the United States. Like most Latin American and Caribbean countries, Puerto Rico originally had an Indian population.

This group was then conquered in the sixteenth century by the Spanish, who gave the island its present name, and brought in African slaves. What established Puerto Rico's unique relationship with the United States was its being ceded to the United States in 1898 as part of the price Spain paid for losing the Spanish-American War. In 1917, after nineteen years of being colonial subjects, all Puerto Ricans were declared to be United States citizens by the United States Government (DeJesus-Rueff, 1986; Melville, 1988).

Thus Puerto Ricans, although geographically and culturally Latin American or Caribbean, are also by citizenship North American. While one may speak of a Mexican-American or Cuban-American, it is redundant to speak of a Puerto Rican-American. There is no legal boundary between Puerto Rico and the mainland United States; Puerto Ricans may travel between the island and the mainland at will. They may be migrants, but they are not immigrants. All of the foregoing suggests that Puerto Rican identity formation must be understood on its own terms and not as part of a general Latino pattern (Melville, 1988; Rodríguez, 1989).

This issue is, not surprisingly, grist for political mills. Totti (1987) points out that by the year 2005 persons of Latino descent will become the largest minority in the United States. He argues that by uniting around common

cultural values and socioeconomic concerns, the several Latino groups can create a politically potent, single ethnic identity.

Conversely, Melville (1988) believes that Puerto Ricans, due to their unique history, struggle with a "colonial ethnicity" (77), and that viewing them as part of a single Latino entity also ignores the very poor socioeconomic conditions under which so many of them live. Similarly, Vasquez (1989) argues that "while sharing a great deal with other Latinos, the Puerto Rican reality must continue to be studied as a unique ethnic phenomenon in the United States " (15). Putting this perspective into operational terms for social work, Asamoah, Garcia, Hendricks, and Walker (1991) stress that only when the specific attributes and values of different ethnic populations are considered can there be appropriate applications of resources, policies, and practice for all ethno-cultural groups. Curtis (1990) urges those who deliver social services not to assume that all Hispanics will react in the same manner to such aspects of cultural life as the use of folk healers speaking Spanish, and the very acceptance of human services.

Klor de Alva (1988) also argues that Latinos differ in significant ways. He cites ethnic and national origins, causes of migration, class, generational and regional factors, and

racial characteristics as elements that differentiate Latino groups from each other. Finally, the Latino National Political Survey, begun in 1988, reports that the various Latino groups define themselves as distinct (Coughlin, 1991). The survey, which has interviewed over 2,800 Cubans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, finds that the various Latino groups identify themselves by their specific nationalities, and express different beliefs in political values, such as economic individualism.

While not unsympathetic to the cause of writers like Totti, the study proposed here is just that--a study, not a call to political action. The arguments citing the unique history of the Puerto Rican people, and the author's impressions from twenty years of experience working in East Harlem, do speak for considering Puerto Rican identity as a discrete entity.

#### ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity is one of the three additional identity concepts considered central to an understanding of Puerto Rican ego identity formation. The other two, minority identity and bicultural identity (DeJesus-Rueff, 1986), will be discussed in subsequent sections of this review.

There is considerable discussion in the literature as to what constitutes ethnic identity. Attempting to distinguish ethnicity from culture, Sottomayor (1977) state that "while culture deals with symbolic generalities and universals, ethnicity deals with the individual's mode and depth of identification as well as providing a sense of belonging to a reference group" (203).

Erikson (1966) although characteristically connotative, describes ethnicity somewhat in the same tone:

a feeling of continuity with the past, a feeling that is maintained as an essential part of one's self-definition. Ethnicity is also related to the individual need for collective continuity (17).

Novak (1972) sharpens Erikson's idea of a maintained sense of continuity with the past:

What is an ethnic group? It is a group with historical memory, real or imaginary. One belongs to an ethnic group in part involuntarily, in part by choice. Given a grandparent or two, one chooses to shape one's consciousness by one history rather than another. Ethnic memory is not a set of events remembered, but rather a set of instincts, feelings, intimacies, expectations, patterns of emotions and behavior; a sense of reality; a set of stories for individuals--and for the people as a whole--to live out (Novak, in Matthews, 1984, 72).

Rogler, Cooney, and Ortiz (1980) also note the individual, subjective aspect of ethnic identity, and add two others:

Ethnic identity has been defined as subjective identification, a single dimension or aspect of the broader concept of assimilation, and as a multi-dimensional concept including language, behavior, values, knowledge or ethnic group history, and subjective identification (194).

For assessing the third, multi-dimensional concept of ethnic identity, these authors suggest the following categories:

Mastery, use of, and preference for the ethnic language; use of and preference for ethnic foods, music, tradition, and literature; knowledge of the cultural heritage; pride in the elements of ethnicity; subjective identification of self in terms of ethnic group descent or attitudes of the ethnic group; belief in the values rooted in the group; behavioral conformance to the cultural norms of the groups (194).

Hermet (1988) finds that in relation to similar variables, mainland Puerto Rican adolescents have a different pattern of references than their Anglo counterparts. Responding to questions on items including food, politics, parentage, and language, the Puerto Rican subjects demonstrated what Hermet terms a "Puerto Rican mode" (12)

that distinguished them from the Anglo group.

The particular values central to the Puerto Rican identity are articulated by many authors. Human relations are seen as the most important focus of the Puerto Rican experience, and these must be characterized by respecto, dignidad, and personalismo (Ghali, 1982; Mizio, 1983). Relationships with the family, including the extended family, receive much care and attention. An authoritarian pattern of child-rearing is preferred, and the presence of "machismo" has a generally accepted impact (Bird and Canino, 1982).

Interactions with people who are emotionally close but not connected by legality or blood are also of deep value. The institution of compadrazgo (Mizio, 1983, 77), in which children are raised by people other than their biological families, is an integral aspect of Puerto Rican life.

Several studies compare the values of Puerto Ricans on the island with those of mainlanders. Sjostrom (1988) uses the Kluckholm Values Orientation Scale to determine the values of island and mainland college students in relation to the man-nature dichotomy, time, activity, and relationships. The findings show mainland Puerto Ricans similar to Anglos in their attitudes toward activity and time, and similar to their island cohorts regarding relationships. Sjostrom sees the

study as validating "the forces of both continuity and acculturation" (182) and urges more research in the area with third-generation mainland Puerto Ricans.

In a related study of island and mainland sixteen-year-olds, Hart, Lucca-Irizarry, and Damon (1986) report findings suggesting that the self-understanding of island Puerto Ricans is oriented more toward social qualities--relationships again--while that of mainland subjects is focussed more on psychological qualities. Finally, Rodríguez-Cortes (1990) compares the ethnic identities of college students on the mainland who are descendants of Puerto Rican migrants with those of island college students. The mainlanders, she finds, "locate ethnic identity in their hearts and minds," or based on "motivational criteria," while the islanders find their ethnic identity "in the eye of the beholder," or based on "behavioral criteria" (380).

The question of the relevance of race to the formation of Puerto Rican ethnic identity has been frequently addressed in the literature. Rodríguez (1989), in a careful review, stresses the difference between the island and the mainland on the issue. She describes Puerto Rico itself as monocultural and multiracial, while the mainland is multicultural and biracial. Traditionally, Rodríguez claims, Puerto Ricans are "rainbow people" (49), who have relatively little color bias.

As Ghali (1982) points out, a much admired physical trait among Puerto Ricans is the skin color known as trigueño, a brown tone between white and black.

It is only on the mainland, according to Rodríguez, that Puerto Ricans have to face a racial either-or situation. In this situation, says Betances (1974), "confusion, ambivalence, and contradictions are present in the lives of Puerto Rican adolescents as they relate to the issue of race and color" (472). Finding that in Anglo society the issue does matter, they are confronted with making a decision about who they are racially, and with the realization that others will also be making that decision about them. Longres (1974) sees the black-or-white polarity as a danger to the existence of the Puerto Rican identity. He argues strongly that "the unique identity of Puerto Ricans as culturally homogenous and racially mixed and integrated must be championed if Puerto Ricans are to exist as an identifiable group" (67). As a way to unify and fight racism, Puerto Ricans, urges Jorge (1982), should think of themselves as "indoafroeurpean" (15).

Several writers cite the influence of class as significant in the shaping of ethnic identity. Melville (1988) defines ethnicity as "a complex phenomenon, or series of phenomena, that can only be understood by looking at class and cultural variables" (76). Bonacick (1980) believes that

"class approaches are the most fruitful way to study ethnicity and race" (59). Longres (1991) takes the class perspective into the practice realm by asserting that it is not culture that is the key factor in how groups respond to service but their status. Of particular note for the study proposed here, Nelson and Tienda (1985) believe that the differing class statuses of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans in the United States are key elements in the formation of their respective ethnic identities.

Ethnic identity is understood by certain authors to be something beyond cultural, racial, and class factors. For Melville (1988), "the essence of the concept (of ethnic identity) is one of contrast between two or more groups, not the objective content possessed by one of the groups in and of itself" (71). "Ethnicity results," she claims, "when a group is singled out and/or self-identifies itself as different from another group" (70). More pointedly, Patterson (1983) believes that a given ethnic group is defined by "consciousness of a shared crisis of alienation resolved through a commitment to the group sharing the crisis" (25).

However ethnic identity is conceptualized, it should not be understood to be a static entity, according to Gelfand and Fandetti (1986). Rather, it is "emergent" (542) in nature, shifting in character under the influence of generalization,

educational, and class changes.

Lyman and Douglas (1973), quoted in Royce (1985), offer a general, summarizing definition of ethnic identity. It is, they state, "an acquired and used feature of human identity subject to display, avoidance, manipulation, and exploitation: (Royce, 185).

#### MINORITY IDENTITY

The issues of contrast and alienation, discussed above, are at the heart of the concept of minority identity, a second major perspective on Puerto Rican identity formation. The literature in this area focusses on how groups outside the dominant society acculturate, or do not acculturate, to the norms of the dominant society.

In his classic work, Assimilation in American Life, Gordon (1964) suggests three outcomes for the process of acculturation in the United States--Anglo conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. The first refers to the condition in which minority groups give up their culturally defining characteristics and become as Anglo as possible. The second describes a new amalgam of American identity, in which "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race" (116).

The third is the situation in which various minority groups maintain their distinctive cultural characteristics and co-exist in what New York Mayor David Dinkins has termed "a glorious mosaic".

Gordon and others (Berry, 1974; R. Hill, 1980), see the acculturation process in stages. In broad outline, the process is understood to take place within a continuum, with rejection of original minority identity elements and wholesale acceptance of dominant society norms on one end, and a reverse rejection of dominant society norms coupled with a strong adherence to original cultural elements on the other. There are intermediate points and variations within the acculturation process, indicating that individuals may choose some form of bicultural identity rather than commit themselves entirely to one or the other of the polarities.

The relationship between minority status and the development of ego identity is stressed by Maldonado (1975):

It has become impossible for an individual to develop any self-identity concepts without reference to his race or ethnicity, especially the individual whose minority status is looked upon as inferior and who is systematically made aware of this status (621-2).

Erikson (1966) warns of the potential vulnerability of minority-group members when they face the task of achieving a positive ego identity:

The individual belonging to an oppressed and exploited minority, which is aware of the dominant cultural ideals but prevented from emulating them, is apt to fuse the negative images held up to him by the dominant majority with his own negative identity (155).

Bird (1982) applies Erikson's concept of negative identity to the Puerto Rican people as a whole. Bird believes that due to the colonial nature of Puerto Rico's relationship to the United State, "there is a prevalence of negative identity elements" (205) in the self-definition of all Puerto Ricans. Melville's (1988) later suggestion that Puerto Ricans struggle with a "colonial identity" (77) is similar to Bird's formulation.

Lampkin (1971) sees the development of a negative identity differently. She believes that one takes an alienated position not so much "from rejection of major values or culture, but from the acceptance of pressing realities of underclass life in an affluent society" (44). This perspective has particular relevance for understanding the minority experience of mainland Puerto Ricans, many of whom live in economically distressed neighborhoods. Lampkin uses the term "underclass" far in advance of its current highly

visible and debated exposure.

#### BICULTURAL IDENTITY

The final perspective on Puerto Rican identity formation to be considered is that of bicultural identity. The essence of a bicultural identity is simply that--the individual sees himself or herself as embracing elements of two cultures, and defines himself or herself as such. The benefits to Hispanics of adopting a bicultural identity in the United States are argued by Szapocnik and Kurtines (1980):

Individuals who live in a bicultural context and who either underacculturate (fail to learn how to, or do not want to interact with the Anglo-American context) or overacculturate (reject the skills necessary to interact with the Hispanic-American context), do not have the flexibility necessary to cope with their entire cultural milieu (146).

De Anda (1984), in a frequently cited article, sees the bicultural model as holding "the most promise for understanding the process by which an individual learns to function in varying degrees within two systems--the minority culture and the majority society" (101). She believes that the degree to which a minority-group individual is able to become

bicultural depends upon the dissimilarities between the minority and dominant groups, and the availability of mediating influences that may bridge the cultural gaps.

De Hoyos, De Hoyos, and Anderson (1986) find the dichotomy suggested by the bicultural model inadequate for a full understanding of the minority experience. They argue that social workers must assess and work on the degree and kind of "dislocation" (61)--be it social, cultural, or sociocultural--suffered by minority group clients as they attempt to interact with the larger society.

The either-or polarity implied by the bicultural model is also questioned by Curtis (1990). Curtis urges that social workers not make assumptions about the acculturation of Hispanic families based simply on their choice of language, belief in folk-healers, or acceptance of human services. For Curtis, along with De Hoyos, De Hoyos, and Anderson, acculturation is a more subtle, graduated phenomenon.

Coming to terms with a bicultural identity, however desirable, may not be a simple matter. The attempt to do so is cited by Costantino, Malgady, and Rogler (1988) as a significant stressor for Puerto Ricans living on the mainland. Valcourt (1977), in a study of Puerto Rican adolescents in the United States, finds that ambiguity exists in their minds, and

that "they do not know who they are and where they belong" (147).

For the individual unable to take on a bicultural identity, there are potential pitfalls. Palleja (1987), in another study of mainland Puerto Rican adolescents, reports findings that support the contention of Szapocnik and Kurtines (1980) that failure to achieve an optimal degree of biculturalism can be problematic. Palleja's subjects, especially males, who maintain an allegiance to one, rather than both the Puerto Rican and Anglo-American cultures, manifest higher levels of rebellious behavior. DeJesus-Rueff (1986), echoing the concerns of Erikson (1966) and Maldonado (1975) about the vulnerability of minority-group members, states:

Ethnic minority members unable to choose a bi-cultural ethnic identity during ego identity development are more susceptible to the negative identifications placed on group members by the dominant society (50-1).

A considerable body of both professional and creative literature has emerged to describe, and validate, a particular New York-Puerto Rican bicultural identity, termed the "Nuyorican" (Algarín and Piñero, 1975; Flores, Attinasi and

Pedraza, 1981; Mohr, 1982; Flores, 1985; Rodríguez, 1989). In the creation of the unique Nuyorican identity, according to Flores (1985), "something other than assimilation or cultural separatism is at work" (11). Nuyoricans, says Flores, possess a bicultural identity that cannot be understood by "ethnic reductionism" (Greer, 1974, 34), or linguistic reductionism based on their choice of Spanish or English. Indeed, a central purpose of the Flores-Attinasi-Pedraza paper is to make a case for the legitimization of "Spanglish," the Spanish-English dialect the authors claim to be the lingua franca of Nuyoricans and a potent symbol of their bicultural identity.

Flores's (1985) paper maps out four specific "moments" (11) in what he sees as the development of the Nuyorican identity: an immediate perception of the impoverished New York surroundings; a spiritual and psychological passage to Puerto Rico searching for ethno-cultural bearings; a psychological return to New York, but with a perspective altered by the experience of the second moment; and, finally, a branching out to join with "other marginalized peoples" (12). In this admittedly political piece, Flores credits Tato Laviera (1981), a Nuyorican poet whose work figures prominently in this study's sample, as being both the inspiration for his paradigm, and an expression of the Nuyorican experience.

In general, mainland writers regard the establishment of a bicultural Nuyorican identity favorably. Summarizing several years of studies, DeJesus-Rueff (1986) finds that "it appears...that among mainland Puerto Ricans there is a conscious effort to create a new bicultural identity" (66).

The view of Nuyorican identity from the island, however, is less sanguine. Seda-Bonilla (1972) believes that the Nuyorican identity is created by the mainland Puerto Rican's being caught between a demand for cultural assimilation and the racist attitude of the dominant society that denies him or her full admission into mainstream American life. Seda-Bonilla sees the political struggle to save the Puerto Rican national identity as being weakened by the acculturation of Nuyoricans.

#### SUMMARY

The following elements have been cited as influential in the formation of the mainland Puerto Rican identity: ethnicity, race, class, and minority, and bicultural status. Each has at times been pressed into the service of a political agenda; little hard data exists to indicate that one has significantly more salience than another. To use Breakwell's (1986) language, it is likely that each of these components is comprised of varying content, and carries greater or lesser

value, in the final ego identity of every mainland Puerto Rican.

CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the general methodology of the study. First the rationale for using a qualitative approach is discussed. Then the particular method of grounded theory is explained, including a review of selected pertinent literature.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The Chaplain of Yale University, Frederick Streets, who was also trained as a social worker, was recently asked about the challenge of integrating Yale's rapidly diversifying student body and their religious beliefs with the school's traditional Protestant Christian forms of worship. Reverend Streets replied that he was guided in his efforts to make his services meaningful to everyone by two questions he tried constantly to keep before him: "What do you have to retain to still be who you are? And if you lose a part of you, who are you then?" (Judson, 1992, L39).

These are essentially the questions that impelled this study: What does the mainland Puerto Rican male have to retain

of his ethnocultural self to still be who he is? And if he loses a part of that self, who is he then?

These questions could have been pursued by asking Puerto Rican subjects to respond to standardized quantitative instruments. There are various personality inventories that assess identity, or self-concept, as it is more often called. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1964), Offer Self-Image Questionnaire (Offer, 1971), Ego-Ideal and Conscience Development Test (Cassell, 1969), and Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (Millon, Green, and Meagher, 1983) are a few among many.

These instruments have been challenged, however, as being invalid for understanding the Latino identity or self-concept (Maldonado, 1975; Rogler, 1989; Guarnaccia, Good, and Kleinman, 1990; Marín and Marín, 1991). Maldonado, for example, finds that they have "failed to adequately consider the factors of nonassimilation, partial acculturation, and ethnic identity" (622) in their conceptualization of the Latino identity.

In a highly critical review, Becerra and Zambrana (1985) state that much of the quantitative research on Hispanics has not developed information that could be beneficial to the minority community. Rather, they believe, "researchers'

findings have been harmful to minority communities, portraying behavior patterns as pathological," and fostering "stereotyping" (43).

For the present study, the researcher believed that a qualitative methodology would yield results less subject to cultural distortion--results that might, in fact, correct culturally distorted existing theoretical formulations. Leininger (1992) states that "gaining new insights into cultural lifeways" (409) is a particular strength of qualitative studies.

## GROUNDED THEORY

### Rationale

The choice of grounded theory methodology was consistent with the project's primary goal of gaining an experience-near understanding of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. The raison d'être of the method is to "ground" whatever theoretical statement it makes in the experiences and perceptions of the subjects. Grounded theory is developed during, not in advance of, study, and "avoids the common divorce between abstract theorizing and the evidence from actual investigation" (Shipman, 1981, 33). According to Glaser (1978), who with Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) founded the method, grounded theory frees the researcher "to

discover what is going on, rather than assuming what should be going on" (Glaser, 1978, 159).

For an understanding of mainland Puerto Rican male identity, the researcher wanted the information to come as directly as possible from Puerto Ricans themselves, rather than assuming that established theory had the last word on the subject. Using grounded theory for the study met what Rogler (1989) sees as the test of cultural validity--"the dialectical matching of the assumptions underlying the concept and perceptions of the cultural context to see if and how they fit" (298).

In addition to choosing grounded theory for its ability to generate experience-near concepts, the researcher also valued its potential for immediate application. Findings from grounded theory research can be tried out while study continues. Leininger (1992) sees this potential as "a major advantage" (410) that qualitative studies have over quantitative ones.

In this study, poems that appeared relevant to mainland Puerto Rican identity formation could be utilized in the researcher's practice with Puerto Rican adolescents. Adolescence is considered to be the period in the lifespan during which the individual needs to establish a firm

foundation for his or her identity (Erikson, 1980). Bringing poems that speak to Puerto Rican identity into sessions with Puerto Rican adolescents, in a therapeutically timely manner, would stimulate the adolescents' reflection and work on a task central to their stage of development.

By this approach, both practice and research would be served. The Puerto Rican adolescents' responses to the poetry would be a measure of its value for theory-building. The discussion of the poems would further the clients' work on their identity formation. The investigator would function as a practitioner-researcher (Schon, 1983), a role that is believed to be "critical for the integration of practice and social science theory" (Bernstein, Goodman, and Epstein, 1992, 4).

### Method

Grounded theory seeks to let data tell its own theoretical story. In terms of allowing psychosocial theory to emerge from the data of subjects' communications, Freud was the first grounded theorist. He had a minimal number of pre-existing constructs in his field with which to work, and so was relatively free of both guidance and constraint in his reception of what he heard and saw. Even as his ideas about

human behavior took substantial form, it was the essence of Freud's approach "to see...the theoretical implications of each piece of evidence, and to follow them without regard for the sanctity of the positions he had already established" (Alvarez, 1972, 105). This is the attitude toward which the grounded theorist strives.

Working from a different perspective and toward a different end, the radical sociologist Paulo Friere (1985) also defined the attitude of the grounded theorist: "To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and recreate them" (4).

Another example from Through the Looking-Glass also illuminates the ideal grounded theory frame of mind. In fact, Alice, who has constantly to question her usual ways of understanding the world as she faces life behind the looking-glass, is a particularly appropriate model for the grounded theorist. At one point in the story, Alice comments on the "curious attitudes" of a messenger who is approaching the White King. "Not at all," replies the King. "He's an Anglo-Saxon Messenger--and those are Anglo-Saxon attitudes. He only does them when he's happy" (100). This study, by an Anglo-Saxon researcher, sought to understand Puerto Rican attitudes, which have often looked "curious," if not dysfunctional, through the lens of traditional quantitative research (Becerra and Zambrana, 1985).

Although it is a qualitative paradigm, grounded theory is quite specific in its method, using "a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1991, 24). The prime task of the grounded theory method is the exploration of "emerging structures" (Glaser and Strauss, 1966, 61) of meaning from data.

The process by which the investigator facilitates the emergence of structures of meaning in grounded theory involves several steps: data collecting; categorizing the data; integrating the categories; memoing; and writing the theory (Custer, 1987; Rennie, Philips, and Quartaro, 1988). This process will now be outlined.

#### Data Collecting

The grounded theory researcher begins by sampling data that are believed--by existing theory--to be most closely related to the phenomenon under study. This is consistent with the practice of traditional validation research. In this case, the researcher first sampled poems written by mainland Puerto Rican males, on the assumption that they would most accurately reflect mainland Puerto Rican male identity formation.

As the researcher examines each new unit of data, he or she compares it with the already examined data--here, each poem with the previously read poems. This is the technique of "constant comparison" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 105), which drives and guides all stages of a grounded theory study. It is the application of the constant comparison technique that "starts to generate theoretical properties of the data" (106).

### Categorizing

The first sampled data, by being subjected to constant comparison, begin to suggest categories of meaning. In grounded theory work, the investigator tries not to impose categories on the data but allows the units to cluster themselves, much as iron filings on a piece of paper draw together over magnets out of sight underneath the paper.

As new data are examined, two developments occur. One is that the established categories "saturate, which means that the analysis of new protocols reveals no new categories, properties, or relationships among them "(Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988, 143). In the present study, for example, a category related to the "awareness of discrimination" saturated quite early in the analysis; reading additional poems only reinforced its existence.

Another development is that new categories are created by data that does not fit into the established categories. The grounded theorist is particularly alert for data that are "potential qualifiers of the emerging theory" (Ibid.)--that is, the theory coming into existence through the interaction of the established categories. The researcher continues the process of comparative sampling "as long as new information that appears to enlarge the categories of data available keeps coming" (Holland and Kirkpatrick, 1991, 139).

When data are found that do appear to qualify the emerging theory, and thus demand new categories, the researcher may select additional data samples that allow further exploration of their qualifying attributes. In the present study, the emergence in the poetry of male Puerto Rican attitudes toward Puerto Rican women suggested that reading poetry written by Puerto Rican women might add new dimensions to the understanding of the Puerto Rican masculine identity.

In the same constant comparison approach, other forms of creative literature by mainland, and island, Puerto Rican men and women could also be sampled for their expression of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. Thus, data sampling in grounded theory work is not limited to the area staked out by existing theory, but is flexible and takes new directions

"influenced by the outcomes of the emerging analysis" (142).

In theory, the method could sample an almost infinite number of comparison data groups (Custer, 1987, 72). The grounded theorist is seen as a kind of sociological Wild Person of Aveyron, entering society with a mental tabula rasa, and learning everything from the ground (sic) up. He or she carries no theoretical baggage, all experience is data, and categories of meaning establish themselves only slowly through repeated, comparative contacts with the data of experience.

This study, by comparison, took a modified grounded theory approach. It was what Miles and Huberman (1984) term a "tight, prestructured qualitative design" (27). Its core category of identity, an established theoretical construct, was pre-set; it did not devolve from the data. Along with the concepts of ethnic, minority and bicultural identity, it acted as the study's guiding "cognitive map" (Bernstein, Goodman, and Epstein, 1992, 21).

### Integrating the Categories

In grounded theory work, as the categories coalesce and

saturate, the researcher begins to integrate them. Some are found to be "defining characteristics or properties of other categories" (Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988, 143). For example, existing theory sees the categories of ethnic, racial, minority, and bicultural identity as properties of the central category of ego identity in Puerto Ricans. As the supporting categories collapse into a few core categories, or a single core category, the researcher has the foundation for his or her eventual theoretical statement. "Thus the theory develops," say Glaser and Strauss (1967), "as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison" (109).

### Memoing

Like the technique of constant comparison, the keeping of memos is a continuous and integral part of the grounded theory method. In the memos, the researcher maintains a running commentary of his or her thoughts, speculations, questions, and biases as the study unfolds. Many of the memos are "conceptual in intent" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 69), and will serve as the foundation for the writing of the eventual theory. An important focus of the memos is the analyst's "thoughts about the similarity of the emerging theory to established theories and concepts" (Rennie, Phillips, and

Quartaro, 144). The latter are an inescapable part of the researcher's mindset, and their influence throughout the study must be acknowledged, documented, and discussed.

Layder (1982) stresses that the memos should also explore the potential role in the theory development of such issues as power, class, transference. This was especially necessary in this study by an Anglo researcher of Puerto Rican identity.

### Writing the Theory

In writing the theory, the analyst relies heavily on his or her memos, "the main repository of the analyst's interpretative activity" (Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 145). Via the memos, the theory actually takes shape throughout the entire study. As Thomas (1990) states:

The theoretical framework is self-correcting; that is, the framework is generated from and grounded in the data gathered up to any point in the study process. Adjustments are made to accommodate new information from additional data and from comparisons with the literature (146-7).

Acknowledging the constraints imposed by his or her biases, the analyst attempts to set down what the data says about the phenomenon being analyzed. The final theory combines "mostly

concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data with some existing ones that are clearly useful" (Miles and Huberman, 46). To be true to the spirit of grounded theory, the researcher also must admit that there may be aspects of the studied phenomenon that do not yield up, or yield to, theory.

### Grounded Theory Studies

Several authors have used the grounded theory method to analyze aspects of psychosocial behavior and development. In nursing, the field in which Glaser and Straus (1965) began their work, three of the many grounded theory citations are Antle-May's (1980) examination of the reactions of first-time expectant fathers to their wives' pregnancies; Stern and Pyles's (1986) study of women's culturally based decisions about health; and Chenitz and Swanson's (1986) edited collection of readings on grounded theory research. In the field of higher education, Conrad (1982) sees the grounded theory approach as a promising alternative to traditional research methodology.

In social work, two studies exemplify how grounded theory may be used to examine psychosocial processes closely related to that of identity formation. Fiene (1988) analyzes how a

group of poor Appalachian women construct their world view, finding that core categories of belief system, role behavior, morality, and self-appraisal emerge from her interview data.

Bitonti (1990) examines the self-esteem of women during life transitions. She chooses the grounded theory approach because "the study of self-esteem within the logical-positivist research tradition has yielded little knowledge directly applicable to clinical social work practice" (2157A). The aim of Bitonti's theory-building is "the generation of propositions to be translated into social work practice" (Ibid.). This was also a central purpose of the present study.

In the area of social work practice, Sacks (1987) uses the constant-comparison technique of grounded theory to conceptualize "the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social forces which interact at the (psychosocial) interface to precipitate a worker's interventions with or on behalf of a client" (1542-A.)

Creative literature has just begun to be used as data in grounded theory research. Custer (1987) uses six twentieth-century novels by American women to derive a grounded theory statement about the cognitive development of women. She reports that her findings are consistent with the conclusions

of Gilligan and other theorists in the field of women's studies. She believes that her study "has shown that analyses of female fictions of development can both substantiate and enrich more scientific methods of investigation" (366). The present study shared Custer's belief in the value of creative literature as a medium through which to expand and develop psychosocial theory.

### Related Research

Many studies, while not labeled as grounded theory, utilize creative literature as data to describe and analyze aspects of identity formation. Adler and Clark (1991), using Erikson's and Gilligan's theories of development, report on a content analysis of the depiction of adolescence in award-winning adolescent literature. Backes (1990) explores female coming of age as presented in contemporary literature about adolescents. In a study of minority group identity, Markstrom-Adams (1990) examines the self-development of American Indians as portrayed in adolescent literature, discovering that themes of "hopelessness and helplessness of an American minority group" (225) are pervasive shaping forces in the subjects' identity formation.

The experiences shaping mainland Puerto Rican identity as

seen in Puerto Rican literature are analyzed by several authors. Lopez (1973) and Falcón (1984) note the important effects of emigration and immigration. Baglin (1971) and González-Ferreira (1991) examine how Puerto Rican writers portray the unique, bicultural life situation of the mainland Puerto Rican, with González-Ferreira finding that cultural-minority status is a critical factor in determining how mainland Puerto Ricans view themselves and the world.

In a thematic study closely related to the present one, Turner (1978) examines the fiction and poetry of the group of mainland Puerto Rican writers referred to as the Neoricans. She finds that these writers are concerned with "the question of identity, racial oppression, and the dire poverty of the ghetto" (vii).

The development of female Puerto Rican identity as pictured in Puerto Rican literature written by women is explored by Fernández-Olmos (1989) and Rojas (1989). Rojas finds in the novel Getting Home Alive, by Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales, a clear expression of the Puerto Rican woman's "search for identity," and "need for self-definition" (166).

While these literary analyses of Puerto Rican literature are not technically grounded theory work, it is essentially

only in label that they differ. They let the literature speak for itself as data, and are thus concerned, in Glaser's (1978) words, with "what is going on rather than assuming what should be going on" (159).

These analyses of works of creative literature for themes related to Puerto Rican identity formation yield results that are consonant with psychosocial theory. The factors of migration, biculturalism, minority status, discrimination, and poverty are documented by both artist and theorist. The traditional Puerto Rican values regarding human relations and the family are similarly noted. All of these elements are understood as contributing to the mainland Puerto Rican identity.

#### SUMMARY

A qualitative paradigm (Leininger, 1992) and the particular method of grounded theory were seen as appropriate and necessary for this exploration of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. The study was designed to derive an understanding of that identity from the thoughts and words of mainland Puerto Ricans themselves. The medium of poetry was chosen as being a direct expression of identity, one not filtered though by the constraints of psychometric

instruments.

Chapter IV describes how the methodology of grounded theory was specifically put to use in the study.

CHAPTER IV  
SPECIFIC METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY  
INTRODUCTION

It is more difficult to describe qualitative methodology precisely than quantitative. As Kirk and Miller (1986) put it, "the ability of practitioners of certain kinds of scientific endeavor to talk about what they do is much more advanced than that of qualitative researchers" (18).

A central difference is that non-qualitative research deals in numbers, which in and of themselves are unambiguous. The strength, and weakness, of the purely numerical approach are suggested by a comment made by the fourteen-year-old mathematical genius who is the protagonist in Don DeLillo's (1976) novel, Ratner's Star. "As I understand it," he says, "there is no reality more independent of our perception and more true to itself than mathematical reality" (48).

Qualitative studies, for their part, suffer from "the chronic problem of being done chiefly with words" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 54). Furthermore, the words of qualitative research are not like the technical language of quantitative work, whose technical denotations are understood and accepted and whose connotations are few. The language of qualitative study is ordinary language. Its denotations are often

elusive, and its connotations many. Investigators who choose qualitative methodology thinking that it will be the easier research mode should beware.

#### DATA

In using poetry as data, this study offered a new medium for the development of social work knowledge. The choice of poetry was made in the belief that "the artist's view of reality is a unique and valid one which can be used to enhance and reinforce the results of empirical study" (Custer, 1987, 13). To date, Custer has been the only grounded theorist to use creative literature as the data from which to derive psychosocial theory.

The use of poetry as data carries limitations. If it is a "chronic problem" of qualitative research that it deals in words rather than numbers, then poetry is yet another step away from the numerical precision of non-qualitative study. This limitation will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

The use of poetry as data also has its strengths. It was a prime consideration of the study that mainland Puerto Rican identity be defined "in (its) own voice" (Gilligan, 1982). The creative literature of a people is a direct expression of

the beliefs and values that matter most in their sense of who they are. Speaking of mainland Puerto Rican writers, Turner (1991) states that "an issue which recurs in one guise or another in the work of nearly all of these writers is the question of identity" (5).

While there are some novels, plays, and short stories by mainland Puerto Rican authors, poetry makes up the most extensive segment of mainland Puerto Rican literature. Mohr (1982) notes "the surprising amount of poetry composed by Puerto Ricans in New York" (91). Speaking of poetry in general, John Fowles (1973) said, "I never pick up a book of poems without thinking that it will have one advantage over most novels: I shall know the writer better at the end of it." Poetry is then a literary medium likely to provide a wide range of experience-near data for this study of mainland Puerto Rican male identity.

#### PROCEDURES

Leininger (1992) states that a major shortcoming of qualitative research is the "failure to report clearly and in detail how the data were analyzed" (408). The grounded-theory investigator is up against it at this point in a study. As noted before, he or she has no formulae, equations, or

accepted technical jargon with which to explain what was done with the data. The grounded theorist can only describe--in ordinary language--the often tedious process in which he or she repeatedly sifted through the data watching for it to gradually reveal categories of meaning and the relationships among them.

### Sampling

The sample of poems used in the study was drawn from Puerto Rican poetry published on the mainland between 1969 and the present. Nineteen sixty-nine was the year of publication of Victor Cruz Hernandez's Snaps, the first collection of poems to explore the experience of being a Puerto Rican raised on the mainland.

The sample was limited to poems written primarily in English. There were two reasons for this qualification. The first is that the predominance of mainland Puerto Rican poetry written since 1969 has been written in English. The second reason is that it was one goal of the study to develop a bibliography of poetry for use in bibliotherapeutic interventions with mainland Puerto Rican clients, primarily adolescents and young adults. This population is now largely English-speaking, and certainly English-reading.

The sample was not significantly biased by the English-only limitation. The researcher reads enough Spanish so that he was able to survey mainland poems written in that language since 1969 and determine that their expression of mainland Puerto Rican identity essentially matched that of the poems written in English.

Because the focus of the study was male mainland Puerto Rican identity, the central selection of poetry was written by males. The works of several female mainland Puerto Rican poets were also examined in the constant comparison method as checks on the emerging theory.

The final requirement for the sample of poems was that they express elements of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. In effect, the poets, through their poems, were treated as subjects, and asked, "What constitutes your identity as a Puerto Rican man living on the mainland?"

The great majority of the poetry selected for the sample was written by New York Puerto Rican poets. This is not surprising given that New York has traditionally been the chief point of entry and home for most mainland Puerto Ricans. Some of the poets represented were born on the island; some were born on the mainland. No difference in the expression of identity was noted between these two groups.

Many of the poets represented in the sample were of the "Nuyorican" school (Algarín and Piñero, 1975; Mohr, 1982; Aparicio, 1988). Born of Puerto Rican parents, and raised, but not necessarily born, in the United States, the Nuyorican poets:

...see themselves as belonging to a society distinct from but essentially operating within a dominant society that is oppressive and unjust to its minorities, refusing to recognize their basic physical, moral, and spiritual needs and denying them dignity (Mohr, 1982, 93).

In their work, according to Aparicio (1988), the Nuyoricans "strive to create an oral, bilingual context which reflects the popular culture and the social conditions of the Puertorriqueños in El Barrio" (147).

There has been lack of agreement as to who should be considered a Nuyorican poet. The only anthology devoted to the Nuyoricans (Algarín and Piñero, 1975), described as "the best indicator of who belongs and who doesn't" (Mohr, 1982, 104), does not include the work of Victor Hernandez Cruz. Cruz lived and wrote in New York for years, and contributed significantly to the mainland Puerto Rican poetic opus. Mohr suggests that Cruz "does not share the ideological and esthetic commitments of poets who are self-consciously Nuyorican..." (Ibid). The findings of this study indicate

otherwise, as will be discussed later.

Because the Nuyoricans have written so much of mainland Puerto Rican poetry, the sample could have been comprised of only their work. However, it was felt that the study would be strengthened by having the broadest possible sample of mainland poetry; thus works of mainland poets not considered of the Nuyorican school, including poets living outside of the New York area, were also surveyed.

With the Nuyoricans substantially represented in the sample, the question of bias had to be considered. The work of the Nuyoricans "as a whole is very homogeneous, growing as it does from shared assumptions and similar experiences" (Mohr, 92). The weight of the Nuyorican segment of the sample might have suggested that their particular perception of mainland Puerto Rican identity was more pervasive than was the actual case. What the data revealed, however, was that the themes of identity that the Nuyoricans expressed so consistently, and insistently, were found across the poetry sample. The fact that one was not considered a Nuyorican poet, or lived outside of the New York area, were not significant variables.

The actual poetry survey and sample selection were done manually, primarily at the Centro por Estudios Puertorriqueños of the City University of New York. The Centro library houses

the most extensive collection of mainland Puerto Rican literature in the City. The researcher read through all the anthologies containing mainland Puerto Rican poetry, the sociocultural journals concerned with ethnic and Latino issues published since 1969, and the volumes of poetry written by individual mainland Puerto Rican poets. He also surveyed journals of poetry and creative literature (e.g., The Massachusetts Review, Antaeus, The Antioch Review) published from 1969 to the present.

The survey yielded 129 poems by 42 poets that fit the requirement of expressing elements of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. Included in the sample for purposes of comparison were 20 poems by 13 female mainland Puerto Rican poets.

In the same way that the Nuyorican poets as a group were strongly represented, certain individual poets contributed heavily to the sample. Sixty-eight of the 129 poems were written by six poets: Laviera (21); Cruz (13); Espada (10); Pietri (9); Algarín (7); and J.P. Melendez (6). An additional 22 poems were written by five other poets: Esteves (5); Figueroa (5); Agüeros (4); Hernandez (4); and Piñero (4). Thus, one-third of the poets accounted for nearly three-quarters of the sample. By weight of numbers, the sample was skewed. However, again paralleling the situation with the

Nuyoricans poets, the numbers did not tell the whole story.

As the researcher read through the poems of Laviera, for example, certain themes of mainland Puerto Rican male identity announced themselves. They were repeated in additional Laviera poems, which were accordingly added to the sample. What was meaningful for the emerging theory, however, was that although the absolute number of poems by Laviera in the sample kept increasing, they did not reveal any new themes of identity.

In grounded-theory terminology, the identity categories stated in the Laviera poems "saturated" (Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988, 143) fairly quickly. They were reinforced by being restated, but they were not amended or contradicted. The same process occurred as the researcher read through the poems of the other poets whose work was to become part of the sample.

It gradually became clear that there was a small core of mainland Puerto Rican male identity elements that was repeatedly stated throughout the poetry being surveyed. Reading additional poems did not increase, alter, or undo these categories. More poems by certain poets were kept in the sample only to strengthen the developing bibliography. Overall, the number of poems included by each poet was approximately proportionate to his or her contribution to the

total mainland Puerto Rican poetic opus.

### Reading the Sample

Miles and Huberman (1984) point out that "qualitative fieldwork should be iterative; one pass at a site leads to a reshaping of one's perspectives and of one's instrumentation for the next pass" (63). Miles and Huberman are talking about interpersonal work being done at a field site, but their comments are germane to how this researcher gathered data through the reading of poetry.

In this study, the poetry was the field. The interaction was between the researcher and the text of the poetry. Grounded theory notes the importance of the interreaction between investigator and subject in its method; but the final induction of a grounded theory evolves from the interaction between the investigator and the text of interviews. Using literature as data is consistent with both the letter and spirit of grounded theory, as Custer's (1987) study of the cognitive development of women using novels as data demonstrated.

Using literature as data is also consistent with the standards demanded by ethical qualitative research. One does

not usually consider ethical aspects when no live human subjects are involved in the research, but perhaps this study may extend thinking in this area. House (1990) states that "an ethics of qualitative field studies should focus on the words, ideals, and aims of the participants in the study" (163). Creative literature written by the members of a population being studied fits those criteria very well.

As Miles and Huberman suggest, each reading of the sample of poems did alter the perspective from which the investigator approached them in subsequent readings. In theory, the re-readings could have gone on indefinitely. In practice, they stopped when no new categories of mainland Puerto Rican identity emerged from an additional reading.

Because the poems were seen as the field in which the researcher would work, they were studied by hand as they were printed rather than being typed onto a computer and analyzed by a software program such as Ethnograph (Bernstein, 1989). While too much can not be made of this, having each poem in hand did heighten the sense of being more in touch with what the poet was saying.

For the readings, the sample was ordered alphabetically according to each poet's last name, from Agüeros to Villalobos. The poems were not individually dated, so it was

not possible to arrange them all chronologically so that any shifts in the expression of identity over time might be noted. The works of poets who published several volumes were ordered by publication date. The dates of the journals and anthologies in which the works of the other poets were published provided at best only a rough guide as to when those poems were written. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the identity elements that emerged from the analysis were expressed consistently across the entire sample. This indicated that no significant shift in the poets' perspective on mainland Puerto Rican male identity occurred during the twenty years in which the poetry was written.

#### Reading, Coding and Categorizing

The most tempting, and deadly, path down which the grounded theory researcher can be led is that of reification (Bernstein, Goodman, and Epstein, 1992). He or she sees in the data the expression of already established theoretical concepts, whether the data actually supports this or not. Indeed, after spending months immersed in a review of the literature on the issue under study, the researcher must make a strong effort to shake off the assumption that he or she knows what is going on, and try to see what the data suggest is going on (Glaser, 1978, 159). In fact, grounded theorists

might do well to postpone the major part of their literature reviews until after they have derived their theoretical concepts from the data. This is a suggestion that was also made by Glaser (1978, 31).

In this study, the investigator approached the data with his own particular "cognitive map" (Bernstein, Goodman, and Epstein, 1992, 21) of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. The correlates of this map were ethnicity, minority status, and bicultural identity. The tendency was to view the poetry through one or more of these perspectives. As best he could, the researcher attempted to put aside these preconceptions and let the data speak for itself.

As a check on his ability to be objective, the researcher periodically asked a few of his Puerto Rican adolescent clients, and a Puerto Rican social work colleague, for their views on the identity statements made in some of the poems. The social worker, of course, brought his own professional cognitive map to his reading of the poems, one probably quite like that of the researcher. The adolescents were less encumbered. In each case, the consultants' readings closely matched the researcher's.

The researcher read through the sample of 129 poems five times. He first read them as he surveyed as much of the entire

body of mainland Puerto Rican poetry as was available. From this reading, the poems were placed in the sample if they appeared to express aspects of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. While no coding was done during the survey, identity categories began to announce themselves tentatively as the researcher decided that certain poems belonged in the sample.

After the sample was selected, the researcher read these poems a second time. During this reading, he underlined the passages in each poem that seemed to state themes of mainland Puerto Rican male identity. These underlinings usually identified the parts of each poem that had flagged it in the researcher's mind for the sample during the initial survey. With each underlining, he also made a note in the margin briefly indicating what the expressed identity aspect seemed to be.

The researcher then used the margin notations as the basis for a "start list" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 57) of 38 codes identifying the different identity elements expressed in the sample. These first codes were descriptive in nature rather than abstract. In some cases, the poets' actual words or phrases were used as a code--e.g., "oppressed."

With the start list of codes established, the researcher read the poems a third time, assigning the start list of codes

to the passages he had underlined in each poem. If a passage could not be accurately identified by one of the 38 codes, a new code was created. Six additional codes were added from the third reading. During this reading, it began to be apparent that many of the initial codes were not discreet entities but were descriptions or elaborations of broader categories.

For the fourth reading, the researcher did not consult the list of 44 codes he had developed. He read the sample through and re-coded the expressed identity elements, attempting to put aside his knowledge of the first codes. He then checked this coding against the first and found that no significant new categories of identity emerged.

Throughout the readings, the researcher employed the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to develop categories of meaning from the data. Each element of mainland Puerto Rican male identity expressed in a poem was a "data incident" (Custer, 1987, 73). The first such data incident found in the sample became a category of identity in and of itself. As the researcher read the poems, he compared each newly discovered data incident with those found in the poems read before. If the second data incident, for example, expressed the same aspect of mainland Puerto Rican male identity as the first, it was placed in the same category as the first. If it expressed a separate identity aspect, it then

demanded the establishment of a separate category.

This process of moving back and forth between the poems and the emerging tentative categories of identity continued throughout the readings of the sample. Each new expression of mainland Puerto Rican male identity either fit with other data incidents in an already formed category, or by its separateness required that a new category be formed.

In the next step, the researcher studied the 44 established codes to see if they could be reduced to a smaller number of core codes. This process, which Rennie, Philips, and Quartaro (1988) refer to as a "movement toward parsimony" (144), gradually reduced the first round of codes to 12, which in turn eventually clustered around two final core categories of mainland Puerto Rican male identity, and a possible third. The researcher then read the sample through a fifth time to see if the expressed identity elements could be validly encompassed by the core categories.

Finally, the researcher again read the poems in which identity elements had been coded with the tentative third category. The attempt in this step was to decide if the third category in fact stood on its own or could be subsumed under one of the first two.

### Memoing

Throughout the reading, coding, and categorizing of the data, the researcher kept memos. These were "the analyst's written records of the analytic process" (Corbin, 1986, 108). They documented the emergence of the theory and the researcher's thoughts, doubts, and questions as that process unfolded. The memos were handwritten, sometimes a brief note, sometimes a page or more. They were filed according to the particular category of meaning or aspect of the study they concerned.

In one memo, for example, the researcher noted and discussed how he was comparing the developing categories of mainland Puerto Rican male identity not only with the data incidents in each poem but also with his own personal knowledge of mainland Puerto Rican men. He had been working in East Harlem for over fifteen years and had known many Puerto Rican men as colleagues and clients.

This comparison of emerging theoretical concepts with the researcher's own past and present experience is an unavoidable phenomenon. If it occurs relatively free of the researcher's intellectual and emotional biases, it further grounds the theory in the real world. In the memos, the researcher must attempt to record and explore such potential confounding

variables as clearly and completely as possible (Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro, 1988). In Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the biases he was able to identify and their influence in the study.

### Writing the Theory

Using the memos as his foundation, the researcher next formulated the grounded theory statement on mainland Puerto Rican male identity that he induced from the data. The statement describes the identity categories that emerged in the poems and the relationships among them. Chapter 5 contains the study's theoretical findings.

Chapter V  
FINDINGS  
Introduction

Two core categories of mainland Puerto Rican identity emerge from the sample of poetry: an oppressed identity and an ethnocultural identity. Certain poets devote more of their work to one of these identity categories than the other; but both are expressed consistently enough across the sample to establish the basis for a grounded theory statement on mainland Puerto Rican male identity.

Actually, the oppressed and ethnocultural identity categories are voiced by both the male poets who comprise the majority of the sample, and the female poets whose works are included for comparison. Within the context of the larger American mainland society, Puerto Rican men and women experience a similar identity. Because of this agreement, and for simplicity of syntax, I will speak from this point on of mainland Puerto Rican identity, rather than specifying male identity.

In the scholarly literature, ethnic and cultural identities are at times seen as discrete entities in an individual's makeup (Patterson, 1983; Melville, 1988). In the mainland Puerto Rican identity portrayed by the poetry,

these merge into an ethnocultural gestalt. Thus, the mainland Puerto Rican identity is revealed as having two, rather than three, core categories.

A third category of identity also reveals itself in the poems. Following the lead of one of the poets, I have called this an existential identity, or searching for identity. This category, also, is one expressed by both male and female poets.

#### OPPRESSED IDENTITY

The sense of having an oppressed identity is strongly, often vehemently, expressed in the sample. The poets themselves frequently use the words "oppressed" and "oppression." "My name is Jesús Papote," states the narrator in Tato Laviera's long poem of that name, " I am born in oppression."

Miguel Piñero speaks bilingually of the mainland Puerto Rican's condition in "There Is Nothing New in New York":

No hay nada nuevo in nueva york  
 There is nothing new in new york  
 I tell you in english  
 I tell you in spanish  
 the same situation of oppression  
 it's the only action in all the corners  
 of this nation.

One of the woman poets, Sandra María Estéves, in "Maria Christina," describes the same condition:

i speak two languages broken into one  
but my heart speaks the language of people  
born in oppression.

### Sources of Oppression

#### Oppression from the mainland society

The oppression suffered by mainland Puerto Ricans is experienced as coming from many sources, and as being directed at several aspects of their being. The most global source is the entire mainland American society, which first oppresses Puerto Ricans by betraying the promise of equality and economic opportunity it holds out to them. In "America You Lied to Us," which is both title and refrain of his poem, Richard Garcia challenges America:

You told us if we came here many  
new things would change and improve our lives...  
You told us of a "Heaven" where  
opportunity existed for everyone,  
where every man was an equal...  
AMERICA YOU LIED TO US...

Julio Marzán portrays the oppression in a subtle voice:

Mr. Rodriguez  
 is superintendent  
 at 85th and Park  
 Some days  
 he chases a taxi  
 for Mrs. Mathews

He does this  
 because he thinks  
 she is a lady

Mrs. Mathews  
 appreciates that  
 because

she thinks  
 that he  
 is right. ("NUTSHELL")

Miguel Algarín warns Puerto Ricans who are thinking about emigrating to the mainland, "Don't believe the fetching dream of life improvement in New York." ("Mongo Affair") In "A Job," Bimbo Rivas describes the destructive effect on mainland Puerto Ricans of having no real chance for employment and economic independence:

I need a JOB...  
 I don't expect the world to stop for me  
 To stop its mission for my sake  
 I only ask for a clearer path  
 to put my brains and hands to work  
 to prove my worth...  
 I need a JOB to keep my peace with God  
 A Job to make me stop wishing for an early grave...

Oppression from the welfare system

Excluded from opportunities for work, many mainland Puerto Ricans are dependent upon public assistance, and thus become vulnerable to oppression from the welfare system. Martín Espada ("Waiting For The Cops") tells of their "waiting for the caseworker's ritual humiliation and then the check." Miguel Algarín ("Mongo Affair") believes that "a man is demoralized when his woman and children beg for weekly checks." To quote again from "There is Nothing New in New York," Miguel Piñero advises:

brother don't stick your nose into welfare  
believe me because the tar is ugly  
and a curse that's a lot of fun  
for the investigators...

Oppression from employers

Those Puerto Ricans on the mainland who manage to find some employment face oppression from their bosses:

in this ceremony  
your boss/tu jefe presides  
to lay you off  
for your good attendance  
cause he won't need you  
to ayudar him  
make another fortune. (José-Angel Figueroa, "lay  
offs")

In "the song of an oppressor," Tato Laviera speaks of his mother's years of exploitation at the hands of her employers:

madre madre madre mia  
 those crystallized dreams about  
 america cars home fortunes  
 were buried inside the needle  
 of the singer machine.

One of the woman poets, Amiña Muñoz, also describes her mother's life as a worker:

ana maría muñoz de rodríguez was  
 just another one of the  
 millions of spics  
 lured like cockroaches to roach motels  
 lured by death disguised as  
 getting ahead  
 lured by jobs for 85 a week  
 to die while waiting  
 for medical attention  
 they didn't get but paid for  
 with food stamps. ("Muerte en Nueva York")

Finally, L R Rivera, in a poem addressed to an employer ("I SHOULD RESOLVE TO BE LIKE YOU"), describes the economic exploitation of mainland Puerto Rican men as a physical violation:

while you order your hands  
 hired  
 to spread my cheeks apart  
 to get on with the business  
 of operating another shaft...



get a job  
all you people do is whine and fight.

José-Angel Figueroa, in "Boricua," believes that:

schools  
always wanted  
to cave in your  
Puerto Rican Accent  
& because you  
wanted to make it  
you had to pledge  
allegiance lefthanded  
because you  
had lost your soul  
during some english exam.

Finally, Miguel Algarín, in "Biological," cites an  
example of the humiliation of a young Puerto Rican boy in  
class:

Puerto Rican  
children  
have nothing to  
say in school.  
Pedro said the  
other day "I've  
got the D train  
running up my  
leg and the F train  
in my crotch."  
The teacher gave  
him a demerit  
and said "Sit  
down." He sat and  
peed all down  
his pants. The  
teacher sent him  
to the principal  
for incorrigible  
behavior. Pedro  
knew he had not

been understood.  
 Puerto Rican  
 children  
 have nothing to  
 say in school.

Those Puerto Ricans who manage to survive in school face the danger of oppression from co-optation. Here is how Alberto O Cappas puts it:

Black and Puerto Rican students  
 Talk about revolution  
 With sociology minds and pencils  
 In their hands,  
 It is a tool  
 Given to them by the enemy. ("Leadership Headaches")

Felipe Luciano, in "The Library," describes the painful fight against being won over by mainstream American culture:

Been seduced once or twice  
 The N.Y. Public Library raped me  
     viciously  
 Assaulted my nose with book smells  
 'Til I almost forgot  
 Revolution was a thing of the streets...  
 Don't matter. The library tempts me  
 Sometimes worse than a woman...  
 I've kissed books before, held them  
     close to my brown skin...  
 But they never taught me how to fight...

### Oppression and the Viet Nam War

Many of the poems in the sample were written in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when this country was in severe

conflict over the Viet Nam War. The poets experience our involvement in Viet Nam as another form of societal oppression, this one shared with non-Puerto Ricans of like mind. In a poem entitled "Viet-Nam," Archie Martinez quotes a letter from his father , who is in the Armed Forces, expressing his doubts about that involvement:

Now I am going into action to Viet-Nam.  
 Here I am on my way in a big boat  
 to fight other people.  
 These people I am fighting  
 have never done anything to me,  
 so why should I kill them  
 without no answer  
 Is it still my duty to fight?

Miguel Piñero, in "A Tear in the Mirror," has no doubts about where justice lies in the Viet Nam conflict:

A tear in the mirror  
 falling little by little like  
 drops from a fire pump  
 echoing through the night crying  
 the rhythms of Injustice-Injustice-Injustice

A tear in the mirror  
 that yawns the wailing  
 of mothers  
 with sons in Vietnam  
 because they are the ones  
 on the wrong side...

For Richard Garcia ("America You Lied to Us"), the Vietnam involvement is just another lie that the mainland society tells to Puerto Ricans:

AMERICA YOU LIED TO US

To my brother you promised  
 If he went to Vietnam and killed a lot of gooks,  
 That when he came and he would come back,  
 That his family would receive more rights as  
 citizens..  
 INSTEAD YOU GAVE HIM

an unremovable bullet in his right leg  
 a needle full of dope on his left arm  
 a stick of pot in his hip pocket...

In summary, according to the poetry, Puerto Ricans on the mainland feel beset by oppression from many quarters. The American society as a whole, its educational system, its economic system, its welfare system, the conditions in which they must live, and even the possibility of success within the American society all contribute to the creation of a major component of the mainland Puerto Rican's total identity--an oppressed identity.

Targets of oppression

The aspects of their being that mainland Puerto Ricans feel are targeted for oppression are their language, their skin color, their values, and their style of living. These aspects are exactly the central and most cherished elements of the other core category of their identity--their ethno-cultural identity. This relationship between the two core categories of their identity, a relationship between

oppression and pride, is a critical factor in the lives of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. It will be discussed further at the end of this section on the category of oppressed identity.

Spanish as a target

Whether they were born on the island or on the mainland, the poets see Spanish as the first language of Puerto Ricans, the language of their names. Oppression against their language begins early for mainland Puerto Ricans--in school. José-Angel Figueroa describes an interaction with his teacher:

when  
she scratched deep  
into my brown hairless skin  
w/her educated grin

&  
told me  
dhat SPA nish  
was a necessary no-no... ("Ill Literate Poem")

Martín Espada ("Trumpets from the Island of Their Eviction") speaks of young Puerto Rican immigrants in mainland schools:

like Daniel, stockaded  
in the back of retarded classrooms  
for having no English  
to comfort third-grade teachers.

The discrimination against their Spanish language continues in later life for mainland Puerto Ricans. Figueroa again, in "Boricua," commiserates bitterly with mainland Puerto Ricans about the discrimination they face when seeking health care, telling of:

lincoln hospital  
 having a field day  
 with your mother  
 because she had  
 labor pains with  
 a Spanish accent...

#### Skin color as a target

Mainland Puerto Ricans also experience oppression because of their skin color. Pedro Pietri ("The Broken English Dream") sees the United States as a land where there are:

...televised  
 firing squads  
 for everyone who has  
 the sun on the side  
 of their complexion.

Carmelo Romero believes that to the Anglo eye Puerto Ricans are equally to be discriminated against with African-Americans:

the man  
 sees no  
 differences  
 between  
 us  
 in spanish  
   in english  
     we are niggers  
       we must be ruled  
         or  
           destroyed. ("Nests To Be Built")

Julio Noboa, Jr. contrasts the skin color, and the sense of vitality, of Puerto Ricans with what he sees as the dominant Anglo norm. He describes the latter as follows:

White  
 marble exterior  
 on a caucasoid cold and  
 rigid naked statue  
 silent and still  
 but worshipped by those  
 whose image it reflects  
 it reigns in the minds of men. ("Comiendo Cerebro")

### Culture as a target

In the same way that mainland Puerto Ricans feel denigrated because of the language they speak and their skin color, they also see that their cultural mores are not respected by the larger society. Chico Rivera ("The Dream Revisited") believes that Puerto Ricans come to the mainland with expectations of cultural mutual respect, as another group in a long tradition of immigration. They are soon

disillusioned:

We brought our culture hoping to share it  
 with the people who came before us  
 But you deceived us "Mother America."  
 You opened your door and tucked us away  
 nice and neat in your Ghettos.

Edwin Claudio, who was eighteen when he wrote "A Boycott," sees the American schools as ignoring the Puerto Rican culture. In the poem, he claims that mainland Puerto Ricans are subjected to "an unjust education" that demands they "learn the anglo way of life."

Finally, Sandra María Estéves, in "Here," portrays the experience of the mainland Puerto Rican whose culture is demeaned:

I am two parts/a person  
 boricua/spic  
 past and present  
 alive and oppressed  
 given a cultural beauty  
 ...and robbed of a cultural identity...

### Manhood as a target

Mainland Puerto Rican men perceive the purpose of the oppression aimed at them as castration. In "Mongo Affair," Algarín graphically describes how being caught in the American

welfare system "draws the blood from his cock," makes him  
"mongo":

mongo means flojo  
mongo means bloodless  
mongo means soft  
mongo cannot penetrate...

Pietri, in "For Pancho Cruz," sees the same fate intended  
for mainland Puerto Rican men, and a wish to transform all  
mainland Puerto Ricans into cold Anglo clones:

they want our women  
to give birth to ice cubes  
they want our men  
to have wheelchairs  
in between their legs...

### Reactions to Oppression

#### Confusion and despair

As depicted in the sample of poems, mainland Puerto  
Ricans react to oppression in several ways. Some feel  
overwhelmed and lost. This is how Jack Agüeros portrays his  
life:

In Hollywood the worst thing  
That ever happened to anyone  
Was to miss a bus, whereas I

Am Puerto Rican  
 And live in a film with no  
 Editing. ("Whereas I")

Alberto O Cappas, looking back on his years in New York,  
 says:

I only found new nightmares that want to destroy  
 My sanity of being a puerto rican. ("Letter for  
 Iris")

Other mainland Puerto Ricans respond to their oppression  
 with despair, a despair learned at an early age. Jesús  
 Papoleto Meléndez addresses a young mainland Puerto Rican  
 child:

child/     hey, child  
 why won't you smile?  
           /if just for one small while  
 child     /please smile...

child/     hey/  
 oh hell    child  
 what's the use?  
           i see you've found  
           what it's all about. ("child")

In "even then he knew," Tato Laviera portrays another  
 child in despair:

papote sat on the stoop  
 miseducated  
 a   blown-up   belly   of   malnutrition  
 papote sat on the stoop  
 of an abandoned building  
 he decided to go nowhere.

Anger

The oppression to which they are subjected evokes strong anger in mainland Puerto Ricans. Virtually every one of the poems cited earlier documenting the sources and targets of oppression was written in anger. Here is Pedro Pietri in "To Whoever It May Concern":

you who trained us to mop yr floor  
 will be cremated today  
 we will not cry when this happens  
 we love you better this way.

Jesús Papoleto Meléndez again, this time in "walking & thinking/within chaotic revolution/within life," claims:

i am culturally deprived/  
 not because i was born without one,  
 BUT  
 because some motherfucking bastard stole it  
 while i was trying to be american.

Brenda Torres, another of the woman poets in the sample, ends her poem about the life, death and funeral of a young mainland Puerto Rican as follows:

of these  
     of all of this  
 i remember clearly  
 only  
 your rage  
 your pain  
 at the life spent

with no main chance possible  
 jorgito  
 the newyorican  
 murio. ("Jorgito")

### Defiance

The evoked anger can lead to defiance in mainland Puerto Ricans. A female poet, Amiña Muñoz, in "a chant," flaunts the despised, feared image of the Puerto Rican held by the larger society, and thus turns it against the oppressors:

...and when they party  
 they drink bacardi--  
 cause puerto ricans are bad  
 uh-huh  
 puerto ricans are bad  
 uh-huh.

Angel Berrocales decides that the American school system can also be turned toward the same end. Rather than shun it because it demeans or may corrupt him, Berrocales ("Situation Heavy") sees in the schools a weapon against oppression:

Thank you, thank you! Thank you for your schools.  
 For you taught me how to eat with your silverware.  
 You taught me how to comb my lovely hair.  
 You taught me how to create my own tools.  
 Thank you for your schools.  
 You taught me how to manipulate the so-called great  
 and how to have a good debate.  
 And I'll keep going to your schools.  
 I'll keep going to your schools, you dumb fools.

Mainland Puerto Ricans react with despair, rage, and defiance to the fact that the dominant mainland society singles out for oppression the most central and valued elements of their ethnocultural identity. The report now turns to those elements.

#### ETHNOCULTURAL IDENTITY

##### Race

One essential element of mainland Puerto Rican ethnocultural identity is race. Like the total ethnocultural identity, it, too, is a blended entity. In the poems sampled, mainland Puerto Ricans see themselves as a combination of native, pre-Columbian Taino Indian, Black, and white, with different poets granting greater or lesser salience to one of these strains than the other. Martín Espada, in "Cordillera," believes that Puerto Ricans are:

Descended from  
Taino carvings  
Spanish watchtowers  
African manacles...

In "Root of Three," Victor Hernandez Cruz makes the same claim:

I walk New York with a fan  
 in my pocket  
 made of the feathers  
 of three continents  
 It blows African feet  
 It blows Spanish heart  
 It blows Taino head space.

David Hernandez, in "White Statue," states:

i  
 am rican  
     nigger  
     blanco  
     indio

Finally, Rosario Morales, and Aurora Levins Morales, mother and daughter poets, express the irreducible and irreversible blended racial identity of the mainland Puerto Rican in "Ending Poem":

I am not African.  
 Africa waters the root of my tree, but I cannot return.

I am not Taíno.  
 I am a late leaf of that ancient tree,  
 and my roots reach into the soil of two Americas.  
 Taíno is in me, but there is no way back.

I am not European, though I have dreamt of those cities...  
 Europe lives in me but I have no home there.

Heritage of the island

The island heritage of mainland Puerto Ricans is another major element in their ethnocultural identity. It is valued as a place of birth, or visited homeland, as a dream or fantasy, and as a symbol of a lifestyle counter to that of the dominant Anglo society. These lines are from "Sonnet For Delgado the Driver," by Jack Agüeros:

When I look closely it is Jorge Delgado the driver, who  
 has  
 Red and blue fringe tassels around the rims of all  
 the windows.  
 Behind the back seat he has a hand-embroidered  
 starched doll.  
 Standing next to a coconut palm tree towering over a  
 ceramic  
 Deep green avacado, all resting on a hand-embroidered  
 doily...  
 Delgado drives fourteen hours day and night in New York  
 City, America  
 But he is in Puerto Rico all the time.

The dreamed image of the island speaks to all Puerto Ricans, whether born there or on the mainland. For Victor Hernandez Cruz, in "Los New Yorks," the island image can transform New York:

Suena

I present you the tall skyscrapers  
 as merely huge palm trees with lights

Suena

The roaring of the trains is a fast

guaguanco  
dance of the ages

Suena

Snow falls  
Coconut chips galore...

Walk y suena  
Do it strange  
Los New Yorks

For Martín Espada, who was born on the mainland, the dream of the island lives in him transmitted by his father. This is the last stanza of "We Live by What We See at Night":

This was the inheritance  
of your son, born in New York:  
that years before  
I saw Puerto Rico,  
I saw the mountains  
looming above the projects,  
overwhelming Brooklyn,  
living by what I saw at night,  
with my eyes closed.

In similar fashion, Sandra María Estéves describes how the image of the island sustains Puerto Ricans on the mainland in "Here":

I may never overcome  
the theft of my isla heritage  
dulce palmas de coco on Luquillo  
sway in windy recesses I can only imagine  
and remember how it was

But that reality now a dream  
teaches me to see, and will  
bring it all back to me.

In "Ode to an Island," Salima Rivera salutes Puerto Rico:

Green breath of life,  
Your sweet loamy earth  
bears prismatic flowers  
of people who house  
the sun in their Blood.

The Spanish language

A third significant component in the ethnocultural identity of mainland Puerto Ricans is their Spanish language. The use of Spanish, being volitional, is often held to with particular intensity by Puerto Ricans on the mainland. Here is Pedro Pietri's brief poem, "Tata":

Mi abuela  
has been  
in this dept store  
called America  
for the past twenty-five years  
She is eighty-five years old  
and does not speak  
a word of english

That is intelligence.

Miguel Algarín also insists, more specifically, that speaking Spanish is crucial in maintaining the identity of mainland Puerto Ricans against the oppressing dominant society. This is his poem, "Inside Control: my tongue":

if the man owns the world  
 oh white power hidden  
 behind every word i speak  
 if the man takes me into his  
 caverns of meanings in sound  
 if all my talk is borrowed  
 from his tongue then i want  
 hot boiling water to wash  
 out my mouth i want lye  
 to soothe my soiled lips  
 for the english that i  
 speak betrays my need to be  
 a self made power.

Tato Laviera, who became more of a champion of Nuyorican  
 bilingualism and biculturalism than most mainland Puerto Rican  
 poets, still says of Spanish:

ESPANOL, one of my lenguas, part of my tongue,  
 I'm gonna fight for you; I love you, spanish,  
 i'm your humble son ("spanish").

By way of comparison, the lines quoted below are by a  
 Mexican-American, or Chicana, poet, Lorna Dee Cervantes. She  
 cites the risk in not embracing Spanish as her native  
 language:

mamá raised me with no language  
 I am an orphan to my spanish name  
 the words are foreign, stumbling on my tongue  
 I stare at my reflection in the mirror  
 brown skin, black hair

I feel I am a captive  
 aboard the refugee ship  
 a ship that will never dock  
 a ship that will never dock. ("Refugee Ship")

Food

A fourth central element in the mainland Puerto Rican identity is their traditional food. Martín Espada ("Tony Went to the Bodega but He Didn't Buy Anything") describes the feelings of a young Puerto Rican who left the New York City projects to attend law school in Boston:

But he cursed the cold primavera  
in Boston;  
the cooking of his neighbors  
left no smell in the hallway,  
and no one spoke Spanish...

Jesús Papoleto Meléndez, in "OYE MUNDO/ sometimes," values the emotional uplift to be obtained from his traditional cuisine:

when i can taste the rare culture  
of cuchifritos      y lechon.

In "The Sounds of Sixth Street," Martita Morales describes the anger of "a Puerto Rican girl, trigueña and fifteen years old," at the whites who are taking over her neighborhood:

and she fights and she fights  
for her  
ARROZ CON GANDULES  
for lunch  
instead of that so-called lunch

peanut butter and jelly sandwiches  
with peagreen soup...

Finally, Judith Ortiz Cofer, in "The Latin Deli," portrays poignantly how a Latina woman presides in her sanctuary of Latin foods, where patrons can maintain some connection with a cherished part of their ethnocultural heritage:

She spends her days  
slicing jamón y queso and wrapping it in wax paper  
tied with string: plain ham and cheese  
that would cost less in the A&P, but it would not  
satisfy the hunger of the fragile old man lost in  
the folds of his winter coat, who brings her lists  
of items that he reads to her like poetry, or the  
others, whose needs she must divine, conjuring up  
products from places that now exist only in their  
hearts--closed ports she must trade with.

### Music and dance

Another component of the mainland Puerto Rican identity consists of their music and dance. This is a visceral, deeply experienced, element of identity. As the mother and daughter poets, Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales, put it:

I am of latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my  
continent.  
I speak from that body. Just brown and pink and full  
of drums inside.  
("Ending Poem")

In "Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction," Martín Espada describes how even in the oppressed conditions in which Puerto Ricans live on the mainland, Latin music "swarms into the barrio of a refugee's imagination" and gives strength:

And at the bar two blocks away,  
immigrants with Spanish mouths  
hear trumpets  
from the islands of their eviction.  
The sound scares away devils  
like tropical fish  
darting between the corals.

In similar fashion, Carmelo Rodríguez ("Bembe at Humboldt Park") tells how "the 'congas', the 'guiros', the 'bongos', (and) 'las salsa'," can temporarily take mainland Puerto Ricans beyond "the dirty tenement buildings" and the "barrio's drabness":

and the green synthetic grass of Humboldt Park  
enjoys the thump of those Rican feet...

Mainland Puerto Ricans see their traditional music and dance as a vivid, vital antidote to the lifeless Anglo style. Here is Victor Hernández Cruz on the music and dance of the dominant American society in "IS A DEAD MAN":

guilty bodies...  
they dance like  
shit is coming  
out they ass...  
they have bands

god help us they  
 have bands they  
 have singers 0

they have singers  
 who knock you into  
 orbit around boredom  
 snag at the moon  
 forget they exist...

### Family

A very significant element in the ethnocultural identity of mainland Puerto Ricans is the importance of family, with special reverence being given to the older generations. Tato Laviera, who of the sample of poets perhaps articulates the values and norms of mainland Puerto Ricans most explicitly, pays tribute to the grandmother (abuela) in "familia," here quoted in its entirety:

moment's personal worth,  
 life ceases for a minute,  
 pays attention to a milestone.

moments when choke of tear,  
 adams apple above the eye.

moments when sacrifices find glory.

moments when we come together,  
 everlasting kinship strength.

moments when ay bendito humanity  
 flourishes and expands.

and, of course,

moments when family tree  
 sees nuclear-expanded  
 attention moving upward,



Early shadows condense to reveal a flamboyant tree  
 heavy with blossoms, leaning over the well  
 that helped her nurse her generations,  
 and her progeny have been like the sunflower  
 rather than the rose, scattering their seed.

Yet it all remains fast on this hill,  
 the house, the well, herself gathering memories  
 like grandchildren to her lap, to watch the day  
 climb the hill like her man did so many seasons ago,  
 bringing the night on his clothes and on his hands.

The presence of family helps Puerto Ricans endure in the  
 face of oppression on the mainland. This is a section of a  
 poem by the Chicago-born Puerto Rican poet David Hernandez:

while they talk of hunger  
 your belly growls in the city morning  
 waking up to the roaches on the ceiling  
 and the warmth of your sisters  
 and brothers next to you  
 is the only good feeling. ("While They Talk")

### Sensuality

Another of the valued norms of mainland Puerto Rican life  
 expressed in the poems is the acceptance and appreciation of  
 sensuality. Puerto Ricans are portrayed as being truly  
 libidinal, in the original Freudian sense of the word as  
 embracing of loving relationships. As Laviera has it, "we are  
 a people who love to love..." ("boricua"). Miguel Algarín  
 ("Sunday, August 11, 1974") portrays this acceptance of the  
 sensual in his description of being with his family on a  
 Sunday after church:

there is pleasure in living,  
 there is no shame in being  
 full of love,  
 there is no shame in being  
 nude while my mother's  
 eyes look in on me,  
 looking at my nude body,  
 body that she made mixing her blood  
 with my father's,  
 and there's no rushing for clothes  
 just sweet openness in being  
 loved by my family...

In "OYE MUNDO/ sometimes," Jesús Papoleto Meléndez talks  
 of how Latin music and food can lift him beyond the grim  
 misery of the Puerto Rican ghetto, and also cites as another  
 liberating element of his identity his ability to feel:

a conglomeration of vibrations  
 heat waves  
 body waves  
 people waves  
 of real gente  
 /& i feel goooooood...

The women Puerto Rican poets are again in agreement with  
 the men in this area. This is Carmen Pursifull's "three p.m.  
 the vulnerable witch":

the key is turning in the lock  
 and there i stand/romance ready/  
 my fingers kissed  
 by an aroused spouse  
 he pops a bottle of champagne/  
 pours out liquid images  
 of courtship rituals  
 proximity of flesh flickers  
 a spark of electricity  
 and once again i'm young/slim/

a neophyte carried in his arms  
 to the bed of rediscovery  
 i lie in my own down  
 as flesh ripe with receptivity.

Luz Rodriguez, in "i feel the eve," is graphically  
 accepting of her feminine physicality:

i feel the eve  
 of my body  
 flowing through  
 the cycle of woman.  
 blood rush down  
 cleanse my womb.  
 my hair at motion,  
 limbs in stimulation,  
 effecting sensation,  
 submerging in love.

The image of the vital, sensual Puerto Rican is  
 contrasted with that of the cold, synthetic Anglo of the  
 dominant society by many mainland Puerto Rican poets, among  
 them Estéves, Algarín, Pietri, LR Rivera, and Cruz. Victor  
 Hernandez Cruz sums up the mainland Puerto Rican view of the  
 Anglo world in the final stanza of "IS A DEAD MAN":

hopeless  
 useless  
 is a dead  
 dead world  
 they selling  
 here.

Loyalty to ethnocultural values

The poems counsel mainland Puerto Ricans not to be lured by the American dream away from following their own ethnocultural values. In "El Olvido," Judith Ortiz Cofer warns:

It is a dangerous thing  
to forget the climate of your birthplace  
to choke out the voices of dead relatives  
when in dreams they call you  
by your secret name.  
It is dangerous  
to spurn the clothes you were born to wear  
for the sake of fashion...

Similarly, Pedro Pietri ("Puerto Rican Obituary) writes of mainland Puerto Ricans who have lost their ethnocultural bearings:

They are dead  
They are dead  
and will not return from the dead  
until they stop neglecting  
the art of their dialogue  
for broken english lessons...

In the same poem, Pietri goes on to imagine a heaven for the mainland Puerto Ricans who died after lives of oppression spent futilely chasing the American dream--"dead Puerto Ricans, who never knew they were Puerto Ricans." Pietri's heaven is one:

where beautiful people sing  
 and dance and work together  
 where the wind is a stranger  
 to miserable weather conditions  
 where you do not need a dictionary  
 to communicate with your people  
 Aqui Se Habla Espanol all the time  
 Aqui you salute your flag first  
 Aqui there are no dial soap commercials  
 Aqui everybody smells good  
 Aqui tv dinners do not have a future  
 Aqui the men and women admire desire  
 and never get tired of each other  
 Aqui Que Pasa power is what's happening  
 Aqui to be called negrito  
 means to be called LOVE.

#### Taking root on the mainland

This final section of Pietri's poem sums up many of the elements that comprise the ethnocultural identity of mainland Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans come here with that culture, "hoping to share it," as Chico Rivera says in "The Dream Revisited." When they are rebuffed by the dominant society, their culture becomes a means to subvert the despised standards of the oppressing majority.

Victor Hernandez Cruz symbolizes this hoped-for development in his long poem, "The Man Who Came to the Last Floor." In the poem, Cruz tells of a Puerto Rican man who comes to New York "with a shopping bag full of seeds strange to the big city." One day, he begins "flinging the seeds of tropical fruits down to the earth..." As a policeman passes

beneath the man's window, a mango seed lands "nicely in his curly hair." A few months later, the policeman has a five-foot, fruit-bearing mango tree growing from his skull. A part of Puerto Rico had taken root in New York, and as Cruz says, "there was nothing that could be done."

### Summary

As was described earlier in the chapter, the ethnic and cultural categories of the mainland Puerto Rican identity are presented in the data as merged in a gestalt. Similarly, one could almost say that there is a gestalt of ethnocultural and oppressed categories of identity for the mainland Puerto Rican. As depicted in the poems, mainland Puerto Ricans feel that to be of their particular ethnocultural identity is ipso facto to be oppressed. Only within the bounds of their familias and barrio can they enjoy their ethnocultural identity away from oppression.

There is clearly a dynamic at work between those two core components of the mainland Puerto Rican identity, a circular, mutually reinforcing pattern of interaction. The more the Anglo world denigrates the ethnocultural elements of the mainland Puerto Rican identity, the more adamantly mainland Puerto Ricans will hold to, and even flaunt, those

ethnocultural aspects of their being. This, in turn, may expose them to on-going, or possibly increased, oppression. The synergy that feeds, and feeds on, this relationship is expressed by Martín Espada in "Revolutionary Spanish Lesson":

Whenever my name  
 is mispronounced  
 I want to buy a toy pistol,  
 put on dark sunglasses,  
 push my beret to an angle,  
 comb my beard to a point,  
 hijack a busload  
 of Republican tourists  
 from Wisconsin,  
 force them to chant  
 anti-American slogans  
 in Spanish,  
 and wait  
 for the bilingual SWAT team  
 to helicopter overhead  
 begging me  
 to be reasonable.

#### EXISTENTIAL IDENTITY

While the existential category of identity is expressed in fewer of the poems than the oppressed or ethnocultural categories, it is nonetheless sufficiently present to warrant a place in the mainland Puerto Rican identity. It is an aspect of the identity of mainland Puerto Ricans, but not specific to them as Puerto Ricans. The existential identity, or searching for identity, is probably common to all poets,

and perhaps to all people, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, one of the poets, Raúl Santiago Sebazco, in "It's 6:45 PM on 14th Street", gives this identity category its name:

I become the first existentialist...  
 The modern loner...  
 I am the early morning consciousness..  
 I am the faces that loom in doorways..  
 I am the pouring rain...

Julio Noboa writes a poem that is titled "Identity," which begins with these stanzas:

Let them be as flowers  
 always watered, fed, guarded, admired,  
 but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I'd rather be a tall, ugly, weed,  
 clinging on cliffs, like an eagle  
 wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

Noboa might here be contrasting metaphorically his Puerto Rican identity with that of the Anglo majority; but there is no indication of this in the poem. Noboa seems rather to be expressing the striving for a unique, individual self that poets from Keats to Angelou express.

Victor Hernandez Cruz, who voices acutely the oppressed

and ethnocultural elements of mainland Puerto Rican identity in much of his work, also searches for an existential identity in several poems. These lines are from "Side 32":

I am nothing and no one  
 I am the possibility of everything  
 I am a man in this crazy city  
 I am a door and a glass of water...

In a very existentially titled poem, "My In of Me," Lucky Cienfuegos grapples with the same issue of defining a unique identity:

...my in of me will always be by, for he  
 or I, one of us will always be there for this is I  
 I saw through the windows of this skull.

Julio Marzán, in "Emergency," faces the existential issue of gradual physical decay:

After my determined calendar of checkups,  
 My stoic brushings after every meal,  
 Another patched-up tooth rotten to the root.  
  
 Doctor, how do I stop this urge to diminish?

The woman poets are also concerned with the existential identity. Gloria Vando, in "Glimpses of Light," tries to get hold of a more extended sense of being:

They tell me all elements in my body  
 come from the earth and the sky.  
 Am I kin to tortoise?  
 Fired from phoenix ash? The lost  
 Pleiad? Or hen to pan--ouroboros?

Carmen Pursifull, in another existentially titled poem,  
 "one a.m. greets the cosmic eye," also expresses the  
 awareness of a uniquely separate identity:

i float in a cosmic womb  
 waiting for the sun to waken me  
 i sense myself  
 in the state of being  
 as soul is separate  
 and a vehicle for observation  
 there is a crack in the egg  
 where light shines a beam  
 on my lids  
 they open to the radiance  
 to see an eye  
 of magical proportions  
 where fear of death  
 does not exist.

The distinction between the ethnocultural identity of the  
 mainland Puerto Rican and her or his existential identity is  
 made clear by Magdalena Gomez in "To The Latin Lover I Left at  
 the Candy Store." This is how she admonishes a "latin lover"  
 for assuming that he knows her because of her supposedly  
 Latina characteristics:

you may know my hips,  
 but you don't know me;  
 you may know my name,

but you don't know me;  
you may know my color,  
but you don't know me...

The poems do not indicate how the existential identity category of mainland Puerto Ricans relates to their oppressed and ethnocultural identities. The search for existential meaning may always be present while they simultaneously attempt to define and maintain their ethnocultural identity in the face of oppression. Another possibility is that the existential quest can only be undertaken after mainland Puerto Ricans escape oppression to some extent. It would require individual interviews with mainland Puerto Ricans, poets and non-poets, to answer this question, an endeavor that is beyond this study.

#### SUMMARY

In summary, an analysis of the selected sample of poems yields two core categories of mainland Puerto Rican identity: an oppressed identity, and an ethnocultural identity. Each of these subsumes within it various intermediate identity categories. While these intermediate elements initially appeared to exist as independent, discrete entities, through the several rounds of constant-comparison analysis they

eventually took their place as contributory, descriptive components of the two core categories.

In addition to the oppressed and ethnocultural identities of the mainland Puerto Rican, a third category of identity emerges from the poems. This can be termed an existential identity, or searching for identity. It appears to be the exploration of self-definition in existential terms that is expressed by poets of all ethnocultural backgrounds.

Chapter VI will examine the findings in the light of established theory, the limitations of the research methodology, and the implications of the study.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONGRUENCE, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter addresses three aspects of the study. First, it examines the congruence of the findings with established theory. Next, the limitations of the study are addressed, along with their possible impact on the findings. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the study's implications for social work practice, education, and further research.

## CONGRUENCE

The selected psychosocial literature on mainland Puerto Rican identity reviewed for this study presents three elements as central to that identity: minority identity, ethnic identity, and bicultural identity. The categories of identity that emerge from this grounded-theory analysis coincide in some respects with those of established theory, but differ in others.

Oppressed identity

One of the two major identity categories expressed in the sample of poems is an oppressed identity. As was pointed out earlier, the terms "oppressed" and "oppression" are used often by the poets themselves. This revealed category of identity is closely related to the category of minority identity described in established theory, but is not an exact duplication.

Some authors in the professional canon do connect minority status with an oppressed identity. Maldonado (1975) points out that self-identity must be developed within the awareness of one's race or ethnicity, "especially the individual whose minority status is looked upon as inferior and who is systematically made aware of this status" (621-22). Similarly, Erikson (1966) indicates that there is a risk to the positive ego-identity of the individual "belonging to an oppressed and exploited minority..."(155).

The salient issue is that established theory, as the above passages make clear, holds that the minority group to which one belongs must in fact be oppressed for his or her identity to be negatively affected. In other words, there are minorities and there are oppressed minorities, or perhaps better, all minorities are not oppressed to the same degree.

For instance, Koreans are decidedly a minority in this country. While they doubtless experience discrimination, and in some cases outright oppression, they cannot be said to be oppressed to the extent that Afro-Americans are oppressed, or to the extent that the poems present mainland Puerto Ricans as being oppressed.

What the poems in this study make clear, repeatedly, is that the identity of the mainland Puerto Rican is inextricably both minority and oppressed. For the mainland Puerto Rican, his or her minority identity and oppressed identity are one and the same.

#### Oppressed and threatened identity

The concept in the theoretical literature that most closely corresponds to the oppressed identity that emerged from the poems is Breakwell's (1983a, 1986) "threatened identity." Breakwell believes that threats to identity challenge the content of one's personal or social identity, and/or how one values his or her personal or social identity. According to Breakwell (1986):

a threat to one's identity occurs when the processes of identity, assimilation-accommodation and evaluation are, for some reason, unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem, which habitually guide their operation (46-47).

This is precisely what the poems say happens to mainland Puerto Ricans. Here, again in very direct language, is what could be Jesús Papoleto Meléndez's ("walking & thinking/ within chaotic revolution/ within life") transcription of Breakwell's formulation:

i am culturally deprived/  
not because i was born without one,  
BUT  
because some motherfucking bastard stole it  
while i was trying to be american.

The oppressed identity category of mainland Puerto Ricans presented in the poems so closely corresponds to Breakwell's threatened identity that, had the poets themselves not used the terms "oppression" and "oppressed" so frequently, I would have labelled it a threatened identity. In the poems, the psychological impact on mainland Puerto Ricans of the oppression they suffer is the feeling of having their identity threatened.

One can only speculate why the poets spoke of oppressed rather than threatened identity. The latter term may be more personal, while the former perhaps carries more political charge, with broader impact for social change. Whatever the term utilized, Alberto O Cappas ("Letter for Iris") depicts the sense of the condition clearly in describing his on-going life on the mainland:

I only found new nightmares that want to destroy  
My sanity of being a puerto rican.

### Ethnocultural identity

The second core category to emerge from the poems is ethnocultural identity, a finding that essentially confirms what is suggested by established theory, although scholarly literature tends to present ethnic and cultural elements as discrete. This is one of the instances when qualitative research is "outright 'confirmatory'" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, 27). Both the poems and the theoretical literature cite a non-white racial identity, and a group of strongly held preferences for certain values, attitudes, styles, music, dance and food as central to the Puerto Rican identity. Established theory describes the ethnic and cultural elements separately; the poems express them as merged into a unified whole.

The theoretical literature, however, also states that a bicultural identity is one of the three central components, along with ethnic and minority categories, of the mainland Puerto Rican identity (Flores, 1985; DeJesus-Rueff, 1986). The poems do not support this idea. On the contrary, they portray the dominant Anglo culture and the Puerto Rican culture as antithetical in almost every regard. (Some of the

later work of Tato Laviera is an exception to this, and will be discussed later.) In the poems, the human, sensual and vital Puerto Rican lifestyle is repeatedly held up as superior to the cold, plastic and sterile culture of the majority society.

The poems, while rejecting the move toward a bicultural identity described in the theoretical literature, do manifest one aspect of a bicultural identity--bilingualism. The works for this study were chosen in part because they were written in English, but the preponderance of Puerto Rican poetry written on the mainland is in English. This is a clear manifestation of one form of assimilation to the majority society.

According to Flores (1993), however, the significance of the poets' writing primarily in English should not be overstated. Speaking of Puerto Rican literature written in the United States, Flores says that the change from Spanish to English "should not be mistaken for assimilation in a wide cultural sense. As the content of the literature indicates, using English is a sign of being here, not necessarily of liking it here or belonging" (65).

A study by Attinasi (1983) supports Flores's beliefs. Attinasi interviewed ninety working-class subjects aged twelve

and over living in East Harlem, and forty teachers working in bilingual programs in New York City public schools. He finds that the acceptance of bilingualism among his subjects does not represent a giving-up of Puerto Rican ethnocultural standards, but rather a pragmatic reaction to a bilingual social situation.

While written largely in English, many of the poems sampled intermingle words, phrases, or longer passages in Spanish with the predominantly English text. The final lines of "Puerto Rican Obituary," in which Pedro Pietri portrays a heaven for long-oppressed Puerto Ricans, is a representative example:

Aqui Que Pasa Power is what's happening  
Aqui to be called Negrito  
means to be called LOVE

The presence of Spanish in the poems appears to be an attempt by the mainland Puerto Rican poets to keep alive a central element of their ethnocultural identity, and is in agreement with the work of Flores and Attinasi. As noted, throughout the poems, the Puerto Rican ethnocultural identity is championed as superior to that of the Anglo majority.

A desire for the bicultural identity cited in the theoretical literature is clearly expressed in the work of

only one mainland poet, Tato Laviera. The other mainland poets stress the fundamental incompatibility of the Puerto Rican and Anglo cultures, and the oppression of the former by the latter. Laviera moves from that oppositional position in his earlier work like "jesus papote," "even then he knew," and "the song of an oppressor" to embrace biculturalism in his later work. Laviera's 1985 collection of poems is entitled *AmeRícan*, a term that expresses his bicultural stance. This is the poem's final stanza:

AmeRícan, yes, for now, for I love this, my second  
land, and i dream to take the accent  
from the altercation, and be proud to  
call myself american, in the u.s.  
sense of the word, AmeRícan, America!

### Religious identity

While grounded theory study seeks to reveal what is in the data, it also reveals what is not in the data but ought to be there according to established theory. Hispanics are often described as "an eminently religious people" (Pena, 1993, 367). Padilla (1958), in a well-known, three-year qualitative study of East Harlem life, reports that even though religious ideas among her subjects cannot be bounded by the beliefs of any one church, there is in the community a shared "premise that all religions are good," and that religion is important

for "understanding the nature of the forces that are beyond the control of the individual man" (126). More recently, Clara Rodriguez (1989), describing life in the South Bronx, credits "religious organizations and activities" with providing "the spiritual and social sustenance that helped community members with larger injustices" (111).

However, there is disagreement in the scholarly literature on the importance of religion in the lives of mainland Puerto Ricans. Alers-Montalvo (1985), in a work on the Puerto Rican migrants of New York City, states:

...for the great majority of Puerto Ricans, the structure of religious meanings which was omnipresent on the Island, which was part of the total life of the community, has collapsed (117).

The poetry surveyed in this study does not reflect a strong religious aspect of identity in the mainland Puerto Rican. Religion is alluded to infrequently in the sample of poems; and while the tone of some of the references is neutral, the more insistent attitude expressed in a few poems toward religion is explicitly hostile.

In one neutral example, Miguel Algarín, in setting the stage for his expression of unashamed sensuality ("Sunday, August 11, 1974"), describes a Sunday afternoon: "all the churchgoing latinos have crossed themselves and are now going



while  
       priests work in drug stores blessing the  
 pill...

T C Garcia, in "Under an Apple Tree," believes that mainland Puerto Ricans must move away from religion in order to achieve their true identity:

we have to grow  
 'n' rid ourselves  
 of the bags of religion  
 we speedball with corrupt thoughts  
 of capitalism...

The most vehement and extended denunciation of religion in the sample is Miguel Piñero's "The Book of Genesis According to Saint Miguelito". The poem begins:

Before the beginning  
 God created God  
 In the beginning  
 God created the ghettos & slums  
 and God saw this was good.  
 So God said,  
 "Let there be more ghettos & slums"  
 and there were more ghettos and slums.

In the course of the poem, Piñero's God creates "leadbase paint...the alleys of the slums and heroin and cocaine...and GENOCIDE." Before God gets on a plane "for the sunny beaches of Puerto Rico," he tells the people:

to be  
 COOL  
 and the people were cool

and the people kept cool  
 and the people are cool  
 and God said,  
 "Vaya..."

In the poems, the denigration of organized Christian religion is not balanced by a turn toward the more indigenous spiritual practices of Puerto Ricans identified in the sociological literature (Ghali, 1982; De LaRosa, 1988). Spiritualism, often cited as a strong supporting force in the lives of Puerto Ricans, is favorably contrasted with organized Christianity only once, in Brenda Torres's "Jorgito." Her poem, about the short brutal life, and funeral, of a young "newyorican" contains this stanza:

shango could not attend  
 the old black god would seem unseemly  
 the pale cristo  
     in gilt & purple  
     very red drops on his brow  
 is wanted here  
     (i do not trust him  
     he is too concerned with placing the palms  
     just so  
     upwards on the thighs  
     so the nail holes show  
         jorgito  
         i would prefer shango)

While Torres's voice is powerful, it is just one voice. In general, the sustaining "religious organizations and activities" (Rodriguez, 1989), whether Christian or indigenous, that are thought to be a part of mainland Puerto Rican life are not clearly present in the poems. Perhaps the

most that can be said on this issue at this point is that the poetry sampled reflects the ambiguity in the scholarly literature concerning the role of religion in the lives of mainland Puerto Ricans.

### Machismo

The trait of machismo is another element of the Puerto Rican male identity that, contrary to most established theory, is conspicuously absent in the poems. Machismo is a complex phenomenon whose exact nature is the subject of debate (Lopez, 1973b; Mizio, 1983; Dillard, 1983). Mizio (1983) states that "machismo may be seen as the Puerto Rican's cultural expression of male chauvinism with a stronger emphasis on male virility" (82). Wagenheim (1972) agrees:

It (machismo) is sometimes linked with sexual potency, or physical courage, but it extends beyond that. It includes the belief that man is innately superior to woman, and it affects the whole pattern of family relations (211).

Lopez (1973) gives a particularly thoughtful and persuasive reading of the history of machismo in Puerto Rican life, following it from its roots in the culture of the Spanish colonizers, through their use of it to suppress the islanders, into the development of Puerto Rican street gangs, and finally to the "gradual awakening of the Puerto Rican

people" (208). For Lopez, machismo is built on the two concepts of sexism and self-respect, and is "a composite of some of the most reactionary (and some of the most progressive) forces in the Puerto Rican social development" (200).

In the poems analyzed in this study, there is virtually no machismo. The male poets do voice a demand for respeto, which is a valued norm of Puerto Rican culture (Ghali, 1977, 1982; Montiel, 1978; Mizio, 1983). This is Tato Laviera in "serious dude":

i like and dislike, like the good  
dislikes the bad in everything, bro...  
i integrate what i like, i reject  
what i don't like, bro...  
...that's my ideology  
you better respect it bro...

But respeto is a quality to be proffered to both men and women in Puerto Rican life. The female poets are equally assertive with the men in insisting that they be respected as individuals. Sandra María Estéves speaks to a Latino peer in "Transference":

I'm not your mother who didn't hold you all day  
long...  
And I'm not your girlfriend who left you flat...  
I'm not your neighbor who hates you...  
  
And I'm definitely not the one who ripped off your  
mind.

The equality of assertion which the women poets define themselves may have to do with the kind of Puerto Rican woman who becomes a poet. The lack of machismo expressed by the male poets may be explained in like fashion by considering the kind of Puerto Rican man who becomes a poet. A detailed psychosocial study of each poet needed to clarify this awaits another study, although the issue of the general role and function of the poet in the Puerto Rican culture will be examined later.

Another way to understand the apparent equity between the male and female mainland Puerto Rican poets is that it is evidence that the power of the oppressed identity mainland Puerto Rican men and women share can put in abeyance, or eradicate entirely, certain norms of their traditional ethnocultural identity. In the face of oppression, solidarity is far more important than male superiority. This formulation is in accord with Lopez's (1973) belief that when Puerto Ricans shed the negative self-images grafted on them by the dominant Anglo society, "when machismo becomes pride in being Puerto Rican, there will be no more machismo" (208).

In Miguel Piñero's "The Book of Genesis According to Saint Miguelito," there is a concise poetic statement of Lopez's analysis of machismo. After Piñero's God creates

ghettos, slums, filth, drugs, and disease, he creates:

capitalism  
 who begat racism  
 who begat male chauvinism  
 who begat machismo...

Returning to the social-science voice, as Mizio (1983) states, machismo "must be viewed in the context of society denying a male his manhood by societal castration" (82).

The perspective that sees machismo as born of the oppression of Puerto Ricans by Anglo society illuminates certain behaviors of some inner-city Latino and African-American youth. These youngsters often put on, in dress and attitude, what they call a "gangsta" persona. In its mildest, nascent form, this starts with a cap worn backwards or skewed, and progresses to a figure in full black wearing boots, baggy pants, a lower-face mask, dark reflecting glasses, and a hood—a Darth Vader of the streets. This persona is at once an angry compensation for the lack of respect and opportunity granted these youngsters by the dominant culture, and an intimidating flaunting of just those characteristics that the Anglo world believes are most threatening in their ethnocultural identity. These youngsters would understand Amiña a Muñoz's lines perfectly:

...and when they party  
 they drink bacardi--  
 cause puerto ricans are bad  
 uh-huh  
 puerto ricans are bad  
 uh-huh ("a chant").

### An existential identity

The existential identity that emerges from the poems is difficult to place, both in relation to the core oppressed and ethnocultural categories, and in relation to established theory on the mainland Puerto Rican identity. Its embracing of all content suggests that it is a more abstract concept than the oppressed and ethnocultural categories. In theoretical terms, this would make it a higher level construct (Sacks, 1987), subsuming within it the oppressed and ethnocultural categories. However, the existential component is not pervasive enough across the sample of poems to be given that status as a category of mainland Puerto Rican identity. Still, the degree to which it is present warrants acknowledgement and discussion of its significance.

These lines from Raul Santiago Sebazco's "It's 6:45 PM on 14th Street" give the existential component its label:

I am the first existentialist...  
 I am the early morning consciousness...  
 I am the pouring rain...

I am the man walking in the dark of sidewalks...  
As he moves to his uncertain destiny...

Poems by Victor Hernandez Cruz, Miguel Algarín, Pedro Pietri, Sandra María Estéves and Magdalena Gomez, among others, also express an existential identity, or an existential awareness as a part of the mainland Puerto Rican identity. Estéves herself refers to Pietri as being "among the most existential of the Puerto Rican poets in New York" (1987, 167). Her statement identifies both Pietri's individual existentialism and the strain of existentialism in other mainland Puerto Rican poets.

The existential component that is revealed in the poems is related to the concept of "process identity" (Krill, 1978, 29) in the scholarly literature on existentialism. Process identity "refers to the experience of actually being the total activity of all forms in a given situation" (29). This experience is clearly what Victor Hernandez Cruz, for one, expresses in "side 33" when he states, "I am the possibility of everything"; and what Sandra María Estéves portrays in these lines from "i am the bird in transit for the winter":

i am the timeless  
and spaceless

the burning  
and freezing  
the smallest  
and greatest...

According to Krill (1974), "the stress upon individual freedom and the related fundamental value of the uniqueness of the person" (277) are also central aspects of the existential stance. These, too, are clearly expressed in the mainland Puerto Rican poems. These are the final lines from Miguel Algarín's "Fathering":

I'm fathering  
the will to be a man  
that withstands becoming,  
that resists molding,  
that needs no personality,  
I'm fathering a need  
for invisibility, to not know  
my name, to not know where I belong,  
to not be professing anything,  
I'm fathering the pure, undistilled  
me not recognizable, unmade,  
I'm fathering a need for no me.

The existential identity component revealed in the mainland Puerto Rican poems is not found in the established theoretical formulation of mainland Puerto Rican identity. In established theory, mainland Puerto Rican identity is thought to be comprehensible via the three key concepts of ethnic identity, minority identity, and bicultural identity. (As has been discussed, the grounded theory statement derived from this study notes an oppressed identity and an ethnocultural identity, closely related to minority and ethnic identities, and a mono-cultural rather than a bicultural identity.) Established theory suggests that mainland Puerto Ricans define their identity within the bounds of these three core

categories without the opportunity, or the inclination, to seek beyond them.

If the Puerto Rican poets are representative speakers-- and this will be discussed later--there is also an existential component of identity in the mainland Puerto Rican. In their work, the poets indicate that they are not only Puerto Rican poets, but also poets-at-large, if you will. That is, they have specifically Puerto Rican concerns, but they have other concerns as well, including the kind of existential searching for meaning and identity pursued by poets of all ethnocultural backgrounds.

In an article entitled "Poetry in Common," DiPiero (1993) makes a distinction between two types of political poetry that is useful here. One is a "poetry of political concern" (477), a poetry with specific agendas, focussing on wrongs to be righted. The poems that reveal the oppressed ethnocultural identity of mainland Puerto Ricans fit this type of political poetry.

Di Piero's other political poetry "does not preach to the converted or contrive positions certain of an audience's approval" (477). Instead, the poet in this case attempts "to tell the experience of being a singular self kneaded into an undif-ferentiated crowd of others" (478). Di Piero describes

the purpose of this second type of political poetry as follows:

The important political activity of poetry is to approach a common world by exercising the contentious, even divisive, energies of the idiosyncratic imagination. It is a singular, cranky consciousness that can yet absorb and propagate the normative consciousness of the many. If any poet's speech is talk formalized, a political poet's speech is dissenting talk about a common world.

The "singular, cranky consciousness" of this kind of poet is expressed in what I term the existential mainland Puerto Rican poems, such as Pedro Pietri's "November Hangover." This is the poems's second stanza:

Sometimes my behavior shocks me  
 I exchange blank expressions with  
 The missing details of what is present  
 Stare at the cup of coffee for hours  
 Before deciding not to drink it--  
 My hands become very interesting  
 I give them my undivided attention  
 And the phone can ring til doom's day  
 And I will not answer it because  
 I am too busy laughing at my own jokes.

#### Significance of the existential identity finding

The finding in the poems of an existential component of mainland Puerto Rican identity stimulates the kind of thinking that is a major benefit of grounded theory work. Because the

identity component is not present in established theory, one needs to ask if theory is thereby extended by the finding. The issue here appears to be implicitness. Does established theory, without actually stating it, contain an implicit assumption that Puerto Ricans, like all people, have an existential component of their identity?

If that implicit assumption is there, then this grounded theory study has not extended theory but has only expanded my consciousness. Moreover, there is the danger that in citing the existential component of mainland Puerto Rican identity I become guilty of oppression by condescension--pointing out as a discovery what everyone understands to be true.

There is also the possibility that this grounded theory finding of an existential identity component may serve both ends. It may expand the analyst's consciousness and extend theory at the same time, much as a stone dropped into a pond creates widening circles of effect. My reading of the scholarly literature and my professional practice experience suggest that this possibility is probably the correct one.

Established theory on mainland Puerto Rican identity indicates, with considerable justification, that mainland Puerto Ricans are primarily involved in maintaining their minority ethnocultural identity in the face of Anglo

oppression, or attempting to find ways to take on an acceptable bicultural, albeit still minority, identity. The omission of an existential component may suggest that for mainland Puerto Ricans the existential search can be acknowledged only after some relatively secure resolution has been reached concerning the fate of their ethnocultural identity.

It would require individual psychosocial study of each of the poets who expressed an existential identity component to determine how he or she was able to explore this aspect of identity. One general explanation may be that they are poets, and poets engage in existential quests, even while their ethnocultural identity is under siege. At the least, the finding of the existential dimension of the poems raises the possibility that all Puerto Ricans struggle with existential questions, a possibility that established theory does not make clear. Using the existential poems in practice with Puerto Rican clients, and in the education of Puerto Rican social work students, will help to clarify the issue.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

When I was an undergraduate English major taking a course in theatre, we were taught to ask three questions of any play

we read: What did the playwright try to do? How well did he or she do it? Was it worth doing? Many years have passed since then, and the winds of change in literary theory have blown away any belief that those questions can be answered in terms acceptable to a majority of readers. The third question is especially vulnerable to the spectre of deconstructionism. Still, with these caveats, the foregoing questions are essentially those that are asked of research studies. The first has been answered in the previous chapters of this report; the third will be addressed in the final section; the second will be faced now.

The danger in presenting the limitations of a research study is that the researcher may be so convincing that he is hoist with his own petard. That is, the question will be asked as to why the study was mounted in the first place (Epstein, 1993, in conversation). However, all studies by definition have limitations, and it is the particular duty of the researcher who follows grounded theory methodology to "identify in a candid and honest manner the strengths and limitations of each method used" (Leininger, 1992, 408-9). In fact, it is a notable virtue of the grounded theory approach that it attempts to identify its subjective constraints as clearly as possible.

### The research instrument

In grounded theory work, the research instrument is the researcher. It is he or she who interacts with the subjects and data, which in this study were poems. The "researcher-as-instrument" (Field and Morse, 1985, 115) thus has the obligation to present as openly as possible the theoretical preconceptions and personal biases he or she brings to the work. Of course, as Layder (1982) has pointed out, complete disclosure of one's biases is a contradiction in terms. It is as Freud is rumored to have said of self-analysis--it works very well except for the counter-transference.

The purpose of this study was to explore the identity of an ethnocultural minority group on the American mainland. As the researcher, I thus need to state my own ethnocultural identity and class status, and consider them as factors in my work with the data. I am a middle-class, New England WASP whose ancestors came to this country in the seventeenth century. Not only have I never experienced the oppression expressed by the mainland Puerto Rican poets, I am a descendant of the lineage which is a model for the norms of the dominant Anglo culture.

My first awareness of Puerto Ricans occurred when I was

about sixteen. I used to notice brown-skinned men working in the tobacco fields of the Connecticut River Valley when I drove with my parents from Massachusetts to visit my grandmother in New Hampshire. I knew nothing about these men except that they were "different." I know now that they were the "tabaqueros," migrant workers from Puerto Rico who began to come to the mainland in 1916 to pick the tobacco harvest. Some returned to Puerto Rico after the harvest, some remained.

I was also raised in a very different poetic tradition than the mainland Puerto Rican poets whose works are the data of the study. My models of literature were the traditional Western canon, including Keats, Milton, Browning, Yeats, and T.S. Eliot. In first reading the mainland Puerto Rican poems, I found it frustrating and annoying to struggle through their idiosyncratic, seemingly capricious, syntax and form.

In addition, I was also unsettled at times by the intensity of the rage in some of the more radical poems, like David Hernandez's "While They Talk," which contains these lines:

while they talk of mental health  
 you begin to think "i'm not so dumb  
 or lazy." you check out your mind.  
 you know you're not crazy.  
 while they talk of politics  
 you are in their home

stealing gun collections,  
 using your street education.  
 and  
 when they come to study you  
 or buy your vote on the street  
 you  
 calmly blow them off their feet.

After all, the "they" coming to study them was I, in all my middle-class WASPness.

In putting me off balance and making me anxious, these poems were doing something that they set out to do--disturbing a member and representative of the dominant social and literary establishment. This is a central aim of "resistance poetry" (Harlow, 1987). In resistance poetry, "the very bareness of the language is part of the offensive... ..(against) certain forms of cultural imperialism" (Harlow, 50). Harlow quotes part of a work by the Black South African poet A.N.C. Kumalo as an example:

Let's have poems  
 blood-red in colour  
 ringing like damn bells.

Poems  
 that tear at the oppressor's face  
 and smash his grip.

My response to certain of the mainland Puerto Rican poems raises, and at once answers in the negative, the question of

my being a reliable research instrument. There is no doubt that I would react differently to a sample of nineteenth-century English poetry, or even a twentieth-century radical poetry written in support of the IRA. Both would be much closer to my own literary and ethnocultural lineage.

Similarly, the fact that my first language is not Spanish may have put another constraint on my ability to hear clearly what was in the sample of poems. Although the poems were written in English, as are most Puerto Rican poems written on the mainland (Flores, 1993), a Puerto Rican investigator might have heard messages in the included Spanish phrases, and in the code-switching, that I missed.

With all this said about the limitations of a study in which a middle-class WASP attempts to analyze the poetry of mainland Puerto Ricans, there remain very good reasons for the carrying-out of such a project. These will be discussed in the section dealing with the study's implications.

### Poetry as data

Some of the questions about poetry in general as data were explored in the methodology chapters of this report. They primarily have to do with the ambiguity of poetry, an aspect captured in Robert Frost's definition of poetry as

"what gets lost in translation." In this chapter, the focus is specifically on mainland Puerto Rican poetry as data.

If certain of the poems in the sample were unsettling and even threatening, they were not ambiguous, quite the opposite. The issue here is not one of ambiguity but of representativeness. Is the voice of the mainland Puerto Rican poet representative of the mainland Puerto Rican people? An answer to the question requires an examination of the place of the mainland Puerto Rican poet in mainland Puerto Rican life.

In his book, The Nuyorican Experience: Literature of the Puerto Rican Minority, E.V. Mohr (1982) points out that "Hispanics are still very much at home with the concept of poetry as a popular art" (91). For Puerto Ricans the poet is not an effete academic shut away in an ivy tower, but a public declamador [declaimer] standing up to voice general thoughts and concerns about life. The voice of the Puerto Rican poet is thus a vox populi.

Many of the poems included in the sample are from the Nuyorican school, and thus the question of their particular representativeness must be raised. Nuyorican poetry, according to one of its practitioners, Sandra María Estéves (1987), "is an affirmation of political struggle" (168).

Another poet considered one of the Nuyorican school, Miguel Algarín (1981), explains why Nuyorican poets write:

When you have nothing and can expect nothing, anything you do is something, so that our experience makes it possible for us to write poems that describe our condition without fearing that they might be too personal or too lost in the detail of the day and not metaphysical enough (162).

Algarín believes that the work of the Nuyorican poet is to "perpetuate rituals and habits that are the remains of an already badly weakened historical consciousness or historical self" (161). In the language of this study, Nuyorican poetry seeks to assert and maintain the ethnocultural identity of mainland Puerto Ricans against the oppression of the dominant mainland society.

The Nuyorican poets do not stand alone in this effort. As Velez (1987) indicates, "the Nuyorican material is itself a sub-category of twentieth-century Puerto Rican poetry, the best of which, like Puerto Rican prose writing, has always had a denunciatory function" (76). According to Alfredo Matilla and Iván Silén (1972), the editors of The Puerto Rican Poets, "Puerto Rican poetry of the twentieth century ...is a struggle against the agony of the ghetto...and against the imposition of a crushing colonial state of mind" (xviii).

Furthermore, Nuyorican poetry is seen as being closely related to the actual lives of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. As Flores (1993) states:

not until the late 1960s, when distinctly Nuyorican voices emerged on the American literary landscape, did it occur to anyone to speak of a Puerto Rican literature emanating from life in this country (54).

In Nuyorican literature, Flores believes, "the Puerto Rican community in the United States has arrived at a model of literary expression corresponding to its position as a non-assimilating colonial minority" (65).

Thus the Nuyorican poetry, while at times particularly vehement and outspoken, is still a voice of Puerto Rican poetry and of the mainland Puerto Rican people. It should also be remembered that the study's grounded theory analysis revealed the same categories of oppressed and ethnocultural identities throughout the sample of poems, whether written by Nuyoricans or other mainland Puerto Rican poets.

The question that remains to be answered by further study is if the mainland Puerto Rican poets, whether of the Nuyorican school or not, are a representative voice of the mainland Puerto Ricans of today. Here again, using the poems

in therapeutic interventions with Puerto Rican clients can determine how relevant the oppressed, ethnocultural, and existential dimensions of identity are for the lives of mainland Puerto Ricans today.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Implications for research

This section begins in reverse of the usual order in which a study's implications are discussed. This is to counter immediately what might be seen as the study's major limitation--a methodological one arising from the fact that middle-class WASP attempted to understand the identity of an ethnocultural minority through the data of their own poetry.

The poems present, in direct and accessible language, a clear, unequivocal statement of mainland Puerto Rican identity: oppressed and angry; ethnocultural and proud. As Harlow (1987) says of the poetry of oppressed people:

Poetry is capable not only of serving as a means for the expression of personal identity or even nationalist sentiment. Poetry, as a part of the cultural insti-

tutions and historical existence of a people, is itself an arena of struggle (33).

The social work researcher who, like myself, does not share the ethnocultural and class identities of the poets, is forced by the intense immediacy of the poems to face just how "different" he or she may be from them. In addition, he or she must attempt to deal with whatever anxiety the awareness of that difference may engender. As I noted, I was at times made very uncomfortable by the rage directed in the mainland Puerto Rican poems at the people I represent.

However, if multicultural competence is to mean anything, it must begin in this kind of real self-confrontation. Far too often, social work exercises in multicultural awareness do not progress much beyond the sharing of recipes and tales about holidays and types of traditional dress. The mainland Puerto Rican poetry has the power to bring to the surface, and thus to the possibility of resolution, the anxieties that interfere with meaningful cross-cultural study.

Johnetta Cole, the president of Spelman College, cogently expressed the rationale for engaging in such cross-cultural work. Dr. Cole was concerned about certain tee-shirts worn by some Spelman students that read, "It's a Black thing--you wouldn't understand." If she had her way, Dr. Cole said, the shirts would read, "It's a Black thing--you must try to

understand" (Chira, 1992, E7).

#### Implications for education

The benefits of using multicultural creative literature for cross-cultural study also apply to the education of social work students for culturally competent practice. From this material, social work students can gain greater understanding of their clients, and can explore and affirm their own ethnocultural identities.

#### Understanding of clients

In the past several years, there has been much talk in the professional literature about infusing ethnocultural content into the social work curriculum (Devore and Schlesinger, 1981; Lister, 1987; Ho, 1991; Chau, 1992; Christensen, 1992). While the end toward which this effort is laudable, the means can be improved. Virtually all of the content whose infusion into the curriculum is urged is professional literature (see citations above), which rarely has the force to engage and stimulate students that creative literature has. Further, much of this material is written, as Mohr (1982) says of sociological works about mainland Puerto

Ricans, "by persons whose values and attitudes distance them from the people they write about" (xii).

The mainland Puerto Rican poems analyzed in this study, and all ethnocultural creative literature, are written about and by the people who live the "ethnic reality" (Devore and Schlesinger, 1981, vii). Through this medium, social work students can receive a vivid picture of what it means to be a member of an ethnocultural minority in this country. This kind of classroom experience provides a necessary, preparatory sensitization to the lives and identities of other ethnocultural groups, one far more compelling than conveyed by the professional literature.

In facing the ethnic reality of other groups, students can begin to identify and resolve the issues that interfere with their gaining a real cross-cultural sensitivity. "Enabling social workers to confront their biases," as Latting (1990) puts it, is critical if they are to achieve an acceptable level of cultural competence.

An exposure to ethnocultural creative literature can also provide students with a perspective from which to gauge the validity of the theoretical literature they read on various ethnocultural minorities. With this added perspective:

students can begin to determine the applicability of traditional and contemporary theories of human personality to cultural life styles that do not conform to the dominant society's characteristic ways of thinking and acting (Balgopal, Munson, and Vassil, 1979, 34).

### Self-affirmation

The use of multicultural creative literature in the curriculum can enable students to define and affirm their own ethnocultural identities, and the role they play in the establishment of their professional social work identity. A recent study by Hendricks (1993) indicates that a significant number of Latino social work students experience considerable tension between the values and norms of their traditional culture and those of the professional social work culture.

Hendrick's work is valuable in several ways. First, it identifies an element that may have an important impact on how Latino students feel about both their social work education and the profession for which they are being educated. There is also good reason to believe that social work students from other ethnocultural minority groups may experience similar tension as they prepare for work as professional social workers. Also, in identifying this tension, Hendrick's work legitimizes it as an issue for discussion in the social work curriculum, and empowers Latino students to define clearly and

openly the standards of their ethnocultural identity.

There is a parallel between Hendrick's study and the use of mainland Puerto Rican poetry being proposed in the present report. Each legitimates the exploration of cross-cultural tensions in social work education, and empowers the expression of the ethnocultural identity of the minority group experiencing that tension. The mainland Puerto Rican poetry, which brings the elements of ethnocultural identity vividly to life, can facilitate both of these important processes.

The benefits of utilizing Puerto Rican creative literature in the social work curriculum are well summarized in an article urging the use of Latin American literature to develop cultural sensitivity in another helping profession, psychology:

One avenue for developing such cultural sensitivity might be the study of the Latin American literature. Making it available to all students enrolled in a graduate program in psychology would increase their familiarity with the history and assets of the Hispanic American people. Specific examples from the literature could be used to illustrate psychological traits within the culture and accepted as well as controversial beliefs, systems and values prevalent in Hispanic American countries. This curriculum content could serve a two-fold purpose: (1) to legitimize the Hispanic American student by making him or her feel proud of the heritage; and (2) to help the non-Hispanic American student understand and appreciate the strengths of the Hispanic American culture through its vast literature (Bernal et al., 1983).

### Implications for practice

The implications for practice of this study are related to those for the education of Latino social work students. They are strongest in the area of legitimizing and empowering the expression of mainland Puerto Rican ethnocultural identity.

The establishment of a personal identity is accepted as a critical goal in the psychosocial developmental process (Erikson, 1959/1980; Costantino, Malgady, and Rogler, 1986; Hart, 1988). The component elements of personal identity will vary in content and value (Breakwell, 1986) from culture to culture, but a secure sense of self remains the goal.

Ethnic identity is believed to be a necessary and central piece of personal identity (Erikson, 1966; Maldonado, 1975; Rakoff, 1981). According to Maldonado:

The development of ethnic and racial self-identity is vital to personal self-identity. This fact is especially true in this pluralistic society, for self-identity does not develop in a sociocultural vacuum. Instead, it takes form in an environment that places great importance on one's race, ethnicity, or other characteristics that define a person as different and a minority member (621).

Lopez (1973), in a statement about his own development,

indicates the importance of ethnocultural identity for mainland Puerto Ricans in their search for a personal identity:

I was Puerto Rican, from New York's Washington Heights, raised in the South Bronx. My Spanish was poor; I had no knowledge of what it meant to be a Puerto Rican, and, hence, no sense of identity (xii).

The poetry of mainland Puerto Ricans can be a powerful vehicle in empowering them to reclaim their ethnocultural identity, which has been subjugated by the dominant Anglo culture in this country. In turn, this reclamation and affirmation can strengthen in them a positive self-identity, a self-identity "that flows from the values, ways, and styles of (their) ethnic background, instead of from a self-concept based upon the opinions and prejudices of the larger society toward (their) ethnic group" (Maldonado, 1975, 621).

Rakoff (1981) suggests that the importance of cultural identity is too often ignored by clinical practitioners. Speaking of Erikson's work, she claims that "the strong cultural emphasis that he gave appears to have been lost in the clinic" (25). In an interesting formulation, she believes that cultural background and customs, acting like Winnicott's transitional objects, provide the individual with an inner sense of security that enables him or her to move with

confidence into the wider society.

In a study that supports Rakoff's hypothesis, Schneider (1992) reports on work done with emotionally troubled Jewish adolescents living outside of Israel. Schneider finds that these Jewish adolescents who came to Israel for treatment "seemed to be able to attach themselves to a cultural identity in Israel that enables them to find or repair a lost or damaged identity" (413).

The implications for using mainland Puerto Rican poetry, which defines and affirms ethnocultural identity, with Puerto Rican adolescent clients are clear. This is a population at very high risk for socially maladaptive behaviors (De Palma, 1993). Interventions to strengthen their positive sense of self-identity, interventions based on "the values, ways, and styles of (their) ethnic background" (Maldonado, 621), might well enhance their ability to cope adaptively with the demands of mainland life.

My own experiences working with Puerto Rican adolescents indicate that they would be appreciative of interventions utilizing mainland Puerto Rican poetry. In one case, I was working with a sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican youth who had come for counseling because of feelings of low self-esteem.

During one session, I gave him Tato Laviera's "boricua," which he read out loud with great interest. When he finished, he looked up and asked, "Did a Puerto Rican write this?" When I replied, "Yes," he exclaimed, "All right!" In a subsequent session, when I gave him Miguel Piñero's "The Lower East Side" to read, he identified strongly with Piñero's anger and despair, and went on to talk about his own feelings of being discriminated against as a Puerto Rican. The poems clearly facilitated the process of defining a self-identity for this young man.

In another instance, the empowering aspect of the mainland Puerto Rican poetry was demonstrated in an completely unplanned manner. In my job at the Adolescent Health Center of Mount Sinai Hospital, I worked two days each week at a junior high school in East Harlem. This school has a large Puerto Rican population, and puts on an annual Salsa Night, a performance of Puerto Rican and other Latino readings, music, and dance. The week before Salsa Night, I had shown a few of the poems from my sample to an English teacher at the school who I knew was interested in finding engaging works for his students. He had left them on his desk, and they were noticed by one of the Puerto Rican students involved in the salsa program. He was so taken with them that he brought them to the group planning the program, and they were made an integral part of the show.

The following year, the school found the funds to invite Pedro Pietri, a significant contributor to this study's sample, to work for several weeks with the student performers in the 1993 Salsa Night. Pietri also wrote a piece to be performed at the program. I attended the show, as I had for several years. The sense of pride and solidarity stirred in both performers and audience by the display and affirmation of valued Puerto Rican ethnocultural elements was palpable and moving. The experience provided further clear evidence of the benefits to be gained from the use of material like the mainland Puerto Rican poetry in work with Puerto Rican clients.

The specific areas of intervention with Puerto Rican clients in which the poems can be utilized are many. They include bibliotherapeutic work with troubled children and adolescents; therapeutic tutoring with youngsters with reading difficulties; literacy programs for older clients, including those incarcerated; and "multicultural family therapy" (McGill, 1992), in which "the cultural story" (347) of families needs to be understood.

A particularly pressing need is in work with the many Puerto Rican adolescents who are seen at high risk for dropping out of school (Gibbs, Huang and associates, 1989; De Palma, 1993). These youngsters frequently feel that to attempt

to achieve in school is "to be white." As this would be a denial of an important element of their identity, they reject the goal of academic success. The same sentiment is expressed in the works of several mainland Puerto Rican poets, including Luciano, Cappas, and Algarín. Using these poems with disaffected Puerto Rican youngsters would give credence to their feelings, feelings that educators and counselors usually try to change without hearing them out.

It is not that a change to a more positive attitude toward learning should not be an objective. But in this case, there will be a chance for that change only after these Puerto Rican youngsters have the opportunity to voice their disaffection, and have it respected as a legitimate expression of how they see their lives and experiences. The works of poets who share their ethnocultural identity, and their sense of anger and disaffection, can empower them in this.

There are also benefits to be gained by social work practitioners from the use of mainland Puerto Rican poetry in their work. For one, there is the satisfaction that would follow what I believe would be the increased engagement and progress of their Puerto Rican clients. For another, there is the potential self-awareness that would be stimulated by the use of such a strongly ethnocultural medium. Practitioners would gain insight into their own blindspots and prejudices,

and also, by reflection, a heightened appreciation of their own ethnocultural identity. In order to work competently with members of different ethnocultural groups, we need to know who we are in ethnocultural terms.

Finally, a use of Puerto Rican poetry in our work can improve our relations with Puerto Rican colleagues, as another anecdote illustrates. I was at my junior high position on the day when Pedro Pietri was to begin working with the students on the salsa show. I overheard the school's director, who is Puerto Rican, talking in the office to a few staff members about a "Pedro Pietri." I asked him if he was talking about Pedro Pietri the poet, and he exclaimed, "You see! Only one guy here knows who Pedro Pietri is, and he's a white guy!" My knowledge of one of his culture's poets was a sign of respect that in turn increased the director's respect for me.

I offer these anecdotes not in the service of self-aggrandizement, but to promote the benefits of using mainland Puerto Rican poetry in social work practice.

Mainland Puerto Ricans continue to write poems and other works of creative literature that can be used in interventions with Puerto Rican clients. Victor Hernandez Cruz, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Martín Espada recently published new collections. Abraham Rodriguez, Jr., a young Puerto Rican

writer from the South Bronx, has published a book of short stories and a novel in the past two years. Utilizing these works with Puerto Rican clients, especially children and adolescents, might stimulate them to write of their own experiences. Victor Hernandez and Herbert Kohl (1970) found this to be a very fruitful approach with inner-city Latino and African-American youngsters over twenty years ago.

#### CONCLUSION

This study derived a grounded theory formulation of mainland Puerto Rican male identity from the data of a sample of mainland Puerto Rican poetry. The poems portray mainland Puerto Rican males as having a self-identity with two core categories: an oppressed identity and an ethnocultural identity. There is a mutually reinforcing dynamic between these two categories because the oppression of the dominant Anglo society is felt by mainland Puerto Ricans to be directed at the ethnocultural elements of their identity, and they react to this oppression with an increased insistence on the value of those ethnocultural elements.

In addition to the two core identity categories, the poems reveal an existential category of identity, a component

more abstract and less content-focussed than the two core categories. Although the existential identity is not pervasive enough throughout the sample to be given status as a core category or a higher-level construct, it is still sufficiently present to merit recognition and discussion. While the study looked specifically at male identity, the poems indicate that both mainland Puerto Rican men and women share all three of the revealed identity categories.

In its finding of the existential identity category, the study is believed to have expanded the consciousness of the analyst and extended theory on mainland Puerto Rican identity. The existential component is not discussed in established theory on the identity of mainland Puerto Ricans.

Also noted were possible limitations to the study. The most notable were those deriving from the fact that a researcher from one ethnocultural and class identity attempted to understand the identity of people from different ethnocultural and class identities by an analysis of their poetry. From another perspective, however, this cross-cultural approach, with all its tension, was the study's greatest strength.

The implications of the study for social work practice, education, and further study are many. The theme connecting

all of them is that mainland Puerto Rican poetry is a potent medium to empower mainland Puerto Ricans to express and affirm their ethnocultural identity. The necessity for this endeavor is conveyed in the two following statements. The first is by Vine Deloria, Jr., (1981) a Native American political scientist:

As the cultural traditions of racial minorities erode and become homogenized by modern communications, the fearful possibility exists that these groups will be sapped of their natural resources for survival and become perpetual wards of the welfare state. Thus, although legal political identity remains a strong interest of the racial minorities, the real task for them is to broaden American perceptions of cultural diversity, both as a measure of protection and as an avenue for eventual realization of the American promise of equality and justice (26).

The second statement is by Ann Hartman (1991), Dean of the Smith College School of Social Work:

Social workers must never discount the power of language. Indeed, we, along with people who are oppressed, must continue to challenge the dominant discourses that attempt to marginalize groups on the basis of such categories as color, sex, age, or sexual orientation. We must participate in the efforts of such groups to claim the right to define themselves and their experiences--that is, to describe their own lives (276).

It is fitting to end with the voice of the poet. This is Tato Laviera's "puerto rican":

silk  
smooth  
ivory  
polished  
into  
brown  
tan  
black  
soul  
leaning  
back  
looking  
proud  
sharp  
answers  
casual  
community  
conversations  
based  
in  
mental  
admiration  
how  
highly  
we  
claim  
our  
worth  
conceiving  
new  
society  
inside  
cemented  
hard  
core  
beauty  
chanting  
snapping  
beats

FINIS

## Appendix

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