The social basis of separatism: Explaining support for the Puerto Rican Independence Movement

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Introduction

In the 1990s, particularly in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union, comparativists rediscovered the enduring appeal of separatist movements around the globe. Many of the most significant political events of the past decade have revolved around issues of nationalism, ethnicity, irredenta, and the like. In light of these renewed preoccupations, it is surprising that U.S. scholars have largely ignored a nationalist movement closer to home. The Puerto Rican independence movement is by far the most significant separatist tendency under the U.S. flag, and is one of the few major anticolonialist movements to survive into the twenty-first century. Although supporters of Puerto Rican independence have typically drawn only three to five percent support in local elections and in plebiscites on the island's political status, neither have they disappeared from the political scene. The remarkable durability of the independence movement demands systematic explanation. However, as strange as it may seem, to date there have been no serious scholarly studies of the social bases of the Puerto Rican independence movement.[3]

In this paper, we examine the political sociology of *independentismo* over the past fifteen years, using both electoral data from 1992-2000 and a major public opinion survey conducted in 1995. With regard to our empirical focus, we aim to identify who supports independence and why. With regard to our theoretical focus, we ask whether framing public opinion and electoral behavior in utilitarian terms can shed new light on the independence movement—and by extension, on the overall "status cleavage" that forms the backbone of the Puerto Rican party system.

This paper proceeds in seven sections. In the first, we explain our theoretical framework. In the second, we provide context by reviewing the historical background of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States. In the third section, we illustrate how the debate over the U.S.-Puerto Rican relationship has come to form the dominant cleavage within the island's party system. In the fourth section, we describe our sources

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[3] There is a small literature on the Puerto Rican party system, providing indirect attention to the independence movement. The best overviews of the party system are those of Anderson (1965, 1983, 1998a), who emphasizes the status cleavage; Meléndez (1998), who also stresses the status cleavage but incorporates some class analysis; and García-Passalacqua and Heine (1991), who downplay the importance of the status cleavage and argue that Puerto Rican voters choose their parties pragmatically, based on policy delivery. The conventional wisdom, which we accept and incorporate into our research design here, is that Puerto Rico possesses a largely one-dimensional party system in which the island's relationship to the United States is the overriding issue. To our knowledge, the only truly empirical study of party identification is the dissertation by Blanco (1988), which is based entirely on an original public opinion survey conducted by the author in December 1979.

of electoral and attitudinal data. The two subsequent sections analyze these data to shed light on the social bases of support for the independence movement. Our seventh and final section places our findings in theoretical and comparative perspective.

Theory: Testing a Utilitarian Model of Status Preferences

The theoretical framework that we employ is inspired by recent studies of public opinion toward major political and economic transitions elsewhere in the world. Democratic transitions, market reforms, and economic integration all represent major departures from the status quo. As such, they are viewed as opportunities by some citizens and as threats by others. Those citizens who estimate that they can safely navigate the transition are open to a leap of faith; those who believe that their interests will be harmed are likely to oppose the transition in question.

We frame the prospect of Puerto Rican independence as a hypothetical transition with far-reaching consequences. Independence would represent a radical departure from the status quo, in which economic association with the United States has provided impressive economic benefits to the past three generations of Puerto Ricans. These benefits include sponsored industrialization for the past fifty years, and the availability of federal public assistance for the past thirty. With independence, these benefits would be lost. As with every political and economic transition, there would be winners and losers. We assume that voters know this, and that they estimate the likely consequences for themselves.

We hypothesize that support for independence can be explained in terms of citizens' self-assessments about their ability to successfully navigate a transition of this magnitude. This expectation is inspired by recent studies of support for market reforms in the former Soviet Union (Duch, 1993), party identification in the new postcommunist party systems (Kitschelt, 1992; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1995, 1999), or public support for European integration (Gabel, 1997). Although these studies have different empirical foci, they all emphasize the subjective adaptability of citizens to new circumstances. For example, in an early (and brilliant) hypothesis about the genesis of postcommunist party systems, Kitschelt (1992) predicted that a major cleavage in the emerging party systems would hinge on the skill levels of voters, particularly on the "convertibility" (to the new capitalist economy) of the skills that citizens had acquired under socialism. Later, Kitschelt et al. (1995, 1999) expanded on this utilitarian argument, stressing the importance of "positional assets" in citizens' electoral behavior during the transition. In a recent study of public opinion in the European Union between 1975 and 1992, Gabel (1997) developed a similarly utilitarian understanding of attitudes toward economic integration: citizens' views of the Single Market were strongly predicted by their occupational characteristics and skill levels. The most subjectively adaptable citizens—i.e., those that judged that they could survive the integration of capital and labor markets—showed the strongest support for EU integration.

We adapt these insights to the question of Puerto Rican independence, testing the plausibility of a utilitarian model of status preferences. Is support for independence a function of the perceived "positional resources" of certain citizens, who are confident that their skill levels would provide them with economic security in a hypothetical republic? Conversely, is opposition to a republic a function of the individual's

perceived economic dependence on the United States? In order to provide for a rigorous test of these hypotheses, we explore them at two different levels of analysis. First, we undertake a cross-sectional analysis of voting returns from Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities, examining the connection between socioeconomic characteristics of the communities and their aggregate level of electoral support for independence. Second, we move to the individual level, examining the sociodemographic characteristics of voters who identify with the independence movement. Before doing so, however, we step back in time to discuss how the current status quo came to exist.

Historical Background

Puerto Rico has never enjoyed national independence. After four centuries of Spanish colonial rule, Puerto Rico came under the U.S. flag in 1898. Since then, the United States has gradually approved laws to extend various political rights to the citizens of the island. In 1952, the United States approved the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, creating the current status quo. Under Commonwealth status, Puerto Ricans gained autonomy in local governmental affairs, although the United States retained full control over foreign and defense policy. For more than a half century, the question of the political status of Puerto Rico has been at the center of all debates of the three main political parties. Each party has proposed different solutions to the question of the island's present status. Despite holding various plebiscites on this issue, most recently in 1998 (the one hundredth anniversary of the Spanish-American War), Puerto Ricans remain sharply divided over their relationship to Washington.

In 1898, Puerto Rico went from being a Spanish colony to being an American one. From 1493 until 1898, Spain had shaped the language, religion, and political institutions of Puerto Rico. In 1898, the United States sent troops to invade Puerto Rico during the Spanish American War. After losing the war, Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United Stated via the Treaty of Paris of 1899. Under the provisions of the Treaty, the United States Congress would decide over the civil rights and the political status of the island. After the war, the United States established direct military rule over Puerto Rico for a period of two years.

In 1900, the United States Congress approved the first Organic Law, called the Foraker Act, ending the occupation of Puerto Rico. Under the Foraker Act, Puerto Ricans had limited participation in a local civilian government. The President of the United States appointed most major government officials, with the exception of the members of the Chamber of Representatives who were popularly elected. Thus, the White House chose the governor, members of the upper house, and judges. Moreover, the President and the Congress of the United States could veto any law approved by the Puerto Rican legislature. In addition, the Foraker Act modified the citizenship of the inhabitants of the island to that of Puerto Rican citizens. However, the Act did not provide for a bill of rights, nor did it define the legal status of the island. A few years later, the Supreme Court interpreted the Foraker Act and declared that Puerto Rico was an unincorporated territory of the United States (Anderson, 1965; Garriga Picó, 1997).

In 1917, Congress approved a second Organic Law, the Jones Act. This new Act gave Puerto Ricans United States citizenship, a bill of rights, and the right to elect the members of the Senate. The Jones Act also exempted Puerto Ricans from the personal

income tax provisions of the Internal Revenue Service. In spite of these new rights, Washington retained control over the executive and judicial branches of the Puerto Rican government. It was not until 1947 that Congress allowed Puerto Rico to elect its Governor. The Jones Act did nothing to modify the concept of "unincorporated territory" (Fernandez, 1996).

Between 1950 and 1952, a combination of three bills culminated in the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In 1950, the United States Congress passed Public Law 600, allowing Puerto Rico to convoke a constitutional convention that would establish a permanent charter for local self-government. Under the provisions of Public Law 600, once the Constitution was approved by the Puerto Rican people and by the United States Congress, it would automatically repeal all of the Jones Act's articles regarding local administration. The rest of the articles of the Jones Act referring to international affairs would remain in effect under the name of a new bill, the Federal Relations Act. In 1950, Puerto Ricans consented to Law 600 via a referendum, and the Puerto Rican legislature then convoked a Constitutional Assembly that subsequently drafted and approved a new Constitution. In 1952, the United States President and Congress approved the new Constitution. In that same year, Puerto Ricans formally established the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Fernandez, 1996).

Under the Commonwealth, Puerto Ricans enjoyed more autonomy in local government. Since then, Puerto Ricans have been able to elect all local government officials in insular elections. In addition, they are exempted from paying federal taxes and are covered by the Social Security Act. However, Puerto Ricans cannot vote for president of the United States, who ultimately determines the foreign relations of the island. Nor can Puerto Rico act independently in international affairs. Thus, the creation of the Commonwealth did not put an end to the lingering question of the political status of Puerto Rico.

The Status Debate and the Party System

The consolidation of Commonwealth status in the 1950s led to a corresponding consolidation of the modern Puerto Rican political party system. The overriding cleavage within the party system is the question of the island's political status (Anderson, 1965). For the past half century, the three main political parties have been the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), the New Progressive Party (PNP) and the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), each of which advocates a different status option.

The Popular Democratic Party (PPD), founded in 1938 by Luis Muñoz Marín, favors the present political status. Muñoz Marín, a former pro-independence advocate turned moderate, was governor of Puerto Rico throughout the conceptualization, establishment, and consolidation of the Commonwealth. For Muñoz Marín, permanent association with the United States would guarantee the economic and social well-being of the Puerto Rican people (Muñoz Marín, 1982). Independence would cause these benefits to be lost, whereas statehood would compromise national and cultural autonomy; therefore, the best solution in the eyes of the *Populares* was the intermediate Commonwealth status. With the Commonwealth, Muñoz Marín brought industrialization and an undeniable improvement in the standard of living of Puerto Ricans (Dietz, 1986). Not surprisingly, the PPD, under his personalistic leadership, dominated island politics from 1952

through 1968 (Farr, 1973; Navas, 1980). His successors in the PPD have also served as governors: Rafael Hernández Colón (1972-1976 and 1984-1992), Sila María Calderón (2000-2004), and Aníbal Acevedo Vilá (2004-present).

Table 1
Major Political Parties in Puerto Rico

Spanish Acronym	English Name	Status Preference
PNP	New Progressive Party	Statehood
PPD	Popular Democratic Party	Commonwealth
PIP	Puerto Rican Independence Party	Independence

The New Progressive Party (PNP), founded in 1968 by Luis Antonio Ferré, favors Puerto Rican accession to the Union (Meléndez, 1988). According to PNP supporters, under the present Commonwealth status Puerto Ricans are second-class citizens of the United States. Arguing that "statehood is for the poor," the PNP's ultimate goal is to make Puerto Rico the 51st state (Romero Barceló, 1978). Several PNP leaders have served as governors in Puerto Rico: Luis A. Ferré (1968-72), Carlos Romero Barceló (1976-1984) and most recently Pedro Roselló (1992-2000). The post-Muñoz Marín era created a political opening for the PNP, and from the Romero governorship onwards, the PNP has been highly competitive with the *Populares* (Anderson, 1983, 1998a).

The PPD and PNP differ sharply on the issue of political status, but otherwise share some broad similarities. They are both large, centrist organizations that privilege the status question over ideological questions and policy differences. To the extent that there are ideological differences, the PNP is usually perceived to be slightly more conservative than the PPD. Both parties maintain informal linkages with the two main U.S. political parties (García-Passalacqua, 1983, 1998). In recent decades, the PNP has been more sympathetic to the Republicans and the PPD to the Democrats, but these differences are mostly stylistic and have few repercussions in island politics (although they occasionally find some echoes in mainland elections involving sectors of the Puerto Rican diaspora). Because the two dominant parties both support a formalized relationship with the United States but differ only on the format of this relationship, it is not surprising that these two parties are catch-all organizations with internal ideological heterogeneity (Anderson, 1998a; Meléndez, 1998).

The third and final political party, the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP), was founded in 1948. Its founding members, led by Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, split from the PPD due to differences on the status question. As its name suggests, the PIP advocates the creation of an independent Republic of Puerto Rico, arguing that the present Commonwealth status is just colonialism under a different name. It is also a far more ideological organization than either of the two main parties. Since its founding, the PIP has had a predominantly social democratic orientation, but has also attracted the support of more left-wing autonomist sectors, independent Marxists, and progressive artists and intellectuals. The party is particularly strong in colleges and universities, and has a significant following among faculty and students at the University of Puerto Rico.

Unlike the two dominant parties, which are more oriented toward the mainland parties, the PIP has more of a regional Latin American identity: it is historically more connected to hemispheric progressive parties and anticolonialist solidarity movements. Since Concepción de Gracia's death, younger PIP leaders, such as Rubén Berríos Martínez and Fernando Martín García, have continued the struggle for independence (Berríos, 1979, 1983).

Since its founding more than 50 years ago, the PIP has consistently been a distant third force in Puerto Rican politics. The pro-Commonwealth PPD and the pro-statehood PNP are remarkably balanced in terms of party identification among the electorate, and these two parties together account for 95% of the votes cast in recent Puerto Rican elections. A typical gubernatorial election will result in the PPD and PNP each receiving between 45 and 50 percent of the vote, and the PIP winning from 3 to 5 percent. The independence movement has never surpassed the 5 percent mark in any island-wide election. This undoubtedly reflects the popular appeal of formal association with the United States, but it also reflects the prevailing electoral system (Anderson, 1998b). The Puerto Rican lower house uses the U.S. system of single-member district plurality (SMDP) voting, and just as on the mainland, this system tends to favor the maintenance of two large parties while punishing minority alternatives like the PIP.[4] Moreover, the growth of the pro-statehood PNP is thought to have weakened the electoral basis of the PIP, as some *independentistas* may strategically vote for the pro-Commonwealth PPD in order to prevent the statehooders from winning. Although the PIP has never elected a governor, several prominent members have occupied positions in the legislature and in local governments.

These three parties have participated in recent attempts to resolve the question of the political status of Puerto Rico. In 1967, and more recently in 1993 and 1998, the island held plebiscites in which voters were asked to choose among three options: continuation of the Commonwealth, statehood or independence. In the 1967 status plebiscite, Commonwealth won 60.4% of the vote, statehood 39.0%, and independence only 0.6%.

[4] In the Chamber of Representatives, 40 members are elected in single-member districts, while in the Senate 16 members are elected in two-member districts. However, the electoral law does provide for an additional 11 at-large seats in each of the two chambers, thus boosting the normal size of the lower house to 51 and the upper house to 27 seats. These at-large seats (*candidaturas por acumulación*) do not have much effect on the overall distribution of political power: the vote distribution in the at-large district tends to allocate the seats on a 6-4-1 basis, with the best-performing party normally receiving six seats and the PIP (which strategically nominates a single at-large candidate) obtaining one. See Anderson (1998b, p. 75-76). However, if one party obtains more than two thirds of the seats in a legislative chamber but receives less than two-thirds of the vote for governor, this triggers a provision in the Puerto Rican Constitution (Art. III, section 7) known as the *Ley de Minorías*. Adopted in the PPD's mid-century heyday, the *Ley de Minorías* boosts the legislative representation of qualifying small parties (those that exceed a 3% threshold based on gubernatorial votes). When triggered, the law provides for the expansion of chamber size until the combined minority parties reach a total of at least 9 seats in the Senate and/or 17 in the lower house. Additional seats are allocated on the basis of each minority party's share of the combined gubernatorial vote of the losing parties (Electoral Code, Art. 6.012). Once again, this implies that the PIP is unlikely to benefit from this formula, since the calculation itself is based on the results for a single-member district (that of the governorship). The *Ley de Minorías* thus benefits minority parties as a bloc, not individually, and the rewards generally accrue to the second-placed large party. (Although the law was created to attenuate PPD hegemony, the PNP's success in the 1992 elections turned the PPD into the assisted minority party for the first time.) Despite these compensatory provisions, the overall character of the electoral system is strongly majoritarian and—like the U.S. mainland party system—unfavorable to third parties.

This result reflects the electoral hegemony of Muñoz Marín and the PPD in the first two decades of the postwar era. In the 1993 plebiscite, Commonwealth won 48.6%, statehood 46.3%, and independence 4.4%. These more balanced results mirror the surge of the PNP in the 1970s and 1980s, when statehooders first controlled the executive branch for an extended period of time.

In the 1998 status plebiscite, the ballot options were different, incorporating two new options ("Territorial Commonwealth" and "Free Association") that would modify the existing Commonwealth status as designed by Muñoz Marín and the PPD in 1952. The PPD's response to the confusing ballot structure (itself a ploy of the PNP, which insisted on the inclusion of "Territorial Commonwealth" as a divide-and-conquer strategy to weaken the *Populares*) was to organize an unusual campaign for "none of the above" (Dietz, 2003, p. 181-84). This option in fact won an absolute majority of 50.3%, signifying that the plebiscite once again ratified the status quo. Statehood won 46.5% of the preferences, almost identical to its totals of five years earlier, whereas independence won only 2.5%, a significant drop. The drop in the independence vote in 1998 can be explained with reference to two factors. First, the novel appearance of two "enhanced Commonwealth" options on the ballot (which received 0.1 and 0.3% of the vote, respectively) may have siphoned off some wavering independence voters. Second, some *independentistas* almost certainly engaged in strategic voting, switching their vote to "none of the above" so that the confusing ballot would not bring about their worst-case scenario (and the one intended by the PNP): a victory of the statehood option.

In all three status plebiscites over the past 35 years, the most voted-for option has effectively been maintenance of the Commonwealth. Observers of Puerto Rican politics frequently note that while pro-statehood sentiment has gradually increased over recent decades, the independence movement seems stuck below a glass ceiling of about 5% of voting preferences. On the other hand, neither has the independence movement disappeared, even though it faces an overwhelmingly unfavorable electoral landscape.

Sources of Data

In this paper, we use two distinct datasets to examine the social and electoral bases of the Puerto Rican independence movement in the 1990s. We describe each database briefly before proceeding to the respective analyses.

The first source of data is a simple cross-sectional dataset using sub-Commonwealth governments as the unit of analysis. In Puerto Rico, local-level governments are called *municipios*, and the U.S. Census Bureau has traditionally treated them as the equivalent of counties in the U.S. states. However, since Puerto Rico has only one level of administration below the Commonwealth, *municipios* embody characteristics of both counties and city governments on the mainland. Some are 100% urbanized, such as San Juan, while others in the interior are predominantly agricultural and/or mountainous; and some *municipios* combine both features, possessing a central urban core surrounded by outlying rural areas. There are currently 78 *municipios*, allowing us to construct a cross-sectional database with a reasonably large *N*. For each of the 78 *municipios*, we assembled electoral data for all elections and plebiscites in the 1990s, using both the Commonwealth Elections Commission of Puerto Rico (CEEPUR) web page and the

excellent "Elections in Puerto Rico" website maintained by Manuel Álvarez-Rivera.[5] We then used the U.S. Census to add important socioeconomic and demographic variables for each "county" unit. The structure of the database permits ecological analysis of voter support for the three status alternatives.

Our second source of data comes from the third wave of the World Values Surveys (Inglehart 2000).[6] The Puerto Rico survey (*N*=1164) was conducted in the fall of 1995 by principal investigators Angel Rivera-Ortiz and Jorge Benítez-Nazario of the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras. The fieldwork date of 1995, the midpoint of the decade we are examining, turns out to be ideal for our purposes. Because the WVS survey yielded a sample that is 65% female and we were unable to obtain an explanation for this in the accompanying documentation, we opted to weight the data using the actual sex ratio of Puerto Rico in the 2000 census (51.9% female). All results reported below are gender-corrected. By using party identification as a proxy for status preference, we are able to use the Puerto Rican WVS data to examine support for the independence movement.

Analysis of Municipal-Level Data

Our first step in analyzing the cross-sectional database was to establish a measure of support for independence that would permit meaningful comparisons across *municipios*. We examined municipal election returns in gubernatorial and mayoral elections in the 1992-2000 period, and we also included the results of the 1993 and 1998 status plebiscites. In creating our measure, our task was greatly simplified by the fact that electoral volatility in Puerto Rico is negligible in comparative perspective. There is a remarkable consistency in voting patterns across time, and the status-driven political cleavages are firmly embedded in the electorate.

Table 2 illustrates the impressive correlations among support for PIP gubernatorial candidates in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections and support for the independence option in the 1993 and 1998 plebiscites. In no case are the correlations below .80, and in most cases they are significantly higher. Similarly strong patterns emerge when one looks at the relationship between PPD gubernatorial returns and Commonwealth preference, and between PNP gubernatorial results and statehood preference, respectively. However, when one factors in the results for mayoral candidates, the correlations drop significantly. This suggests that Puerto Rican voters draw a close connection between their status preferences and their votes in gubernatorial elections (which are "nationalizing" and status-driven contests), but draw a much weaker connection between island status and municipal-level politics. Mayoral elections are presumably decided more on local issues, but gubernatorial elections unequivocally reflect the dominant macropolitical issue in Puerto Rico: the island's relationship with the United States. Therefore, in creating a municipal-level measure of support for independence, we opted for a simple solution: we averaged the vote shares for PIP gubernatorial candidates in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 general elections and the percentage of voters supporting independence in the status plebiscites of 1993 and 1998.

[5] The Commonwealth Elections Commission website is available at http://www.ceepur.net. The "Elections in Puerto Rico" website is available at http://www.eleccionespuertorico.org.

[6] The WVS are a series of wide-ranging opinion polls conducted by an international team of social scientists collaborating under the direction of Ronald Inglehart. See http://www.worldvaluessurveys.org.

The mean of these five values is a valid indicator of the independence movement's support in a given *municipio* throughout the 1990s.

Table 2
Consistency of the Pro-Independence Vote in the 1990s, Municipal Level
(Pearson Correlation Coefficients)

	1996 Gov	**2000 Gov**	**1993 Status**	**1998 Status**
1992 Gov	.94	.88	.89	.89
1996 Gov	--	.90	.95	.90
2000 Gov	--	--	.83	.80
1993 Status	--	--	--	.85

Notes: N=78. All coefficients significant at p<.001.

Table 3 presents the values of the pro-independence score for each of Puerto Rico's 78 *municipios* over the past decade. The scores range from a high of 6.54 in Cabo Rojo to a low of 1.70 in Maricao, with a mean municipal score of 3.60. Visual inspection of the data yields mostly what one would expect: the largest, most urbanized, and most economically developed municipalities (e.g., San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez, the three largest cities) are significantly above the mean. The *municipio* of Vieques, a small island off Puerto Rico's eastern shore that was used as a bombing range by the U.S. Navy until 2003, ranks third among all municipalities in its support for independence.

Table 3
Support for Independence in the 1990s, by *Municipio*

MUNICIPIO	**MEAN**
High Support	
Cabo Rojo	6.54
Trujillo Alto	5.82
Vieques	5.70
Cidra	5.46
Caguas	5.24
Aguas Buenas	5.16
San Juan	5.06
Aibonito	5.04
Guayanilla	4.96
Guaynabo	4.92
Cayey	4.90
Peñuelas	4.88

San Sebastián	4.84
Toa Baja	4.72
Bayamón	4.70
Medium Support	
Maunabo	4.68
Hormigueros	4.62
Mayagüez	4.62
Carolina	4.60
Culebra	4.56
Dorado	4.56
Ponce	4.52
Florida	4.34
Cataño	4.30
Toa Alta	4.26
Arroyo	4.10
Yauco	4.10
Guayama	3.96
Fajardo	3.82
Humacao	3.78
Guánica	3.74
Canóvanas	3.70
San Germán	3.70
Vega Baja	3.68
Patillas	3.64
Mean Score	***3.60***
Gurabo	3.60
Lares	3.60
Manatí	3.52
Río Grande	3.50
Vega Alta	3.50
Aguada	3.48
Comerío	3.42
Quebradillas	3.42
Luquillo	3.38
Lajas	3.36
Barranquitas	3.28
Arecibo	3.20
Jayuya	3.14
Loíza	3.12
Naranjito	3.08
Aguadilla	3.02
Juncos	3.00
Salinas	2.98
Isabela	2.94
Santa Isabel	2.84
Yabucoa	2.82
San Lorenzo	2.80
Ceiba	2.74

Sabana Grande	2.72
Barceloneta	2.66
Corozal	2.66
Las Marías	2.54
Hatillo	2.52
Juana Díaz	2.52
Low Support	
Utuado	2.50
Naguabo	2.48
Las Piedras	2.42
Coamo	2.36
Rincón	2.36
Ciales	2.32
Moca	2.20
Camuy	2.16
Villalba	2.06
Añasco	2.04
Adjuntas	2.02
Orocovis	2.02
Morovis	1.92
Maricao	1.70

Notes: Support for independence is calculated as the mean of the following five values: support for PIP gubernatorial candidates in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections, and support for the independence option in the 1993 and 1998 status plebiscites. *N*=78, mean =3.604, standard deviation=1.087. High support is defined as more than one standard deviation above the mean; low support more than one standard deviation below the mean.

Our utilitarian model of status preferences holds that Puerto Ricans who are less economically dependent upon the United States should be more likely to support independence. This individual-level assumption can also be adapted to the aggregate level, as in ecological analysis of *municípios*. Therefore, we hypothesize that municipalities that are relatively economically diversified and less dependent on federal public assistance programs will evince comparatively greater sympathy for the independence movement; conversely, municipalities more reliant on manufacturing and more dependent on U.S. welfare programs should, relatively speaking, oppose it. We base this reasoning on the assumption that the two most important economic benefits to Puerto Rico deriving from its relationship with the United States are (1) the extensive subsidies and tax breaks offered to U.S. industries that relocate their manufacturing activities to the island, a program originally known as Fomento (or, more condescendingly, "Operation Bootstrap," first passed by the U.S. Congress in 1947), and (2) the availability of federal public assistance programs to Puerto Rican families.[7] The centrality of these two factors is well captured in the title of economist Richard Weisskoff's exhaustive study of the Puerto Rican development model, *Factories and*

[7] The tax exemption for U.S. corporations operating on the island is enshrined in Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton, imposed a future sunset clause on Section 936. Tax exemptions for firms were phased out at the end of 2005. For details, see Dietz (2003, chapter 5).

Food Stamps (Weisskoff, 1985).

Examining Weisskoff's two key variables as they were measured in the 2000 census, we note that Puerto Rican *municipios* vary widely in the share of their labor force employed in manufacturing. This percentage ranges from over 60% in Aibonito and Camuy to less than 2% in San Juan (the industrial belt in the metropolitan area is largely outside the capital's borders). There is also wide variation in the percentage of households receiving any form of federal public assistance programs, from 35% in Utuado to less than 7% on the outlying island of Culebra, near Vieques. This variance permits us to estimate a multivariate model that captures the utilitarian nature of status preferences: *municipios* that are most dependent on the "factories and food stamps" economic model should be the least hospitable to the independence movement. In order to ensure proper controls, we include other relevant variables that capture socioeconomic characteristics of the *municipios*. These include the 1999 per capita income (high of $16,287 in Guaynabo, low of $4,634 in Lares, mean of $6,943), the university enrollment rate (high of 14.7% in Mayagüez, low of 3.6% on Vieques, mean of 7.2%), and the degree of urbanization (high of 100% in eleven municipalities, low of 34.3% in Las Marías, mean of 90.2%). We also included the percentage of the population that is ethnically Puerto Rican, on the assumption that a higher presence of non-Puerto Ricans should dilute support for the island's independence. Not surprisingly, more than 97% of the island's residents are indeed Puerto Ricans, but there is some variation here: there are 7 *municipios* with fewer than 95% Puerto Rican inhabitants.[8] Finally, we included a dummy variable for the island of Vieques. Dummy variables for individual cross-sections are often criticized because they are included for statistical rather than theoretical purposes, but in a study of pro-independence sentiment we feel it would be indefensible not to control for the only *municipio* that was regularly used for target practice by the U.S. government.[9] With these controls in place, we used OLS regression to estimate the six models presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Factories and Food Stamps: A Utilitarian Model of Status Preferences
(Dependent Variable: Electoral Support for Independence in 1990s, *Municipios*)

Variable	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
EAP Manufacturing	-.0176***	-.0160**	-.0158**	-.0205***	-.0196***	-.0179***
Welfare Households	-.0933***	-.0624**	-.0614**	-.0713**	-.0650**	-.0665**
Per Capita Income		1.2219	1.1480	1.9866**	1.8788*	1.7075*
College Enrollment			.0230	.0244	.0208	.0933
Ethnic Puerto				.1029**	.0987**	.1080***

[8] For example, San Juan is home to most of the island's non-Hispanic North Americans ("continentals"), to a sizable Cuban exile community, and to many immigrants from neighboring Latin and Caribbean nations. The capital is therefore only 85% ethnically Puerto Rican. Similarly, the *municipio* of Ceíba, home to the Roosevelt Roads naval station, has a Puerto Rican population of only 76%.

[9] After decades of bombing Vieques, and after years of intense mobilization and well-publicized protests by local residents, the Navy ceased target practice in May 2003.

Rican						
Urban					.0077	.0071
Vieques						2.637***
Constant	6.1722***	4.5777***	4.4344***	-5.7604	-6.1156	-7.411*
Adjusted R^2	.30	.31	.30	.34	.34	.41

Entries are OLS coefficients. *N*=78. Significance Levels: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01
Notes: All socioeconomic data are taken from U.S. 2000 Census. Per capita income figure is for 1999. College enrollment refers to percentage of population enrolled in college, university, or graduate school; welfare rate is percentage of households receiving public assistance of any type. For coding of dependent variable, see notes to Table 2.

The first model in Table 4 is a baseline model, using only the two primary independent variables of interest. Both the share of the labor force in manufacturing and the share of households receiving public assistance are significant predictors of support for independence, and both are in the expected negative direction. These two variables alone correctly predict 30% of the variance in cross-sectional support for independence among Puerto Rico's *municipios*. Model 2 adds per capita income as a control, and while the coefficient for municipal wealth is large and in the positive direction, it is not statistically significant. Model 3 adds the university enrollment rate, which has a nonsignificant effect. In Model 4, the share of the population that is Puerto Rican has a significant and positive effect, according to expectation. The introduction of a control for urbanization in Model 5 has no effect. As expected, the inclusion in Model 6 of a binary variable for Vieques has a powerful impact on the model; this municipality's support of independence is far higher than what might be expected based on its comparatively low social and economic indicators. The goodness-of-fit increases substantially (to .41) when we control for the Vieques outlier, and the impact of Puerto Rican ethnicity becomes more statistically significant in the model, but the main findings about welfare and manufacturing are largely unaffected.

The results of the cross-sectional analysis using *municipios* generate support for a utilitarian model of status preferences in Puerto Rico. Although the substantive impact of our two main variables appears small—a one percent increase in the share of households receiving public assistance depresses electoral support for independence by less than one tenth of one percent—we must recall that we are trying to model a relatively rare phenomenon. In a typical *municipio* supporters of independence make up less than 4% of the electorate. In fact, our models have considerable explanatory power: dependence on manufacturing and federal welfare programs allows us to predict nearly a third of the variance in municipal support for independence. This simple "factories and food stamps" model remains stable throughout various alternative estimations, even when controlling for various other factors thought to affect support for the independence option. The implication is that the perceived economic benefits of association with the United States pose serious impediments to the growth of the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* and to its proposal for a Puerto Rican republic.

Analysis of Individual-Level Data

The World Values Surveys give us superior insight into the social bases of the independence movement. Here we will measure support for independence in terms of party identification. In the Puerto Rican wave of the WVS administered in late 1995 (*N*=1164), respondents were asked: "If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote?" (Inglehart 2000: V210, p. 47).[10] Respondents were then handed a card containing the names of the PPD, PNP, and PIP. The results showed that 79.6% of Puerto Ricans expressed support for one of the three parties mentioned, a figure that is very high in comparative perspective.

Among the 927 respondents who expressed a party preference, 47.8% supported the PPD, 44.1% supported the PNP, and 8.1% supported the PIP. Note that the party ID scores for the two dominant parties differ by less than two percentage points from what their respective status options had received in the plebiscite held two years earlier—once again illustrating the remarkable durability of the status cleavage within the Puerto Rican electorate. However, the 8.1% support expressed for the PIP is nearly double what the independence option received in 1993 (4.4%). Why such a disparity? We attribute this to the fact that the WVS is an opinion poll, not an election. In a survey, respondents are free to indicate their true partisan sympathies, whereas in an election they may vote strategically for a party other than their first choice. The PIP's vote undoubtedly underrepresents the actual level of support for the party, given that the WVS data show that status and party preferences are strongly transitive among PIP supporters (independence > Commonwealth > statehood), just as they are among PNP supporters (statehood > Commonwealth > independence). Island political lore has long held that many *independentistas* switch their vote to the pro-Commonwealth PPD in order to prevent statehooders from winning.[11] For this reason, the individual-level World Values Survey affords us better "purchase" on the phenomenon of interest than do aggregate electoral data.

The presence of numerous demographic and attitudinal variables in the WVS battery allows us to estimate models of considerably greater complexity than was possible with the cross-sectional (municipal) data. Using the WVS, we can estimate multinomial logit analyses that allow us to explore the social bases of the parties and how they differ. We are most interested in determinants of support for the PIP. The independent variables

[10] Those who replied "don't know" to this question were then asked a followup: "Which party appeals to you most?" Therefore, V210 is an acceptable measure of party identification.

[11] We inspected the WVS data to examine the transitivity hypothesis for all three parties. In the 1995 WVS, respondents were shown a card with the three parties listed (PNP, PPD, PIP) and were asked for which party they would vote if the elections were held tomorrow. This is our measure of party ID (V210). Respondents were subsequently asked which party would be their second choice (V211) and if there was a party on the list they would never vote for (V212). Among PNP (statehood) identifiers, 67.4% said their second choice was the PPD (Commonwealth), and 69.3% said they would never vote for the PIP (statehood). Among PIP (independence) identifiers, 73.1% said their second choice was the PPD (Commonwealth), and 76.2% said they would never vote for the PNP (statehood). This offers strong support for the hypothesis that some independence sympathizers strategically switch their vote to the PPD in elections and to the Commonwealth option in status plebiscites. As for the PPD identifiers, who support the status quo of Commonwealth and are located "between" the PNP and PIP, they were predictably torn. Of the *Populares*, 52.2% opted for the PNP as a second choice and 47.8% for the PIP. Supporters of the PPD were also divided about which party they could never support: 45.6% cited the PNP and 54.4% cited the PIP. Thus, the transitivity hypothesis is well supported by the WVS data.

and their associated hypotheses are as follows:

Age. Respondents were coded into four age groups, beginning with the 18-24 category and moving upward. Younger Puerto Ricans are much less acquainted with the economic insecurity that faced their parents and grandparents. We also note the strong presence of PIP on university campuses, as well as the generally greater receptivity of younger voters to prescriptions for more radical change. Moreover, a survey conducted in 1979 had already suggested that age was a significant predictor of support for the PIP, but not for the two larger, catch-all parties (Blanco, 1988, p. 83-88). Therefore, we hypothesize that age will be a negative predictor of support for independence.

Gender. Although Blanco's 1979 survey yielded null results on gender (Blanco, 1988), we hypothesize that women will be less supportive of independence, for two reasons. First, women worldwide have traditionally been less likely to give their support to radical or left-wing parties than have men.[12] Second, the welfarist discourses of the PPD and PNP, which emphasize the family-oriented economic benefits deriving from association with the United States, are likely to resonate with female voters.

City Size. Using a simple threefold classification (city, town, rural), Blanco's 1979 survey had found no relationship between community size and party ID (Blanco, 1988, p. 69-72). However, the 1995 WVS has a superior coding of urbanization: the size of the respondents' towns were classified into eight categories, ranging from less than 2000 inhabitants (category 1) to more than 500,000 inhabitants (category 8). Based on patterns of support for left-wing parties around the democratic world, and keeping in mind that voters in urban areas are more likely to be exposed to alternative information sources, we assume that Puerto Ricans in large cities will be more responsive to the pro-independence message of the PIP.

Education. In 1979, Blanco had found that among college graduates, support for independence was more than twice as high as that among respondents with no higher education (Blanco 1988: 109). We return to his hypothesis not only because the distribution of educational resources has changed dramatically in Puerto Rico since the 1970s, but also because the 1995 WVS affords a measure of educational levels superior to the one used by Blanco. In the WVS, education was coded into nine categories, ranging from 1 (no formal education) to 9 (university-level education, with complete degree). Given that the relatively higher skill levels of educated voters mean that independence would hold fewer economic uncertainties for them, and given the historic association of the PIP with institutions of higher education,[13] we hypothesize that educational levels should be positively related to support for a Puerto Rican republic.

Income. In the WVS, respondents were coded into deciles based on the actual

[12] As Inglehart and Norris (2003) note, this was a dominant hypothesis on gender and voting in Western European democracies for several decades. However, their careful analysis of WVS data (including the unpublished fourth wave of 1999-2001) demonstrates that the hypothesis of female conservatism is no longer supported in advanced industrial democracies, and has in fact become reversed in several (including the United States). For the purposes of the present analysis we maintain the traditional hypothesis.

[13] Using surveys conducted during the 1972 election at the University of Puerto Rico's main campus in Río Piedras, Blanco estimated that approximately one-third of the UPR student body supported the PIP at that time (Blanco, 1988, p. 108).

distribution of income in Puerto Rico in 1995. In accord with the cross-sectional results described above, we hypothesize that more economically secure individuals will be more willing to support independence. The coefficient for the income variable should be positive.

Ideology. The WVS data provide us with an opportunity that the municipal data could not: a chance to test the relationship between ideology and status preference. Respondents were asked to locate themselves on a ten-point scale where 1 equals the leftmost position and 10 equals the rightmost. The mean score for the ideology variable was 6.64 (*N*=931), well to the right of the median point. Among the 751 respondents who reported both a party preference and an ideological self-classification, the pro-statehood PNP respondents (*N*=335) scored 7.36 and the pro-Commonwealth PPD (*N*=345) scored close to the mean, at 6.84. The PIP respondents had a mean score of 4.22 (*N*=71). These data tend to support the reputations of the three principal parties: the PNP and PPD as middle-of-the-road catch all organizations, and the PIP as significantly to the left. Given the historical overlap between progressive sectors and the independence movement in Puerto Rico, and in light of the solidarity that the PIP receives from left parties throughout Latin American and the Caribbean, we hypothesize that the ideology variable should remain negative and significant even when controlling for other factors.

Postmaterialism. One of the main reasons for the development of the WVS was to provide for a comparative test of Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change. This theory holds that materialist values are increasingly being replaced by postmaterialist ones, most notably among citizens in the wealthy democracies of Western Europe and North America, but also among more educated and economically secure sectors in developing societies (Inglehart, 1997). This transformation has had an enormous impact on parties of the Left worldwide. The traditional program and social base of the Old Left—with industrialization as the dominant goal, a dirigiste state to guide it, and an electorate based on large industrial unions—is gradually being replaced by the goals and political styles of the New Left. The New Left, based on a new electorate that is highly educated and has largely escaped the economic and physical insecurity faced by earlier generations, favors postmaterialist values such as decentralization, direct democracy, environmentalism, sexual and reproductive freedoms, and the like. Postmaterialists tend to judge issues based less on a strict pocketbook calculus and more on positive returns to the quality of life. The full 12-question battery used to tap the materialist/postmaterialist dimension is described in Inglehart (2000, V1010, p. 171). Using the less sophisticated 4-question battery (Inglehart, 1977) available at the time, Blanco's 1979 survey found strong support for postmaterialist value priorities among *independentistas* in Puerto Rico (Blanco, 1988, p. 116-121).

Following Blanco, we hypothesize that in Puerto Rico, the cleavage between opponents and supporters of independence should be broadly similar to the one between materialists and postmaterialists first described by Inglehart for postwar Western Europe (Inglehart, 1977). Puerto Ricans who recall earlier times of economic insecurity on the island (e.g., prior to the creation of Fomento in 1947 or the introduction of food stamps in 1974) should be more materialist, and therefore less sympathetic to the idea of independence and to the leap of economic faith it requires. Conversely, younger Puerto Ricans who have been raised under a far higher standard of living than earlier

generations, and who are also vastly more educated, should tend toward a postmaterialist orientation. We further hypothesize that the materialist/postmaterialist dimension should find resonance within the party system. The pro-Commonwealth PPD is a "smokestack" party associated with the industrialization of postwar Puerto Rico and with a visibly materialist legacy. The association between industrialization and the United States presence on the island this meant that the traditional blue-collar social democratic electorate was never seriously penetrated by the pro-independence PIP, even though the party always styled itself as social democratic. Hence, we assume that the postwar economic development model worked to restrict the potential electorate of the PIP to its most educated, elite, and economically secure elements. The social base of the independence movement should therefore correspond much more closely to that of the New Left than the Old, and we hypothesize that supporters of the PIP should be disproportionately postmaterialist in their value orientations.

Puerto Rican voters essentially choose from among three parties, and the appropriate technique to model this choice is multinomial logit analysis. After listwise deletion of missing data, the estimation in Table 5 is based on an *N* of 673 party identifiers, of whom 64 supported the PIP, 291 supported the PNP, and 318 supported the PPD.

Table 5
Multinomial Logit Analysis of Party ID, 1995 World Values Survey

Variable	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Party of interest (dep var = 1)	PIP	PIP	PNP
Comparison group (dep var = 0)	PNP	PPD	PPD
Age	-.3811**	-.5146***	-.1335
Female	-.4166	-.2834	.1332
City Size	.4899***	.4019***	-.0880
Education	.1750**	.1495*	-.0254
Income	.0541	.1644***	.1103**
Ideology (1=left, 10=right)	-.4463***	-.3526***	.0937***
Postmaterialism (12-item index)	.3196**	.2988**	-.0207
Constant	-1.6438*	-2.124**	-.4803

Significance Levels: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01
N = 673, log pseudo-likelihood = -569.399, pseudo-r^2 = .10

Notes: Dependent variables coded from V210 in 1995 World Values Survey: "If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote?" Those replying "don't know" were then asked: "Which party appeals to you most?" Party identifiers: PIP = 64, PNP = 291, PPD = 318, total = 673 cases.

Model 1 in Table 5 compares PIP identifiers to PNP identifiers. Supporters of independence are significantly younger, more educated, more left-leaning, and more urban than supporters of statehood. However, they do not differ on the income variable. Model 2 compares the PIP to the PPD, and the results are remarkably similar to those of Model 1, with one key difference: PIP supporters are significantly wealthier than PPD supporters. Finally, Model 3 compares the supporters of the PNP and PPD, the two dominant parties. As expected, these two catch-all parties exhibit the fewest differences of the paired comparisons. PNP supporters are wealthier and more conservative than

PPD supporters, but none of the other five variables is significant.

The multinomial logit estimation has several implications. First, although the female gender has the expected sign in Models 1 and 2, it is never significant in party identification. Second, the income variable suggests that higher-income voters will gravitate either toward independence or statehood, net of all other variables, and that lower-income voters will lean toward the PPD. This is entirely consistent with the "factories and food stamps" perspective discussed earlier: the PPD is the creator of the modern Puerto Rican development model and has reaped electoral benefits from the same. However, even though PIP and PNP supporters do not differ on income, they *do* differ on education, which is clearly the best proxy for transferable skills. This contrast is remarkable given that education is usually a strong predictor of income.[14] Independence supporters are not wealthier than statehood supporters, but they are significantly more educated. Third, in accord with the reputations of the PPD and PNP as heterogeneous, catch-all parties, there are few major differences between their respective supporters. Taken together, the three models in Table 5 suggest that the most significant differences lie between the PIP, on the one hand, and supporters of the two dominant parties, on the other.

Table 6
Binary Logit Analysis of PIP Support, 1995 World Values Survey

Variable	**Coefficient**
Party of interest (dep var = 1)	PIP
Comparison group (dep var = 0)	PNP+PPD
Age	-.4577***
Female	-.3449
City Size	.4414***
Education	.1615*
Income	.1127*
Ideology	-.3951***
Postmaterialism	.3091**
Constant	-2.6034***

Significance Levels: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01
N = 673, log pseudo-likelihood = -158.150, pseudo-r^2 = .25

Party identifiers: PIP = 64, PNP + PPD = 609, total = 673 cases.

Noting the uniqueness of PIP supporters, we partitioned them from all other party identifiers in the WVS sample. We estimated a simple binary logit in which 1 equals support for the PIP and 0 equals support for either of the catch-all parties supporting formalized relations with the United States (Table 6). This model, which provides the clearest and most direct test of our theoretical expectations about support for independence, correctly predicts 92% of the 673 cases. All variables have the predicted

[14] The two variables are correlated at .39 in the Puerto Rican sample of the 1995 WVS. The correlation between education and income on the island may be somewhat weakened by the widespread availability of public assistance. In 2000, federal transfers provided 20.4% of all personal income in Puerto Rico (Dietz, 2003, p. 148).

polarity, and all are statistically significant except one. Education and income are significant only at the relaxed .10 level, but the fact that both remain in the model generates support for our hypotheses about resources and skill levels. The most significant variable in the model is ideological self-classification: left-leaning Puerto Ricans are much more likely to support the PIP. Age, city size, and postmaterialism all have positive coefficients and high levels of statistical significance. The only variable that does not perform according to expectation is the female gender. While the sign is correct—implying that women could be less supportive of the PIP net of all other factors—it does not attain statistical significance. We note that when we removed the gender variable from the model (results not shown), the model did not change in any appreciable way. Therefore, we are confident that this sociodemographic model of independence is otherwise appropriately specified and is not distorted by the inclusion of the gender variable.

In sum, analysis of the 1995 World Values Survey suggests that when we compare PIP identifiers to sympathizers of the pro-Commonwealth and pro-statehood parties, supporters of the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* tend to be younger, wealthier, better educated, more left-leaning, more postmaterialist in their value orientations, and more likely to reside in the larger cities. In sum, they are more cosmopolitan and more economically secure.

Implications and Conclusions

We have examined the social bases of separatism in Puerto Rico, asking which of the island's residents support independence and why. We caution again that these findings must be contextualized. Well over 90% of Puerto Ricans support either the maintenance of Commonwealth or the island's full accession to the Union as the 51st state. Support for independence is a rare thing indeed, although independence appears to be slightly stronger in attitudinal than in behavioral (electoral) terms.

Overall, the picture that emerges from the cross-sectional electoral data is that support for Puerto Rican independence is strongest among those *municipios* that are least dependent on the two main economic benefits of formalized relations with the United States: manufacturing and federal public assistance programs. This suggests that "factories and food stamps" (Weisskoff, 1985) may be not only an economic model, but also a political one. The centrality of these two economic pillars of the U.S.-Puerto Rico relationship presumably makes it difficult for the PIP to penetrate the industrial working class and lower-income voters, two natural constituencies for progressive parties elsewhere around the world. Space within the party system is almost evenly divided between one party that brought these benefits to Puerto Rico and seeks to maintain Commonwealth status (the PPD), and another party that seeks to intensify these benefits even further by pursuing statehood (the PNP). For reasons of economic rationality, the development model is not favorable to a separatist movement that proposes divorce from the world's wealthiest nation. Add to this the obstacle of the majoritarian electoral system—which, as Duverger (1954) noted, has both "mechanical" and "psychological" effects generating the inertial dominance of two large parties—and the growth potential of the PIP is clearly limited. The distant third position of the PIP is also self-reinforcing, given that some potential sympathizers of independence engage in strategic voting—switching their votes to the pro-Commonwealth PPD in order to forestall victories by

the pro-statehood PNP.

Turning to the World Values Surveys, the picture that emerges from the individual-level attitudinal data is that sympathy for independence is strongest among educated, well-to-do, left-of-center urban professionals. The social base of the PIP appears to be closer to that of a New Left than to an Old Left profile. *Independentistas* tend to have value orientations that are disproportionately postmaterialist. They tend to be more highly educated and more economically secure than supporters of formalized relations with the U.S. (Table 6).

The conceptual bridge that links together the findings of the cross-sectional and attitudinal data is the notion of economic security. In both sets of analyses, we found that higher levels of economic security are associated with greater relative support for independence. This argument may be less immediately apparent in the case of *municipios*, which we have examined only very abstractly. However, if we define economic security at the municipal level as (1) higher average wealth, (2) higher skill levels as measured by the educational achievement of the local population, and (3) greater diversification of the local economy (meaning higher impact of the service sector, and less reliance on either agriculture or manufacturing), then the concept of economic security begins to gain some theoretical traction. The argument is much clearer at the individual level, where it is easier to grasp the unequal distribution of "positional assets" (Kitschelt *et al.*, 1995) within society. The WVS data showed that education and income, which together capture the skill levels and economic viability of respondents, are positively associated with support for independence.

The findings about economic security are not surprising. Departures from the status quo—for example, political and economic transitions in the contemporary world—are fraught with uncertainty. Individuals with higher skill levels and greater levels of personal economic security are more likely to be confident about their own ability to successfully navigate the transition. National independence for Puerto Rico would be a transition of similar magnitude, and it is unsurprising that large sectors of the population firmly oppose it. Thus, our findings lend support to a utilitarian model of status preferences. Although the empirical referent is quite unique, our results on Puerto Rico lend support to the utilitarian models that have been developed to explain public opinion toward prospective macro-transitions in other parts of the world; e.g., support for market reforms in the former Soviet Union (Duch, 1993), party identification in the new postcommunist party systems (Kitschelt, 1992; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1995, 1999), or public support for European integration (Gabel, 1997).

We recognize that this utilitarian perspective may be unattractive to those who would prefer an ethnic politics approach, explaining support for Puerto Rican independence in cultural or symbolic terms. The fact that 95% of Puerto Ricans consistently support formalized relations with the United States implies that ethnicity alone has limited value for explaining separatism, although Table 4 suggests that ethnicity—in the purely demographic, numerical sense—does have a marginal impact on electoral outcomes. Looking within the confines of the independence movement, primordialist or constructivist perspectives may provide some analytical insight into the creation of Puerto Rican identity and the translation of this identity into the organizational politics of the PIP. However, we would point out that such a culturalist perspective—while

based on very different assumptions from ours—is not entirely incompatible with the instrumental approach we have outlined here. A long line of research from Maslow to Inglehart has suggested that individuals must first satisfy their basic needs before addressing more abstract goals (e.g., the politics of identity). Inglehart (1997) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) have argued that this "survival versus self-expression axis" is emerging as a major global cleavage in the twenty-first century. If this line of argument is correct, then postmaterialists—those individuals who are highly educated, economically secure, and more free to pursue to higher-order goals of self-realization—should be disproportionate supporters of Puerto Rican independence and the primordial satisfaction it implies. We and Blanco (1988) have found this to be true. Postmaterialism predicts separatism.

Thus, although we consider our utilitarian theory about transferable skills to have better microfoundations than primordialism, we concede that some supporters of Puerto Rican independence might simultaneously be viewed through both lenses. The linkage between the two rival theories could be provided by postmaterialism—as their education levels and individual economic security rise, certain Puerto Ricans may feel free to turn their attention to the politics of identity. As Emilio Pantojas-García notes: "the average Puerto Rican does not share the obsession of the political and intellectual elites with defining the Puerto Rican identity" (Pantojas-García, 2000, p. 235). But when examining elites, we should avoid conflating identity politics with *independentismo* (Morris, 1995). This would run perilously close to the assumption that the PPD and PNP are somehow less Puerto Rican than the PIP, an assumption we find ludicrous. In sum, the ecological evidence is overwhelming that economic benefits from the United States depress support for independence, and the individual-level evidence about economic security points in the same direction. This suggests that the independence question turns mostly on utilitarian and instrumental calculations (which have microfoundations) rather than on identity politics. However, thick description of macropolitics in Puerto Rico is impossible without recourse to the latter approach (e.g. Fernandez, 1996).

Our results represent only a "snapshot" of the social bases of the independence movement as they existed in the 1990s. Our analysis is not longitudinal. Still, the findings encourage us to speculate about the conditions under which support for independence might shift in the future. Although the present economic model seems to limit the growth potential for the independence movement, from the perspective of the PIP there is an also an "optimistic" interpretation of the data: the ongoing socioeconomic modernization of Puerto Rico is likely to enlarge the social sectors that supported independence in the 1990s. With each passing year, the island becomes wealthier, more economically diverse, more urbanized, and most importantly, better educated. In accord with Inglehart's theory of "postmodernization," there should be a concomitant growth in the postmaterialist value syndrome that seems to generate support for the PIP—or at the very least softens opposition to the party. Through the process of intergenerational population replacement, Puerto Ricans today are less likely to recall the severe hardships that existed before the consolidation of the current economic model. The rise of a generation that recalls no major threats to its economic and physical security could create a more hospitable political landscape for the independence movement in the future.

However, this "optimistic" interpretation should be tempered by attention to the prevailing economic and political structures, which are well entrenched. First, with regard to economic institutions, the "factories and food stamps" model brings undeniable benefits to the majority of Puerto Ricans, strengthening the arguments of those who support formalized relations with the United States. Second, with regard to political institutions, the party system is largely "frozen" in place. Even if the PIP's proposal for an independent republic did not represent a radical leap for most voters (which it does), the PIP is still a small third party competing with two very large ones under majoritarian rules. It also confronts a situation wherein the status preferences of PIP voters are strongly transitive (independence > Commonwealth > statehood), and which *independentistas* may be driven to vote for their second choice in order to stop their third choice from winning. Their first choice —independence— therefore fares worse in electoral terms than in attitudinal support. These politico-institutional and strategic variables render the Puerto Rican party system remarkably inertial. From the perspective of PIP supporters, this is the "pessimistic" interpretation.

So we conclude with a paradox. On the one hand, underlying structural conditions should be creating a more fertile landscape for independence over time. On the other hand, the prevailing economic and political institutions counteract the effects of sociodemographic change. While speculation is difficult, one possible outcome is that *attitudinal opposition* to independence may diminish over time, but actual *behavioral support* of it may not grow either. We may hypothesize that only some form of severe shock to the macroeconomic model or to the political party system—a "critical juncture," in the terminology of Collier and Collier (1991)—could eventually break the logjam that maintains Puerto Rican politics in a virtual holding pattern. For reasons we have discussed above, the early appearance of such a critical juncture is highly unlikely. In the meantime, however, it is worthwhile for social scientists to delve more deeply into the social bases of Puerto Rican separatism, a movement of remarkable durability and determination.

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