parenting empires

class, whiteness, and the moral economy of privilege in latin america

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To never forgetting . . .

4,645 deaths in Puerto Rico
1964 and its aftermath in Brazil

contents

acknowledgments

My interests in parenting, sovereignty, and the Latin American elite emerged in uneven, roundabout ways, at the unexpected intersections of personal and academic paths. The fieldwork for *Parenting Empires* began after a decade of learning about the lives of working-class Brazilian migrants and US-born Puerto Ricans in Newark, New Jersey, as well as following Brazilian and Puerto Rican youths on their return to their parents' ancestral lands. As a new parent, increasingly moving in various parenting circles in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the United States, I came to realize how much parenting ambitions and sovereign aspirations mirrored each other. For Latin American elites, like those profiled in this book, closeness to power turns parental ambitions and sovereignty aspirations into everyday practices of place making, affective inequalities, and inner-world dispositions. This is what I hope to document here in this ethnography, a work spanning more than six years and enabled by many people.

I am thankful to the individuals whose voices appear in this ethnography. They generously gave me their time and emotional labor, introduced me to their lives and loved ones, and shared interior worlds and everyday routines with me over my years of fieldwork in Brazil and Puerto Rico. Some unexpected friendships formed during the making of this ethnography, as interlocutors became unwitting collaborators and allowed me to witness vulnerable moments in their lives and to examine their ongoing ambivalence about their privileged place in the world. Following anonymity and confidentiality promises, I will not mention these interlocutors by name. I want to assure them, however, that I appreciate their willingness to allow me into their journeys, as they aimed to resolve the dissonance and multiple conflicts caused by the presumably noble

task of advocating on behalf of their children, their neighborhoods, and their countries.

During moments when I was not physically in the field, I worked as a faculty member at CUNY-Baruch College, where I occupied the Valentín Lizana y Parragué Endowed Chair in Latin American Studies, and at the CUNY Graduate Center, where I was affiliated with the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies (CLACLS) and the Critical Social Psychology Department. At the Graduate Center, I am grateful to Michelle Fine, Setha Low, and the faculty in the Critical Social Psychology program, who welcomed me into the Psychology Department despite my training in anthropology; to Dana-Ain Davis, director of the Center for the Study of Women and Society, whose understanding of the unrealized potential of anthropology keeps me hopeful; to Arlene Torres, who remains committed to identifying issues of discrimination against Latinx faculty throughout CUNY; and to the CLACLS staff for so enthusiastically embracing my work. At Baruch, I want to thank Sandra Nieves, administrative assistant in the Black and Latino Studies Department. Sandra was always honest and kind, showing the greatest dignity, even when wealthy South American donors criticized her Nuyorican working-class Spanish and did not want her included at the lunch table. She made tough years in a tough place more bearable, and I will always be very thankful for that. Over the years, I have benefited from the unwavering support of Katherine S. Newman, my former dissertation advisor and the best example of what mentoring should look like. I also appreciate Micaela di Leonardo's candid guidance and occasional tough love over the past several decades.

In the fall of 2016, and after nearly two decades teaching at public institutions, I accepted a position at Yale University, where I am currently professor of American studies; women's, gender, and sexuality studies; and ethnicity, race, and migration. I thank the colleagues in each of these exceptional programs, as well as those affiliated with the Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration and La Casa. I want to single out the leadership of Alicia Camacho-Schmidt, Inderpal Grewal, Matthew Jacobson, and Stephen Pitti. I always knew I would meet bright minds and gifted teachers in this new adventure, but the fact that I also encountered warmth, solidarity, commitment to social justice, and humility has been a marvelous surprise. The ethnographer in me also appreciates the opportunity to work alongside Aimee Cox, Kathryn Dudley, and Eda Pepe to invigorate and "re-enchant anthropology" at Yale and beyond. My students at Yale are similar to the extraordinary students I met during my years at Rutgers and CUNY: they are energetic working-class, first-generation students of color, some undocumented, who possess a unique

conviction and dedication to issues of social justice. Regardless of the institutions I inhabit, those graduate and undergraduate students still make me feel like the luckiest person in the world when I walk into the classroom, whether at Rutgers, CUNY, or Yale.

The Whiteness in the Americas workshop served as intellectual home for this project over the past five years. I am especially thankful to the unwavering support, brotherly warmth, and incisive intellectual engagement of workshop co-organizer and compadre Carlos Vargas-Ramos. I am immensely grateful for his feedback, encouragement, and support, as I am for those I received from WIA members Jillian Báez, Hal Barton, Ulla Berg, Hugo Cerón-Anaya, Milagros Denis, Zaire Dinzey-Flores, Melissa Fischer, Henry Franqui-Rivera, Daniel HoSang, Aldo Lauria-Santiago, Hilda Lloréns, Katherine López, Airín Martínez, Geisa Mattos, Tshombe Miles, Suzanne Oboler, Yadira Pérez, Edgar Rivera Colón, Patricia Silver, Stanley Thangaraj, Juan Usera, and Anahí Viladrich. Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, John Jackson, and Shamus Khan were guest speakers at different WIA events and have served as important interlocutors for this project. Victoria Stone and Ana María Becerra took care of the administrative tasks and helped planned the Whiteness in the Americas conference, inspired by the workshop, at the CUNY Graduate Center in 2014. In addition to finishing each other's sentences (at times literally), I want to give special thanks to dear sister-friend, coauthor extraordinaire, and intellectual kindred spirit Ulla Berg, who has kept us internationally plugged in as we traveled to Buenos Aires, Paris, Bogotá, and Cali to crush the boundaries of US academia. Rachel Sherman and Patricia de Santana Pinho provided incisive readings and comments that were instrumental in helping me think through some impasses I faced along the way. Likewise, the students in Branquitude and Anti-Racismo, a course I co-taught with Geísa Mattos at the Universidade de Ceará in Fortaleza, provided the final push and inspiration that got me even more deeply connected with this project. The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale provided funding for final follow-up trips to Brazil and Puerto Rico.

I have presented portions of this book at several US and international forums, but the two that stand out were organized by the Brazilian activist group Brazilian Resistance against Democracy Overthrow in New York (BRADO-NY) and by the Women's Studies program at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. Debarati Sen and Mallarika Sinha Roy orchestrated the visit to JNU, where I got asked a question that I am still pondering: Can we rescue self-care and wellness from the realm of privilege? At the BRADO event, among working-class Brazilian migrants in the NYC area, the question that

stood out was, Can we rescue Brazil from its seemingly impending spiral into fascism? I am not sure I have addressed either of these audience questions adequately here, but I am still thinking about both, and there is another project in the pipeline that engages some of those lingering political projects beyond this current book. I want to thank the scholars, activists, and participants that attended these two events.

Valêria Araújo, Ana María Becerra, and Tiffany Medina entered my life when I was desperate for help with several tasks—from transcribing numerous Spanish and Portuguese interviews to putting together illustrations and maps to searching newspaper archives in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and beyond. I am convinced that there is nothing these young women cannot do. In their other lives, they are talented musical composers, graphic artists, travel bloggers, scrapbookers, dedicated moms, and the center of gravity for their families and communities. I admire their dedication to finding their life passions and am happy to consider them the younger sisters I never had. Jeannette Zaragoza De León, Oscar Blanco-Franco, and Thomas Abraham took some of the photos in this ethnography, and Francisco Javier Sánchez located important archival documents related to El Condado. Thanks to all of them for coming to the rescue!

Although I have worked with editor Gisela Fosado and editorial associate Alejandra Mejía for only a few months, their professionalism, enthusiasm, energy, and resourcefulness have helped me understand what all the fuss about Duke University Press is about. Ellen Goldlust, book project editor at Duke, provided needed reassurance and came to my rescue a few times in the final stages of this project. I feel privileged to entrust this manuscript to them and the rest of the production staff and editors at Duke.

My family, nuclear and extended—by birth, marriage, or choice—is my world. As an only child, I have a special love for my siblings-in-law, Premila Hoon and Peter Abraham, and their partners, Harry Baden-Powell and Lavinia Abraham. Along with our nephews, Jayant Hoon and Alok Abraham, and my amazing stepson, Christopher Abraham, they make our intercontinental households feel less distant. Likewise, the Fernandes, D'Souzas, Farias, and Alnemris in New Jersey and Pennsylvania allow us to come together for all holidays and treat us to the most delicious Indian cooking and hospitality. I am always, every day, grateful for my comadres Ana María Becerra and Aixa Cintrón, for Aixa's partner, Julia Burch, for my nieces, Ino and Amelia Cintrón-Burch, and for my nephews, the wonder twins Michael and Daniel Patino-Becerra, and for my siblings-by-choice, Carmen Benet, Oscar Blanco-Franco, Clara Castro-Ponce, and Raúl Perales. Julia Burch receives a special shout-out for reading (twice!) this whole thing and making critical editorial suggestions.

My close-knit family in Puerto Rico—my mom, Ana Hilda; my dad, Vicente; my aunts and uncles, Manuel and Yolanda, and Magaly and Javier—are the motivation for everything I do. During the time of writing this ethnography, Hurricane Maria virtually destroyed our island and revealed the stark social inequalities we always knew existed. The few days when we had not heard from my parents were dreadful, and the number of months without electricity were unbearable. If this was scary for my family members, who live in solid buildings in the metropolitan area of Santurce, I can only imagine the desperation of Puerto Ricans in poorer, more rural regions of the country. If "Puerto Rico Se Levanta," as the slogan goes, then *levantarse* will only happen when we heal the lingering trauma, critically examine the colonial context that led us here, and become able to imagine a future in our own terms. Coincidently, around the same time of Hurricane Maria, another type of threat and trauma took over Brazil, as a Far Right government swept the country and fascism reared its ugly head. Those ongoing processes of trauma and healing tacitly underscore this ethnography.

My life partner, Thomas Abraham, was at least as affected by the hurricane and how Puerto Ricans were treated in its aftermath as I was. Indian by birth, he has adopted Puerto Rico as a home he loves. He took us to marches, organized collections of provisions, proposed student *brigadas*, delivered food and water filters in Yabucoa, and was a caring son to my parents during these frightening times, as well as being a great support to my extended family for the last decade. His integrity, the way he shows up and stands up for others, his brilliance, modesty, and how he is as a parent continues to have me asking: How did I get so lucky? Perhaps our best joint project, and the source of our own parenting dramas and anxieties, is our spunky, mischievous, witty son, Sebastián Abraham-Zayas. Barely two years old at the time of my first fieldwork trip, Sebastián used his Spanish to communicate with the Portuguese-speaking teachers and kids at his daycare in Brazil and adapted to various fieldwork demands in Puerto Rico. He became a participant observer of the Ipanema and El Condado lagoons and beaches, of neighborhood parks and playgrounds, and a lover of *sucos de manga, brigadeiros,* and *empanadillas de pizza*, all without missing an ethnographic beat.

Finally, I dedicate this project to those Brazilians and Puerto Ricans, friends, relatives, and strangers, who continue to imagine what we could become, precisely by never forgetting. This is what the 4,645 deaths in Puerto Rico and 1964 and its afterlife in Brazil means in the dedication page of this book.

1

Parenting Empires and the Moral Economy of Privilege in Brazil and Puerto Rico

In March 2016, the photo of a dark-skin and uniformed *babá* (nanny), walking behind a white Brazilian couple while pushing twin toddlers in a stroller through Ipanema, captivated the Brazilian media. The couple, sporting the colors of the Brazilian flag, and the nanny were participating in one of the early marches protesting Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, or Workers' Party), which a few months later would lead to the impeachment of democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff. The nanny in the photo was eventually identified as forty-five-year-old Maria Angélica Lima, who served as *babá folguista* (weekend nanny) for the children of Carolina Maia Pracownik and her husband, Claudio Pracownik, the vice president of finance for the Flamengo, one of Rio's soccer teams.

The irony behind the photo of a wealthy Ipanema family bringing their nanny along to a demonstration against the PT, a party that for more than a decade had been responsible for, among other things, establishing legislation to protect the labor rights of nannies and domestic workers, was not lost to some. Media interviews with Carolina, the employer, and Angélica, the nanny, followed. "I went to the streets with my whole family, and I would go again! If this country seems good to others, it is not good for us. We went to protest against all this embarrassing corruption," stated Carolina, who claimed to be "shocked and scared" by the violence of critics who viewed her as the classic *dondoca* (snobbish, superficial woman). Carolina defended her decision to ask Angélica to wear the all-white nanny uniform, a source of polemic in Ipanema at the time: "There is a 'dress code' for many professions: doctors, nurses, doormen. . . . Why wouldn't nannies, now a regulated profession, wear white, transmitting peace to the children they care for? That argument

FIGURE 1.1. Uniformed nanny accompanying Ipanema couple and their children on an anti–Workers' Party demonstration, March 2016. Photo: João Valadares / Correio Brazilienze / Da Press

about discrimination is unacceptable. As they say: prejudice is in the eye of the beholder." As part of a response posted on her Facebook page and reprinted in other news media, Carolina stated, "My children recognize my smell, the warmth of my hug, my smile of approval. . . . In our home, the discussion is affectionate and the arguments are intelligent and stimulating" ("Patroa de foto polêmica" 2016). In the months following this demonstration, Brazil saw intensifying polarization over issues that were broad, diverse, and internally contradictory, culminating in dueling marches for and against the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2015 and the imprisonment of former president Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva as part of the Lava Jato "anticorruption" investigation (chapter 2).

More than 5,000 kilometers (3,242 miles) from Rio's political demonstration, in El Condado, an affluent neighborhood in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Tony Fortuño Vernet remarked, "Living in El Condado is also a huge part of how we parent." Mariblanca Giusti, Tony's wife, further noted, "Not everybody can create a good environment for their children, expose them to nature, be outdoors, rather than sit them in front of a screen. In El Condado you have that healthier, active lifestyle integrated into your daily life." As Tula, a dark-skin Dominican woman, who served simultaneously as housekeeper and nanny, walked by, Mariblanca remarked, "Which is what I tell Tula, because her grandchildren live in front of the TV. You

need to take them out, to the park, outdoors!" Tula responded something like "I try, I try, but they don't listen to me," as she carried an armload of laundry. Mariblanca and Tony looked almost like siblings: they were both tall, athletic, and permanently tanned. Over the years of my fieldwork, they insisted that these obvious indicators of material wealth and a luxurious lifestyle "meant nothing" to them. What mattered to them was their emotional growth and spiritual journeys, as they worried about their country and raising their children. Mariblanca explained, "When I became pregnant with [my first child], I also became interested in Eastern spirituality, got certified in yoga. I wanted to turn my life around. Our country is in crisis, and it is partly a crisis of values. This demands a transformation, from all of us, from within."

The moral economy of wealth, implied in Mariblanca's remarks, challenged modernist ideals of increased technological and industrial development, the centrality of materialism and consumption, and an unconditional value of all things Western. As minimalist consumers, parents like Mariblanca embodied a version of national austerity politics and an austerity subjectivity; they drew from a neoliberal narrative of austerity to decry the evils of "irresponsible" consumption of their subordinates, and connected it to discussions around the national debt, social welfare, and the environment. These ethos of being down to earth (*pessoas despojadas* in Ipanema and *gente sencilla* in El Condado) was strongly linked to changing legal and hemispheric perspectives on race and "diversity" and a general distaste for mass-market consumer behavior. While domestic work in Brazil and Puerto Rico, and throughout the world, has undergone significant transformations over the last century, its present social form in Ipanema, El Condado, and perhaps other elite liberal neighborhoods was powerfully shaped by evolving practices of "parenting" that granted moral virtue to even the most profoundly unequal affective relations with subordinates.

There are multiple lenses through which one could examine the Ipanema photo and the conversation in El Condado. In this ethnography, I place the magnifying glass on the white wealthy parents who resided in arguably two of the most upscale neighborhoods in Brazil and Puerto Rico, respectively. Through a moral economy built on affective practices, anticonsumption, and antimaterialist discourse; psychological cultivation; child-centered environments; and everyday interpretations of national crises and the need for austerity, these Latin American urban elites altered their neighborhoods and cities, as they effected change in physical landscapes, structures of feeling, and processes of integration, segregation, and surveillance. More significantly, though, these

upper-class Latin American parents—like Brazilian and Puerto Rican national elites of the past—were collaborators with the dictums of US empire. *Parenting Empires* shows how the parenting subjectivities and practices of urban elites in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and possibly in liberal urban centers across Latin America and the Global South forged child-centered sociabilities and national affects, and provided moral justifications for inequality that complement US political, financial, and military hemispheric interventions.

Parenting Empires may not be what most readers would imagine an ethnography of empire, colonialism, or sovereignty to look like. However, the project is concerned with pushing beyond conventional imaginings of empire and sovereignty to understand how hemispheric forms of control and influence get solidly entrenched in the fabric of daily life, parental aspirations, and routines. As agents of empire, the upper-class parents in this ethnography engaged in spaces and circuits of affinity and sociability that produced forms of personhood rooted in aesthetics of affect and morality, which effectively dovetailed with projects of austerity and perspectives on "crisis" and "corruption" in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the Americas more broadly.

In this book, I endeavor to see how Brazilian and Puerto Rican elites inhabited their privilege and strove to make ethical and moral sense of racial and social inequalities that were inherently immoral. I use "parenting empires" in the title as both concept and verb. As a concept, the term labels the processes by which practices attached to the contemporary parenting of elites in the Americas intersected with national and hemispheric ideas of empire and sovereignty. As a verb, "parenting" serves as an action generative of empires; it indicates that forms of empire in the twenty-first century are in fact ideologically nurtured in child-centered ways that have unique moral appeal. Partly nurtured from a failed consolidation of sovereignty and US hemispheric reach, these forms of empire recast elite ideals into normative and commonsensical relational standards that effectively foreclosed alternative grassroots critique and narratives. (After all, who could challenge that children are any country's future? Or that parents should care about their children more than about other people's children? Or that being "mindful," having high "emotional intelligence," and investing in children's cultural cultivation are good things?)

As *Parenting Empires* demonstrates, the moral economies of privilege underscoring sovereignty and parenting prove particularly effective in granting currency to US hemispheric implementation of a "war on corruption" in the region and providing moral grounding to neoliberal austerity projects. Wealth and inequality, even under authoritarian governments, still requires a moral

logic. Parenting—with all its neoliberal intensities, aspirations, languages, claims to expertise and science, and emphasis on inner-world cultivation—has become an effective, morally legitimate imperial formation.

Studying Privilege in the Americas

As Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon-Charlot remark, "Poverty allows itself to be scrutinized, cataloged, described. . . . Wealth, on the other hand, is little explored by sociologists who do not seem to venture into noble neighborhoods" (2007, 22–23); in a Lacanian sense, wealth is unrepresentable, or more precisely, it is the invisible tableau on which other things are situated for representation. While most research on the global inequality gap tends to focus on the lives of the poor, some recent scholarship has taken up anthropologist Laura Nader's (1974) challenge to "study up," extending the ethnographic gaze to those populations who have benefited from these global economic trends. Contemporary studies of elites in the Americas have examined how status, whiteness, and class take shape through elite collaborations and various forms of engagement with empire and nation building. One strand of this bibliography, in relation to Rio de Janeiro, includes Jerry Dávila's *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917–1945* (2003) and Zephyr Frank's *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (2004), and in relation to Puerto Rico as a whole, Teresita Levy's *Puerto Ricans in the Empire: Tobacco Growers and US Colonialism* (2014) and Julian Go's *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during US Colonialism* (2008).[1] From a historical perspective, these works discern early iterations of elite family life, wealth, and race in relation to questions of national sovereignty. *Parenting Empires* brings these historical overviews on colonial elite and populist collaborations to the present, examining the unique ways in which neoliberalism has altered what Latin American and Caribbean collaborations with US economic expansionism look like.

Another line of this bibliography of Latin American elites draws from urban studies and sociology to examine relationships of class and race, privileging living arrangements and the built environment as analytical lens. Centering on the proliferation and segregationist appeal of gated communities, Teresa Caldeira's *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (2000) and Zaire Dinzey-Flores's *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City* (2013) are exceptional works, which combine urbanism with understandings of democracy, citizenship, and race in the cities of São

Paulo, Brazil, and Ponce, Puerto Rico, respectively.[2] Building on these ideas, *Parenting Empires* aims to critically analyze not the Latin American elites that choose to self-segregate (or segregate the poor, in some of the cases Dinzey-Flores describes), but rather those that claim to want their children to feel at ease among "all sorts of people," and who are critical of walls and gates. The study pushes for a perspective on elites as heterogeneous and not always easily corresponding to popular images of the powerful. It makes the claim that such a perspective could yield a more complete (and complicated) understanding of how power, class, and race manifest in built and natural environments, and operate to sustain forms of white supremacy that are hardly transparent or easily detectable. This ethnography, thus, focuses on the upper classes that chose to settle in traditional upper-class neighborhoods, claiming that such neighborhoods were more accepting, open, and democratic, and who, in fact, viewed residents of gated communities as provincial, constitutive outsiders.

Dynamics of conspicuous consumption, a focus on the body and physical appearance, and luxurious and aspirational lifestyles are at the center of anthropological studies of Latin America and Caribbean middle and upper classes. Alexander Edmond's *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil* (2010), for instance, compellingly analyzes the complex and relatively democratic world of plastic surgery and body politics in Rio de Janeiro, where domestic workers and the poor have also come to view cosmetic procedures as a vehicle to social mobility and work opportunity, and a proxy for modernity. Likewise, Maureen O'Dougherty's *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil* (2002) masterfully documents how in the mid-1980s, at the peak of Brazil's greatest inflation, the middle and upper-middle classes in fact intensified their consumption. These sectors came to primarily define themselves in terms of their privileged consumption (and the media continually addressed these middle-class Brazilians as consumers), and consumption in fact became a symbol of racial, cultural, and moral superiority; parents had to be more flexible in the jobs they were willing to take, while putting stakes in their children's expensive private education as a social mobility project. Moreover, in the context of Barbados, and possibly applicable to other Caribbean nations, Carla Freeman's *Entrepreneurial Selves: Neoliberal Respectability and the Making of a Caribbean Middle Class* (2014) examines how an entrepreneurial middle class reworks the Caribbean cultural model of reputation and respectability in alignment with postcolonial neoliberal demands of flexibility and self-making. The figure of the entrepreneur embodies not only financial aspirations, but also the very reworking of personhood and intimacy. While *Parenting Empires* recognizes that consumption, body work,

and entrepreneurial ventures were enduring cultural practices among the Ipanema and El Condado upper classes, and the ethnography is inspired by some of this scholarship, it extends consumption beyond the easily observable realm of monetary transactions and body projects to the realm of interiority and its inconspicuous forms. Practices associated with Eastern religions, spirituality, psychology, and wellness, some of which actually rendered conspicuous consumption suspect, were important status markers and parenting subjectivities in Ipanema and El Condado.

While research on Latin American upper classes and racial privilege is rare, possible exceptions include Jennifer Roth-Gordon's *Race and the Brazilian Body: Blackness, Whiteness, and Everyday Language in Rio de Janeiro* (2017) and Jessé Souza's *A elite do atraso: Da escravidão à Lava Jato* (2017).[3] Roth-Gordon proposes the term "comfortable racial contradiction" (2017, 1) to highlight how structural racism that privileges whiteness exists alongside a deeply held pride in Brazil's history of racial mixture. From a sociolinguistic perspective, she argues that individuals from Rio's shantytowns and middle classes read one another's bodies for racial signs. They determine the amount of whiteness or blackness a body displays, based on specific phenotypic features as well as cultural and linguistic practices, speech, and slang. Roth-Gordon compellingly examines the minutiae of the linguistic strategies deployed by residents of Rio de Janeiro's poor communities, as they engage in forms of cultural production and territorial claims over the neighborhood. Her discussion of white upper-class Rio residents resonated with some of the language and parenting practices I noticed in Ipanema, though not with those I witnessed among the upper classes of El Condado, as I examine in this volume. This is one of those instances in which the South-South comparative ethnographic angle becomes critical in understanding that it is largely the diversity in elite socialization practices that effectively sustains power inequality in the Americas.

Adopting a political economic and historical framework, Jessé Souza traces how the language of corruption has become a cultural fact inseparable from elite perspectives on Brazilian governmentality, or the country's presumed inability to reach the marks of a modern democracy. As Souza argues, contemporary Brazilian elites have consistently rejected populism, and the country's intellectuals have situated corruption exclusively in the realm of the nation-state, thus effectively absolving financial and corporate sectors from blame for the country's various crises. The national government, therefore, becomes entirely responsible for rampant corruption. This perspective situates the genesis of social and racial inequality, fiscal debt, and governmentality crises entirely outside the financial and corporate sectors, which at times are often viewed as

the saviors of corrupt government through various privatization projects. As Souza demonstrates, the discourse of corruption has predictably served forms of governmentality that have benefited the upper classes—from the imposition of military governments to the impeachment of democratically elected ones. Fostering the belief that corruption is a social fact unique to Brazil, these upper classes reinforce a US historical narrative of Latin American backwardness.

As is the case among Puerto Rico's upper classes, Brazilian elites rarely approached corruption as a critique of US and foreign intervention or corporate greed. The deployment of corruption as a rallying point into which the upper classes draw alliances with the middle class, furthermore, enforces narratives of dysfunction and pathology onto the lower, often racialized, populations.[4] This application of a corruption narrative to explain Brazilian failure of governance similarly applied to Puerto Rico during the time of my fieldwork. Puerto Rico's upper and middle classes almost exclusively associated corruption with the island's government and public institutions, as opposed to white-collar crimes of their own class; they harbored the view that privatization and giving tax incentives to foreign investors would eliminate corruption and believed that austerity was the only way out of the country's debt crisis. This has never, of course, been an exclusive narrative of the upper classes. Yet, the upper and upper-middle classes in Ipanema and El Condado placed child-centered practices and deployed a moral economy of wealth to position themselves as innocent bystanders, frequently absolved from the downward spiraling of the nation.

While *Parenting Empires* enters in conversation with this remarkable, if partial, body of literature on Latin American and Caribbean elites, the clearest debates for this volume belong to a US-based scholarship more explicitly concerned with urban upper classes, liberalism, parenting, and the moral economy. Two of these works, which I engage with in greater depth in later chapters, are Rachel Sherman's *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence* (2017) and Elizabeth Currid-Halkett's *The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class* (2017). Sherman examines the "anxieties of affluence" among wealthy New Yorkers, while Currid-Halkett alludes to "the aspirational class of inconspicuous consumers." Both works show how US urban elites, particularly in their role as parents, instill and reproduce ideas about how to occupy privilege legitimately. Dilemmas related to money and identity, and the challenges of striking a balance between giving children material resources and opportunities without spoiling them, for instance, were ultimately conflicts about how to render one's wealth moral and legitimate, especially at a moment of extreme economic inequality.

This contemporary US work on elites has extended the boundaries of studying up beyond analyses of conspicuous consumption, leisure, and luxurious lifestyles to investigations of psychological, affective, and wellness orientation among elites. These studies note that since the 1899 publication of Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, the sociological classic that introduced the phrase "conspicuous consumption" and described the frivolity of the upper class, the power of material goods as symbols of status has diminished with their wider accessibility. As a result, US and European upper classes have altered consumption habits away from extravagant displays and excessive expenditures to more subtle, less materialistic forms of inconspicuous consumption, which are also emblematic of elites' conflictive attitudes toward the quality, identities, and display of wealth.[5]

Another important body of US-based studies of elites has centered, ethnographically, on boarding schools as totalizing institutions for adolescent socialization. Two seminal works that examine capital beyond economic advantage are Shamus Khan's *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (2012) and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández's *The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School* (2009). Khan views privilege as a sense of self and a mode of interaction that advantages upper-class students. He identifies "ease"—the ability to comfortably inhabit most social settings, both those considered to be "above" and "below" oneself in an enduring social hierarchy—as the core of such class privilege in the United States. Likewise, Gaztambide-Fernández illuminates how elite boarding schools emphasize the importance of being a "good person," even though these enactments of goodness—through volunteerism, for instance—necessitated marginalized others who lacked the material resources to themselves undertake similar goodness actions. The broader social context for elite schooling and privatized education in First World and emerging economies has significantly changed over the last half century. With the spread of democratic processes and meritocratic ideologies, social elites are no longer the historically closed circles created by inherited or ascribed sociological status, reinforced by intermarriage and exclusive social circuits. This shift has fostered greater uncertainty, anxiety, and strategy around the intergenerational transfer of privilege, as parents develop strategies to position children advantageously for educational opportunity starting earlier and earlier. Importantly, Pierre Bourdieu's classic work argued that parents' backstage investments orchestrated the child's individual achievement of such status by meritocratic means, "so that the educational system seems to award its honors solely to natural qualities" (1984, 254). This individualized achievement could then be formally confirmed and validated by educational

credentials. A significant, and perhaps counterintuitive, finding of this scholarship is that greater institutional openness or inclusion (i.e., the liberal alternative of a diverse student body and curriculum), in and of itself, does not yield greater social equality or radically challenge structural inequalities.

The US-based sociological and ethnographic work outlined here unfolds in a context where social class has historically been undermined by the language of the American Dream, meritocracy, intergenerational upward mobility, and hard work. This US foundational language, while not entirely absent in Ipanema and El Condado, operated very differently in relation to class and racial hierarchies in Brazil and Puerto Rico. *Parenting Empires* examines elite gestures toward social and racial openness, but rather than focusing on the world of adolescents and schools, it analyzes how experimentations with inclusion in Ipanema and El Condado were situated in the realm of parenting and its child-centered sociability, practices, and idioms.

The Perils and Politics of Parenting

I do not propose the concept of "parenting empires" in the title of this ethnography as an arsenal of practices exclusively implicating parents and their children. Instead, parenting empires is a form of sociability and relatedness that positioned child-centeredness in terms of how the upper classes in two Latin American affluent neighborhoods worked through relationships across racial and class lines, altered urban practices and the built environment, crafted a sense of personal depth and interiority currency, and adapted a national language of austerity and corruption to neighborhood governance. Working within theories of the moral economy, I analyze how political economic and historical practices intersected with a person's moral value, increased investment in reflexivity and personal growth, and led to the virtual demise of structural explanations for inequality. In countries infamous for having draconian austerity measures and the highest levels of social inequality in the world, investments in forms of "immaterial" advantages were hardly immaterial. These moral dilemmas, embodiments of privilege, inner-world aesthetics, and concern with a progressive self-fashioning often provided the impetus for civic neighborhood action, institutional and spatial privatization, and exclusionary practices that did not require encroaching walls or country club memberships.

In *Parenting Empires,* the concept of parenting is a social phenomenon that provides a productive analytical lens to how other liberal democratic concepts—like sovereignty, empire, corruption, or crisis—and hierarchies of class and race get recast when privilege is examined in all its moral and affective complexities.

Over the last fifty years, we have witnessed a powerful global convergence of ideas and practices regarding child rearing and parenting. In Philippe Aries's 1960 study of privileged French parenting, he shows that there was already tremendous investment in the child in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Unlike those early iterations of family life and childhood, however, contemporary parenting culture is built on tensions between the call to individual fulfillment of the late twentieth century and the altruistic expectations around resources given to children. A term that became prominent in the 1950s in a language used by psychologists, sociologists, and social work practitioners in North America, "parenting" does not have a perfect Spanish or Portuguese translation, though I did occasionally hear the terms *crianza* (to raise a child) in Puerto Rico and *parentalidade* (assuming the role of a parent) in Brazil. Nevertheless, parenting, a phenomenon with its own vocabulary, practices, and rules, serves as conduit to processes otherwise associated with sovereignty and governance, including surveillance and policing in the elite neighborhoods in this ethnography.

Ellie Lee, Jennie Bristow, Charlotte Faircloth, and Jan Macvarish's edited volume, *Parenting Culture Studies* (2014), and Inderpal Grewal's *Saving the Security State: Exceptional Citizens in Twenty-First Century America* (2017) offer exceptional examinations of child rearing in connection to public debate, moral panics, and policymaking in Europe and the United States, respectively. These works view parenting not primarily as a site of intergenerational social reproduction, but as one of governmentality (see also Cecello and Kholoussy 2016). Covering political developments in Europe and North America, Lee et al. (2014) analyze the reasons why the minutiae of how parents raise their children—how they feed them, talk to them, play with them, or discipline them—have become routine sources of public debate and policymaking. *Parenting Culture Studies* situates parental determinism in the wider context of risk consciousness and the demise of social confidence about the future. The edited volume focuses on various ways in which explicit parenting support policy entered European political agendas during the early 1990s and produced a "turn to parenting," with its experts, new terms, instruments, and institutions.

Tracing the changing relations between the US state and its citizens in an era marked by the decline of US geopolitical power, endless war, and increasing surveillance, Inderpal Grewal (2017) demonstrates how the private domestic space of American women has been expanded, so that idealized mother-subjects have come to play critical roles in the privatization of welfare, surveillance, and security in an array of everyday forms (e.g., gated communities, shopping malls, suburbs). During the US war on terror, these "security moms" were invested

in obsessive surveillance and projected state terror onto criminalized foreigners and racialized domestic populations. Rather than harboring an expansive view of violence, which might include a common feminist concern with issues of domestic violence, US security moms viewed the home as a fortress against "Islamic terrorists," "illegal aliens," and racial and criminalized Others. Evidenced in the propensity of white mothers to call the police on Black and Brown (male) bodies, for instance, this increased anxiety engendered distrust and competitiveness; it is centered more on individuality and less on community belonging. Ultimately, these maternal super-citizen subjects sustained and gave moral value to neoliberal agendas and economic policy that otherwise led to government retrenchment and the virtual elimination of social justice and welfare concerns.

Parenting Empires draws inspiration from these analyses, which view parenting not as part of a psychological realm of parental anxieties, neuroses, depressions, narcissisms, or paranoia, but as practices that are often pawns of and complicit with broader nation-state projects. In complicated Global South contexts, like Ipanema and El Condado, sovereignty, austerity, and national crises were attributed to, or heavily imposed on, racialized and socially marginalized populations, whose very parenting was rendered suspect. Global processes that converge in the Caribbean and Latin America trouble the claim that national governments have supreme control over their internal affairs and that other states cannot intervene, under exception of threat or obligation of alliance. It has been widely demonstrated that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the sovereign nation is a myth or an aspirational model at best. This impossibility of sovereignty, and even the uneven desire for sovereignty, in fact turns other social formations as proxies, to do what sovereignty promises but fails to deliver. As I highlight throughout this book, moral dilemmas among elites are important not because of the anxiety and inner conflicts they might cause these upper-class populations but because these dilemmas were impetus for increased surveillance and privatization actions with direct material repercussions on racialized and stigmatized Others, like Dominican immigrants in El Condado and migrants from the impoverished Brazilian Northeast in Ipanema.

Parenting produced an intimate public sphere in which sovereignty became the sum of the private acts and values of individual subjects; it effectively situated social action around inequality away from concentrations of congealed wealth and toward culture and intimate conduct, feelings, and morality. A shrinking welfare state and severe austerity measures have become morally justified through new positions of active and responsible citizenship, including forms

of parenting empires. Having absorbed this profound significance, parenting is imagined to be both the cause of, and solution to, all social ills and structural inequality.

Parenting Empires: A Theoretical Framework

In this South-South comparative ethnography, I propose the framework of parenting empires to trace dynamics of race and class privilege as they acquired materiality and psychological depth through the built environment, landscapes, child-centered sociabilities, and the regulation of affective expectations that Ipanema and El Condado upper classes had of themselves and their subordinates. This framework proposes that these dynamics in fact communicate the goals of US hemispheric reach and enlist the collaboration of national elites in processes of empire and colonial control. The theoretical framing of parenting empires is built on three cornerstones, each doing some of the work the concept proposes: the salience of "child-centered nodules of urbanism" and sites of adult sociability and relatedness; the dedication to crafting an "interiority currency," a particular form of inner-world cultivation, which I propose is a white elite project fundamental to Latin American and Caribbean white supremacy; and the moral justification of wealth through the everyday productions of "austerity subjectivities" and narratives around government corruption.

CHILD-CENTERED NODULES OF URBANISM

A cornerstone of parenting empires in Ipanema and El Condado were the "child-centered nodules of urbanism," as I refer to the neighborhood-based physical or social locations where adults involved in the care of children came together, sometimes crossing class, regional, ethnic, and racial lines. These were prosaic spaces of urban encounters—and sites of Foucauldian panoptic force—that occasionally opened up new perspectives about segregation and (dis)assemblies of collective life. Child-centered nodules of urbanism gave spatial forms to the elite sociability on which parenting empires were built. These were embodied sites of locating unrest, fear, austerity, and making judgment on individuals, families, and neighborhood transformations. Neoliberal discourses of choice, responsibility, and aspiration gained moral currency and got played in everyday routines around children, yet only certain social subjects were able to mobilize their interest to achieve a legitimate subject-position in these spaces. Imperfectly modular and at times amorphous, these were spaces whose density, history, and public or semipublic quality contribute to imprinting

them onto local urban aesthetics, routines, and ideologies around child rearing, even when children were not physically present or when such spaces were not explicitly designated as "child-friendly spaces." Affective dispositions, aspirational language, and anxieties about safety, opportunity, and distinction acquire materiality in these nodules.

Some of these nodules were perhaps predictable: playgrounds, school campuses, parks and plazas, enrichment classes (swimming, beach volleyball, kayaking, languages), puppet theaters, and children's sections in local bookstores. Others were not explicitly associated with children but still played significant roles in the children's socialization and in parental self-fashioning: popular bakeries and ice cream parlors, speech or occupational therapy lectures, cafés and restaurants, country and sports clubs, pregnancy/postpregnancy yoga and Pilates. "Nature" and "outdoors," such as the neighborhoods' respective beachfront, the Rodrigues de Freitas Lagoon in Ipanema and the Condado Lagoon in El Condado, and corresponding adjacent national parks were also child-centered nodules associated with shifting and arbitrary understandings of healthy living, fitness, spirituality, and body care.

These child-centered nodules are founded on gradated variations and degrees of sovereignty and disenfranchisement, on multiple criteria for inclusions and sliding scales of basic rights. As parenting becomes the most intimate terrain where empires are constructed and entitlements are embodied, child-centered nodules do the spatial work of redrawing categories of subject and citizen, fostering elaborate nomenclatures that distinguish between *favelados*, *títeres*, foreign billionaires who get tax exemptions, national elites, and internal and transnational immigrants (e.g., *nordestinas/os, dominicanas/os*). They produced scales of differentiation and affiliation that exceeded a clear division between ruler and ruled (Wright 2015).

As socially produced and made productive in social practices, child-centered nodules of urbanism were characterized by the contradictory, conflictual, and ultimately political character of their very process of production. Henri Lefebvre's work—with its focus on the role representation plays in the production of space—aids our understanding of contemporary urban processes and the "feel" that places like Ipanema and El Condado have on the national (and even international) imaginaries (Lefebvre 1991, chapters 2 and 3).[6] In segregated cities, where zones of poverty are ubiquitous in the landscapes of the wealthy, as is the case in San Juan and Rio de Janeiro, child-centered nodules of urbanism provided, ironically, one of the few spaces in which forms of subaltern "resistance" were experimented with, largely because these were oftentimes public spaces shared by paid and unpaid caregivers.

FIGURE 1.2. El Condado, aerial view of field site. Photo: Oscar Blanco

Participating in child-centered nodules of urbanism was not merely about individuals interacting with their surroundings, but about being intimately—not just transactionally—involved with hierarchies of power. Parenting was a neoliberal subjectivity that was particularly effective in the privatization of public spaces and in subjecting those spaces to surveillance, policing, and exclusion. I trace the process of how inner, personal, and moral conflicts, more frequently articulated through a language of parenting, became engines for collective exclusionary neighborhood practices.

INTERIORITY CURRENCY: EMOTIONAL DEPTH, COGNITIVE AESTHETICS, AND PERSONHOOD

A second cornerstone of parenting empires considers ever-increasing commitments to projects of the self, Eastern spirituality, and personal growth. Such projects are certainly contemporary staples of neoliberal personhood, a profitable "happiness industry" (Davies 2015), and the commodification of feelings worldwide (Hochschild 1979; Illouz 2007) and are not unique to Brazil and Puerto Rico. In Ipanema and El Condado, however, such interiority projects were also fundamental to the solidification and legitimation of white privilege. While early twentieth-century Brazilian and Puerto Rican intellectual elites

FIGURE 1.3. Ipanema, aerial view of field site. Photo: Luiz Eduardo Lages, http://luizeduardolages.com/turfindx.htm

viewed various modalities of "racial democracy" (e.g., *mestiçagem* in Brazil, *mulataje* in Puerto Rico) as an intrinsic national trait, contemporary Ipanema and El Condado elites cultivated inner-world aesthetics that allowed them to preserve their white privilege while sustaining, questioning, and being ambivalent about the tenets of racial democracy. Thus, virtually every interlocutor, in both Ipanema and El Condado, recognized racism and racial discrimination in their countries, while also proposing inner-world cultivation as a site where these social inequalities would presumably be ironed out. They imagined how socially subordinate and marginalized populations could reach personal fulfillment by working on spiritual development and self-regulating to overcome whatever "unfortunate" life situation they faced.

The upper-class and upper-middle-class parents I met were dedicated not just to "being themselves," but to doing the work of *becoming* a certain kind of individual recognized for her or his ability to understand, discuss, and enact the world of emotional depth and interiority.[7] Debates about whether the self was "found" or "made," and other philosophical stances about one's inner quests, personal journeys, and metaphysical and existentialist concerns were intertwined with recommendations for life coaches, therapists, Buddhist meditation centers, yoga retreats, Kardecismo and *espirita* groups (in Brazil), and various healers, gurus, and relationship experts (see chapters 4 and 5).[8] These debates were not very different from those common among upper-class parents

in the United States or the United Kingdom; what was different was how these practices were entangled with neighborhood governance, expectations of social relations across class and race, and approaches to sovereignty and austerity.

As a cornerstone of parenting empires, such interiority currency is productive in illustrating the social effects of notable changes from conspicuous to inconspicuous forms of consumption (or the conspicuous consumption of socially worthy things) among Ipanema and El Condado elites. In these neighborhoods, explicit luxury and superficial displays of wealth were no longer unambiguous signals of respectability, modernity, or personal worth, as they may have been a generation before (chapter 6). Importantly, far from making the world more egalitarian, this shift in fact entrenched modern elites' racial and class privilege even more effectively than conspicuous consumption habits ever did (cf. Currid-Halkett 2017; Sherman 2017b).[9]

I use "interiority currency" to highlight a form of capital that, unlike the inculcated cultural capital Bourdieu discusses, or even Michèle Lamont's (1992) symbolic moral capital, never gets to be viewed as second nature or perfectly achieved.[10] For interiority to constitute a form of capital, it had to be actively and continuously pursued, worked on, and never fully realized. Upper-class Ipanema and El Condado parents viewed their inner world not as "just who you are," but as who you are *and* could become, as a work-in-progress rooted in commitment, dedication, and hard work, and therefore accessible to anyone willing to do that work. Interiority currency was realized not only through outward body display, cosmetic, behavioral, or even spiritual, but through the continuous critical and conscious pursuit of an understanding and management of one's interior growth or path. Targeting areas for personal improvement and growth, cultivating the emotional intelligence to navigate complex affective entanglements and social situations, focusing on transforming the "outside world" through self-awareness, and the very decision to pursue this path as a life quest were at the center of this interiority currency. Under these forms of self-cultivation was a demand for an ordered futurity, where hierarchies were not so obstructive, and desires were uncorrupted by the weight of historical guilt and violence.[11]

Over the last few decades, scholars have written about "therapeutic culture" (Illouz 2008, 30), the self-help industry, "entrepreneurial selves" (Freeman 2014), "regimes of the self" (Rose 1996b, 81–82), and "street therapists" (Ramos-Zayas 2012), in which "therapy is not just an adjustment device but an expression of generalized reflexivity" (Giddens 1991, 180). Increasingly in the Global South, parents deployed therapeutic language and treatments to relate to their children, thus engaging in emotional coaching and becoming reliant on

child development experts to vindicate child-rearing decisions.[12] The tenacity of distinctly therapeutic notions and the mainstreaming of ordinary psychological anxieties of the upper- and upper-middle classes into a broader emotional micro-public sphere (cf. Illouz 2007) served as tools through which the upper classes developed relational expectations of subalterns and the "psychological narrativity" (Tobin 1995, 234) that they used in child-centered nodules of urbanism.[13] Tracey Jensen (2010) argues that parenting is the most recent of the intimate realms into which emotional capitalism is stretching, and on which ideologies of individualism get cemented.[14] Therapeutic style, language, and communication furthermore shaped elite expectations of how relationships, not just interactions, with racialized and social subordinates ought to be conducted and evaluated, as well as what that said about them as elites.

Focusing on parenting—and the highly politicized and deeply moralistic set of rules, ideologies, and impositions that accompany it—allows for a clearer view of how structures of power are rendered legibly, acquire social significance, and get codified in the realm of emotion, affects, and sentiments.[15] Parenting empires provide a framework to trace how child-centered sociabilities have become the social lynchpin between affect, morality, and politics in everyday life.

AUSTERITY SUBJECTIVITIES, CORRUPTION, AND THE MORAL ECONOMY OF PRIVILEGE

The third main theoretical cornerstone of parenting empires focuses on the social networks of child-centered care that upper-class parents enlisted. The adults enlisted in these networks—namely, members of the extended family and domestic workers—served as proxies for a broader political economy of the Global South, including the colonial, transnational, and imperial histories of Brazil and Puerto Rico. It was through these networks of child-centered care that a national rhetoric of "corruption" and a focus on austerity acquired everyday grounding and immediacy.

Although technically, Brazil is a sovereign nation and Puerto Rico a US territory, both countries have often found themselves questioning their ability to have their democratic political choices respected. Since colonial logic dictates that empires must incorporate colonial subjects to obscure dehumanization (Mendez and Germann 2018), Puerto Ricans, including elites, were included in the social structures of the United States, albeit as "delinquent citizens" (Ramos-Zayas 2004). Since the first decade of this century, the specific path adopted by Brazilian elites to interact with central economies was to transform the country into an international platform for financial valorization (Almeida 2016). The impeachment of a democratically elected president in Brazil in

2016, like the Federal Control Board imposed by the US Congress to oversee the Puerto Rican government, suggested a lack of democratic value and political autonomy.[16] In the posh living rooms of Ipanema and El Condado, residents speculated about how such national crises and political divisions would affect personal safety, close relationships, and their children's future and quality of life, as well as contemplating when to exert discretionary powers, as citizens of their specific neighborhoods, to punish transgressions, and when to make the customary exception from the law. Discussions around "corruption" and "the merits of austerity" became the threads to how parenting empires legitimated social inequality, privatization of national resources, and foreign intervention. Parenting empires in the affluent neighborhoods in this ethnography were premised on a moral economy of privilege and wealth.

As I was discussing this project with US and Latin American scholars, it became clear how terms like "colonialism," "empire," and "sovereignty" had a currency, legibility, and quotidian character in the Global South that may not quite resonate in Global North contexts. This could arguably be because in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and perhaps other countries in the Global South, sovereignty has become precarious, even untenable, and increasingly associated with everyday relationships across domains of class, race, and local geographies, rather than confidence in the state, democracy, or political autonomy. The presumed failure to achieve the normative ideal of national sovereignty—what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2002) terms the North Atlantic Universal—is furthermore associated with a state of unachieved (or underachieved) modernity. But even in Brazil, understandings of sovereignty are integrated into a future, a popular orientation toward a commitment to "the children" and "future generations." Neither Brazil nor Puerto Rico can be understood without examining the critical role that US imperialism has played in Latin America and the Caribbean over the twentieth century.[17]

The question of pursuing a "moral" way of being wealthy in countries of astonishing economic inequalities is interwoven with imperial and colonial projects and sovereign aspirations. Arguably better than other adult subjectivities, parenting provided an effective grounding to how elites rendered their wealth and racial privilege legitimate. Among wealthy Latin American and Caribbean populations, a new form of global, cosmopolitan parenting operated as the affective underside of a moral economy of wealth. Through parenting, morality acquired materiality, concreteness, and rhetorical currency; anticorruption and proausterity measures were tangled with parental aspirations, socialization practices, and neighborhood expectations. A rhetoric of fiscal responsibility accompanied the implementation of austerity policies, as panacea for economic

crises, attributed to "excessive spending" or a necessary response to irresponsible fiscal management in previous administrations. Fiscal discipline was positioned as the solution to the current crisis of capitalism, whereby the correct response to the precarious future was to shrink the state and condense public spending. Even though austerity as fiscal remedy hardly works, with many economies moving into, or having already moved into, second stages of recession, austerity continues to enjoy moral appeal in Ipanema and El Condado (Jensen and Tyler 2012).

In Brazil and Puerto Rico, financial crises, caused by the banking and financial sectors and colonial and neocolonial projects, were attributed to "unsustainable" levels of public debt and social spending. Austerity architects, and the Ipanema and El Condado residents that supported them, put financial crises, like those affecting Brazil and Puerto Rico over the period of my research, to ideological and moral work; they claimed that various forms of social safety nets, and the commitment by some governments to support its citizens via the provision of welfare, had become too costly. *Parenting Empires* aims to illuminate how Brazilian and Puerto Rican elites straddled links between geopolitical centers of power and local manifestations of that power. A child-centered politics of care intersected with how operations of sovereignty, austerity, and corruption materialized in the everyday life of neighborhoods and acquired moral legitimacy through the parenting practices of Latin American elites.

Methodologies: How I Got "There" and What I Did

Do you ever suddenly find it strange to be yourself?
—Clarice Lispector

In Clarice Lispector's metafictional novel *Un sopro de vida* (A breath of life), the Brazilian writer appears fascinated by the ambiguity between main character and narrator, creator and created, representations of others and presentations of self. Hers is a meditation on life, personhood, and time, not too different from the process of ethnographic writing and reflexivity. When I set out to do fieldwork on affluent Latin American neighborhoods, parenting, and US hemispheric influence and empire, I began to recognize how each of these relational concepts, like all affective entanglements, was both magnetic and repellent. This recognition demands a discussion not only of methodology, but also of self-positioning and epistemology.

Coming of age in the middle- and working-class areas of Santurce, Puerto Rico, in the 1980s, my perspectives on wealth were concretely spatial. At the

time of my fieldwork, Santurce had been referred to as the Puerto Rican Williamsburg, a vibrant urban community of young artists, university activists, hip chefs, and internationally recognized muralists. When I was growing up, however, residents of the nearby affluent neighborhoods of El Condado and Miramar viewed Santurce as a predominantly Dominican immigrant enclave and stigmatized the area accordingly. "Calle Cerra? That's where all the prostitutes used to be!" my dad, who grew up in Santurce, declared when I enthusiastically mentioned that there was a new vegan restaurant on that very street.

I attended a private Catholic school that, by Puerto Rican standards, was remarkably diverse socioeconomically and ethnically. I had classmates who had recently arrived from the Dominican Republic and classmates who were the children of 1960s Cuban exiles; students who hailed from working-class areas, like Barrio Obrero, to upper-middle-class areas of Isla Verde. We all knew there were affluent neighborhoods, some close to where we lived, and others farther. We knew that everyone recognized a handful of schools as "the best schools," and that ours was not one of them but was also not as "bad as a public school." We knew that individuals who lived in wealthy neighborhoods and attended the best schools dated and hung out at the Caparra Country Club and Casa Cuba, places that remained almost mysterious to me until I began this project. Certainly, "studying up" in El Condado would have been easier, at least initially, if I had been able to activate personal alumni networks from high schools or contacts from private country club rosters. Likewise, had I studied in a public school instead of a Catholic school, or had I grown up outside the metropolitan area of San Juan, the neighborhoods, schools, and country clubs I came to associate with the upper and upper-middle classes in this ethnography may not have had the same meaning or name recognition.

While on their own these facts might have made for a compelling narrative about my relative lack of privilege, this would be an incomplete story. After I graduated from high school, I ended up attending undergraduate and graduate Ivy League institutions in the United States, each increasing the professional credentials and cultural and social capital that in fact personally connects me to the individuals I would come to meet in this study. Along with my light skin, my own investment in "interiority" projects, and Yale professorship (arguably the ultimate form of symbolic capital in the world of global hyperparenting), being the mother of a young child and member of a married heterosexual couple further facilitated my relationships with Puerto Rican and Brazilian interlocutors. In Ipanema, the fact that I had lived in New York most of my adult life, my connections to US higher education, and English fluency triggered parental imaginaries of

studying abroad and Ivy League college admissions for their children. In El Condado, my "proper Spanish" was valued even more highly than my English fluency, particularly at a time when "Spanglish," Dominican-accented Spanish, and even English were viewed as threatening to national cultural sovereignty. These forms of embodied, cultural, social, and symbolic capital often overrode economic differences and allowed my interlocutors to imagine what our relationship could become and the networks or interests we could share.

In conventional anthropological parlance, I was a "native ethnographer" in Puerto Rico. My connection to Brazil, on the other hand, was more informal (e.g., attending Brazilian friends' weddings) and academic. I had conducted ethnographic research among Brazilian migrants in Newark, New Jersey, from 2001 through 2010 (Ramos-Zayas 2012) and had lived in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, for several months in 2006, while doing research on youth and return migration. Nevertheless, I had come in late to Brazilian studies and Brazilian anthropology. While I felt tremendous support, encouragement, and collegiality from Brazilian academics in the United States, Brazil, and elsewhere, that was not always the case among a few white male senior scholars who appeared invested in forms of US academic dominance and gatekeeping.[18]

I had visited most regions of Brazil for academic conferences, vacations, and to see friends, but it was not until I began this project, in 2012, that I developed an enduring and powerful connection with Rio de Janeiro. This connection was both strongly visceral and deeply embarrassing, as I frequently caught myself drawn to some of the very essentialist qualities of the place that I was trying to peel off; there was also something almost eerily similar between Rio and places I knew from my childhood in Puerto Rico. While nobody ever gave me suggestions about how to approach fieldwork in Puerto Rico, I still recall a close Brazilian friend and colleague advising, "To do research in Ipanema, you need to be lighter. Go with the flow, and tone down that dark humor and cynicism of yours. Rio is not São Paulo. It is not New York." Her recommendation, and Clarice Lispector's quotation, would come to mind often over the time of my fieldwork, though I often felt I would have benefited from guidance on approaching El Condado too.

I found it strange, to follow Lispector's words, to be my Puerto Rican self in Ipanema. I remained profoundly aware of how, in Brazil, Puerto Rico was virtually invisible, even in discussions about Latin America or the Caribbean. When I would introduce myself as being from Puerto Rico, I would often have to add a qualifier like, "an island in the Caribbean, near Cuba," or resort to the popular icons, like Ricky Martin or Menudo. Once "Despacito" became a global

musical sensation, many interlocutors told me that they could appreciate the song more because they had met me, the only Puerto Rican they knew. Once cursory explanations of Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States were out of the way, further processes of what I came to view as intra–Latin American body politics came into play. At five foot three, I had never been as aware of my height as I was among Ipanema's upper classes. Height became, to my surprise, a way in which upper-class South Americans of European background came to racialize many other Latin American populations. Most of the individuals I interviewed in Brazil were quite tall, and several of them spontaneously mentioned that the reason "most Brazilians are tall" and "most (other) Latin Americans are short" had to do with the particular racial mixing in Brazil, the strong European influence, rather than the "indigenous look" they associated with Central and northern parts of South America. These conversations about body aesthetics took multiple shapes (no pun intended) in El Condado and Ipanema, where female bonding often happened around discussion of plastic surgeries, nutrition, fitness, and cosmetic treatments.

My fieldwork consisted of eight months each in Ipanema and El Condado, spanning a period of five years, from 2012 through 2017. These months corresponded to US academic calendar breaks (June–August; December–January; and brief interludes, like spring break). The ethnographic purist in me had difficulty accepting that I would not be uprooting my family to spend an uninterrupted consecutive period of at least a year in each place. After all, as an anthropologist, I was trained to view participant observation not only as the foundation of ethnographic research, but also as a measure of anthropological authenticity. The more the anthropologist pushes the boundaries of her comfort zone and sacrifices for the field, the more "authentic" she becomes and, presumably, the more reliable her data are. And yet, there was no roughing it in an ethnography of upper classes in beachside neighborhoods, at least not in any traditional sense.

Over the eight months I spent respectively in Ipanema and El Condado, I attended extended family gatherings (birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, funerals); parent-sponsored lectures in neighborhood bookstores, university campuses, and private homes; and philanthropic and civic events in the interlocutors' communities. More often, however, I shared everyday routines. I accompanied individuals to Pilates and yoga, to children's sports events, to cosmetic clinics and spas, and spent time in homes, work sites, the beach, cafés, and restaurants. Conducting some audio-recorded walkabouts through areas of the neighborhood that interlocutors claimed as part of these routines allowed me to compose cognitive and social maps, and to better understand

the personal significance of landmarks, landscapes, and the built environment. Interlocutors shared visual biographies, like family videos, photographs, and meaningful artwork or inherited jewelry, and demonstrated their own engagement with space through home décor and solar panels, and interests in photography, landscaping, design, and architecture. I met most of the Ipanema residents at local beachfront playgrounds and through the daycare that my son attended during our first summer in Brazil; in El Condado, I used a snowballing approach that involved contacting three El Condado families who were friends of friends and having them introduce me to their respective social networks.

In addition to the data gathered through participant observation, social mapping, and visual biographies, I conducted numerous structured and semistructured interviews. In Brazil, I conducted multiple interviews with a total of thirty-nine individuals, consisting of eight fathers, fifteen mothers, four grandparents, six private school and crèche (daycare) staff, and six nannies. I held focus groups with several other people, mostly nannies, extended family members, store clerks, and parents from areas outside Ipanema who were regular participants in beach playground events. I interviewed Ipanema parents who were involved in collaborative efforts with the municipal police and attended monthly police briefings given to Ipanema residents. In Puerto Rico, I conducted repeated interviews with thirty main interlocutors: twelve mothers, ten fathers, three nannies, two private school teachers, and three Calle Loíza community activists involved in child-centered urban development projects. Additionally, I conducted focus groups with parents affiliated with each of two private schools, one in El Condado (St. John's School) and one in Miramar (Academia del Perpetuo Socorro). Although the Academia del Perpetuo Socorro is technically not in El Condado but in the adjacent neighborhood of Miramar, the parents affiliated with El Condado and these schools overlapped quite a bit, a revelation yielded from social mapping. Hence, in the El Condado sample, I interviewed a few families who lived in the Miramar area; and in Ipanema, I included a few residents of the adjacent neighborhood of Leblon. Most of the focus groups and interviews were conducted in Portuguese or Spanish. Two exceptions were a portion of an interview in which a Brazilian mother asked me to switch to English so her young son, who was playing nearby, would not understand. In Puerto Rico, even among Spanish-dominant, island-born individuals, interviews were characterized by high levels of code switching between English and Spanish; in fact, I was stunned by what appeared to me to be a new sociolinguistic phenomenon, which was even more pronounced among school-age children

(see chapter 5). Although I had help transcribing the audiotapes, I did all the translations myself.

In between periods of being in the field, I maintained connections and communication with interlocutors through various social media sites, as well as by email, phone, and Skype. On a few occasions, I got together with interlocutors from Brazil and Puerto Rico when they came to New York City on vacation, or when we coincided in other US cities, like Philadelphia, DC, and Boston, where they would come for work, vacations, or to take their children on school-related sports events or college tours. This long-distance ethnographic data in fact yielded a valuable panoramic overview of the field and interlocutors. The time I spent physically away from the field was not idle or unproductive. Quite the contrary. Those times were critical to developing a closeness and mutual imaginaries that were personally rewarding, ethnographically helpful, and empirically valuable.

I was aware that several interlocutors had Googled my name or requested me as a "friend" on Facebook shortly after meeting. There they could see family photos, occasional political statements, and my own idiosyncratic selection of articles and memes. This socially mediated information accelerated (or slowed down) the pace of the ethnographic relationship. For instance, two El Condado residents whom I had known for several months—both Puerto Rico–raised Cuban women—disliked an article and comment I posted when the United States resumed diplomatic relationships with Cuba, under President Obama. I was able to reconnect with one of these women but never heard back from the other. The only way for me to confirm whether this distancing had to do with the Facebook post was to test my hypothesis with a third woman who was also friendly with the woman avoiding me. To my surprise, while it was true that these women had not liked my Cuba post, the main reason why one of them had continued to avoid me was that she felt betrayed because I had remained in touch with an ex-boyfriend of hers after they had broken up. Her ex-boyfriend remained in my sample throughout. While social media provided valuable insight into the events in people's lives, and even about their aspirational lives and sense of self, I also recognized that these data needed to be tested and triangulated. Facebook, Skyping, WhatsApp groups, and texting enabled a continuous, if imperfect, alternative to some of the logistic limitations of multisited comparative research. Moreover, Facebook helped me to develop kin charts, where I was able to trace connections through friend lists, distinguishing between friends and acquaintances, and considering the frequency and quality of specific interactions.[19] While definitely an imperfect tool, these Facebook kin charts helped

me corroborate, challenge, and triangulate data from other sources; identify issues and questions I wanted to pose in person; and consider forms of fictive kinship (Stack 1974) that more traditional ethnographic methods might have missed.

Notes on Epistemology and Terminology: Who These People Are

> I must try and break through the clichés about Latin America. Superpowers and other outsiders have fought over us for centuries in ways that have nothing to do with our problems.
> —Gabriel García Márquez

Some epistemological and terminological aspects of this ethnography merit explicit acknowledgment and clarification. First, the neighborhood, more than simply one of many possible units of analysis, is the scale and focus I use to inspect the state. I treat the state as a composite operating under singular historical and political economic conditions, and the affluent neighborhoods as significant components of such composites. Significantly, neighborhoods gain immediacy and moral quality through normative tropes like "family," "parenting," and "children." Neighborhoods like Ipanema and El Condado, and the child-centered nodules of urbanism that constituted them, allowed parents to imagine a unique childhood and life trajectory for their children, as well as a desirable parental identity for themselves.

Second, throughout this ethnography, I use terms like "upper class," "upper-middle class," "elite," and "affluent" to showcase aspects of class subjectivity. Instead of emphasizing social determinism in a classical Marxist sense, I approach class as it was subjectively experienced, managed, and attached to specific structural processes or how it influenced those processes. Similarly, I use "privilege" to indicate elite positionalities that were not circumscribed to economic capital but that indicated other sources of power, most notably whiteness. When relevant, I retain the languages of class that permeated popular culture in Puerto Rico and in Brazil. In Puerto Rico, class appeared in the quotidian usage of racialized status terminology, like *cafre*, *comemierda*, and *guaynabito*, which I discuss later in this ethnography. In Brazil, a cultural narrative of class emerged likewise through frequent references to *arrumadas/os*, *dondocas*, *piruas*, or *moleque*. In Brazil, however, unlike in Puerto Rico, sociological and policy class rubrics employed by the government were also frequently used, notably the A-B-C-D-E designator, where each letter stands for an income bracket (*faina de renda*). I rarely heard the term "elite" as a self-referent or an emic category; classed identities and racial pronouncements in Ipanema and El Condado were

more coded, implicit, and relational. I want to underscore that each voice that appears in this volume is relevant not for its representativeness, but as the outcome of regional, historical, and personal processes that, taken together, reflected some imperfect patterns and social fabrics.

Another important epistemological element of this ethnography is that, when I declare its comparative aspect, I am comparing not objects, people, or essences, but processes of meaning construction, relationships among persons, situations, events, frameworks, and discourses in material political economic contexts that are distinct. My comparative axis consisted of a set of open analytical questions posed differently in each neighborhood, rather than predefined entities, so as not to overshadow contextually significant variables. I am not just portraying the lives of affluent individuals in Brazil and Puerto Rico but also comparing the structural conditions, hemispheric dynamics, and processes of agency that contributed to shaping practices of parenting, privilege, and urbanism in two neighborhoods in different parts of the world. In choosing Brazil and Puerto Rico, moreover, I retain a comparative angle that was not mediated, as is usually the case in transnational, global, or multisited studies, by a direct comparison with the United States. The processes under analysis in this ethnographic project decenter the United States as intellectual, epistemological, and methodological center, while seriously engaging with its colonial and imperial reach across the Latin American and Caribbean region.[20]

This takes me to a leading question often raised: "Why Puerto Rico and Brazil?" Puerto Rico and Brazil are vastly different, in the size of their land, population, and economy; they are different in colonial history, economic influence and status, global political presence (or absence), and even language. A Portuguese-speaking country, Brazil had the fifth largest population and eighth largest economy in the world in 2010, while Puerto Rico, a US territory where Spanish is the main language, lacked international political representation and faced significant population decline. And yet, Brazil and Puerto Rico shared a national mood of bewildered anxiety about their respective political and economic futures, austerity policies, privatization of industries and institutions, and governmental corruption over the time of my fieldwork. They each served as global stage for discussions about the Zika epidemic and pregnancy avoidance; in Puerto Rico, this public health crisis was magnified as a result of Hurricane Maria, a devastating category-4 hurricane, which brought forth US neglect and invigorated discussions of US colonialism in Puerto Rico. Each country also consistently ranked among the top ten most unequal countries in the world.[21] Distrust of the government, fears related to economic insecurity and crime, a weakened or eroded sovereignty, and fiscal

debt and governmentality crises serve as broader background to neighborhood life in Ipanema and El Condado.

Nodules of Latin American and Caribbean tourism and tax exemption havens to foreigners, Ipanema and El Condado witnessed the influx of foreign developers and oil corporation billionaires, who often settled with their families alongside local Brazilian and Puerto Rican national elites, shaped the international private school market, and became unwitting interlocutors for domestic claims to sovereignty. Adjacent to some of the most impoverished areas of Rio de Janeiro and San Juan, Ipanema and El Condado are not simply the Latin American neighborhoods of postcards, tourist advertising campaigns, and high-end retail.

Behind these iconic images, Ipanema and El Condado are residential neighborhoods where the Brazilian and Puerto Rican upper classes, especially those who fashioned themselves as progressive, socially conscious, and cosmopolitan, chose to raise their children. Rather than viewing residents of these neighborhoods as representative of liberal elites, however, I view the spaces they inhabit as representative of such liberal elitism in their respective countries. The privileged unit of analysis here is the neighborhood, while moving across a scale of mutually constitutive imaginaries, including the individual, family, household, nation, and beyond. It could be argued that Ipanema and El Condado have more in common with each other than Brazil and Puerto Rico have in common with each other. Yet I do believe that US hemispheric control—of which parenting has become an imperial formation—mediated Brazil's expectations of Ipanema and Puerto Rico's connection to El Condado in similar ways.

It is also important to underscore that, in this ethnography, I view Puerto Rico as a self-standing social and cultural entity, not exclusively or primarily as an extension of the US mainland. This is a deliberate effort to push against academic conventions that have deployed Puerto Rico's "exceptionalism" to justify its frequent exclusion from both Latin American studies and mainstream scholarship in American studies. While Puerto Rico is decidedly a colony of the United States, the United States has formal or informal imperial relations with many nations, even some that are technically considered sovereign, like Brazil. Following Ann Stoler's "degrees of imperial sovereignty" (2006), I place Brazil and Puerto Rico in a continuum, not in entirely different universes, in their relationship with US imperialism in the American hemisphere. The realignment of Puerto Rico and Brazil, and other parts of the Global South, as part of the same US imperial landscape is productive for understanding contemporary circulation of geopolitical configurations, including fascist tendencies, austerity policies, and parenting trends. Moreover, viewing Puerto Rico

as a self-standing entity allows me to foreground the emic perspective of El Condado interlocutors (in all their upper-class privilege and cosmopolitan aspirations), who overwhelmingly viewed Puerto Rico as linguistically, culturally, and socially distinct from the United States, or who, at the very least, were strategic about how they situated Puerto Rico in relation to the US mainland, the rest of the Caribbean, and Latin America as a whole. On a macro level, US colonization of Puerto Rico constrained the island's economic development, trade, and political representation on a global stage, and El Condado interlocutors were clear about this, as they were about the ease of travel conferred by US citizenship. In the everyday parenting lives of elites, however, these constraints did not figure prominently; as long as they stayed on the island, their lives were hardly different from those of other Latin American elites (and they arguably shared more in common than they shared with US elites in terms of values, perspectives on sophistication, aesthetic dispositions, and cultural capital).

A final epistemological and methodological question that underscored this research almost from the beginning, which colleagues and friends frequently asked when I presented earlier versions of this work, was, "Who are these elites?" This was not a question of how representative these elites were but of who their counterparts might be—in their respective neighborhoods, countries, and internationally, or at various historical moments. This was a question that rose from the difficulty in categorizing them, either in traditional sociological rubrics (e.g., old/new money, intellectual/political/corporate) or through popular images. The Ipanema family attending the anti-PT march at the beginning of this chapter resonates with the most recognizable and iconic global image of "the Latin American elite"; they are not different from the superficial wealthy family at the center of Rubén Blades and Willie Colón's 1978 song "Plástico," or more recently, Teatro Breve's comedy series *Las Real Housewives de Miramar*. Nevertheless, the demographics for which these images stand, and the interlocutors in this ethnography, defy such facile categorization.

Most of the parents in this ethnography came of age in the 1980s and 1990s and, in the Brazilian case, viewed themselves as part of a "lost generation," unsure of itself and, until becoming parents, unsure of its role in the future of the nation (Maia 2012, 43). These upper-class parents in Puerto Rico and in Brazil had virtually lost faith in their respective national governments. Since corruption was so firmly grounded in a political elite, the imperialist US "war on corruption" against both Brazil and Puerto Rico, projects to encourage foreign interests and capital, and other questionably neoliberal and austerity practices made sense to them. Nevertheless, and perhaps unlike European and US urban or progressive elites (e.g., Sherman 2017a), Ipanema and El Condado elites

continued to value cultural nationalist practices, even when they were generally sympathetic to US imperial, corporate, and colonial influences.

Interlocutors in the El Condado sample led virtually the same lives that their own parents and even grandparents had led; they attended the same schools and clubs, grew up in the same neighborhoods, had the same occupations, knew the same families, married people they knew since childhood, and had dense social networks. I have never seen a more perfect example of what classical sociology has called "social reproduction" than what I witnessed in El Condado. In Ipanema, interlocutors followed more diverse social paths; some had grown up in Ipanema, whereas others had moved there as adults; none of them had attended the same schools, though some of their children did go to a handful of local private schools; some of them had inherited wealth and recognizable surnames, but others were the first in their families to pursue higher education and had earned their wealth. A few of the Ipanema interlocutors had experienced tremendous social mobility in their lifetime and invariably attributed such mobility to merit and personal effort (see Rockman 2014); many others, including a couple of El Condado interlocutors, had experienced a combination of paths to wealth, as well as downward and upward mobility trends over generations.

At times, in different parts of this ethnography, I propose that Ipanema and El Condado elites are a new type of elite, thus suggesting a historical or generational distinction in what constitutes being an elite in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is because, unlike older generations who unapologetically displayed and inhabited their wealth, the contemporary elites at the center of this ethnography were often aware of how wealth was globally associated with corruption and frivolous consumption. The broadening of a social sphere, coupled with these elites' determination to disavow such corruption and frivolity, further encouraged their continuous moral justifications and interiority projects. Unlike in their parents' or grandparents' generations, discussed in chapter 6, these contemporary elites felt they needed to justify their privilege, and they engaged in practical, psychological, and rhetorical projects to render their status and wealth moral.

The interlocutors in *Parenting Empires* tended to fashion themselves as politically and socially "progressive," and they viewed other Puerto Rican and Brazilian elites, including others in their neighborhoods but more frequently those who lived in gated communities or traditional upper-class US-style suburbs, as more conservative and less cosmopolitan. Importantly, though, even these characterizations were fluid, and from the beginning of my research in 2012 through its official end in 2017, I witnessed what some Brazilians have

called the "Right coming out of the closet" phenomenon. Some of the Puerto Rican and Brazilian elites in this ethnography gradually adopted more conservative political stances; tacit acceptance of the US-imposed Fiscal Control Board in Puerto Rico and explicit support of the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil were examples of this shift. A possible reading of this is that they were socially progressive but fiscally or politically conservative all along, but this was not always the case. Rather, they explained the crises in their respective countries largely in terms of the inherent corruption of politicians, almost to the exclusion of any other factors (e.g., financial sector, foreign interests).

On a final ethical note, concerns with confidentiality and anonymity are at the center of most ethnographic research. "Everybody knows each other here," claimed an El Condado parent when I assured him that I would use pseudonyms. The possibility of changing the names of the neighborhoods, the schools, the social clubs, and the other identifying landmarks and institutions at the center of my interlocutors' lives was a strategy to protect anonymity that was suggested to me in one of the preliminary presentations of this work. While I do use pseudonyms for individuals, I decided against anonymizing places for several reasons, including the fact that I am sympathetic to Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández's call for academics to adopt a "radically un/ethical position" when researching elites.[22] This un/ethical position might help us address difficulties articulating a structural, distributional critique, rather than an individualistic, behavioral one, "that no one deserves to have so much while others have so little, regardless of how nice or hardworking or charitable they are" (Sherman 2017b, 25), and, indeed, they were nice, hardworking, and charitable.

"I don't think I could deal with the snobbishness and First World problems of these people," my husband once remarked, echoing what other colleagues would also tell me upon learning of my research. And yet, that is the irony about researching "up": most of my interlocutors had the ability to be engaging, profound, laid back, and quite charming. I entered their spaces with the practiced ease of someone who hangs out in places similar to the ones frequented by Ipanema and El Condado elites. As an academic mom, it is not uncommon for me to spend time at neighborhood coffee shops with my laptop in the middle of a weekday, or to be (painfully) familiar with the world of playdates and concerted child cultivation.

I felt a sincere friendship and personal connection with many of the interlocutors in this ethnography, including Maribel Seijo, an El Condado resident. Talking with Maribel was like talking with some of my closest academic friends—both fun and intellectually stimulating without pretension. Toward

the official end of my fieldwork, in 2017, I was convinced that Maribel could tell that I was puzzled about her life choices; at the most basic level, I could not understand how she did not get bored staying at home, by herself, most of her weekdays. Sure, she attended Pilates classes, had lunch with friends she knew since elementary school, and was a member of a long-standing book club. Still, I found myself asking her, on several occasions, if she had ever thought of going back to work or considering graduate school or even volunteering. She would answer that, even when she thought about it, there had never been a financial need to motivate her, nor had she identified a clear "path" or "passion" for herself.

I interviewed a few mothers and fathers who considered parenting as a space for creative expression; they spent time building sophisticated architectural models with their children, hosting sleepovers, and decorating Pokémon cupcakes; planning elaborate princess birthday parties or seeking the best party planners and venues; who looked forward to going to a designer's atelier to see a daughter getting fitted for a formal gown. Maribel was not one of those parents. Her lack of a sense of competency baffled me: "I haven't put up that frame, because [my husband] has been very busy"; "We haven't finished planting those pots because I will need help holding the plant while I put in the dirt"; "I will wait until the weekend so that [my daughter] can come with me to take the dog to the vet." I came to interpret these common attitudes toward the mundane as a low threshold for discomfort. Sure, nobody likes to have to juggle heavy grocery bags in one hand and a barely folded stroller in the other, but oftentimes, for my interviewees, these levels of mundane discomfort were not even entertained. I found myself mourning the lives that some of these individuals, with all their resources, could have enjoyed had they better managed their tolerance for discomfort—the discomfort of work politics; the discomfort of doing things because you have to, not because you want to; the discomfort of daring to take risks and enduring rejection and failure. These instances, to me, highlighted the importance and inescapable ordinariness of affect, something central to an ethnographic praxis that is always funny and traumatic, poignant and mundane, about how anthropologists and their informants can embody a fully affective subjecthood during the ethnographic encounter.

At a rational level, the sadness I experienced toward Maribel, a wealthy, resourceful, and reasonably happy woman, was paternalistic, condescending, and misplaced. It also gave currency to what John Jackson (2010) calls a shift from ethnographic authenticity to ethnographic sincerity, which requires us to ask what sociocultural knowledge through immersion might leave in its wake and urges us to treat subjects/informants more robustly, as fully embodied and

affective interlocutors. As difficult as it was at times, I really tried to move beyond my impulse to judge elites in ways I could not imagine doing with the working-class interlocutors of my previous research, though I am not sure I always succeeded.

My interlocutors' practices of inquiry, familiarity with parenting language and expertise, and search for a form of relatedness in which their authority was established frequently challenged the analytic forms and methodological tools I brought to the field. It demanded acute attention to how individuals' perspectives manufactured political discourses and influence. Access to considerable material resources made a great deal of difference in the knowledge El Condado and Ipanema parents produced, the weight such knowledge production carried, and how I analyzed, produced, and conveyed my own knowledge about them. Daily political intrigues, discussions of corruption, indignity about top-down colonial and imperial impositions, and perspectives on a national crisis were neither abstract nor overly deterministic of the social field these elites inhabited. Personal actions and mobilization around the welfare of elite children provided El Condado and Ipanema parents, even those who did not belong to an official or elected political elite, an everyday language that aimed to break through forms and foreclosures imposed by broader national conditions and international agendas. The parents I met in Brazil and Puerto Rico had a clear, thorough understanding of their privileged worlds and charmed lives, of the social dramas they had to navigate, and of the kind of politics that would better serve their aspirations and interests.

The singularity of each fieldwork relationship is not simply established once but is continuously renegotiated through the course of the research, reflecting, and writing processes. This book is the result of an ethnographic fieldwork through which, in response to Clarice Lispector, I did "find it strange to be myself."

Book Overview

I view this ethnography as implicitly divided into three main sections, two chapters each, in addition to this introduction and the epilogue. In the first section, I situate each neighborhood's "child-centered nodules of urbanism" in the history, built environment, and urban planning of Ipanema (chapter 2) and El Condado (chapter 3), and in the political economy of Brazil and Puerto Rico. In these two chapters, I examine Ipanema and El Condado in contradistinction to affluent suburban and poor urban communities in Brazil and Puerto Rico, as well as to the foreign billionaires settling with their families in the neigh-

borhoods. Chapter 2, "The Feel of Ipanema: Social History and Structure of Feeling in Rio de Janeiro, " considers the social history and cultural narratives around Ipanema as a global, sensual, and aesthetically privileged neighborhood, while also examining how governance through parenting unfolded.

Chapter 3, "Parenting El Condado: Social History and Immaterial Materiality in San Juan," traces practices of parenting through the social history of El Condado and the adjacent traditional upper-class neighborhood of Miramar. An argument here is that all affluent urbanism is, necessarily, child centered. I show how child rearing has become almost inseparable from elite lifestyles, the cultivation of adult friendships, and the "feel" of a place. I also highlight parallels in my fieldsites by noting how, just as the upper-class suburb of Barra da Tijuca and Rio's favelas were constitutive outsiders to Ipanema, the suburb of Guaynabo and poor areas of Santurce served a similar symbolic function for El Condado parents.

In the second section of the ethnography (chapters 4 and 5), I examine interiority currency—the cultivation of psychological depth, emotional vocabularies, and spiritual formations among the elite. Gaining mastery over one's inner world, in all its presumed elasticity and potential for expansion, was at times a compensatory strategy for the national political instability and economic crisis that characterized Brazil and Puerto Rico during the time of my fieldwork. In chapter 4, "Whiteness from Within: Elite Interiority, Personhood, and Parenting," I examine how a tendency to psychologize the social (and a socialization of the psychological) manifested as a search for *afinidade* (affinity) in Ipanema and for *personas sencillas* (down-to-earth people) in El Condado. Ipanema and El Condado elites were invested in shifting the sociological field from the material to the metaphysical, in ways that altered local sociabilities and granted legitimacy to widening racial and class inequalities in both countries. Attributing certain therapeutic qualities to nature, being outdoors, and beachfront landscapes; deploying Orientalist narratives and genealogies; presenting an evolved masculinity as evidence of gender equality; and situating capitalist achievements in a language of miracles were critical tools for cultivating interiority currency as a white privilege project.

In chapter 5, "Schooling Whiteness: Adult Friendships, Social Ease, and the Privilege of Choosing Race," I examine how schools served as eminent spaces of parenting empires. In relation to school choice, discussions of religious versus secular culture, native-language education versus English-dominant instruction, and forms of relatedness forged contemporary versions of noblesse oblige. I argue that Ipanema and El Condado parents actively worked through their children's schools, and memories of their own schooling, as they aimed

to render their wealth as moral, deserved, and altruistic; more significantly, though, these experiences of schooling were central to various racial aesthetics and misrecognitions that arose as parents struggled over how much to expose their children to social and racial inequality.

The third and final section of the ethnography considers how parenting empires fostered familial and affective expectations of care across ethnic, regional, and racial lines, as Ipanema and El Condado parents enlisted other adults—namely, extended family members and domestic workers—to solidify everyday child-centered routines, socialization, and austerity ideologies. Within this moral economy of wealth, elites positioned themselves in relation to ethnoracial and regional Others, while also translating neoliberal state politics into austerity subjectivities. In chapter 6, "The Extended Family: Intimate Hierarchies and Ancestral Imaginaries," I examine how the grandparents' generation provided financial support and ancestral connections to highly valued ethnic heritages. A traditional Latin American cultural trope, the extended family served as a leading affective vessel through which Ipanema and El Condado parents explored resentment, gratitude, trauma, insecure adulthood, and ambivalence toward life choices, on the one hand, while securing racial and class privilege through connection to a family lineage and financial resources on the other.

In chapter 7, "Affective Power Inequalities: Childcare Workers and Elite Consumptions of Blackness," I examine the relationship between elites and domestic workers, particularly nannies. I identify the ways in which parents produced racialized intimacy and difference—simultaneous affective attachment and sociological detachment—with Dominican domestic workers in El Condado, and with dark-skin nannies from the Brazilian Northeast in Ipanema. I draw on distinct cultures of domestic work in Brazilian and Puerto Rican societies to analyze the formulation of whiteness in reference to *nordestinas* (women from the Brazilian Northeast) and *dominicanas* (women from the Dominican Republic). The epilogue revisits the framework of parenting empires and analyzes the relation between national draconian austerity measures and the US war on corruption in the Americas, while also considering the issue of judgment in research about Latin American and Caribbean elites.

notes

1. PARENTING EMPIRES

1. Zephyr Frank's work, for instance, uses inheritance records to flesh out the life of Antonio Jose Dutra, a slave sold from Angola who proceeded to build an impressive personal fortune in Rio de Janeiro in the 1830s and 1840s. Dutra was typical of middle-wealth holders, individuals of modest means who had gradually accumulated wealth by investing their capital in slaves. With the cessation of the slave trade and subsequent abolition of slavery in 1888, these middle-wealth holders were hit harder than the wealthiest inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro, who had invested instead in stocks and bonds and in urban real estate. Thus, as Frank demonstrates, while the abolition of slavery undermined the position of the middle groups and curtailed the social mobility of free blacks in Brazil, it did not have severe repercussions on the wealthier populations, whose wealth could be better assessed through ownership of urban real estate, not ownership of slaves. Julian Go argues that when the United States took control of the Philippines and Puerto Rico, in the wake of the Spanish-American War in 1898, it particularly targeted the wealthy, educated political elites in both colonies as collaborators. In both territories, US colonial officials built extensive public school systems and set up American-style elections and governmental institutions. Colonial officials aimed their lessons in democratic government at the political elite: the relatively small class of the wealthy, educated, and politically powerful within each colony. While they retained ultimate control for themselves, the Americans allowed the elite to vote, hold local office, and formulate legislation in national assemblies. Go assesses complex processes of cultural accommodation and transformation, which reveal how elites in both the Caribbean and the Pacific sought to "domesticate" the novel forms and language of the occupying power and redefine them as different from its Spanish colonial predecessor. Thus, Go calls attention to the various registers at which US colonialism operated; ultimately, the success of the US empire depended on how successfully its agents were at colonizing local culture and inducing cultural change.

2. Teresa Caldeira explains that, in São Paulo, particularly after the end of the Brazilian dictatorship in the late 1980s, there has been an increase in "crime talk" and fear of

violence among the upper classes. This preoccupation with crime has, in fact, changed the urban landscape, built environment, and notion of public space, while fostering the growth of gated communities, surveillance industries, and even a new aesthetics of securitization among elites. The São Paulo upper and middle classes in Caldeira's study have all but abandoned the detached house for high-rise apartment complexes in the center and gated communities on the periphery. The newer gated communities, or *condominios fechados*, are all-inclusive spaces, which provide an array of social, professional, and educational services and parallel institutions. On the infrequent occasions when São Paulo elites venture outside their walls, the very rich do so in helicopters and bulletproofed cars with armed bodyguards and specially trained drivers. Caldeira considers the challenges that these forms of social and spatial segregation pose to the consolidation of democracy and human rights in Brazil, while also noticing how the gated community has indeed become a global phenomenon. Zaire Dinzey-Flores describes the rise of gates in the Puerto Rican city of Ponce since the early 1990s. As the integration policy of the New Deal reform movement of the 1940s and 1950s failed, writes Dinzey-Flores, gates and fences emerged as mechanisms through which the wealthy could self-segregate in *urbanizaciones* (middle- and upper-class neighborhoods). More significantly, and departing from Caldeira's study of São Paulo, Dinzey-Flores shows how, in the Puerto Rican case, the government—through policies like Mano Dura contra el Crimen (Heavy Hand against Crime) in the 1990s—places walls around public housing complexes (*los caseríos*), where poor and racialized populations live. These low-income families see their access to and from the outside world shaped and limited by an architecture of exclusion and surveillance, designed not so much to protect them from crime, but to protect others from the crime that, for many Puerto Ricans, the government, and the media, low-income people have come to represent. The *urbanización* and the *caseríos* become emblematic of "types" of people—the hardworking or deserving versus the social welfare dependent or undeserving, the good citizen versus the denizen, and so forth. These types and culture wars, Dinzey-Flores demonstrates, are established on a tacit racial and racist logic that implicitly codes the space of the *caserío* as a space of blackness and crime.

3. Other important scholarship that explicitly deals with the question of whiteness in Brazil includes Iray Carone and Maria Aparecida Silva Bento's *Psicologia social do racismo: Estudo sobre branquitude e branqueamento no Brasil* (2002), Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz's *White Middle-Class Men in Rio de Janeiro: The Making of a Dominant Subject* (2018), and Vron Ware's 2004 edited volume on *branquidade* (whiteness) in Brazil. From an ethnographic perspective, Suzana Maia (2012) has examined the connection between Brazilian body aesthetics, national images, and whiteness. Also crucial to discussions of whiteness in Brazil is Guerreiro Ramos's 1957 article "Patologia social do 'branco' brasileiro," possibly the earliest academic approach to the subject in the Brazilian context. To my knowledge, there is no comparable ethnographic literature on whiteness in Puerto Rico, though scholars of race allude to the linguistic and political valorization of white skin on the island (e.g., Godreau 2000, 2015; Vargas-Ramos 2005).

4. Not coincidentally, Souza argues, the middle- and upper-class demonstrations against the incumbent Workers' Party, which were visible in Ipanema in the months leading up to Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, attributed the country's corruption exclusively

to the national government. Under Rousseff and her predecessor, Lula da Silva, Brazil witnessed the implementation of social welfare programs that had lifted tens of millions out of poverty, begun addressing racial discrimination through racial quotas in universities, and extended labor laws to protect domestic workers, including nannies.

5. A growing ethnographic literature focuses on the subjective aspects of middle-class belonging. While the focus of this research is the middle class, and even the global middle classes, they enable important, if indirect, comparisons to equivalent work that has focused on elites. See Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty's anthology, *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography* (2012).

6. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) views space not as "context" in which events and relationships unfold but as the very process of production of these relationships and social practices.

7. Elsewhere (Ramos-Zayas 2012), I argue that an emotion-based theory of practice renders aspects of individual interiority legible, while recognizing that such "interiority" is entangled in the power hierarchies of a political economy. Ipanema and El Condado parents, rather than viewing themselves as subordinate to the state, as was the case among the Newark working-class and immigrant populations, framed their "interiority currency" in light of racial and class privilege, which contributed to their production of everyday forms of sovereignty and valuing of austerity politics.

8. Although adults who do not have children are often as involved (if not more) in such deliberate "inner quests," parenting provides a socially uncontested morally privileged grounding, imagined along the lines of "altruism," "selflessness," and "sacrifice" in a way that not having children rendered difficult.

9. I realize that conspicuous consumption persists, and that the distinction between "conspicuous" and "inconspicuous" is by no means rigid, but I center on how elites tend to change their habits once the masses gain the ability to copy them.

10. Pierre Bourdieu expands understandings of social inequality by providing a broad theory of elite reproduction through tastes (consumption), associations (social capital), and dispositions (cultural capital). A focus on inculcation, articulated in the concepts of "doxa" (Bourdieu 1977, 166; 1984, 68) and "body hexis" (Bourdieu 1977, 124), accounts for conscious and unconscious bodily practices that become unquestioned. Michèle Lamont (1992) notes that marks of social distinction among the French and US upper-middle classes are based not only on socioeconomic and cultural practices, as suggested by Bourdieu, but also on moral ones "centered around such qualities as honesty, work ethic, personal integrity, and consideration for others" (4).

11. Norbert Elias (1994) examines how internalized "self-restraint," imposed by increasingly complex networks of social connections, develops the "psychological" self-perceptions that Freud recognized as the "super-ego." Elias shows that habitus was the outcome of long-term historical process, rather than the natural constitution of the nation or cultural group. He calls these distinct sociological, historical, and intimate connections between a macro structural level and contemporary modes of conduct and emotional disposition "the process of civilization." Elias does not address how individuals get to control their emotions, or how the lack of successful control of emotions has different consequences for different populations (cf. Berg and Ramos-Zayas 2015). I owe

this reflection on elite futurity to a conversation with anthropologist Edgar Rivera Colón (personal correspondence, February 8, 2019).

12. Adam Howard (2010) moves beyond a conception of privilege as a commodity, which has dominated the body of scholarship on elite education, to understanding it as an experience more intrinsic of who a person is or has become.

13. Joseph Tobin (1995) argues that contemporary bourgeois approaches to early childhood education stress the substitution of techniques of verbal expression for other more genuinely child-centered emotionality. Contemporary "therapeutic culture" of child rearing is in fact deeply ambivalent about emotions, by emphasizing the value of emotional expression while demanding strict emotional control.

14. Carla Freeman's study (2014) of middle-class Barbadian entrepreneurs, while not directly *about* parenting, notes a recent emphasis on children as "projects," requiring not only strict discipline, good manners, and proper behavior, but also the cultivation of new modes of expression and creativity, open communication, warmth, and care. This shows a radical revision of the affective culture of child rearing that Freeman's interlocutors recalled from their own childhoods.

15. The process of making the child through "concerted cultivation" is part of a broader neoliberal project that emphasizes individual responsibility and self-management alongside a focus on managing risk. As sociologist Annette Lareau (2002) shows, children in upper- and upper-middle-class families are taught to question authority, engage in constant negotiation with their parents, and, through their various engagements, become socially adept. More recently, "intensive parenting has been associated with depression in mothers, suicide in teenagers, and overall deficiencies in raising self-reliant, independent young adults (even linking this to the boomerang effect, college graduates returning to live with their parents [e.g., Marano 2008; Rosenfeld and Wise 2010]). "Intensive motherhood," a term Sharon Hays introduced in 1996 to describe an emergent ideology urging mothers to "spend a tremendous amount of time, energy and money in raising their children" (1996, x), had been spun off in almost comedic renditions. In journalistic, autobiographical, and the new genre of "mommy" literature, terms like "hyperparenting," "Tiger Moms," and "helicopter parenting" provide imaginative counterparts to Margaret Mead's culturalist perspectives on child rearing in Samoa and around the globe.

16. As Argeo Quiñones-Pérez and Ian Seda-Irizarry (2016) note, the 2015 "Fiscal Stabilization and Economic Growth Plan" for Puerto Rico proposed various neoliberal prescriptions dating from the time of the Tobin Report, while adding others like negotiating debt restructuring with bondholders, obtaining federal concessions with more Medicare and Medicaid, and obtaining exemption from cabotage laws. They conclude, "The Puerto Rican economy has become a model of extreme capitalist wealth extraction. . . . Meanwhile the share of profits and interest [is increasingly] going to local extractive elites, mostly intermediaries of global financial capital and other fractions of capital" (97–98).

17. The United States was instrumental in staging the 1964 military coup against a democratically elected left-wing Brazilian government devoted to the distribution of wealth for social welfare. Regional interference practices in response to domestic crises in Latin America gained legitimacy in the post–Cold War era (Coe 2015). For

the next twenty-one years, the United States continued to support a military dictatorship that served its economic interests, while vehemently denying that it played any role in the coup.

18. The peculiar ways in which US white male academics relate to Brazil and all things Brazilian, including Brazilian (female) spouses, deserves attention, but this is beyond the scope of this project.

19. After India and the United States, Brazil had the highest number of Facebook users at 90.11 million in 2016 (Young 2013).

20. Sally Falk Moore makes a plea for a comparative anthropology that does not insist on synchronic societal ethnographies or the production of typologies (2005, 2). She proposes a time-conscious, process-oriented approach to comparison to bring both context and cross-cutting themes into focus (10).

21. As part of the *Informe sobre desarrollo humano: Puerto Rico 2016*, a government study of human development and income distribution in Puerto Rico since 1990, Puerto Rican economist Marcia Rivera Hernández demonstrates that Puerto Rico has the fifth-greatest social inequality in the world, with a 2014 Gini index of .547, significantly above the US average of .481 (Instituto de Estadísticas 2017; Pacheco 2016; Toro 2008; cf. Mora Pérez 2015; Quiñones-Pérez and Seda-Irizarry 2016). Anecdotal references to the irony of a fiscal crisis, on the one hand, and "an abundance of luxury cars," on the other, were in fact backed up by statistical studies declaring that "more Porsches are sold in Puerto Rico than in the US, Brazil, and Argentina . . . in reality, more are sold in Puerto Rico than in any other country of America" (Pacheco 2016). Comparatively, the Gini index in Brazil fell from .607 in 1990 to .526 in 2012, a significant reduction in inequality that took place during the first decade of this century. At the time of my fieldwork, the most notable concentration of a new Brazilian middle class was in the Northeast of the country (43 percent). Brazil remained among the most unequal nations, occupying the eighteenth most unequal country in 2014 (Rockman 2014).

22. As Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2015) states, ethical responsibility to the (elite) participants should not override ethical responsibility to society. Throughout this project, I remain attentive to how research ethics are never innocuous to social standing; in fact, "the question of accountability is complicated by the fact that the rights of some groups to remain anonymous might conflict with the rights of others to know the processes involved in the reproduction of inequality" (Gaztambide-Fernández and Howard 2012, 298; see also Galliher 1980).

2. THE FEEL OF IPANEMA

1. Although the entire Zona Sul is considered a prestigious social area in Rio de Janeiro, within this area, Ipanema and Leblon are neighborhoods viewed as able to prevent problems related to modernization in ways that the neighboring Copacabana could not; hence, Ipanema residents live in constant fear that their neighborhood will become like Copacabana. They are keenly aware of these street-by-street or block-by-block distinctions and oftentimes described their own social position based on where they stood on this spatial status grid. See Velho (1978) 2013.