

Making and Marketing National Identities

“Now everybody loves Puerto Rican culture,” observed a Puerto Rican schoolteacher and festival organizer, “but that’s exactly the problem. Now you have people that don’t know culture but are putting together events because it’s fashionable. That’s why we need the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, so people don’t devalue our culture.”

Culture is certainly fashionable in Puerto Rico. In addition to the hundreds of cultural festivals that are celebrated every year on the island, transnational corporations, well aware that culture sells, are drawing on images of Puerto Rican folklore and popular culture to advertise beer, cigarettes, and other products. Meanwhile, political supporters of U.S. statehood, of independence, and of commonwealth status variously claim to be pro-Puerto Rico and all things Puerto Rican.

The current emphasis on cultural identity in Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony that continues to debate its political status, represents a significant development considering that overt demonstrations of Puerto Rican identity were once regarded as subversive. Once limited and associated with pro-independence sectors of society, manifestations of cultural identity are now widespread: musicians sing nationalist songs on prime-time television, and nationalist symbols, such as the Puerto Rican flag, decorate advertisements

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and private dwellings alike. Yet, as the teacher's comments suggest, these developments have raised contentions over what elements and which interests can legitimately represent Puerto Rican culture. These issues and their impact on contemporary politics and on shaping and expanding definitions of identity are the subject of this work.

This study examines the dynamics of cultural politics in contemporary Puerto Rican society.' It considers the debates regarding the use, definition, and representation of Puerto Rican culture as the terrain on which a variety of actors seek to advance and legitimize interests that range from selling products to promoting U.S. statehood or independence. I argue that such debates are actively involved in shaping conceptions of national identity and, ultimately, in reformulating the basis and the processes by which identities are constructed on the island. My analysis probes the scope and nature of cultural nationalism and the forces fueling its growth in contemporary society. In short, I attempt to show cultural nationalism to be far from a unitary movement but rather one that serves and generates divergent objectives, including those that sustain and others that challenge dominant frameworks about culture, identity, and political participation.

The case of Puerto Rico provides a good example of cultural nationalism and a unique entry point for examining the issues at stake in contemporary cultural struggles. A colony in a postcolonial world, Puerto Rico has remained in a colonial relationship with the United States since the U.S. occupation of the island in 1898. Puerto Ricans attained commonwealth status in 1952, which conferred self-governing authority under federal jurisdiction and rendered the island a "free associated state" of the United States. Under this arrangement, Puerto Ricans are subject to all federal laws, but they are not permitted to vote in U.S. elections or influence the political decisions that affect most aspects of their lives. Yet despite their lack of political sovereignty, most Puerto Ricans consider themselves a territorially distinct national unit, a

nation defined by its cultural distinctiveness notwithstanding its political and economic dependency on the United States. In fact, while the average Puerto Rican now feels more pride than ever before in his or her identity, most favor the continuation of some type of political and economic relationship with the United States.

However, the lack of mass support for independence has led many island scholars to discount the heightened role of culture as a “light” nationalism or a neonationalism that has no significance for anticolonial politics. This view mirrors criticism of the widespread escalation of cultural movements in the current transnational context where the idiom of culture is increasingly rendered into one more tool to sell consumer goods.² Yet local cultural identities continue to be salient mediums for political mobilization and serve to promote a variety of other interests, not limited to **issues** of sovereignty and independence (Johnson 1994, Nash 1995, Young 1993). This work highlights these issues by considering the current growth of cultural nationalism not as an apolitical development but as part of a shift in the terrain of political action to the realm of culture and cultural politics, where the idiom of culture constitutes a dominant discourse to advance, debate, and legitimize conflicting claims. Through this focus I emphasize the variety of struggles that are currently being waged through culture, hoping to shed light on some of the opportunities and constraints involved in contemporary cultural and nationalist movements.

Contemporary cultural politics permeate many sectors of Puerto Rican society, from the media to government departments for tourism and education. In order to highlight the historical context of current conflicts, this study focuses on the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the governmental entity charged since the 1950s with defining and defending Puerto Rican culture, and on Puerto Rico’s rapidly proliferating grassroots festival organizations. Varied in their goals and activities, which range from sports to environmental protection, these grassroots groups have a com-

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mon interest in organizing public festivals and cultural celebrations. Their growth reflects the increased significance of culture in political discourse and provides examples of the range of interests that are promoted through culture on the island.

The government's initial attempts to promote cultural nationalism in the 1950s are the starting point of this discussion. While local debates over culture in Puerto Rico can be traced to the ideas of educated elites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was only in the 1950s, after Puerto Rico attained local autonomy through commonwealth status, that the government first made a concerted effort to define an official cultural policy and stipulate what could rightfully represent Puerto Rican culture. At this time, the colonial government developed an "official nationalism" (Anderson 1983) that emanated from and served the colonial state. This involved emphasizing the island's cultural distinctiveness through a cultural nationalism that helped to disguise its politically dependent status and sought to reconcile diverse interests into a stable colonial project. Puerto Rico's separatist nationalism was contained by repression and co-optation, the nation was associated with the realm of the cultural, and views of national identity became "institutionalized" through cultural policies and government cultural agencies. The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture was founded at this time, with the official task of defining and disseminating the constituent elements of Puerto Rico's national identity. Shortly afterwards, cultural centers affiliated with the institution were established to replicate its mission at the local level. By the late 1970s, government-affiliated cultural centers had been founded in almost all of the island's seventy-eight municipalities, where they were intended to serve as extensions of the central institution.

The official discourse about what could rightfully represent Puerto Rican culture reproduced patterns of nationalist ideologies similar to those found in many other contexts (Dominguez 1990, Verdery 1991). First, culture was "objectified" as a set of distinct

and identifiable traits and products defined as forming the essence of national identity (Handler 1988: 13-16, Friedman 1994:88). It was constructed as something that could be lost or possessed, or be embodied in a fair, a piece of folk art, a tradition, or an object, rather than as a way of life and everyday culture. These products could then be assigned value as being more or less able to represent Puerto Ricanness or deemed more or less likely to provide the “content” of Puerto Rican identity. It is “culture” constructed as an element of self-identification that has formed the basis for struggle in Puerto Rico’s cultural politics.

Moreover, within the official discourse about Puerto Rican culture, authenticity was defined through strict dichotomies such as that opposing a pure, utopian past and folklore to the impure and immoral influences of modernity. The United States, with its commercial culture, represented the “other” against which authentic Puerto Rican culture was defined. Thus, images of national identity became centered around a traditional agrarian past with its customs and folklore; and a romanticized and harmonious integration of the indigenous Taino, Spanish, and African components of society, under the rubric of Hispanic tradition, was set in opposition to the American invader.³ In sharp contrast with this authenticated view of national identity, Puerto Ricans have long been geographically divided; 2.7 million Puerto Ricans currently live in the United States while island residents number 3.5 million. There is constant migratory traffic between Puerto Rico and the mainland, and American commercial culture touches every aspect of contemporary island life. Furthermore, 71 percent of the island’s population lives in urban areas; unemployment stands at over 20 percent of the workforce; and services, manufacturing, and the civil sector, rather than agriculture, are the primary sources of employment (Negociado del Censo Federal 1990). In this context, contemporary folk artists are more likely the urban unemployed, Puerto Rican music is increasingly the result of the hybridization of musical rhythms, and ideas of Puerto Ricanness

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are more broadly disseminated by Budweiser than by political parties or government institutions.

Tensions between government-sanctioned images of national identity and people's lived social realities are not unique to Puerto Rico. Against the perceived threats represented by modernity, many nationalist ideologies have built images of bounded national entities eternally pitted against pollution and contamination (Handler 1988, Lloyd 1994, Olwig 1993). These tensions are increasingly evident in this age of transnational flows, where the media, commercial culture, and the growth of diasporic populations continue to challenge traditional constructs of culture and national identity. My interest, however, is in tracing the ongoing negotiations, ancillary creations, and practices in which people engage as they seek to maintain cultural distinctiveness. Such attempts are vividly displayed in Puerto Rico, where the island's cultural identity remains the most important basis for defining the national entity, and where the idiom of culture has historically served as a site for contesting power over the colonial state. These factors have sustained ongoing attempts by island intellectuals and political elites to maintain cultural authenticity by upholding officially constructed definitions of culture, or by renewing these definitions without challenging their "traditional" foundations.

In the realm of everyday life, however, new expressions of Puerto Ricanness are being generated by a variety of grassroots cultural organizers. Specifically, an assortment of independent groups, committees, and organizers of festivals are functioning as arenas for the definition of national identity and increasing the public space for cultural debate and contestation. These groups vary widely; I refer to them here as "independent" or "community groups" to highlight their regional and community orientation and their independence from the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and all other government cultural entities. They include groups such as the Recreational, Educational, and Cultural Association of the Barrio Mariana, which started as a community-renewal

organization, and the Christian Collegial Center in Jayuya, whose focus is on the local youth, as well as many other groups whose work is directed to their communities rather than at promoting a particular view of national identity. However, as they voice diverse interests through cultural claims and organize festivals and public events as part of their programs, these groups are also becoming involved in contesting and representing Puerto Rican culture in public life. In this process, most groups draw on the official cultural policy regarding Puerto Rico's traditional agrarian past and folklore as representative of what is distinctively Puerto Rican. Yet the extent of this borrowing varies. Rather than "authentic" folklore or other ethnic markers used by the government's cultural policy, increasingly it is popular and mass culture, as well as regional icons like the breadfruit, the cane worker, or the flat-bottom boat that dominate grassroots representations of Puerto Rican culture. This trend, in turn, highlights the dissemination of popular expressions of Puerto Ricanness that go beyond the official definitions of cultural authenticity. As a result, although they differ in their goals and activities, these groups are alike in being perceived as threats to the "homogeneity of the nation," which the official cultural nationalist project strives to project. Thus, their departure from government cultural policies will be analyzed as popular challenges to restrictive definitions of identity, and their work is viewed as part of larger attempts to rearticulate the discourse of culture toward specific ends.

Of particular interest in this context are corporate advertisers, especially those promoting such consumer goods as liquor, soft drinks, food, and tobacco. Aware of the marketing potential of the current popularization of cultural nationalism, these companies are also staking claims to Puerto Rican culture through their support of folk art fairs, festivals, and contests and their use of Puerto Rican folklore, history, and popular culture as background in their advertisements. Through an analysis of the background and motivations leading to the corporate turn to culture, I analyze

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some of the local contentions and contradictions ensuing from this development as corporate publicity strategies alternately reinforce and challenge dominant representations of culture. Thus, far from promoting homogenization, corporate sponsors contribute a new dimension to contemporary cultural politics. Considered by some a threat to the authenticity of the nation, commercial sponsors nevertheless add to the national dialogue over what can appropriately depict Puerto Rican culture. Specifically, grassroots activities and representations of Puerto Ricanness are increasingly distinguished as “cultural” or delegitimized as “commercial” and accepted or rejected on this basis. Ironically, however, corporate sponsors are simultaneously helping to market and showcase new ways of expressing Puerto Ricanness that are shunned by official definitions of Puerto Rican culture.

These are some of the developments that are central to my analysis of the constraints and possibilities for broadening the scope of representations and the interests that can be advanced in cultural terms. I attempt to broaden discussions of culture, politics, and nationalism by recognizing the contributions of local groups and private corporations to debates over definitions of national identity. In doing so, I address **two** issues central to present-day culture struggles—the ongoing tension between state-sponsored nationalist programs and alternative conceptions of group identity, and the nature of contemporary processes of identity formation in an increasingly mass mediated and transnational world.

Culture and the Creation of Nationalism

As ethnic and cultural identities acquire greater importance in present-day political movements, the study of nationalism and the cultural construction of national identities have come to the forefront of contemporary social analysis (Foster 1991, B. Williams 1989). This emphasis has led to a general awareness that

forging a cultural identity, either from an ethnic past (Connor 1973, Smith 1986) or from recent inventions (Anderson 1983), is a central component of all nationalist programs.

Although they always entail the construction of a national identity, nationalisms have, nevertheless, taken many forms and been shaped by specific historical forces and agents.⁴ This diversity has made defining and studying nationalisms a difficult task. Yet contemporary studies tend either to conflate all types of nationalism or to treat them, and other social categories of identity such as ethnicity, as “peoplehood constructs” (Fox 1990, Wallerstein 1991). These conceptualizations highlight the similarities among different types of nationalism, but they can also hide their historical specificity and social particularities.

While not arguing for a strict categorization among different types of nationalism, I find it useful to distinguish the case of Puerto Rico as an example of cultural nationalism in order to highlight *the* particular historical circumstances that led to the current emphasis on cultural distinctiveness, over concrete political boundaries and definitions, as the primary determinant of national identity. Accordingly, the distinction lies in the “loci of political identity,” whether the relevant political unit is thought to be the cultural unit or the nation-state as recognized by the international community (see Barnett 1974: 240 quoted in Williams 1991: 16). The distinction between nations and states can be traced to Herder’s eighteenth-century ideas of the “folk soul” in which nations are deemed to have a distinct essence rooted in history and tradition (Hutchinson 1987). This conception was later subverted by classical views of a nation as a political entity bounded by a state. Yet the distinction between nations and states is important in order to study types of nationalism that identify with something other than a nation-state, such as those encapsulated within a greater state or constrained by a colonial relationship, as in the case of Puerto Rico. In this context, national identity is defined not as identification with a nation-state as a juridically

defined unit (Hylland Eriksen 1993) but in terms of identification with a culturally distinct community.

The conception of a national identity drawing on the identification with a culturally distinct unit, rather than on an independent nation-state, is particularly relevant for the case of Puerto Rico. Due to the politically divided nature of Puerto Rican society and to years of repression and persecution of separatists and pro-independence advocates: “nation” and “nationality” are highly contentious terms on the island. Many apply these categories to the United States or to Puerto Rico according to their particular political goals for the island—U.S. statehood, commonwealth, or independence—or according to whether they take as basis the island’s cultural identity or politically dependent status. This was evident in demonstrations organized in 1996, prompted by a public comment by the pro-statehood governor to the effect that Puerto Rico is not a nation because it has never been a sovereign state. This statement led to a heated public debate and to the organization of three parallel marches in which thousands were mobilized to support different and competing goals: to affirm their nationality irrespective of the island’s political status, to affirm their U.S. citizenship, or to express their desire for the political independence that would provide a legal basis for Puerto Rico’s nationhood. References to the “national” are still politically loaded terms in everyday society, but the terms “culture” and “identity” are commonly used to express identification with Puerto Rico as a distinct collective unit. Specifically, discussions of culture and claims to be *pro cultura*, *culturalista*, or *puerto-riqueñista* (pro-Puerto Ricanness and things Puerto Rican) are all statements of national identity or of self-identification with Puerto Rico as a culturally distinct unit.

This work argues that cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico is a direct result of the limits imposed by colonialism on the development of a politically defined nation-state, which led to the emphasis on culture as Puerto Rico’s “domain of sovereignty”

(Chatterjee 1993), a realm wherein the local government could establish a degree of autonomy even under colonial control. It is this historical function of culture as the only institutionalized channel of nationalism that has since heightened the significance of the idiom of culture as a venue of self-identification and political debate. However, by focusing on cultural nationalism I do not mean to imply that it is the only type of nationalism operating on the island. Nationalism in Puerto Rico has been characterized as a heterogeneous movement (Carrion 1993) as it ranges from the more widespread cultural nationalism to a separatist nationalism that seeks political sovereignty for the island. However, it is cultural nationalism that has historically evolved into the dominant form of nationalist thought and that provides the framework for contemporary debates.

In the literature on nationalism, cultural nationalism is also known as the process of reinvigoration, authentication, and standardization of a country's national identity. This process has been documented as an integral part of the development of all nationalist movements, one that leads to the integration of a plurality of identities into a common national culture and the expression of a common identity.⁵ As such, cultural nationalism is an ongoing and recurring process that can emerge and heighten at different historical stages: prior to the constitution of a state, as in the case of pre-independence India (Chatterjee 1993); long after statehood has been achieved, as in the case of Japan's *nihonjinron* movement of the 1970s and 1980s (Yoshino 1995); or as a recurrent force in times when national identity is perceived as threatened by internal or external forces—for example, as documented in the case of Irish cultural nationalism (Hutchinson 1992). Yet always, cultural nationalism serves as a key component in the constitution, renewal, and reinvigoration of a country's national identity and feeds a sense of political distinctiveness. Contrary to the emphasis of the above studies, these processes are not led only by intellectuals and governmental elites or by the

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“thinking elites” (Yoshino 1995), defined as those who formulate ideas of national identity through creative pursuits. Conceptions of identity are affected, directly or indirectly, by a variety of agents including those to whom these views are geared. I therefore draw on a broader conception of intellectuals as including “anyone whose social practice invokes claims to knowledge or to the creation and maintenance of cultural value and whose claim is at least partly acknowledged by others” (Verdery 1991: 16). In particular, I discuss the role played in shaping and authenticating a national identity by advertisers and local groups who may or may not be openly concerned with the creation and direction of ideas of national identity and whose participation in this realm may be largely unnoticed or unacknowledged.

This work addresses these **two** attributes associated with cultural nationalism: the emphasis on culture over other political boundaries, and the processes of shaping and constructing national identities. For my point of departure, however, I use the struggles involved in shaping views of national identity; hence my interest in contemporary cultural politics and struggles over definitions of culture and who and what are its most appropriate representatives.

The Politics of Culture and Authenticity

Pivotal to the constitution of a national identity are the containment and redefinition of difference into ideas of common peoplehood. These processes are characterized by contention and negotiation, through which a dominant standard of the nation is constituted. This, in turn, serves to demarcate who is and who is not part of the community as defined, and on what basis. Anthropologists examining these processes have analyzed the creation of meanings and ideas of common peoplehood in terms of nationalist ideologies, or ideologies for the “production of conceptions of peoplehood” (Fox 1990: 3) that provide ideas of common identity

through which people define themselves as part of a given community and operate to produce, define, and contest ideas of national identity. In this way, nationalist ideologies provide the terrain upon which actors define or contest the ideas and meanings of the national community.⁶ In turn, research on how people construct particular nationalist ideologies has found a preponderance of similar ideological precepts, such as the equation of a nation with a people (implying homogeneity, purity, and stability), which affect the development of constructs of cultural identity (B. Williams 1993: 146). These processes have been linked with nationalism's Western heritage; in particular, the Enlightenment concept of nations as authentic and unique entities has led to the expectation of cultural distinctiveness as an intrinsic component to legitimize political demands in all nationalist ideologies (Breuilly 1982: 108-9). Accordingly, claims to national distinctiveness have since been justified as natural through affirmations of authentic and distinctive elements embodied either in a language, a unique history, or a people. This, in turn, explains the recurrence of tropes from nature, kinship, and myths of shared heritage among nationalist ideologies, used to naturalize the national community and to link it with a recent founding myth or a continuous and glorious past (A. Alonso 1994).

We should note, however, that not all myths of national identity place the same emphasis on homogeneity. Segal (1994) argues that, due to a history of colonization and the continual arrival of transplanted populations, nationalisms in the "New World," such as in the Caribbean, have often embraced ancestral diversity as a defining component of their national identities, celebrating the harmonious coexistence of different peoples who still remain culturally distinct. Puerto Rico's national myth emphasizes this kind of diversity and includes Spanish, indigenous, and African components, although, like many *mestizaje* myths in Latin America, Puerto Rico's embraces homogeneity and claims that these three strands have merged into a single ethnicity, the "Puerto Rican."

These differences in emphasis, however, do not make nationalist ideologies more inclusive, unbiased, or unaffected by inequalities of power. Whatever the model, the consolidation of ideas of national identity by nationalist programs is intrinsically involved in the unequal categorization of aspects and elements of a given society according to the dominant criteria for defining the national community. Some people and certain elements of the culture are valued as part of the community; others are shunned, excluded, and categorized as “ethnic” or foreign. It is in this sense that nationalist ideologies are composed of the hegemonic, or that which becomes, as result of cultural struggles, the dominant standard of the nation (B. Williams 1989). These processes often rely on transformist hegemonic processes by which the cultural products of different groups are appropriated, assimilated, and neutralized to create an image of national distinctiveness while forms of exclusions are being recreated (B. Williams 1991).⁷

These processes were evident in Puerto Rico in the 1950s, when the pro-commonwealth leadership first won political and economic power with the attainment of commonwealth status, which it legitimized by promoting the nation as a cultural community. Separatist nationalism was contained by repression and co-optation, and different elements of Puerto Rican culture and society were unequally incorporated into a culturalist definition of the nation embodied in folklorized images of a utopian agrarian past. Among other distinctions, this view emphasized the island’s Hispanic heritage and deemphasized its African component.

It is important to note, however, that the commonwealth’s cultural nationalist project was structurally limited from its inception by the island’s colonial status. Political and economic activity has always been limited to coalitions that advance U.S. and local interests on the island. These constraints have not only affected the island’s cultural nationalism: its development strategies and the constitution of the commonwealth itself have resulted from political projects that represented the consolidation of U.S.

interests and those of dominant local sectors (Pantojas-Garcia 1990). We therefore need to make a distinction between hegemony as an ongoing process by which struggles are vested around the incorporation, intersection, and articulation of different interests in order to ally groups and advance particular goals; and hegemony as a condition, resulting from the successful completion of such a process through which a class or group is able to achieve consensus and provide intellectual and moral leadership to the rest of society (Mallon 1995, Roseberry 1994). Neither the pro-commonwealth party nor any other political faction in Puerto Rico has been able to secure local hegemony independent of U.S. interests, although domestic elites have established a degree of power over the colonial state through the containment and incorporation of competing groups and interests.⁸ It is as a result of these processes that the pro-commonwealth party was able to attain political dominance in the 1950s and to direct efforts to disseminate the foundational elements that still form the backbone of most representations of Puerto Rican culture on the island.

Tropes of national identity, however, are always vulnerable constructs contingent on power relations and the maintenance or transformation of a given social order. State-developed myths of national identity, for instance, need to be constantly renewed, defended, updated, and articulated in all areas of society, ranging from historical and literary accounts of common peoplehood to cultural policies and official versions of history (Rowe and Schelling 1991, Sommer 1990). These processes are never smooth or cohesive; yet in Puerto Rico they are further complicated by the island's colonial status and, in particular, the historical ambiguity of commonwealth status. Specifically, the commonwealth has remained a "moment" rather than a permanent status, and has continued to be contested by other political interests also attempting to affect definitions of national identity and to link them to different status options for the island. This situation has further

hindered the dissemination of an uncontested view of national identity and increased the significance of cultural struggles as a framework for debate and conflict. In particular, Puerto Rico's indeterminate colonial situation has perpetuated the creation of cultural policies and institutions that could never be fully popularized due to their symbolic significance for those that controlled them. As Pierre Bourdieu shows, claims to knowledge and authenticity are part and parcel of struggles over the monopoly of power in which those in dominant positions "operate essentially defensive strategies, designed to perpetuate the status quo by maintaining themselves and the principles on which their dominance is based" (Bourdieu 1993: 83).⁹ In this context we see government cultural workers incorporating elements of popular culture and everyday life into official definitions of Puerto Rican culture while, for the most part, sanctioning these definitions through the standards of authenticity and restricting those who can take part in the cultural domain through cultural policies and legislation. In this context, I argue that the early policies for promoting cultural nationalism were able to generalize a cultural definition of Puerto Rican identity, center politics around culture, and contribute to the colonial premises on which views of Puerto Rican culture have since been grounded. Yet these processes were never devoid of struggle about the content of culture and its most appropriate representatives.

Alternative Authenticities

Against this already politicized and contingent background, we also need to consider how questions of identity in Puerto Rico are affected by global political economic processes. We need to account for the ways in which transnational corporations are making consumer products appear Puerto Rican as they tap into culture in order to sell their goods, as well as for the mass-mediated popular culture and hybrid representations of cultural identity

displayed by a variety of grassroots groups. These developments are at the heart of contemporary research, which, aware that nationalism within the context of globalization is not a contradictory but rather a complementary process, increasingly focuses on the disparate processes through which cultural identities are promoted, hindered, or shaped (Featherstone 1995, Hall 1991, Miller 1995).

In this research a key question emerges about the relevance of “national identities” at a time when the intrastate system circumscribes the potential of nationalism to legitimize national spaces; a constant flow of peoples, images, and ideas challenge strict conceptualizations of identity; and ongoing processes of commodification affect cultural markers of identity (Basch et al. 1994, Friedman 1994, Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Under these conditions, new agents such as transnational corporations are joining nationalist elites in constructing images of collective identity, and modes of identification often elude traditional definitions of space, territoriality, and the objectification of the nation through material bases of authenticity while still expressing and demarcating the existence of a cultural community (Malkki 1992, Rosaldo 1989). It is these processes that have led many to advance constructs such as “hybrid culture” and “blurred” or “transnational” or “post-modern” identities to describe the new processes of identity formation that emerge as a result of the ongoing dislocation of national, state, and territorial boundaries (Appadurai 1990, García-Canclini 1992b, Basch et al. 1994, Featherstone 1995).

In turn, these new spaces and forms of identification are often perceived as opportunities that may potentially supersede the exclusionary nationalist forms of identification. Thus some suggest that the new forms of cultural identification and more flexible cultural affirmations directly challenge notions of cultural identity tied to patrimony and attachment to territory and may therefore be more resilient to appropriation (Garcia-Canclini 1992a). In a similar manner, the mass media and the consumption of commod-

ities and products are often regarded as sites for local strategies of self-definition that may provide alternatives to nationalist forms of identification and mediums for progressive politics (Garnham 1993, Shohat and Stam 1994).

Nevertheless, little attention has been given to how these processes actually operate in daily life, especially in relation to lingering nationalist precepts and processes and their ongoing attempts to objectify or essentialize forms of identity. These issues are particularly relevant considering evidence that points to the dual nature of global processes that lead both to homogeneity and to the recreation of difference, by fostering quests for authenticity, fixity, and determinacy. Postmodern theory emphasizes the end of meta-narratives, such as nationalism, but what we often see is the durability of the old paradigms of race, nation, and culture, albeit reconstituted in new guises, such as those of the new racism that speaks of the “insurmountability of cultural differences,” (Balibar 1991: 21) or new nationalisms that prioritize cultural rather than civic ties (Friedman 1994). Even hybrid forms themselves, by necessity, are in a constant stage of becoming, or attaining some fixity to be rendered useful in strategic politics (Naficy 1993). In this context, engaging in cultural struggles inevitably involves not superseding but bridging and negotiating with established categories of identification and hierarchies of representation.

This study takes up these issues by considering the seemingly more fluid forms of identification at play in the case of Puerto Rico not in opposition but in relation to the island’s nationalist discourse. I draw from the view that the alternative sites and expressions of Puerto Ricanness based on popular culture and everyday life evidenced in this work do not mark a demise of nationalism or nationalist forms of identification, for it is still in relation to lingering nationalist precepts that these practices operate.” It is not the idea of the nation that is being contested but its nature and range of representation. In fact, I argue that the emergence of more diverse representations of Puerto Ricanness

has not challenged the discourse of authenticity and cultural identity but rather has shaped and helped reconfigure its scope and reach. In this way, my concern is with the conflicts and challenges that people confront in the process of rearticulating identities, not only in relation to external politico-economic constraints but also in relation to dominant frameworks for defining authenticity.

Thus, the new ways of representing Puerto Rican culture that are generated through the “reception” and “consumption” (de Certeau 1984) of official constructions of nationhood are an important aspect of this work. Cultural organizers are actively employing and manipulating official cultural policy and, in the process, simultaneously engaging in subsidiary productions, both through the adoption of imposed orders, spaces, and regulations and the incorporation of new materials for representing “Puerto Ricanness.” Similarly, people are mediating the involvement of corporate sponsors in their work and reformulating what is meant by a “culturally meaningful activity” through the adoption of hybrid cultural expressions. However, while folk music is mixed with merengue, T-shirts showing salsa musicians displace traditional folk images, and the organizers of New York’s Puerto Rican Day parade are staking a claim in discussions about the island’s political fate, these developments still operate in relation to established hierarchies of authenticity. Thus my intent is to trace these developments but also to inquire about the extent to which the popular forms of resistance and manipulation of the government’s cultural policies are displaced or compromised by lingering precepts for defining national identities. Specifically, I inquire into the processes by which oppositions to dominant views of national identity negotiate and come to terms with the exclusionary premises of nationalist discourse, and the extent to which popular claims to culture depart from, reproduce, or help expand the criteria on which cultural legitimacy is based. Moreover, I trace people’s ability or inability to articulate alternative interests

through such practices. Through this focus I seek to highlight the particular uses of nationalist discourse at work in Puerto Rico and thus transcend conceptualizations of nationalism as a unitary force or the ultimate “essentialized” identity. Instead, my concern is with the ongoing processes of incorporation as well as the alternative initiatives that are always involved and generated within any nationalist project.

These are the issues that guide my study of contemporary practices for representing Puerto Ricanness in relation to ongoing attempts by different sectors of Puerto Rican society to secure and maintain standards for the island’s national identity through claims to knowledge and authenticity. It is through this analysis that contestations about issues of legitimacy and potential departures from dominant views of national identity are revealed. This results in conflicting developments that attest to the interaction of contrasting models for articulating collective identities in contemporary society.

Finally, my research adds to a long tradition of studies on Puerto Rico’s national identity that have challenged the dominant conception that there is an identifiable, single “Puerto Rican culture” and that there is consensus on its meaning. Since local intellectuals first gave themselves to the task of identity formation, a quest heightened after U.S. occupation of the island, the issue of Puerto Rico’s national culture has been the subject of continuous analytical inquiry. This emphasis is particularly evident in the literary production that has served as a key forum to define and debate the nature and content of Puerto Rico’s national identity. For instance, the literary works of Puerto Rican elites in the 1930s and 1950s, which explored the themes of generation, paternalism, and the legacy of Spanish culture, have long been considered pivotal in elaborating the values and class interests of the Puerto Rican elite of the times (Flores 1979, Gelpí 1993). Similarly, literary works and historical reassessments since the 1970s have provided swift challenges to the dominant

Hispano-centered interpretations of Puerto Rican culture by highlighting issues of race, class, and gender (J. L. González 1987, Zenon Cruz 1975, Sola 1990). In fact, the importance of literature in nourishing and defining nationalisms (Bhabha 1990, Said 1993) is nowhere more evident than in the politically constrained context of colonial Puerto Rican society, where discussions of the island's national identity have long pervaded the literary and scholarly work."

However, while debates on Puerto Rican national identity have been plentiful, the literary focus of most of this work has left us with little ethnographic description of the processes through which contestations over culture take place and the way in which dominant views of Puerto Rican culture are challenged or constructed. In fact, it is not until recently that studies have begun to address the everyday dimensions of struggles involved in definitions of Puerto Rican identity. Contemporary research has begun to bring attention to the varieties of expression—such as joking, beauty pageants, and cultural and language policies—through which people both challenge and define Puerto Ricanness in contemporary society (Flores and López 1994, Pérez 1994, Torres 1994, Morris 1995). Similarly, the transnational community of Puerto Ricans is beginning to be regarded as a pivotal element in definitions of Puerto Rican nationality (Lao 1997, Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel 1997).

As a result, the issue of national identity is increasingly being placed in a "postnational" context in which cultural expressions of national identity, not tied to specific political aspirations, are finally rendered an appropriate subject of analysis. What follows is part of this larger quest to bring attention to the conflicts and challenges confronted by people in the processes of asserting and contesting "Puerto Ricanness." In so doing, I seek to go beyond traditional definitions of cultural nationalism as a transient ideology, a "lesser" form of nationalism, a literary movement, or a strategy designed by state bureaucrats in order to analyze it as it

is actively manifested in contemporary society. In this context, while no longer overtly subversive, assertions of Puerto Ricanness remain forever contested, if not entirely controversial.

Overview

This book is organized into six chapters. The first, “Securing the Nation through Politics,” begins by describing the emergence of cultural nationalism as a political tool for the consolidation of the commonwealth government. This development is traced to early cultural policies initiated by the local commonwealth government, including the creation of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, ICP). This chapter also traces the debates surrounding changes in cultural policy since the mid-1950s, which serve as a background to contemporary discussions about culture on the island.

Chapter II, “The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the Building Blocks of Nationality,” turns to a discussion of the processes through which the “foundational” elements of Puerto Rican culture were established and officially disseminated through the government’s cultural institutions. The chapter describes how these ideas are represented in and disseminated by the ICP’s programming, and how these policies help reproduce the colonial foundations of Puerto Rican society.

The third and fourth chapters present case studies of the micro-political dynamics at play among different groups involved in the public display of Puerto Rican culture on the island. These chapters draw on interviews with representatives of a variety of groups throughout the island, but the discussion centers mainly on three groups in a southeastern town I call Caone. Chapter III describes the ICP-affiliated center of Caone as an example of the repercussions of national cultural policy at the local level and the struggles that characterize ICP-affiliated centers. Chapter IV focuses on

nonaffiliated groups as vehicles for the articulation of alternative views of Puerto Ricanness.

Chapter V, “Culture, Politics, and Corporate Sponsorship,” focuses on the advertising and promotional strategies of R. J. Reynolds for Winston cigarettes and Anheuser-Busch for Budweiser beer, as the basis for a discussion of commercial interests as additional players contesting Puerto Rican nationality. I discuss how commercial interests draw on both the official cultural nationalist standards for representing Puerto Rican culture and on aspects of contemporary popular life. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the strategies through which people negotiate the involvement of corporate sponsors on the island.

The sixth chapter, “Contesting the Nation, Contesting Identities,” pays particular attention to the ongoing tension between culturalist and commercial views of national identity resulting from the cultural policy of countering the “degeneration” of commercialization and its threat to authenticity. Through case studies of **two** cultural events, I argue that the dichotomization of culture, into the cultural (as authentic) and the commercial, is one more cloak for the subversion of alternative views of nationality. By analyzing how “commercial” expressions are continually subordinated and devalued in relation to the authenticated culture, I argue that this tension is most useful in legitimizing institutionalized views of Puerto Rican culture. The chapter ends by highlighting the compromises that people design to cope with these tensions.

The Conclusion explores the prospects for the creation of alternative views of nationality in the commercial, colonial, and national context of contemporary Puerto Rican society. The discussion reflects on both the constraints that associate the national culture and nationalism with a “proper” discourse, and the spaces that are opening up for the representation of difference and conflict within Puerto Rico’s cultural and national discourse.