

ANNOTATIONS

PATTERNS OF LIVING IN PUERTO RICAN FAMILIES¹

PATTERNS OF LIVING IN PUERTO RICAN FAMILIES is a report on a survey in 1946 of a sample of 1,044 families representative of the total Island population. The study was made by the Department of Home Economics of the University of Puerto Rico "as a basis for strengthening the home economics program and adapting it as fully as possible to the needs of the Island." Evidence descriptive of family living in Puerto Rican families of all socio-economic levels would afford a basis, it was hoped, "for education and service, not only to home economists but to all agencies working for improvement of living conditions in homes of the Island."

Data bearing on income and composition of families, on the physical standards of living, on education and cultural patterns, on food habits, and the adequacy of diets are presented in 230 tables. The main findings are discussed and interpreted by the authors in 260 pages of text and charts and illustrated with 56 photographs. Much has been written previously in the United States about the poverty of this Island Territory. This book gives a vivid portrayal of the primitive level of living of the majority of the population, of the poor and crowded housing conditions, of the dearth of facilities such as clothing, cooking and eating utensils, and all home furnishings, and of the inadequacies of the basic diet of rice, beans, and viandas.

From the mass of data presented, a few figures may be quoted that relate to the basic economic problem. Three-fourths of the families had annual incomes below \$1,000 and nearly two-thirds

¹ Roberts, Lydia J. and Stefani, Rosa Luisa: *PATTERNS OF LIVING IN PUERTO RICAN FAMILIES*. Rio Piedras, P.R., The University of Puerto Rico, 1949.

had incomes below \$750. The authors estimate that a minimum adequate diet for a family of five cost about \$700. Only 8 per cent of the families had incomes of \$2,000 or more. Large families are common in Puerto Rico and the average household included 5.4 persons. Rural families average 5.9 persons and comprise about two-thirds of the population. Overpopulation and the continued rapid increase of the population on this Island with an agricultural economy and few mineral and other natural resources constitute a basic problem in the improvement of living standards. Measures being taken by various government agencies to promote industrial development, to raise wages, to increase local production of low-cost goods that would replace expensive imported articles, to provide subsidized housing, and to improve sanitary facilities and health services throughout the Island are discussed.

The difficulties to be overcome in improving living conditions in Puerto Rico are not minimized by the authors. Stimulation of a desire for better living through education and assistance and instruction in the means of attaining a better life through self-help are recognized as fundamental to a successful attack on the problem. Although the amount of schooling has increased, a large percentage still receive little formal education. In 1946, at ages 15-19 years, 9 per cent had had no schooling and about 30 per cent had not gone beyond the 4th grade. Education through newspapers, magazines, etc. is not effective, since few families read them. Only about one-fourth of the families have a radio. Obviously, local community centers, clubs, and personal contact must be utilized to teach the people how to make better use of their resources, to improve their diet by home gardening, etc. The authors point to progress that has been made and are hopeful that concerted effort on the part of educational and other agencies will result in further progress. Many lines of attack are discussed.

This book should be of interest to all who are interested in Puerto Rico or in other underdeveloped areas. As an example of an intensive socio-economic investigation and an analysis of living conditions, it should interest home economists, public health workers, sociologists, and economists. Facts such as were gathered in Puerto Rico concerning the peoples' habits,

customs and needs are basic to formulating down-to-earth plans for betterment of living conditions.

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INDIANS OF THE URBAN NORTHWEST¹

ONE of the most interesting areas of aboriginal culture in America was the Pacific Northwest area. Under the impact of a century of contact with white people, the old culture has been largely destroyed, and much of its content and meaning can never be recovered. The present work is a collection of papers by various scholars who have been working recently on the Northwest Coast culture.

As the editor states in her preface, “. . . this book only attempts to focus upon the southern section of the Pacific Northwest, upon western Washington, and southwestern British Columbia; it deals primarily with the Indians of these regions, all of whom spoke languages which have been classified as Coast Salish.” The word “urban” in the title does not mean that the Indians are residents of the large cities, but rather an area along the inland waters which has felt strongly the effects of urbanization and industrialization.

The various papers in the book are written by specialists, and they are of more interest to specialists than to the general reader. The range is wide—diet, the Shaker religion, painting, music, coiled basketry, archaeology, language, physical type, folklore, etc.—so wide and so specialized, in fact, that one finishes with the feeling that he has seen a group of snapshots rather than an integrated movie.

Let us select a few items which would seem to be of interest to the readers of this particular review. The first chapter, “The Indians and Modern Society,” by Dr. Smith, presents a brief summary of the adjustment of the Coast Salish to modern civilization. Dr. Smith points out that “Their record of adaptation to industrial society is certainly better than that of

¹ INDIANS OF THE URBAN NORTHWEST. Edited by Marian W. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1949. 370 pp. \$6.00.