U.S. METROPOLITAN BRIDGES TO PUERTO RICAN MUSIC IDENTITY;
CUBAN AND PUERTO RICAN MUSIC CONNECTIONS FROM THE 1920S-1970S

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Abstract

“Cuba and Puerto Rico are As two wings of the same bird, They receive flowers and bullets Into the same heart ...” (Lola Rodriguez de Tio, 1868)

Puerto Rican poet and political activist Lola Rodriguez de Tio penned these words after being inspired by the call for the independence of Puerto Rico. Her words were further canonized in Puerto Rican cultural identity after being published in the song La Borinquena by composer Rafael Hernandez. Hernandez’s song would later become a musical symbol of national identity for the island of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican Diaspora. The connection between the two islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba emerge as constant themes throughout contemporary culture. They are often manifested as the evolution of unique Puerto Rican characteristics of music that was imported from Cuba. Although both islands have shared musical influences with one another through diverse channels of distribution, this study focuses on the impact of US metropolitan regions such as New York have had upon the Puerto Rican adoption of Cuban music.

In order to understand the musical influence of US mainland upon the Puerto Rican Diaspora concerning Cuban music research was concentrated into six major overarching themes. These themes deal with channels of music distribution (i.e. radio, music stores, promoters, etc.) venues and associations, national cultural identity, historical significance, migration, and socio-economics. This research primarily deals with the era of the 20th century primarily between the timeframe of the 1920’s to the 1970’s.
By exploring these themes this study largely deals with the existence of the unique musical relationship Cuba and Puerto Rico share in contrast with other Latin American nations and territories. There is a definite distinction between the two musical worlds, however through years of migration and musical genre evolutions, the boundaries between them are at times blurred, at least on a superficial level.
### Contents

Acknowledgements...........................................................................................................ii

Abstract..............................................................................................................................iii

Chapter 1. Introduction........................................................................................................1

  Statement of the Problem.................................................................................................1
  Need for Study..................................................................................................................1
  Research Questions.........................................................................................................3
  Glossary of Terms............................................................................................................4
  Limitations of Study........................................................................................................7
  Assumptions......................................................................................................................8

Chapter 2. Literature Review...............................................................................................8

  Introduction......................................................................................................................8
  Beginning Evolutions....................................................................................................10
  Popular Dance Scenes...................................................................................................11
  Puerto Rican and Cuban Cultural Identities and Diaspora...........................................13
  African Diaspora Contribution.......................................................................................17
  Instrumentation...............................................................................................................17
  Migration..........................................................................................................................19
  Political Influences.........................................................................................................24
  Conclusion.........................................................................................................................25

Chapter 3. Methodology.....................................................................................................26

  Descriptions of Research Tools.......................................................................................27
  Participants in Study.........................................................................................................29
Chapter 4. Research Findings.................................................................................29
  Introduction.........................................................................................................29
  Migration, Immigration, & Travels.................................................................32
  Politics & Socio-Economics...........................................................................34
  Channels of Distribution................................................................................38
  Cuban Danzon & Son in Puerto Rico..............................................................39
  Record Companies & Technological Advancements.................................42
  Venues & Music Associations.......................................................................47
  Stick Ball; Urban Community Connections to the Music............................64
  Cultural Identity.............................................................................................65
Conclusion..........................................................................................................69
References.........................................................................................................76
Appendices........................................................................................................81
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Much has been written about the development of Cuban and Puerto Rican music both on the respective islands and throughout the United States. Publications and groundbreaking research have been published by ethnomusicologists from past to present. Subjects ranging from the roots of salsa, timba, and guaracha to the son and danzon have been covered at length. While no shortage of information seems to exist on the topic, especially on the era of the mambo craze that ushered in household names such as Tito Puente and Celia Cruz, I have observed a lack of writing dedicated to the relationship between the Cuban and Puerto Rican diaspora. What information that has been published on the topic of the relationship is usually peripheral at best or told through specific related historiographies such as the musical genre of salsa.

Need for the Study

Interest in this relational topic came primarily out of curiosity born of a personal desire to be more acquainted with my own musical identity as a Puerto Rican musician. The impact of Puerto Rican acculturation and appropriation of Cuban music was not unchartered territory for me; however, I arrived at a point in my personal studies as a musician where I began to inquire about the roots (or at least early developments) of the relationship between these two ethnic musical styles. One of my goals for this project is to ultimately be used as a resource to explain how migration and diversity within a population may impact cultural
traditions. While this study focuses on the impact of two specific music cultures and traditions, it may also be used as a tool to observe how migration can impact and influence the larger diaspora. Many of the popular Puerto Rican based genre recordings that became successful hits on the island were actually recorded on the United States mainland in large metropolitan cities such as New York and Miami. This project will potentially serve as a case study on how the evolution and exchange of musical ideas due to migration can influence traditions in the region of origin from a diaspora of people. Consequently, due to the wide range of information and activity that results from such a large-scale migration (and movements due to constant travel), writing on the developments of musicians can take an infinite number of directions. My primary focus is on the influence of large metropolitan cities, and how large-scale migration to metropolitan cities within the United States was the major factor in shaping the current Puerto Rican acculturation of Cuban music.

My interests were born from a desire to discover the origins of the cultivation of traditional Cuban musical art forms on the island of Puerto Rico. I soon realized however that the answers were connected to an overwhelmingly number of complex layers. These are issues not limited to generalities in socio-economics, national identity, governmental politics, education, and migration. No one certain perspective applies to any category, and certainly both imagined and real relationships/assumptions exist between the Diasporas music cultures of Puerto Rico and Cuba.
Research Questions

Amongst my research questions was the reality of a unique relationship between Cuban music and its cultivation by Puerto Rican musicians. Concerning this relationship I was often reminded of the famous poetic line by Lola Rodriguez de Tio saying “Cuba y Puerto Rico son de un pájaro las dos alas...,” which translates to “Cuba and Puerto Rico are two wings of the same bird...” (Rodriguez, 1967). With twenty-one Spanish-speaking nations, why are the musicians of these two diasporas mentioned so often in the same sentences and breath with popular Cuban music genres? Why was Cuban music (specifically Afro-Cuban genres such as rumba) so pervasive throughout the island of Puerto Rico? How did Puerto Rico become one of the premiere locations outside of Cuba to study Afro-Cuban music styles? How much of this relationship is imagined and how do various groups throughout the Puerto Rican and Cuban Diaspora perceive it? Was the cultivation of Cuban music in Puerto Rico at a higher concentrated level than other Caribbean islands and Spanish speaking nations or was this a perception fed by commercialization and marketing? I assumed it would be easy for me to just relegate the answers to these questions to the popularity and success of celebrated Puerto Rican musicians during the 1950s, 1960s, and the 1970s (with the rise of Salsa and the founding of the Fania record label). I realized however that the layers were more complex and that I would benefit in researching the roots beyond the success of salsa in the 1970s and the mambo craze of the 1950s.
Glossary of Terms

**Afro-Cuban**- Cuban of African descent. This term can also be used to describe a form or genre of music, art, etc.

**Afro-Puerto Rican**- Puerto Rican person, art, or music of African descent.

**Barrio**- A neighborhood, district, city, or town where a large majority of occupants speak Spanish. A barrio can also refer to a community where Latino culture, language and or poverty is prevalent.

**Bolero**- The Bolero is a genre of slow-tempo Latin music and its associated dance. Both Spanish and Cuban forms are significant and have separate origins. The bolero has been popular for over a century.

**Bomba**- The Bomba is one of the traditional musical styles of Puerto Ricans of African descent. Bomba can be used as the generic name for a number of rhythms; its real meaning is about the encounter and creative relationship between dancers, percussionists, and singers. Bomba is a communal activity that still thrives in its traditional centers of Loíza, Santurce, Mayagüez, Ponce, and New York City.

**Borinquen**- Original name of the island of Puerto Rico given by the native Taino people.

**Conga Drum**- A conical shaped drum of African origin, usually made of wood staves and iron hoops. Originally it was tuned by fire. Today, it is tuned by adjusting metal lug keys. Traditionally the conga is the name of the second largest drum in a set of three. The term conga drum is a contemporary term for describing all sizes of drums similar to the shape and design of the tumbadoras. See tumbadora definition.

**Cuatro**- The name refers to the national instrument of Puerto Rico. Today this instrument has ten strings arranged in five pairs and is tuned to the same intervals as the fancy Spanish Lute. Over time Puerto Rican artisans changed its traditional keyhole shape into one reminiscent of a violin, a symbol of upper-class sophistication. In this new configuration the instrument was heard across the Island (Cumpiano 2011). The cuatro belongs to the plucked chordophone family in the Hornbostel-Sachs classification system.

**Danza**- Danza originated in Ponce, a city in southern Puerto Rico. It is a popular turn-of-the-twentieth-century ballroom dance genre somewhat similar to the waltz. It is a mixture of classical music cadenzas and marches incorporating the African clave. The music and the dance is creolized because composers were consciously trying to integrate African and European ideas and because
many of the people themselves were creoles, that is, born in the Caribbean, accepting the islands as their true and only homeland.

**Danzon**- A dance genre derived from the Cuban Creole tradition. It was particularly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century

**Decima**- Decima refers to a ten-line stanza of poetry. The song form generally consists of forty-four lines, an introductory four-verse stanza followed by four ten-line stanzas. The decima lyrical content refers to a wide range of subject matter such as religious, lyrical, and political themes. Some decimas are also in the humorous vein, making fun of a rival’s weakness or even a funny story about a foolish act.

**Guaracha**- The guaracha is a genre of Cuban popular music that employs rapid tempo and lyrics. Guarachas were played and sung in musical theatres and in low-class dance salons. During the later nineteenth and the early twentieth century the guaracha was a favorite musical form in the brothels of Havana. The guaracha survives today in the repertories of some trova musicians, conjuntos, and Cuban-style big bands.

**Guiro**- An instrument widely used in Cuban popular music that probably originated with the Bantu people, although Cuban aborigines may also have used it. It has also been called calabazo or guayo. It is a percussive idiophone made from the cylindrical fruit of the guiro (gourd), between 30 and 50 centimeters long, and about 10 centimeters in diameter, with a curved peduncle. (Orovio 2004, 104)

**Jibaro**- Jíbaro is a term commonly used in Puerto Rico to refer to mountain-dwelling peasants, but in modern times it has gained a broader and specifically a nobler cultural meaning. Since at least the 1920s the term jíbaro has a more positive connotation in Puerto Rican culture, proudly associated with the pioneers of Puerto Rico; however, the term occasionally also has a negative connotation. Despite this negative affiliation, the image of the jíbaro represents an ideology of a hard working, simple, independent, and prudently wise Puerto Rican. The jíbaro serves as a representation of the roots of the modern day Puerto Rican people symbolizing the strength of traditional values like living simply and properly and caring for homeland and family.

**Mambo**- Dance music genre with a brass section that achieves extraordinary effects with the melody, the harmony, and the rhythm, while the Cuban percussion provides a characteristic underlying rhythm and strong jazz influences.

**Merengue**- Music genre that originated from the Dominican Republic
**Plena**- Known as el "periodico cantao" or "the sung newspaper," the plena comes from the lower classes of the barrio in Puerto Rico. It originated in Ponce around 1900. The plena was first heard in the Barriada de la Torre neighborhood, whose population consisted mostly of immigrants from St. Kitts, Tortola, and St. Thomas who settled on the island beginning in the late 1800s. The traditional center of plena was probably San Antón, a barrio of Ponce, although the black neighborhood of Loíza is also mentioned as the heartland for the genre. Its popularity peaked in the 1920s.

**Rumba**- Rumba is used as shorthand for Afro-Cuban rumba, a group of dances related to the rumba genre of Afro-Cuban music. The most common Afro-Cuban rumba is the guaguancó. The other Afro-Cuban rumbas are Yambu and Colombia.

**Sextetos**- A type of music group born out of the 1920s in Havana Cuba specializing in the genre of Son. A sexteto comprises of the guitar, tres, double bass or marimbula, maracas and claves. During the end of the decade trumpet was added. This resulted in the former grouping becoming known as the septeto.

**Son**- Son cubano is a style of music and dance that originated in Cuba and gained worldwide popularity in the 1930s. It is a duple-meter form that emphasizes percussion instruments such as the marimbula, the tres, (a modified guitar with three double or triple strings) or guitar, the clave or palitos (sticks), and the guiro. (Glasser, 23) The structure and elements of son combine Spanish guitar with African rhythms and percussion instruments. The Cuban son is one of the most influential and widespread forms of Latin American music, was made most popular in salsa, and has spread across the world.

**Tres**- Cuban stringed instrument with three sets of double strings tuned in unison-two in a high octave, the other one octave lower, in D minor.

**Timba**- Popular music genre associated with contemporary Cuban dance originating in the 1980s and utilizing a combination of jazz, funk, rap, spoken word, synthesizer sounds, and variations of traditional percussion patterns.

**Timbales**- Timbales or pailas are shallow single-headed drums with metal casing. They are shallower than single-headed tom-toms and are usually tuned much higher. The player, called a timbalero, uses a variety of stick strokes, rim shots, and rolls to produce a wide range of percussive expression during solos. The shells of the timbal are called cascara (shell), and it is also the name of a rhythmic pattern common in salsa music played on the shells of the timbales.

**Trovador**- The Trovador is a singer of traditional Puerto Rican jibaro music. The trovador is mainly known for his/her ability to improvise in the form of the
décima. The origin of the trovador comes from the twelfth and thirteenth century lyric poets in Southern France, Northern Italy, and Spain. This singer is also known as a strolling minstrel.

**Tumbadoras** - Traditional name for conga drums.

**Limitations of the Study**

The majority of the interviews, and research focused on New York, New Jersey and Chicago and Los Angeles. Several other metropolitan regions throughout the United States also played large roles; however, New York contributed the largest impact upon the research. The difficulty of tracing music developments related to the study over such a broad physical landscape created another challenge and limitation to the study. Schedule barriers with participants due to time constraints complicated the study. The sheer volume of work published related to the topic in combination with schedule limitations however, existed as both a barrier and an opportunity. Due to the assistance of modern technology the access to resources such as online published interviews, documentaries as well as networking with potential interviewees via social media proved to be a preeminent strategy. With the volume of information already published and conversely the point of perspective that is central to the study so often being a peripheral one, an archival approach combined with scheduled interviews was conducted. This was done in effort to highlight the aforementioned periphery issues and therefore moving them into focus. In this case a balanced perspective was key, however with many of the notable participants/musicians already having published interviews there seemed no need to reinvent the wheel; especially before exhausting the available information.
Assumptions

Starting out, my research was built on an assumption that there is a unique relationship between the islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba as opposed to other Latin American nations and territories based upon shared history hence directly impacting the music. I explored the notion that in some context the relationship may be imagined or built upon various biases. The relationship may have dramatically changed over the years to either be cemented, more ambiguous, or layered with expanding complexity. Since I am a third generation Puerto Rican living within the mainland US, I assumed I would be accepted and perceived as both an outsider and insider. Many of the participants were musical colleagues and mentors of mine as well as those whose work has influenced my own over the years.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Both Cuba and Puerto Rico have a diverse blend of traditional musical legacies coming from the African slaves, Spanish colonialists, and indigenous population such as the Taino. The foundations of Puerto Rico’s music dates back centuries; however, to keep points specific and concise to support the relativity of the research, I elected to focus primarily on the Cuban and New York influences upon the island combined with the folkloric rural mountain and coastal regions of Puerto Rico during the twentieth century.
The evolution of music on the island of Puerto Rico has been dynamic for an extended time. From the interaction and travels of the indigenous Taino people, the introduction of the Spanish colonists, and the importation of the African slaves, Puerto Rico has been fertile soil for its own unique musical production (in terms of the traditional music exclusive to the island) and has made its mark on imported styles from neighboring islands. When it comes to genres of music such as those from the neighboring island of Cuba, Puerto Rico has been a continual example of acculturation (regarding much of the popularized music of the island). While acculturation is strongly present in Puerto Rico, a fraternal exchange of musical schools of thought branches from similar origins.

Several publications I reviewed for research resources provide detailed information on various traditional music styles of both Puerto Rico and Cuba. The breadth of published research material provides analysis on connections to various musical distinctions between the islands, migration to and from the U.S. urban cities, socio-economic issues, politics, community cultural dynamics away from the islands, music venues, music associations, and historical significance of the popular music styles such as the son, rumba, mambo and salsa. Also included were works on the influences of the African and European Diaspora in Puerto Rico and Cuba. Although African slaves contributed heavily to the local music existing on both islands, having the knowledge of their respective origins offers a deeper explanation on the differences (and similarities) within African based folkloric music such as the rumba of Cuba or the bomba of Puerto Rico. Throughout the process I also consulted Helio Orovio’s book *Cuban Music From A to Z*. Helio Orovio’s work is an encyclopedic
reference on popular musicians, composers, scholars, traditional instruments, and iconic hit songs of Cuban origins.

The evolution of Cuba and Puerto Rico’s music and history is complex with numerous eddies and currents much like a healthy body of water pouring into a changing landscape. It is both an ancient yet modern living story that is still being written. For hundreds of years, exchanges of musical ideas, religion, etc. traveled back and forth between the islands through Natives, Spanish and French colonists, and African slaves from different ethnic groups. This interaction is crucial to understanding how the island of Puerto Rico (amongst other islands and Latin nations) was readily able to adopt and identify with so many outside musical styles.

**Beginning Evolutions**

Beginning in the 1930s, Cuban musicians traveled back and forth to Puerto Rico, and popular hits were played on the airwaves. In order to grasp the contemporary evolution of this music, the early history must be studied. Biographical sketches and Chronicles such as Max Salazar’s *Mambo Kingdom: Latin Music in New York* help connect the fusion of the musical traditions of islands such as Puerto Rico and Cuba with the perspective of various musicians’ history, which culminate in New York City. A large portion of the book’s viewpoint is from both the popular dance scene that helped to bring these worlds together in New York as well as broadcast radio. Within Salazar’s work are biographical accounts of over forty important Puerto Rican and Cuban artists who were influential in New York City. The majority of these artists either migrated from Puerto Rico or Cuba. Salazar’s work lays out a detailed map that is beneficial in researching connections in the
evolution and development of the contextual Latin music development in New York City. The biographical works and interviews within Salazar’s book help give more background to the dance perspective tied to the evolution of the music in the city.

The tradition these influential musicians performed was often married to dance. This is an important connection to understanding the music more closely and exploring relationships and connections between the different communities in the metropolitan areas of the United States (Salazar 2002).

**Popular Dance Scene**

Sydney Hutchinson’s article, “Mambo on 2: The Birth of a New Form of Dance in New York City,” found in the Centro Journal shows the larger picture of this unique relationship (Hutchinson 2004, 109-37). Just as in Salazar’s work, having the artist’s biographical information or the “behind the scenes” knowledge helps to explain the evolution and fusion happening in New York. Jim Payne’s *Tito Puente; King of Latin Music* presents an in depth with a historical chart of popular Cuban music. Payne’s chart follows the path of traditional and popular styles from the origin of Cuba up to the 1990s. The non-profit television network PBS offers a comprehensive timeline of Cuban music history on their website www.pbs.org.

Isabelle Leymarie book *Cuban Fire; The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz*, chronicles and explores the “golden years” of Cuban dance music to the evolution of Latin Jazz in the United States. Her publication focuses on the underpinnings and evolution of popular Cuban music while also dedicating large portions of the book to Puerto Rican influences. Relationships between Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians in New York are regularly included with chapters also focusing on Puerto Rican
music influences on popular Cuban music. Five of the chapters include either the title *The United States and Puerto Rico* (This title appears several times with varying sub-chapters, tying the Puerto Rican influence into each era) or some other heading with specific Puerto Rican influence. Chapter three includes sub chapters *The Awakening of the Barrio, and Music in Puerto Rico.* In Chapter five *Dance Bands in Puerto Rico,* Leymarie writes about the influence the mambo craze developing in New York and other cities had in Puerto Rico. Leymarie’s choice of intentionally including Puerto Rico in the development of popular Latin dance music in the United States and abroad is reflected in her introduction. She writes “This book tells the story of Cuban music in its homeland and in the United States, but it also includes Puerto Rico – Cuba’s musical sister – and the Dominican currently merging with salsa and Latin jazz.” (Leymarie 2002, 3) Another important perspective Leymarie gives in her book is that of regions in the U.S. outside of New York City. She includes the influential dance scene on the West Coast. While the West Coast dance scene may not have carried the same commercial success, many popular artists of Cuban music art forms such as Cal Tjader made large impacts upon the development of the music.

*From Mambo to Hip Hop* centers on the story of the South Bronx’s influence on the music scenes of mambo, salsa, and hip-hop from the Latin golden era of the 1950s to the DJ and hip-hop movement of the 80s. This documentary gives insight to the perspectives of the musicians, and dancers of the era. The documentary is produced by Steve Zeitlin and Elena Martinez and includes interviews, and performance video clip. The documentary is key to the urban role of influencing the
music. These contributions of the urban environment include politics, socio-economics, violence, cultural community activities such as stickball, etc. This coincides with the “sense of place” Elena Martinez writes about in her article with Roberta I. Singer titled *A South Bronx Tale*. (Singer, Martinez 2004) In this article both Singer and Martinez detail the importance of how physical location informs and influences the music. With Puerto Rican and Cuban migration constantly flowing in and out of U.S. urban environments, research such as Martinez and Singer’s are instrumental to understanding the how and why of their (U.S. cities) role in the Puerto Rican identification with various Cuban music forms.

From the African slaves in the French colonies of Haiti, to the island of Cuba, and the plethora of ideas coming from New York after years of musical exchange, Puerto Rico’s musical foundations is both a deep well and active spring. Other than the island’s own folkloric music, Puerto Rico has often stamped it’s style on adopted musical traditions which after many years are considered it’s own. For example, styles such as the bolero, son, son montuno, guaracha, guajira, rumba, etc., which came from Cuba, have been successfully adopted and indigenized by many famous Puerto Rican composers leading to international success over the years.

**Puerto Rican and Cuban Cultural Identities and Diaspora**

This exchange eventually led, in part, to the mixing of Puerto Rican styles such as bomba, plena, danza, decima, seis Aguinaldo and other genres from various parts of Latin America into the popular contemporary “Salsa” created by musicians in the New York scene. Puerto Rican Composers such as Rafael Hernandez traveled
back and forth to Cuba, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and New York City adding their own flair and “tipico” Puerto Rican folkloric tradition to the music.

With Robin Moore’s “Música: Spanish Caribbean Music in New York City” (Moore 2009, 241-44), Ruth Glasser’s. My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and their New York Communities, 1917-1940 (Glasser 1995), and Ned Sublette’s Cuba and Its Music: from the First Drums to the Mambo (Sublette 2004), a comparison can be made among Cuba and Puerto Rico’s folk music traditions. Instrumentation also serves as a bridge between the cultures. Even before Puerto Ricans in New York were exposed to the conga drum many already had experience with the Afro-Puerto Rican bomba drums, which were also conical in shape and depending on the particular style carried potentially similar rhythmic structures and tone.

Donald Thompson gives a rare perspective on music history and development in Puerto Rico within his book Music in Puerto Rico. While the subject of folk and traditional music history and evolution of the music has been written about on the island, the vast majority of detailed resources to be used for scholarly work are primarily in Spanish. Thompson’s book includes perspectives of contemporary music played in Puerto Rico by influential composers such as Tite Curet. Music in Puerto Rico is a helpful resource of perspectives and developments of musical identity on the island.

Juan Flores explores the cultural expression of the Puerto Rican Diaspora and on the island. Flores weaves various social and economic issues that influence cultural identity and in turn direct the music amongst different eras of the twentieth century. Chapter seven Pan-Latino/Trans-Latino; Puerto Ricans in “New Nueva York”
describe a changing ethnic landscape of New York City during the wide ranging periods 1940s-1980s. In this chapter Flores specifically addresses socio-economic and political situations that contributed to the economic vitality, and in many cases lack thereof the Puerto Rican community in the major cities of the United States.

Another Juan Flores publication *Puerto Rican Arrival in New York; Narratives of the Migration, 1920-1950* gives first hand accounts of Puerto Ricans migrating from Puerto Rico to New York City through a series of interviews given in a narrative form. The narratives included in Flore’s publication are, as in his own words, “unfortunately, and significantly...written by men” (Flores 1997, 7) “The migration story as told and experienced through the eyes of Puerto Rican Women in the early decades”, exclaims Flores, “can only be derived from direct oral testimony, and from the countless personal writings, letters, poems, diaries, scrapbooks- that never made it into print. (Flores 1997, 9)

Silvio H. Alava’s *Spanish Harlem’s Musical Legacy 1930-1980* is part of an Images in America book series that chronicles a historical era and region through a collection of images and often detailed captions of their significance. While Alava’s narrative is a focus on New York’s Spanish Harlem, it is done so by tributing its legacy hence many of the images are of performances throughout the United States. This gives insight to the weight of urban areas cultural music contribution, transcending local metropolitan borders.

Christina D. Abreu’s *Rhythms of Race; Cuban Musicians and the Making of Latino New York City and Miami, 1940-1960* addresses the ethnic diversity amongst Cuban musicians living in New York City and Miami prior to the 1959 Cuban
revolution. Throughout _Rhythms of Race_, Abreu covers dynamics of relationships between Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians living in New York City. Using concert posters, advertisements, journalism clips, and interviews Abreu crafts a unique perspective of how Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians navigated urban environments together. She does this by not only focusing on New York but also offering perspectives from regions such as Miami as well.

Peter Manuel’s article _Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa_ is a critical source offering directly related material to the research project. Manuel’s work “[explores] the process by which Puerto Ricans have appropriated and resignified Cuban musical forms as symbols of their own cultural identity.” (Manuel 1994, 250) The article details the process of how the process of the musical appropriation of Cuban music by Puerto Ricans as resulted in the knowledge of which Cuban musical origins once crucial in Puerto Rican culture, has become of little consequence or relevance to Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans. (Manuel 1994, 250) While Manuel’s article explores the process of Puerto Rican appropriation and acculturation of Cuban music and expounds upon the debate of Puerto Rican national music identity (or the rearticulation of such) my research pivots primarily on specific overarching themes such as politics, socio-economics, cultural identity, migration statistics and patterns dependent upon U.S. urbanization impacting the musical relationship of the two diaspora. Manuel’s work explores the creative process of appropriation and “socio-musical rearticulation, which can be seen as a feature of Puerto Rican culture in general—a culture which has consistently been conditioned by a complex,
overlapping, and often-contradictory set of multiple identities.” (Manuel 1994, 250)

While the central focus of my research deals with U.S. metropolitan bridges connecting Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians during the 1920s and the 1970s, Manuel’s article provides specific discussion on various music theory/foundational principles of the creative appropriation process Puerto Ricans used in the evolution of music such as salsa during the 1960s and 1970s.

**African Diaspora Contributions**

Banco Popular’s *Raíces* (Paloma 2001), a musical and historical documentary on Puerto Rican bomba and plena genres, provides a rich amount of information on the families, pioneers, and cultural curators of the music. The film documents famous families such as the Cepedas of Puerto Rico who preserve the music of bomba. Publications such as Alejo Carpenter’s *Music in Cuba* (Carpenter 2001), Nolan Warden’s “History of the Conga Drum” (Warden 2005, 8-15), and Sublette’s *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Sublette 2004) describe the origins of the slaves’ and their descendents’ music such as the abakua, bembe, rumba, etc.

**Instrumentation and Band Associations**

On the cuatro project website (a website dedicated to the history and evolution of the Puerto Rican cuatro; a stringed instrument belonging to the mandolin family), William R. Cumpiano and Ramon M. Gomez explain the connections between the Puerto Rican and Cuban tres (Cumpiano, The Cuatro Project). The tres is a Cuban guitar with three sets of double strings. With so many Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrants to New York City, having an understanding of
how similarities in culture may have assisted in forming a unique relationship outside of the island helps. Cumpiano suggests that the Cuban tres may have been introduced in Puerto Rico prior to Puerto Ricans playing it in New York City (Cumpiano, The Cuatro Project) The Puerto Rican Cuatro Project website lists influential players, biographical information, influential musical works, and scholarly publications. The website is run by a nonprofit organization located in North Hampton, Massachusetts, and Moca, Puerto Rico. It began in 1991 and is run by artisans, technicians, teachers, writers, and artists. Although it is not directly connected to an academic institution it has been funded and encouraged by The National Endowment for the Arts, The institute of Puerto Rican Culture (A Puerto Rican government run agency) and “from the music, anthropology, and communications departments of several New England universities--such as the University of Massachusetts, Hunter College and Rutgers University--and recently, from the Smithsonian Institution” (Puerto Ricans Searching for Their Own Lost Culture, Cuatro Project)

Sones Cubanos-Sextetos Cubanos Vol. 1 is a collection of popular songs composed by notable Cuban Sextetos of the 1930's. Within this compilation's liner notes are valuable information on the origin of the groups included. Included is Sexteto Machin, which included a Puerto Rican tres as a replacement to the Cuban tres. Michael I. Avalos notes add that the recording included on the compilation by Sexteto Machin would be “the first and only recording by a Cuban Sexteto utilizing the cuatro and not the tres.” (Avalos, 1991) While this may have been the only recording of the Puerto Rican cuatro in the Cuban form of Sextetos, it is more
importantly a valuable resource to my research as it is an early manifestation of the
stateside influence of the Puerto Rican connection to Cuban music. Sexteto Machin’s
bandleader, Antonio Lugo Machin sought out Latino musicians in New York City.
Many of these musicians that would perform and record with Machin were Puerto
Ricans residing in the city.

Lise Waxer’s book Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin
Popular Music is a comprehensive guide of the transnational impact of salsa music.
Waxer includes discussion on salsa as a music genre, explores its social impact, and
musical evolution from its previous origins. Additionally Waxer includes the
developmental of direction/evolution salsa in terms of Latin jazz and stylistic
uniqueness (Waxer includes discussion on the role of the Cuban clave in salsa) from
its Cuban genre predecessors. Salsa is often viewed as a U.S. barrio phenomenon
(Manuel 1994, 268). Lise Waxer’s publication offers unique insight (Waxer includes
music theory discussion on stylistic differences between salsa and popular Cuban
styles) to the development of salsa music within the U.S. urban context.

Migration

Another general category of my research is in the area of migration. The
population growth statistics of Puerto Ricans in the first half of the twentieth
century was massive and directly related to their major musical influences in New
York City. In Island in the City, Dan Wakefield notes that “The exodus of Puerto
Ricans that began in the 1950s was so massive that the route between San Juan and
New York became known as an ‘air bridge.’ Day after day, plane loads of migrants
were lofted from their patria, and a few hours later descended the stairway into a new world, 1600 miles to the north.” (Wakefield 1959, 234)

Although migration from Puerto Rico to the United States Mainland was slow and steady from the 1800s on, not until World War II did the migration explode on the scene. In fact the war itself could be considered a separate research topic because it was instrumental in bringing Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Black American musicians together in a unique way that resulted in an evolution of musical styles of Cuban, jazz, and soul music that would later become the foundations of contemporary Latin and jazz genres. Kal and Olga Wagenheim document the various stages of this migration in The Puerto Ricans; A Documentary History (Wagenheim 1973). Wagenheim writes that in “The first year after the war 39,000 Puerto Ricans came to the mainland, and the annual stream reached an average of roughly 50,000 in the postwar decade... the total of 600,000 first or second generation Puerto Ricans in New York City in 1958 was expected to rise to a million by the early 1970s. And for the first time, the great migration had begun to spread more heavily in cities and towns throughout the country” (Wagenheim 1973, 236) Although Puerto Ricans were not the only Latinos migrating to New York City and other urban centers throughout the United States, they were by far the largest in numbers within northern metropolises. Many young Puerto Ricans who lived and worked in rural areas of Puerto Rico enlisted or were drafted in the United States military and served overseas and in the continental United States. This gave them exposure to the possible benefits of living and working off the island. According to census
reports Puerto Rican migration not only began to boom in the decades after World War II, but it eclipsed every other Latino urban group.

In the 1950s and 60s, however, New York became strongly identified with the group designated in research literature as an airborne migration of American citizens and as stereotypical outsiders in popular culture. Until the 1960s Puerto Ricans constituted over eighty percent of New York’s entire Latino population and eighty-five percent of all Puerto Ricans throughout the nation. The census figures for Puerto Ricans included second and third generations and revealed that three out of every ten individuals were born in the continental United States. Moreover, the population was exceedingly young. Based on a census of the school-age population in New York City, 12.5 percent of every school district in Manhattan and the majority of the districts in Brooklyn and the Bronx were of Puerto Rican parentage (Korrol 2008, 157).

In his book *Puerto Rican Americans: The Meaning of Migration to the Mainland*, Joseph P. Fitzpatrick states that “Although a mere 7.9 percent of the city’s total population was Puerto Rican in 1960, 11 percent of all youth aged 15 through 19; 11 percent of children aged 10 to 14 years; 12 percent of aged 5 to 9 years and 14 percent of all children under 5 years were Puerto Rican.” (Fitzpatrick 1971, 2)

The amount of Puerto Rican youth in New York City during the 1950s and 60s is significant in that a whole new generation of young adults established and evolved cultural trends. Many of these youth combined the city’s urban culture with that of their parents and grandparents who migrated from Puerto Rico. Many of them identified with the Latin music that was popular from generations before them
while also identifying with funk, soul, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll. A blend of these styles, with a strong Cuban and Puerto Rican base, would eventually become known as the popular Salsa music that was popularized in the 1970s. The large migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland of the United States however was not just limited to New York City. Other metropolitan areas such as Chicago saw a large growth of a Puerto Rican population. This increased population is directly related to the evolution of cultural music trends and the shared socio-political issues of the Puerto Ricans and Cubans who moved in and out of these large cities.

Percussionist, composer, educator, activist, and multiple Grammy nominee Bobby Sanabria stated in an interview with famed composers and percussionists Jose Luis Changuito, and Roberto Carcasses that “Since 1962, when the U.S. imposed a de facto embargo on trade with Cuba, encounters between musicians from the birthplace of ‘salsa’ and U.S. based musicians have been limited. Politics have always gotten in the way of cultural exchange but somehow [New York City's Puerto Rican community has kept Cuba's musical presence alive, in large part]” (Latin Music USA, 2009)

As Puerto Rican migration exploded on the United States mainland many immigrants found themselves in an environment that was largely foreign to them. Peter Manuel, author of Caribbean Currents Peter Manuel writes that “As migrants found themselves in the alien, English-speaking, stressful, and often violent milieu of New York's tenements, it was natural for them to try to make their surroundings more familiar by transplanting as much of island culture as possible to the barrio.” (Manuel 1995, 65)
Many migrating from Cuba and Puerto Rico found similar hurdles in their transition to America. Wagenheim writes that by the late 1950s, several American cities had large Spanish speaking barrios. Most of the newcomers were ill prepared for their new way of life, but they tenaciously held on to the hardest, poorest paying jobs, lived in overpriced substandard housing, and struggled to establish themselves. Some fell by the wayside, into public welfare dependence, or far worse—into drugs and crime. Soon, U.S. newspapers began referring to “our Puerto Rican problem,” in much the same way that newspapers at the turn of the century complained of the “filthy Hebrews,” or “the dangerous Italians” (Wagenheim 2008, 227).

The hurdles of poverty, language, religious differences, and racism were not unique to the Puerto Ricans. Many of the Cubans (and other Latino groups in New York City and other urban areas) also suffered from the same things. These issues created bridges between the Puerto Ricans and Cubans and directly affected the Latin music scene across the United States.

Puerto Rican migration is a heavily covered topic with a wide angle of perspectives to explore. In the *Commuter Nation; Perspectives On Puerto Rican Migration*, Carlos Torre, Hugo Rodriguez Vecchini, and William Burgos discuss various historical, political, social, cultural, economic and psychological perspectives on migration. This multidisciplinary book on Puerto Rican migration gives insight to complex issues regarding the topic and also tackles tough questions such as the differences between commuters and migrants regarding the Diaspora. *The Commuter Nation*, while giving objective data, hinges on exploring both the plight and aspirations of the Puerto Rican Diaspora and therefore contributes a diverse narrative of the subject of the role Puerto Ricans played in shaping urban U.S. environments and likewise the effect the converse had upon the people. A couple of the titles of chapters within the book are *The Economics of Migration, Children and*
the Family, The Psychological Effects of Migration on the Puerto Rican Child and Return Migrants and Education. (Torre 1994, 9-10)

Jose A. Cobas and Jorge Duany write about Cuban migration to Puerto Rico in Cubans in Puerto Rico; Ethnic Economy and Cultural Identity. This is another unique perspective in that it offers a look into the subject of Cuban migration to Puerto Rico during the time shortly after the Cuban migration and the decades following. The book focuses on the attempt to "balance the image of Puerto Rico as not only a source of migrants to the U.S. but also as a receiver of outsiders (Duany 1997, 3). Additionally and most importantly for my research it explores the political and socio-economic complexities of Puerto Rico and Cuba. The majority of the migrants were concentrated in the upper middle to affluent socio-strata yet it still speaks to the role of adaptation and middleman groups as it relates to the Puerto Rican Diaspora.

Political Influences

While the embargo enacted in the 1960s prevented a constant flow of music back and forth between Cuba and the United States, it also contributed in part to a decade that helped produce the popular contemporary styles of Latin music such as salsa in the United States and abroad. Manuel exclaims, “this decade ended up being an extremely fertile one for Latin music in the United States and for American music in general." (Manuel 1995, 72) Manuel’s Caribbean Currents also gives insight to the significance of contemporary genres like salsa in relation to all of the shared socio-political and economic issues many Latinos in the United States shared and a new American youth influenced generation.
The new social consciousness called for a new musical movement that could at once embrace Puerto Rican tradition and capture the spirit of the barrio in all its alienated energy and heightened self-awareness. The logical musical vehicle for this was not the perceivably quaint and provincial seis or plena but modernized Cuban dance music—especially the son, which had for decades been the favored idiom of urban Puerto Ricans and Newyoricans. In the process, the son’s Cuban origin, like that of the rumba now so avidly played by barrio street drummers, was de-emphasized, and the genre became resignified as a symbol of Newyorican and, by extension, pan-Latino ethnic identity (Manuel 1995, 73).

**Conclusion**

Through studying both contexts such as migration and population growth statistics and similarities in culture such as language, religion, musical roots, and the navigation of economic and political tensions, the subject of the Puerto Rican adoption of Cuban music can be seen as a map to assist in understanding cultural relationships. Sublette’s thoughts on music evolution assist in illuminating issues of music origins. In his book *Cuba and it’s Music; From the First Drum to the Mambo* he writes, “In music there is no immaculate conception” (Sublette 2004, xiii) Assuming and/or asserting that any one musical genre or style is more sacred than another is dangerous. Context is important in understanding functionality and what is appropriate. My research stemmed from a mere curiosity but eventually led to a deeper issue related to what I had advocated within the Christian worship context for many years. The term “pure” in reference to music must be used with caution and should always employ the knowledge of context. So while my research revolves around the phenomena of Puerto Rican adoption and in many instances acculturation of Cuban music, it is on a deeper level more about the relationship
between the two island’s music and how one culture’s identification with another can transcend philosophical and political borders.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Interviews with artists who either live or have lived in New York, Chicago area, Los Angeles, and Cuba were conducted, and primarily used to give a primary source perspective. Cuban percussionist Luis Conte was interviewed based on his international experience in the performing and recording industry. With over four thousand albums (spanning multiple genres) and a long list of performances with notable Puerto Rican and Cuban artists such as Sergio Mendez, Cachao, Poncho Sanchez, Arturo Sandoval and many more, Luis brings an important perspective to the study. Percussionist Chembo Corniel is a second generation Puerto Rican born in Manhattan and raised in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Corniel has amassed decades of traditional Cuban and Puerto Rican musical tradition experience performing and recording with Grammy award winning musicians such as Eddie Palmieri, Chucho Valdés, Willie Colon and more. Like Luis Conte, Corniel is also a Grammy nominated artist/musician with several solo recordings. With a musical pedigree that includes such Latin percussion pioneers as “little” Ray Romero, Tommy Lopez, Louie Bauzo and Cachete Maldonado, and foundational music background within New York, Chembo Corniel brings an intercultural perspective directly related to the central theme of the study. Musicians raised in U.S. cities such as Chembo provided insight of how the music (and the culture) was learned, applied and disseminated throughout the various regions. Johnny Conga, a percussionist a forty-year music
veteran and Bronx native was also interviewed. Johnny Conga was interviewed via phone from his home in Miami. He has lived, performed, taught (percussion) and hosted radio shows in Miami, Los Angeles, New York and Seattle. His experience is unique and instrumental to the research in that he offers a perspective from the vantage point of not just a musician but also an expert in the genre of popular Cuban music as a radio personality. Luis Miranda is a percussionist currently living in Southern California and the last living member of the iconic Latin band Machito and His Afro-Cubans. Machito and His Afro-Cubans was primarily a Latin Jazz band (active from the 1940s through the 1970s) that utilized orchestrations deriving from swing and combined them with the Cuban mambo amongst other Latin styles. Luis performed and recorded with Machito and many other pioneering Latin bands from the 1940s on including Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, Mario Bauza and more. Luis’s experience, spanning seven decades provides a firsthand inside viewpoint of the commercial Latin music scene from the 1950s on. Ciprian Garcia is a second-generation Puerto Rican musician from Waukegan, Illinois. Waukegan is a suburban city approximately forty-five miles outside of Chicago. Garcia’s experience is relevant to the Puerto Rican music experience in the Chicago land region. The interviewees provided an emic perspective relative to cultural identity, socio-economics, political, technological (i.e. studio, radio, etc.) along with the impact of migration between the United States, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

**Descriptions of Research Tools**

A combination of regional libraries, online databases, focus groups via social media forums were used for pooling potential resource information. To narrow the
data collection, it was necessary to employ specific keywords and phrases related to the topic. In order to ensure success, a strategy was developed consisting of categories with specific internet tags/keywords and phrases that helped narrow the data collection through internet search engines. Using the proper tags and phrases in online search engines is a key strategy for finding appropriate resources. In addition, time in online forums related to the music genres covered in the research proved useful and effective toward finding direction. Many of these forums have hundreds of musicians and enthusiasts who are familiar with authoritative works on the subject. Aside from major search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo, as well as the online retail giant Amazon (utilizing relative product searches). The categories relative to the research project are listed:

- Relative/Significant Cuban and Puerto Rican composers and musicians
- Biographies
- Documentaries
- Interviews
- Significant recordings
- Significant works, trends, etc.
- Popular radio disc jockeys
- Music producers
- Performance Videos (online), DVDs
- Filmmakers
- Authors
- Poets
- Diaspora
- Migration
- Socio-Economics

For the research project I have listed the categories above in separate tabs and columns on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The information titles within the spreadsheet are linked to a document with further details about the work/listing. For the Internet listings on the spreadsheet I have created hyperlinks to the URL site.
Public contact information such as work numbers for authors are also linked within the spreadsheet for convenience. The research spreadsheet, literature review, and annotated bibliography along with all relative topic documents are placed in specific research folders and backed up on a separate (external) hard drive. All physical documents and publications are held in my personal library in reference to their specific category (DVD, book, magazine, printed academic article, music recording, etc.). With printed material I have tabbed (colored bookmark placements) important pages in reference to the research and typed specific page numbers/chapters in the appropriate Excel spreadsheet column.

Participants in the Study

The amount of information on Puerto Rican and Cuban music is plentiful. Employing the help of experts on the development of Cuban and Puerto Rican music within the U.S proved a clear-cut and efficient strategy. Correspondence with academic scholars in anthropology, musicology, and ethnomusicology programs along with Grammy award winning musicians, authors, notable journalists, and radio personalities in large cities such as New York, Orlando, and Los Angeles for potential interviews and input on helpful publications.

Chapter Four

Research Findings: Puerto Rican Migration and Diaspora

Introduction

Puerto Rican migration, socio-economic, and political landscape of the early and mid nineteenth century is well documented in both the Spanish and English
language context. According to scholars on Puerto Rican cultural history this was not always the case. In her 1995 publication *My Music Is My Flag*, Ruth Glasser states:

> On the more academic side, I noted that although there seemed to be a plethora of books and articles on, for example, Mexican-American musical and cultural history, there seemed to be no equivalent for Puerto Ricans in the continental United States. They had been explained ad nauseam in sociological, anthropological and political science treatise, which dealt mainly with the post-World War II migration process...” (Glasser, 1995)

Glasser continues to express that much of the lack of focus regarding academic work the lack of focus on Puerto Rican cultural aspects outside of urban migration from the island “begun to change through the Herculean labors of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños in New York,” and Virgina Sanchez-Korrol’s publication *From Colonia to Community* (which was another step in the right direction). (Glasser, xx)

The musical connection between Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians is a story often woven in the larger narrative of history and transnational cultural relationships. Through the academic journal articles, interviews, books, selected discography, liner notes, documentaries and oral histories six overarching themes emerged assisting me in connecting the dots regarding metropolitan regions in the United States influence on the adoption of Cuban music.

- Most popular and or far-reaching channels of music distribution: i.e. popular or influential radio stations, promoters, community music stores; including technological innovations and advancements
- Important Venues: Music clubs, Ballrooms, Associations, etc, that cultivated important connections between Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians
- National, ethnic, and cultural identity within Puerto Rican and Cuban communities within urban U.S. cities
• Historical Significance of commercial popular music trends such as the Cuban danzon, son, charanga, rumba, and mambo
• Puerto Rican Migration (mainly to the New York City region): population Statistics, politics affecting migration back and forth from Puerto Rico, Cuba and the U.S.
• Socio-economics of Puerto Rican and Cubans within U.S. urban communities

The link between Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians, though often expressed in terms of the post World War II era was indeed in existence prior to the import of Cuban music in the Americas and the widely known mambo craze. Puerto Rican musicians and composers such as Rafael Hernandez traveled back and forth from Puerto Rico, Cuba and cities such as New York, New Jersey and Chicago. The popular European contradanza became creolized in Cuba as the danza or danzon and inspired the Puerto Rican danza. Peter Manuel states “Puerto Rico's amicable relations, and indeed, fraternal solidarity with Cuba appear to have nullified any potential sense of cultural rivalry or inferiority. These aspects of Puerto Rican appropriation of Cuban music, as we will see, foreshadow the process of adopting Cuban dance music in the twentieth century.” (Manuel, 1994) Manuel’s statements refer to the political and musical relationships of both islands. He further states “Cuba and Puerto Rico have enjoyed a special relationship since the Spanish colonial period. The most important tie, of course, was the fact that they were the only remaining Spanish colonies after the rest of Latin America gained independence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Economic, political, and cultural bonds between Cuba and Puerto Rico intensified in the nineteenth century, as agricultural workers migrated to and fro, commercial and military
interaction increased, and shared anti-colonial movements forged a common socio-political bond.” (Manuel, 1994)

Migration, Immigration, & Travels

While New York and New Jersey were not the only cities within the United States to receive those migrating from Puerto Rico and immigrating from Cuba, the impact Puerto Ricans and Cubans settling and working there upon the respective music scenes can not be overstated. Statistical research on Puerto Rican and Cuban settlement in New York is often highlighted in regards to musical, cultural and socio-economic subjects. Unfortunately published academic research of the musical contribution of Puerto Ricans and Cubans (and their cross cultural relationships) outside of New York is often minimal. Since, however, I have concentrated the larger portion of the research project on the area of New York City I chose to mainly include migration statistics in the related region in order to give perspective on the influence the numbers of Puerto Ricans living in New York and traveling from the city to other regions in the US (often after times after returning to Puerto Rico). This is relevant since the record companies and technological innovations referenced are mostly based out of the North East.

Glasser writes “although Puerto Ricans had been arriving on the mainland since the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until they were granted U.S. citizenship, in 1917, that people began migrating from the island in substantial numbers.” (Glasser, 1995) Glasser further writes “As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans were not included in census population counts of the foreign-born; therefore there is some
controversy over their numbers, with estimates ranging between 45,000 and 100,000 by 1923.” (Glasser, 1995) (Glazer/Moynihan, 1963) Many of these settlers lived in scattered neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

The years immediately following the second world war saw an increasing number of Puerto Ricans in New York and Chicago. “More than 61,000 Puerto Ricans were living in New York by 1940.” (Leymarie, 2002) A combination of an economic recession on the island, failed political policies, lowered airfare prices from San Juan to New York, and the exposure many Puerto Ricans had to the U.S. while serving in the United States military during the war sent a vast number of Puerto Ricans to the mainland. “By 1950 the Puerto Rican ranks in the Big Apple had swelled to about 200,000. (Leymarie, 2002) David Garcia includes the following statistics in his Arsenio Rodriguez publication. “In the mid-twentieth century Puerto Ricans accounted for the overwhelming majority of Latinos living in New York City, growing from an estimated 45 percent of Latino in 1940 to 80 percent in 1960 (HaslipViera 1993, pp. 8-18). The Puerto Rican population itself grew from an estimated 61,500 in 1940 to 612,574 in 1960.” (Garcia, 2006)

Eventually the population of Puerto Ricans in New York would outnumber the population on the island of Puerto Rico and far outnumbering any other Latino representation in New York. Lloyd H. Rogler writes, “In the city, the Puerto Rican population grew rapidly: comprising in 1950 less than a quarter of a million persons (3 percent), in 1980 they had increased to 860,000 persons (12 percent). (Rogler, 204)
The sheer population size of Puerto Ricans in New York as it relates to their musical influence cannot be understated. Rogler remarks “of all newcomers to the United States, few have been so concentrated in new York City as persons of Puerto Rican origin. Between 1930 and 1940 the island-born population in New York City increased more than eightfold, and the city’s share of natives of Puerto Rico living in the United States increased from 62 to 88 percent. In 1950, 81.6 percent of all persons of Puerto Rican birth and parentage living in the mainland were enumerated in New York City. (Rogler, 204)¹ The cultural landscape of New York City therefore was ripe to cultivate an urban stamp on the next evolution of Puerto Rican musical influence leading up to the 1960s and 1970s.

**Politics and Socio-Economics**

While several socio-economic issues have been covered previously and throughout my research findings there are a few significant developments that warrant a separate section. Politics, and economics are not independent from the evolution of music within sub-cultures of a Diaspora and this certainly applies to the evolution of Cuban and Puerto Rican identity in the development of the music. Isabelle Leymarie writes:

> Puerto Rican cultural expressions are inseparable from the historical situation of the island and, in the case of the Puerto Rican population in the U.S., directly linked to the search for national identity. As with all minority groups, cultural traditions tend to reinforce the feeling of cohesion and to maintain ties with the place of origin. Music has played this role for Puerto Ricans in the United States. On the island, during the colonial period, and simply in the context of economic and cultural alienation, music has also expressed emotions that would be otherwise difficult to voice and has served to vent frustrations. (Leymarie, 343)

¹ See migration timeline in Appendices
It was this search and alignment of national and cultural identity that salsa emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Leymarie further writes, “Historians have extensively documented Puerto Rican migration. This migration has consisted of progressive urbanization: both from the countryside to the Puerto Rican cities, as well as from the island to the urban centers of the mainland. Duany rightly points out that it is in the “context of migration urbanization, industrialization and proletarianization of the Puerto Rican labor force that the salsa phenomenon emerges” (1984-1985). (Leymarie, 344)

During the periods of heavy migration Puerto Ricans arriving in New York often worked in lower paid urban occupational positions. Rogler suggests there was the possibility of some upward mobility of the younger incoming Puerto Rican migrants, he adds that “the fact stands that the major job opportunities for male Puerto Rican migrants to New York City in 1950 were in the lower status operative and service jobs.” (Rogler, 202)

During the late 1940s Puerto Rico experienced a transformation from a mostly agricultural based society to that of an industrialized economy. During World War II the island of Puerto Rico saw an increase of industrialization to help support the war effort. This industrialization continued after the war due to governmental tax incentives and corporate business invitations aimed at inviting private U.S. capitol. Emilio Pantojas Garcia has written an extensive study on this development and the act known as Operation Bootstrap. He states “The industrial incentives act of 1947 formally initiated what is known today as Operation Bootstrap. The program of industrialization was coupled with a program of agrarian reform aimed at the sugar industry.” (Garcia, 1990) While the island saw an increase in economic growth, it also experienced mass out-migration to the United States. James Dietz
argues that a rise in manufacturing on the island contributing to a change in economic production coupled with a slow growth of employment opportunities spurred a continuous and growing migration to the mainland.

Puerto Ricans disadvantaged socio-economic status continued to decline in many areas within the New York urban environment. Rogler’s writing in his article *From Puerto Rico to New York City* offers insights to the Diaspora’s economic situation as a whole (within the relative region) in the early decades of the 20th century and up through the 1970s.

As newcomers, Puerto Ricans are handicapped by their lack of familiarity with the city’s institutions, customs, and employment practices and by their lack of transferable skills, educational qualifications, and fluency in English... by no means the least important factor is the discriminatory practices to which they are subjected, as stated by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1975: “Puerto Ricans have lower incomes than other New Yorkers even when age, education, and vocational training are taken into account” (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 1975). (Rogler page 206)

Between the decades of the 1950s through 1970 New York experienced economic changes and a decline in manufacturing. Another key economic insight by Rogler reflects financial hits to the Puerto Rican community during this era. A large portion of Puerto Ricans worked in the city’s labor force including manufacturing.

For example, apparel manufacturing in New York City, one of the largest employers of minorities, lost 127,000 jobs, or 40 percent of the total employment from 1960 to 1970, thus increasing the unemployment of Puerto Rican women who mostly needlework. The decline in manufacturing jobs continued in the 70s. Since Puerto Ricans were concentrated in manufacturing jobs (40 percent of Puerto Rican workers had factory jobs in 1970, as opposed to 20 percent of all New York workers), the rapid decline in the numbers of jobs disproportionally affected their livelihood. Data from the 1970 census indicated that, as a group, Puerto Ricans had lower labor force
participation rates and higher unemployment rates than all New Yorkers taken together. (Torre 1994, 207)

As the economic situation in New York continued to decline, boroughs such as the South Bronx experienced financial devastation that literally left the city on fire. During the 1970s landlords set apartment complexes on fire to collect insurance money. This continued to displace Puerto Rican families. Iconic salsa composer Willie Colon remarks “I lived in the last apartments in a burnt out building with my grandmother and my sister, and it was very very scary.” (Colon, Mambo to Hip Hop, 2009). Puerto Rican composers often used salsa as a vehicle to express socio-economic and political issues happening in the Puerto Rican and African American communities. “The Puerto Rican lyrics were a little bit more social. Se te quema la casa was about when the landlords were burning down the buildings for insurance.” (Colon, Mambo to Hip Hop 2007) Colon continues in saying “we not only wanted to make music, we had a goal. We wanted to convey a social and political message, and salsa was very important for that, because it was our voice. It was one of the only things that was not controlled.” (Colon, Mambo to Hip Hop 2007) Many of the youth in Latino urban areas such as the Bronx did not embrace the rise of rock and roll as their primary musical voice. Leymarie writes “The emergence of rock n’ roll and the twist, and the closing of the Palladium in the early 1960s pushed Latin music back into the community.” (Leymarie, 1994)

The socio-economic issue of salsa’s emergence in Latino communities within New York is discussed in like manner in Peter Manuel’s article Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa. Manuel writes “Salsa emerged as a product primarily of the Latino communities in New York barrios, affirming their growing sense of ethnic and class identity in the face of social, economic, and political marginalization and exploitation.” (Manuel 1994, 271) Additionally, Manuel remarks on the subject of Pan-Latino identity in U.S. urban environments. He adds “For others, however salsa serves as a banner for Afro-Latin culture, or for international Latino solidarity in confrontation with
American imperialism (see Flores 1991). Accordingly, many songs explicitly stress themes of pan-Latino unity.” (Manuel 1994, 272)

**Channels of Music Distribution**

Radio has long been a formative channel of distribution for the introduction and promotion of music trends. At various points in history throughout the world the radio was the foremost platform of distributing music. Cuba was no exclusion to this notion. Ned Sublette writes “For a time radio even caused a dip in the popularity of records. It was entirely an imported technology. There were not so much as a radio receiver assembly plant in Cuba, not even by the 1950’s and even the maintenance of the broadcast equipment was done by American technicians.” (Sublette, 2004)

The musical influence the United States, and specifically New York and New Jersey had upon the Cuban cultural landscape through studio and radio technology was paramount. Many, if not most of the popular Latin songs from the 1930s on were recorded and exported from the U.S. mainland.

By the arrival of the first son bands in Puerto Rico, the inhabitants on the island were already familiar with Cuban music traditions such as the danza (which later became indigenized with a unique Puerto Rican character) through Cuban immigrants and travelers. While the origin of the Puerto Rican danza is largely debated it is often directly related to the Cuban danzon. The Cuban danzon is synonymous with the term danza. Understanding the popularity of the Cuban danzon during the mid 19th century (and its origin-connection in the European contradanza) gives clarity to the spread of Cuban influences throughout the Caribbean and the United States. Like the modern contemporary genres of salsa,
bachata, merengue, or even the mambo of the 1950s (or for that matter any form of popular music), it is important to understand that the Cuban danzon was widespread throughout Cuba and abroad. It was often packaged, commercialized and mainstream, especially among Spanish speaking Latino audiences throughout Latin America. Certainly elements of it derived from traditional forms however, it was for all intensive purposes “pop” music. By the 19th century, Havana, Cuba was a cosmopolitan city exporting many of the styles of music developing upon the island. With the slave trade, along with the influx of migrants and refugees from neighboring islands throughout the 19th century, Cuba continued to evolve as an island brimming with diversity. This diversity in turn directly impacted the evolution of the music. As the diversity upon the island impacted the music, the same effect took place in New York as immigrants and traveling musicians influenced one another.

Cuban Danzon and Son in Puerto Rico

During the mid nineteenth century “Captain General Miguel Tacon (1775-1855) [governed Cuba and] cleaned up Havana and modernized it. With the island awash in Sugar prosperity, during the forty five months of his administration he created the nineteenth century image of Havana.” (Sublette, 2004) Sublette writes that Tacon’s work of modernizing Cuba and building the Grand Teatro Tacon was “the crowning achievement of [his] urbanization program; it signified the coming of age of Cuban theatre, which was needless to say, musical theatre. (Sublette, 2004) The musical theatre of Cuba produced traveling acts/shows, which would be imported into Puerto Rico and further introduce the Puerto Ricans to various styles
of Cuban music. Glasser writes “Stage shows from outside Puerto Rico followed established trade routes to become another important island import...From Cuba came the bufos Cubanos, a type of light theatre, which introduced new genres and songs into all sectors of Puerto Rican society. The bufos and other itinerant Cuban entertainment ensembles introduced into Puerto Rico a number of genres that became staples of both the island and the New York repertoire. (Glasser, 1995) By the time ensembles in Cuba were being recorded by traveling record companies from New York and later introduced into New York and Puerto Rico, the Puerto Ricans on both the island and the big city were connected to the music by previous foundations such as the traveling musical theatre.

Mambo pioneer and Cuban son giant Arsenio Rodriguez had a major impact on the cultural identities of both Cubans and Puerto Ricans migrating to New York City (Garcia 65, 2006) Prior to this however, Arsenio’s “own recordings and his conjunto’s almost daily live performances on Radio Mil Diez and Radio Salas were very instrumental in establishing his popularity outside of Cuba, especially in Puerto Rico and the Netherlands Antilles.” (Garcia, 2002)

Landmark Cuban son and groups Sexteto Machin and Sonora Matancera both had deep Puerto Rican connections within their orchestration. Puerto Rican singer Myrta Silva moved from Arecibo, Puerto Rico to New York in the 1930s and eventually recorded for RCA Victor becoming an international success throughout Latin America. During the late 1940s Silva became the lead singer for the Cuban group Sonora Matancera and performed throughout Cuba. Antonio Machin also left Cuba for New York in the 1930s leaving his arranger behind on the island. He
recruited other Latino musicians for his group in New York City, especially among the Puerto Rican community. Ultimately Machin was not able to find an adequate tres player and enlisted the talent of Puerto Rican guitar and cuatro player Yayito Maldonado. (Avalos, 1991) Often (and especially after the Cuban revolution) Cuban musicians that specialized in various Cuban genres were not available in northern U.S. cities. Puerto Rican musicians, being familiar with many of the Cuban art forms and being the most populated Latino demographic in New York City, filled this void demonstrating the deep connection and history between the two diasporas. In addition the confluence of Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians was further developed in the popular son genre with the help of the recording and performing industry in New York City.

Technological advancements shortly after the turn of the 19th century saw Cuban music pervading the airwaves reaching throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Many of these advancements were coming directly from the northeastern United States.

If the son was already in high gear, juiced by the availability of records (which were strictly imports, as there was no record manufacturing facility in Cuba) its popularization by radio broadcast was revolutionary. As radio broadcasting diffused the son all over the island, Cuba acquired a new national music genre. And not just all over the island, but over a long distance as well. There were fewer stations on the dial then, and a medium-wave signal could travel thousands of miles at night. Cuban music was heard all over the Caribbean, attracting listeners in Puerto Rico and Mexico, and even in New York...” (Sublette, 2000)

This brings together a thought or bridge between the one small layer of the larger complex relationship between large urban areas of the United States and the
islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba and also brings into play the role of radio and the record industry off the island.

Record Companies & Technological Advancements

US record industry companies had direct and indirect impacts on the exposition of foreign music to the island of Puerto Rico. With a combination of complex business and marketing exchanges between musicians and record executives technological advancements in music recording and amplification produced an even larger acquisition of outside music influences. Glasser remarks, “From the early twentieth century they influenced the musical tastes and expectations of foreign musicians and audiences, Spanish speakers being prominent among them. In turn, this would have an effect on musical culture in Latin America.” (Glasser, 1995) Glasser continues this discourse by pointing out that record companies used intentional marketing strategies fueled by popular music trends based on commercial success. Glasser further states “Both recording ethnic musicians in their native countries and making sounds from the United States available to them, Victor Colombia, Edison, and other companies made sure that Puerto Rico and its neighbors a mixed musical legacy... Latin American expectations of mechanical musical production and consumption were tempered by a commercial connection dating to the late nineteenth century.” (Glasser, 1995 131)

While the island of Puerto Rico was exposed to outside musical influences prior to the global business exploits of companies like Victor, and Colombia they no doubt cemented the diverse relationships thus further establishing a cultivation of traditional music from nearby islands such as Cuba.
The repertoire recorded was quite different from that later offered by Puerto Rican groups in New York. Nevertheless, it reflected the multiple outside influences on the Puerto Rican music of the era. The groups sang and played not only the aristocratic Puerto Rican danza but also salon dances of Cuban influence, such as danzones, and European origin, including pasodobles, valses, and mazurkas. On the other hand the elaborate strophic music of the jibaros, subsistence farmers of the Puerto Rican highlands, and the complex rhythms of the Afro-Puerto Ricans working in the coastal sugar industry were virtually ignored. These recordings thus crystallized a carefully selected diversity of sounds played and heard in Puerto Rico. (Glasser, 134 1995)

Latino community representation was not altogether lacking from the commercial record industry. Latino music stores and businesses in major cities often acted as intermediaries between musicians and record companies. Victoria Hernandez, owner of Casa de Hernandez and biological sister of the iconic Puerto Rican composer Rafael Hernandez played a large role in the interaction between the two entities. Casa de Hernandez was among many other businesses amongst Latino communities that served as a headquarters or base to recruit and liaison musicians for record companies. Ruth Glasser writes “Victoria Hernandez’s activities as a booking agent and liaison with record companies served not only Rafael but also many other Puerto Rican musicians...She would serve as an intermediary with record companies such as Columbia and Victor, advancing pay for recording sessions to the usually hand-to-mouth musicians, in exchange for a cut of the fee.” (Glasser 109, 1995) She further adds, “Victoria Hernandez’s business activities and the musicians’ attitudes toward them reflect the important concrete roles merchants could play in musicians’ careers, as well as the mixed feelings they evoked.” (Glasser, 1995) Hernandez was also responsible for booking many artists from both Cuba and Puerto Rico to perform in theatres in New York. In this way it is
important to see the role business owners and venues played in the distribution of Cuba and Puerto Rican musical influences.

Not all businesses were owned and operated by Latino entrepreneurs however. Jewish entrepreneurs such as Sidney Siegel played an important role in the evolution and development of Latin music in urban communities within the mainland US. “The once-Jewish community of Harlem was now predominantly Puerto Rican and Cuban, and [people] were desperate for Latin-music recordings. Mr. Siegel signed up Latin-music artists.” (Salazar, 10 2002) Siegel’s cousin Howard Roseff recalls, “We recorded the Puerto Rican trios and the Cuban conjuntos. Eventually Seeco catered more to the Afro-Cuban sound, as it sold the most... Our market was Puerto Rico, and it was buying the Cuban sides.” (Salazar, 2002) Siegel’s record label Seeco became one of the most influential producers of Latin music out of New York. According to Roseff, there were albums going far beyond the gold record selling point in Puerto Rico. When the United States entered WWII products such as shellac, which was necessary for the production of records, was limited. Salazar states “the little which was allowed to be bought was given to RCA, Columbia, and Decca to record American pop bands.” (Salazar, 2002) This resulted in many Latin bands being out of work. Latin record labels such as Seeco filled in the gaps by manufacturing in Canada. Mark Schwartz writes “Throughout the 40’s and 50’s and into the 60’s, Seeco and its subsidiary Tropical, manned by Howard Roseff, specialized in a wide variety of Latin music, including tangos, Mexican rancheras, Dominican merengue, Spanish Flamenco, and more.” (Schwartz) Schwartz further states, “Seeco carved a niche with Cuban recordings, from the boleros of the Trio
Matamoros to the fiery big-band sound of La Sonora Matancera and its young vocalist Celia Cruz.” (Schwartz, Mamboniks)

Program directors often dropped by stores such as Siegel’s and Casa de Hernandez in order to purchase music to air on their programs. The developing and evolving recording industry in the US Northeast provided product to several influential radio stations throughout the mainland and the respective islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba.

By 1937 El Barrio had ballrooms that featured the music of Alberto Socarras, Augusto Coen, Jose Morand, Vicente Sigler, Nilo Menendez, Juanito Sanabria, and Los happy Boys. Tito Puente was then living on East 117th Street. When he heard Anselmo Sacasa’s piano solo on Casino de la Playa’s recording of “Dolor Cobarde,” he decided to study the piano. That was the year the word “disc jockey” was first used, in an article about music in Variety. A “record hit” competition every bit as intense as a horserace developed among commercial radio stations as their “jockeys” tried to play a disc as many times as possible and thus “ride” it to success. (Salazar, 2002)

The 1920’s saw the emergence of commercial radio stations and Latin music evolving in Spanish speaking urban centers in the mainland US was right in the center of the popular music it pumped out.

Ned Sublette remarks the “wave of Carbonization began in North America, after which nothing would be the same. It wasn’t usually referred to as Cuban music, but as Latin music, reflecting the reality that the orchestras and audiences were populated by people from different Latin American countries, especially Puerto Rico.” (Sublette, 2000) The recording and release of El Manisero by Rita Montaner is noted by many historians to be one of the largest catalysts of the commercial Latin dance craze. “On May 13, 1930, RCA Victor recorded Azpiazu’s version of the song.
The record was released seven months later, and with it, popular Latin dance music was born in New York.” (Salazar, 2002)

During the 1940’s controversy sparked between radio networks and music publishers. “The broadcasters had long objected to the fees they paid annually to ASCAP, and they were threatening not to renew their contract in 1941.” The conflict eventually led to a ban and created a platform for the birth of BMI by broadcasters. Salazar writes, “BMI was responsible for exposing Latin music nationally. BMI contracted material from the Music Corporation of America (MCA) and aired rumbas, congas, and Xavier Cugat ballads over English-language radio stations.” (Salazaar, 2002)

Another issue to note is that this research has highlighted urban environments impact upon the Puerto Rican Diaspora as a whole (given there are many complex layers). Like in many ethnic groups and communities the radio was and is an integral part of cultural identification. Ciprian Garcia, a Puerto Rican musician originally from Kenosha, Wisconsin and raised in Waukegan, Illinois (raised during the late 1950s and 1960-70s) recalls, “Gosh I really don’t remember exactly the first time I heard salsa music. My earliest memories are as a kid of my mother dancing through the house to salsa and singing ‘le lo lai... I remember one time her trying to get me to dance with her. I grew up with the music playing in the house and I can usually distinctly tell [upon hearing a tune] when the artist is Puerto Rican.” (Garcia Interview, 2017) Garcia’s experience is indicative to many second and third generation Puerto Ricans experience in the U.S.; specifically those exposed to traditional Puerto Rican and Cuban forms of music. His words point out the issue
of recognizing music such as salsa (which has origins in the Cuban guaracha, and son) as a part of his own cultural identity. Many urban Puerto Rican artists developed an admiration for the agrarian lifestyle of the Puerto Rican countryside. This often manifested in lyrics in tribute to the countryside of Puerto Rico or vocal styles often found in traditional Puerto Rican genres. Ciprian Garcia’s parents moved to the Kenosha area from Puerto Rico during the 1950s like so many other Puerto Ricans in search of a better economic situation. Looking at stories such as Ciprian Garcia’s help place the role of US cities on the cultural bridge between Cuban and Puerto Rican communities as it pertains to music.

**Venues and Music Associations**

Music venues, social clubs and various musical associations were an integral part of the Latino cultural identity in the city off the island. It allowed a space for nostalgia, escape of the harsh realities of poor urban neighborhoods, and a showcase of famous and upcoming entertainers. Many young Puerto Rican musicians were exposed to talent from various Latin American traditions and attribute the birth of their musical aspirations to the showcase of music talent at local venues such as Park Palace, Hunts Point Palace, Teatro Puerto Rico, and the Palladium. Iconic salsa and Latin jazz percussionist Ray Montalvo recalls his own experience regarding his early music influences; “Well, at that time it was like the Hunts Point Palace. I give you an example, they used to have like twelve bands...bueno we could go on and on.” (Gotay, Youtube, 2015)

In looking at the role of mainland United States urban environments played in the relationship of Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians, the importance of location
or as anthropologists Roberta L. Singer and Elena Martinez put it, “place,” can not be understated. Both Singer and Martinez have written how the very location of areas such as New York City or the venues therein have direct impacts upon cultural music scenes at large. “Oftentimes, memorable even historic, turning points and the memories of them are linked to a specific site.” (Singer, Martinez 2004, 183) “Our sense of place...is rooted in narration. A person is at home in a place when the place evokes stories and conversely, stories can serve to create places” (Johnstone 1990:5) Singer mentions the bridge between Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the Bronx that was cemented and continuing to be established in East Harlem, or “El Barrio.” She writes, “Most were Puerto Ricans who had either moved there [the Bronx] from El Barrio or directly from Puerto Rico or were born and/or raised there; a good many were or would become internationally known.” (Singer, 2004) While this quote does not mention Cuba or Cuban musicians, it does speak to the Bronx as a region being a springboard and cultivating landscape to musicians who performed music that originated, and influenced by Cuba. Many of the venues such as Hunts Point Palace and Teatro Puerto Rico brought in popular acts from Cuba. Singer and Martinez present a philosophy of a local region transcending from a mere suburb to an independent community with its own local amusements. The after effects of this regional transition result in an environment that cultivates, and incubates relationships between people groups who populate these areas. Singer writes “Four new theatres have been constructed in the Bronx within the last two years, and at the present time a fifth is nearly completed. This is one of the evidences that the Bronx is developing into a community by itself, with its own amusements, for
without its own amusements a locality never becomes anything more than a suburb.”
(Singer, Martinez 2004) The impact that the transformation of many cities such as
East Harlem (or more popularly called “El Barrio”) and the Bronx is heard in words
such as percussionist Adolfo “lefty” Maldonado; “You could walk every block and
hear this tun-tun-tun-tun from the roof, everyplace. And it was so beautiful.”
(Martinez 2000b) The sound Adolfo refers to are those of the tumbadoras/ congas
and bongos. These are instruments that originated and developed in Cuba.

Many of the theatres brought bands and musicians from around the world
including Cuba as early as the 1920s and 1930s. These bands were booked to as a
result of increasing demand for both wealthy White audiences and from growing
Latino communities; although usually not at the same time/venue. “Victoria
Hernandez remembers bringing Trio Matamoros from Cuba in the 1930s to play a
show at the Toreador, a club geared toward wealthy White audiences, for one
hundred dollars.” (Glasser, 1995) Puerto Rican and Cuban artists were not only
being influenced and influencing listeners off and on the islands but also between
local neighborhoods. This is part of the complexity of a location’s role in cultural
identity; having many layers.

Puerto Rican trio, cuartero, and orquesta musicians traveled between
different musical worlds that often existed in a hierarchical
relationship to one another. Their professional lives involved crossing
national, class, and geographical boundaries, even frontiers of good
taste, as they self-consciously catered to ethnic stereotypes both
downtown and uptown. In the process, they brought new sounds back
to local audiences. (Glasser, 1995)

Chicago, Illinois and surrounding cities is another region with a large Puerto
Rican population with growth also beginning in the 1920s and highly effected by the
massive post WWII Puerto Rican migration. Many areas such as Chicago however have different dynamics then the New York and northern New Jersey areas often focused upon in relevant research. Oliver Wang writes “The U.S. salsa scene was dominated by Puerto Rican musicians. In New York, they drew heavily on Cuban styles such as the guaguancó and son montuno, but in Chicago, the local community turned to Puerto Rican influences, especially folkloric dance rhythms like the plena. (Wang, 2011) The Chicago Latin music scene (although thriving with their own local sound and recordings) was heavily influenced by other urban municipalities such as New York. Many musicians and dancers arrived from both Puerto Rico and New York. During the 1950s, as the Puerto Rican population grew in the Midwest, venues and record stores began to pop up in various cities. Wang also mentions this in an article for NPR “Carlos Ruiz arrived in Chicago from New York in 1950. The Puerto Rican native was a dancer by training and saw a need for a social and cultural venue to bring together the city’s growing immigrant community. So he founded the Puerto Rican Congress of Mutual Aid, originally housed in a basement a few blocks north of the stretch now known as Paseo Boricua – the Puerto Rican promenade.” (Wang, 2011) Ruiz’s Congress eventually became a local Latin landmark and developed into a record label; Ebirac Records. “Ebirac was one of the few labels anywhere devoted to Chicago Salsa.” (Wang, 2011) This is a prime example of how venues held a symbiotic relationship to the distribution of Puerto Rican influenced music with Cuban roots. While the national distribution in certain regions as Chicago or surrounding Midwest cities had little to no national distribution, it is important to note its influence on the communities directly being impacted. Many
regions such as Chicago had large Puerto Rican populations that were fluid in that they continued to travel to other locations over the span of several generations. It is important to note that this fluidity directly impacted the U.S. mainland landscape in that regional cultural distinctions influenced one another. While the boundaries and differences are not always clear-cut, certain aspects in the sound can be noted depending upon the city. For instance, over various periods through the 20th century certain differences can be heard in salsa music in different regions. In an interview with Chicago based musician Dennis Calito, the idea of how New York in general, during the 1990’s, was the first to mix traditional Cuban sounds with that of hip hop, and modern beats in addition to the contemporary Cuban timba. He states “New York was the first to start more of a hip hop/salsa fusion salsa style with modern beats (drums and timba flavor). Sergio George was the first to put it together with the group DLG (Dark Latin Groove) in the 1990’s. (Interview, Calito). He further stated, “When you look at it, there is not much of a difference. [When] look at individual players then you can notice the styles of Chicago and NY. NY has a loud sound and very aggressive; more of a street sounding type of style. NY plays a little more behind the two beat on the conga. In Chicago we tend to play rough but also keep it clean. We play on top of the two beat on the conga.” (Calito, 2017) What Calito mentions is similar to what was happening with the fusion of Cuban music in New York during previous decades. With the Cuban son, jazz, pop and African American soul genres also influenced the music. Important to note is that the issue of fusion and regional influences highlight the urban U.S. mainland environment’s impact upon the Puerto Rican Diaspora as a whole (given there are many complex
layers). Salsa, being a fusion of different Latin American rhythms and melodic styles with an Afro-Cuban foundation was incidentally as diverse as the neighborhoods in which it flourished. The Cuban, son, charanga, mambo, African American styles of blues, jazz, disco, hip-hop, and Puerto Rican traditions such as bomba and plena shaped the contemporary evolution of salsa. The ethnic and cultural cities in which it flourished were reflected in the ebbs and flows of the music. While the music of salsa in New York may have relied more heavily upon Cuban influences, the essence of Chicago based salsa drew more from Puerto Rican traditions. Many of the Puerto Rican traditions such as bomba and plena did not rely upon the Cuban clave (a two bar rhythm that directs the melody and overall instrumentation direction. Clave also means key in Spanish and in the music it essentially acts as such.), although the Puerto Rican rhythms of bomba and plena were often fused with the Cuban style as seen in popular hits of composers Rafael Cortijo and Ismael Miranda. With the steady movement of Cubans and Puerto Ricans to and from the respective islands to mainland U.S. cities (in addition to the mass marketing of popular Latin trends), the musical borders of different regions often became blurred. Moreover with New York based Latin musicians traveling throughout the U.S. to perform, these boundaries became less obvious. Arsenio Rodriguez, an iconic performer of the Cuban son and pioneer of the mambo traveled from NY to the Chicago area spending several months performing during the 1950s. David Garcia writes "Nevertheless, as in Havana, his conjunto remained active in and had a significant impact on the local musical life of the Puerto Rican and Cuban communities in East Harlem and the South Bronx. The conjunto also performed for the largely Puerto Rican community
in the north side of Chicago for several months in 1958 and again in 1962.” (Garcia, 2) Popular jazz clubs like as the Blue Note in Chicago also hosted Latin jazz acts such as Cal Tjader in the 1950s.

Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians toured throughout the United States and abroad during the early and mid 20th century. Iconic bands traveled as far West as Los Angeles and San Francisco. Their impact and influence was seen and heard far beyond their northeast regional borders. In an interview on Cougar Videos YouTube account percussionist Luis Miranda stated that he performed with Machito’s big band in the late 1940s and 1950s in Los Angeles and San Francisco. He later left Machitos band and moved to California to perform regularly with Latin jazz vibraphonist Cal Tjader. (Cougar Videos, YouTube Interview) Cal Tjader is one of the most notable Latin bandleaders from the West Coast. Many of the Latin bands on the West Coast also employed percussionist and musicians from Cuba, Puerto Rico and New York. Puerto Rican and Cubans who were not necessarily professional musicians also migrated from New York to California during the 1960s and 1970s bringing with them their musical influences. And thereby impacting the Western regions of the U.S. Cuban percussionist Luis Conte explained that when he arrived to the States in the 1970s from Cuba (via Spain) he was unaware of the large Cuban music industry presence in New York. “In Cuba when I was living there I had no knowledge what was happening outside of the island...I was detached from the actual world. Right out of high school I left Cuba [and arrived in California]. I remember one Sunday afternoon I went to Griffith Park and their was this Cuban dude there and a younger Puerto Rican guy...they had a timbale and congas and they
played pretty good. I started talking to the Puerto Rican player and asked him where did they get this music from [that they were playing]? He told me to go to Duran Records in Los Angeles. There used to be this record store in downtown L.A. where it was the only place you could get a Willie Colon record. I asked him, well where did the music come from. He said New York. I am from New York. We play this stuff there.” (Conte, 2016)

In a telephone interview with Luis Miranda he explained to me that his mother was Puerto Rican and father was Cuban. Luis confirmed this in his interview in the interview published on YouTube by CougarVideos. Many of the famous big bands in New York such as Machito’s employed a mixture of Puerto Ricans and Cubans (including Dominican and Colombian musicians as well). Machito himself was married to Hilda Torres, a Puerto Rican woman. (Salazar, 5) Cuban vocalist Miguelito Valdes, another iconic performer of Cuban music during the early and mid 20th century was singing the songs of Puerto Rican composer Pedro Flores. (Salazar, 5) Amongst other notable Cuban singers to perform Pedro Flores compositions were Celia Cruz, and Beny Moré.

Up into the 1940s venue owners in New York and other cities were often not Latino, while Latino managers were usually from backgrounds other than Puerto Rican. This also extended into larger bands. What was performed in these spaces and by these bands was often dictated by the current trend.

Throughout New York City, Italian and Jewish mobsters controlled many of the clubs and cabarets of the prohibition era.... Indeed, reminiscing about the beginning of his career in the early 1940s, pianist Charlie Palmieri could still remark that “Most clubs were owned by Whites. The managers were Latin.” (Centro, 1974) Even
when clubs where owned or managed by Latinos, They were rarely Puerto Ricans. (Glasser, 1995)

One of the most iconic venue landmarks that helped shape and distribute Latin music with Cuban roots was the Palladium in El Barrio. It was perhaps the most popular Latin venues (and dance venues overall) of the golden era of the 1950s and into the 1960s. According to Max Salazar the inception of the palladium is the third most important event in the history of popular Latin dance music. He states “The third most important event in the history of popular Latin dance music occurred on January 23, 1942, when the Dreamland Dancing Academy at Fifty-third Street and Broadway, aka the Alma Dance Studios, became the Palladium Ballroom. (Salazar, 2002) Ned Sublette remarks, “In New York, the Palladium was the place to be seen. Mambo had become a scene for people who dressed to impress and danced competitively. There were articles about it in Newsweek, Time, and everywhere else.” (Sublette, 2000)

As mentioned, social clubs were regular fixtures in the city during the 1930s through the 1960s. Many of the Black Cuban social clubs had historical roots in the Black neighborhoods, or cabildos, in Cuba. In the U.S. a diversity of social clubs emerged in Latino communities. Many of these social clubs in US cities such as New York did not except Cubans and Puerto Ricans of color. The ones that did however, such as Club Cubano were instrumental platforms not only for the expression of Latino culture in a region so far from “home” but also provided an incubator and cultivation for the bridge between Cuban and Puerto Rican relationships. The role of race amongst Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians in the U.S. was complex and tension was often not absent among the popular bands. Even though lighter skinned
Puerto Rican musicians were subject to racism from non-minorities, racial tension still ensued internally between the Diaspora. Often, even after breaking through color barriers in cities such as New York, popular bandleaders such as Machito and Arsenio Rodriguez still suffered the results of racial bias from Latino band managers.

David Garcia writes the perspective of musicians close to the mambo pioneer Arsenio Rodriguez and the racial stereotyping he experienced from powerful New York music booking agent Jose Curbelo. Garcia writes “Curbelo may have had personal reasons for his contempt for Arsenio; as Berrios and other insinuated, racism may have been one factor. For example, some musicians felt that Puente and Tito Rodriguez received preferential treatment by Curbelo because of the bandleaders lighter skin color. As flautist Mauricio Smith explained: “Machito only got token gigs from Jose Curbelo. He was pushing Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez, the lighter bands. But the Black artists? Forget it. Black musicians? Very, very little. He had the power, he had the connections” (Smith interview 1999) (Garcia, 111)

Mario Bauza also remarked on the racial tension and prejudice between Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians. In an interview with Cuban composer Mario Bauza conducted by Ruth Glasser (transcribed by Christine Abreu) Bauza “described a complex racial negotiation among the Latino/as living in New York City in the 1930s and 1940s: light skinned Latino/as rarely interacted with or wanted any association with darker-skinned Latino/as and African Americans. (Abreu 2015, 49) (Bauza, Interview with Ruth Glasser) Abreu writes, “Tensions between Puerto Ricans and Cubans in New York City intensified in the mid-1930s due to ‘competition for housing, employment, and political identity’. Immigration laws also worked to
aggravate relations between the two ethnic groups.” (Abreu, 49) She further states “Many Cubans grew resentful of Puerto Ricans, who as U.S. citizens could travel freely between the island and the mainland, while Cubans who remained in the United States for more than twenty-nine days without a visa risked arrest and deportation.” (Abreu, 49) Mario Bauza also recalled that many Puerto Ricans and African Americans rejected his Cuban music since the drums such as the bongos were symbolic of Africa. (Abreu, 50) Bauza’s experience displays the complex racism that ensued throughout the 20th century not only outside of Latino communities but also inside amongst the ranks of Latino musicians. Johnny Conga, a percussionist from New York now based in Miami described the prejudice against the Cuban drums that he experienced during the 1960s. “It was pretty hard to find someone who played congas or owned congas. They weren’t common like they are today. It just wasn’t a common instrument for people who play. It was frowned upon. We would get chased out of parks. Police would chase us. It irritated the ignorant ones who thought it was just ‘jungle music’ or voodoo... it was a stereotyped.” (Conga, 2017) Such experiences also highlight the historical significance of social clubs such as Club Cubano, which possibly contrast this experience.

Speaking of the Club Cubano on the border of the South Bronx and Hunts Point, Garcia states “although the majority of its members were Cubans and Puerto Ricans of Color, the social club welcomed, as Raul Travieso [brother of Arsenio Rodriguez] emphasized “whites, blacks, everyone” (Garcia, 2006) As seen in the interviews with Mario Bauza the role of skin color amongst Cuban, African American and Puerto Rican musicians is complex, multi-layered and plays a central role in
Latino and Afro-Latino pan-identity. Christine D. Abreu writes "In New York City, Cuban migrants and musicians settled near and among much larger Puerto Rican and African American communities, mostly in Harlem and the South Bronx but also in lower Manhattan and it was in these contexts which were sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, that Black and White musicians engaged with ideas about their music, race and national identity. (Abreu, 4) Social clubs were not immune to the complex relationships of ethnic diversity within New York and other U.S. cities; they often played a central role in perpetuating ethnic segregation or conversely a Pan-Latino fraternity. David Garcia writes about the club Ateneo Cubano in contrast to other social clubs in the U.S. during the early and mid-20th century. Garcia writes “This was in contrast to other social clubs, such as the Ateneo Cubano and the Club Caborrojeno (although like many other social clubs, Caborrojeno eventually, in the 1960s became a dance hall that hosted salsa music pioneers who were a blend of ethnicities including Blacks), both of which were located in Manhattan and were known to discriminate against Cubans and Puerto Ricans of color." (Garcia, 2006) He also mentions “the purpose of the club was to provide members and their family and friends with social and recreational activities, mostly involving the celebration mostly involving the celebration of Cuban patriotic holidays.” (Garcia, 2006) This dynamic speaks also to the role that neighborhoods such as El Barrio and the Bronx played in cultivating an environment where Latino music and culture could thrive. While racial tensions and competition for resources amongst differing nationalities (such as Cubans and Puerto Ricans) was far from absent in these cities, the desire to be a part of a shared Latin identity through music and social activities still thrived.
amongst many Latinos living in predominantly Latin neighborhoods. In many ways large groups of Puerto Ricans who were accepted in these social clubs throughout New York and other cities did not automatically see parts of Cuban culture as something “other” or alien. This is often heard in statements or words used by Puerto Ricans referring to various forms of Cuban music such as “ours” or “we.” Puerto Rican pianist Ray Coen pointed out that the Club Cubano “was like an outlet for our type of music (Coen interview 2000). The fact that the music was invariably Cuban did not prevent non Cuban members and musicians, such as Ray Coen and others in Arsenios conjunto, from embracing it as theirs.” (Garcia, 2006) Prior to the creation of Latino social clubs in New York, many Puerto Rican musicians were already familiar with Cuban music and had long since adopted it into their own culture. Coen’s words regarding the music as “ours” affirms this adoption and association amongst Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians. Many of the social clubs continued to evolve and had a diverse mix of Cubans and Puerto Ricans. Both islands were colonies of Spain (and later the U.S.), populated by a mixture of indigenous natives, and African slaves. While the amount of African slaves may have differed on respective islands, the similarities in traditional rhythmic structures, and the shared colonial Spanish language existed as a bridge between the communities in U.S. cities. By the 1950s common bonds in politics, socio-economics, and nostalgia for “home” established a connection that manifested in social clubs, ballrooms and within the actual bands performing in them.

What the mixing in these venues did contribute however was the continued development of the musical and cultural evolution being conceived in cities off the
respective islands. Chembo Corniel, a Puerto Rican conga player from New York recalls accompanying percussionist Tommy Lopez to Cuban rumba ceremonies and social club performances. “Really it started out to be all Cuban social club rumberos that some Puerto Ricans were accepted at the time...that they knew Tommy was one of them. Even though they [knew Tommy] was one hundred percent Puerto Rican, there was a handful of Puerto Rican rumberos that were let in to that club. I came in because I was with him. You know he is with me kind of thing. If I wasn’t with him if I knocked on the door by myself they wouldn’t let me in.” (Corniel, 2017) Corniel credits Tommy Lopez, a percussion pioneer in the salsa music genre, for his initial music training. Tommy Lopez learned directly under the iconic Cuban conga player and composer Chano Pozo. On a visit to a Santeria ceremony in New York during the 1970s Cuban bandleader and percussionist Luis Conte recalls a similar mixing and the authenticity of the music. “I went to a Santeria bembe, man, in New York... this in the seventies though; you could have been in Havana. But the guys that played...It was Frankie Rodriguez... great rumbero... So the bembe was led by Frankie who was a Puerto Rican cat. He was the [singer] and there was a Puerto Rican dude and a Cuban dude playing the drums in the Santeria. It was a total mixture. But you thought you would be in Cuba but all the people were Puerto Ricans.” (Conte, 2016)

Artists such as Arsenio Rodriguez transcended singular nationalism and became cultural fixtures for transnational Latino identity. In fact, artists such as Arsenio Rodriguez performed not only for social clubs in New York but also similar associations and small house parties in cities throughout the United States. He particularly made a large impact on first and second generation Cubans and Puerto
Ricans. “Nevertheless, for many first-generation Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles as well as for Curacaosans, Arsenio was never forgotten, and his music and performances continued to have an important impact on their local music cultures.” (Garcia, 2006)

As the 1960s emerged the development of Latin music began to take a turn and its platforms were both directly and indirectly impacted. John Storm Roberts refers to this era in his book Latin Tinge as a transition for Latin music in the US; when Latin music went underground. The Charanga was quickly catching on in cities such as New York and Latin music such as the mambo and other popular styles was returning to Cuban roots. Roberts writes “The apparent retrenchment of Latin music continued during the 1960s. The Cuban-based core style returned to its island roots. Hollywood lost interest.” (Roberts, 1979) While there generally was a large shift in popular trends and interests with a younger generation in the 1960s, especially with the emergence of rock and roll, many Puerto Ricans in large urban areas on the East Coast gravitated to the more intense brass heavy Latin music that would eventually be labeled as “salsa.” Isabelle Leymarie also references this more “undergrown” development of salsa and its Cuban roots in her publication Cuban Fire, the Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz. She writes “The early New York salsa was admittedly derived from the son and son montuno, but it had its own callejero (street) feel, for salsa was essentially a product of the barrio. One of its mainstays is the “cuchifrito circuit” (the Latin equivalent of the Black “chittlin’ circuit”) - small social clubs in sometimes dismal neighborhoods where the locals congregate.” (Leymarie 2002, 268)
The Puerto Rican music traditions bomba and plena (originating from the coastal Black communities on the island) once largely popular off the island began to lose momentum in the late 1960s amongst Puerto Ricans living in New York. Many younger Puerto Ricans turned their sights toward more contemporary styles such as the Cuban based salsa, merengue, and rock. In Peter Manuel’s article *Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity*, he quotes Latin musician and producer Rene Lopez concerning the “New York rumba-dominated street drumming vogue starting from the late 1950s.” (Manuel 1994, 261)

Looking back at those jam sessions, I cannot remember playing Puerto Rican rhythms. I guess we thought of our parents’ music as jibaro (hicky), old fashioned, and not really percussive. I think this impression was formed because popular Puerto Rican music of the ‘50s was composed mainly of trios, quartets, and popular big bands that were mainly melody oriented. Although we had heard of Plena and Bomba, they were very vague images because Black Puerto Rican music was never given any importance. As a matter of fact, till seven or eight years ago I never knew Plena and Bomba were Black expressions. In the schools there was no history of Puerto Rico being taught and no music programs that had anything to do with Puerto Rican culture. (Lopez 1976:108-9)

Puerto Rican bandleaders, composers and musicians in New York were returning to the Cuban roots in terms of performance and song writing. Manuel writes, “Accordingly, as some Nuyorican and Puerto Rican musicians realized that their favored genres were primarily Cuban in origin, they took a renewed interest in studying the roots through old recordings.” (Manuel 1994, 267) Manuel further quotes Lopez’s statements (quoted from Roberta Singer’s 1982 dissertation *My Music Is Who I Am*) on Puerto Rican musicians interpretation of the foundational
Cuban styles; his words giving perspective on the Cuban roots of the music and the beginning of an era where Puerto Ricans would lead a charge of producing the continued evolution of popular Cuban music. (Manuel, 267-268)

By then I had met most of the band leaders and had all their albums and could then trace the tunes that were on the albums… I could trace them especially to Cuba through these old 78s that I had collected. And I realized that they [contemporary musicians] were just reinterpreting things. And not only that- a lot of the time they would do the same inspiracion [semi-improvised vocal lines in the montuno]. (Quoted in Singer 1982:143)

During the 1960s Puerto Rican musicians inspired by the Cuban charanga, son, guaracha, rumba, African American jazz, swing, Rhythm & Blues, and Rock and Roll experimented with instrumentation by adding sounds that would not normally be heard in typical Cuban conjuntos/groups. The blend of the aforementioned music genres within the Latin band context ultimately led to the formation of what would eventually be labeled as salsa music by popular radio DJs in the U.S. Puerto Rican jazz pianist Charlie Palmieri wrote about his younger brother Eddie Palmieri’s pioneering fusion in the 1962 album liner notes of La Perfecta.

While playing piano with the Tito Rodriguez band, Eddie decided to leave the financial security of one of the most successful Latin bands around and formed his own band. The band business is rough enough, but Eddie made it even rougher for himself by going against the tide and instead of organizing a Charanga, the popular sound of the day, he organized what I call a “Trombanga,” a band featuring trombones and flute. Novel?...yes. A fresh sound?... yes. Commercial possibilities? ... a very big gamble. His gamble paid off though because his Band “La perfecta” is one of the busiest working bands in New York City. (As cited in Waxer 2002, 28)

Puerto Rican musicians in New York simultaneously drew from their previous generation’s island folk music tradition while building experimental
Cuban musicians definitely created the music, which we now call “salsa,” and it all began with the arrival in New York of some great musicians. The first generation of Puerto Rican musicians, dating from the 40s, were greatly influenced by the rhythms of Mario Bauza, Machito and his orchestra and Luis Varona, all Cubans... After that and under the influence of jazz and rock, the Cuban groups began to vary the rhythmic and harmonic structure of their tunes. It was then that the great musicians like Tito Puente, Palmieri, and others came on the scene. As it was easier to record in New York, a market for Antillean rhythms came into being as a kind of musical bridge between there and Puerto Rico. (Curet, 1973)

Stick Ball; Urban Community Connections to the Music

Stickball was a game formed by neighborhood city children in urban areas. In New York “playing stickball was a form of recreation but also an opportunity to meet future notable musicians. (Garcia, 2016) The development of athletic community activities in New York such as stickball is an example of how the urban metropolis on the U.S. mainland was unique in developing relationships with Puerto Rican musicians performing Cuban based music. This development also speaks to the “sense of place” Singer and Martinez have written about in the article A South Bronx Latin Music Tale (Singer, Martinez, 2004) and how a physical location or landscape can shape culture. The evolution of stickball is a unique Puerto Rican experience in New York. It is unique in its relationship with Puerto Rico (the shared heritage of its participants), however altogether independent as well; a recreational sport created in the streets of New York City.
During the beginning of the mambo era young Puerto Rican musicians such as Orlando Marin and Benny Bonilla were heavily involved in community recreational activities such as stickball. Bonilla recalls “stickball is what got me into music.” (Martinez, 2006) Bonilla’s words speak to the unique platforms and opportunities created by heavily populated urban environments of U.S. cities such as New York. This relates to the “sense of place” Many of the young musicians during the 1950s “a group of local teenagers who were alumni of the school and played stickball in front of the building formed a band. This band included musicians who would later become major figures in Latin music including Eddie Palmieri, Orlando Marin, and Joe Quijano. (Place Matters, 2017) PS. 52 rehearsals was a magnet for young musicians who also studied at the school and went on to be iconic fixtures in the New York Latin scene such as Ray Barretto, Manny Oquendo, and many others. (Martinez, 2006). Edwin Garcia notes that “The importance of stickball as a conduit to the music industry cannot be overstated.” (Garcia, 2016) Orlando Marin gives insight to social clubs impact on music live distribution through dances at Hunts Point Palace. A local stickball team called the Sparks started these dances.

The Sparks were the first social club in the Bronx to give dances at the Hunts Point Palace. And, since my team played against the Sparks all the time, they were all my fans. They went to P.S. 52 to dance. So, at the Hunts Point Palace, they put me to play. (Bonilla, 2006)

**Cultural Identity**

Puerto Rican and Cuban cultural relationships trace back to Spanish colonial rule. Both islands share a connection of language, and blend of African, Spanish, and Indigenous ethnicities/cultures. While the historical ethnic background and population of the African slaves on the respective islands may differ, both Puerto
Ricans and Cubans share many similarities including the Spanish language. There have been several different stages through the generations that are complex and multi-layered. Many Puerto Ricans and Cubans may be familiar by 19th century poet Lola Rodríguez de Tio’s literary work “A Cuba,” where she writes “Cuba y Puerto Rico son de un pajaro las dos alas…” “Cuba and Puerto Rico are as two wings of the same bird…” These similarities are however multi-faceted and have many political, national, ethnic, and cultural layers. While the relationship between the two islands is not without contention, their influences upon one another are monumental, often with indistinguishable borders. In *Cubans in Puerto Rico; Ethnic Economy and Cultural Identity*, Jose A. Cobas and Jorge Duany write “the two islands were Spain’s remaining two possessions in the Americas after the loss of most of its former colonies in the early nineteenth century… Many illustrious Puerto Ricans participated in Cuba’s wars of independence against Spain… The Cuban Revolutionary Party, based in New York, had a Puerto Rican section. Cubans and Puerto Ricans mingled easily in the immigrant communities of New York, New Orleans, Key West, and Elsewhere.” (Cobas/Duany, 1997). It is important to note that historical connections such as both islands being colonies of Spain and later the U.S., as well as the connection of the Spanish language helped foster this connection. Cobas and Duany further write “In 1915 de Diego founded a cultural association, Union Antillana, to promote literary and artistic exchanges among Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic… More important was the Puerto Rican exodus to Cuba during the first three decades of this century. By 1930 about twenty-five thousand Puerto Ricans were living and working in Cuba…” (Cobas/Duany, 1997)
The lyrics of Rafael Hernandez, perhaps one of the most revered Puerto Rican composers, give the some of the most iconic representations of nationalistic pride and nostalgia. Hernandez life and travels are a historical representation of not only Puerto Rican folk music but also American music as a whole. Hernandez played instrumental roles as a pioneer in American jazz the Cuban, son and mambo. While staying in New York with his sister Victoria, Rafael Hernandez penned Lamento Borinquen; a staple in Puerto Rican folk music. The song reflects the hard economic times of Puerto Rico. The composition carries a theme of lament and nostalgic longing for the island affectionately called by its pre-colonial name Borinquen; a name given by the indigenous Taino.

He sets off happily with his cargo
To the city, to the city
Carries in his thoughts
A whole world filled with happiness
Oh, of happiness
He plans to remedy the household situation
Which is all that he loves, yeah!
And happy, the peasant goes
Thinking, saying, singing on the way:
"If I sell my load, my dear God
I'll buy a suit for my little old lady"
And his mare is happy also
When he knows that the song is
All a joyful hymn
And then the daylight comes unexpectedly
And they arrive to the city market
The entire morning goes by
Without anyone wanting
To buy his load, oh, to buy his load
Everything, everything is deserted
And the town is full of need
Oh, of need
The mourning is heard everywhere
In my unhappy Borinquen, yeah
And sad, the peasant goes
Thinking, saying
Crying like this on the way:
"What will happen to Boriquen, my dear God
What will happen to my children and my home?" Oh!
Boriquen, the land of the Eden
The one that when sung by the great Gautier
He called out the pearl of the Seas
"Now that you lay dying from your sorrows
Let me sing to you also
Boriquen of my love"
I'm a child of Boriquen and no one will change that
I'm a child of Boriquen and no one will change that
And on the day that I die, I want to rest in you
I love you, Puerto Rico, and no one will take that away, yeah!
(Hernandez, 1947)

Due to economic hardships, massive migration off the island to New York, and political tensions, Puerto Ricans increasingly gravitated toward nationalistic themes in their music. With many Puerto Ricans previously adopting Cuban art forms as their own (as seen in the relationship with Puerto Rico’s relationship with the danzon and the son of Cuba), many of the popular compositions were set to Cuban rhythmic structures. Hernandez himself trained and performed in Cuba. Cuban composer and performer Arsenio Rodriguez used political racial themes in his lyrics that not only intentionally spoke to Black Cubans but also included other Black nationalities representing the African Diaspora. Rodriguez also referenced his own empathy for Puerto Rico’s political, economic and colonial status in his composition “A Puerto Rico.” The song was recorded in Havana one year after his trip to New York in 1947. (Garcia, 2006)

There have been scores of Puerto Rican composers who, over the years, have written pieces with intentional lyrics in tribute to the Cuban roots and connection to their own cultural identity. From the 19th century danza, and decima to the 20th century rumbas and son boom from Cuba that was successfully imported to Puerto
Rico (due to the record industry marketing) in addition to the fluid migration off and on the island and throughout the mainland, Puerto Ricans have developed a tradition of cultivating various Cuban art forms. Peter Manuel writes “From the early 1800s until today, Puerto Ricans have avidly borrowed and mastered various Cuban music styles, including the Cuban danzon, son, guaracha, rumba and bolero.” (Manuel 1995, 52) Puerto Rican composers such as Tito Matos have helped revive interests in Puerto Rican folk music while simultaneously contributing to the evolution of Cuban and Puerto Rican fusion directly impacted by U.S. cities. Such artists do this by staying authentic to Puerto Rican folk traditions like bomba and plena however continue to evolve and combine elements of jazz, and Afro-Cuban traditions to the music. While too complex to generalize, certainly this is largely due to the import and travel back and forth to urban regions on the U.S. mainland. I believe this, in turn, influences not only the active music participants but also the audiences directly connected to the music.

**Conclusion**

I began my research with a question of foundation and roots between the Puerto Rican adoption of various forms of Cuban music. I was aware of a basic knowledge regarding the cross-cultural exchange (primarily during the 1950s, 60s and 70s) however desired a deeper look at an earlier beginning. During my travels to Puerto Rico, and cities in the mainland U.S. with high concentrations of Puerto Ricans, I continually encountered those who either played Cuban instruments or identified with them as their own (culturally speaking). Due to travel restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba, many students of Afro-Cuban music traveled to Puerto
Rico in order to learn from masters of the various genres such as rumba, pachanga, bembe, etc. I have been fully aware of other close connections outside of Cuba as well such as the Dominican Republic, Columbia, Venezuela, etc. however Puerto Rico by and large seemed to prevail as a sort of fraternal brother/sister island. This is reflected in the poetry of Lola Rodriguez, and more recently in publications on Cuban music such as *Isabelle Leymarie’s Cuban Fire; The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz*. Leymarie writes “This book tells the story of Cuban music in its homeland and in the United States, but it also includes Puerto Rico- Cuba’s musical sister…” (Leymarie, 3)

In an NBC news article about Cuba and Puerto Rico’s intertwined historical path (written shortly after Fidel Castro’s death) Luisita Lopez Torregrosa writes recalls the birth of the Cuban Revolution and the rise of Fidel Castro. She writes “She and my journalist aunt and my actor-director uncle and their friends in our island home, Puerto Rico, celebrated the triumph of the Cuban revolution in January 1959 as if it were our own.” (As of November 26, 2016, “On Fidel’s Death, Cuba and Puerto Rico, Two Paths Intertwined) The musical paths of Cuba and Puerto Rico are intertwined, however as seen here in Torregrosa’s words concerning the adulation of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution on the island of Puerto Rico during the late 1950s, the connection between the islands transcended the boundaries of music; moreover it was this transcendence that fostered the connection and hence the cultivation of Cuban culture amongst the Puerto Rican diaspora. This is not to say that all Puerto Ricans on the island and abroad supported the Revolution or all of Cuban political developments, however it is another manifestation of the very real connection between the islands.
An overwhelming amount of information concerning the music relationships between Puerto Ricans and Cubans relevant to this research has been published in books, articles, and documentaries. Cuban and Puerto Rican music has been approached in a myriad of approaches and there seems to be no dearth of material on the subject. I have concluded however that the issue of Puerto Rican and Cuban musical and cultural ties is often a peripheral one. In the publications where it is emphasized, it is often shrouded in a multitude of differing perspectives.

If, with twenty one Latin American countries and territories, Puerto Rico has the most unique (in terms of close connection) tie to Cuba, musically speaking, I desired to know where the roots lay and how is this perceived by different communities. In other words, is it a romanticized thought pervaded by popular songs and literature immortalized by powerful record labels, radio networks, publishers, and charismatic performers? As I began to search deeper I quickly discovered my focus would not be on the discovery of whether a unique relationship between Cuba and Puerto Rico truly existed and to what extent, but rather how large metropolitan regions have influenced, cultivated, and incubated the cross cultural musical connection between the Cuban and Puerto Rican Diaspora; how they have influenced cultural, national and ethnic identity. The ebb and flow of Puerto Rican migration from the island to U.S. cities was a crucial component to the evolution of Puerto Rican musical identity. Concerning the controversy of appropriation as it pertains to the Puerto Rican adoption of various Cuban music forms, I am reminded of Ned Sublette’s reference that in music there is no immaculate conception. (Sublette, 2000) Music is not created in a vacuum and certainly neither was the popular Cuban music of the 1920s, 30s, 40s and the golden era of the 1950s. Cuba held close ties with the United States in domestic trade, tourism, entertainment, etc. and this resulted in what I have previously referred to as a cross cultural exchange. Even Cuban music is an evolution of complex multilayers. For instance African slaves from Haiti traveled between both Cuba and Puerto Rico influencing the culture and traditional landscape of both islands. Raul Fernandez writes “In 1994, two hundred years after the beginning of the Haitian revolution, a Grammy Award was given in the United States to the Cuban American
singer Gloria Estefan for her CD *Mi Tierra*. The bomba rhythm—so closely associated with Puerto Rican folklore—may be heard behind the title song, with its lyrics that speak repeatedly of Cuban themes, Cuban traditions, and the general nostalgia of Cuban Americans for their island homeland.” (Fernandez, 2006) In Fernandez writing on the bomba and the Cuban connection of Estefan’s song *Mi Tierra* we see a full circle music connection between what has been previously referred to as “sister islands.” (Leymarie, 2) In addition to the fluid motion of cross cultural exchange between the two islands and diaspora, Cuban exiles fled to Puerto Rico in mass after the Cuban Revolution of the late 1950s making Puerto Rico the second largest Cuban exile community.

Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians in New York and other U.S. cities were in search of better economic, racial (this is especially and specifically for those of color from Puerto Rico and Cuba) and political situations. Their shared language and colonial governance often manifested in a desire for unified Latin and Afro-Latin identity. The racism Black and Puerto Rican musicians experienced on the island was not absent on the mainland U.S. however what early music pioneers discovered in the metropolitan cities such as Harlem was a space that could incubate opportunities that were not found back home. Black Cubans and Puerto Rican musicians therefore relied upon their shared talents and responded to demands for the Latin sounds they could produce. This developed into a foundation for younger Latino generations who relied on the Latin music traditions that evolved in the urban environment as opposed to the popular American rock and roll movement.

The musical conversation of Cubans and Puerto Ricans was negotiated in popular dance venues, social clubs, and concert halls in places such as New York City, New Jersey, and Miami. The fluid movement of performers and listeners of the Diaspora ebbed and flowed throughout the mainland U.S. from major music industrial hubs known as the South Bronx, El Barrio, and Brooklyn NY to the urban regions of Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, and San Francisco. Like an intricate network of river distributaries, the fluidity of the Cuban music in urban U.S. communities throughout the 20th century has influenced the musical cultural identity of Puerto Ricans on and off the island. This phenomenon cannot be fully
explored without understanding the migration history and patterns of the Puerto Rican diaspora prior to World War II and especially in the decades immediately following it. Political developments such as the Jones Act of 1917 conferring U.S. citizenship upon Puerto Ricans and the after effects of Puerto Rico’s governor Muñoz Marín’s Operation Bootstrap (1940s) resulted in an increased influx of islanders to cities such as New York. Political economics led to “The lowering of the San Juan-New York air fares [accelerating] the exodus of Puerto Ricans, most of whom were between fifteen and forty years of age.” (Leymarie, 157) These migrants arrived in New York in search of a better financial situation. Many of the Puerto Ricans and Cubans who traveled back and forth throughout the 20th century were musicians who took full advantage of technological innovations in the U.S. and the recording opportunities often not found on the island.

Technological innovations in the radio and recording industry played major roles in the importing and dissemination of Cuban and Puerto Rican sounds within the United States. In addition to the importing of Latin music in the mainland U.S., record companies were also responsible for tempering popular music trends within the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico as well. In Caribbean Currents Peter Manuel quotes historian Jorge Javariz statement on the massive music recording production taking place in New York during the mid 20th century. He quotes “The bulk of what we call popular Puerto Rican music was written and recorded in New York. Puerto Rico is the only Latin American country whose popular music was mainly created on foreign soil. The curious thing about this phenomenon is that it was precisely in those years that the popular Puerto Rican song became more Puerto Rican than it has ever been before or since.” (Manuel, 67) (Glasser, Spring 1991) This statement carries profound consequence in that it points out the major role U.S. cities play in the shaping of Puerto Rican musical identity. The technological innovation in the recording industry is a direct result of the era in which it was produced. The northeast region of the United States served as a hub for development of this technology and consequently cities such as New York, New Jersey directly impacted Puerto Rican and Cuban communities. Often, the purveyors of these industries were not versed in ethnic and national differences within the music. Moreover they often
followed popular trends and perceived demands thereby becoming major bridges of cultural connection between Latino communities.

As mentioned previously, the movement of Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians throughout the United States was fluid. Through racial tensions, and musical competition amongst popular bands, a shared Latino identity emerged in the urban cities of the United States. This is largely due to the Spanish language connection, shared musical histories, and colonial and political ties of the Diasporas homelands of Puerto Rico and Cuba. The very physical location (its distance from the Caribbean islands) fostered a cultural identity amongst Puerto Ricans and Cubans in urban communities. The roots of Puerto Rican adoption of Cuban music is a multi-layered history. Major metropolitan regions of the United States evolved into landscapes that shaped intercultural connections between the two communities. The physical manifestations of landmark venues, concert halls and social clubs within the U.S. urban environments filled the void of cultural and national identity amongst Latino communities. As Puerto Ricans navigated a foreign environment distant to what was familiar, their experiences in turn directly resulted in shaping their musical identity. More often than not, Puerto Ricans reached for and responded to what was familiar. Cuban music was marketed in mass to Puerto Rican communities. This was mainly due to the language and shared cultural connection. Puerto Ricans often related to Cuban music with positive acceptance and adoption as their own. Venues such as the Teatro Puerto Rico in the South Bronx featured popular Cuban musicians. The edgy urban landscape of U.S. cities, and their diverse blend of ethnic communities became central to the cultural identity of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Peter Manuel’s explanation of Puerto Rico’s amicable relationship and fraternal identity with Cuba (Manuel, 1994) is not only fostered and cultivated in cities such as New York, but rather, the role of the urban mainland landscape is crucial to the relationship. The purpose of this research is to highlight the role large U.S. cities played in the Puerto Rican adoption of Cuban music. Large migrations of a diaspora over sequential periods of time often result in direct impacts of the Diaspora’s cultural identity. Without the political developments between the U.S. and the islands, the music associations created in the city, the urban socio-
economics of Latino communities, the technological advancements, the creation of popular venues of the American metropolis, and the Puerto Rican migration back and forth from the island to the U.S., the Puerto Rican music adoption of Cuban music would certainly not have evolved into its current existence.
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http://www.wsstickball.org/.


Appendices

Migration Timeline

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45,000-100,000 Puerto Ricans Living in NY up to 1923

Puerto Rican percentage of Latino population Increases from 40% to 80% during the years between 1940-1960

200,000 Puerto Ricans in NY

612,574 Puerto Ricans in NY

860,000 Puerto Ricans in NY

*See Migration, Immigration, & Travels. Page 32-34*
The dates above are approximations of the eras in which the Cuban genres were popularized or held significant historical value within the United States.

*Approximate era Popularized in United States
Puerto Rican Music Identity Triangular Model
Bridging Cuban and Puerto Rican Music Cultures from the 1920s-1970s

Puerto Rican Music Identity

U.S. Metropolitan Regions
Puerto Rico
Cuba
CONSENT FORM
The Influence of US Metropolitan Cities on Puerto Rican Adoption of Cuban Music
William Johnson
Liberty University
Masters of Arts in Ethnomusicology

You are invited to be in a research study of how metropolitan cities within the US helped shape and influence Puerto Rican adoption of various forms of Cuban music. You were selected as a possible participant due to your expertise and involvement/role in the relevant profession or industry. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

William Johnson, a student in the Masters of Arts in Ethnomusicology program at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of my research is to explore the roots of Puerto Rican adoption/acculturation of Afro-Cuban music. I believe one of the largest factors of this phenomena is the influence of large US cities during the mid 20th century. My primary research questions deal with the uniqueness of the Puerto Rican and Cuban relationship in contrast to Cuban relationships with other Latin American nations and territories. While there has been much research on the Puerto Rican and Afro-Cuban music diaspora, the relationship between these two diasporas are often peripheral at best. There is a definite distinction between the two musical worlds; however, through years of migration and musical genre evolutions, the boundaries between the two music diasporas are often blurred, at least on a superficial level. My goal is to specifically explore and research the roots of this music relationship. The topic of my research is the Puerto Rican adoption of Cuban Music and how large metropolitan regions within the United States helped incubate the musical relationship between Cuba and Puerto Rico

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Answer questions or provide helpful (based on your expertise and or experience) resource information at your own comfort level during an interview that will be tailored to your convenient time constraints.
2. Permit the quotation (upon approval) of any relevant information within the study. If necessary the said quote can be made anonymous. This applies to the interview.
3. Most interviews may last 15-30 min but can be shorter if needed.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:
With the current economic state of Puerto Rico and the political developments between the United States and Cuba, this study is a timely addition to the rich dialogue and research concerning the Cuban and Puerto Rican Diaspora. I hope to continue my research after this project and potentially publish it as part of a book on the musical relationship between the Cuban and Puerto Rican Diaspora. Your assistance not only helps to ensure the success of this project but also aids in the preservation and advancement of Cuban and Puerto Rican music cultural traditions.
Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Any records of this study not relevant to the research topic will not be published in the study. Only data collected for interview purposes such as name, date, music background, related music background will be published in the interview. No personal addresses, or any other confidential not related to the research such as names of family members, and addresses will be utilized. All interview data/information will be stored on an external hard drives belonging (and solely accessed by) to the principle researcher. Interviews will be stored on two external hard drives (one for main access for thesis/publication and one for backup in the event of files becoming damaged). Once interview is transferred to external hard drive all digital files of interviews within the digital recorder will be deleted. Interviews will be stored on external hard drives mainly for the purpose of thesis research purposes, educational purposes as well as the possible publication of a book written by the principle researcher. In the event of interviewing more than one participant at a time, participant confidentiality cannot be assured by other participants/interviewees. This is also the case for public environments such as places of business where such establishments may have patrons in nearby vicinity within audible proximity of the interview. If this is a potential problem please inform the interviewer/researcher in order for the interview to be done in a more secure environment.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is William Johnson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at williamjohnsonmusic@gmail.com. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Dr. Katherine Morehouse, at khmorehouse@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 171 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please note if the researcher if you would like a copy of the information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.
The researcher has my permission to audio and video (only performance if applicable) record me as part of my participation in this study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video (only performance if applicable) record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video (only performance if applicable) record me as part of my participation in this study.

4/8/2017

Date

June 8, 2017

Date
(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video (only performance if applicable) record

Date

September 5, 2017

Date
The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 9/28/2016 to 9/27/2017 Protocol # 2625.092816

(Note: Do not agree to participate unless IRB approval information with current dates has been added to this document.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video (only performance if applicable) record

09/05/17

Date

September 5, 2017

Date