6

Port of Epistemic Riches

Social Science Research and Incarceration in Mid Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico

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On April 24, 1945, a twenty-four-year-old Black former bartender and mechanic from Caguas named Marcial Hernández García (alias "Yombe") entered the Insular Penitentiary at Río Piedras (popularly known as Oso Blanco).[1] A week prior, the Caguas district court sentenced him to eight years for a bundle of offenses ranging from breaking and entering and multiple counts of theft to a crime against nature, all of which he claimed to have committed under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Behind bars, he was interviewed and studied by penitentiary health professionals, who were interested in his life before prison and his health while incarcerated.[2] Psychiatrist José R. Maymí Nevares, for instance, concluded that Yombe suffered from mental maladjustment, or more specifically, episodes of bewilderment during which he observed "abnormal" and "undisciplined" conduct.[3] Several individuals familiar with him in Caguas before he was jailed confirmed his erratic state of mind. These potential advisors had since distanced themselves from him, telling parole officials he was "half-crazy."[4]

To treat Yombe's mental instability, he was isolated in a cell and regularly observed. An intelligence exam (Wechsler-Bellevue test) administered by psychologist Juan B. Picart, on which the prisoner scored a 63 (indicative of

[1] "Yombe" is likely a reference to African ancestry. The Yombe people reside primarily in Zambia, the Congo, and Angola. See "Yombe [multiple entries]," Art and Life in Africa, Stanley Museum of Art, University of Iowa, Spring 2014, https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu.

[2] By "health professionals" I mean medical and social scientists, as well as social workers, parole officers, and other technical personnel. Many of these individuals participated in Oso Blanco's Classification and Treatment Board, an interdisciplinary medico-legal entity founded in the mid-1940s that imagined and implemented rehabilitation programs for prisoners. Alberto Ortiz Díaz, *Raising the Living Dead: Rehabilitative Corrections in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), chapters 2–3.

[3] Expediente del confinado Marcial Hernández García, Caja 138, Serie Junta de Libertad Baja Palabra, Fondo Departamento de Justicia, Archivo General de Puerto Rico (hereafter SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR).

[4] Expediente del confinado Marcial Hernández García.

mental deficiency), corroborated "signs of organic cerebral disease."[5] Picart's clinical and vocational analysis confirmed Yombe's cognitive and applied shortcomings, leading prison technocrats to believe that mental infirmity was why he neglected to study or learn a new craft while in Oso Blanco. This could become a problem, as reform logic prevailed in the penitentiary alongside carceral capitalism.

When Yombe was finally eligible for parole between late 1948 and early 1949, officials rejected the prospect given that his mental state and behavior had not improved much. Parole officer María Casasnovas cosigned their reservations, and in the end, Yombe remained imprisoned. Still, penitentiary health professionals sensed that the man was treatable and therefore salvageable. They insisted that solitary confinement, psychiatric observation, psychological examination, social work interviews, an appropriate labor assignment, and sports would achieve his rehabilitation. In fact, Oso Blanco Classification and Treatment personnel forecasted Yombe's rehabilitation as "regular," so they went about preparing him for parole reconsideration. Health professionals viewed his impaired mind as surmountable, especially if addressed across rehabilitative techniques, and more importantly, as but a snapshot of a complicated, panoramic whole that included both the tangible and intangible.

This brief foray into Yombe's experience, who was interviewed, studied, and deemed worthy of rehabilitation by an interdisciplinary group of penitentiary health professionals, reveals myriad, overlapping encounters between different health practitioners and convicts and the frequent exchanges and loops between them in a mixed-race society under US rule. At the microlevel, the interaction between Yombe and Picart was mediated by science and destabilized homogenous notions of Blackness. Prison authorities categorized Yombe as Black. Picart was also of color.[6] Sharing skin tone did not mean the two men were entrenched kin folk, though, for they had diverging class backgrounds. Whereas Yombe had worked in bars and gas stations and expressed wanting to be his own boss, ship logbooks indicate Picart frequently traveled to New York City, where he earned an MA degree at Columbia University Teachers College in 1946.[7] Both men

[5] Ibid. Also see Corwin Boake, "From the Binet-Simon to the Wechsler-Bellevue: Tracing the History of Intelligence Testing," *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology* 24, no. 3 (May 2002): 383–405; Patti L. Harrison and Alan S. Kaufman, "History of Intelligence Testing," in *Encyclopedia of Special Education*, 3rd ed., eds. Cecil R. Reynolds and Elaine Fletcher-Janzen (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 1128.

[6] Federal census records between 1910 and 1940 interchangeably refer to Picart as a Mulatto and a person of color. His World War I draft registration card identifies him as Black. "Juan B. Picart [born 1897]," Ancestry Library Edition, www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/?name=Juan+B._Picart&event=_puerto+rico-usa_5185&birth=1897.

[7] American Psychological Association, *Directory* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1957), 351.

negotiated settler colonial scenarios, albeit from very different positions and with different goals and outcomes in mind.

More broadly, Yombe's case illustrates that multiple settler colonial traditions shaped how members of Oso Blanco's Classification and Treatment Board (i.e., psychologists and those trained in social science disciplines like social workers) coevaluated incarcerated people in the 1940s and 1950s.[8] Spanish colonial ethnographic approaches to criminal science informed mid-century social scientists' compilation of prisoners' histories. These, in turn, allowed them to better "see" the entirety of the people under their scrutiny and in their care.[9] This happened in a laboratorial setting, however, which reflected eugenic American approaches to science, such as psychometrics, that arrived in Puerto Rico after 1898.[10] The result was a "creole" (racially mixed, race-neutral) nationalist science that blended Spanish and American colonial traditions, while contradictorily utilizing the resulting knowledge to reclaim Puerto Rico's future.[11]

[8] Violence, dichotomous race relations, and eugenic science are central to settler colonialism. But in this chapter, I view settler colonialism as unfixed and emphasize how Puerto Ricans recast colonial logics and practices to restructure relationships beyond and within the archipelago; when within, resulting in a racially elastic internal colonialism. Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Severo Martínez Peláez, *La patria del criollo: An Interpretation of Colonial Guatemala* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009 [1970]).

[9] Arthur Kleinman, "What Is Specific to Western Medicine?" in *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, vol. 1, eds. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15–23.

[10] By "psychometrics" I mean the measurement of the human mind and its functions and how these determine social behavior. I use the terms "psychometric," "psychological," and "mental," especially regarding testing instruments, interchangeably. On the concepts at the core of psychometrics, see Bonnie A. Green and Harold Kiess, *Measuring Humans: Fundamentals of Psychometrics in Selecting and Interpreting Tests* (San Diego: Cognella, 2017). On the consequences of the War of 1898, see the essays in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (November 1998): 577–765; Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[11] I use the term "creole" as a marker for the racially diverse group of health professionals involved in imagining and materializing rehabilitation in modern Puerto Rico. Originally, creole referred to the descendants of enslaved and free people born in American colonies. Later, the term connotated miscegenation and distinct ethnic identities, including "Puerto Rican." The racial landscape and terminology of Puerto Rico is complex and subject to a class-color pyramid that has long prevailed across the Caribbean and Latin America. Binary ways of understanding race in Puerto Rico have been and continue to be entwined with viewing race through a prism of racial fusion, which has resulted in inconsistent notions of Blackness, whiteness, and mixture marked by silences, affirmations, denials, and stereotypes. José Luis González, *Puerto Rico: The Four-Storeyed Country and Other*

The blended creole science apparent in Yombe's case and others like it in modern Puerto Rico substantiates insights about the multidirectionality of science and medicine in Latin American and Caribbean history.[12] In the mid twentieth century, the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party, or PPD) and the statesman-turned-governor Luis Muñoz Marín presided over the rise and fall of Puerto Rico as a social laboratory.[13] During this era of multifaceted reform, health professionals promulgated social science research that was cognizant of prisoners' humanity, showcasing that racialized colonial subjects created their own scientific expertise and used it for the purpose of national rehabilitation in the midst of unequal relations with the United States. Critical ethnography and psychometric tests enabled Puerto Rican social scientists to forge their own "objective" assessments of prisoners. The creole-appropriated projects of mapping convict minds, lives, and behaviors, rehabilitating them, and (re)integrating them into the Puerto Rican political economy and body politic helped mute and overturn long-standing colonial assumptions about tropical unfitness. "Repairing" prisoners positioned privileged creole technocrats to contribute to a broader project of rationalizing domestic self-government, a vision that came to fruition in 1951 via commonwealth status. The irony was that they aspired to rehabilitate inmates while reinforcing common tropes of their dysfunction.[14]

Using a variety of sources, this chapter traces Puerto Ricans' pursuit of a decolonized science, one that responded to the archipelago's evolving health

Essays (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1993); Jay Kinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood: The Free People of Color and Racial Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Ileana Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities in Puerto Rico* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Kathryn R. Dungy, *The Conceptualization of Race in Colonial Puerto Rico, 1800–1850* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); Isar P. Godreau, *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

[12] Juanita de Barros, Steven Palmer, and David Wright, eds., *Health and Medicine in the circum-Caribbean, 1800–1968* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Mariola Espinosa, "Globalizing the History of Disease, Medicine, and Public Health in Latin America," *Isis* 104, no. 4 (December 2013): 798–806; Mariola Espinosa, "The Caribbean Origins of the National Public Health System in the USA: A Global Approach to the History of Medicine and Public Health in Latin America," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 22, no. 1 (2015): 241–253; Gabriela Soto Laveaga, "Largo Dislocare: Connecting Microhistories to Remap and Recenter Histories of Science," *History and Technology* 34, no. 1 (2018): 21–30.

[13] Michael Lapp, "The Rise and Fall of Puerto Rico as a Social Laboratory, 1945–1965," *Social Science History* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 169–199.

[14] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, eds. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2014), 230.

challenges despite biomedical progress and the reduction of mortality rates.[15] Penitentiary psychologists and social workers used psychometrics and ethnography to measure the intelligence, skill sets, and personalities of prisoners, and to signpost how to best uplift them. These diagnostic and descriptive tools revealed that convicts required discipline, tutelage, and treatment, but that they also had redemptive potential regardless of social difference. Socio-scientific interaction of this kind troubled linear notions of human progress, tempered professional preferences for certain technologies of power, and formed and made visible the value commitments of prisoners *and* the experts charged with evaluating and shepherding them.[16] Instead of seamlessly accepting the results of mental tests, social scientists put them into dialogue with inmate ethnographies to forge what to them were forward-looking treatment programs, illustrating how racialized racelessness and intersubjective exchanges transformed Puerto Rican corrections, at least for a time.

Blended Science

The history of science in Puerto Rico is as long as the history of the archipelago.[17] Puerto Rican science acquired cross-imperial and polyglot features in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through vertical health interventions and studies of botany, disease, forensic pathology, and medicine.[18] In many of these accounts, characters of flesh, bone, and blood were relegated

[15] Manuel Quevedo Báez, *Historia de la medicina y cirugía en Puerto Rico*, 2 Volumes (San Juan: Asociación Médica de Puerto Rico, 1946–1949); Oscar G. Costa Mandry, *Apuntes para la historia de la medicina en Puerto Rico: breve reseña histórica de las ciencias de la salud* (San Juan: Departamento de Salud, 1971); José G. Rigau Pérez, "Historia de la medicina: la salud en Puerto Rico en el siglo XX," *Puerto Rico Health Sciences Journal* 19, no. 4 (December 2000): 357–368; Raúl Mayo Santana, Annette B. Ramírez de Arellano, and José G. Rigau Pérez, eds., *A Sojourn in Tropical Medicine: Francis W. O'Connor's Diary of a Porto Rican Trip, 1927* (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2008); Nicole E. Trujillo-Pagán, *Modern Colonization by Medical Intervention: U.S. Medicine in Puerto Rico* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014); Gil G. Mendoza Lizasuain, "Desarrollo del sistema de salud pública de Puerto Rico desde el 1900 al 1957: 'una visión salubrista hacia las comunidades aisladas'," PhD dissertation, Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico-Recinto Metropolitano, 2017.

[16] Warwick Anderson, "Objectivity and Its Discontents," *Social Studies of Science* 43, no. 4 (August 2013): 557–576.

[17] Lydia Pérez González, *Enfermería en Puerto Rico desde los precolombinos hasta el siglo XX* (Mayaguez: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1997), chapter 1; Reniel Rodríguez Ramos, *Rethinking Puerto Rican Precolonial History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Frances Boulon-Díaz and Irma Roca de Torres, "Formación en psicología en Puerto Rico: historia, logros y retos," *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología* 27, no. 2 (July–December 2016): 231.

[18] Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, *Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Editorial Universitaria, 1966 [1778]); André Pierre

to the background. By the eve of the twentieth century, people-centered ethnographies increasingly characterized local scientific knowledge production. This shift was evident in the growth of social science studies, particularly a steady stream of anthropological and sociological literature about peasants, mental patients, and criminals.[19]

Among the studies published in the late nineteenth century that shed light on Spanish colonial ethnographic research in Puerto Rico are those of the physician-criminal anthropologist José Rodríguez Castro. In the early 1890s, he published several medico-legal reports about crime and madness on the southern coast. One of his investigations spotlighted a Black adolescent named Isidora Gual who had strangled her infant son. Rodríguez Castro applied European ideas and ethnographic methods to Gual's case to distinguish between her criminality and insanity. His narrative revolved around her youth, sensuality, lack of education, class and race background, regional origins in Guayama (a Black part of the island associated with sugar plantation slavery and witchcraft), and family history of mental instability. In addition to only possessing fifty-three centimeters of cranial circumference, the generally somber Gual endured numerous spells of hunger and sickness with her child.[20] The precise answer as to why she killed the boy lay somewhere between her individual decision-making and the social conditions shaping

Ledru, *Viaje a la isla de Puerto Rico en el año 1797, ejecutado por una comisión de sabios franceses, de orden de su gobierno bajo la dirección del capitán Nicolás Baudín*, translated by Julio L. de Vizcarrondo (Río Piedras: Instituto de Literatura Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1957); René de Grosourdy, *El médico botánico criollo* (Paris: F. Brachet, 1864); Enrique Dumont, *Ensayo de una historia médico-quirúrgica de la isla de Puerto Rico,* 2 Volumes (La Habana: Imp. "La Antilla," 1875–1876); Agustín Stahl, *Estudios sobre la flora de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Tip. "El Asimilista," 1883–1888); José G. Rigau Pérez, "El Dr. Francisco Oller y el inicio de la salud pública moderna en Puerto Rico, 1790–1831," XXVII Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Medicina (August 31–September 6, 1980): 199–202; José G. Rigau Pérez, "The Introduction of Smallpox Vaccine in 1803 and the Adoption of Immunization as a Government Function in Puerto Rico," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 3 (August 1989): 393–423; Henri Alain Liogier, "Botany and Botanists in Puerto Rico," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 776, no. 1 (June 1996): 42–45.

[19] Francisco del Valle Atiles, *El campesino puertorriqueño: sus condiciones físicas, intelectuales y morales, causas que las determinan y medios para mejorarlas* (San Juan: Tipografía de José González Font, 1887); José Rodríguez Castro, *La embriaguez y la locura, ó, consecuencias del alcoholismo* (San Juan: Imp. del "Boletín Mercantil," 1889); José Calderón Aponte, *El crímen de Bairoa* (Puerto Rico: Imprenta del Heraldo Español, 1903); Salvador Brau, *Ensayos: disquisiciones sociológicas* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1972).

[20] "Noticias de la isla," *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, September 2, 1891, 3; José Rodríguez Castro, *Infanticidio: causa contra Isidora Gual, informe médico-legal* (Ponce: Imprenta "El Telégrafo," 1892), 6–10.

her circumstances, a position that contrarian colleagues contested.[21] Truly understanding the case, Rodríguez Castro wrote, necessitated examining "all her life," her decisions over time, and moral and physical factors.[22]

Resolving health problems, such as the prevalence of alcoholism and anemia, in part instigated the turn toward multidimensionalizing people and using them to explain crime, disease, and other infirmities in Spanish colonial Puerto Rico. US military scientists subsequently recast Puerto Ricans as disease-ridden rural subjects.[23] In the early twentieth century, scientific knowledge production in Puerto Rico primarily revolved around biomedicine and the focus of the economy, agriculture. During the interwar years, nutrition became a public health concern and biochemists, home economists, agronomists, and social workers promoted rural hygiene programs.[24] By the mid twentieth century, the wombs of women increasingly garnered the attention of scientists.[25] An exception to this biomedical-corporeal rule surfaced in the mid-1910s, with the anthropological works linked to the initial phase of the New York Academy of Sciences' *Scientific Survey of Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands*. Although Franz Boas and John Alden Mason composed thick descriptions of Puerto Rican Indigeneity, rural oral folklore, and Blackness while nurturing liberal-reformist colonial interests to remake an "empty" colony in the image of a "civilized" metropole, it was not until the 1940s and 1950s that ethnography fused to modern Puerto Rican statecraft.[26]

Human science in Puerto Rico, then, has historically responded to colonial-imperial politics and prerogatives. Under Spanish rule, ethnographic science attentive to socioeconomic and spiritual conditions prevailed. Under

[21] Teófilo Espada Brignoni and Ashley Rosa Jiménez, "Entre lo individual y lo social: debates sobre lo psicológico en el caso de Isidora Gual, 1890–1892," *Umbral* 18 (December 2022): 3, 8, 18.

[22] Rodríguez Castro, *Infanticidio*, 9.

[23] Puerto Rico Anemia Commission (Bailey K. Ashford and Pedro Gutiérrez Igaravídez), *Uncinariasis en Puerto Rico: un problema médico y económico* (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, 1916 [1911]); Francisco A. Scarano, "Jíbaros y médicos a comienzos del siglo XX: los cuerpos anémicos en la ecuación imperial," in *La mascarada jíbara y otros ensayos* (San Juan: Ediciones Laberinto, 2022), 161–183.

[24] Elisa M. González, "Food for Every Mouth: Nutrition, Agriculture, and Public Health in Puerto Rico, 1920s–1960s," PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2016.

[25] Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[26] Eugenio Fernández Méndez, *Franz Boas y los estudios antropológicos en Puerto Rico* (México: Editorial Cultura, 1963); George W. Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888–1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), xiv, chapter 8; Simon Baatz, "Imperial Science and Metropolitan Ambition: The Scientific Survey of Puerto Rico, 1913–1934," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 776, no. 1 (June 1996): 1–16; Rafael Ocasio, *Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore: Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

American rule, science became more laboratorial and rigid.[27] Puerto Rican scientists of all persuasions continued to tout the importance of the laboratory under colonial-populism, but they also rediscovered ethnography as a tool that could help address the dual challenges of crime and stagnant colonialism. While the Spanish and US-Americans had contrasting rehabilitative logics, in both cases these emanated from the intersection of biopower and custodial-regulatory practices.[28] What rehabilitation looked like on the ground under colonial-populism, however, mirrored the socio-scientific outlook of Muñoz Marín and the PPD, who dominated Puerto Rican politics for several decades and articulated a "reformed colonialism" rather than reinforcing colonialism proper or insisting on independence.[29] The colonial-populist project of the PPD merged state-controlled development, modernization, and "democracy" without rupturing cultural and political bonds with Spain and the United States, respectively.[30]

A major site where Puerto Rican leaders hoped to manufacture civic foot soldiers for this project was the Río Piedras scientific corridor, a cluster of welfare institutions located on the outskirts of San Juan close to the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras (UPR-RP) campus, an agricultural experiment station, and a leper colony in Trujillo Alto.[31] Oso Blanco (Figure 6.1), modeled after Sing-Sing penitentiary in New York, opened in 1933 and was the capstone of a transinstitutional complex that included the prison, an insane asylum, and a tuberculosis hospital.[32] Each of these institutions reinforced one

[27] Medical experiments on convicts became commonplace in US prisons during this period and were also carried out in US imperial domains. Jon M. Harkness, "Research Behind Bars: A History of Nontherapeutic Research on American Prisoners," PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996; *"Ethically Impossible": STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948* (Washington, DC: Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, 2011), 13–26.

[28] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978* (New York: Picador, 2009).

[29] Geoff C. Burrows, "The New Deal in Puerto Rico: Public Works, Public Health, and the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, 1935–1955," PhD dissertation, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2014.

[30] Emilio Pantojas García, "Puerto Rican Populism Revisited: The PPD during the 1940s," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (October 1989): 521–557; José Luis Méndez, *Las ciencias sociales y el proceso político puertorriqueño* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2005).

[31] University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras Agricultural Experiment Station, *The Story of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico, 1952); Julie H. Levison, "Beyond Quarantine: A History of Leprosy in Puerto Rico, 1898–1930s," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 10, no. 1 (2003): 225–245.

[32] The Chicago-based architectural firm Bennett, Parsons & Frost devised the original plan for the complex. Bennett, Parsons & Frost co-spearheaded the "City Beautiful" movement, a reform philosophy of North American architecture and urban planning that

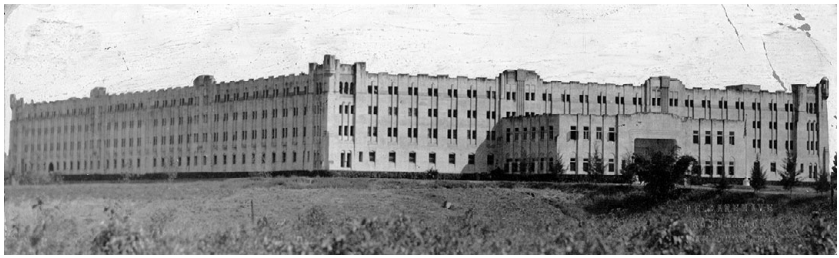

Figure 6.1 Front view of the Presidio Insular in Río Piedras, undated (but likely circa 1930s–1940s given the institution's name), photographed by M. E. Casanave.
Source: Colección Archivo Fotográfico El Mundo, Biblioteca Digital Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico.

another in a common epistemic fabric. A culture of rehabilitative corrections that triply pathologized inmates emerged on the grounds of the complex, where inmate bodies, minds, and behaviors served as raw material for a local yet cosmopolitan medical class whose research was well-disposed *and* self-aggrandizing.[33] In this context, incarcerated people conveyed their stories to penitentiary technocrats, while social scientists' narratives of inmates exposed their desires to resurrect the Puerto Rican "nation."

Knowing Precedes Rehabilitating

In the early twentieth century, academia helped advance and reinvent settler colonialism. Universities and scholars contributed to forging purposeful knowledge about colonies and drawing the boundaries of growing but racialized and exclusionary academies.[34] In the Western hemisphere, US-American scholars in the humanities and social sciences approached South America with fresh eyes to ingrain or reject prior generalizations and stereotypes of the subcontinent. Their research laid the groundwork for a new apparatus of

flourished in the 1890s and early 1900s with the intent of introducing beautification and monumental grandeur to cities around the world. William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), chapter 6.

[33] Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 226–227, 237, 244–245.

[34] Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks, and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); José Amador, *Medicine and Nation Building in the Americas, 1890–1940* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2015); Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest: U.S. Scholars in South America, 1900–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

knowledge in the service of inter-American relations, imperial hemispheric hegemony, and informal empire.[35]

Puerto Rico's flagship university (founded in Río Piedras in 1903) and Columbia University played key roles in informalizing the US Empire and building local capacity for education and the health and social sciences.[36] Columbia made inroads into Puerto Rico in the 1910s and 1920s, when its faculty documented folkloric traditions and established a tropical medicine school in San Juan. In 1915, the "father of American anthropology," Franz Boas, traveled to the Caribbean and participated in the *Scientific Survey of Porto Rico*.[37] He and the archeologist and linguist, University of California-Berkeley graduate John Alden Mason, together researched Puerto Rican Indigeneity, presumed to have been long decimated in the wake of Spanish colonial expansion in the sixteenth century. Later, Boas supervised Mason's research on rural peasant (*jíbaro*) and "negro" Puerto Ricans – the still living and visible portions of island identity by the mid twentieth century – efforts that "rescued" the equivalent of reams of highland oral folklore spanning poetry, sayings, songs, riddles, and folktales, and that documented Black vocabulary, religion, medicine, and customs.[38] Meanwhile, the tropical medicine school was inaugurated in September 1926 and operated as an imperial research outpost. It was celebrated as a private–public partnership and testament to North Americans' and Puerto Ricans' commitment to forging a shared America and equality in hemispheric relations. Asymmetrical relations between metropole and colony persisted unabated, however.[39]

[35] Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest*, 1–2.

[36] Marcial E. Ocasio Meléndez, *Río Piedras: ciudad universitaria, notas para su historia* (San Juan: Comité Historia de los Pueblos, 1985); Amador, *Medicine and Nation Building in the Americas*.

[37] Julio C. Figueroa Colón, "Introduction," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 776, no. 1 (June 1996): vii–viii; Ocasio, *Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore*. On Boas's legacy, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1974]); Alan J. Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 88–91.

[38] Ocasio, *Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore*. Mason went on to work in South America. See, for example, John Alden Mason, "The Languages of South American Indians," in *Handbook of South American Indians*, vol. 6, ed. Julian H. Steward (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 157–317.

[39] Courtney Johnson, "Understanding the American Empire: Colonialism, Latin Americanism, and Professional Social Science, 1898–1920," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, eds. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 178; Amador, *Medicine and Nation Building in the Americas*, 136–137; Tuck and Yang, "R-Words," 245.

Columbia faculty again pushed the boundaries of Puerto Rican social science in the mid twentieth century. After World War II, UPR-RP's new Center for Social Research commissioned a large-scale study to determine how modern social science could be employed to examine and resolve Puerto Rico's social and economic problems. Anthropologist Julian Steward helmed the study, which was published in 1956. *The People of Puerto Rico* focused on how modernization affected local subcultures and underscored that health and welfare programs on the island had therapeutic and political significance.[40] While Puerto Rican authorities weighed the impact of social science on statecraft, penitentiary social scientists like Picart lent their expertise to raising convicts from mental and social death. In both cases, acts of knowing preceded acts of rehabilitation.

When Oso Blanco was inaugurated in May 1933, Puerto Rico's appointed governor, James Beverley, highlighted the prison's modernity. This meant a concrete structure with sanitary facilities, the efficient use of space inside and of land surrounding the prison, self-sufficient (and later profitable) institutional productivity, and the application of social sciences like criminology.[41] Modernity also signified professional subjectivities linked to notions of rationality and progress.[42] It connoted humanizing punishment, which manifested in the attempted procurement of regenerative treatment.[43] Colonial and local authorities alike envisioned Oso Blanco as a site of physical and mental rehabilitation. According to Attorney General Charles Winter, it was a place where convicts would be inculcated with healthy and moral habits through labor, education, and science. The point was to return "useful citizens" to their families, their communities, and society devoid of "criminal inclinations."[44]

[40] Julian H. Steward, *The People of Puerto Rico: A Study in Social Anthropology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 482. Smaller-scale studies followed, including David Landy's *Tropical Childhood: Cultural Transmission and Learning in a Rural Puerto Rican Village* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959) and Sidney Mintz's *Worker in the Cane: A Puerto Rican Life History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960).

[41] This was the case in Latin American penitentiaries across the region in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carlos Aguirre and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[42] Dorothy Ross, ed., *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 8–9.

[43] Fernando Picó, *El día menos pensado: historia de los presidiarios en Puerto Rico, 1793–1993* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1994), 29–30, 56; Carlos Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850–1935* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–2; Julia Rodríguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), chapter 7.

[44] Departamento de Justicia, Oficina del Procurador General (Charles E. Winter), *Reglamento para el régimen y gobierno de la Penitenciaría de Puerto Rico en Río Piedras* (San Juan: Negociado de Materiales, Imprenta y Transporte, 1933), 5–6.

But a decade-plus would pass before the social sciences became fixtures at Oso Blanco.

Socio-scientific classificatory schemes, methods, and research in Puerto Rican corrections interfaced with intellectual currents emanating from the US mainland. In a paper published shortly after World War II by federal prisons official Frank Loveland, who around the same time was contracted by Puerto Rico's government to conduct a critical study about incarceration there and suggest improvements, he stressed the variability of rehabilitative ideas. Analyzing corrections in the periphery taught Loveland that rehabilitation was a multifaceted, cooperative process involving individuals and institutions. Without cooperation from both sides, constructive results could not be obtained.[45] Social scientists, critical ethnography, and psychometrics formed part of Loveland's arsenal to streamline the holistic improvement of incarcerated people.

By the mid-1940s, mental tests had become a vital instrument of prison classification by opening different pathways to work toward the institutional adjustment of inmates, their rehabilitation, and their eventual societal reintegration. With these goals in mind, the mental exams of the era sought to measure the intelligence, skills, and personalities of incarcerated populations.[46] In Puerto Rico and elsewhere, prison authorities believed that mental test results would clarify treatment paths for inmates. They also became synonymous with literal and symbolic health in Oso Blanco at a time when elite Puerto Ricans aimed to redefine the colonial pact with the US government amid exorbitant poverty, overpopulation, economic transformation, and political crisis.[47] Carceral health professionals associated with the PPD contributed to building a local constituency that bore evidence of this reformist undertaking. Racially diverse convicts were perceived as candidates in this vein. To an extent, this distinguished the Puerto Rican approach to carceral rehabilitation

[45] H. G. Moeller, ed., *The Selected Papers of Frank Loveland* (College Park: American Correctional Association, 1981), ix.

[46] Milton S. Gurvitz, "Psychometric Procedure in Penal and Correctional Institutions," in *Handbook of Correctional Psychology*, eds. Robert M. Lindner and Robert V. Seliger (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 58; Frank Loveland, *Classification in the Prison System* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Prisons, 1950).

[47] Pedro A. Caban, "Industrial Transformation and Labor Relations in Puerto Rico: From 'Operation Bootstrap' to the 1970s," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (October 1989): 559–591; Silvia Álvarez-Curbelo and María Elena Rodríguez-Castro, eds., *Del nacionalismo al populismo: cultura y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1993); Alberto Ortiz Díaz, "Pathologizing the *Jíbaro*: Mental and Social Health in Puerto Rico's *Oso Blanco* (1930s to 1950s)," *The Americas* 77, no. 3 (July 2020): 421–422, 434, 440; Pantojas García, "Puerto Rican Populism Revisited," 523; González, "Food for Every Mouth," 4, 8, 20–21, 25; Méndez, *Las ciencias sociales y el proceso político puertorriqueño*, 85–102, 149–202.

from the eugenic carcerality flourishing in the United States. Indeed, creole rehabilitation sought to (re)integrate the races anthropologists like Boas and Mason were so eager to disjoin earlier in the century. Still, penitentiary social scientists deployed rehabilitative techniques that revealed the caprices of scientific medicine and the spurious, philanthropic university-based research informing it.[48]

Psychometric Testing

Since the late 1800s, psychometric tools have served as technologies of power that create normative frameworks for thinking about racialized people.[49] They claim epistemological consistency and ontological universalism but can also be tools of juridical power and social control. The globalization of psychometric instruments in the twentieth century failed at universalizing "the human" yet contributed to colonial expansion. In mid-century Puerto Rico, neither Spanish nor American colonial frameworks were hegemonic. The creole nationalization of science and parallel pursuit of comprehensive human science under colonial populism subverted exclusively Spanish or American approaches to rehabilitation. Spanish, American, and creole flows of scientific knowledge production crashed into one another in the first half of the 1900s, with the latter becoming prominent at mid-century. Creole supremacy circumvented conventional exchange relations, reversed value, and upset predominant social structures and hierarchies associated with settler colonialism.[50] The colonial conceits that informed acceptable manifestations of modernity and state formation remained visible in the ways psychometric tools reproduced certain standards and tropes during the era of the PPD, but were also translated over.

The development and use of psychological tests and measures in the West and Puerto Rico spans more than a century.[51] In 1920, adaptations of the Pintner tests of Non-Verbal Abilities circulated on Puerto Rico's main island;

[48] Anne O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[49] Joseph R. Buchanan, *Manual of Psychometry: The Dawn of a New Civilization* (Boston: Holman Brothers, 1885).

[50] Anderson, "Objectivity and its Discontents," 564.

[51] Roger Smith, *The Fontana History of the Human Sciences* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 589–599; John Carson, "Mental Testing in the Early Twentieth Century: Internationalizing the Mental Testing Story," *History of Psychology* 17, no. 3 (August 2014): 249–255; Frances Boulon-Díaz, "A Brief History of Psychological Testing in Puerto Rico: Highlights, Achievements, Challenges, and the Future," in *Psychological Testing of Hispanics: Clinical, Cultural, and Intellectual Issues*, 2nd ed., ed. Kurt F. Geisinger (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2015), 52.

the Stanford Achievement test then appeared, by 1925.[52] These were followed by other exams administered to public school students and incarcerated youths.[53] In 1927, for example, Attorney General George Butte, who was later active in the Philippines, reported that University of Puerto Rico psychologists completed an educational and mental survey of imprisoned young people in Mayagüez, using, among other tests, the Stanford Test of Ability, which had been previously used by the Commission from Columbia University in a study of public school children.[54] Clinical psychological services, on the other hand, were not routinely offered in psychiatric hospitals, facilities serving veterans and children, and prisons until the 1940s and later.[55] This slow expansion coincided with the maturation of psychology as an academic discipline emphasizing mental processes, introspection, behavior, and interpersonal relationships.[56]

Puerto Rican psychologists trained in the United States and elsewhere aspired to develop and perfect mental tests attuned to the local linguistic and cultural milieu. This was because cultural mistranslation weakened the reliability of these diagnostic tools. Therefore, it was difficult for Puerto Ricans to obtain the expected mean Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of 100, the prevailing Anglo standard. A clear bias emerged when speakers of languages other than English were tested within parameters designed for English speakers. Standardized culture-free tests could universally estimate the intellectual functioning and manual capabilities of different groups, in theory resulting in more equitable assessments of colonized people.[57]

[52] Irma Roca de Torres, "Perspectiva histórica sobre la medición psicológica en Puerto Rico," *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología* 19, no. 1 (2008): 11–48; Robert W. Rieber, ed., *Encyclopedia of Psychological Theories*, First Edition (New York: Springer, 2012), 797–798; Boulon-Díaz, "A Brief History of Psychological Testing in Puerto Rico," 51.

[53] Frances Boulon-Díaz and Irma Roca de Torres, "School Psychology in Puerto Rico," in *The Handbook of International School Psychology*, eds. Shane R. Jimerson, Thomas Oakland, and Peter Thomas Farrell (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007), 311–312.

[54] George C. Butte, *Report of the Attorney General of Porto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1927* (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1927), 17.

[55] Guillermo Bernal, "La psicología clínica en Puerto Rico," *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología* 17, no. 1 (2006): 353–364.

[56] Ana Isabel Álvarez, "La enseñanza de la psicología en la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras: 1903–1950," *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología* 9, no. 1 (1993): 13–29; Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts, 1940–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3–6; Boulon-Díaz, "A Brief History of Psychological Testing in Puerto Rico," 53–54.

[57] US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Bulletin No. 12: Research Relating to Children* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 1960–July 1960), 21; Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum, 1985); Irma Roca de Torres, "Algunos precursores/as de la psicología en Puerto Rico: reseñas biográficas," *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología* 17, no. 1 (2006): 63–88; Boulon-Díaz, "A Brief History of Psychological Testing in Puerto Rico," 54.

Multiple tests were adapted in Puerto Rico between the 1930s and 1950s. These included the Wechsler Intelligence Scale, the Binet Intelligence Scale, and the Goodenough Draw-a-Person test.[58] Reliance on mental tests in Oso Blanco aligned with the growth of psychology in Puerto Rico at large. Prison psychologists connected to UPR-RP assessed the intelligence, cognitive and mechanical abilities, and personalities of convicts. Exam results reiterated to the Classification and Treatment Board that inmate minds harbored rich data that could and should be scientifically excavated, explained, and repurposed. In mapping prisoners in this way, penitentiary social scientists laid bare their own moral and behavioral preferences as well as those of Puerto Rico's criminal-legal system and government.[59] From their collective point of view, the end of a rehabilitated Puerto Rico "free" of colonial mismanagement justified the means of utilizing uneven psychometrics on prisoners to confirm their dysfunction *and* redemptive potential.

Pursuing Comprehensive Human Science

Oso Blanco endured scientific growing pains in its first decade of existence. Shortly after officially opening in 1933, the penitentiary lacked a psychopathological clinic to examine, diagnose, and treat convicts suffering from mental lesions.[60] The next year, in 1934, Attorney General Benjamin Horton encouraged Puerto Rican legislators to carve carceral mental health positions into the new fiscal year's budget. A psychiatrist and psychologist were "indispensable" for the study of prisoners' "defects" and treating the "mental disorders" either caused or influenced by the crime(s) they committed, Horton insisted.[61] As of 1935, the posts still had not been created.[62]

There is little to no mention of carceral mind science in Puerto Rican government justice publications between the mid-1930s and mid-1940s. By 1946, psychiatric and psychological services were routine in Oso Blanco and overlapped. Psychological testing fell under the umbrella of psychiatry in

[58] Boulon-Díaz, "A Brief History of Psychological Testing in Puerto Rico," 54.

[59] Jan E. Goldstein, "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France," *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (February 2015): 2.

[60] Charles E. Winter, *Report of the Attorney General of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1933* (San Juan: Negociado de Materiales, Imprenta, y Transporte, 1934), 18.

[61] Benjamin J. Horton, *Report of the Attorney General of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1934* (San Juan: Negociado de Materiales, Imprenta, y Transporte, 1934), 24.

[62] Benjamin J. Horton, *Report of the Attorney General of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1935* (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1935), 26.

terms of government reporting. Attorney General Enrique Campos del Toro, for instance, observed that "The number of new cases taken care of during the fiscal year by the psychiatrist at the Penitentiary were 138, of which the majority were cases of mental deficiency, psychopathic personality and psychoneurosis. Fifty-seven did not reveal apparent mental disturbances."[63] Mental tests helped prison authorities draw these conclusions. Governor Jesús Piñero relayed the following year, in 1947, that "Medical care to the indigent and public welfare activities in general increased throughout the Island, and a modest educational program [and census] on mental hygiene, with special emphasis on the problem of the feebleminded, was undertaken."[64] To be feebleminded was fused to promiscuity, criminality, and social dependence, equated "mental deficiency," and denoted a level of functioning just above "idiocy."[65] Puerto Rican penitentiary health professionals imbued the category with similar opprobrium in their estimations of incarcerated rural people in the mid twentieth century.[66]

Psychometric exams of convicts were administered on the UPR-RP campus and inside the penitentiary. Performing well or poorly on intelligence tests did not automate or preclude rehabilitation, though. For example, in September 1948 Picart assessed Enrique Carmona – a spoiled, "rebellious" seventeen-year-old wheat-colored (*trigueño*) prisoner from Toa Alta.[67] Carmona took the Wechsler-Bellevue test (Form I) on the UPR-RP campus and earned a complete score of 56, which meant he was "mentally retarded" or a "high moron."[68] However, Carmona had "psychological potential" that could bear fruit "under favorable environmental conditions."[69]

In contrast, in January 1949 Picart evaluated a thirty-one-year-old white "psychopathic" prisoner who grew up between San Juan and New York named Santiago Ocasio Soler.[70] Picart used the Wechsler-Bellevue to secure numerical values for the inmate's verbal and manual skills by having him respond to arithmetic problems, order blocks, and finish drawings. There was a

[63] Enrique Campos del Toro, *Report of the Attorney General of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1946* (San Juan: División de Imprenta, 1947), 44.
[64] Jesús T. Piñero, *Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year 1946–1947* (San Juan: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico Printing Division, 1948), 31, 133.
[65] James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Goddard and the Intelligence Testing Movement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[66] Ortiz Díaz, "Pathologizing the *Jíbaro*," 429–430.
[67] Expediente del confinado Enrique Carmona, Caja 73, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Expediente del confinado Santiago Ocasio Soler, Caja 61, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.

discrepancy between Ocasio Soler's verbal and nonverbal scores because he took longer than expected to complete the former and was too sure of himself on the latter. Yet, his "mental deterioration" was an "insignificant 7 [percent]," and overall, he scored a 118 (in the normal superior range), a number that exceeded the Anglo standard of 100.[71] Like Carmona, Ocasio Soler was deemed rehabilitable. In both cases, a psychologist of color (Picart) presided over administering and explaining their mental test results, an inversion of the presumed racial and scientific orders.

Oso Blanco Classification and Treatment practitioners had lucid exchanges about these and other cases and shared their research with one another. Mimicking developments in the United States to a degree, psychometric tools in Puerto Rico formed part of a culture of observation and evaluation that consolidated and expanded vertical forms of social control.[72] Notwithstanding the limits of many exams, psychologists like Picart deployed a variety of mental tests to determine on which minds different ones could be applied. His work, in conjunction with the efforts and interpretations of the Classification and Treatment Board, tended to essentialize "mentally deficient" prisoners. Convicts thus served as psychological specimens. But many social scientists also valued the "egalitarian" creed of the PPD and wanted the prisoners striving for rehabilitation to do so as well. As convicts showed signs of conforming progress, the liberatory effects of colonial-populist rehabilitation became more pronounced. Prisoners were corralled and studied in Oso Blanco, where social scientists viewed them as objects of research. Just as significantly, social scientists desired to comprehensively understand and civically redeem convicts, transforming the meanings of citizenship and socio-scientific knowledge production in a settler colonial context.[73]

Redeemable Prisoners

Rehabilitative corrections flourished in the mid twentieth century.[74] In Puerto Rico, Classification and Treatment officials investigated the lives of convicts, generated socioeconomic portraits of them, and organized health and social

[71] Ibid.

[72] Rebecca Schilling and Stephen T. Casper, "Of Psychometric Means: Starke R. Hathaway and the Popularization of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory," *Science in Context* 28, no. 1 (March 2015): 77–98.

[73] Luis Negrón Fernández, *Report of the Attorney General to the Governor of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1947* (San Juan: Real Hermanos, Inc., 1950), 30, 32.

[74] Volker Janssen, "Convict Labor, Civic Welfare: Rehabilitation in California's Prisons, 1941–1971," PhD dissertation, University of California-San Diego, 2005; Greg Eghigian, *The Corrigible and the Incorrigible: Science, Medicine, and the Convict in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Ortiz Díaz, *Raising the Living Dead*.

science data they later channeled into treatment programs.[75] The director of Socio-Penal Services compiled findings and approved or modified prescribed plans. Treatment programs covered the medical, social, psychiatric, psychological, educational/vocational, and religious-spiritual aspects of rehabilitation. They usually concluded with a bottom line indicating whether individual prisoners could be rehabilitated at all. Crucially, incarcerated people had little to no say in whether they wholeheartedly consented to such practices, for at the time human subjects research was not legally micromanaged. Still, degrees of reciprocity were built into the human subject-researcher encounter, even if on highly unequal terms.

Classification and Treatment personnel utilized variable diction to convey inmate rehabilitative prospects. Proclaiming that prisoners were "rehabilitable" meant they were salvageable physically, mentally, socially, morally, and civically. Psychometric exams such as the Wechsler-Bellevue test, the Otis Mental Ability test, and the Rorschach Inkblot test either set the interpretive tone for Classification and Treatment Board efforts or built on already available ethnographies of convicts. In short shrift, however, board practitioners rejected exclusively considering IQ. Instead, they made a habit of contemplating exams intersectionally, meaning that Classification and Treatment experts believed multiple exams disclosed more together about individuals' rehabilitative prospects than apart. Although mental tests pointed to the intellectual, interactive, and mechanical "deficiencies" of inspected prisoners, they also served as a compass for the prison technocrats charged with crafting treatment programs. Regardless of inmate identities or the nature of their crime(s), they were generally considered eligible for rehabilitation – even if getting there would be an uphill climb. This does not mean that categories like race, class, or sexuality were irrelevant relics of a bygone era. Rather, health professionals defied and contradictorily engaged them to achieve the more pressing goals of self-government and constituency building.

The confluence of convict ethnographies, mental tests, and treatment programs repeatedly surface in the archival record. For example, in March 1950 prison authorities reviewed the case of a twenty-five-year-old white prisoner from Cayey serving time for mutilation named Onofre Rodríguez López. Classification and Treatment official Gloria Umpierre reported that this convict was well-educated, and that he appeared to be a "trustworthy," "serious,"

[75] Asymmetrical power relations and scientifically legitimated stereotypes are embedded in Classification and Treatment ethnographies and mental test results but so is the human science of rehabilitation. The modern archive is often reduced to a site of racialized, violent knowledge production given its genesis in colonial-imperial enterprise, but one can read into it counterintuitively as well, for archives produced under duress are also collectively inspired and defy reductiveness. The introduction to this book elaborates on these and other methodological nuances.

and an all-around "normal" person.[76] Perhaps most importantly, he showed repentance for his crime, possessed an excellent attitude, and was willing to adapt to what authorities demanded of him. He was a "good" case for rehabilitation. These conclusions would seem to suggest that Rodríguez López's whiteness dictated Umpierre's favorable assessment. However, his exam results divulge other interpretations.

Rodríguez López underwent protracted testing while incarcerated. He earned a high average score of 118 on the Otis test, above the Anglo standard of 100. More impressive was the fact that he answered questions quickly *and* correctly. Rodríguez López scored 39 points on the Bell Adjustment Inventory, which implied that he was "relatively well-balanced emotionally" compared to his immediate peers.[77] Yet, his social skills needed improvement, for he was an "isolated type."[78] The answers he gave to questions about interpersonal interactions (21 total) exposed his social shortcomings. In short, being white did not mean he had flawless social prowess. Psychologists also probed Rodríguez López's manual ability via the MacQuarrie test. He boasted average mechanical ability overall, performing well on the relational awareness, speed, and visual portions of the test, but underperformed on others. Prison officials recommended that the convict be given vocational work assignments to take advantage of the skills he had, and to cultivate and strengthen the ones he lacked. Interviews and religious services could further enrich his rehabilitation process, experts believed.[79]

As Rodríguez López's case suggests, mid-century Oso Blanco social scientists believed that determining intelligence had to be complemented by the measurement of nonintellectual characteristics, such as manual skills and/or personality traits.[80] The pattern is visible in cases of convicts of color as well. For example, in April 1950, Oso Blanco's Classification and Treatment Board studied a twenty-seven-year-old Mulatto prisoner from Guaynabo serving time for homicide named Antonio Hernández Alamo. The "always smiling" Hernández Alamo impressed board members as "trustworthy" and "humble" but also as "a bit ignorant" and not in full control of his emotions.[81] He earned

[76] Expediente del confinado Onofre Rodríguez López, Caja 195, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] James D. A. Parker, "From the Intellectual to the Non-Intellectual Traits: A Historical Framework for the Development of American Personality Research," MA thesis, York University-Toronto, 1986; Kurt Danziger, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 158; Robert E. Gibby and Michael E. Zickar, "A History of the Early Days of Personality Testing in American Industry: An Obsession with Adjustment," *History of Psychology* 11, no. 3 (September 2008): 164–184.
[81] Expediente del confinado Antonio Hernández Alamo, Caja 475, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.

a 77 on the Otis test, a borderline deficient score. If exposed to interviews, religious guidance, challenging recreational activities like reading, and agricultural labor therapy, Hernández Alamo was a "good" case for rehabilitation. In fact, the prisoner teemed with "plenty of rehabilitable material."[82] His mixed-race background did not disqualify him.

Hernández Alamo's Otis test result was but one component of a more comprehensive psychology and broader human science that also depended on a social worker's evaluation of his personality. In his case and others, penitentiary social scientists bridged ethnography and psychometrics. A thirty-eight-year-old Black asthmatic inmate from Guayama serving time for homicide named Adolfo Ortiz Gutiérrez, who "feared the dark" and was tortured by nightmares about ghosts, is another case in point.[83] According to Classification and Treatment experts, who evaluated the convict in July 1950, he appeared to have "emotional problems," found "lying satisfying," and earned a 74 on an Otis test (borderline intellectual deficiency). These findings convinced them that they needed to administer personality tests to diagnose and treat Ortiz Gutiérrez more effectively. He had a "regular" chance to be rehabilitated. Interviews, religion, reading, and films could help bring him back from the mental and social brink.[84]

While white prisoners scoring in the normal range or exceeding it on a given intelligence test and mixed-race or Black prisoners scoring in the borderline deficient or inferior range can certainly be interpreted as settler colonial social science in action, that Oso Blanco social scientists experimented with combinations of tests in either racial scenario is suggestive of their awareness of the inequities baked into psychometrics and the need to evaluate incarcerated people on the basis of other shared criteria. Even if we assume prisoners of color were exclusively marginalized in this regard, a low intelligence score and rehabilitation were not mutually exclusive. This was the case for Salvador García Salamán, for instance, a twenty-one-year-old Black convict from Río Grande incarcerated at the Zarzal penal encampment in 1953 whose "below average intelligence" failed to raise serious concerns about his rehabilitative prospects.[85]

The opposite could also be true. For example, Picart administered a Wechsler-Bellevue test to a forty-six-year-old Black inmate from Santurce named Pedro Sánchez Alvarez in December 1948. The convict scored in the normal range (93). In his qualitative analysis, Picart noted that Sánchez Alvarez had satisfactory immediate and deep past memory, satisfactory mental concentration, and a "great ability to comprehend practical, real-life situations and to resolve situations involving arithmetic reasoning."[86]

[82] Ibid.
[83] Expediente del confinado Adolfo Ortiz Gutiérrez, Caja 475, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Expediente del confinado Salvador García Salamán, Caja 484, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[86] Expediente del confinado Pedro Sánchez Alvarez, Caja 101, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.

He expressed himself easily with ample vocabulary. The strengths and promise Picart saw in Sánchez Alvarez contrasted sharply with opinions of him shared by several of his immediate family members, who labeled him a "lost cause."[87] Here communal opprobrium did not flow from social scientists, but from Sánchez Alvarez's own brothers and other kin. For every García Salamán or Sánchez Alvarez, however, there was someone who incarnated socio-scientific stereotypes. A twenty-six-year-old Mulatto prisoner from San Juan named Ricardo Estrada Padilla, for example, combined "below average intelligence" and "criminal tendencies." These put his rehabilitation in jeopardy but never annulled it.[88] Similarly, health professionals understood a quinquagenarian Mulatto from Coamo named Sandalio Mateo Vázquez as a "suspicious hypocrite" with "below average intelligence," yet he was "rehabilitable."[89]

Prisoners' crimes, their backgrounds, and their (un)favorable personality traits and test scores did not automatically qualify them *for* or disqualify them *from* rehabilitation. Education, labor therapy, social orientation, religious services, and so on *could* transform convicts, although this was not guaranteed. While psychologists and social workers had occasion to belittle and racialize convicts, implicit in their mapping prisoners' worlds and articulating rehabilitative programming for them was the belief that inmates could be raised from living death. Social scientists and inmates together made the human sciences more human in a place (the prison) where dehumanization was and remains the expected norm. There, race largely functioned as a pivot on which creole science partially turned at a time when colonial-populists reimagined Puerto Rican national identity on race-neutral terms.

Conclusion

As Puerto Rican rehabilitative corrections hit their stride in the mid-1940s and 1950s (though not without challenges and shortcomings), Puerto Rico's government contracted federal consultants to conduct studies of the penal system. It was not until later in the 1950s and 1960s that justice officials finally implemented some of the recommendations put forward by the studies.[90] University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras social workers drew from the studies to renew the promise of Puerto Rican rehabilitative corrections. In a critical analysis published in 1959, Rosa Celeste Marín, Awilda Paláu de López, and Gloria Barbosa de Chardón chronicled the work of contemporary university

[87] Ibid.
[88] Expediente del confinado Ricardo Estrada Padilla, Caja 484, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[89] Expediente del confinado Sandalio Mateo Vázquez, Caja 484, SJLBP, FDJ, AGPR.
[90] Rosa Celeste Marín, Awilda Paláu de López, and Gloria P. Barbosa de Chardón, *La efectividad de la rehabilitación de los delincuentes en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1959), 96–97.

social science faculty in the prison system. Faculty assessed the personalities of maximum-security prisoners incarcerated in Oso Blanco and found that many of them tested as "mentally deficient" and were vulnerable to ongoing mental infirmity and recidivism.[91] To gather the data leading to these and interrelated findings, social scientists administered a diverse batch of psychometric tests: the Porteus Maze, Rorschach, Thematic Apperception, Draw-a-Person, and Bender-Visual Motor Gestalt tests. Psychologists also put exam results into conversation with ethnographic information about convicts. The collective data laid bare the psychological features of each inmate, as well as tendencies in their emotions, thinking, and behavioral and cognitive functioning.[92]

Discussion of prisoners' mental test results increasingly revolved around their dangerousness and propensity to mentally deteriorate when released from prison, however. A growing pessimism surrounding prisoner rehabilitation, flashes of which were apparent in the 1950s, gained momentum in Puerto Rico by the mid-1960s, evidenced by an uptick in studies that accepted the premise of criminal pathology yet lacked the rigor of previous generations to confront it.[93] This coincided with successive governments across Puerto Rico's party divide suffocating the rehabilitative ideal in the decades that followed.[94] No longer were social science tools and methods viewed as pathways toward convict redemption. Instead, they functioned as instruments of intense pathologization and othering, which aligned with how US researchers and authorities trafficked in them across groups and national borders earlier in the century.[95]

In the mid twentieth century, Puerto Rican social scientists exposed convicts to Spanish and American rehabilitative logics and practices. They transcended binaries (Spanish and US colonialism, Black and white, researcher and research subject) to foster a creole science and pugilistic nationalism that aspired to prove that prisoners could be rehabilitated and become colonial-populist citizens. This nationalism countered the American settler colonial image of Puerto Ricans as perpetual tutees. In a sense, Puerto Ricans pursued a decolonized science in the mold of their African peers, who as Erik Linstrum has argued, utilized psychology to disclose the limits of British imperial authority.[96]

[91] Ibid., 62–63.

[92] Ibid., 211–224. Maile Arvin's chapter in this volume examines Stanley Porteus's Maze Test and scientific work in greater detail than I do here.

[93] Manuel López Rey y Arrojo, Jaime Toro Calder, and Ceferina Cedeño Zavala, *Extensión, características y tendencias de la criminalidad en Puerto Rico, 1964–70* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1975); Franco Ferracuti, Simon Dinitz, and Esperanza Acosta de Brenes, *Delinquents and Nondelinquents in the Puerto Rican Slum Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975).

[94] Picó, *El día menos pensado*, 57, 73.

[95] Alexandra M. Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[96] Erik Linstrum, *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

While the mid-century social scientists involved in evaluating prisoners often cast them as deficient, returning incarcerated people of all colors to society as productive laborers, family providers, and citizens – indeed, as human capital – illustrated that the colonial-populist (and later commonwealth) state just might live up to its racial democracy rhetoric.[97] Socio-scientific research behind bars also showed that Afro-Puerto Rican health professionals like Picart could lay claim to scientific knowledge production, invest the epistemological riches in a more equitable domestic future without invalidating the relationship between metropole and colony, and unsettle assumptions about who got to possess research subjects and exercise health authority. Even though it was included as a category for describing incarcerated research subjects, race played a restrained role in inmate rehabilitation. The equity project within Puerto Rican corrections was paradoxical and failed, however, precisely because it depended on extracting pain and damage narratives from racially heterogeneous Puerto Ricans of perceived lesser status in the first place.

Colonial-populist Puerto Ricans' alternative deployment of social science contributed to Puerto Rico's modernization process but not in a way that automatically segued into rigid race-based exclusion.[98] Whereas anthropological ethnography is now cast as a valuable instrument in the struggle against systems of oppression, particularly in the Western academy, this was not always the case. Intelligence tests, for their part, are still being used for reactionary purposes. Social science literature linking race and intelligence continues to be published, and it appears the social science community that works on intelligence accepts this without challenge notwithstanding their recognition of the ethno-racial biases and controversies that have long tainted psychometrics.[99] The case of mid twentieth-century Puerto Rico, then, offers an inviting vantage point from which to understand how carceral human science, ironically, lent itself to the search for and realization of other realities, well in advance of our own preoccupation with reimagining the world.

[97] Michelle Murphy, *The Economization of Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

[98] As was the case in South Africa. Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); William Beinart and Saul Dubow, *The Scientific Imagination in South Africa: 1700 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[99] Frederick T. L. Leong and Yong Sue Park, "Introduction," in Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, *Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2016), 1–2; Elliot Turiel, "Eugenics, Prejudice, and Psychological Research," *Human Development* 64, no. 3 (2020): 103–107.