

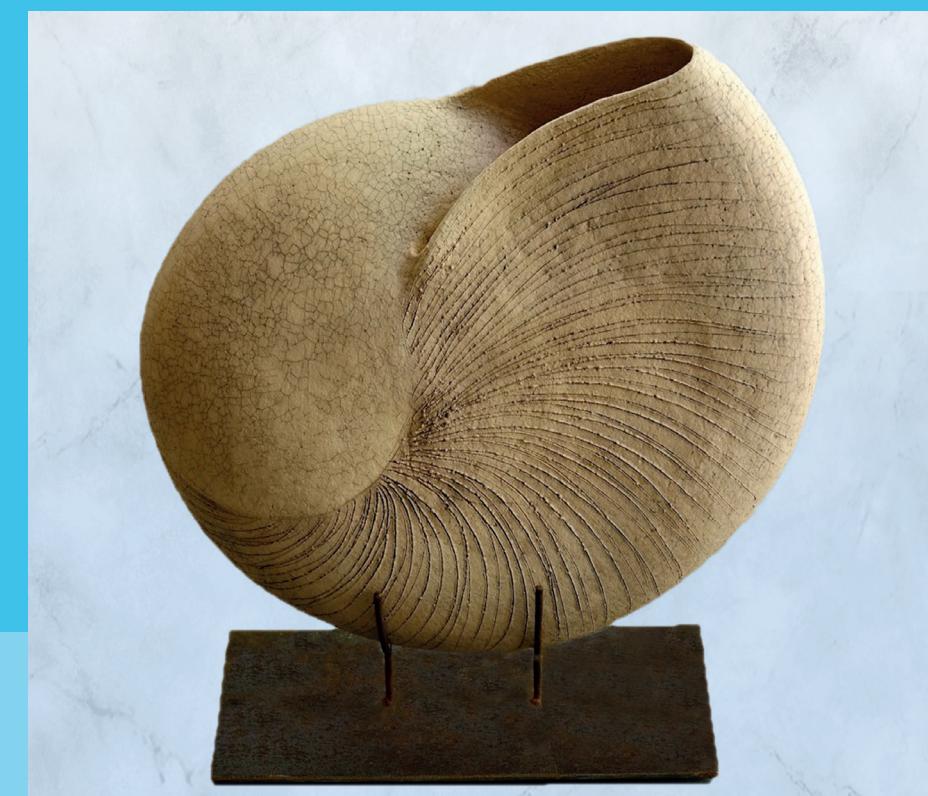
This volume, *Denaturalizing domination: Defying denial in the study of the languages, literatures and cultures of the greater Caribbean and beyond*, is a collection of peer reviewed articles that present a critical perspective on the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Greater Caribbean and beyond. The book is part of a two-volume set published annually since 2009, which provides a platform for recent writing from and about the Greater Caribbean in general in one volume and about the Dutch Caribbean in particular in the other. The contributing authors include a wide range of voices old and new from the Caribbean and beyond. The online versions of these volumes and the other 30 volumes in this series can be found on the Islands in Between website at <https://islandsinbetween.com/>, and at the Caribbean Languages and Culture Platform in the Partner Collections of the Dutch Caribbean Digital Platform of the Library of University of Curaçao at <http://dcdp.uoc.cw/icar plat>.

## Denaturalizing domination

# Denaturalizing domination

**Defying denial in the study of the languages, literatures and cultures of the greater Caribbean and beyond**

Edited by  
Nicholas Faraclas  
Ronald Severing  
Elisabeth Echteld  
Sally Delgado  
Wim Rutgers



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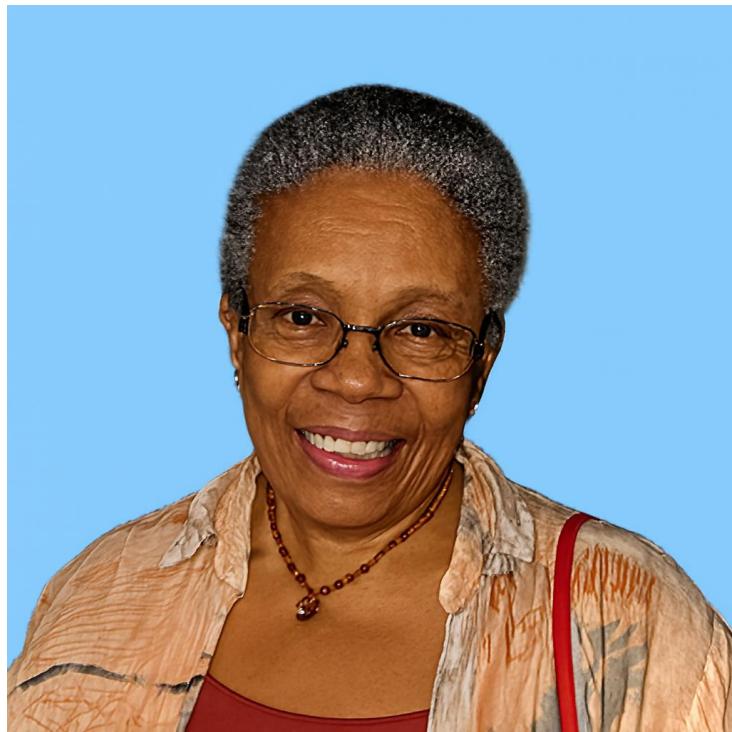


UNIVERSITY  
OF CURAÇAO  
DR. MOISES DA COSTA GOMEZ



Denaturalizing domination:  
defying denial in the study of the languages, literatures  
and cultures of the greater Caribbean and beyond

## DEDICATION



### **Dr. Marguerite-Joan Joseph (May 1953-April 2024)**

Born in Grenada, Dr. Marguerite-Joan (aka 'M-J') Jospeh was an island scholar who was actively engaged in reviving the Island's French patois (Grenada French lexifier creole). She established the Grenada Creole Society in 2009 which became a center for researching, documenting, promoting and teaching the language. Dr. Joseph wrote three books and penned two chapters in edited volumes on Grenada French lexifier creole as well as composing some songs in the language.

M-J received her doctorate at the University of the West Indies and became the first female obstetrics and gynaecology specialist in Grenada. Dr. Joseph worked with the Ministry of Health in Grenada from 1992 to 2012. Her colleagues all agreed that her "level of commitment and service were unmatched". She had so many plans.

We all miss you M-J. May you rest in eternal peace.

**Denaturalizing domination  
defying denial in the study of the languages, literatures  
and cultures of the greater Caribbean and beyond**

Volume 2

Edited by

Prof. Dr. Nicholas Faraclas

Prof. Dr. Ronald Severing

Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Echteld

Dr. Sally. Delgado

Prof. Dr. Wim Rutgers



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OF CURAÇAO  
DR. MOISES DA COSTA GOMEZ



Curaçao/Puerto Rico 2024

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Volume 2

Edited by Nicholas Faraclas, Ronald Severing, Elisabeth Echteld, Sally Delgado and Wim Rutgers

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See more at: <https://ellenspijkstra.com/2022/04/08/cocooning-april-2020-may-2021/>; [www.ellen-spijkstra.com](http://www.ellen-spijkstra.com).

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## **Introduction and acknowledgements**

The two publications: *Denaturalizing Domination: Defying Denial in the Study of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Greater Caribbean and Beyond* together with *Denormalizing Disinformation: Defying Denial in the Study of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch Caribbean and Beyond*, contain a collection of articles that present a critical perspective on the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Greater Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora. The contributing authors include a wide range of voices old and new from the Caribbean and beyond.

This book forms part of a two-volume set, with this volume focusing on the ABC-islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao) and other parts of the (former) Dutch Caribbean, in particular, and the other volume focusing on the Greater Caribbean in general.

Together, these volumes provide a platform for researchers and other cultural workers whose work treats the islands, topics, and/or perspectives that traditionally receive less scholarly attention than others at professional conferences and in academic publications. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring that new voices with fresh points of view find a place in these volumes, alongside contributions by more well-established scholars. The online versions of these volumes and the other 30 volumes, together a total of 32 volumes published in this series between 2009 and 2024, can be found on the Islands in Between website at <https://islandsinbetween.com/> as well as on the Caribbean Languages and Culture Platform in the Partner Collections of the Dutch Caribbean Digital Platform of the Library of the University of Curaçao at <http://dcdp.uoc.cw/icarplat>.

This publication received generous support from the University of Curaçao.

The Editors



# **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE**



# **SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE LATEST WAVE OF COLONIZATION IN PUERTO RICO: “INVESTORS” AS THE NEW *CONQUISTADORES***

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## **Abstract**

This investigation explores how online discourse is used to promote and justify ideologies that displace and expropriate Puerto Ricans, especially in relation to real estate and property ownership, as well as how Puerto Ricans are resisting this. By highlighting the specific example of Kira Golden’s comments regarding Hurricane Maria, as well as the subsequent response to these, we can see how social media serves as a discursive tool that can both perpetuate inequalities and interrupt the narratives that many real estate investors are attempting to employ.

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**Key terms:** Puerto Rico, neo-colonialism, crypto-investors, real estate, tax breaks

## **Introduction**

Puerto Rico’s tax laws, such as Act 60 and Act 22, allow wealthy investors from the mainland United States to move to the island and pay significantly less income and capital gains tax than they would otherwise. These laws have been created under the claim that attracting wealthy investors to the island will improve Puerto Rico’s economy and benefit the citizens through job creation, improved infrastructure, and other forms of “development.” These benefits have yet to come to fruition in a significant way, leaving many locals questioning whether these laws are actually beneficial for the island as a whole. Kira Golden is just one of the opportunistic “investors” who has moved to Puerto Rico for these reasons, and she has recently garnered attention for publicly expressing that Hurricane Maria “was amazing for the island” (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 3:30), prompting numerous responses in opposition to this statement. While Golden

does not appear to have a public YouTube channel, she is frequently featured as a guest on other channels, which is the source of this now-viral clip.

Additionally, it has become quite common for opportunistic “investors,” such as Jerry Norton, to create social media content centered around discussing investment strategies, including personal experiences with living in Puerto Rico and information for accumulating wealth using the island’s resources. These “creators” also use their platforms to sell their own products and services, such as books/guides, consultations, and special events, as well as promote organizations that are affiliated with their network of opportunistic “investors.” As of February 2024, Norton’s YouTube channel has 486,000 subscribers.

Both Golden and Norton are associated with the Real Estate Investors Association of Puerto Rico (REIARICO), and Norton promotes this organization in at least one of his YouTube videos (Norton, 2021, see also Norton, 2022), while Golden has been featured as a guest speaker for their events. REIARICO regularly posts content on Instagram promoting their events and promising access to investment information and opportunities for members. One such event includes a bus tour in which people can purchase tickets to be shuttled around to view the island’s “opportunity zones” and potential investment properties. REIARICO published a video promoting one of these events on January 7, 2022, which was then picked up by an artist named Adrián Román a few days later. Román remixed the original REIARICO video by adding additional pictures and video footage and uploaded this to his Instagram account on January 12, 2022 in order to provide social commentary about this event.

Similarly, the Instagram account PR No Se Vende (2023) regularly posts infographics, images, and videos criticizing the current exploitative real estate practices and tax evasion laws in Puerto Rico. Many of these images look similar in design to the posts from organizations such as REIARICO, even adopting a logo that reads “Not Your Tax Haven” in the same font and style as the organization Discover Puerto Rico, which has long been criticized for attempting to convey a white-washed, sanitized, and Americanized version of Puerto Rico to tourists and outsiders. Each of these content creators offers insights into the discourse surrounding ownership, real estate, and expropriation on the island. Furthermore, these materials being posted publicly on social media add the element of interaction through comments.

### **Kira Golden and Hurricane Maria**

On January 26, 2019, Glenn Sutherland uploaded an episode of his podcast, *A Canadian Investing in the USA*, to YouTube, which featured Kira Golden as a guest (Sutherland, 2019). During this episode, Golden discussed her experience with property investments in Puerto Rico and even stated that “we had a big hurricane in 2017, and that was amazing for the island” (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 3:30). While this was only one portion of the podcast episode, this particular clip went viral on TikTok and other social

media platforms in early 2023. This clip, as well as other portions of the podcast episode and responses to Golden's statements, highlight opposing attitudes about real estate, investment, ownership, and expropriation on the island.

Golden's language points to Van Dijk's assertions about manipulation, stating that generalizations are one linguistic strategy used for this (Van Dijk, 2006). By generalizing "the island," Golden attempts to manipulate the audience into believing that Hurricane Maria was beneficial to Puerto Rico as a whole. Golden's viral statement also uses the subject pronoun "we" to refer to those affected by the catastrophic event that was Hurricane Maria. However, it is unclear who exactly she is referring to at first. Golden explains further:

So much opportunity, so much funding coming down, contractors are coming down, more tourism than we've seen in a long time. And so, our vacation rental properties are getting more demand on the island than they have before. (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 3:35)

In this sample, Golden implies that "we" is the community of investors on the island. This is clarified through the use of the possessive pronoun "our" to mention that rental properties are getting more demand, which would only be true for those who actually own rental properties. Through the use of these pronouns, Golden establishes what Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) refers to as the "interpersonal metafunction" (Schleppegrell, 2014), which in this case is a community of investors and/or potential investors, including both Sutherland and viewers of the video. It also becomes clear that Golden does not mean that the hurricane was good for the entire island, but rather her own community that has benefitted from the natural disaster. However, the language that she uses does not explicitly state this, which relates to Van Dijk's point that implications often involve deniability (2014, p. 597). By using the "we" and "our" pronouns, Golden is maintaining distance between herself and the majority of the island, but this is deniable through the clever manipulation of implication.

Golden also utilizes intensifiers such as "so much" and comparative adjective structures such as "more tourism" to emphasize just how "amazing" Hurricane Maria was for her and other opportunistic "investors," potentially even inspiring viewers to try their hand at investing in Puerto Rico. Additionally, the parallel structure through the use of "so much" and "coming down" adds emphasis to just how much "opportunity" is available on the island. In line with SFL, Golden reveals the ideational metafunction of her statements. Ideational metafunction refers to how experiences are communicated (Schleppegrell, 2014), which in this case involves emphasizing that Golden and other investors have benefitted tremendously from Hurricane Maria. Through both the interpersonal and ideational metafunctions, Golden is attempting to create meaning through language by associating a natural disaster with financial opportunity for her select community, which runs counter to the typical associations of natural disasters with death, destruction, and hardship.

However, Golden is not unaware of how detrimental the hurricane was for most of the local population. Before explaining how she has benefitted from this disaster, she states “I almost kind of feel like a jerk saying this, but no, not almost. I do feel like a jerk saying this. I mean, there are a lot of people who lost their homes” (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 3:52). The syntactic structure of this statement reveals an attempt to convey self-awareness, but this falls short given the context of the topic that Golden is discussing. Notably, Golden chose to say, “I do feel like a jerk,” which implies that she is not actually a jerk. The use of the verb “feel” paired with the intensifier “do” serves to create space between herself “I” and being a “jerk.” This suggests that Golden understands that what she is about to say is problematic, but that she does not view herself as a bad person for publicly saying it. This is further emphasized through Golden’s use of mitigating adverbials of degree beforehand, stating that she “almost kind of” feels like a jerk before affirming that she does, in fact, “feel like a jerk.” Thornborrow (2014) explains that Narrative Analysis can be used to understand how stories and narratives are conveyed. Before narrating her version of what occurred on the island after the hurricane, Golden utilizes this statement about being a jerk as a repair mechanism to save face.

After this statement, Golden laments that many local Puerto Ricans lost their jobs, could not pay their mortgages, and were unable to keep their homes, which were eventually seized by the banks. She goes on to explain how this situation has unfolded in her favor:

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But what it’s done is it’s created a glut of foreclosures and properties available to investors. And so, we’ve been snagging those properties. And quite frankly, insurance has taken a long time to pay a lot of people. So, by us taking back those properties and rehabbing them and then selling them all done, we actually think we’re sort of helping people get back on track and get back into a home that’s been repaired and in good condition and safe and secure to live in. (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 4:49)

Again, Golden uses the pronouns “we” and “us” to refer to those investing in real estate, which reveals that she identifies with this group rather than the island’s population as a whole in the context of Hurricane Maria’s aftermath. The phrase “we’ve been snagging those properties” uses the present perfect tense with the addition of *-ing* at the end of “snag” to create the present continuous tense and establish that “snagging” foreclosed properties is an ongoing practice that she and her associates have been doing since Hurricane Maria hit the island. The structure of the phrase “by us taking back those properties” reveals an attitude of entitlement, suggesting that these investors deserve to own these properties. The inclusion of “back” completely changes the meaning of this sentence. Without this adverb, the phrase would read as “by us taking those properties.” However, inserting the adverb “back” after the verb “taking” implies that these properties are being returned to their rightful owners, as if they belonged to Golden and her associates before the hurricane. This directly contradicts the use of the word “snagging,”

which indicates that Golden is obtaining properties quickly before others have the chance to do the same. The opposition of these two verbs--“snagging” and “taking back” -- exposes just how contradictory the discourse is that comes from opportunistic “investors” like Golden. On the one hand, they try to demonstrate their business savviness by showcasing how quickly and cleverly they can “snag” properties. On the other hand, they frequently reveal attitudes of entitlement, as the verb phrase “taking back” showcases.

Finally, the phrase “we actually think we’re sort of helping” indicates that Golden is aware that she and her associates are not truly helping local people on the island. The adverb “actually” provides contrast, indicating that she is aware that buying and selling properties that have been taken from local Puerto Ricans in the aftermath of a major hurricane might not seem like “helping” to the audience. Additionally, the use of the attenuating adverbial “sort of” expresses to what degree she and her associates are helping. This is an adverb of degree that can mean “somewhat” or even “not quite.” By including this adverbial, Golden reveals that they are possibly not quite helping, but she is presenting her ideas as if they are.

As the analysis of Golden’s statements so far suggests, she is attempting to convey a narrative that she has helped the island by investing in real estate after Hurricane Maria. Golden’s narrative is organized as if there was a hurricane that damaged the island, and then she jumped in to help by buying properties and “rehabbing” them. However, according to the video, she moved to Puerto Rico in 2014 and was already buying real estate for a profit well before the hurricane, which contradicts her overall narrative by admitting that she was actively seeking out investments. Additionally, through the use of the word “snagging,” it becomes clear that she jumped at this opportunity to obtain cheap real estate. Golden’s inclusion of adverbials is also used to recontextualize her actions. Instead of framing her actions as “snagging” real estate after a natural disaster, she is “actually sort of helping.” This also unmasks Golden’s attempts to manipulate the audience through positive self-presentation and convincing the targets that certain actions are in their best interest (Van Dijk, 2006).

However, it is notable that Golden is not necessarily trying to convince Puerto Ricans that these actions are in their best interests, but rather viewers who might have ethical concerns about engaging in disaster capitalism. Van Dijk mentions that repeated messaging is a tool of manipulation (2006, p. 370). While the message is not being repeated directly within Golden’s narrative, her ideas do contribute to the repetition of colonial discourses and mental models by claiming that her exploitation of the island for profit is something beneficial. This also relates to Van Dijk’s (2014) discussion about how mental models are formed and reproduced in discourse. For example, Golden is utilizing a capitalistic and exploitative mental model that deems personal financial gain at the expense of others as an “opportunity.” This is reflected in the context models that Golden utilizes. Van Dijk explains that context models refer to methods of

communication that are appropriate for a particular context (2014, p. 589). For instance, Golden assumes that her audience solely consists of like-minded investors or potential investors, so she depicts other peoples' suffering as opportunities for personal gain, flipping houses as "rehabbing," and profiting from this practice as "helping," under the assumption that the audience will accept this narrative at face value.

Sutherland responds to Golden's narrative with a simple "awesome" (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 5:18) before changing the subject. This reveals social attitudes through the omission of complex syntactic structuring. By simply responding with an adjective, Sutherland indicates that he accepts Golden's ideas as something positive, and then changes the topic of discussion as if everything that Golden said was acceptable. In this way, Sutherland endorses Golden's narrative through the acceptance of her statements.

For the remainder of the podcast episode, Sutherland and Golden discuss investment strategies, Golden's business, real estate options, and other related topics. Later in the episode, Golden encourages Sutherland (and indirectly, the viewers) to visit the island and "come on down, check out your real estate. Have a piña colada. Go see where Columbus landed" (Golden, cited in Sutherland, 2019, 11:36). These syntactic choices reveal the textual metafunction according to SFL (Schleppegrell, 2014), which is a YouTube Podcast. The use of the imperative tense here conveys a welcoming tone and invites Sutherland and the audience of the podcast to consider exploiting the island just as she has. Golden also uses a parallel structure of *imperative verb + object* to convey the casualness with which investors can come to Puerto Rico and buy up property--"check out your property, have a piña colada, go see where Columbus landed." The use of the possessive pronoun "your" is also revealing here, suggesting that the properties on the island already rightfully "belong" to investors who are interested in buying them. Furthermore, the suggestion to "see where Columbus landed" is all too fitting considering the colonial nature of Golden's practices. This statement serves as another instance of manipulative implication. Telling potential investors to "see where Columbus landed" has clear colonial undertones, but Golden could easily posit deniability, for example, by claiming that this is a common activity to engage in when visiting the island. Finally, the episode ends with Sutherland stating that he's interested in visiting to look at properties in Puerto Rico and that he was "thinking about going into like South Florida or something, but I'm like, you know what? If it's the same barriers I have going, to all the way to Puerto Rico and stuff like, you know, why not, right?" (Sutherland, 2019, 16:22). Sutherland's use of rhetorical questions implies that Golden has convinced him that investing in Puerto Rico is the most profitable option for him. The addition of "right?" after "why not" suggests that Sutherland is seeking one final instance of validation from Golden, thus contributing to her narrative through turn-taking. Golden affirms that Sutherland would make a better return on his investments in Puerto Rico and concludes her interview by saying "we'll see you down here in Puerto Rico" (Golden,

cited in Sutherland, 2019, 16:50). Once again, Golden uses the subject pronoun “we” and pairs this with the future tense to imply that Sutherland will undoubtedly be coming to Puerto Rico to invest.

Comments under the original video are almost all in opposition to Golden’s interpretation of Hurricane Maria, which substantially changes the social context of the video. Some comments include:

- **@izahmar:** Hurricane Maria was a deadly Category 5 hurricane that devastated Puerto Rico. There were about 4,000 deaths. We had no electricity for many months. Thousands of people lost their homes, and today there are still houses with roof awnings. Only a psychopath can call this event “amazing.” And the publication of expressions like these is something very irresponsible and shameless.
- **@mapitar:** This is obscene. Why publish this podcast?
- **@angelvelez2360:** Gentrifier get lost.
- **@elizabetheg5013:** #COLONIZERS

These comments express opposing attitudes to Golden’s statements, revealing that Golden’s context models were largely inappropriate for this audience. Although her context models might have been acceptable for the intended audience, that is not who the video primarily reached after going viral. Furthermore, these comments change some of the metafunctions of the video through interaction, regardless of who the intended audience was. For instance, the interpersonal metafunction is now a real estate investor explaining her tactics for engaging in disaster capitalism to an audience that experienced hardships after the hurricane. In terms of the ideational metafunction, commenters provide a contrasting experience of Hurricane Maria’s aftermath, which also challenges Golden’s narrative.

Similar to Golden, user @izahmar uses the subject pronoun “we,” but it is evident that this user is referring to those negatively impacted by Hurricane Maria instead of those profiting from it. Additionally, the sentence “Only a psychopath can call this event “amazing” places the modifier “only” before “a psychopath” to emphasize that someone who views a Category 5 hurricane as “amazing” is mentally unwell, which is a clear reference to Golden. In terms of SFL, this user is combatting Golden’s attempts to create meaning. While Golden tried to associate a natural disaster with financial opportunity, @izahmar uses language to create meaning by explaining that someone who thinks like Golden is a “psychopath.”

Furthermore, @izahmar both corroborates and rejects Golden’s narrative of what occurred after Hurricane Maria. This user asserts that many people lost their homes, which Golden also expressed in her narrative. However, the notion that Golden’s actions of purchasing homes and flipping them for profit have been helpful is called into question through the user’s recollection of how many people died, lost their homes, went without electricity, etc. @izahmar also uses prefixes and suffixes to hold Sutherland

accountable, calling the publishing of the podcast episode “irresponsible” and “shameless.” The prefix *ir-* and the suffix *-less* are used to express that Sutherland lacks both responsibility and shame and that the ideas he is using his platform to promote are highly problematic.

The user @mapitar converts her disapproval into a question, attempting to prompt Sutherland to reflect on why he felt it was appropriate to publish this episode in light of Golden’s statements, further revealing that the context models used in the video do not match those of the commenters. User @angelvelze2360 uses the *-er* suffix to personify those contributing to gentrification as “gentrifiers” and uses the imperative tense to command that they “get lost.” It is implied that Golden and Sutherland are “gentrifiers” in this context. User @elizabethcg5013 forgoes complex syntactic structure altogether, instead opting for a simple hashtag that reads “#COLONIZERS.” Similar to @angelvelze2360, @elizabethcg5013 uses the *-er* suffix to create a noun to label those who partake in colonization and uses the hashtag to imply that Golden and Sutherland should be tagged as “colonizers.”

It is relevant to note that Sutherland responded to very few of the comments that were critical of this episode, which evidences Thiesmeyer’s ideas about self-imposed silencing (2003a). In fact, he only responded to 3 comments in total, which are as follows. One user, @ClareDejong commented “Intresting [sic],” which Sutherland “liked.” User @carlossantiago246 commented “Great, Awesome!!!!!!” and Sutherland simply thanked the user. The only response to any opposition that Sutherland provided was to a comment from user @adrianasofia7160, who posted three “mad face” emojis. Sutherland responded with a comment asking, “What are u upset about?”. Responding to criticism with a question like this allows Sutherland to feign ignorance rather than address the content of his podcast episode directly, which evidences self-silencing (Wodak, 2003) in order to avoid accountability for giving Golden a platform for promoting colonial ideologies.

### **Golden goes viral**

While the original video only had 867 views as of February 2024, the clip of Golden discussing Hurricane Maria went viral when other creators posted it on TikTok and “stitched” it with their own commentary. For clarification, “stitching” is a practice used on some social media platforms where users can take a portion of another user’s video and combine it with a video of their own. This is often used to add commentary to clips from other creators. One such instance of this comes from a user named Adrián González Costa, who stitched Golden’s viral clip in February 2023 and then added a video expressing his thoughts about gentrification in the neighborhood of Rio Piedras (González Costa, 2023). As of February 2024, this video received 4731 “likes” and 242 comments, most of which expressed opposition to Golden’s ideas. Some of these comments include:

- **@dennise.2022:** *Incredible como nos venden* [Incredible how they sell us] (all translations are by the author, unless specified otherwise)
- **@elocin:** These videos hurts, they don't care it's all abt the money
- **@juleeann:** Did she really say that the hurricane was amazing for the island or for her white colonizing behind
- **@alyz.marieee:** Amazing???? *En serio??* [Amazing???? Seriously??]
- **@dreams\_to\_action:** I hope she takes pictures in la Perla at night.

The comment from user @dennise.2022 omits a subject, instead starting the comment with “*Incredible*,” implying that the whole situation between investors and locals is “incredible.” In this context, it is clear that “*incredible*” is being used to mean something shocking and negative. The structure “*como nos venden*” reveals social attitudes from the perspective of many Puerto Ricans. The use of “*nos*” as the object of the sentence, which is the “commodity” being sold, implies that Puerto Ricans are something that can be passively bought and sold. This statement acts as a reflection of and response to how opportunistic “investors” view the island, its people, and its resources, which is reinforced by Golden’s narrative. User @elocin uses the demonstrative pronoun “these,” indicating that there are numerous videos with content similar to the one from Golden. @elocin also uses the pronoun “they” as a means of imposing a particular identity onto a group of people, which in this case is people like Golden who are exploiting the island’s resources. Additionally, the omission of punctuation between the statements “they don’t care” and “it’s all abt the money” creates a sense of complacency—the fact that opportunistic “investors” only care about money is so obvious that adding clarity to the delivery of these statements through punctuation is unnecessary. Similarly, user @juleeann omits a question mark for the rhetorical question that she poses, since it is relatively obvious that Golden is not aligned with the interests of the whole island. Asking whether Hurricane Maria was “amazing for the island or for her white colonizing behind” brings up who Golden considers as “the island.” As previously established, Golden reveals through pronoun usage that she is aligned with opportunistic “investors” and not the island as a whole. @juleeann uses the intensifier “really” to suggest bewilderment, which is markedly different from how Golden and other opportunistic “investors” use intensifiers, primarily attempting to establish positive framing. However, the comment from @juleeann uses an intensifier for disbelief and negative framing, which is seen in several other comments opposing Golden’s statements. @juleeann also uses cumulative adjectives, including the addition of the suffix *-ing* to transform “colonizing” into an adjective. This is used to describe Golden’s “behind” as “white” and “colonizing,” adding to the negative framing that the comment establishes.

User @alyz.marieee does the opposite in terms of punctuation, adding multiple question marks after each of the rhetorical questions. This has a similar effect to the previous comment by establishing a tone of distaste and disbelief. However, instead of using intensifiers, @alyz.marieee adds emphasis through the overuse of punctuation. Finally,

user @dreams\_to\_action uses the phrase “I hope” to express a (probably theoretical) desire that Golden will take “pictures in la Perla at night.” This comment highlights the importance of context since it is well-known that taking photos in the neighborhood of La Perla can lead to dangerous confrontations from the locals who reside there. Furthermore, this choice of scenario reveals mental models shared among Puerto Ricans since La Perla is a traditionally lower-income neighborhood that has garnered attention from tourists and investors in recent years due to its proximity to Old San Juan, a popular tourist area. It is actually quite possible that someone like Golden would find themselves in La Perla for either investment or recreational purposes but would lack the socio-cultural context to behave appropriately, thus potentially being confronted with problems by residents who have been fiercely (and thus far successfully) resisting gentrification for decades. In this way, hoping that Golden “takes pictures in la Perla at night” perfectly references the many of the social, political and cultural contradictions in Golden’s discourse praising opportunistic investment.

The comments under this video (and many others) are all similar in their opposition to Golden’s remarks. Like the comments under Sutherland’s original YouTube video, these challenge Golden’s narratives about how the hurricane impacted the island. However, the responses on TikTok do have some differences compared to those from YouTube. In terms of the interpersonal metafunction, these comments are not intended to address Golden or Sutherland directly, but rather to express meaning in the context of an audience made up of Puerto Ricans that oppose Golden’s narrative. Furthermore, the context models used take this into account. Since Golden probably will not see these comments directly, they are quite harsh and even imply that Golden should see some consequences for her words and deeds, as evidenced in the comment referring to taking pictures in La Perla. Thiesmeyer (2003b) explains how silencing promotes discourses that are “outside of discursive norms,” such as the La Perla comment. This comment operates outside of discursive norms by suggesting violence. However, this is due to continuous silencing from multiple angles. The government, private organizations, and wealthy individuals consistently refuse to acknowledge the concerns and struggles of many local Puerto Ricans, and even exasperate these struggles, as Golden demonstrates in Sutherland’s video. In this way, Puerto Ricans might choose to interrupt discursive norms to have their message heard, which can take the form of implied violence, negative labeling (colonizer, gentrifier, etc.), and profane language.

Van Dijk (2014) emphasizes that different forms of knowledge contribute to the creation of mental models. For example, social knowledge among Puerto Ricans involves understanding that many outsiders come to Puerto Rico primarily for financial gain. This is stored in the “semantic memory” since this occurs repeatedly (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 588). In this way, many Puerto Ricans can recognize certain language choices and tactics related to this since these are stored in semantic memory. This also relates to Van Dijk’s ideas about how repeated experiences contribute to knowledge and the formation of

mental models. The commenters who saw the viral clip of Golden have likely encountered this attitude before, which explains why it evoked such strong reactions. Golden's language use and overall attitude are not isolated incidents, but rather they embody the manner in which many opportunistic "investors" think about the island. In relation to Wodak's (2014, p. 525) ideas about backstage discourse, Golden is blurring the line between public and private discourse. While the actions of opportunistic "investors" have always evidenced their intentions and attitudes, this is rarely expressed publicly in such a blatant manner. However, through the use of social media, opportunistic "investors" are now openly sharing their thoughts, tactics, and ideologies in ways that are accessible to the general public. As a result, Puerto Ricans who already have mental models in place regarding this are publicly responding not only to Golden but to the entire system that allows people like her to exploit them.

### **"Amazing"**

The viral clip of Golden was stitched countless times on TikTok as it gained traction, prompting one user only known as "Valerie" (Valerie, 2023) to participate and add footage from their own experience during Hurricane Maria. The clip of Golden is cut off right after she says the phrase "amazing for the island," and then Valerie's clips are shown with the song "Amazing Grace" playing in the background. Some of Valerie's footage include:

- A dark room without power and the text "Amazing Lowlight" (Valerie, 2023, 00:09).
- A shattered glass door and the text "Amazing "Glass Confetti" thrown at you" (Valerie, 2023, 00:13).
- People walking around with bags of ice and the text "Amazing Refreshments AKA Ice Lines" (Valerie, 2023, 00:32).
- Children eating a meal with lit candles beside them and the text "Amazing Candlelight Non-Perishables Dinners" (Valerie, 2023, 00:46).
- A long line of people waiting outside and the text "No one could get enough of the amazing refreshments! Everyone came back every f%\*+g day" (Valerie, 2023, 00:53).

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The clips and text that Valerie provided were obviously meant to provide contrast to the worldview that Golden peddles online. Valerie repeatedly uses the adjective "amazing" as a reference to Golden's viral statement and uses positive framing as a means of sarcasm. For example, when showing an image of broken glass, this is labeled as "Glass Confetti" and when showing people carrying bags of ice (since they did not have refrigeration after the hurricane), this is referred to as "refreshments." This highlights how opportunistic "investors" try to establish narratives by using language that does not correspond with reality. In the last clip, Valerie shows a long line of people waiting for ice and includes the text, "No one could get enough of the amazing refreshments! Everyone

came back every f%\*+g day.” This is where the video finally addresses the facade being presented by using censored profanity. The use of “f%\*+g” before the word “day” serves as an intensifier that provides negative framing while the rest of the statement continues to offer a parodied version of positive framing through the adjective “amazing” and nouns that do not correspond with what is actually being shown in the clips.

This video skillfully uses implication to challenge Golden’s narrative that Hurricane Maria was “amazing” for Puerto Rico. Valerie never explicitly addresses Golden or makes commentary in opposition to her statements, but the message is implied through sarcasm. In this way, Valerie is self-silencing to parody Golden’s language choice. Thiesmeyer (2003a) defines silencing as the removal and replacement of language, which is exactly what Golden does when she calls the hurricane “amazing” or describes her predatory investment practices as “helping.” In response to this, Valerie shows clips of the hardships endured after Hurricane Maria and labels them with language that does not match the footage being shown, which parodies what investors like Golden do when they attempt to use positive framing to normalize narratives of exploitation.

### **Bianca Graulau responds**

A few months after Golden’s statements went viral, independent journalist Bianca Graulau referenced Golden’s viral clip in a post on TikTok in April 2023 (Graulau, 2023). As of February 2024, Graulau’s post has received 13,900 “likes” and 404 comments. In this short video, Graulau explains that she is working on a story that made her “think about how an event that was so devastating for some could turn Puerto Rico into such a gold mine for others because that investor is not the only one” (Graulau, 2023, 00:13). This quote organizes the sentence in a way that offers a comparison of two different narratives. Graulau’s structuring of this statement aligns chronologically with the unfolding of Hurricane Maria and its aftermath. She states first that the hurricane was “so devastating for some” before mentioning how it “could turn Puerto Rico into a gold mine for others.” Additionally, Graulau’s use of intensifying adjectives mirrors both that of the investors and those in opposition to them. She states that the hurricane was “so devastating,” which emphasizes the impact of this event on local people, while also stating that Puerto Rico is “such a gold mine,” which highlights just how much investors can benefit from the island. However, this is being used to achieve negative framing rather than positive framing, which helps to establish the meaning of the language being used to discuss financial gain through investment on the island. For instance, words such as “gold mine” or “opportunity” might carry negative associations for local Puerto Ricans in this context due to semantic memory.

Graulau goes on to say that:

I’ve been watching a lot of clips of investors saying that they moved to Puerto Rico after the hurricane because they knew what would happen. They knew that

property values were going to drop, that they could buy a lot of real estate for cheap and ride that wave up. And they've done that. They say they can't believe just how much cheaper property is here and how they've been able to flip those properties and sell them for a lot more. On top of that, they're getting tax breaks and incentives from the government that's actively inviting them to move here. On the other side of that, of course, is Puerto Ricans who lost family members who had to leave Puerto Rico though, because they just couldn't afford to go so long without electricity and water. (Graulau, 2023, 00:24)

In this portion of the video, Graulau uses a mix of verb tenses to establish a particular narrative concerning disaster capitalism. She uses the present perfect continuous tense to first establish an ongoing trend of opportunistic “investors” posting online about how they have benefitted financially by moving to Puerto Rico. Then, she uses the simple past tense to explain that these investors definitively “knew what would happen” in terms of being able to benefit after a natural disaster. She also uses the present perfect tense to reiterate this point by saying that “they've done that” in reference to moving to the island, investing in cheap real estate after a disaster, and profiting from this. Similar to the simple past, the present perfect tense provides a sense of permanence in relation to the action. The actions of these investors have unquestionably occurred. This same effect is employed when mentioning that “they've been able to flip those properties and sell them for a lot more.”

Graulau uses comparative and superlative adjectives to emphasize how much investors are benefiting from the island, similar to how Golden also used these. For example, stating that that property is “much cheaper” after the hurricane and that these investors can sell their property for “a lot more.” However, as mentioned when analyzing Graulau’s opening comment, this contributes to neutral or even negative framing rather than positive framing. Graulau also uses the active voice to explain that the investors “are getting tax breaks and incentives from the government.” By using this structure, the investors are the actors in terms of receiving tax incentives and it makes it clear that opportunistic “investors” are active participants in this exchange. Furthermore, Graulau uses the adverb “actively” to demonstrate the government’s role by stating that the government is “actively inviting” investors to the island. The suffix *-ly* creates an adverb and the suffix *-ing* puts “inviting” into the present participle form, which expresses that this is an ongoing practice. This is used to highlight the mutually profitable relationship that investors and the government have established.

However, Graulau quickly demonstrates that this mutually beneficial relationship between the government and investors is not necessarily beneficial to local Puerto Ricans. She begins by using the phrase “on the other side” to establish contrast. She then uses the simple past tense to explain exactly what has happened, which is that many Puerto Ricans lost family members and had to leave the island. She also employs intensifiers such as “just” and “so” to demonstrate how difficult the situation was for many. In terms

of structuring, this section is interesting because it uses reverse chronological order. In contrast to her opening statement, Graulau explains how investors have benefitted after Hurricane Maria and then circles back to discussing local Puerto Ricans' experiences. This leaves the listener reflecting on the situation of these people rather than the "successes" of investors, which makes sense considering the interpersonal metafunction being presented. Graulau's video is primarily intended for other Puerto Ricans or those interested in knowing about issues in Puerto Rico, since this makes up a significant portion of her content online. The textual metafunction is a TikTok, which is a short video (around 1-2 minutes), so the information is condensed to fit the time limit. Graulau also attempts to maintain her role as a journalist and reporter by offering insights into the narratives of both investors and Puerto Ricans. However, the organization in which her narrative is presented clearly challenges the narratives of investors while corroborating those of local Puerto Ricans. This is not surprising considering Graulau's background as a Puerto Rican herself who experienced the effects of Hurricane Maria, and the fact that the narratives from opportunistic "investors" are often not grounded in reality. Graulau ends the video by explaining that she is doing a story about local Puerto Ricans who occupied property during the aftermath of Hurricane Maria to grow food and provide other community resources. She mentions that oftentimes, these properties are already owned by investors, but being occupied by locals for survival, which leads to conflicting interests and the question of "who gets to keep them"? (Graulau, 2023, 01:38). The question posed at the end of her video leaves the listener with uncertainty about the island's future, reflecting real-life concerns about whether Puerto Rico will remain a place for Puerto Ricans. In this way, Graulau is creating meaning about ownership through the questioning of the island's fate.

Graulau's response to Golden's viral clip is significant because she is a well-known figure in Puerto Rico. Wodak (2014) explains that people are more networked together than ever before, which allows us to communicate opinions and consume information very quickly. As backstage discourse becomes more accessible through the internet, creators with large followings, such as Graulau, can respond to these discourses and challenge the narratives being offered in a more "official" capacity than those who leave individual comments. Furthermore, the viral clip of Golden shows just how easily the internet can contribute to the revealing of backstage discourse. While Sutherland's video was originally published in 2019, it was discovered by local Puerto Ricans in 2023 and went viral as a result. Within just a few months, numerous creators with substantial followings responded to it.

Wodak (2014) mentions the concept of "e-democracy", which she explains is a tool that can increase democratic participation. As seen in the case of Golden's viral clip, the internet was used as a tool to resist the narratives presented by Golden and other investors, even prompting creators with large followings, such as Graulau, to discuss this publicly and collaborate in the narratives coming from Puerto Ricans.

## REIARICO Recruits

During the same month that Graulau's video was posted, REIARICO posted a series of infographics on their Instagram page promoting investment in short-term rentals, which contained the following text (Real Estate Invest Puerto Rico, 2023):

- Did you know? Puerto Rico saw a 300% increase in Airbnb bookings from 2019 to 2021.
- The average daily rate for an Airbnb rental in Puerto Rico is \$118 per night.
- On average, Airbnbs on the island run at 60% occupancy.
- PR Airbnb hosts earned over \$100million in 2021.

The last slide of the post says, “Join us at our Real Estate Investor’s Association and learn how to maximize your rental income!” (Real Estate Invest Puerto Rico, 2023) and then includes event information.

This series of infographics uses colorful designs and bold text that are intended to catch attention. The language in the images reflects this using the rhetorical question “Did you know?”. This post also uses adverbs and comparative adjectives alongside numbers and percentages to create a narrative that investors will see significant returns on property investments in Puerto Rico. For example, “300% increase,” “average daily rate...[of]... \$118 per night,” and “over \$ 100 million.” The last slide uses the imperative tense to encourage viewers to join the Real Estate Investor’s Association to “maximize your rental income,” once again indicating that this is a worthwhile opportunity to invest in.

The post’s caption further encourages viewers to join the event, stating:

Whether you’re a seasoned host or just starting out, our events are designed to provide valuable insights and tips on how to succeed in the Puerto Rican Airbnb/ Real Estate market. From pricing strategies to acquisition walkthroughs, our community will share their knowledge and experience to help you take your rental business to the next level. Don’t miss out on this opportunity to network with other hosts and learn from the best in the industry. Register for our next event today and let’s build your Airbnb business together! (Real Estate Invest Puerto Rico, 2023)

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The caption utilizes the possessive pronoun “our” to create a sense of community and exclusivity—if you are not in the organization, you are not part of this “our.” The use of comparative and superlative adjectives is present again, promising to take the viewer’s business to the “next level” and provide advice from the “best in the industry.” The caption also uses parallel structure in the first two sentences with the use of either a conjunction or preposition, followed by two options, and then ending with a descriptive statement of their services. This structure not only catches the viewer’s attention but also ensures that REIARICO is catering to a wide range of potential investors. Finally, the caption ends by once again using the “us” pronoun, but this time including the viewer by stating “let’s build your Airbnb business together!.” By adding “together” at the end

of the sentence, this makes it clear that the viewer can be part of this community (if they sign up and pay).

Similarly to Golden, REIARICO is attempting to recruit potential investors by painting a picture of easily accessible real estate, an exclusive community, and substantial profits—all of which contrast significantly with the local population’s experiences. Despite the ongoing discourse in response to Golden, REIARICO chose to press forward in promoting their ideology of exploitation in the name of profit, further contributing to the repetition of (neo-)colonial discourses and the revealing of backstage discourse. This post makes similar assumptions to that of Golden since the interpersonal metafunction involves like-minded investors, while the ideational metafunction utilizes data relating to experiences that are only true for a particular group of wealthy individuals, especially in the midst of a housing and displacement crisis on the island (Suarez et al., 2022). The textual metafunction organizes the texts by first presenting information designed to catch the viewers’ attention, then later explaining that viewers must join this organization to receive the benefits that are being promised.

This post embodies Wodak’s (2014) ideas about backstage discourse and Van Dijk’s (2006) ideas about manipulation. While REIARICO may not be expressing information that they feel should be private, they make it extremely clear that their organization utilizes backstage discourse that requires membership to access, which is one of the primary tactics of their recruitment strategy. This relates to Van Dijk’s (2006) assertion that manipulation must occur through the use of social groups rather than individuals. In this way, REIARICO affirms Golden’s mental models and ideological framework through the active recruitment of people to join their organization, and thus, the larger social group of wealthy investors in Puerto Rico. Additionally, as Van Dijk (2006) points out, the most influential version of manipulation is that which focuses on more abstract models instead of specific mental models. While REIARICO never responded to Golden’s viral clip or publicly mentioned anything about investing after Hurricane Maria, they do sustain mental models that promote endless plunder of the island since this leads to quick and easy profits, which is the exact type of mental model that disaster capitalists internalize to justify their actions. As Wodak (2014) explains, the same concept of ‘e-democracy’ that allowed Puerto Ricans to challenge Golden’s ideas can also be used for “reproducing forms of social inequality and exclusion” (p. 531), as REIARICO perfectly showcases.

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# CECILIA ALDARONDO'S DOCUMENTARY *LANDFALL* AND VOICES OF RESISTANCE TO NEO-COLONIAL DISCOURSES OF DEPENDENCE IN PUERTO RICO

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## Abstract

The main body of the counter-discourse analyzed in this article was collected from the documentary *Landfall*, which was directed by Puerto Rican filmmaker Cecilia Aldarondo (2021), in which there is a focus on a meeting that occurred during an “investor”-sponsored “Restart Week” that was organized in 2018 to promote crypto-investment, gentrification, real estate flipping, and the other neo-colonial strategies in Puerto Rico. During this meeting, “investors” were met with opposition from local residents. While crypto-investors would like to believe that they are innovative in bringing change to Puerto Rico, it is actually local people who best understand their own history, present and future in order to create systems that are maximally equipped to help them establish and sustain lives free from coloniality, domination and dependence.

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**Key terms:** Puerto Rico, dependence, documentary, crypto-investors, resistance

As Law 20 and Law 22 of 2012 slipped quietly into existence in Puerto Rico, most of the location population was unaware of the changes that would be brought about once these two laws were fully merged into Law 60 of 2019. This new law allows for private investors and companies to pay zero percent on Capital Gains tax if they live on the island for at least six months per year and conduct business from the island. While for a time it seemed that these tax haven laws would go mainly unnoticed, there were numerous factors that have finally brought this law to the forefront and allowed for direct opposition from the public. Before Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico on September 16, 2017, most protests were focused against the new Fiscal Control Board (*La Junta*) that was put into place in 2016 by then U.S. President Obama. The law was seen as just another form of outside control of Puerto Rico, its budget and its ability to self-govern.

In other words, La Junta was just another colonial regime. However, after the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria, and the devastation left in its wake, Puerto Ricans were waking up to the fact that:

[T]he story that we've been passed from generation to generation is America is going to protect us, is going to provide, is going to, when it matters, they can defend us, and then when it mattered, they couldn't get people here. I think it was just a great moment of a story collapsing. (Davis, 2018)

The main body of the counter-discourse analyzed in this article was collected from the documentary *Landfall*, which was directed by Puerto Rican filmmaker Cecilia Aldarondo and released on July 7, 2021. In order to analyze the counter-discourse that appears in this film, it is imperative to define decolonization and decoloniality. In Nelson Maldonado-Torres's (2021) paper titled *Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality*, he refers to decoloniality as:

efforts to rehumanize the world, to break hierarchies of difference that dehumanize subjects and communities and that destroy nature, and to the production of counter-discourses, counter-knowledges, counter-creative acts, and counter-practices that seek to dismantle coloniality and to open up multiple other forms of being in the world. (p. 10)

In this documentary as well as in a previous documentary titled *Is there a revolution brewing in Puerto Rico?* (Davis, 2018), there is a focus on a meeting that occurred during an “investor”-sponsored “Restart Week” that was organized to promote crypto-investment, gentrification, real estate flipping, and the other neo-colonial strategies in 2018 in Rincón. During this meeting, “investors” were met with opposition from local residents. Although the names of the opposition figures were not given, there were four women of varying ages who arrived at a Restart Week event to be the voices of resistance. The first woman who spoke up is not a local Puerto Rican but identified herself and her viewpoint by stating:

I am not Puerto Rican. I'm African. A lot of Puerto Ricans are African, so I can speak as an African here in Puerto Rico. The scramble for Africa just ended not too long ago, and it began sort of like this, where people came in and they say, ‘We want to support you. We want to have an economical relationship’ and then all of a sudden, things do not go very well. We don't need a savior, coming in a white skin and blue eyes. We don't need saviors. (Aldarondo, 2021)

These statements are blatantly calling out the obvious history of the African continent and the Americas. The tone of voice which is used is unwavering and resolute in its message. Another woman joins in this strong resolve by claiming loudly, “You didn't have an interest in Puerto Rico until the tax breaks came, and that's why you're here!” (Aldarondo, 2021) In a book titled *Methodology for the Oppressed* (Sandoval & Davis, 2008), Sandoval reiterates Fanon's words:

Identifying and naming the dominant culture a ‘white society and European culture,’ and defining its construction of racial identities as a chiasmic relation between ‘black skin and white masks,’ are social interventions designed to challenge the legitimacy of dominant ideology. (p.1064)

Once the microphone is handed over by the emcee to a local Puerto Rican woman, she explains her viewpoints to the group of majority male crypto-investors by stating, “You’re making it seem like all the children in Puerto Rico need to be well-versed in technology, and that is not the case. What they need to be well-versed in is agriculture, and those two things are polar opposites” (Davis, 2018). In her argument, the speaker is exemplifying a counter-discourse by stating the counter-knowledge that is required of decoloniality. The crypto-technology that is being pushed by crypto-investors is in direct contrast to what is needed to restore peoples’ sovereignty over land and the ability to feed themselves and lessen their dependence on agricultural imports.

Another woman, who appears to be the youngest of the group, explains to the crypto-investors that, “last time there was a ‘we’, my people died. My people died and my land was taken the last time there was a ‘we’, so honestly, I don’t trust any of you” (Aldarondo, 2021). Her testimonial was in response to the insincere statement that crypto-investors and Puerto Ricans could function as a holistic ‘we’ in regard to being stewards of the land. She based her stand on the history of Puerto Rico and its relationship to hegemonic and colonial institutions that have dominated the island since the arrival of Europeans and Americans.

While engaging in an unproductive conversation with the main crypto-investor Brock Pierce, the young woman is told to “eat the rainbow” in reference to her explanation of growing and eating her own food. In response to a perceived facetious comment, she returns to her native tongue, points her finger directly at Brock Pierce and asserts, “*Tenga mucho cuidado como hablas a mi. Usted es un hombre blanco y tú estás en mi terreno. Vela como me estás hablando a mí. No me faltes el respeto.*” (Aldarondo, 2021). Speaking Spanish is a way for this woman to completely articulate herself and her resistance to a disrespectful commentary.

In this brief summary of the interactions between the crypto-investors and Puerto Ricans, it is glaringly obvious that much of the individual resistance is coming from women. This is an extremely important fact since crypto-investors in Puerto Rico consist mainly of wealthy white men. It is seen that women are the ones “who dare to question, [and] haunt the colonizer every time that anyone raises the question about … colonialism and decolonization” (Maldonado-Torres, 2021, p.25). Because these women are familiar with the socio-historical and geo-political conditions that have created their current reality, they are able to confront and resist those (men) who control the means of producing knowledge in modern (neo-)coloniality.

An aspect of colonization that has taken hold in Puerto Rico is the implementation of “heightened individualism” (Maldonado-Torres, p. 4). In Sandoval’s (2021) description

of Foucault's work, she states that, "the generation of new kinds of citizen-subjects can happen only when we become capable of refusing 'the kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.'" (p. 2011). This is because "resistance is only effective insofar as it is specifically related to the forms of domination and subordination that are currently in place" (Sandoval, 2021, p. 2022). The hyper individualism that exists in American culture has seeped into Puerto Rican culture and is creating a new form of hegemony. However, a source of resistance can also be counter-practices of collective culture, whereby the family can become, "a cultural base and as a source of support" (Rivero-Vergne & Berrios, 2020, p. 680)

For Puerto Ricans and gentrifiers alike, land is important as there is a finite amount in the archipelago. The Connelly family of Vieques has understood the historical and financial value their home holds. Having lived in the same house for 53 years, Mr. Connelly hopes to pass on his home and property to his five children. During an interview, he explains that while his children have left Vieques to study, they all have the intention of returning and keeping the property within the family. While constantly being hounded by investors to sell his home and property, he indignantly declines every time. Mr. Connelly confesses:

How can you get the young people to stay when you're constantly being pushed off the island and the best choice for your future is to leave? But we're doing the opposite. The best thing we can do for our future is to understand what we've been through so it's not repeated and we can move forward. (Aldarondo, 2021, all translations from Spanish are taken from the subtitles of the documentary)

If "clarity can be a powerful weapon for decolonization" as Maldonado-Torres (2021, p.2) claims, then the Connelly family truly comprehends the gravity of their choice to stay. They understand that by holding their ground and continuing to inhabit their land, this family automatically becomes a prime example of resistance.

It is not just families living in touristic zones that are being pushed off their land, it is also those in rural mountainous settings in the interior. A young woman in Orocovis explains the importance of her family's farmland. She is acutely aware of the discourse that has been pushed on local farmers to give up their traditional ways of growing crops, in favor of factory farming of cash crops. While being interviewed, the woman explains her knowledge and understanding of the historical aspects of sovereignty embodied in indigenous farming practices. As Operation Bootstrap became a mechanism to move Puerto Ricans away from their traditional agricultural lives into low-wage labor intensive industries in the urban centers during the mid-20th century, she states that "they wanted us fully dependent on them" (Aldarondo, 2021). Puerto Ricans have been consistently told that it cannot possibly produce its own raw goods, foods, materials, etc. However, she challenges the colonial desire to control the means knowledge production when she is confronted with governmental agronomists' ideology of "progress" in

farming, which recommends turning farms into factories. This dominant discourse is aimed at convincing local people that their knowledge of the land is useless. She states that:

They came and said, ‘You need to use these tools to measure the land. Not with your own eyes as you’ve always done. You can’t use the moon to harvest. That’s useless.’ They kept taking things away from … [the farmers]. That’s how they weaken people. By taking away their power, their confidence. And when you feel vulnerable, what do you do? You believe anything. (Aldarondo, 2021)

Crypto-investors and other outsiders have historically believed that progress can only be achieved through destructive technologies. If people take it upon themselves to return to self-sufficient lifeways, like agriculture, the dominant neo-colonial discourse will accuse them of moving backward. For who could possibly dream of returning to their roots, declaring their sovereignty and ridding themselves of outside domination?

During Restart Week, in which the crypto-investors held a forum for locals to join, protestors brought up the contentious topic of land being bought by investors. As a response to being told that “the best way to help is getting out of the way”, Brock Pierce portrayed himself as a benevolent oppressor by claiming:

All I see are a bunch of basic needs not being met in Puerto Rico … and the only focus I have is making sure people are informed and that their basic needs are met .... I just offered to get you a farm .... Bring me the farmers that want some land. I will figure out how to buy that land and give it to them so they can grow the things that are needed here. Show me real opportunities and I’ll show you real solutions. (Aldarondo, 2021)

While Pierce’s diatribe is rife with manipulative discourse, he tries desperately to convince the objectors of his interest in preserving local culture, agriculture, land, etc. all the while positioning himself sometimes as savior, and at other times as feudal land-owner. However, he seems to be unaware of projects that are already underway in communities that have begun to free themselves from coloniality by creating counter-discourses, counter-knowledges and counter-practices.

Over the past 14 years, one such group, Plenitud PR (located in Las Marias), has been taking care of the urgent needs of their community through providing food, assuring water security, building safe and affordable housing, taking care of the elderly, and teaching the youth. Plenitud PR was created and founded by Paula Paoli Garrido with the desire to serve her community. The system within Plenitud PR is self-sustained by paid workers from the community in service to the community. This community group goes beyond counter-discourse. Subversive, life-giving, sovereign knowledge is spread through teaching local children how to sustainably grow and cook local foods at school and at home so that this wisdom can be passed on to others without dependence on colonial domination. Counter-practices come in the form of building small houses made from local natural sources that can withstand hurricanes and earthquakes. In no small

part due to the “house flipping” and gentrification efforts of crypto-investors, the Housing Price Index (HPI) has jumped 61 points in Puerto Rico over the past few years, which has created scarcity in housing for Puerto Ricans. Being able to build sustainable and safe houses, having access to food and water and creating a community in which all aspects are taken care of is a powerful form of decolonial resistance.

While crypto-investors (and other millionaires) flock to Puerto Rico to avoid interest on capital gains and dividends, the local population is being squeezed by rising health care costs, severed pensions, loss of workers’ benefits, higher university fees, and shuttered schools. However, some communities have taken over these schools to create spaces where the needs of their communities can be met. After Hurricane Maria left many interior areas of the island without any outside assistance, a woman from the town of Lares figured out a way to immediately help her community. She explains the moment in which she made the decision by saying, “I remember standing in front of the gate with my friend Alemán, staring at the name of the school, and we looked at each other and said, ‘We have to do it.’ We broke the lock.” (Aldarondo, 2021). The ability to experience destruction and still find a way to create hope within the community is a staunch declaration of resistance. The speaker goes on to explain, “The first month was kind of underground … Our main priority was creating space for displaced people, but at the same time, having a space for the community to learn skills and create employment” (Aldarondo, 2021). Maldonado-Torres (2021) states that:

Decoloniality is the dynamic activity of giving oneself to and joining the struggles … to bring about community and the formation of another world. It is an activity that requires embodied subjects coming together to create, think, and act in the effort to decolonize being knowledge and power. (p 30)

While crypto-investors would like to believe that they are innovative in bringing change to Puerto Rico, it is actually local people who best understand their own history, present and future in order to create systems that are maximally equipped to help them establish and sustain lives free from coloniality, domination and dependence.

What I find interesting is that most of the discourse and practice of resistance comes from women. All, except for one, of the examples given in this article have been about women at the center of resistance to domination. It is rarely acknowledged that historically, the enclosure of female bodies and labor has been a significant part of colonization. In fact the entirety of the colonial and neo-colonial projects depended crucially on the intensification of the domination of women under patriarchy and would have been impossible without the increased subjugation of women. Therefore, it is unsurprising to see women rise up to meet their neo-colonizers head on.

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# THE WISDOM OF AUNTY ROACHY

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## Abstract

Standard language has historically been one of the ways colonialism has established roots in the psyche of colonized peoples. The works of native speakers in countries like Jamaica, when they tap into the powers of creolization, can therefore constitute authentic and effective resistance to the discursive and ideological domination of Standard English, including the values embedded in the language. Louise Bennett's *Aunty Roachy Seh* (2003) serves as a prime sourcebook for the superlative subversive effects of creole. Louise Bennett's monologues provide ample opportunities to contest linguistic and cultural domination. These monologues engage the audience at the level of linguistic form as well as decolonizing and critical content. In this article, I explore some of the wisdom to be found in *Aunty Roachy Seh*.

**Key terms:** Louise Bennett, creolization, Jamaican, Patois, Auntie Roachy, creolization and resistance

Standard language has historically been one of the ways colonialism has established roots in the psyche of colonized peoples. Indeed, so-called Standard English has co-opted the norms of the colonial Other through language, a case of discursive domination at its bloodless finest. To put it another way, standard use of the colonizer's language, often disseminated through systems of education and media, procure for native rhetors the privileges that the "multi-headed hydra" of colonialism, racism, patriarchy, speciesism, ecocide, among other vectors that the death-instinct can offer within organisms. Such organisms include organisms of ideas like the nation-state, which often spearhead standardization across variegated areas such as speech, behavior and thought. I would claim that the lynchpin of domination is language per se, especially in its standardized form and specifically as incarnated in English, perhaps the mother of all linguistic conquest and domination. Consequently, *resistance* has taken likewise

variegated forms, including armed struggle. Yet arguably one of the most effective forms of resistance to the formidable array of hydra-like heads of the monster of domination is the practice of creolization.

The term creolization, as used in this work, involves the undomesticated and unpredictable mash-up of multitudinous linguistic and cultural repertoires and resonances. The works of native speakers, when they tap into the powers of creolization, constitute authentic and effective resistance to the discursive and ideological domination of standardized “hydra-English.” In the Caribbean, for example, many writers have used creole in their art as a way not only to capture realistically the experiences of the colonized, but also to actively reject the norms embedded within Standard English.

Brathwaite was one to go deep-deep into the African elements of his being and produce subversive poetry, alternatives to the hegemonic approaches of the West. Louise Bennett, from Jamaica, is another Caribbean author to challenge the linguistic and cultural landscape of the hydra of colonial domination. In this article, I will therefore focus on her collection *Aunty Roachy Seh* (2003) as a prime sourcebook for the superlatively subversive effects of creole. Her monologues provide ample opportunities to hack at the hydra metaphor, including discussions on gender, race and so-called developing economies; it is worth noting that Louise Bennett’s monologues engage the audience at the level of linguistic form as well as at the level of decolonizing and critical content.

The very first piece in the radio anthology titled “Jamaica Language” serves as the fountainhead of Louise Bennett’s creole philosophy. In it, she challenges the narrative of a pure and self-referring notion of English, and exposes some key elements of historical mixing in the standard language:

Den dem shoulda call English Language corruption of Norman French an Latin an all dem ... language what dem seh dat English is derived from. Oonoo hear de wud? ‘Derived.’ English is a derivation but Jamaica Dialec is corruption! [Then they should have called English language a corruption of Norman French and Latin and all of those ... languages that they say English is derived from. Did you hear the word? ‘Derived’. English is a derivation, but Jamaican is a corruption!] (all translations by the editors, unless specified otherwise). (Bennett, 2003, p. 1)

The word corruption is telling, since it is a concept associated with impurity, in juxtaposition to English as the polar opposite of corruption, i.e. purity. I would contest, metonymically, that words like corruption can extend to ideas of gender normativity as well as racial “integrity.” Louise Bennett, however, pokes at the hole in the Other, the incompleteness of the Other of language, namely in this case standardized English. In other words, English properly understood is as mixed as Jamaican patois, except the latter does not disown its own structure or the peoples behind such structures.

In the piece, “Show Off Speech,” Louise Bennett identifies in the speech of an other

signs of chaka-chaka:

So when dem ask her when she goin back to town de foo-fool gal gi out, ‘I’m not going backing.’ Now if she did seh ‘Me naw go back’ she woulda be talking good Jamaica language, but ‘I am not going backing’ is boogooyagga English, a oh! [So when they asked her when she was going back to town, the foolish girl answered ‘I’m not going backing.’ Now if she had said ‘Mi naw guh back.’ She would have been speaking good Jamaican language, but ‘I’m not going backing.’ is messed-up English.] (2003, p. 5)

To adhere to standard English is to attempt to mimic the colonizer’s culture, to subscribe to the vices of linguistic norms. To be otherwise than Jamaican. Whereas, the playful and creative and authentic use of Jamaican patois, as praised by Bennett, returns language back to the people and away from the pretentiousness stitched to the norms of the metropole.

It is noteworthy, however, to see when Aunty Roachy does break with her usual speech practices and switches to standard English. In “Paraplegic,” at the sight of non-able-bodied athletes overcoming their struggles, she hollered:

Magnificent! Wonderful! Excellent! ... Koo yah! Aunty Roachy drop English wud pon paraplegic performance eena games! [Magnificent! Wonderful! Excellent! ... Here, here! Aunty Roachy bestows English words upon the paraplegic performances in the games!] (p. 119)

Even then, she does not expand her syntax beyond single words in English, but the paraplegic event elicited a break from the usual patois, and even a reflective note on the part of the author herself. This could hint to the unifying power of the Other, such that linguistic resonances are woven more liberally.

Miss Bennett, in her *Aunty Roachy Seh* persona, describes the value of Jamaican philosophy through proverbs, indelibly crafted in creole:

When goat laugh, everybody fine out seh him got no teet .... No put yuhself eena barrel when matches box can hole yuh [When a goat laughs, everyone can see that it has no teeth ... Don’t put yourself in a barrel when a match box is big enough to hold you.] (p. 7-8)

The first proverb, according to Aunty Roachy, is about ignorance leading to people not keeping their mouths shut and making fun of others when they themselves are just as worthy of ridicule. The second proverb, per the poet, is about being honest about one’s abilities and capacities and not pretending that they are greater than they actually are. The use of parables and creole illustrate the wisdom embodied in Jamaican language, philosophy and culture; they capture the ethos and morals of a people.

Another piece, “Rude Man,” also features proverbs:

What is de cos of a chokey bead, compare to de feelins of a suffering human bein?

What happen to de good ole time ‘Help thy neighbour’ feelins? [What is the cost of a necklace bead in comparison with the feelings of a suffering human being? What

ever happened to the good old fashioned ‘Help thy neighbor’ feelings?] (p. 42)

Proverbs also weave the best traces not only of national and/or ethnic wisdom, but even of Christianity, a religion often re-signified in the region to the point that it is beyond recognition under the European gaze. Though not quite a proverb, but keeping with the theme of wisdom, in “Scandal,” Aunty Roachy says:

Ah chile! Me wish eena me heart dat human beins coulda stop a scandal-mongerin fi true. Dat hear-seh, seh-seh, susu, kas-kas an all dem tings-deh coulda banish from de lan [Oh, child! I really wish in my heart that people could stop scandal mongering. That all of that hearsay, backstabbing, gossip, scandal and all of those things could be banished from the land.] (p. 82).

Discursively, education and ethics are enjoined, as will be seen below, since this piece segues well to “School’s Challenge” in the same radio collection. Here we learn that

de Jamaica pickney-dem never know bout dem own Jamaican book what dem own Jamaican write ... dem know bout de works of Shakespeare an Hitler an all dem foreign smaddy-deh, a oh! [Jamaican children don’t ever get to know about their own Jamaican books that their own Jamaican authors write ... they only know about Shakespeare and Hitler and all of those foreign ‘somebodys’!] (p. 11)

Colonial education disseminates Western names like Shakespeare, spatially allocated a place beside the signifier Hitler in Bennett’s discourse. This is not accidental because the Virginia company investor Shakespeare might very well have supported a fascist politician such as Hitler in his time. All of this underscores that fact that Bennett wishes to impress on the need to decolonize the curriculum, primarily by studying Jamaican writers like Claude McKay and Roger Mais. Moreover, the reality of English Education in the Caribbean, with its pro-Western catalogue of thinkers, augments the value of the aforementioned proverbs, and the crucial detail that these proverbs exist in creole signifies the decolonial spirit in the everydayness of Jamaican speech and life.

Additionally, to the topoi of resistance, Louise Bennett also adds seminal facets of Jamaican history such as the figure of Nanny:

Grandy Nanny couldn’t stomach slavery. Mmm. She use to hate de very soun a de wud ‘slave’, an she teck a oath an vow fi use Nanny Town which part she live as a refuge an backative fi all runaway slave who coulda fine dem way dere, mmm [Great Nanny couldn’t stomach slavery. Yes. She used to hate the very sound of the word ‘slave’, and she took an oath and vowed to use Nanny Town where she lived as a refuge and support for all runaway slaves who could find their way there, yes.] (p. 13)

World-historical individuals like Nanny preserved Bennett’s patois, and served as a living symbol for all Jamaicans to resignify the term slavery. ‘Slavery’, as a word, in my view functions as a means to retain within formerly enslaved peoples a sense of inferiority, as though the victimization of ancestors has reduced them in the present. In contrast, the concept ‘enslaved’ captures much more effectively the essence of what actually happened in the past: groups forcibly putting others into chains. Enslavement is something

that is done to people, not who they are. The same can be said for class, race, gender, and speciation. Just as people are enslaved, they are also classed, raced, gendered, and speciated. Since language, as illustrated throughout this article, is inherently ideological, it is important to rescue the spirit of freedom in the use of rhetoric and salvage enslaved from the snares of the term ‘slave’. Linguistically, this would place the emphasis of injustice and crime on the hands of others, often though not always, white others.

Another facet of Jamaican history is Independence Day:

An tonight mento ban an reggae ban an all kine a sweet music a go play fi street dancing outa street till all hours. Yes, massa, a so we do tings big a Jamaica. [And tonight mento bands and reggae bands and all sorts of great music will be playing in the street dancing out in the street until all hours. Yes, master, that's how magnificently we do things in Jamaica.] (p. 18)

The carnival quality of their reverie, the almost theatrical and quintessentially Caribbean drama of celebration, speaks of the Jamaican people’s indigenous and authentic modes of being. They seal in performance the concept of independence.

Following up on the topoi of independence, in “Dear Princess,” Aunty Roachy says good things about Princess Anne, the daughter of the late Queen of Great Britain, giving readers a sense of generosity even to those who serve as, arguably, the embodied symbol of the very worst aspects of colonialism. Yet, dialectically, the conversation moves beyond symbols and toward a new way of relating to power, as power, in the case of Louise Bennett’s persona, is the power of language.

For example, in “Free Schoolin,” she places enormous emphasis on the prospects of education on the island:

Any lickle run nose po ting bwoy eena Jamaica nowadays can get a chance fi grow up an tun Governor-General or Prime Minister or any a dem sort a big shot dere. An any lickle po ting gal pickney who put her head to dem lesson an have good mine can grow up an tun lady senator or even married to ambassador or any kine a big shot. Yes, mam! Any lickle mirasmi baby who cyaan even hole pinda-shell good now can hole Jamaica destiny eena hin han later on! [Nowadays, any little poor snotty-nosed boy child can get the chance to grow up and become Governor General or Prime Minister or any of those other big shots. And any little poor girl child who applies herself in school and has a good mind can grow up and become a female senator or get married to an ambassador or any other kind of big shot. Yes! Any little undernourished baby who can’t even properly hold a peanut shell now can hold Jamaica’s destiny in his hands later on!] (p. 23)

The Jamaica Louise Bennett envisions and ushers in with her use of creole is one where the psyche of Jamaicans is lifted from the historical inhibitors of the past, and any one of them can aspire to be, in a different form, a figure like Nanny; consequently, it is through education where the nation can be re-signified, through the everydayness of language practices. This is why she is in favor of subsidized

schooling, so that in every generation there is a chance for a new crop of a happy and well-off citizenry to emerge.

In the piece, “Class an Colour Debate,” there’s a significant example of colorism in Jamaica. One woman goes into a restaurant and identifies a sliver of hair in her lunch. Her choice of words is decisive:

Of course ah couldn’t eat it! De ting dat really hurt me is dat de hair eena de food come off nayga head! It was a piece a natty-natty roll-up nayga hair. [Of course, I couldn’t eat it! The thing that really hurt me is that the hair in the food came off of a Black person’s head! It was a piece of kinky coarse Black person’s hair] (p. 30)

Historically, hair as a signifier, much like slave, has been overdetermined. And not only overdetermined, but suffused with the semantic charge of the colonial Other. As a result, ideologies of hair have emerged in postcolonial/ neo-colonial discourses. As is known, straight hair is associated with normative beauty, whereas kinky hair is linked to wildness and animality, metonymic terms of racism. Aunty Roachy comments:

Sad but true, dat soun like if it was a nice straight blonde hair she fine eena her food she woulda eat it an never seh a wud bout it! [Sad, but true, that sounds like if it was a nice piece of straight blonde hair that she found in her food, she would have eaten it and never said a word about it!] (p. 30)

The adjective, blonde, cements the racist associations embedded in human hair, in this example and beyond, to contemporary debates on hair and color.

Building on the insights the poet gives about hair, color and other critical terms, the *Aunty Roachy Seh* persona tackles gender in “Oman Equality,” where she frames the unfairness of the view where

Oman’s place is in the home, an a demands dat oman tan a yard so wash an cook an clean all day long ... meanwhile de husband-dem a drink an gamble as dem like ... De wud ‘equality’ cyaan stan up by itself alone. So Aunty Roachy seh dat when dem add awn ‘rights’ an seh dat oman want ‘equal rights’ wid man, soun better. [Woman’s place is in the home, and demands that a woman stay in the yard to wash and cook and clean all day long ... meanwhile their husbands are drinking and gambling as they please ... The word ‘equality’ cannot stand up on it’s own. So when they add on rights and say that women want ‘equal rights’ with men, it sounds better.] (p. 66)

The author’s position is not of a war between the sexes, nor is it resignation to one sex’s authority over the other. On the contrary, by subscribing to the discourse of rights, she aims to even the playing field of the sexes. Indeed, this stance is subversive today, when clusters of the political left are abandoning discourses of feminism or, in my most personal view, recklessly intersecting constructs without first grounding them in the real, whether that’s the body or the material reality of those under the header ‘woman’. I

hasten to add that there is no one unified uppercase science, or to deny plurality on earth. In this exact same piece, “Oman Equality,” Louise Bennett through her persona demonstrates a fascinating and non-Western use of logic. This is achieved by subverting the commonsense understanding of one plus one equals two. For example:

For doah one an one equal two, if yuh got one boar hog an one coco fiel yuh no got two a nutten, yuh see. For if de boar hog ever get we henna de coco fiel den ‘hog eena yuh coco’, an baps, all yuh gwine got is one bang-belly boar hog an no coco fiel at all! So one and one no equal two in a case like dat at all at all! [Because although one and one equals two, if you have one boar and one field of taro yams you don’t have two of anything, you see. Because if the boar ever gets into the taro field then ‘a hog got into your yamfield’ and suddenly, all you are going to have is one big-bellied boar and no taro field at all! So one and one does not in any way equal two in a case like that!] (p. 67)

Social psychologist Ellen Langer provides additional examples to this train of thought, citing one cloud plus one cloud equals one cloud, just as one pile of laundry plus another pile of laundry equals one pile of laundry. Miss Bennett has tapped into intuitive ways of knowing that bypass mainstream logic, and this example of what she does with thought, I contest is indivisible with what she does with language. Hence the power of her creole rhetoric.

Class is also a crucial marker of difference explored in Louise Bennett’s collection. For example, in “Rent Control,” the author exposes the grim housing situation at the time, which I would wager is a problem that repeats itself in the present, not only in Jamaica but also the greater Caribbean and beyond. She states:

Fifty dollars a mont fi two rookoo-rookoo termine- mongerin room! Lawks! [Fifty dollars a month for two ramshackle termite infested rooms! Look at that!] (p. 91)

Additionally, in “Uncontrollable beef prices,” she comments the increase in the price of beef that had rocked Jamaica at the time. She explains the various hurdles people went through to secure beef. Toward the end, Aunty Roachy says that there was a rat in her dining room, but

since beef price she no hear queak nor quawk outa him! De facety rat muss afraid seh dat she gwine butcher him! Eh-eh! What a crosses fi my po Aunty Roachy go tun mus-mus butcher eena her ole age, counta uncontrollable beef price! [since the rise in beef price she didn’t hear a peep out of him! The cheeky rat must have been afraid that she was going to butcher him! Yes! What a calamity for my poor Aunty Roachy to have to become a makeshift butcher in her old age, on account of uncontrollable beef prices! (p. 101)

The tensions and implications in adding the rat all but seals the direness of the inflation that results from the class warfare of the rich against the poor in Jamaica. As in the case of Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean, Jamaica imports a considerable amount of

its food. In “Roots Food,” Louise Bennett states:

Jamaica can switch from imported food to eating local tubers. Dat means roots food like: yellow yam, sweet yam, yampie, pitata, coco, cassava, breadfruit, banana, banana, banana! [Jamaica can switch from imported food to eating local tubers. That means root crops like: yellow yam, sweet yam, Indian yam, potatoe, taro, cassava, breadfruit, banana, banana, banana!] (p. 104)

The neo-colonial discourses of “development” have put countries like Jamaica in a subservient position as regards food security, all under the banner of globalization. Aunty Roachy reminds readers of the importance of the land, what the earth can provide for sustenance. Land, as Fanon (2005) wrote, is the core value of colonized peoples for it is the springboard of bread. Food is equated with dignity, in Fanon’s thought and in the eyes of many others. Therefore, this entry in Bennett’s anthology is powerful in that it creates the space to interrogate the nefarious signifiers of development and globalization.

Building on the previous entry, in “Farm Allergy,” Louise Bennett’s persona tackles the fact that Jamaicans no longer want to work the land, instead they consider importing the island’s agricultural labor force. I would argue this speaks to the misplaced pride associated with not working the land; conversely, the perceived indignity of having to work primarily with one’s hands instead of one’s mind. The topic elicits uncharacteristic wrath from Aunty Roachy, when she says:

if she was Autority, instead a import any farm labour or set up idle lan commision she woulda form up a ‘cruelty to agriculture courthouse’, an drop prosecutiton pon all de lan deserters-dem, an sentence dem back to de lan, fi learn dem how not to teck offence an get allergic to agriculture [if she were in charge, instead of importing any farm labor or setting up an idle land commission, she would establish a ‘cruelty to agriculture courthouse’ and prosecute all of the land deserters, and sentence them back to the land, to learn how not to take offence at, and become allergic to agriculture]. (Bennett, 2003, p. 124)

Her disdain for those who turn their backs to the land reflects the broader issue of freedom in postcolonial countries, where agency has as its roots in the land, along with the sea and the air.

One timely and final theme that Aunty Roachy approaches is the police. On the police, she says:

Nuff police is brave-hearted police officers … Das why police job hard. Police not suppose fi curry favour wid nobody. Police haffi face danger an violence fi defend de public rights [Many police officers are brave hearted … That’s why being a police officer is a hard job. Police are not supposed to curry favor with anyone. Police have to face danger and violence to protect public rights]. (p. 135).

In an age of defund the police, as well as counter-discourses to Blue Lives Matter, it is

refreshing to identify a counterintuitive voice on the need for police work without succumbing to sycophantic worship of police officers.

Overall, through her masterful construction of Aunty Roachy, Louise Bennett has provided a kaleidoscopic lens on Jamaican culture, history and language. I believe her work captures the speech of a people, the heart of a nation and the profound wit that often accompanies artistry. Her work blurs the line between literature and language, philosopher and woman, and permits readers to sample one of the most superlatively articulate figures in the region. The cultural effect of Bennett's work is resistance to the norms and jaws of colonialism/ neo-colonialism. Beyond resistance, there is also the non-utilitarian beauty of encountering an uncompromising voice.

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# THE ROLE OF MISS LOU'S MONOLOGUES IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY OF JAMAICAN

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## Abstract

This article examines the linguistic attitudes present in three monologues by Louise Bennett (aka “Miss Lou”) (Bennett, 2005). The affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of these attitudes are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using ATLAS.ti (Paulus & Lester, 2016). Total results indicate that 59% of the articulations of these attitudes in the monologues can be most closely associated with the cognitive component, 22% of the articulations of these attitudes in the monologues can be most closely associated with the behavioral component, and 19% of the articulations of these attitudes in the monologues can be most closely associated with the affective component. The higher percentage of articulations associated with the cognitive component suggests that the monologues have an instructive purpose. In the process, Bennett introduces a new conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) related to Jamaican: IF IT'S NOT BROKEN, DON'T FIX IT. This approach, and her use of Jamaican in her performances were crucial in reinforcing Jamaican ethnolinguistic vitality.

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**Key terms:** Louise Bennett, Jamaican, culture, linguistic attitudes, ethnolinguistic vitality, Caribbean

During her remarkable career, Louise Bennett (1919-2006) was unrivaled as a brilliant and unique advocate of Jamaican culture, using Jamaican English lexifier creole (aka Jamaican or Patwa) in her copious production of masterworks of literature, theater, folk music, comedy, and popular education. She courageously defended Jamaican culture through a combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies and earned the sympathy

of many Jamaicans, something that transformed her into a powerful influence over the population of the island.

Jamaica's independence from England was granted in 1962. Bennett broadcast radio sessions using Jamaican from 1966 to 1982, with two to three appearances weekly (Morris, 2014, p. 30). Initially, the program was called "Laugh with Louise" and later it became "Miss Lou's Views." The author used African storytelling features, such as "call and response" and often peppered her performances with popular Jamaican proverbs. The use of humor, irony, and satire also helped to unpack many of the social issues addressed in her monologues, such as language, prejudice and inequality.

Miss Lou introduced Aunty Roachy, a fictional character, in her monologues to effectively connect with her audiences. Aunty Roachy's truths were uncomfortable for many people with privilege, but reflected the realities of everyday Jamaicans. In the monologues, Aunty Roachy comes off as a loud yet respectful lady whose wise words are aimed at helping to awareness at the individual level and life at the level of society (Adisa, 2010; Morris, 2014).

Studies of linguistic attitudes help us map the linguistic and social ideologies of people in their communities. Attitudes "can be described as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). Attitudes have three features: "the notion that attitude is learned, that it predisposes action, and that such actions are consistently favorable or unfavorable toward the object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). Therefore, attitudes have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Fuster, 2012, p. 38; Mühlleisen, 2022, p. 10) all three of which are manifested through daily conversations and interactions, and written text (Mühlleisen, 2022, p. 270; Neviarouskaya et al., 2015, p. 256), and this knowledge is used in disciplines such as the social sciences, linguistics, marketing, and psychology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 1).

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) define conceptual metaphors as the ideas embedded in peoples' minds. Those conceptions provoke many reactions in people when they perceive different stimuli; for instance, a linguistic variety such as Jamaican. Conceptual metaphors can be deconstructed to give way new ones, but this is a process that takes years, maybe centuries, such the conceptual shifts that resulted in the abolition of chattel enslavement. Popular culture has been a tool for resistance in Jamaica, because it has encouraged the adoption of new conceptual metaphors (Procter, 2004, p. 30). The *Aunty Roachy Seh* monologues are a perfect example of this type of paradigm-transforming cultural agency.

To study Bennett's discourse, I analyzed three sketches from the book *Aunty Roachy Seh* (2005), "Jamaica language," "Show-off speech," and "Jamaica philosophy," focusing on the relative prominence of the above mentioned three attitudinal components (cognitive, affective and behavioral) in her discourse. The analysis was carried out using ATLAS.ti, a data analysis software package that can be used in discourse analysis

(Paulus & Lester, 2016). I manually coded each sentence of the monologues as “affective,” “cognitive” and/or “behavioral.” The “cognitive” code was used in sentences where Miss Lou or Aunty Roachy shared some knowledge or fact. The “behavioral” code was applied to sentences where Miss Lou called for action on the part of Jamaicans, including Aunty Roachy and herself. The “affective” code was applied to sentences where Miss Lou or Aunty Roachy communicated feelings or preferences about the monologue’s topics.

In the first sketch, “Jamaica language,” 50% of the discourse reflects the cognitive component, while 34% reflects the behavioral component, and 16% the affective component. From the first sentence, Aunty Roachy expresses her anger with people who consider Jamaican a “corruption of the English language.” If English is considered to be “derived” from French and other European languages, why is Jamaican considered to be a “corruption”? Compared with the other two monologues, “Jamaica language” has the highest percentage of utterances associated with the behavioral component, 34 %. Miss Lou calls for action many times or refers to an action in which she is included with the constant use of the word “we.” For Miss Lou, The use of the word “we” is a solidarity strategy, which is a quality of relationships that arises through a shared membership with others (Myers-Scotton, 2006, p. 150). Bennett is proud to be part of the same linguistic community as her audience and, as an educator, is including herself in the use of Jamaican language community, despite the colonial attitude that sees the language as “broken English” or a “bastard tongue” (see Cooper’s chapter on Proverb as metaphor in the poetry of Louise Bennett, 2000, pp. 37-46; Farquharson, 2013). Miss Lou recognizes English as the Jamaican lexifier but she also stresses that “we can meck it soun like it no got no English at all eena it” [we can make it sound like it doesn’t have any English at all in it] (all translations are by the editors, unless specified otherwise) (Bennett, 2005, p. 2).

Bennett’s discourse evidences her desire to share scientific and objective information on Jamaican history to reinforce a positive linguistic self-understanding. Miss Lou clarifies that her African ancestors were not passive in Jamaican linguistic history and uses the words “forefather” and “ancestor” to refer to both Africans and English people as a strategy to recognize both sociocultural influences. She is not rejecting English people or their language but instead she refutes the idea that Jamaican is not a language itself. She is emphasizing her African ancestors’ courage in creating and using Jamaican as a new form of communication to survive. Later, Miss Lou explains some unique Jamaican linguistic usage and emphasizes that Jamaicans must not have shame for their language, which is an affective suggestion.

This first monologue aims to dismantle the conceptual metaphor of JAMAICAN IS BROKEN ENGLISH, which has its roots in colonialism.

In the second sketch, “Show-off speech,” 65% of the discourse reflects the cognitive component, 29% reflects the affective component and 6% reflects the behavioral

component. The 29% associated with the affective component is related to Miss Lou's negative attitudes toward the use of Jamaican. Miss Lou strongly rejects using Jamaican with more English features or an English accent to sound more "proper." 65% of the sentences in this monologue can be associated with the cognitive component, which is expressed through narrations of real and fictitious situations to exemplify Miss Lou's views about pretentious people. Evidently, Miss Lou doesn't like pretentious people and their attitudes about Jamaican being a 'broken' language that needs to be 'fixed' by making it sound more like English. In this way, Miss Lou extends a common conceptual metaphor to Jamaican: IF IT'S NOT BROKEN, DON'T FIX IT.

In the third monologue "Jamaica philosophy," 63% of the discourse reflects the cognitive component, 17%, the affective, and 14%, the behavioral. Like the rest of the monologues, the discourse has more cognitive sentences. This higher percentage points out the instructive nature of Miss Lou's monologues. The title, "Jamaica philosophy," is an affirmation by Miss Lou concerning the capacity of Jamaican language for artistic and philosophical work. From the beginning of the text, Bennett demonstrates her knowledge about culture, and one of its main aspects, which is generational transfer. As an academic, she is conscious of Jamaican-Caribbean history and the semantic depth of proverbs, deeply rooted in Jamaica and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic.

Miss Lou uses the affective component to problematize the relation between philosophy and Jamaican proverbs. A woman called Muches reacts negatively when Aunty Roachy highlights the philosophical aspect of Jamaican proverbs. This is one of many examples of the use of one of Miss Lou's alter egos to reinforce an idea that can provoke negative reactions from people who underestimate the use of Jamaican language. Aunty Roachy teaches Muches the definition of "philosophy" using an English dictionary. Then, Aunty Roachy goes on to mention a series of some 10 proverbs whose teachings correspond precisely to that same authoritative dictionary-based definition. She then ridicules Muches' ignorance and negative linguistic attitudes toward Jamaican by saying: "Lickle bit a brains can gi big mout trouble" [A little bit of brains can give a big mouth trouble] and "If yuh no know bout, no chat bout" [If you don't know about it, don't speak about it] (Bennett, 2005, p. 8). Miss Lou includes the English translation of some proverbs, which, according to Cooper (2000), "is clearly intended for the readership akin to Muches" (p. 46) (see also Pollard, 1983).

In general, these monologues aim to alter the self-perception of Jamaicans and to expose the ignorance of those who have rejected their language. As Morris (2006, p.1) points out, Miss Lou "was a patriot committed to correcting the colonial legacy of self-contempt and she cleared the way for others by demonstrating that Jamaican Creole could be the medium of significant art." The profound impact of Bennett's work helps us to understand why, over the decades, Jamaican has become more accepted in domains outside the realm of popular culture, such as in radio, commerce, and television (Hancock, 2017).

Nevertheless, many other top-down institutional changes are needed, especially in the areas of governance and education to displace completely the conceptual metaphor JA-MAICAN IS BROKEN ENGLISH and achieve the ethnolinguistic vitality of Jamaican. Jamaican is still not recognized as an official language on the island. School materials and classes are still in English resulting in around 50 % of Jamaican students routinely failing in the area of “language arts” as noted in the 2021 Report on the Reform of Education in Jamaica, with most of the population using Jamaican in most domains and almost 50 % being monolingual in Jamaican. (Ministry of Education and Youth, 2021). Despite this, state services are normally provided in English, and professional jobs are restricted to English speakers. Additionally, many people in positions of power use only English with monolingual Jamaicans. Therefore, many Jamaicans still receive discriminatory treatment in formal institutions despite the fact that Jamaican forms part of their cultural capital (Farquharson, 2015).

In other words, politics are the main obstacle to Jamaicans achieving full ethnolinguistic vitality. Louise Bennett was a perfect agent for offering new metaphorical concepts and dismantling old ones. But to continue her work will require the support of people from different backgrounds, especially those who have the power of convincing and legitimizing (Bourdieu, 1991) at a macro level, in order to make significant changes. Many countries in the world have become part of the globalized economy without erasing or diminishing their ethnolinguistic repertoires. Historically, Jamaican has been integrally embedded in traditions of Afro-Atlantic rebellion and resistance (see Alleyne’s chapter on Jamaica, 2005, pp. 191-241). Are politicians afraid of giving legitimacy and power to a language (or its speakers) with such a history?

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## **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF CREOLIZATION, AND HYBRIDITY**



# THE PORTUGUESE ELEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE KRIOS

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## Abstract

The following are two Sierra Leonean tales translated into Afro-Seminole Creole by Ian Hancock, in collaboration with Mrs. Ethel Warrior and Mrs. D. Flores. In the recipe by Mrs. Warrior, *Istichatti* is a Creek word meaning Native American.

**Key terms:** Krio, Sierra Leone, Portuguese, English Lexifier Atlantic Creoles (ELACs), *tangomaos*, *lançados*

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The Portuguese spoken on the Guinea coast and in the Congo had characteristics of its own. To some extent the deviation from the standard dialect must have been due to the conflicting linguistic background of European visitors. Mariners and merchants who themselves spoke Romance tongues—Castilians, Genoese, Venetians, Sicilians, and even Frenchmen—would not have found great difficulty in acquiring the necessary modicum of the Lusitanian dialect but they probably made little effort to speak it accurately; their own speech, suitably simplified and modified, could provide some measure of intelligibility. The speakers of Germanic languages—Hollanders, Danes, Englishmen—must have barbarized the lingua franca unmercifully. But it is clear that the main distinctive features of Guinea Portuguese were derived from Africa rather than Europe. (von Bradshaw, 1967, p. 8)

## Introduction

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish settlements in Sierra Leone, and gave the country the name that it bears to the present day, and—it has been suggested—gave *Krio* its name as well; Hair posited a “shift, probably from ‘crioulo,’ a version of the Portuguese language spoken by blacks in Africa, to ‘Creole,’ a version of the English language spoken by blacks in Africa, [which possibility] is perfectly acceptable” (1998, p. 111). In 1447, Captain Alvaro Fernandez anchored at the Sierra Leone Peninsula,

followed by Diego Gomez in 1460. Thereafter, visits to the Sierra Leone coast became increasingly frequent, and by the early 1500s, the Portuguese had settled up and down the Bullom shore and had intermarried with the local population. By the end of the century, they had also settled in Port Loko and the Scarcies, and were trading in such items as pepper, ivory carvings, monkeys, parrots and human beings. So well-entrenched were they by this time, that a Roman Catholic mission was established, its first priest proselytizing among the local population between 1605 and 1610. This paved the way for later Jesuit and Capuchin missions, though these met with limited success, because not only was Islam making inroads into the region from the north, but Protestant religious influence from the English was also gradually making itself felt. By the middle of the 18th century, the Portuguese missions were no longer active (Fyfe, 1962, pp. 2-3). The Portuguese traders had already defeated their English rivals on the Lower Guinea coast in 1582, forcing British attention to turn to the Gambia and Senegal by 1588 (Fisher, 1924, p. 2). In Hakluyt's comments, we find the following statement in reference to this, in which are listed the principal trading areas:

By virtue of her Majesty's most gracious charter given in the year 1588, certain English merchants are granted to trade, in and from the river of Senegal to and in the river of Gambia, on the western coast of Africa. The chiefest places of traffic on that coast are these: Senegal river ... Beseguiache ... Rufisque ... Palmerin .... Porto d' Ally ... Joal ... Gambia River. (Hakluyt, cited in Beeching, 1972, pp. 333-334)

Although sustained English interests in the Sherbro and Sierra Leone River area did not begin until the middle of the following century, reference is made in the same entry to the ambush in 1591, of some forty Englishman on that coast by some local Africans who were in league with the Portuguese.

In Jobson's (1623) description of the Gambia River littoral, we find mentions of Mulattos, *i.e.* Creoles, who spoke a form of Portuguese, and while his references are not to their English-speaking counterparts, the picture Jobson gives indicates what kind of social arrangement existed between African and European at that time:

And these are, as they call themselves, *Portingales*, and some few of them seeme the same; others of them are *Molatoes*, between blacke and white, but the most part as blacke, as the naturalle inhabitants: they are scattered some two or three dwellers in a place, and are all married, or rather keepe with them the country blacke women, of whom they beget children (Jobson, 1623, p. 33)

Reference to British settlement in the same area and during the same year, as well as to some local knowledge of the English language is also found in Jobson, where note is made of:

... a pretty youth called *Samgulley*, who from the first coming of *George Thompson* into the River, had always lived with the English, and followed their affairs, so as hee was come to speake our tongue, very handsomely, and him I used many

times as an interpreter ... in reguard of his continuance with *George Thompson*, and after him with the rest of our company, [he] had learnd to speake pretty English ... he was about the age of 17 yeeres. (Jobson, 1623, p. 148)

It is at this time that records of long-term or permanent English settlements on the Sierra Leone coast begin to turn up, and we find accounts of Afro-European families of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, rather than Portuguese, descent becoming established after 1665:

Few Afro-Portuguese were present on the Sherbro .... However, the gap was filled by a community of English traders and pirates, all subject to 'erotic expediency', so that Afro-English half-castes increased rapidly, augmented by black *grumetes* sharing their values .... These mulatto families were cradled in the English trading companies. Zachary Rogers and John Tucker were whites in the service of the Gambia Adventure in 1665, while Thomas Corker, from whom the name Caulker was derived, was sent out to Sierra Leone by the Royal African Company in 1684. Like most other resident whites, they took African wives. (Rodney, 1970, p. 216)

The fifteen-year-old Tomas married Ya Kumba, Duchess of Sherbro, who was known as *Seniora Doll* (Day, 1982, p. 88). Atkins (1735, p. 51) mentions one "Seignior Joseph, a Christian Negro of this Place."

Although the earliest peoples amongst whom the Portuguese settled were Bullom-speaking, by 1650 they had been displaced in the area by the Temne (Fyfe, 1962, p. 5). Both the Bullom and Temne languages exhibit considerable lexical influence from Portuguese (von Bradshaw, 1967); the slave trader Theophilus Conneau visited the same area some years later, and also commented that in "the Soosoo dialect ... many words were taken from the language of the Portuguese" (1827/1976, p. 75).

Numbers of the Portuguese traders and transported lawbreakers who settled on the Upper Guinea coast at this time became fully integrated into their new society; "those of them who went completely native, stripping off their clothes, tattooing their bodies, speaking the local languages, and even joining in the fetishistic rites and celebrations, were termed *tangos-maos* or *lançados*" (Boxer, 1969, p. 31).

Not all of those who lived there did so voluntarily; those who did, were called *tangomas*, "Portuguese-speaking adventurers and traders who made their home on the Guinea mainland, in defiance of the orders of the Crown, and who married there and who established mulatto families" (Donelha, 1625/1977, p. 239 n. 116), while those who were forcibly left there were the *lançados*, "thrown" from the ships; the two words were sometimes used interchangeably (e.g., Guerreiro, 1930; Nafafé, 2012).

*Tangomango* or *tannoomoas* was one of the earliest words used by English visitors. It was first recorded by Richard Hakluyt on his visit to the Upper Guinea Coast in 1553 (Hakluyt & Goldsmid, 1599/1903-1904, vol. VI) and by Ricard Eden in the same year (David, 1981), then by John Hawkins in 1564, who referred to their

living at Tanguarim [now Tagreen] in Sierra Leone (David, 1981, p. 370), and while adopted from Portuguese, according to Carreira (1983, p. 66), the word is ultimately from Temne *tangoma* “*a designação dada a uma linhagem, ou totem que representa essa linhagem*” [the designation given to a lineage or totem representing that lineage] (all translations are by the author unless specified otherwise). It is extensively discussed in Bal (1979, pp. 90-92). Brooks (2003, p. 50) says:

the word *tangomão*, *tangomango* seems to be from *tangomaas*, the Temne/Sapi name for the priestly lineage in charge of the shrines of the Simo society that controlled the highly remunerative Serra Leoa kolas trade. It appears that *lançados* were inducted into the Simo power association for reasons of mutual advantage.

Like *tangomango* the word *lançado* has understandably not survived, nor did it appear in the English-language records; while initially referring only to those of Portuguese descent, it is now used historiographically to apply to a settler of any European origin (e.g., Hancock, 1972; Larimore, 1976; Lang, 2000).

In his account of the linguistic situation on the Sierra Leone coast during his visits there (1678-1679 and 1681-1682), Jean Barbot wrote that:

Most of the Blacks about the bay speak either Portuguese or Lingua Franca, which is a great convenience to the Europeans who come hither, and some also understand a little English or Dutch. ([1732], reproduced in Hair et al., 1992, p. 227)

The Lingua Franca (his *langue franque*) evidently referred to pidginized or creolized Portuguese, *Crioulo* (Wilson, 1962) or written *Kiriol* (Wilson, 2007, p. 29), today spoken in the Cape Verde islands and in Senegal and Guiné, with related (but quite dissimilar) varieties spoken in São Tomé, Príncipe and Annobom in the Gulf of Guinea.

Reporting on the linguistic situation on the River Gambia, which he visited in 1723, Moore wrote that:

[t]he most general Language is *Mundingoe*, by which Name the Country and People are call'd: If you can speak that Language, you may travel from the River's Mouth up to the Country of *Joncoes* (alias Merchants;) so call'd from their buying every Year a vast Number of Slaves there, and bringing them down to the lower Parts of this River to sell to the White People .... The next Language mostly us'd here is call'd *Creole Portuguese*, a bastard Sort of *Portuguese*, scarce understood in *Lisbon* ... the two foregoing Languages I learnt while in the River. (1738, p. 38)

The *tangomaos* and *lançados* forged deep connections with the Africans through formal or informal marriage and the creation of Afro-Portuguese families, in which the language and some of the customs of Portugal were practiced even after the amount of ‘Portuguese blood’ had become minimal. While the first sets of parents consisted solely of European males and African females, the Afro-European children born to them nearly

a year later were both male and female. On reaching marriageable age, presumably in their teens, the young men could choose either African or Afro-European females, and the young women African, Afro-European or European males. The genetic ancestry of their descendants, their cultural identity and their language, were becoming less and less European with the passage of time. Moore commented on the perception of their own identity in Senegambia:

When it was conquer'd by the *Portuguese*, which was about the year 1420, some of that nation settled in it, who have cohabited with the *Mundingoes*, till they are now very near as Black as they are; but as they still retain a sort of bastard *Portuguese* Language call'd *Creole*, and as they christen and marry by the Help of a Priest sent yearly over hither from *S. Jago*, one of the *Cape Verde* Islands, they reckon themselves still as well as if they were actually White, and nothing angers them more than to be called *Negroes*, that being a Term they use only for *Slaves*.

(1738, p. 29)

There were resident Portuguese in the Sierra Leone estuary and on the Scarcies rivers from at least the 1520s, thus for over 250 years there was almost certainly never a time without a Portuguese-speaking resident; they never amounted to more than a few score over those two and a half centuries. Hair et al. (1992, p. 226) called Villault's (1670) claim that everyone spoke Portuguese in Sierra Leone a "wild assertion," and as Rodney says, "Afro-English half-castes increased rapidly, augmented by black *grumetos* . . . to form a group estimated at 12,000 at the end of the eighteenth century" (1970, p. 216), by the mid-17th century there were only a few still living on the Sherbro coast. Kup, too, writes that by that time "[s]carcely any Afro-Portuguese were found in the Sherbro, because [they] had never settled there. Their place was fulfilled by English traders and pirates, and their offspring" (1975, p. 101). Although an earlier Portuguese-lexifier language was employed and, in some coastal settlements became creolized, its function as a trade pidgin waned sharply in the English-dominated areas, and from which it eventually disappeared. At an earlier time, however, as Moore (1738, p. 39) says, Creole Portuguese was "sooner learnt by *Englishmen* than any other Language in [the Gambia] River, and is always spoken by the Linguists, which serve both the separate Traders and the Company." This may account for the widespread occurrence of certain Portuguese-derived items in the English Lexifier Atlantic Creoles (ELACs); there were certainly speakers of an English lexifier coastal pidgin who were able to use the pidgin Portuguese and who adopted words from it, some of which are discussed below, though compared to the number of items of Portuguese origin in Krio, the practically non-existent English-derived content discernible in Crioulo clearly reflects the chronological sequence of the impact of each in the Sierra Leone area.

While visiting Susu country, John Matthews commented on "the principal people [who] call themselves Portuguese, claiming their descent from the colonists of that nation who

were formerly settled here, though they do not retain the smallest trace of European extraction" (1788, p. 13).

Several such groups were established in Sierra Leone, their members—including their Afro-Portuguese progeny—acting as middlemen for factories such as the one on Bunce Island. They built a fort near Saunders Brook and a trading station on Mount Auriol, and two Temne kings took the Portuguese name Felipe for themselves. Because of their constant evasion of the tax imposed by the Portuguese crown on all overseas trade, these middlemen were liable to execution according to a law passed in 1518, but because of their remoteness and general inaccessibility, punishment was seldom carried out (Boxer, 1969, p. 31).

As English influence increased in Sierra Leone, so the Portuguese moved to other areas or—especially in the case of the *lançados*—became totally assimilated into the indigenous population. But until at least as late as the 1750s, the African rulers in the estuary were in almost daily contact with the handful of resident Crioulo-speaking Afro-Portuguese. In 1772, Demarin described the inhabitants of a settlement on the Mitomba River in Sierra Leone, where the inhabitants,

Called Portuguese, are principally persons bred from a mixture of the first Portuguese discoverers with the natives, and now become in their complexion, and wooly quality of their hair, perfect negroes, retaining however a smattering of the Portuguese language. (p. 22)

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62 By then, however, their influence in Sierra Leone had become minimal. According to von Bradshaw:

up to the present day there have always been some residents in Sierra Leone who could speak the language, but it seems very unlikely that it has been the normal means of communication in any substantial Sierra Leone community within the last hundred years. (1967, pp. 12-13)

He does not specify whether the language he referred to there was Crioulo or metropolitan Portuguese; it may well prove to have been the former, spoken by Guiné-born resident traders, and he is probably correct in expressing doubt that "any Krio words have been borrowed directly from Portuguese" (Bradshaw, 1965, p. 12)—but compare *karaw* and *punyata*, below. In 1813, twenty-six years after the creation of the Freetown settlement, a group of Portuguese-speaking recaptives was landed and settled in Pa Demba's Town to the west of Freetown, thereafter known as Portuguese Town (*Podogi Tɔng*). The sources are not explicit regarding the provenance of those people, but it is likely that they were Yoruba-speaking *Aguda* from Brazil, most of whom resettled in Nigeria.

Although Hair wrote that "it seems to me very doubtful whether English was used along the coast in communicating with Africans much before the eighteenth century, and more likely that in the earlier period 'broken Portuguese' rather than 'broken English' was employed" (1998, pp. 113-114), there are indications that both were in use for some of

that time. Bosman, anchored at Buffoe, near Grand Cess in Liberia, wrote in 1705 that “a Negro came on board, who called himself James and pretended to be Captain of Buffoe; he spoke a confused set of language, being a mixed jargon of English and Portuguese” (1705, p. 484). However, and contrary to his earlier statement, Hair (1998, p. 114) admitted that “patently there were Africans on the coast speaking English before Freetown. Presumably it was often ‘broken English’ or pidgin.” Corroborating this claim, Barbot, reporting on his voyages prior to 1682, noted that “... many of the coast Blacks speak a little *English*” ([1732], reproduced in Hair et al., 1992, p. 249)

Margaret Priestly cautioned that it would be wrong to regard the British communities as “completely transient in nature. Their residents often spent remarkably long periods in West Africa ... the central figure in [her own] study lived for thirty years as a coastal settler” (1969, p. 5). Nor should we underestimate their number; Machat (1906) reproduced the account of one Mr. Barber, who owned a factory on Bence (now Bunce) Island in the Sierra Leone River until 1742, in which he describes the situation in that area:

These rivers, none of which is deeper than seven or eight feet, swarm with small boats belonging to the English. Numerically speaking, there are over twelve thousands of these men, married to African women, whose customs and children they cling to, and who even have no further desire to return to Europe. (p. 129)

### **Coast English**

There is the English spoken by those Europeans on the west coast who have English as their mother tongue. Since they have learnt their English in different parts of the English-speaking world, they do not share a common accent; but newcomers gradually adopt certain words and uses of words which are peculiar to West Africa, and which are handed down traditionally from generation to generation of “old coasters.” (Christophersen, 1953, p. 283)

The first Europeans to settle on the Coast were all men and boys, and their wives were all African, none of whom spoke any kind of English; this, they had to learn from their husbands. Those men and boys, remaining together in their small communities, continued to speak English—an eclectic English which, over time, accommodated itself to its new domestic environment, becoming a variety that was spoken nowhere in the British Isles. With its local variants, it was this English in that contact situation that was the direct input into the emerging Rice Coast ELAC—what eventually became the lexical basis for Krio. Regarding what he calls “the attested existence of pre-settlement Guinea Coast Creole English,” Lang writes “the crux of the question is not whether Creole English existed, but how direct a descendant of it nineteenth-century Krio was. The answer depends upon how strictly one defines descent, and from whom one wants to descend” (2000, p. 58). Fisher (1924, p. 74) and von Bradshaw (1967, p. 37) both used a similar term “Coast language.”

Like McWhorter (1997), I believe that the ELACs originated in Africa, and not the Caribbean, our different hypotheses being whether the locus was on the Upper or the Lower Guinea coast: “I am in full agreement with Hancock’s (1969, 1986, 1987) basic proposition that the A[frican]E[nglish]C[reoles] emerged as a contact language developed between Europeans and Africans on the West Coast of Africa” (McWhorter, 1997, p. 88), however, in contrast to the very different social situation on the Upper Guinea Coast, Hancock “d[id] not consider the *creoles*, products of marriages between Europeans and local African women to have been of any particular importance for the generation of Lower Guinea Coast Pidgin English” (McWhorter 1997, p. 76). He continues, “Smith (1987, p. 10) has proposed that Hancock’s Guinea Coast Creole English spread down to the Lower Guinea Coast, which put it in a position to be transported from this region by the mid-1600s” (McWhorter, 1997, p. 88).

I have discussed *Coast English* in Hancock (2022a, 2022b, 2023), and have listed its constituents in Hancock (1972, 1986)—viz. (a) the regional British dialects of the various crew members, (b) items from their nautical register (Hancock, 1976), and (c) local African words with no English equivalents. To which may be added (d) from Portuguese, as investigated here in the present article. To these we may add words acquired later from German (Hancock, 2016) and French (Hancock, 2023), contributing to the emerging Krio. Moore, who visited the Coast in the 1730s, observed that “the *English* have, in the River Gambia, much corrupted the English by Words or Literal Translations from the *Portuguese* or *Mundingoes*” (1738, p. 43). The two were certainly spoken at the same time in a number of places, but the English speakers would have only maintained Crioulo as a medium for trade, and not in their Afro-European domestic households (Hancock, 1972, 1986), it being unlikely that both partners would have used it as their common language in such context. That Portuguese was contributing to Coast English is evidenced by such phonologically assimilated words as *alpainter* (< *alpendre*), *cabiceer* (< *caboceiro*), *palaver* (< *palavra*), *forkilla* (< *forquilha*), or others such as *lugars* or *panyaring*, incorporated grammatically.

## **Lexicon**

Von Bradshaw is premature in stating:

there is almost no overlap between the Portuguese loan-words in the vernaculars and the Portuguese content of Pidgin- or Coast- English; the vernaculars borrowed words for new things which came to them from overseas; the Pidgin terms were primarily borrowed by Europeans and mainly apply to things peculiar to West Africa. (1967, p. 36)

In the same article, however, he had already written that the Pidgin terms came from “West African or Caribbean Pidgin or from Temne” (p. 12). But did the non-European words to which he refers enter the language in England first, or were they imported

directly into Coast English in Africa, introduced by Portuguese traders and seamen stopping on the Guinea Coast on their way home from Asia or the Americas; is *kalbas* an adoption from English *calabash*, or Crioulo *kalabasa*? Examples of words that Coast English surely had before they were brought home with the sailors is “polly,” a parrot, from Temne *a-poli*, Bullom *u-pal*, and “cola,” Temne *k-ɔla*, Susu *kɔlai*. Discussed here are *bambu*, *chinch*, *gweba*, *kakao*, *kalbas*, *nanas*, *petete*, *pɔpɔ* and *yɔka*.

There is a small number of items that shows up consistently in discussions of the Portuguese element in the ELACs; these are *pikin*, *sabi* and *na*, and sometimes *soso*, *palaver* and *dash* (e.g., Christoffersen 1953, 1959), some of which have entered colloquial metropolitan English. De Granda (1986) discusses *pikin*, *sabi*, *dash*, *plaba* and *farinya* in Pichí (Bioko Krio). The words in Carreira’s (1964) study of Crioulo that are also found in Krio are *dash*, *fitish*, *plaba* and *pikin*. Of these, *dash* alone meaning ‘gratuity’ does not seem to have made it across the Atlantic.

The Portuguese-derived items listed here appear to have entered Krio via three distinct routes: 1) from Coast English as part of the basic English-lexifier Atlantic Pidgin corpus, attested by the presence of such words as *pikin*, *sabi*, etc. in Sranan, Jamaican and Gullah, as well as in the Far East and the Pacific (China Coast Pidgin, Tok Pisin and Bislama, though not Pitcairnese)—presumably having been acquired by seamen in Africa rather than in the Caribbean, and are listed, for instance, in Choundas’ (2010) dictionary of sea language; 2) some items that have been adopted into Krio through the intermediary stage of an African language; those which Krio shares with one or more indigenous Sierra Leonean language include *amaka*, *ba*, *biyas*, *blay*, *farinya*, *kɔrin*, *nanas*, *podogi*, *pɔpa*, *pɔpɔ* and *yɔka*, some of which (e.g., *pɔpa*, *nanas*, *biyas*, *yɔka*) occur more frequently in non-Creole (L2) Krio; and 3) another possible route is their having been brought back by Sierra Leonean visitors to other Portuguese territories; in the late 19th century the island of São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea for instance supplied the Sierra Leonean market with mangoes, cinnamon and bananas, and employed Sierra Leoneans to work there on its farms. The Krio *Sentɔmi* is probably via English [sæntɔmeɪ] with the Kr [ɛ] ~ [a] reflex, while the Bullom *santɔmirr* ‘banana,’ retains the original Portuguese vowel. Contact along the coast with Guiné, Casamance and Cape Verde also provided Sierra Leoneans contact with Crioulo.

Other Krio items listed here are less likely to be from Portuguese, e.g., *baf*, *bambu*, *bando*, *kɔmishɔn*, *kɔpɔ*, *loko*, *mandariya*, etc., but are included since they are also in English, and may be convergent forms from both languages. If so, they would then have to date from the time that Crioulo and Coast English were spoken concurrently.

## Categories of words of Portuguese or Crioulo origin in Coast English, GCCE and Krio

### *Obsolete items*

Obsolete items are found in the letters written as long as three hundred and fifty years ago by various correspondents visiting the Guinea Coast. The coexistence of the Portuguese-lexifier trade pidgin with Coast English is clear from those accounts; but since they did not survive, there is no way of knowing whether they were also part of the Gulf Coast Creole English (GCCE) (pre-Krio) lexicon. These include the words considered below. *Alpainter*, Ptg. *alpendre* ‘shed.’ Von Bradshaw (1967, p. 37) calls the word “obsolete Coast-English” and cites Moore (1738, p. 178): “[there is] an Alpainter or Porch at every Factory to be without doors.” According to Atkins (1735, p. 59) *cabiceer*, Ptg *caboceiro* ‘head man,’ was “the principal of the trading men at all towns.” *Consa*, Ptg *consentir* ‘agree, acquiesce’ and *casar* ‘have sexual relations with,’ was “a temporary wife” (Atkins 1735, p. 94); Atkins (1735), Moore (1738) and Crooks (1972) each describe a *forkilla*, Portuguese *forquilha* ‘pitchfork,’ as a wooden stockade that surrounds a building. These were in fact beams supporting a roof, Semantic shift from Ptg/Crioulo into CE is apparent in several of these words. *Grand(ee)*, Ptg *grande* ‘large,’ to mean ‘big’ is recorded in that sense by Kilham (1828), Canot (1854/1928) and Alexander (1821/1846); The word has never meant ‘big’ in English. Early Sranan also had *gran(d)i* ‘big.’ *Lugar*, Ptg *lugar* ‘place,’ was an open cultivated space. It is discussed at length by Flutre (1958, p. 230), Bal (1979) and Mauny (1952, p. 45). In Corry (1807, p. 47) it is the word for a rice field. The Royal Africa Company recorded *manilloes*, Ptg *manilhas* ‘manacles,’ as “slave bracelets made from brass, copper or iron” (Kup, 1962, p. 78). The seizing of possessions in lieu of payment “[is] called *panyaring* in the Coast Language” (a letter from James Fort in the River Gambia, October 24th, 1750, cited in Fisher, 1924, p. 74). It also occurs in Yonge (1772, cited in Lambert 1975), and Falconbridge (1791/1802). Ptg *apanho* has the same meaning. In Krio, *panya* now means ‘a light-skinned woman or child,’ possibly the only memory of who the original ‘panyar men’ were. A variation is *potopanya*. *Peloon*, Ptg *pilão* ‘pestle,’ was first mentioned by Donelha (1625/1977, p. 239) as *pilōis* ‘pestles,’ and Atkins (1735, p. 71) as “poloon,” which both he and Winterbottom (1803) say meant ‘mortar;’ it is that which in Krio is a *mata-tik* or *mata-pensul*, while a mortar is a *mata(-odo)*. Afzelius (1795/1967, pp. 25-27) has “a large Poloon or wooden Mortar.”

### *Words of possible multiple origin*

*Ba* ‘a bar of copper or iron, formerly used as a unit of currency’ turns up in the literature until well into the 19th century. Colloquial British English has bar “a pound,” half a bar “ten shillings” before decimalization—possibly introduced by returning seamen. Ptg *barra* “bar,” with the same application, is discussed by Bal (1979, p. 20). In a letter dated December 29th, 1707, from the Gambia John Snow, an agent of the Royal African

Company wrote “(He) has had a pallaver w y King of Barra who stopt y<sup>e</sup> Water & boats coming to y<sup>e</sup> Island y<sup>e</sup> Pallaver cost 100 bars” (Fisher, 1924, p. 34).

**Baf** ‘a coarse cotton fabric.’ English ‘baft’ and Ptg *bafata*, ‘a cotton fabric of Indian origin.’ Also, Krio *blubaf* ‘blue baft.’

**Bando** ‘a square of fabric to cover the entire head.’ Both the Ptg *bando* and the English *bandeau* mean a ‘narrow headband.’ It also has the Krio meaning in Haitian French Lexifier Atlantic Creole.

**Chinch** ‘chinch(bug).’ In English since 1625, but native to North America, not Britain. Ptg *chinche*.

**Dash** ‘a gratuity.’ While Fyle and Jones (1980, p. 66) has “splash” as its source, it lists *dash* ‘fling, throw’ as a separate entry. This latter was proposed by Hutchinson: “no doubt intended to signify that the gift should be (literally) dashed at the recipient without any stinginess” (1861/1967, p. 18). Its application in a purely African context first shows up in Falconbridge (1791/1802), its use in English perhaps reflecting how the imperious Europeans bestowed their tips), dates back to 1672. While its earliest form had final -*ee* (“dashee”), this could have been the Pidgin epenthetic vowel, or retention of the original Portuguese—therefore suggesting a dual etymology. It is generally thought to be from Gã *dasé* ‘thank you,’ but Portuguese *dação* ‘a gift’ or *dame* ‘give me’ have also been proposed, and a dual etymology is probably more likely.

**Flekefleke** ‘weak, feeble, unresisting, limp;’ Ptg *flaco/fraco*, *flaca/fraca* ‘weak, flaccid, feeble,’ with reduplication (see also *lebelebe* below). Sabir *flaku* has the same meaning.

**Fraka, faraka** ‘free, gratis, especially with reference to food’ Ptg *franca*, Crf *frāka* ‘free’ (Loss of nasal also in Kr *Madinga* ‘Mandinka,’ *samɔs* ‘summons’).

**Soso** ‘only, nothing but.’ Ptg *só* ‘only.’ Semantically, English *so-so* ‘mediocre’ is a poor fit—nor, as has been suggested in Fyle and Jones (1980) and Cassidy and Le Page (1967) is it likely to be from the restricted couplet and phonologically different Yoruba *kɔn soso* ([kɔn sɔsɔ]) ‘only one’ (Krio *wan nɔmɔ*). Since *soso* is also found in Jamaican, St. Kitts, Belize, Bahamas, Guyana, Afro-Seminole, etc. with its Krio meaning, and in Ndjuka, Saramaka and Sranan to mean ‘alone’. Its occurrence as early as 1770 in Suriname (Arends & Perl, 1995), also makes Yoruba an unlikely source. One can imagine a Crioulo-speaking trader insisting *so, so!* when being exhorted to give more than what he was offering at the price, a word easily adopted into Coast English. Papiamentu has *so*, but while Saramaccan has a ca. 35% Portuguese lexical content, Smith and Cardoso (2004) do not count *soso* in their tally. Taylor (1977, p. 167) discusses *so* further, and includes, besides Yoruba, Virgin Islands DLAC *sísu* ‘for nothing.’ Palenquero has only *nu ma*.

**Santapi** ‘centipede,’ Ptg *centopéia*. Probably directly from English, with common Kr [ɛ] ~ [a] interchange and loss of final [d], *basta* ‘bastard,’ *biabia* ‘beard,’ *kabay* ‘carbide,’ *Panya* ‘Spaniard,’ etc.

**Podogi** ‘Portuguese,’ back-formed from the supposed plural \**podogis* (*Chayni, Jepani, iklip, laysin*, etc.) and voicing of the original [t] (Kr *dɔdul* ‘dottle,’ *gedawt* ‘get out,’ *raydawe* ‘right away,’ *sedul* ‘settle,’ etc.). Crioulo *pɔrtugez*.

**Kɔmishɔn** ‘loincloth’ Ptg *camisa*, Cr *kamiza, kaminza*. Also in the indigenous languages, possibly directly from Arabic قميص *qamiisa* (e.g., Temne *k-amisa*, Mandinka *kamisa* ‘shirt’). Although the Krio form has the English form *commission*, the word is not found with this meaning in the OED but occurs in several works on the cryptolectal register of the underworld (Cant), the earliest dated 1567 (Harman, p. 65) suggesting that criminal transportees were familiar with it. Its occurrence in Sranan (*kamisa*) is significant, since it supports its presence in an earlier AEC contributing to both WAfr ELAC and SAmELAC.

**Gweba** ‘guava.’ Ptg *gaiaba, goiaba* < Tupi-Temne *a-koyaba* Me *goyava* Cr *goyeba*.

**Pɔt** ‘pot, saucepan.’ Ptg *pote*, Crioulo *pɔtə*. Temne has *a-pɔthi*, Krim and Loma both have *pɔti*.

**Kaka** ‘excrement.’ Portuguese, English, French, etc. *caca*.

**Maskita** ‘mosquito.’ Ptg *mosquito*.

**Kɔpɔ** ‘money.’ Ptg *cobre*, Crioulo *kɔbre* ‘copper.’ Limba and Susu both have *kɔbiri*, alongside r-less forms such as Temne *a-kɔpa*, Bullom *kɔpa* all meaning ‘halfpenny.’ Note that the Krio word for ‘copper’ is *kɔpa* (although ‘copper-coloured’ is *kɔpɔ-kɔla*); the same distinction occurs in Sranan, *kapa* ‘copper,’ *kopro* ‘money.’

**Fayn** ‘beautiful.’ Probably < E *fine*, but compare Ptg *fino* ‘fine.’ Temne has *-fīnɔ* ‘beautiful,’ Sranan *fini* and Saramaka *finu* both meaning only ‘fine, thin,’ not ‘attractive.’

**Ganga** ‘dress, usually a small girl’s.’ Ptg *ganga* ‘nanteen, a kind of yellow cotton cloth.’ Fyle and Jones (1980, p. 119) has Jamaican *gana-gana* ‘old ragged work clothes’ as its source, but compare Yorkshire dialect *gangery* ‘fine clothes.’

**Lebelebe** ‘light, flexible, supple.’ Ptg *leve* ‘light, quick,’ Crioulo *ləbə* do., but compare KiKongo *lebelebe* ‘supple.’

**Petete** ‘sweet potato’ Ptg *batata* ‘sweet potato.’ Significant, since *white* potatoes (*ayrish petete*) came late on the scene. For the Krio reflex *a/a* > *ɛ* compare *begnet* ‘bayonet,’ *kerekta* ‘character,’ *leda* ‘ladder,’ etc.

**Biyas, viyas** ‘trip, journey,’ Ptg *viagem*, via Crioulo *biyaas*, Susu *biasi*, Temne *a-biyas*, Bullom *bias*.

**Gbeng** ‘(perhaps ideophonic) tag expressing certainty or finality’: *a dɔn ful am gbeng!* ‘I have now completely filled it all up.’ Considered slang in Krio, although long used in Temne. Ptg *bem!* ‘good!’ has been suggested as its source, *a dɔn ful am gud (wan)!* The non-Ptg initial [gb] makes this less likely, although it does not occur in any of the local languages consulted with this application.

**Pɔpa** ‘gunpowder,’ more commonly *gɔn-poda*. Ptg *polvora*, Crioulo *polbra*. Limba has *palapala*, Bullom *pɔba* and Temne *a-pɔpa*.

**Nanas** ‘pineapple,’ Ptg *ananas*. Temne *a-nanas*, Bullom *nanas*, Mende *neesī*. Mostly L2 Krio, L1 speakers using *paynapul*.

### **Other items**

**Amaka** ‘hammock’ (mainly, in which to relax; this is probably a more recent semantic shift resulting from English influence. Earlier, and in the indigenous languages, it is a carrying hammock). The bearer in Krio is a *maka-man*. In a bill of lading from 1597 for an outward-bound British ship, “the Crown paid £300 for canvas to make ‘Hamacas or Brasill beds’” (Fury, 2002, p. 164). Krio *amaka* ‘hammock’ may thus be one of the oldest words in the language, if it were not a later adoption from Crioulo. In that language, however, *maka* means only a ‘stretcher.’ In Portuguese, it is *maca*, but *a maca* is ‘the hammock.’ Cameroon Creole has *hamak*. Sranan has *amaka*. Its origin is Taino *hamaka* ‘fishing net.’

**Blay** ‘a type of basket.’ Ptg *balaio*, Crioulo *balay* ‘hamper, small basket.’ Also Temne *kə-b(ə)lāy*, Bullom *balæ*.

**Buli** ‘gourd, pot.’ Ptg *bule*, Crioulo *buuli* ‘pot.’ Mandinka *bole*, *boli* ‘pot with narrow opening.’

**Farinya** <*farinha*, ‘cassava flour, gari.’ Ptg *farinha* ‘flour,’ Crioulo *farinya*. Temne *ɛ-fariya*, Susu *farinya*, Mende *fanye*. The Ptg palatalized [l] is retained, compare English *farina*.

**Fitish** ‘an inanimate object through which magic can be channelled.’ Ptg *feitiço* ‘artificial.’ First written “*Fetiche*” in a letter dated May 20th 1727 by Overseer W. Charles on Bunce Island. Law’s (1998) suggestion that it is from the Portuguese *cadaver* ‘corpse’ is undoubtedly wrong.

**Jege** ‘cowry shell.’ Ptg *chegadiço* ‘having come from abroad,’ Crioulo *chega* ‘cowry.’ An early item of trade in West Africa, where it is not native, being imported from the Indian Ocean coast. It is now used for decoration and divination. It is a talisman thrown down in Jamaican Maroon divination; while this function is not provided in Cassidy and Le Page, its entry for *jeggi* (1967, p, 245) has “a pretty white sea shell; a white cowrie.” In Krio, these sea-snail shells are used in communicating with the dead, and if when cast they land open-side down, it indicates that the spirits are displeased, and the person will have bad luck. *Di jege butu* ‘the cowries landed face down’ in both Krio and Jamaican is a comment referring to someone experiencing misfortune.

**Juju** ‘witchcraft.’ Christophersen says “the word is European, and most likely Portuguese, in origin. A possible source would be the Portuguese word *Deus* ‘God,’ with loss of the final consonant” (1959, p. 118), a proposal roundly dismissed by Bal (1979, p. 19). Compare Hausa *juju* ‘fetish, evil spirit,’ with possible convergence from Mandinka *ju* ‘mauvais génie.’

**Kakao** ‘unprocessed cocoa.’ Ptg *cacao* ‘cocoa.’

**Kalbas** ‘calabash, gourd.’ Ptg *calabaça*, *cabaça*.

**Karaw** The phrase *yu si karaw, yu go kɔl am punyata*, literally “you’ll experience a (mere) reprimand, but you’ll call it a (heavy) punishment”—is the equivalent of “you’re making a mountain out of a molehill.” Possibly a demonstration of one’s knowledge of Portuguese—the use of French words in *man nɔ de manzhe efi nɔ de travaye* (Hancock, 2023). Ptg *carão* ‘grimace, disapproval.’ See *punyata*, below.

**Kasada** ‘cassava.’ Ptg *casave* (< Haitian Taino *kaçábi*). The variant “cassada” also existed in metropolitan English.

**Katakumbe** ‘brothel.’ Ptg *catacumba* ‘catacomb.’ Catacombs are underground cemeteries, and are presumably where things can take place discreetly, but they have never existed in Freetown; the word, therefore, is probably a deliberate euphemism, though its greater similarity to the Ptg form is puzzling.

**Kɔrin** ‘a metal chain.’ Ptg *corrente* ‘chain.’ This word occurs in various forms in the historical accounts (“cori,” “akori,” etc.) from as early as 1683 (Law, 1998, p. 257; see also Law, 1998, pp. 149, 192-4). It is found in several local languages (e.g. Temne *kɔrentha* Bullom *kɔrɔntε*) as well as Yoruba as *kɔri* ‘long necklace of shells,’ and was thus probably a trade item along the coast.

**Mandariya** ‘prisoner of war’ (Ptg *mandar* ‘command,’ *mandadario* ‘one who is ordered’). For some speakers this last item has the alternative (though not additional) meaning of ‘mixed Arab-African parentage’ and for others ‘an East-Asian looking person.’

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**Malata (malata)** ‘mulatto.’ Ptg *mulato* (either < Arabic مولاد *muwallad* ‘foreigner’ or Ptg *mula* ‘she-mule’), the word was already used in Spain and Portugal to refer to those of mixed Moorish ancestry. Its first appearance in print in English was 1595; OED includes the variant English form with *-a*, *mulata*). Temne has *u-mulānth* ‘albino,’ Bullom *mulat*, Mende *mulate* ‘mulatto, mongrel.’

**Na** ‘locational preposition.’ In Portuguese, it is the contraction *em* (‘in’) + *a* (feminine singular ‘the’). Why this should have triumphed over *em* alone, or the masculine singular *no* (given the propensity of creole grammars to make [+ masculine] the default), or the plurals *nos*, *nas*, a Portuguese source is unlikely, though has been often proposed; there are, after all, no other prepositions in Krio from that language. In Jamaican prepositional *a* was earlier *da*. Jamaican, however, has *ina*, and Sranan has *ini*, both suggesting English *in* + vowel, compare also Jamaican *uona* ‘own.’

**Nanas** ‘pineapple.’ Ptg ‘*ananas*.’ Almost solely K2.

**Obɔrɔ** ‘calabash,’ Ptg *abobora* ‘gourd.’

**Pikin** ‘child, offspring, the smaller of two or more items that normally occur together.’ Ptg *pequeninho* ‘very small.’ Mary Falconbridge (1802) was the first to report the two words “*Pegenine*” and “*pgine*” (sic) ‘child’ following her visits to Sierra Leone in 1791 and 1793. Although “*pegenine*,” “*pickarninee*,” “*pickaninny*,” etc., occur in some early accounts, the shorter alternative, *pikin*, had replaced it entirely by the end of the 19th century. Hannah Kilham (1828) included both “*piccan*” ‘child’ and “*piccaninny*” ‘small’

in her writings. The earliest Sranan text (Herlein 1718, p. 121) had *pinkinine*, while the next (Nepveu, 1770 cited in Arends & Perl 1990, p. 276) had “*pikin*”~”*pekin*”~”*pe-  
kien*.” Crioulo has *pikéne* ‘small’ but only *kriyansa* as ‘child;’ in Sranan [pəcī-so] means ‘a bit’, compare Afrikaans *bietjie* with the same meaning. Related ELACs retain the meaning of ‘offspring’, while in the Portuguese Lexifier Atlantic Creoles it means ‘little’ but not ‘offspring’, (Cabovertiano *pəkənə/pəxənə*, Sãotomense *pikina*, etc.). Moser (1967, p. 87) mentions “*pequeno português* ... which is the broken Portuguese spoken by illiterate Africans in the cities,” compare “*petit nègre*” referring to West African FLAPs (French Lexifier Atlantic Pidgins). A Portuguese origin for the word *pidgin* was probably first proposed by Dalgado (1913, p. 114) the possibility of a derivation from *ocupacão* (‘occupation,’ ‘business’) is discussed as its proposed source in Hancock (1979). Saramaka has *miii* (< *menino* ‘child’). Since *pikin* is also the Sranan word, and therefore of some antiquity, it may be that the visitors’ ‘piccaninny’ may have been their own unconscious adjustment from American and British story books; Clarke (1843) has ‘*piccaninny*.’ Mauny (1952, p. 56) has *pikini* ‘pièce de 0 fr. 25.’ In West African French. Compare also French *picune* [pikyn], *picaillon*. Carib has *pikayun* ‘small, insignificant,’ but this may be an adoption from French Lexifier Atlantic Creole.

**Plaba** ‘dispute, contention.’ Ptg *palavra* ‘word.’ “*Pallaver*” turns up for the first time in a letter dated December 29th, 1707, from the Gambia by John Snow, an agent of the Royal African Company: “Has had a pallaver w y King of Barra who stopt y Water & boats coming to y<sup>e</sup> Island y<sup>e</sup> Pallaver cost 100 bars” (Fisher, 1924, p. 34).

It was described a century later by Golberry (1808), who credits “tobacco” as a motivating part of the event. He wrote:

In all the countries that I have visited, I have seen those assemblies which the Africans call *pallaver* or *palabres*; they commence at sunrise, consisting of thirty or forty blacks of all ages, who collect together in a large hall ... or under the leafy branches of some fine tree in the village.

They form themselves into a circle, and the oldest in company opens the conversation, by relating the petty events of the preceding evening; but they become more important from exaggeration, from the application of them, and the remembrances which they excite.

Soon after the pipe is introduced, for doubtless the custom of smoaking is general among mankind; all these talkers smoke, even the youngest, and the prattling goes on the better in consequence. The fumes of the tobacco (*sic*) awaken their minds, and exalt their joy, like delicate wines among us, excided formerly an amiable cheerfulness in our repasts, when gentle friendship, and obliging urbanity heightened still farther the pleasure. (Golberry, 1808, vol II, p. 244)

In Jamaican *plaba* means ‘a mix-up, quarrel’ (Cassidy & Le Page, 1967, p. 353), but was recorded in Sierra Leone nearly a century before the arrival of the Jamaican Maroons. It is also found in Gullah as *palabuhrin*’, which Gonzales defines as the “soft talk

of a philanderer with the gentler sex" (1922, p. 317), in stark contrast to its Krio meaning,

It has given its name to *plasas*, the Krio national dish, first mentioned by Winterbottom (1803), Canot (1854/1928) and then Clarke (1843) as "palavra/palaver sauce," because the meat, fish and palmoil that go into its preparation are "making palaver" in the pot as it cooks. "*Plaba*" sauce seems to have been modelled—perhaps humorously—on the sailors' "slabber sauce," which the OED (n.d.) lists as an obsolete term for "a sauce or similar preparation, composed of various ingredients, mixed in a sloppy mass." This suggests northern British dialect *claver* 'idle talk, gossip' as a source, besides *palaver*. Jamaican *plaba* also means 'sour milk,' a confusion with 'clabber.' The word turns up in Atkins (1735, p. 71). Another whole sentence was recorded by c.1720-1721 at Cape Mesurado on the Liberian coast: *You didee, you kicatavoo* "if you eat [this fetish bundle], you die presently" (Atkins, 1735, p. 58). Atkins also repeats the word "suc-caba" (pp. 60, 197) in his list of "some negrish words" ... "[I]t is the Seal of all Bargains to take hold of one another's hands and say, *Palaaver suquebah*" (1735). This last is clearly Portuguese *se acabou* 'it is done,' from *acabar* 'end, finish,' the source of *kaba* in the Suriname creoles, the equivalent of Krio *dən*. *Umbra* may contain the Twi *bra* 'settle,' while it is possible that *cooshie* is the Portuguese *cousa*, *coisa* 'affair, matter, business,' the [ʃ] > [s] may also be evident in *dash* < *dação* and *fitish* < *feitiço*, if confirmed.

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**Poto, mopoto** '(any) European,' from **Potogi** 'Portuguese.' (Te *u-potho*, Limba *purotho*, Krim *potu*). The *mo-* remains unexplained but resembles the Bantu singular <+ human> class prefix *m(u)*. In Bioko Pichí, the Krio-speaking Settlers from Sierra Leone were known as "Portos."

**Poppo** 'papaya.' Ptg *papaia* (< Carib *papai*, *ababai*). Temne *a-papali*, Loma *pabai*, Limba *papala*, with loss of the final syllable (compare Krio *tapol* 'tarpaulin,' *fambul* 'family,' *slipul* 'slippery,' *kɔmiyel* 'chameleon,' etc.). The variants *papaw* and *pawpaw* began to appear in English alongside *papaya* in the 17th C; a *pəpəgən* is a pea-shooter made from the papaya's hollow stalk.

**Punyata** See *karaw*, supra, and Ptg *punhada* 'a punch.'

**Pikado** 'sharksucker fish,' Ptg *picado* 'remora, a fish sp.'

**Sabi** 'understand.' Ptg *saber* 'know.' The earliest whole sentence in West African Pidgin English that contains this word comes from the Gold Coast, where it was recorded in one of the Correspondents' reports (Law, 1998, II, p. 186fn.) as "saver." This is different from not having information about something ("yu *sabi mi*, bɔt yu nɔ no mi").

**Salon, Saro** 'Sierra Leone.' Never [sijeyalijon] in Krio, this is the Portuguese *Serra Leôa* 'lioness mountain,' the early name attributed either to the shape of the mountain ridge along the Peninsula, or to the noise of the thunder during storms there. The English spelling and pronunciation are an adjustment to Spanish. *Saro* is the probably obsolete Aku Krio Yoruba form. Mende has *salɔuy* 'Freetown.'

**Sampata** ‘a flipflop sandal, usually made from a car tyre.’ Ptg *sapato* ‘sandal.’ The intrusive *-m-* is probably the result of folk-etymologising as < ‘sand-patter.’ The word is found throughout the Caribbean, but not in Suriname or in Gullah.

**Senjago** ‘prostitute.’ Ptg *Santiago* ‘name of a place.’ A possible association with a place so named near Elmina in Ghana where Portuguese sailors fraternised with African women, or else Santiago Island in Cabo Verde, known to the English as St. Jago during the 19th Century; There is also a St. Jago in Clarendon, Jamaica.

**Sentomi** ‘São Tomé island,’ in the Gulf of Guinea.

**Tambo** ‘a type of small drum, similar to a tambourine.’ Ptg *tambor*, Cr *tambo* ‘drum.’ A folk-etymology has its derivation in *fritambo* ‘bush deer,’ since the drum-head is made from the hide of this animal. A larger type of drum is the *tambule* (< Ar *ṭabla* طبل). *Tambú* is ‘drum’ in Papiamentu, the Iberian Lexifier Atlantic Creole of the ABC Islands. **Yɔka** ‘cassava.’ Ptg *yuca* (< Guarani *oka*). Compare Temne *a-yóká*, Susu *yoka*, Bullom *yek*, Koranko *yokaa*. Mostly called *kasada*, this is native to North America, not Britain.

## Crioulo and Krio

Not only has it been suggested that Krio is relexified Crioulo, it was also widely hypothesized in earlier Creole Studies that the proto-form of all European-lexifier pidgins:

... first came into existence on the West African coast. Other Europeans in their colonial ventures later used this Portuguese-based pidgin as the basis or model for French, Dutch, and English pidgins of their own, reforming some Portuguese pidgin elements, relexifying others, and including innovations from several different sources. (Berry, 1971, p. 511)

Cassidy elaborated:

When the Portuguese began trading along the West African coast there came into existence a trade language drawing its European elements basically from Portuguese . . . when other Europeans began to follow their lead, they used this Portuguese Pidgin as the basis and model for their own. English [Pidgin] . . . appears to have been formed partly by direct adoption of P[ortuguese] P[idgin] elements. (1971, p. 203)

Some of these elements he discusses (Cassidy, 1971, pp. 207-210; Cassidy, 1962, pp. 274-275). The same hypothesis was stated by Thompson and Koroma explaining the origin of Krio specifically:

The language first started in the early 15th century as a pidgin between Portuguese traders and the local people they traded with . . . The contact with the Portuguese was broken and English traders replaced the Portuguese from the mid-16th century onwards. The shift to English resulted in Portuguese words being replaced by English words (relexification) in the emerging new language. (2014, p. 2)

This was not the case. While the indigenous languages do contain many adoptions from Portuguese, despite Tagliavini's claim that it too has "multi elementi portoghesi" (1931, p. 834), Krio contains a comparatively small number of incontrovertibly Portuguese-derived items overall; the largest number of those discussed here could equally well be of English origin. Structurally, the fact that while the majority of the nearly 100 linguistic features listed in Holm and Patrick (2007) are shared by Krio and Crioulo, although some 25% of them are *not*, and this is sufficient to demonstrate the unlikelihood of its having developed as a relexification of that language. A reasoned argument supporting this position is Ola Oke (1977). These features are listed here:

The Holm and Patrick (2007) Features compared for	Krio	and	Crioulo
2.5 Anterior or past with locative	+		-
4.2 Progressive = habitual	+		-
4.3 Separate habitual marker	+		-
5.1 Pre- or post-VB compleative only	+		-
5.2 Compleative + adjective	+		-
6.3 Anterior + irrealis = future in the past	-		+
8.3 <i>For</i> as a quasi-modal	+		-
11.1 Passive	-		+
12.3 Preverbal markers before locatives	+		-
12.4 Predicate clefting	+		-
12.6 Comparison with <i>pass</i>	+		-
12.7 Comparison same as lexifier	-		+
13.6 <i>Have</i> = 'there exists'	-		+
14.3 Serial <i>give</i> = dative	+		-
14.7 4+ serial verbs possible	+		-
15.4 Plural = <i>they</i>	+		-
15.10 Postnominal adjective	-		+
16.1 Possessor + possessed	+		-
16.2 Possessed (of) possessor	-		+
16.3 Possessor <i>his</i> possessed	+		-
16.6 Possessive PN = emphatic possessive ADJ	+		-
17.2 Separate 2ps possessive PN	-		+
18.1 <i>And</i> to join sentences	+		-
20.2 Sentence-final <i>o</i>	+		-
Adverbials with <i>wan</i>	+		-
Instrumental serialization	+		-
Conditional is past + future	+		-
Conditional is future + past	-		+

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# REFLECTIONS ON BODY GESTURE AND MEANING IN TOBAGONIAN ENGLISH-LEXIFIER CREOLE OR “*WHA DI WOMAN DEM TEACH MIH IN TOBAGO*”

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## Abstract

In this article, I consider but a few bodily gestures that form part of an expansive repertoire of bodily behaviors associated with speech in Tobagonian English lexifier creole. The fact that such phenomena have either been marginalized or completely ignored by Northern/ Western linguistics demonstrates how the colonial gaze is a disembodied gaze and how colonial science is a disembodied science. The centrality of such gestures to successful language performance in Tobago and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic means that no adequate understanding of language in Africa or its many diasporas will ever be possible without a re-embodied linguistics.

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**Key terms:** Tobago, oral communication, body gestures, non-verbal communication, Caribbean

## Introduction

I have always been intrigued by the ways Caribbean people use body gesture in the process of oral communication. During the years I spent travelling across the region, teaching, delivering conference papers and intermingling with the folk in city streets and rural yards, my observations have been the same: Caribbean people use a great deal of facial and hand gesture in daily interactions. In Grenada, the groups of women I saw back in the early 2000s spoke as much with their hands as they did with words, similar to the groups of people/ women I saw and heard in Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados and Tobago. In any one of these places, the mode of communication I noticed was one that included a wide range of facial and hand gestures that formed part of the overall flow

and exchange of information. Ideas, opinions and feelings were all contained in and transmitted by a mixture of words, verbal gestures and body gestures. It is perhaps this characteristic of the linguistic practices of Caribbean people that is often referred to when it is said that ‘Caribbean people are expressive’. To be expressive, here, would suggest the distinctive mechanisms of language/ communication systems that stand out and that enable information and meaning to be transferred and derived in particular and very nuanced ways.

My interest in language matters over the past two decades has been around the business of how meaning in Tobagonian, as part of the language continuum of English-Lexifier Creoles in the Caribbean, is produced or modified through verbal and body gestures. This interest has been informed and nurtured by my musical background and practice, in which the attention to the nuances of the sound of the voice (my first instrument) and to the variety of sonorities produced by the piano (my second instrument), remain central. As a solo jazz musician who sings at the piano, mindfulness to the use of verbal gestures as well as to the facial projection of emotions and effort, and to the application of the hands/ fingers to the piano, are key to what constitutes a “performance,” and not merely an individual sitting at the piano, playing and singing. How the song (by voice and piano) is delivered involves the articulations of vocal sounds, the production of facial gestures, the use and movements of the upper body, the use of the feet at the pedals, and the use of the hands that present themselves as the spectacle of music performance. Performance in such a context, therefore, speaks to what constitutes the song’s message; how it makes individuals feel; and how individuals interpret its message(s). Meaning production in the performance is thus directly contingent, not merely on the melody, chords, rhythms and harmonies composed as an intangible product of taste and subjectivity, but also on other variables in the larger framework of human communication: verbal gestures beyond words as well as body gestures that capture, modify and invite the audience to co-create meaning.

The role of body gestures in Tobagonian, is thus the matter discussed in this reflective article. Having spent over twenty years paying close attention to how Tobago Creole operates as a system of communication, I have set out to identify and describe some of the body gestures (largely facial and hand) used in the process communication in Tobagonian, and situate them as inevitable aspects of creole discourse that must be factored into descriptions and analyses of the language and by extension, other Creole languages of the region. Furthermore, throughout my years in both music and language learning and practice, women have been the most dominant and influential community, and the paper also addresses this very important context of both my interpretations and analysis. I first reflect on my years of growing up in Tobago as a way of introducing the context of growing up among women of the village. It is in this scenario where I recall first paying attention to how verbal, facial and hand gestures were used in a process of interaction/ communication. Then, out of this description, I reflect on the audio-visual nature

of oral communication in Tobagonian, and engage hopefully more substantially, the question of how meaning is contained, (re)produced and/or modified in Tobagonian. In this instance, I identify more clearly some of the more common body gestures used in Tobagonian and describe the possibilities of meaning (the signifying capacity) and application of Creole gesture in the context of Creole exchange. Finally, I discuss the question of Creole language description in a larger framework of Caribbean education and language learning as well as what learning may look like when the village and communities of women constitute a unique pedagogy in the broader context of Caribbean orality.

### **Tantie, Teacher, Modda and me: My early village training in language observation**

Memories of my years growing up in Tobago are dominated by being in the company of women. Being the last of five children, whenever it became necessary, it was natural for my parents to leave me in the care of other female extended family members, or with female family members who lived elsewhere, that is, outside of the village or Tobago. I grew up in the family yard, in which lived two brothers with their wives and children, very close to another family yard in which lived two of my father's sisters and their children along with the children of other siblings. In these sites, my uncle's wife or my older female cousins were in charge of the children of the yard. And at the home of my other family members who lived elsewhere, I was invariably left in the care of either my father's sisters, sisters-in-law, or my mother's sisters or sisters-in-law. In each of these cases, I addressed these women as, "Tantie," a designation that identifies blood relation and a status of respect. There were uncles around, of course; but it was a general understanding that I was ultimately left in the care of women. It was the Tantie figure that became a central frame of reference for many of the ideas I have come to contemplate around the question of Creole language communication and expression, a point upon which I shall elaborate later in this section of my discussion.

In addition to being left in the care of women, my village surroundings were punctuated by the female "Teacher" figure. While I may have been prodded to use the designation, Tantie to refer to my parents' female siblings, nieces and sisters-in-law, with the term, Teacher, it was a case of my having heard village members refer to specific individuals by this title. Curiously, with reference to men, I can recall no individual who was called, Teacher and was not a teacher by profession. However, with women, it seemed that the term was applicable beyond the reference to a profession. Thus, while there was, Teacher Baby Joe, a longstanding female educator in the village, there was also, Teacher Birdie, the midwife who had delivered me and many other babies at the hospital and who still lives in the village. In both cases, similar to the women in whose care I was left, the female Teacher figure has had a significant impact on shaping how I have come to understand language and communication. The important role she plays in the nurturing and educating of the children of the village means that children are cultured into

being alert to the presence and over-arching significance of Teacher Birdie's home or of Teacher Birdie herself. Understanding the village/ cultural codes of respect and respectability is its own rite of passage. Knowing when and how, as well as being expected to demonstrate/ use the appropriate salutations, behaviours and so forth (observed through spoken language, dress code and body/ facial gesture) is paramount. While my public behaviour or way of walking, for instance, could be called out by any village elder (an adult) for its perceived "inappropriateness," if such a perception is expressed by the female Teacher figure, there is a great deal more weight given to the observation. A certain level and layer of village care was thus provided though the symbolic force of the Teacher figure.

Not too far from where I grew up were two Spiritual Baptist churches and a community of Spiritual Baptists living in a closely knit compound akin to living compounds in West Africa. At both churches and in this compound, women were at the head. "Modda" Aileen and her four daughters were the leaders of Mt Olivet Spiritual Baptist Church, and Modda Orma led the other congregation a stone's throw away from Mt Olivet. Both women (and the daughters of Modda Aileen) were also relatives of my father and very good friends of my parents. Since our family home/ yard formed a natural triangle with the two churches, it was possible to see people, largely women, dressed, going to service on Sundays and pausing in the street to articulate an idea or to contemplate what had just been said. Furthermore, because the route to the church from Modda Aileen's compound ran past our family house/yard, on any given Sunday/ day, she would stop by to chat with my parents. The presence of Modda Aileen in the yard was for me always a spectacle since I was fascinated by the vocal sounds and body gestures she made when she spoke. She grunted, she twisted and pouted her lips, she left her mouth open after asking certain rhetorical questions, and these idiosyncratic traits kept me always eager to see Modda Aileen.

These three village figures, Tantie, Teacher and Modda therefore played a crucial role in my early observations and understandings of how the language we use on a daily basis functions as a broad communicative tool. These three categories of women became realistic representations of the women who owned corner shops (what we call parlours), women who were caretakers, seamstresses, hairdressers, those who worked in the market and fishmongers, and who thus occupied important positions in the village. When I was with my mother, which was more frequent than the times I spent alone with my father, if we ever left home, it was invariably to go to one of these very locations where women were either the head figures or simply central figures. What I observed as being a part of the oral communication process of Tobagonian, which obtained in any one of these given communities of women were the body gestures to which I had begun to pay attention.

The corpus of gestures that is later identified and analysed in this article is therefore specific to my Tobago life within different communities of women. It was not that men

did not manifest the gestures in question. Rather, because women played such an important role in shaping how I came to understand some of the linguistic modes of human interaction that express and invite audiences to co-create meaning, and because when I did pay attention to the body gestures used by men, there seemed to be a specific application of them, based on gender, age, education/ schooling/ social background and sexual orientation, the effort in this piece is to zero in on how the Tobago community of women have helped plant seeds of thought around how gestures both imply and go beyond words and therefore how they aid in the co-production of meaning in the context of Creole interaction. The observations that I have made regarding the classifications of gender, age, race and so forth will, of course, need to deepen with more time for a comprehensive analysis to begin. However, in relation to the gestures that I have identified for discussion in this article, much more time was spent on following how a limited number of body gestures work in relation to Tobagonian Creole as inevitable aspects of our daily interaction.

### **Creole meaning... in the body**

In my various observations on how meaning is co-produced, communicated, modified or challenged within the context of Tobagonian, one of the points with which I had to come to terms was that in our scenario of orality, the value of segmental meaning in words is co-dependent on other expressive domains of the voice and body. What constitutes meaning in a set of articulated words is no doubt contained within the semantic structure and lexical choice of the utterance; however, it seemed to me that more/ greater meaning is further modified by what a speaker does with the lips, eyes, neck, hands or even shoulders. The utterance of words intended to be transmitted to a listener (in face-to-face interactions), cannot function with the assumption that completeness in meaning is contained therein.

In contrast, the verbal-aural transmission of ideas is often contingent on visually expressive body codes that deepen the context of meaning for a listener/ perceiver. This understanding thus led me to chance a formulaic definition of Tobagonian and other English-Lexifier Creoles: words+verbal utterances/ gesture+body gestures = (the production/ modification/ co-creation of) meaning in Tobagonian/ELC/language. As a way of demonstrating this quasi-mathematical approach to understanding how meaning is contained, transmitted, modified or challenged in Tobagonian, I have identified seven gestures that are associated with speech and verbal gesture in order to illustrate how words, non-words and gesture work as a system of “complete” communication in Tobagonian. Complete, here, does not mean that all possible meanings of the idea ostensibly communicated are in fact expressed; rather, it suggests that an intended meaning at a moment in question is rarely ever (or perhaps cannot fully be) expressed through words but, significantly, alongside other verbal gestures and the idiosyncratic use of different parts of the body (hands, arms, face).

In the sense in which complete meaning is a question of combination between speech and gesture, another important point emerged as a necessary consideration. I realised that my observation of body gesture was in fact an observation of how the body carries out the twin function of communication and preservation since, by extending/ modifying meaning in speech or by standing as independent segments producing/ generating contextual meaning, gestures represent the non-speech encoding of Creole language and meaning in the body. Since these body gestures are not used in a context of English speech as they are in Tobagonian, it seemed to me that it was a case of the mouth, lips, arms, shoulders, neck and wrists learning to render short, clipped, yet complete thoughts in Tobagonian always within a scenario of mutual understanding and co-creation of meaning by both performer and audience. In other words, there is a cultural relationship between native speakers and the behaviours of the body that forms the bedrock for the comprehensibility of the body's gestures in relation to Creole/ Tobagonian speech. I came into the knowledge that at the same time that meaning in verbal speech is extended by body gestures, it is also displaced precisely at the moments when just the gesture is working as speech, in which case, Tobagonian, as its own language, is also to be lodged/ found in the body, and not merely in words, utterances or on the page.

Of the many body behaviours that are associated with Tobagonian speech, seven stood out to me as having special significance given their emphatic or salient application as opposed to others that are not necessarily as emphatic relative to the context of speech in which they are used. Emphatic gestures were those which I saw as readily visible, dramatic in delivery, consistent, salient or acute in application, and pragmatically intentional. These are:

- 1) Akimbo
- 2) Eyelid pull
- 3) Pouted mouth
- 4) Raised eyebrows and bent upper lip
- 5) Wrist flick and lip pouting
- 6) Bad-eye or cut eye
- 7) Head-to-toe eye stare

Individually, each body gesture, within the context of language expression and exchange between speakers, functions as part and parcel of the language that has been codified as Tobagonian/ Creole/ Caribbean English Lexifier Creole, and I therefore saw gesture as one of the bases for defining and interpreting CELC, as well to produce meaning within this language continuum.

### ***Akimbo***

I had always known that the akimbo was not unique to Tobago, although Tobago is naturally the place where I first saw it, since it was the place in which I spent my childhood. I had seen it in operation in Trinidad when I went to study at university, and I had seen it in other Caribbean islands when I went for conferences, seminars and university

business meetings. Interestingly, within the context of the university, it was not as common as I had seen it in the village, where it was not quite restricted to older/ adult women. Although it was not a sanctioned gesture for girls or boys (by adults), whenever there was the opportunity away from the eyes of adults, or whenever heated moments of exchange arose, many children, especially girls, would easily resort to the akimbo often as a layer of communication that reinforces or articulates more emphatically an utterance already made or about to be made in Creole.

Furthermore, I had known through film and more travelling, that the akimbo was also as widespread as was the teeth sucking with the African Diaspora communities and that it is not necessarily a body behaviour associated with “Black” people as we are often called/ call ourselves. However, when I started to pay closer attention to how it is used in Tobago, I had already begun to focus on verbal gestures and began noticing what the body does alongside words and verbal gestures. The pattern I was beginning to observe was that in moments/ instances where a statement or verbal utterance was made, about to be made, or implied, there were often particular body gestures that seemed to be directly associated with it, one of which is the akimbo. I therefore began a preliminary description of what I saw, which enabled me to pay broader and deeper attention to how particular body gestures figure, feature and impact or (re)produce meaning in the context of Tobagonian speech.

In my observations, the akimbo in Tobago seemed to be operating as the creole “utterance” of the arms on the hips. Without words, the akimbo, whether one-armed or two-armed, produces its own meanings, albeit within a larger context of speech interactions or within a larger visual frame of reference (or event) that makes the akimbo the appropriate register. And with words and/or verbal gestures, the akimbo seemed to be performing the role of refining or reinforcing the expressed language or meaning-specific utterance. Thus, with or without words, the akimbo may be interpreted to mean: 1) *well hear nuh/ yuh hear wha mih ah tell yuh*; 2) *ah wha ah gwaan deh?*; 3) *ah who yu ah taak tu?*; 4) *tell mih mo*; 5) *ma wait ya pan am*; 6) *wait leh mih tink...*; 7) *o gaad mih back*; and 8) *ah wha dih hell/ arse/ fuck mee bwai/ gyal ah sih ya soh*. Importantly, the language of the arms on the hips or the expressive capacity and potential of the akimbo is seen/ interpreted in relation to other subtle or less emphatic movements of the neck, lips or head, as the case may be.

#### *Well hear nuh/na*

The akimbo is often used as a gesture that announces the speaker’s intent, and therefore an utterance that may be interpreted to mean, *well hear nuh/na*. The same meaning may be rendered by, *yuh hear wha mih ah seh* and placed at the end of a sentence, in which case it acts as an utterance reinforcing the speaker’s intent rather than announcing it. In a scenario where two speakers are discussing an issue that is arresting/ captivating where one speaker sees him/ herself as obliged to take action on something, that speaker may use the akimbo to communicate *well hear nuh/na* [well hear this] or [well let me tell you

this] (all translations are by the author unless specified otherwise). At times, it is used before the actual words whereas in other instances, it may be used without saying the words. In both cases, its meaning approximates to the same thing. The speaker intending to take action may thus use the akimbo before saying, *well hear nuh/ na, mih ah goh tell am mih mine wen mih sih am*, where, *well hear nuh/na* may or may not be uttered alongside or after the akimbo. If the substantive details of the sentence are given first, the akimbo utterance may come at the end in the form, *yuh hear wha mih ah seh?*, thereby giving us, *mih ah goh tell am mih mine wen mih sih am, yuh hear wha mih ah seh? ah wha ah gwaan deh?*

The akimbo in Tobago also expresses the idea, *ah wha ah gwaan deh?* [What's happening there?]. In this case, it may be used as an utterance with or without these very words. For example, in a situation where in a neighbour's yard known for much in the way of public outbursts, loud screams are coming from inside the yard, another neighbour, without saying anything, may walk quickly/ gingerly to the fence or window of his/her yard and stare into the yard from which the noise is emanating, with both arms akimbo, thereby communicating, *ah wha ah gwaan deh?* At times, the word, 'now' may be added to the interpretation or actual utterance, giving us therefore, *ah wha ah gwaan deh now?* [What's happening there now?]. Thus, without knowing of exactly what is actually taking place in the yard from which the screams emanate, another person seeing the neighbour's peculiar posture where the hands are akimbo and eyes are peering into the other neighbour's yard, is likely to be immediately drawn to the drama by way of the body's utterance, that is, by way of the arms on the hips calling attention to a spectacle. There are, of course, other body gestures that can and do signal that something serious/ interesting /curious is taking place at a location that the eyes can capture, such as the same kind of piercing look at a situation in a physical site with the arms folded. However, the arms folded do not quite seem to carry the same register/ meaning. For instance, while a person with folded arms who is piercing into the neighbour's yard may communicate that a spectacle is unfolding, with the person using the akimbo, in the context of Tобагонian, it is the intensity and drama of the spectacle that is communicated more readily with the arms on the hips.

*ah who (di hell) yu (tink yuh) ah taak tu*

It is often the case in Tobago that the akimbo is used to mean *ah who yu ah taak tu?* or *ah who di hell yu ah taak tu?* In a situation where one individual is expected to have a respectful tone and posture to another, usually older person, the older person is quite likely to use the akimbo if one day, the younger person says something taken to be disrespectful to him/her. For instance, in a scenario where an adult child says to a parent, *buh mammy ah fine yuh move schupid deh* [Mother, I think you've acted quite stupidly], the mother may then use the akimbo before, during or without saying, *ah who di hell yuh tink yu ah taak tu?* If it is used without the actual words, there is often an associated

stare/ gaze at the child with the akimbo somewhat lengthened in duration. The akimbo here marks the beginning of the mother's reprimand.

*tell mih mo' gyal/bwai*

In the Tobago context of *taaking commess* that is, a version of discussing the affairs of another person or other people that has immense repercussions for the image of the individual/s spoken about, the akimbo is a primary form of body expression, often used as an utterance to mean, *tell mih mo' gyal/bwai* ['Really? What else happened?']. In this instance, the listener, so enthralled by the information given by the speaker, may use the akimbo as a gesture to express her interest in gaining more information, or as a sarcastic indication of her interest. The akimbo here may be used with or without the words, and, as in the previous example, the individual using it would be looking at the speaker, but not with the same kind of facial expression of anger likely to be seen in face of the mother.

*ma wait ya pan am*

The akimbo in Tobago is also often used as an indicator of determined patience and impending action, thus approximating, *ma wait ya pan am* [I'm waiting here patiently on him/her]. In this case, the gesture marks both the suspense and intensity of a situation, setting up an onlooker for an impending spectacle of some sort. For example, in a scenario where a mother is waiting for her child after the school day ends, and she is standing, waiting some 45 minutes after their agreement of 15 minutes as the maximum amount of time for the mother to be waiting, she may easily use the akimbo at the waiting point, sometimes slowly pacing her steps as a signal of both her anger and plan to reprimand her child. In such a case, the akimbo would signal a peculiar type of reprimand that would/ could easily become a public spectacle.

*wait leh mih tink...*

In an exchange between two speakers, where one speaker is asked a question that requires some thought, or where the speaker him/ herself is trying to remember something, the akimbo is used as a gesture of contemplation, thereby containing the meaning, *wait leh mih tink* [Let me contemplate this for a while]. Interestingly, in all the examples above, the two-armed akimbo is likely to be the variation used, whereas in this instance, either the one-armed or two-armed akimbo is possible. In both cases, the head/neck is moved accordingly to add to and/or signal the look of pensiveness.

*o gaad mih back*

An iconic use of the akimbo in Tobago is among older persons, especially women, to signal or communicate their feelings of pain in the back. It may be seen just when an elder gets up off his/her sitting position, where the elder uses normally the two-armed akimbo in the standing position and may say, *o gaad mih back* [my back is killing me]. Importantly, I have never heard the utterance, *o gaad mih back* without seeing the akimbo. In other words, this is one instance in which the akimbo seems to be directly tied to the verbal utterance.

*ah wha dih hel mee bwai/gyal ah sih/hear ya soh*

A range of expressions along the lines of shock, horror, amazement and disgust can be articulated through the akimbo in Tobago. In instances where information given to someone is received with shock, amazement, horror or disgust, the person receiving the information may likely use the one-armed or two-armed akimbo alongside the utterance, *ah wha di hell mee bwai/gyal ah sih/hear ya soh?* [Oh my God! What is this that I'm hearing?]

### ***Eyelid pull***

In my observations of the Tobagonian eyelid pull, women tend to be the more common users. This gesture may be used with one hand, in which case the thumb and the index or the index and the third are the likely fingers used to pull the bottom lids downwards. In other instances, two fingers from both hands may be used. In both cases, the speaker uses the gesture to suggest that a promise or a commitment has not been kept, and thus figures as a lament that can mean. *up to now, e nuh come* or *up to now mih nuh sih am*. For example, in a situation in which a woman is promised by her plumber that he would come and work on her kitchen sink, but a number of weeks have passed and there is no showing of the plumber, the woman, lamenting to a neighbour, may say, *Marlan tel mih he ah come ya since last mont...* and may then use the eye-lid pull to complete the utterance, therefore suggesting, *but up to now mih nuh sih am*. Importantly, this gesture may also be used while saying, *up to now...*, but not necessarily with the words, *mih nuh sih am*. The Tobagonian eyelid pull thus seems to covey meaning that is specific to the act of seeing and *not* seeing at the same time, since it is the expectation of seeing the plumber, who, based on his promise, has not been seen, that the gesture seems to express.

### ***Pouted mouth***

My observations have indicated that the pouted mouth in Tobago is a frequently used gesture containing a range of meanings based, naturally, on context. This gesture may be used with the eyes, head, neck and upper torso aiding to clarify meaning articulated by the pouted lips. The pouting is in fact a quick forward-backward movement of the lips. At times the forward-backward movement may be more drawn out, where the pouting may be slightly more sustained but then released. It seems to operate as a 'complete' body utterance in that its use does not necessarily require words as a framework for meaning.

There at least three iterations of the Tobagonian pouted mouth. First, there is the one that makes (normally a disparaging) comment about or identifies another person in the presence of the individual without him/her knowing that s/he is the focus of secret discussion. There is the one that is used with the steups (suck-teeth) and quick movement of the head/ neck away from the eyes of the speaker to approximate, *mih nuh wha fuh hear*. And there is also the one that is used to openly poke fun at another person.

A classic instance of the first iteration appears in the scenario involving more than two individuals, where one person, already a topic of discussion among other individuals, appears in the presence of the others. One of the members of the group discussing the person, who has suddenly appeared, may use the pouted mouth to call attention to what the person is wearing, her head wear, her purse, her walk, or anything deemed necessary for identification and therefore further commentary at a later point in time among the same group or to be shared with other people who were not part of the discussion.

### ***Bent upper lip***

This gesture, albeit not as easily accessible to the eye as is say, the akimbo or the pouted lips, is no less emphatic in terms of its applications and meanings. Particularly used among older women, the gesture is one where the upper lip is bent downwards, often signalling pity, disgust, surprise or mournful acknowledgment of loss or defeat, in which case, slow or medium paced head nodding or shaking is likely to occur. This movement of the lip (and head) seems more associated with verbal gestures, namely, *aaw*, *hm* or *zm* (Thomas, 2024).

As an expression of pity or disgust, the gesture seems not to have a Creole phrase/ sentence that actually carries the meaning contained in the gesture, in the way that other body-movements identified above have a range of associated Creole expressions that communicate the meaning of the body gesture. Contrarily, the bent upper lip as an utterance in this case, seems more to indicate the user's application of pity/ disgust onto what she sees, has seen, hears, or has heard. For example, in a scenario where an individual is observing or has heard of a behaviour, dress-code, or even an eating habit deemed disgusting, especially inappropriate or what Tobagonians refer to as "out-of-place," the observer/ listener may likely use the bent upper lips with slow or medium head shaking. Similarly, a woman quietly reflecting on the outcome of a deal gone bad or of an abusive relationship and acknowledging to herself that she has been treated badly or that she has endured a great deal, may use the bent upper lips and a slow or medium repeated nodding to utter this sentiment of defeat.

### ***Wrist flick and lip pouting***

This gesture is used as an utterance of annoyance, expressed not in view but in the presence of another person. Importantly, the gesture is often meant for others to see, but not for the person to whom it is directed. For instance, in a scenario in which several women are working together in a yard or in a kitchen, and one of the women seems obnoxious to the others, the wrist flick and lip pouting may be used but uttered to the person's back, and not to her frontal view/ her face by one of the women. Because it is often meant for others to see, it would normally provoke mocking laughter among the women who have seen the gesture. At times, a soft teeth-sucking (steupsing) accompanies the lip pouting in this gesture.

### ***Bad-eye or cut-eye and head-to-toe eye stare***

The Tobagonian bad-eye or cut-eye is a common gesture that expresses anger at, resentment for and willingness to confront another person or group of persons. It can express a wide range of disparaging remarks thus communicating a variety of negative sentiments, thoughts or plans of action. Impending revenge can also be signalled by the bad-eye/cut-eye. In all of these cases, the person using the gesture is generally in close proximity to the person to whom the gesture is used, and the latter may or may not know that he/she is being looked upon with anger, hatred or resentment. With this gesture, the user looks at another person normally with the head slightly turned away from the person's direction and the eyes are locked on the individual with an expression of anger on the user's face

In contrast, the Tobagonian eye-to-toe stare is much more confrontational than other gestures in that it is expressed directly in front of the person to whom it is directed. And unlike the bad-eye or cut-eye, it is not always or necessarily confrontational, although it can be. I remember one day, for instance, I met an older cousin of mine in my native village, who tried to remember who I was by using the head-to-toe stare. As I walked past her and recognised it was she who was speaking to another neighbour, I shouted, 'O Charmaine'. She then looked at me from head to toe and then said, 'ah who you be?' Once I said, 'Uncle Charles laas pickni', she then proceeded to find out about my past whereabouts and urged me to come and check in on other family members who may not know or remember me.

In its confrontational iteration, this gesture tends more to be used by women and girls. It may be the gesture containing a similar meaning to the akimbo that asks, *ah who di hell yuh a taak to?* or, it may communicate the utterance, *yuh nuh sih mih gud?*, meaning that the user has already measured her potential competitor and wants him/her to know just that, that he/she has been measured and is being measured. Thus, the Tobagonian head-to-toe stare is likely to precede a volatile outburst, an outburst of some sort, or a conscious and wilful ignoring.

### **Conclusion**

The gestures considered in this article are but a few in an expansive repertoire of bodily behaviors associated with speech in Tobago. Therefore, there is an urgent need for further study in this area. The fact that such phenomena have either been, at best marginalized and, at worst completely ignored by Northern/ Western linguistics demonstrates how the colonial gaze is a disembodied gaze and how colonial science is a disembodied science. The centrality of such gestures to successful language performance in Tobago and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic means that no adequate understanding of language in Africa or its many diasporas will ever be possible without a re-embodied linguistics.

# WE BE THE WORLD JAGUNJAGUN: A DIALOGIC EXPOSÉ

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## Abstract

This dialogic exposé is between two friends of over a decade pondering on the importance of education beyond schooling. While they express all the challenges of schooling in relation to survival mechanisms for self-sufficiency as stipulated in the Nigerian National Policy on Education, the duo sees themselves as *jagunjagun* and students/ warriors whose struggles at the warfront is always their business, but friends and families are always interested in the returns of war. This contribution is not only a reflective practice embarked upon by these two friends to encourage each other, but it is also a call to youths, especially Nigerian youths to be focused, dedicated and strategic concerning how their certificate will be useful beyond white collar jobs which colonialism have made us see as the only way to be relevant/ feel successful in society. To relay their message, they tapped into their multilingual prowess, which is a norm in Nigeria, by dialoguing in Yorùbá, Naija (Nigerian English lexifier creole), and, of course, English, which is Nigeria's official language.

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**Key terms:** Dialog, exposé, *jagunjagun*, Nigeria, education, Yorùbá, Naija

## Our vignette

Isimoheel and I have been college friends since 2008, when we started our associate degree with the hope of becoming professional teachers. During our first year of college, we were casual friends, but in our second year, we gradually became closer as student-leaders, muslims and half course-mates. Half course-mate means my subject combination was Social Studies and English while his was Social Studies and Yorùbá. It was a pleasure getting closer to Lásùnmó, the nickname I fondly call Isimoheel even after starting his own family. However, the friendship string became casual again after our college graduation in 2011 because I relocated to Lagos State while he stayed in Ogun State (both in Nigeria). In 2021, Lásùnmó and I got connected again through a mutual

friend, and we began reflecting on our different paths since we parted ways and how we are doing now.

In sharing our joys, highs, lows, and all that life has been to us as college friends of over a decade, we share how schooling (Apple & King, 1977) instead of life-long education (Fafunwa, 2018) is like a war we have been fighting since childhood. This war is never-ending. We reflected deeply on how I, searching for greener pastures and needing self-reliance, embarked on graduate studies in the United States intending to return to Nigeria and establish myself as a leading educator and curriculum specialist. My friend, Lásùnmó, who is a “well-established” educator, entrepreneur, and poet, serves as an actively engaging listener with whom I share my challenges and wins all the time since 2021 when we reunited. Even though we have never set eyes on each other since 2011, we as friends share our vulnerabilities, struggles, and growth as we plan not to see “education” (schooling) as the only thing we need to *survive* and *thrive* but as other skills to make us self-reliant.

Our rendition in Yorùbá equates schooling to war (*Ogun*), and we, as friends, have embodied resilience, discipline, love, and passion for being mighty warriors (*jagunjagun*) in our various endeavors. However, families and relatives may, at times, not fully understand all the challenges at the war front. Their concern is more about the proceeds from the war, which is expected based on the communal nature of Nigerian society. In what follows, Lásùnmó and I engage in the dialogic exposé of our struggles and wins while embracing multilingualism a norm in Nigeria (Bámgbósé, 2022) in our dialogue going back and forth using Yorùbá (one of the three major languages in Nigeria); English (Nigeria’s official language due to our colonial history) and Naija (Nigerian English lexifier creole) (Faraclas, 2021) which is often called “Pidgin”.

i

Èdá t’óbá máa m’ókè láyé, ó gbódò n’ímò tó péye  
Ó gbódò jé akoni nínú ọgbón  
Ó gbódò jé ọmòràn tó mọ oyún ịgbín nínú ikàrahun.  
Kátó lè jé ẹni ọgbón tó momu ọgbón  
Kátó lè jé ẹni ọye, tó nímò tó péye  
Kátó lè jé ọmòràn tó moyún ịgbín  
Àfi ká jáde nílē,  
Ká d’élé ọgbón, ká bomi ọgbón mu  
Ká rìn-rìn-rìn ká d’élé ìmò, ká b’omi ìmò síkùn  
Torí, Àgùfòn tó máa jẹun orókè láyé, á narùn sókè ní dandan.

Yes, I agree that pesin wey go succeed must be knowledgeable  
I even agree say pesin needs wisdom and the right disposition to make am  
And na true you yarn say pesin must leave their comfort zone to get knowledge

The matter be say, u no fit siddon for one place and say you be the wisest  
You no fit siddon for your village and claim say u sabi  
You gatz gbe bodi and be *transglocal*  
Na that time we agree say you sabi!  
Learning and education are paripasu that needs stepping out of one's comfort  
zone.  
Gbera! Gbe bodi! Ji! Masun!

### ii

Ilé-èkó n'ìmò tó péye pin sí  
Ibi a tí n k'ógbón kúngbón  
Ibi a tí n k'óye kún oye  
Ibi a tí n k'ékòjó àtátà, làá pè n'ílé-èkó  
Ìlé-èkó p'ógbún, ilé-èkó p'ógbòn, lábà tiwa.  
Bómọ kékòjó alákòjó bérè tán  
Á tara şàşà re Girama  
Ìfẹ à n gb'oyè níí m'ómọ re Fásitì  
Fásitì, ibi ìmò pabúdò sí.  
Ibi a gboyè tití táká gba Kòfésò, tórùn ní w'oni kiri.  
Ọmọ tó bá kékòjó gb'oyè níbí, ọmọ tó bá k'ékòjó gboyè lábà wa  
Tíkanra tíkanra ni wón duró  
Wón a fara gb'ogbé bíí ajá tó wólé ẹkùn tó bò  
Ohun tójú rí ní sọ wón d'àjánàkú, tó fí n b'égbépé n'íbi gbogbo.

95

Yes, they told us say na school we go get holistic education  
Dey even talk am say na for school we go get all the needed tools to be wise  
Na school dey say we go acquire worthwhile knowledge  
Na so we start from jéléosinmi to kindergarten and on to university  
Na for university dey say we go acquire professorial degree  
Na true say pikin wey acquire doctorate for our village be genius  
Na with aggression and assertiveness dem dey show f their degree  
Because we all sabi say e no dey easy getting the degree

### iii

Ètò èkó n'ílè aláwò-funfun yàtò gèdégbe  
Omí ọgbón tó jiná nínú ọgbón ni wón fí dáa  
Àwọn àgbà tó jinná nínú ìmò ló gbé ètò òhún kalè.  
Ètò èkó tí ò léjó nínú, kò sí pàsípàrò nínú ìmò tán kó  
Ọmọ tán bá kọ, a gbón şásá  
Ọmọ tán bá wò, a gbó òfẹ

Ọmọ tán bá f'èkó kó, a mọ egun tòlótòló tá a fín télè.  
Èyí ló jé a rí wọn bíi aşíwájú  
Èyí ló jé a rí wọn bíi ọmòràn, tí gbogbo ọmọ wa sì fé k'àwé níbè.  
Èdá tó jáde nílé, gb'oko ìmò lọ n'ílè yií àbí lókè okun  
Wòn se déédé Jagunjagun tó r'ojú ogun

As stressful and challenging wey schooling dey for our village  
We dey hussle am and e get some of us sef wey go *white man's land*  
All in the name of education  
We believe say education abroad, especially'in "*white man's land*" be the og-bonge  
And dem train us to be critical thinkers with lots of rigour  
Na why we say pesin wey commot for our village wey go *white man's land*  
Go *white man's land* for education be warrior  
Jagunjagun means warrior and to be warrior no be child's play  
You commot for your house to school abroad where you have no relatives  
All na to bury yourself in the book and waka go class/conferences in the snow  
Who fit endure all those wahala all in the name of education?  
Na only Jagunjagun fit run am!

Ohun kórí kó şe jagun lójú ogun, ará ilé ò lè sọ  
Ìyà tóhùn-ún kó jé jagun níjù, ará ilé ò lè mò  
Ohun t'éni tí n bẹ l'ábà n̄ retí, ni kí jagun ó m'ólú wálé  
Kó wá gb'ógo ẹbí ga, kó wa d'éni àgbé gègè l'ábà tó ti l'ojú ogun.  
Njé bó ti r'qrùn tó náà nùhun?  
Ojú ogun, ojú ọlómọ-ò-to  
Gbàgede èkó, ibi tí iná tín jó l'ófun amùkòkò  
Ibi t'álùjònú tí n f'omọ ènìyàn d'ájọ lóoyè  
Ibi t'íná tín jóni táà gbodò wí, táà gbodò s'ojo.  
Jagun tó bá s'oji lójú ogun, irú wọn ní b'ógun lọ  
Àwọn ní d'érú f'áwọn tó jagun m'ólú  
Jagun tó jagun m'ólú ní j'oyè Akogun  
T'ijó t'ilù ni wọn fí n j'áwé oyè léwọn l'órí

My friend, I am with you on all the things wey you talk about jagunjagun  
We be jagunjagun to be useful for ourselves and our community  
We be jagunjagun through resilience, and not everyone cares about the stress  
Wetin concern people na the returns  
Wetin you bring come from warfront be the question and main concern

As I ruminate wetin my eyes dey see for studying abroad,  
Na to just dey cry and smile  
But with chitchatting with aa friend like you,  
Life in *white man's land* as an international student is worth rejoicing about.

v

Èèyàn tó r'elé ẹkó, tí ò rí ìwé ẹrí múbò  
Ó se déédé jagun tó s'ojó l'ójú ogun  
Ó wà n'írò àwọn tí yóó d'ẹrú Akọni  
Tórí kò s'óhun tán fé d'élé wí, ju kí wọn sònù s'ínú ayé  
Kí wọn mágá ṣerú àwọn akọni tó jagun ṣégun  
Bóbá wu Elédùmárè, ó lè sọ ẹrú d'omọ,  
Ó sì lè ní k'érú kú s'ókó ẹrú.  
Ohun ojú jagunjagun ní rí l'ójú ogun kò kéré  
Ohun ojú akogun ní rí k'ótó jagun ṣégun kíí s'àwàdà o jàre.  
Bó ti n f'ara gb'ogbé ataàbòn,  
Ni yóò ma f'okàn ṣàárè àwọn ọmọ ogun rẹ tí n kú  
Ìlágbe ò ní jé ó gbádùn l'ésè.  
Bó bá f'orin ọdẹ sílè, ikú dé  
Bó bá f'orin ọfò sílè, ọqrun alákeji ni  
Bó ti n lo ọgbón inú láti ṣégun ogun  
Béè ló mágá lo àdámọ láti dámọ lékun àwówó  
Kò sí ịgbádùn f'eni tí n bẹ l'ójú ogun  
Kò séwéékè f'eni tó fé d'akogun  
Igbé n gbòn mí ò sí l'ójú ogun  
Jé n yára ṣèyó ò se wí  
T'ifura t'ifura ni jagun fi n rìn lágijù  
Bóbá jagun tití, tó data kóró wọnú àdó  
Tó jagun r'éyìn ogun  
Kò ní kóo délé, kó o gb'órúkọ ẹbí ga  
Kò ní kóo padà s'íyèwù, kó r'íbi k'éròjà ogun sí  
Ọpò àbò ogun ní bẹ lábé ibùsùn tí ò wúlò  
Kò ríbékè l'áyé ojósí, bí wòn tí n t'ojú ogun dé, ni wòn pín àbò ogun

Yes, na to dey celebrate people wey complete their degree  
And to see them as role models  
But shey na just about celebration?  
Na just about talking about the resilience?  
Wetin we go say about those wey no fit withstand the stress?  
We say they are weak?

We need to be careful of judging as there are always different strokes for different folks

The main matter be say, rejoice if you are a successful jagunjagun  
But never make a mockery of those who never did!  
The thing be say, everybody go dey okay laslas!

## vi

Bí wón tí n ti ibi èkó dé ni wón mú èkó lò  
Nítóri wón ní aşíwájú gidi  
Wón ní igi léyìn ọgbà tí wón fèyìn tì.  
Òpò ọmọ ogun téé jọ f'ojú winá ogun  
Onírúurú işèlè ní yóò şelè bẹé bá padà d'élé  
Ohun tí yóó şelè sí kálukú á yàtòtò.  
Èyí múmi rántí ogun fásitì tí mo ja n'ílè yií  
Ogun fásitì tí mo b'awọn ja l'óko ilarin  
Ìlorin àfònjà ọmọ enú dùn j'uyò.  
Bí eré, bí eré, mo jagun etílé  
Bí àwàdà, bí àwàdà mo jagun Girama  
Wón ni n ta kóṣó, wón ní n gbéra nílè ki n d'ide  
Kí n wá b'awọn rojú ogun Afònjà  
Mo yára kékí síyèkan mi mótiündé, k'álo ojú ogun  
K'álo jagun mólú báa ti jagun girama lójósí

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My paddy, you remind me of all the wahala of schooling  
I remember when dey say I no fit enter primary one because my left hand no  
touch my right ear  
Dem still dey do that thing?  
Na from childhood they don dey structure our lives  
They make us believe am say all na schooling  
Shey dey no educate my forefathers before schooling ni?  
Schooling sef na just to dey brainwash us atimes  
Abi you dey whine me ni?  
But with everything, I kukuma still dey keep going  
As they say education go make us a “functioning member of the society”  
We hear una o!

## vii

B'ísé bá d'ísé ogun, b'órò bá d'òrò ká gb'awé èrí w'álé  
Tó d'ogun kámú gègé l'ówó, e ránṣé p'omọ Alábédé  
Isé ogun gege ròó l'órùn bí èkó.

Sàdédé n mogbó, p’omọ Alábédé ti gb’oko alawò funfun lọ  
Wọn ní ọmọ Alábédé tí n jagun aránmú s’òrò.  
Kíni k’áti gbọ, p’álákànjí n s’ojo ogun?  
Kíni k’áti gbó, p’ájagun ségun r’ógun sá?  
Mo sa kítí mápá,  
Mó pe éégún ilé, ó jémi ní wéré  
Mo pe òrìṣà ojà, ó jémi ní hòò tèmi  
Mo gbé kóótù aşo ogun, ó d’ogun Afònjà  
Fere tófẹ gbémi, okè odò ló jùmí sí  
Níbi awónrínwán tí n fi ikarahun fórí mú  
T’éranko ní j’ayé ọlọba. Kò s’óhun méjì tí n s’emí,  
Bíi kí n f’ojú kan agijù Afònjà, t’álújònú ibile ìbèrù n gbé  
Kí n máa d’áná ogun yáwọn, bíi ogun bíi ogun  
Kí n máa dáná ọtè yáwọn, bíi ọtè bíi ọtè

My friend, na the scam say education go make me functional in the society o  
Na why I carry my body go ilu òyìnbo for school  
I agree say I be pen warrior even from our Teachers-in-training days  
I believe say my power dey my mouth and my hand  
No wonder Oga Atanda calls me alábelówó  
But above all, we have to keep pushing noonie  
Because you sef know say to be first-generation student no be moinmoin  
But with discipline, passion and resilience, we go do am  
And God no go shame us!

### viii

Ogun ká pa ẹmó, ká p’òkété  
Ká pa lékéléké eyé ojú omi bíi ti Girama, ni mo pe ogun Afònjà.  
À sé, omi Àfònjà tó d’áké róró, ọjòlá ní bẹ l’ábé omi  
B’ígbó agijù Àfònjà ti tutù láti wò,  
Ebóra burúkú tí n jé látóopa níbẹ n’íjù.  
Agijù Àfònjà dùn-ún wò l’ójú  
Kìnìún olóòlajù, àtawónriwón abénu gàngà ní bẹ ní bodè  
Kò séni máa dé bode tí ò ní f’ojú júbà wọn  
Oko ẹkù, òun mùdùnmúdùn nkó? Típétípẹ ló faramó ázà dam.  
Pàgò àwọn ebóra náà ò nélégbé, ọjò wéliwéli ni wọn fi sèṣò è  
Báfẹ-ayé tí n bẹ fáwọn ebóra, tawọn ọmọ ogun náà ò gbéhìn  
B’omọ ogun tí n bẹ nínú igrbó, ni wọn bẹ ló’kè odò  
Ogun wá di bóbó-le-lò, yàgò lónà, ó di kólórí ó dorí mú  
Kò pé, kò jínnà, iná ogun jó dé kókó orí

A wọnú agbami ogun lọ

Guy, you too sabi story sha!  
All this history all about Ilorin!  
That is okay o!  
I am happy for you that you got your degree in a flying color from that school,  
though  
I am always proud of our humble beginning!

### ix

Òpò tí ó l’óògùn arinyà, tí n j’aáyán bì tifuntifun  
Òpò tí ò fesè èyìn dilè mú şübú sínú iná pupa bélébélé  
Òpò ló n kójú rè sánà tánkè pé kan gbalé lọ  
Ògòrò ní bẹ lésè kan ayé ẹsè kan ọrun  
Sùgbón jagun tó m’úra ogun wá láti lé  
Jagun tó mọ ilé-èkó s’ójú ogun, gbogbo wọn ní yan fanda ka  
Gbogbo wọn ní kó èkó mí sítùn  
Tí wọn sì ní sanra nínú ọgbón, tí wọn d’àgbà nínú ọye  
Ohun tó múwọn data-kóró l’ójú ogun  
Ohun tó sọ wọn d’àgbà ọjè ni èròjà ogun tí wọn kó l’ówó

Again, it’s not a child’s play like you said  
Yes, a lot happens in diaspora all in the name of making it  
But who wants to hear your story?  
Who cares about what you go through as a student in Ilorin?  
But ignoring all the noise and focusing on you and your goal  
Truly pays off.  
Again, I am proud of us!

### x

Ení bá máa jagun ségun, tó fẹ kàwé gbàwé èrí  
Kó rántí mú ohun ogun dáni, kó má gbàgbé egbé síté  
Tídè inú ikarahun, òun àkárábá táká fí gbébọra dè n’íjù  
Ìfura ni Yorùbá pè lógùn àgbà, b’ómódé gan ó nífura  
omodé tí ò fura l’ógun, egbé rè á d’epo sáàlà rè.  
Nígbà t’ólùkó bá békèrè ibékèrè tó ta kókó  
Tídè akékòkó ní ọgbón orí tó fí fó ibékèrè náà sí wéwé  
Ìmò ọye tó fí şàlàyé èrò rè ní àkárábá tó fí gbé olùkó dè  
Egbé tí n bẹ l’ówó akékòkó, ni akitiyan tó fí la ipele èkó kòkèkan kójá.  
Kátó lè pèèyàn láláše yorí nínú èkó, k’ákékòkó ó tó le dántó nínú ìmò

Á jagun èkó ọlódún gbogboró  
Ọlódún mèèdógún ní bẹ́ nílè yíí, ọlódún méjilá ní bẹ́ lókè òkun.  
Ọjó tán róúnjẹ gidi jẹ́ kò tó nñkán, ọjó tán debi sùn lópò  
Ọjó tán fí gbádùn ò tó nñkan,  
Òní kálọ yàrá ikékòjó, ọla kálọ yàrá ikàwé  
Òtunla ká gbájúmọ işé àsetiléwá  
Ìpàyà òun ibèrù ìdánwò ní í jé kán rù keegu.  
Ìdánwò ọkọ akékòjó, ibèrù f'awọn olódo

HAAAAA! Reminding me again of all the structures in school?  
The assignments atime can be frustrating  
Examinations that all we do is “la cram la pour”  
Does that make us really functioning members of the society?  
Abi we are just interested in having A’s  
Is there effective town-gown relationship?  
I mean can we apply all that we learn in school in daily lives?  
Does our certificate really bring us satisfying job and the income we want?  
While some people’s education might have town-gown relationship  
While they have satisfaction in their jobs  
While they appear as the best  
Are they “truly” finding joy?  
Is there iota of humanity in what they do?  
Do they get their current paying job through their certificate alone or with some sort of social networks?  
Is there anything called meritocracy?  
All these questions percolate my mind ọré mi as I think about who we are as jagunjagun!

## xi

Onírúurú ohun l’akékòjó şe láti m’ólú nínú ìdánwò  
Òpò ló s’ora wọn d’ebóra òru láti kàwé fún ìdánwò  
Òpò akọ tí ò le k’àwé ti wọ ẹgbé owó pábé  
Òpò abo tí o le k’àwé ti fara wọn jìn fún gègé olùkó  
Nítórí kííni? Njé ìdánwò tó ohun tá ní fara jìn fún?  
Èèyàn tó wọ ẹgbé pábé nítórí ìdánwò  
Èdá tó farajìn fún gègé olùkó  
Òní ni irú wọn rò, wọn ò r’òla  
Wọn ti gbàgbé pé bóníí bá lọ, ọla ní bò.  
Ohun tó hùn-ún k’ójú àkékòjó rí lénu èkó  
Njé ó kan ará ilé? Njé ó kan ijọba?

Àbí e ò rántí p'ópò ló j'ìyà èkó tí ò jèrè rè  
Òpò ló sanwó ribiribi tá ò r'ábò.  
Òpò oní sabuké ló ti gb'égbá aşéwo  
Isé *tap tap tap* ló fí n̄ şara rindin  
E bó o ko lọ fáà, lò pò gb'ójú lé  
Òpò ló gba sabuké tí n̄ bẹ́ lábé ibùsùn nínú ilé  
Òpò oní sabuké níi wa dánfó  
Èyí tí ò wa dánfó t'oko òrókòto d'óko òrókòto

Yes, there are different kinds of students  
The dedicated ones and those that can “use what they have to get what they want”  
But again, what is the goal of education?  
Are you “thriving” because of the education you acquired in school?  
Or you acquired what they made us call “informal education”  
I challenge you to tell me what schooling has done for you  
Other than making you to be “structured” and obey your leaders  
Hmm... Seems I am talking too much again today  
As usual, you know I can be angry atimes when I think of how we have been  
brainwashed in school  
But I am also a beneficiary of the school as an institution  
A reason I am always in my confused state  
But in all, I still keep going to school  
All because learning is a continuum  
And because the certificate will add spice to my entrepreneurial skill  
Indeed, I am trying to juggle things  
Schooling and entrepreneurship  
So that all will meet at an equilibrium  
And I can be that jagunjagun that I envisage for myself  
That the Nigerian national objective also aim for  
A self-reliant jagunjagun!

## xii

Àwọn tó t'ayọ nínú wọn  
Dídá dúró ọgbón inú ni wọn lò  
*Self-reliance* ló fí s'atègùn d'ókè olà  
Okòwò tán-àn mò nípa rẹ́ ló n̄ dágbá lé  
Òré mi n̄ t'aṣo, ó n̄ r'ówó mbè, jé kémi náà o şe  
E sì fé k'étò orò ajé orílè èdè yií ó g'òkè àgbà?  
Òrò yií ò kíí şe ití ọgèdè rárá, ohun tó fa àpérò ni  
Àbí e ti gbàgbé p'áwọn péréte tó léni nímusàn, ló fí s'abuké bùkèlè ìròrùn

Báwo l’òbø ti şorí, tí ìnàkí ò şe?  
Èyí ni kéşé tó gúnmi nínú, èyí ni àrò gídigbà tí n já lódò ọkùn mi.  
Ìwø jagun tí n bẹ l’ójú ogun lówó lówó  
Ìwø akékòdó tí n bẹ níjù èkó n’ílè yií àbí l’ókè òkun  
Ohun tákọ n’iyàrá èkó níkan ò şe gbójú lé

Yes, aside your pen and paper  
Wetin you get again  
Abeg my friend, tell them say make they “up their game”  
And not see school as the end of the world  
Go to school but make dey get other skills too  
Abi use little money dey have to start a business as well  
If you no get business, soft skill can get you farther in life  
Na every year my dear country, Nigeria, dey graduate students  
And no job readily available for them  
As you school reach and you graduate with no job,  
Where you wan kom achieve the self-reliance that the nation says?  
Abeg, I encourage you to think critically  
I be dey beg you to think out of the box and beyond the school  
And carve a niche for yourself  
It is doable! It just requires a baby step of multitasking and being strategic!  
Go for it!  
Tomorrow will be better than today!

**xiii**  
È jé á f’òrò àwọn ará iwájú s’àrík’ógbón  
Ká má gbé e sabuké rù sórí, ká má şise alákadá  
K’áfi sóókàn àyà wa pé, èkó tà n kó  
Ká lè fi b’égbé pé ni  
Ká lè fi m’òtún yàtò s’ósì ni  
Ká lè fi gbésé ọwó tá a bá mò lárugé ni  
Ká lè fi l’ópolo pípé l’áwùjò ịgbìmò àgbáyé  
Ká ní i lókàn wípé báa bá k’àwé tán  
Àfi ká wá isé ọwó òun okòwò ta ó lò ìmò ọhun lé lórí  
K’éni tí n bẹ lájò ó mò pé ilé lòun ó ti lòmò tókó lájò  
Kán má j’oyè ẹní lọ ràrìnrá sóko olóko, tókó baba tiè d’igbó  
È jé káwọn ọmọ wa tí ‘n kékòdó lókè òkun ó máa j’ábò f’únlé  
Ohun titun tí wọn kó lájò, káfí túnlè baba tiwa şe  
Kájé k’étò èkó d’ohun ọtun n’ílè yií.  
B’íjọba bá fé rànwá lówó, tán fé tún ọrò ajé orílè èdè yií şe

Kíṣé ọwó ó pò nínú isé tá à n kó n’ílé èkó  
Ìmò nípa okòwò, kó jé ohun t’ákékòó ó gbájúmó

Yes, na to just reiterate am here!  
Learn a trade!  
Learn a vocation!  
Know your onion  
Develop your soft skill  
Never see yourself as a liability  
You got this life! Nigeria of today is not just about schooling  
Gbera!

#### xiv

Bí wọn bá tín parí, kíṣé àgùnbánirò má jè é isé olùkó mó  
Kó dá lórí okòwò tátí isé ọwó tí wọn kó  
Bí wọn ti kó èkó rè nípa ìwé, kón tún fojú sí bíwón tí n se  
Kówó àgùbánirò má jè é olóshooṣù mó  
ká máa fowó agùnbánirò dáwọn l’ókòwò.  
Èkó nípa gbogbo èdè àgbáyé ní kátún mú lókùnkúndùn  
K’awọn ọmọ wa ó lè t’ayọ níbi gbogbo  
B’awọn aláṣe bálè l’étí iga, t’awọn akékòó sì n tèlé òfin  
Ọrò ajé ilú á lọ s’ókè, orílè èdè yií á lè r’ohun gbé káàkiri àgbáyé  
Ìwà ibàjé òun ìwà kòtó á lè díkù láàárín àwọn ọdó  
Şebí ọwó tó dilè lèṣù n yá lò.  
Ojó ọla àwọn ọdó tí n bò se pàtákì,  
ojó ọla orílè èdè yií se kókó  
E jé a fúra, kámú ohun ètó ní kókó  
Kámú ohun ètó ní sisé,  
Eléduà yóò fún wa se!

You sabi wetin all these stories mean?  
We dey try tell our story of schooling  
How challenging it is  
And how we do not focus on schooling alone  
Never limit yourself  
You are a jagunjagun  
An incredibly resilient jagunjagun  
A multitasking and self-reliant jagunjagun  
Who is not only useful to yourself  
But you are a change-maker in the world

But it is not about schooling alone!  
Self-reliance, fulfillment, joy and impact-making are beyond schooling  
You got this!  
You are a CHAMP!

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## **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE**



# **SILENT REBELS: THE REVOLUTIONARY ROLES OF ENSLAVED AFRICAN WOMEN IN DHALMA LLANOS-FIGUEROA'S *DAUGHTERS OF THE STONE* AND *A WOMAN OF ENDURANCE***

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## **Abstract**

Puerto Rican historical fiction has often glossed over resistance to the horrors of plantation enslavement in Puerto Rican history, and where mentioned, it focuses predominantly on male military strategies. The subtler modes of resistance often engaged in by women go unnoticed. Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa's *Daughters of the Stone* (2019), and *A Woman of Endurance* (2022) compel us to reconceptualize the roles of enslaved African women to highlight their silent non-militarized modes of resistance. These novels expand and celebrate the specialized roles of enslaved African women as *herborarias/curanderas*, *comadronas/accoucheuses*, *costureras*, *cocineras*, *hôpitalières*, and *kaperlatas/macandalises*.

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**Key terms:** Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa, Afro-Caribbean women, enslavement, *curanderas*, *comadronas*

## **Introduction**

Nicole N. Aljoe (2011, pp. 34-51) has argued that most scholarly work on Caribbean slave narratives focuses on the fragmented voices of enslaved African men sporadically interspersed with European descriptions of plantation life, and that this overwhelming preference for male narratives argues was influenced by Judeo-Christian patriarchal colonial gaze that rejects the reliability of female narratives. Several Caribbean female writers in the 21st century, however, have attempted to dismantle these spaces of liminality and silencing of the enslaved female. These writers have created "authentic"

alternative female-centered slave and neo-slave narratives that showcase female modes of resistances that continuously and surreptitiously undermine the power of plantation owners in multiple ways, and ultimately ensure African genealogical continuities in the Caribbean. This stands in contrast to male-centered violent resistance, which more often than not leads to carnage, death, defeat and/or mass extermination for the enslaved.

The recent upsurge in narratives that highlight anti-enslavement rebellions and resistance in Caribbean literary studies has boosted the publication of new slave narratives across the Caribbean. For example, the Hispanophone Caribbean has produced three recent novels including Esmeralda Santiago's *Conquistadora*, (2011); Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa's *Daughters of the Stone* (2019), and Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa's *A Woman of Endurance* (2022).

Even though every Caribbean Island has such histories of rebellions of the enslaved, no matter how unspectacular and unsuccessful they may have been, very little attention is paid to them, especially in relation to the Spanish speaking Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. This article examines two contemporary Puerto Rican neo-slave narratives, but from an angle different from the romanticization of extreme violence for which most revolts of the enslaved are celebrated. Rather than focusing on such violent acts as insurrections, mass suicides, burning plantations down, the slaughter of animals and the killing of plantation masters and mistresses, current female-authored neo-slave texts highlight covert acts of subversion embedded in the performance of predominantly female-assigned roles such as healers, midwives, needle workers, cooks, washerwomen, mothers, and lovers. Such prototypically female-led acts, which often effectively subverted the day to day operations of colonial plantations, must be re-evaluated as forms of resistance alongside those prototypically led by those gendered as male.

Deborah E. McDowell has asserted that female-centered slave narratives provide new ways of theorizing about enslaved “female-gendered subjectivity” and display “more complex” contextual and historical perspectives, not only on “what was done to slave women but what they did with what was done to them” (1989, p. 146). Mathurin (1975), Bush (1990), Beckles (1989, 1999), and Shepherd et al. (1995) list various non-violent ways of female-led resistance, such as: abortion, infanticide, poisonings, womb-shrinking, and sexual abstinence when possible. “As non-violent protestors, ... as protectors of social culture and as mothers ... black women were critical to the forging of resistance strategies and their anti-slavery consciousness is the core of the slave communities’ survivalist culture” (Beckles, 1989, pp. 172–73).

However, Marietta Morrissey (1989) and Saidiya Hartman (1997) draw attention to the interpretative narrowness of these generalizations. They critique the over-centering of resistance on the African-Caribbean female body (Morrissey, 1989, pp. 96-98) and reject the perfunctory association of every move by the enslaved as deliberate subversion or confrontation with the brutality of the enslavers, mistresses, and overseers (Hartman,

1997, pp. 51-56). Corollary to these positions, Jenny Sharpe (2003) argues for an expansion of the theory of enslaved women's resistance to including surreptitious actions without erasing the "unequal power [relations] that restrict[ed] the ability of [enslaved women] to act" in ways of that did not threaten their lives and survival (p. xiv). Stephan Palmié (2005) advocates for a more complex approach to exploring the term resistance in slave narratives: Analyses must consider how enslaved people acted to improve their lives without direct confrontational resistance. Concomitantly, Michel-Rolph Trouillot asserts that if every action by the enslaved is resistance, then the term has become a cliché and loses its critical efficacy (In Mintz, 1995, p. 14). Not all acts by the enslaved are purely founded on an ideology of rebellion. Most of the acts considered in this article did not overtly reflect a loss in terms of finance and/or labor power to the master or mistress, even if the action may have temporarily reduced the profits realized by the plantation. Thus, when we monetize the cost of infanticide and abortion by enslaved women, we get entrapped in a capitalist discourse that dehumanizes enslaved African females and denies them any human feelings for their lost children.

Llanos-Figueroa's novels evidently support these positions by embodying resistance in acts of subsistence and survival. Here we borrow ideas from Karol K. Weaver's *Medical Revolutionaries: The Enslaved Healers of Eighteenth-Century Saint Domingue* (2006) in which she states that:

Herbalists, diviners, nurses, midwives, and veterinary practitioners flourished in the medical world of eighteenth-century Saint Domingue. Using Western, African, and Caribbean remedies, they treated the maladies of enslaved people, white residents, and animals. While these enslaved medical practitioners were an essential part of the plantation economy and colonial prosperity, they ultimately roused their fellow slaves to rebel against and overthrow French rule. (back cover)

### **Love as healing and resistance in *A Woman of Endurance***

To read *las entre líneas* of a book written by an Afro-Caribbean woman and find the missing pieces in the histories written by captors, colonialists and oppressors is also to consider her relevance as a historical *curandera*, a concept proposed by Roberta Hurtado (2017, p. 1). Hurtado argues that this artist-as-curandera constructs a decolonial tradition of resilience that moves the community to heal from the wounds of colonization. History retold by Afro-descendants in Puerto Rico serves as a frame for a decolonial literary history of resistance to serve both as painful yet healing re-visionings of their histories, and simultaneously, to function as a tapestry of re-membering the fractured quilt of love of their community. In *A Woman of Endurance* (2022), Dalhma Llanos-Figueroa proposes disrupting the dominant colonial narratives and weaving new narratives of love from out of their historical memory. The tapestry of love is presented not as a garment

of forgetting but as a quilt of remembering the wounds of slavery and the spirit of resilience that gave the ancestors agency.

In *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022), we meet Pola, who was born with the gift of touch, pointing her to the illnesses or pain of any person she touched. Her hands talked to her and made sense of the world. Once captured by slavers, she inevitably had to touch the body of a man attacking her. Pola decided at that moment to renounce that gift because her hands were allowing her to see darkness she could not bear. “Through her hands, she learned of the malice, the threat, the pain, and cruelty, the cold hatred, the unspeakable brutality in the hearts of many men” (p. 233). The closing of her hands meant the closing of her heart, too, one that she refused to open after being ripped from her land and being sold to reproduce more enslaved children.

Her reality changes once she is sold in for a second time and arrives at La Hacienda Las Mercedes, where she meets Rufina, who identifies as a *curandera*. Pola arrives in La Hacienda severely hurt and in need of care, and Rufina embodies the figure of a healer and loving mother. Rufina opens her home to a stranger and restores Pola's health with her knowledge of herbs and food. She makes Pola a fragrant stew and gives her coconut water while advising: “Eat, drink. *El agua de coco* helps the healing, and the stew will make you strong again” (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 54). This gesture humbles Pola because she had forgotten the taste of lovingly prepared, good food. “This meal takes her back to her village. The memory brings tears to her eyes” (p.54). The aroma of the food prepared for Pola stimulates her memory of her origins and helps facilitate Rufina's efforts to heal Pola. The food provokes pleasant memories and connects Pola's spirit with her ancestors, who will comfort her through her path to healing.

However, more than food and herbs are needed for Pola to achieve holistic healing. She must also achieve spiritual healing through a reconnection with nature. In La Hacienda, Pola tenaciously seeks a quiet spot in the forest to reconnect with nature and tap into its healing powers: a place of healing, a temple of her own. Pola sees Rufina as a maternal link to her ancestors and home; this gives her the courage to escape weekly to the forest to communicate with her Yoruba deity, Yemayá, and matrilineal ancestors. Pola starts escaping to the forest every Sunday as a ritual of self-care, which translates as resistance when an enslaved person intentionally carves time and space out for herself against the rules of the plantation. In nature, Pola finds the “only black tree she has ever seen, it rises majestically, taller and wider than any of its neighbors” (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 96). The tree provides a safe space and, by extension, functions as a metaphor for herself. Under the tree's protective shade and shadow, she “sorts out her conflicting feelings … [and discovers] pieces of herself that she has long buried” (p. 122). This tree is a healing temple that nature provides and a mirror where she re-encounters her true self and draws strength.

It is in the closeness of this tree and in the healing space of nature that Pola finds Chachita. Like Pola, Chachita is a young girl who needs medical attention after living

by herself in the forest in marronage. Concerning Pola's relation to Chachita, Pola is a *curandera*, and this mirrors Rufina's role in Pola's life. Pola takes care of Chanchita's nutritional needs by bringing food weekly. She also seeks ways to heal Chachita's ears to prevent the girl from becoming deaf. This mother-daughter relationship allows Pola to work on her healing process since she was never allowed to mother her birth children. Pola decides to do everything to help heal Chachita's ears. This maternal yearning allows Pola to cry out to Yemayá to restore the gift of healing to her. She passionately prays to Yemayá not to forget or abandon her in this new and foreign place. When Pola touches Chachita to cure her ears, it awakens memories of her trauma:

She now exists in non-space, beyond the limits of her consciousness, floating in a nebula; she drifts alone, cold, lost. And in that space of being alone, Pola is assaulted by images of the past, the most caustic memories, the bitterest experiences. She is forced to suffer them again. (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 233)

The mutual suffering endured in this relationship yields a space for mutual healing; Pola prays she can protect and heal Chachita while the girl experiences things she has not felt in a long time: safety, warmth, and comfort. Chachita thinks she could stay in that space forever, delighted, wondering if that is what it feels like to have a mother.

The narrative does not clarify if Pola healed Chachita's ears. Nevertheless, before the girl disappeared, the comfort and nourishment of a mother figure helped cure the loneliness of living as a fugitive. Whether Pola's affection and care for Chachita are maternal, altruistic, empathic, or otherwise, the emotional, physical, and intergenerational bond that develops between the two gives both of them some temporary respite and compensates for their losses: one an absent mother, the other, a lost child.

Love and affection as a friend, mother or romantic partner has healing powers, as proposed in this novel, and is palpable through the relationship between Pola and Simón. Elina Valovirta (2013, p. 101) mentions the participation of men in women's liberation quests written by Caribbean female writers, who write against the negative conception of men in the islands. While Simón acts as a father figure for Chachita, he also takes on the responsibility of protecting Pola. When Pola arrives at La Hacienda, all broken, Simón shows some affection beyond sympathy and helps Pola accept Rufina's treatments. She later comforts Simón by reminding him of how he was there for her at her lowest moment. "You took care of my body when it was broken. Now maybe I can repay you. I hear it's your heart that needs healing" (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 302).

Simón proposes that the only way for them to carry their burdens is to share them (p. 310). He is aware of Pola's gift of touch and asks to touch her. Allowing Simón to touch, feel, and dress her wounds, Pola lets down her psychoemotional guard and accepts the love and affection of a man. Simón reaffirms the notion of love as a healing portal in these words: "And then you came, bearing scars and rage much like my own, and I recognized you. You bit my hand. And I thought, *Ah! I have found another warrior woman*" (p. 316). Valovirta (2013) points to the desire of Caribbean writers to rewrite

men beyond the stereotypical representation but in a reparative and participatory way (p. 114). These scenes that make space for caring intimacy between women and men also suggest a form of liberation.

As a narrative *curandera*, Dhalma Llanos-Figueroa brings to life the idea of love and community as necessary medicines for individual and community healing. However, for the community to heal, the individuals must achieve healing. When a person's heart heals, that person can help heal others in the community. Thus, for Llanos-Figueroa, the mission of preserving the humanity of enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico's plantation societies in the 19th century was a communal effort among the enslaved. Part of the strategy by the enslaved to survive their demonization in slavery was sharing their personal and group stories: traumatic stories about their brutal severance from their ancestral African homelands, their purgatorial journeys to Puerto Rico in slave ships, their sale to white plantation owners, and their horrific enslavement on the plantations.

Such personal trauma story sharing, often termed narrative witnessing in trauma theory, is demonstrated in the stories shared by Rufina, Josefa, Pola, Simón and others. These stories reveal the resiliency of these enslaved women and men. However, these stories must be retold to other generations to forestall erasure. *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) imagines love as a healing frame to counter the trauma of slavery in Puerto Rican history. Love, however imagined and practiced, functions thus as an act of resistance; it brings out the best in people to counter rage, hate, and violence. Tía Josefa's observation captures how love for oneself, and others restores one's humanity in the face of such inhuman experiences as slavery, rape, murder, and other forms of violence against the enslaved Africans:

We all carry our nightmares in spoken places. The details may be different, but the outcome is the same. They want to steal our humanity to ease the weight of their own souls. Don't you let them. Don't give them the one piece of you they can't take. Don't you become the empty vessel they want to believe you are. (p. 75)

### **The role of the *costureras* in acts of silent resistance**

In *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) *costureras* (enslaved women skilled in needlecraft and making clothes for the plantation masters and mistresses) engage in sophisticated modes of resistance through their craft. They demonstrate their subversive acts in Las Agujas, the house designated as a workshop where the enslaved make elegant dresses for the mistress of the La Hacienda, who sells them to the wealthiest women in Puerto Rico. The initial presence of Pola at Las Agujas highlights the distinction between the seamstresses' seemingly effortless work and the field workers' physically exhausting labor. These twenty-three *costureras*, predominantly mulattas, sit, talk, and sew the garments at the workshop and never experience the backbreaking tasks of the cane cutters. Additionally, they dress more admirably than the other enslaved women.

This creates a social imbalance among the enslaved people and generates jealousy and hatred (p. 114).

However, this imbalance never seriously undermines collective resistance against the system of enslavement. Tia Josefa states how an “*hacienda* is an *hacienda*, and slaves are slaves. Some always get better than others” (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 59). Even though there is some resentment from the other enslaved people, all work together to create a community that fights against the system. The *costureras* make African patterned cloth from scraps of material for their community. Enslaved Africans may have arrived naked in Puerto Rico but quickly blend European styles with re-imagined African styles to create creolized clothing for themselves (p. 115). Buckridge (2004) states that “Dress in any culture both adorns and protects the body. However, dress has other functions. Dress is political, in that it brings people together and also puts them in conflict with others” (p. 18). Therefore, dressing represents an individual's social status, class, and religion.

As in the rest of colonial society, dress styles index social class in the novel. Enslaved Africans were not clothed in finery and received just enough clothing to cover their bodies. Most of their garments were bleached and formless, resembling sacks (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022, p. 115). The *costureras* at La Hacienda las Mercedes would sow dresses “for women who do little work” (p. 115) but the enslaved women would wear shapeless and loose dresses. However, these same *costureras* would collect the scraps of cloth cut out of the material brought by their white clients and “create modest embellishments” to their dresses (p. 115). They would also sew such embellishments onto the clothing of the other enslaved women of La Hacienda, particularly on their Sunday clothes. These clothes, made from scraps, became fashionable to white women. Embellishments included intricate embroidery, delicate lace, pleats, ruffles, and ribbons, all worked into the dresses to camouflage the pieces. This artistry blindsided the free white female customers from noticing the seamstresses' skill in making something out of nothing.

Because of their ingenuity, the enslaved *costureras* wore clothing partly made from the same materials as their mistresses. The *patrona*'s hand-me-downs also supplemented the clothing made from scraps. Buckridge (2004) states that:

the slaves' act of pinching the clothing material from their enslavers, and appropriating and modifying the dress codes and clothing styles is reminiscent of the belief among some Africans that clothing had potency and that dress was strongly connected to the spiritual world. (p. 80)

Therefore, if the enslaved wore the oppressors' clothing or even small pieces of it, the spirit of the enemy would weaken. Buckridge proposes that some African descended people in the Caribbean may have believed that if they wore the oppressors' clothing or even small pieces of it, the spirit of the enemy would weaken. In *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) the *patrón*, Don Tomás' slow illness could be interpreted as evidence supporting this spirit-draining belief. Thomas' illness consequently disrupts

the operation of La Hacienda. It is not until Llanos-Figueroa's *Daughters of the Stone* (2019) that Mati, a powerful healer, takes over Hacienda las Mercedes and transforms it into a place of healing for formerly enslaved people.

Silent resistance related to fabric in *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) is not only about customizing and appropriating dresses but also about keeping African heritage alive by using textile accessories. For example, in the novel some drummers tie colorful pieces of cloth around African drums, paying homage to deities such as "red for Changó, green for Osain, blue for Yemayá" (p. 92), demonstrating how cloth has powerful meaning in African culture. Regarding dress, Buckridge (2004) notes that slave women's African-inspired clothing provided a way to resist their white oppressors' denigration of African customs (p. 85). The headwrap was a piece of clothing worn by many enslaved women as an accessory. It performed several functions, including protecting their heads from the sun, balancing loads and preserving fresh hairstyles. Headwraps could signal one's ethnic origins in Africa as well as indicating the role an individual was assigned on the plantation (p.88).

In *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) Pola preferred to wear the white headwrap that was commonly worn by the fieldworkers and refused to wear the more ornate one given to her as a *costurera* at Las Agujas. Pola's wearing the white headwrap is a clear example of silent resistance. In this case, Pola's choice is aimed at fostering a sense of collective identity and solidarity with the field workers who cut cane. This solidarity was not only symbolic, but also translated into real concrete acts, such as the transformation by the seamstresses of the plain clothing of all of the enslaved people on the plantation into something beautiful and wearable. Thus the seamstresses established a community by transforming scraps of cloth into clothing that protected their bodies as well as their cultural heritage. This fostering of community survival strategies in the novel can be read as a powerful but silent act of resistance to the system of enslavement.

### **Food as a tool of resistance, survival and healing**

Another effective method of silent resistance related to survival engaged in by the enslaved involves the culinary arts. The central roles of the plantation kitchen and cook(s) in critical discussions about slave resistance often focus exclusively on the use of poison by cooks. In *A Woman of Endurance*, Llanos-Figueroa (2022) widens the scope of such resistance by showcasing how the cook and her assistants falsely declare portions of raw or cooked food destined for the master's table as spoiled, so that they can secretly redistribute these foods to the enslaved. The chefs thus covertly support the survival of the enslaved, providing them with the physical health and strength to engage in more overt rebellion at a later date. The enslaved African women transported to the Caribbean during the transatlantic slave trade faced unimaginable hardships and struggles. They all encountered and endured brutal forced labor, psychosomatic and emotional abuse, and sexual exploitation by their enslavers. Amidst these traumas, these women found

surreptitious ways of resisting oppression and creating a sense of racial, community, and cultural identity. Food has always been a central aspect of African culture. It is a means of sustenance and a source of cultural identity and social connection. The enslaved African women who arrived in the Caribbean brought with them their ancestral culinary traditions and skills. They used food to nourish their bodies, preserve their cultural heritage, and create community.

The enslavers in the Caribbean tried to strip the enslaved Africans of their cultural identities and force them to assimilate to European lifeways. Enslaved African women resisted this assimilation by using their cooking practices as a form of resistance. They created dishes that reminded them of their homeland and used food to express their cultural identities. They also shared their culinary traditions with other enslaved people, building community and solidarity. Enslaved African women had no access to formal European education, property, or other forms of power. However, they could attain a certain level of cultural agency through their role as chefs. By controlling the palates of their enslavers and knowing which ingredients--spices, viandas, herbs-- to use for healing, they held some power over the enslavers and earned the love and trust of the other enslaved. They became the ones who prepared the meals for the plantation masters and were often responsible for feeding the entire plantation. Their role as cooks gave *cocineras* a sense of importance and agency.

In *A Woman of Endurance*, (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) Pastora is the head cook at La Hacienda. The *patrón* valued Pastora's cooking skills highly, and she was responsible for preparing the meals for the plantation owner's family and guests. However, Pastora used her position as a cook to subtly resist her oppressors. She would add traditional African ingredients and flavors to her prepared meals, keeping her cultural identities alive and preserving her connection to her homeland. Pastora also often gathered ingredients and prepared meals for her fellow enslaved, creating a sense of community and solidarity. "She purposely overestimates the family portions, resulting in generous leftovers. These she sends out the kitchen back door to the enslaved community in the lower batey" (p.66). Also, this silent protester is much loved by her fellow enslaved because "she makes sure the cooks who feed the workers get more than their share of leftovers and unwanted scraps from the *la casa grande*" (p. 66). Such acts of generosity and care helped uplift the spirits of other enslaved people and gave them hope and resilience in the face of their oppressors. Through their culinary traditions, enslaved women could resist assimilation, create a sense of community, and empower themselves as women. Today, the culinary traditions of enslaved Africans continue to influence Caribbean cuisine and serve as a reminder of the resilience and strength of these women. Their silent resistance, collective nurturing, and female agency contributed to their community's survival and eventual liberation.

### **Healing hands through silence, survival, and solidarity: *Kaperlatas* in *A Woman of Endurance* and *Daughters of the Stone***

Llanos-Figueroa shows immense enthusiasm for the connection that the women in *A Woman of Endurance* (2022) and *Daughters of the Stone* (2019) have with the earth, mainly through feminine and spiritual knowledges, such as that of the *kaperlata* who uses her hands and her inner voice to transport energy and bring about healing, Weaver (2006) writes the following:

In the eyes of French and Creole officials, the *kaperlatas* were the most dangerous element of the medical underworld of eighteenth-century Saint Domingue. During plantation slavery in the Caribbean, colonial authorities deemed them dangerous influences with the potential to destroy white society and grasp control of the island colony (p. 113).

In the novels, the *kaperlata* is embodied in such figures as Pola (aka Keera) and Matilde (aka Mati), Fela's daughter. Through great sacrifice, both women are connected to the powers of the orishas.

Before arriving in Puerto Rico, Keera (Pola's ancestral name), is quick to reject her healing gift at the beginning of her journey through the Middle Passage. In *A Woman of Endurance* (2022), Llanos-Figueroa writes:

Keera's hands told her everything, and sometimes more than she wanted to know. Yemayá's gift of knowing had been more than the girl had ever wanted or imagined. The knowing became a burden .... Keera began to feel emotional vibrations from her fellow captives. The desperate confusion, the piercing pain, the raging anger, the numbing despair— all began to flow into her fingers. In the darkness, her mother's words returned to her once more. *You delight in your gift now, but I fear it will cost you, my daughter, more than you or I can imagine.* (p. 31)

Her mother Iya's protective words guide her through her immense suffering, sexual violence, and enslavement. Still, it is only through her gift of healing that she can reconnect with Yemayá.

As Pola becomes a part of the collective transformations at La Hacienda and she finds the Healing Tree, she recovers her maternal instincts after meeting Chachita and rediscovered her ability to empathize with and nurture others. In Chachita, Pola receives an opportunity to be a mother again, something that she thinks she has lost for good. Pola's love for Chachita spurs a reactionary response from some in the community of the enslaved who are ready to betray their own people, such as Leticia La Colaboradora and the albino Celestina. Both these women suffer illusions of grandeur and reject their community, leading to Leticia la Loca descending into madness due to societal rejection, and Celestina developing a severe skin pigmentation disorder resulting in her deportation to a leprosarium.

Weaver (2006) states “Through divination and the manufacture and distribution of herbal remedies, charms, talismans, and potions, *kaperlatas* ... carried on African

healing traditions. Diviners occupied important places in Africa-- they expressed, maintained, and validated the cultural truths of a society" (p. 114). Likewise, Pola's hands act as healing agents for Chachita: they bring her the food, safety and security necessary for making it possible for the girl to escape to la Cueva del Cimarrón.

In *Daughters of the Stone* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2019) Matilde's hands act similarly as agents of change and gifts of life. Llanos-Figueroa documents the young girl's gifted life, which is profoundly and emotionally tied to the earth:

As the years passed, the people of the *batey* got used to Mati's odd ways .... One day, as the women of Las Agujas were having their midday meal, Mati wandered towards the back of the *choza*. As she passed the pigsty, her eyes were drawn to the sounds of a pig surrounded by her litter. A tiny piglet lay ignored and immobile. Mati climbed over the lowest slat and crawled to the lone animal. She closed her eyes and concentrated on the inert animal on her lap. (p. 63)

After this event, Margó becomes aware of Mati's power and tells her:

You can do much good with your gift, but sometimes animals and people, too, are meant to die. Their time here is finished, and they must leave us .... The same power that gives you the gift gives all of us life. (p. 66)

While Yemayá is the orisha accompanying Pola/Keera on her healing journey in *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022), in *Daughters of the Stone* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2019) it is Lady Oshun, a different orisha, who tells Mati stories of her mother Fela, and "father, Imo, and her grandfather, the keeper of tales .... She told Mati about the ancestors who would always be waiting" (p. 67). It is this same connection that she has with her mother, Fela, that helps Mati use her powers as *kaperlata* to free herself and take hold of the plantation.

Ailing Don Tomás tells Mati that, as his daughter, she will inherit the plantation. Her worst fears becomes a reality, however, when other plantation owners assert their dominance over her and refuse to believe that she is the daughter of Don Tomás. This erasure of her freedom leads her to use her powers to take ownership of what is rightfully hers. Llanos-Figueroa (2019) writes:

One after the other, the neighboring plantation owners who had taken her land developed ailments for which the doctors could find no explanation or remedy. Each man began to waste away. The gentry offered masses for the improvement of their health. Local doctors were replaced by specialists from the capital. The druggist made a fortune filling prescriptions that never worked. Lawyers were summoned, paraded in and out with ink-stained fingers and newly witnessed documents. Distraught wives were tortured by nightmares of hearse and shrouds of black silk. When the situation seemed hopeless, words were whispered in the dark. And then there would be a nocturnal knock on Mati's door. Soon after, a visit from Mati and an understanding. By the end of the year, every man who had stolen a parcel of her land would sign it back in exchange for her elixirs. The

land she was given always coincided exactly with the land left to her in Don Tomás's will. She never asked for or was given a kilometer more or less. Shortly thereafter, the ailing man's health would improve and all would, apparently, be well. It would be years before anyone noticed that none of these *patrons* fathered any children after their mysterious illness. (p. 134)

It is through this process that Mati regains her land and provides collective safe spaces for previously enslaved African people. Using her powers as a *kaperlata* helps her to assert her place in society. She then celebrates the fact that this gift is carried on by her daughter Conchita, reminding readers that these gifts of healing and restoration continue across generations.

In *A Woman of Endurance* (2022) and *Daughters of the Stone* (2019) Llanos-Figueroa demonstrates that effective resistance to chattel enslavement was not restricted to occasional overt acts of revolutionary insurrection, but also extended to everyday covert acts that contributed to surviving and outliving the brutality of enslavement through African-derived or African-inspired medical, cultural, spiritual, culinary, fashion, artisanal, linguistic, and social practices. In this article, we have shown a few examples of how, while the daily activities of enslaved women overtly facilitated the smooth running of the haciendas in Puerto Rico, they also fostered a more covert and subversive domination over the lives of their masters and mistresses, who depended entirely on these women for their existence. Thus, the masters lived in constant fear of the power of the enslaved to eventually make the institution of chattel enslavement completely unviable and the plantation regime totally ungovernable.

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# **GONE FISHING, CAUGHT AN ADIDAS-DONNING MERMAID: NATURE'S TRANS-FORMATIVE GAZE IN MONIQUE ROFFEY'S *THE MERMAID OF BLACK CONCH***

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## **Abstract**

What would occur to a people if they were to see/sea the world through nature's eyes? How would the place trans-form? And if one were to acquire nature's gaze, would a people's identity reflect a "tidalectic" (Brathwaite, 1999) paradigm of existence? The aim of this paper is to explore the role of Aycayia in Monique Roffey's *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020) as the concretization of nature in all its trans-formative and protean essence as an epistemological and ontological model. The work of Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Wilson Harris, Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott, among others, will serve to further elucidate such approach with the intent of positioning the novel as an essential contribution to the environmental humanities and its imbrication with the theme of transformations.

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**Key terms:** tidalectics, sea, nature, ontology, epistemology, Caribbean

Imperialist nostalgia revolves around a paradox: A person kills somebody, and then mourns the victim. In more attenuated form, someone deliberately alters a form of life [I would add transforms], and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention. At one more remove, people destroy their environment, and then they worship nature. In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of "innocent yearning" both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination .... "We" (who believe in progress) valorize innovation, and then yearn for more stable worlds, whether these reside in our own past, in other cultures, or in the conflation of the two. (Rosaldo, 1989, pp. 69-70)

Renato Rosaldo's embracing of the antinomies of empire brings forth the complexities and contradictions that often accompany every present or former colonial subject. As a Caribbean islander, I constantly find myself in the position where I must accept the detritus of progress in my native Puerto Rico whilst longing for a past I have no recollection of. I say detritus of progress because nature's relentless ruination makes it so that any human-made mark of "progress" can only be fleeting if nature is not kept at bay. When I see an old house, an old rural road, even a beach, I try to search for a time when these sites had not been affected by empire, mostly because these places have first and foremost been *created* by empire. But when I set sights on natural spaces, here we return to the beach as it might just be the most ubiquitous natural sight we have—I try to see/sea the place from two plausible stances: the Arawak or Indigenous perspective and from what might just be the most impossible of human feats, from nature's gaze. The reason why I engage in such futile ontological attempts is because for any colonial subject, the past, history with a lower-case h, must be conflated with natural history so that our past can be truly enshrined. But as we are all very well-aware, having a non-human gaze that emulates the view of nature is impossible with the utmost of certainty. So, in the face of such futility, we can only resort to what Derek Walcott writes in his essay, "Isla Incognita," that "our only true apprehensions are through metaphor" (1973, p. 57). Or how George B. Handley succinctly puts it, "'get[ting] nature [and by extension, existence] right' in the same way nature exceeds metaphor" (2007, p. 5). This is where the concept of allegory comes into play. Clifford describes allegory as:

polysemous and embedded in specific historical places and contexts, meaning that it does not travel easily across time. This is why it can be disorienting to read. It disrupts expectations of chronological sequencing and constructs coexisting parallel spaces and temporalities. Instead of characters, allegory employs personified concepts ... more than individualized human subjects. (1974, pp. 97-101)

Allegory is therefore the most suitable alternative toward attempting to achieve a natural gaze, a view without a human chimera.

The aim of this paper is to explore the role of Aycayia, the Adidas-donning mermaid, as the concretization of nature in all its trans-formative and protean essence as an ontological model. If nature could speak, what would it say? For Monique Roffey, author of the acclaimed 2020 novel, *The Mermaid of Black Conch*, if nature were to talk and take on a tangible form it would be Aycayia, a young Amerindian woman from Cuba who entralls everyone with her song and dance. As a result of such non-verbal enchantment, she is cursed by the jealous women of the village to become a mermaid for eternity by conjuring the goddess Jagua in the form of a hurricane to sweep Aycayia into the sea. More than a thousand years later, Aycayia, or Sweet Voice in Arawak, is caught by an American banker and his son off the coast of St. Constance, a fictional island in the southern Caribbean. Once captured for eventual profit—it is not every day one catches an Amerindian mermaid—she is rescued from the exhibition jetty by David, a sweet,

guitar-strumming fisherman from the St. Constance village of Black Conch, and so begins her transformation back into a human woman for reasons that are never revealed. *The Mermaid of Black Conch* is primarily a love story between a fisherman and an “ex-mermaid” and their fight for acceptance in society. But it is also a story about the legacy of enslavement, colonization, genocide and the ecocide brought upon the region that to this day still reels from the harrowing effects of the colonial “enterprise.” After five months of living back on land as a woman who has learned to talk in Black Conch parlance, to love and make love, and to develop a penchant for a pair of 1976 green Adidas sneakers, hurricane Rosamund comes to claim Aycayia back to sea and back to her curse to roam the ocean eternally alone. But during her time as a human, she manages to transform the people of Black Conch, has them reckon with History, its legacy, and most importantly, gives them a new perspective on existence through the re-view of nature itself.

What would occur to a nation and its peoples if they were to see the world through nature’s eyes? How would the place change and trans-form? And if one acquires nature’s gaze, whose essence is transformative, would a people’s identity reflect a “tidalectic” paradigm of existence? In this article, ecological theories from writers like Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Wilson Harris, Kamau Brathwaite, and Derek Walcott, among others, will serve to further elucidate such an approach to Roffey’s novel, as most criticism of the text is mostly buttressed on issues that are in the marginalia of this proposed reading, which has the intent of positioning the novel as an essential contribution to the environmental humanities and its imbrication with the theme of transformations.

According to Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “allegory is known for its embeddedness in history (time), its construction of a world system (space), and its signification practices in which the particular figures for the general and the local for the global” (2019, p. 5). Aycayia, the Amerindian Mermaid, serves as an allegory to engage Walter Benjamin’s “nature-history” where “history becomes subject to nature and therefore to decline” (1998, p. 166), to ruination, and thus a dismantling of the Western construct of a split between nonhuman nature and history. Roffey’s novel can therefore quell the Caribbean angst of endlessly searching for History with a capital H and to instead find Benjamin’s “nature-history” and the ontological appeasement such a stance brings to the colonial subject. Aycayia as allegory is therefore synecdochized due to her gaze and age as she fulfills what Frederic Jameson states on allegory that it is:

attractive for the present day and age ... because it models a relationship of breaks, gaps, discontinuities, and inner distances and incommensurabilities of all kinds. It can therefore better serve as a figure for the incommensurabilities of the world today. (2001, p. 25)

As a mermaid, a half-fish, half-woman interspecies or hybrid (Haraway, 2008), what I like to call a tidalectic entity who merges land and sea ontologies, Aycayia is allegory

personified in all its “discontinuities” (Jameson, 2001, p. 25) that in turn yield conflations and thus, continuities in Caribbean histories.

*The Mermaid of Black Conch* therefore re-presents the merger between nature and culture, human and nonhuman ontologies, as a means to “destabilize Western representations of nonhuman nature as spectacular or alien to human experience” (DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 148). Aycayia’s arrival on land and into the lives of David, Arcadia, Life, and Reggie, among others, quickly becomes entirely mundane, parochial, and commonplace. They teach her to speak in Black Conch parlance, to walk, and to wear clothes, her sartorial choice being one of David’s old track suits and her pair of green Adidas sneakers. Everyone in the village becomes accustomed to the legend or story of the mermaid who was fished out of the sea only to become part of the St. Constance community. Roffey therefore achieves what DeLoughrey describes in Keri Hulme’s writing where she (Hulme):

makes a claim for the ordinariness of the human engagement with the sea and its nonhuman inhabitants and thus inscribes sea ontologies. This mutability and the *transformative* relationship between the human and the sea foreground the myth of the individuated human subject and the collapse of a linear temporality that is tied to empire and capitalism. (DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 147, my italics)

The only characters in the novel who cannot and do not see Aycayia as parochialized are the American businessman and his son, as their motive remains steadfast on recapturing the mermaid for profit, precisely because they solely see her as extraordinary. There is no realism in the magic for these characters. When the indigenous woman/mermaid re-encounters the colonizer, allegorically portrayed in the American fisherman and son, a retelling ensues that revises the historical outcome, which is furthermore allegorically showcased in the long and grueling, almost Melvillian and Hemingwayan, fishing scene in the novel. The many characteristics of the sea as a “daily means of production, the joys and drudgery of labor, the banality and sumptuousness of food, a space of human violence, a space of nonhuman ontology, and a vital resource” (Hulme interview, cited in Bryson, 1994, pp. 131-135) simultaneously come into play to reveal a battle between ontologies.

Catching or fishing Aycayia allegorizes what activists in New Zealand call a “sea grab,” where “*mana moana*” (power of the sea) is violently transplanted onto “*mana whenua*” (power of the land). A tidalectic meeting of *mana moana* and *mana whenua* in Aycayia herself yields a transformative gaze that is tidalectic in ontology. The Amerindian mermaid’s actual body is representative of land *and* sea; she is half-fish, half-woman, and half-Arawak.

From a spatial point of view, the Caribbean as a geopolitical region has been land-locked or trapped in the West’s masculinist law of wilderness despite being composed of islands. There’s therefore an ontological disconnect or schism between spatiality and ontology serving as an argument to justify neo-colonial paradigms that open the doors to

the American fisherman and his son and their licentious capitalistic impunity. Aycayia's gaze transforms such a dynamic and in turn balances or realigns the spatial and ontological. Island spaces acquire an island sea-gaze, a *mana moana/ whenua* that conflates the land and the sea to include human and non-human natures. As Patrick Wolfe argues, "settler colonialism ... is not a past 'event', but rather an ongoing structure of alienation and disenfranchisement" (2006, pp. 387-409). The people of St. Constance have become alienated from their own land. Aycayia, as the alter/ native transforms these alienated islanders into grounded islanders (see Paul, 2007). She returns the island back to its peoples.

Aycayia and the novel allegorize the concept of the alter/ native because the magic realism component of the text parochializes her presence in Black Conch. This proposes a tidalectic ontology which resides in eternal transformation, on "fluidity and mutability" (DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 146). The very metamorphic nature of the novel's subject eventually informs the reader and demands something from the audience, which may be the very questioning of Aycayia's transformation back to a mermaid close to the end of the novel. Aycayia may be thus read as the allegory which begs to fulfill its goal of *being* natural history concretized and therefore in eternal flux and change, or what Phillip E. Steinberg calls "adaptive allegoresis" (2014, p. 81). In his book, *Beginnings: Intention and method* (2012), Edward Said notes that creating a beginning "is the first step in the intentional production of meaning" and furthermore writes that articulating such beginnings conversely involves a sense of loss (p. 372). When Aycayia leaves David, Miss Rain, her son, and partner, Life, during Hurricane Rosamund she does so out of a sense of duty. Her job of transforming the people of St. Constance has been completed, as her gaze can be read as the perennial articulation of beginnings, as one gets to *sea* through nature's eyes. This new ontology in turn suggests the infinity of beginnings, like the tides on the shore, as Walcott (1972) and Brathwaite (1999) have written about.

Édouard Glissant argues that to "recuperate the relationship between nature and culture" (1989, pp. 105-6) that colonialism fractured one must engage in a "language of landscape" (p. 146), and I add a language of nature and more specifically, a language of the sea. Wilson Harris argues that the nonhuman world is foundational to developing a "language of the landscape." He writes:

When the human animal understands his [or her or their] genius, he [or she or they] roots it in the creature, the forest, in the trees ... in the language which we *are* and which we acquired, not only from our mother's lips but also from ... the music of the earth as we pressed on it ... All those sounds are threaded into the language of the imagination. (1992, p. 78, emphasis in original)

Aycayia's name translates from Aruac to Sweet Voice, which in the novel and true to mermaid myth mesmerizes characters with her singing and dancing, so much so that this is the reason why she is cursed and turned into a mermaid in the first place. The women of the village envied how she enthralled the men. For this they conjured the goddess

Jagua to sweep Aycayia out into the sea to roam the waters eternally alone. A thousand years later, Aycayia arrives on the shores of Murder Bay in the village of Black Conch where she befriends David, her future lover and “heart mate” (Roffey, 2020). When she is caught by the American and his son and is then rescued from the exhibition dock by David, she is nonverbal. It is only until she meets Arcadia’s son, Reggie, who speaks in sign language, and is therefore non-verbal, that Aycayia begins to “talk” first in song, then in sign language, and then in human Black Conch parlance. But during all this time, she never relinquishes her singing and dancing that have an effect akin to the “language of landscape” and not only language, but through her singing and dancing she *is* “the music of the earth” that moves the rest of the characters as close as possible to seeing from nature’s gaze.

Roberts and Wills (1998) explain,

In Māori models of epistemology … to know something is to be able to locate it within a *whakapapa* … both a noun and a verb that means to layer. Since it is a process (rather than a product) of incorporating the subject into planetary networks of kinship … knowing and being are co-constitutive and interrelated. (cited in DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 143)

This aligns with Chakrabarty’s “species of thinking,” defined as “consciousness of ourselves as globally connected and geologically determinative agents” (2009, p. 220), which has limits because “we can only intellectually comprehend or infer the existence of the human species but never experience it as such” (p. 220). With Aycayia, she allegorically represents nature’s ontology with her age and immortality signaling the scale of nature, the planetary, and deep geological time. Her gaze and her voice offer the metaphorical plausibility of infinity through the establishment of what Serres calls a “natural contract” where “a new relationship to the planet set[s] aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect; where knowledge would no longer imply property, nor action mastery” (Serres, 1995, pp. 31, 40), the most unhuman of human views.

To conclude, Aycayia, the Adidas-Donning Amerindian Mermaid of the Caribbean allegorizes what Mishuana Goeman terms, “Indigenous ‘politics of care’ that stem from the stories ‘between human and nonhuman others’” (2013, pp. 36-37, in DeLoughrey, 2019, p. 196) to which, in DeLoughrey’s concluding remarks on her book, she adds, “This caretaking, particularly its feminized and Indigenous constellations, is the untold story of the Manthropocene, Capitalocene, Necrocene, and Plantationocene streams in the academic contest for the historical primacy of the Anthropocene” (2019, p. 196). By the end of the novel all characters have been affected by the mermaid and transformed to become as close as possible to animal human beings, including the American fishermen and Porthos, the police officer who sought her arrest. They managed to see/sea themselves in her and through her, understanding the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman nature. After Hurricane Rosamund ushers Aycayia back to sea,

Life went to Arcadia and hugged her tight and hugged his son tight too and he rubbed his chin and thought of the mermaid, how her life had affected his, and how she had shown him how to be brave. Everything had changed up in Black Conch and he's never expected that. Some places just stay the same, never change. Not here. Not in this tip of an island jooking out into the sea, not in a place full of the ghosts of his ancestors, not in a place where the gods still laughed and said not so fast. They waited for the storm to pass and when it did, eventually, they climbed up and out and into the time after Rosamund. (Roffey, 2020, p. 187)

I, too, have been trans-formed. I, too, can now se[a]e my island.

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# **BREAKING OFF FROM THE MOTHER AND COLONIAL EDUCATION: CARIBBEAN BILDUNGSROMAN AND THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN JAN LO SHINEBOURNE'S *THE LAST ENGLISH PLANTATION***

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## **Abstract**

This article explores the mother-daughter relationship in Jan Lo Shinebourne's (1998) second novel *The Last English Plantation*. It analyses the protagonist's journey towards self-discovery and *mestiza* consciousness. Drawing on elements of the *bildungsroman* genre, Shinebourne delves into the complexities of Caribbean identities and colonial violence. June, the protagonist, navigates the conflicting demands of her Indian heritage, colonial education, and societal expectations, ultimately forging her own perspective amidst a backdrop of class and racial discrimination.

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**Key terms:** *Bildungsroman*, Chinese-Guyanese authors, mother-daughter, colonial education, class differentiation, racism, *mestiza*

## **Introduction**

Since colonial days, poor accessibility to readers has been one of the biggest challenges Caribbean literatures and Caribbean authors have encountered. Up until today, more and more writers pass unnoticed because major publishers have overshadowed the independent and small publisher sector. Even those selected few Caribbean writers who have managed to attract the attention of major publishers and scholars have either seldom been given the full recognition that they deserve, or have been canonized to such a degree that they have inadvertently made it more difficult for less acknowledged voices and writers such as Jan Lo Shinebourne to gain their due place in Caribbean studies.

Born in 1947, Jan Lo Shinebourne is a Guyanese writer of Chinese descent who currently lives in London. Before publishing *The Last English Plantation* in 1998,

Shinebourne published *Timepiece* (1986) a novel that won the Guyana Literary Prize, and afterwards, *The Godmother and Other Stories* (2004) and *Chinese Women* (2010). Peepal Tree Press, an independent publisher of Caribbean writing has published all her books. According to Judith Misrahi-Barak (2012) Shinebourne is one of the “few authors who have actually written about the Chinese diaspora in the Caribbean” (p. 1) even though she “did not initially present [herself] as a Chinese Caribbean author” (p. 11). In an essay on Afro-Chinese writers in the Caribbean, Lisa Li-Shen Yun (2004) mentions in a footnote that Shinebourne is one of a number of writers of “Chinese descent who have addressed Chinese identity” in her novels (p. 42).

My purpose in this article is to analyze Shinebourne’s second novel, *The Last English Plantation*. In this *bildungsroman*, the author immerses us in a captivating relationship between a mother and her daughter, in which the latter undertakes a journey in search of her *mestiza* identity and her own perspective on the world. To accomplish this journey, the daughter is forced to challenge the mother’s vision of the world and to develop a critical view towards the colonial predicament. At the same time, Shinebourne uses the daughter’s confrontation with multiple colliding visions of the world to grasp the different levels of violence present in a colonial system. Since other Caribbean women writers have already published in the *bildungsroman* genre with feminine main characters and the mother-daughter relationship featuring prominently in their narratives, I first discuss the characteristics of this genre which are present in Shinebourne’s novel. I then analyze how different levels of colonial violence or domination influence the protagonist’s journey toward adulthood.

### **The *bildungsroman* and the mother-daughter relationship**

The *bildungsroman* is a coming of age story in which the psychological development of the main character plays an important and central place in the narration (Stecher Guzmán, 2016; Buckley, 1974). Lagos (1996, p. 34) asserts that typically, in this kind of novel a young male character goes through a journey of self-discovery, a metaphor for the transition from childhood to adulthood, where the character overcomes social pressures to ascertain a sense of their own direction in life, but that when it comes to a *bildungsroman* whose main protagonist is female, female writers do not often follow the masculine model that has been considered the norm for this genre. The main difference, according to Lagos, is that, while in the traditional male *bildungsroman* the male hero learns to be an independent adult, the female is expected to learn submission and to depend on others’ protection to survive. Lagos also adds that the female character is destined to disappointment because society obstructs her aspirations.

In her work on migrant narratives from the Caribbean, Stecher Guzmán (2016, p. 96) notes that another difference between the male and female *bildungsroman* is that in the former the parental figure is usually quite distant, if not completely absent, while in the latter, the figure of the mother occupies a central place. In the female *bildungsroman* the

mother-daughter relationship is one of “intense love and intense hatred” (James, 2001, p. 45), i.e., the protagonist’s most important childhood bond from which she is forced to separate herself (Stecher Guzmán, 2016, p. 96). This relationship is very similar to what Adrienne Rich (1976) defines as ‘matrophobia’:

a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers’ bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers’; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery. (p. 236)

The daughter’s desire to become “individuated and free” comes, to some extent, from the realization that her mother has been taught to transmit to her “the restrictions and degradations of a female existence” (Rich, 1976, p. 235). If the daughter confronts the mother, it is only because, as the colonizer, she “functions as a deterrent to the autonomy her teenage daughter seeks” (James, 2001, p. 46).

In *The Last English Plantation*, Shinebourne (1998) presents us with a female protagonist named June Lehall, the twelve-year-old daughter of a half Chinese, half Indian father Cyrus, and an Indian mother Lucille, who has converted from Hinduism to Christianity. Much in the relationship between June and Lucille has to do with the mother being a social climber who accepts the social norms of class and race. In the first scene of the novel, when a member of the village council visits the house:

[Lucille tells him] please don’t call June ‘Muluk’ [her Indian nickname]. That is not her name. Her name is June .... Up to this year she had been called both names in New Dam, but her mother was putting a stop to it now that she was going to school in New Amsterdam. (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 7)

Lucille’s denial of June’s Indian nickname comes from her belief that she must disassociate from everything Indian, speak “good English” and be a Christian to have social mobility. Hence, Lucille expects her daughter, June, to behave in an English manner, prohibiting June from using the name Muluk or to “speak improperly,” that is in Creole or “bad English.”

One of the first disputes between mother and daughter in the novel is about June not speaking “proper English.” When, in the first chapter, Lucille and Cyrus are talking about Overseer Beardsley wanting June to visit his daughter, June tells her parents: “I don’ want go no overseer yard” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 15). Lucille immediately orders June to “speak properly” warning her that she will not listen to anything June says if she keeps speaking in such a manner. For Lucille the only way for June to advance in society, leave New Dam and to stop being poor is by attending school in New Amsterdam “like the children of the overseers” (p. 32). That is why June is supposed to erase all Hindi from her tongue, be Christian and get educated, since, according to Lucille, that is the only way to be accepted in society as an honorable person.

Lucille has thus become an agent of the colonizer and this causes June to rebel against her (James, 2001, p. 46). Most of the disagreements between June and Lucille are due to the fact that their perspectives of the world do not match. As a result, June starts developing a kind of love and hate relationship with Lucille as: “it was difficult for June to be angry with her mother. Her anger was mixed with love” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 15).

Yet, this cultural collision of June with her mother and the colonial system is necessary for the development of her *mestiza* consciousness. According to Anzaldúa’s chapter on the consciousness of the mestiza (1987, pp. 77-91) the *mestiza* is “a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them a new meaning” (p. 81). In other words:

*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 78)

June thus finds herself at the interstice between borders, and this becomes more evident to her once she starts the journey to New Amsterdam, where she encounters multiple interpretations and perspectives of the world that contradict those of her mother and, at the same time, seem more logical. Like Anzaldúa’s *mestiza*, June, “in perceiving conflicting information and points of view”, is locked in a counter stance —“a duel of oppressor and oppressed”—, that subjects her “to a swamping of her psychological borders” (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 78-79).

### **In search of the *mestiza***

June’s consciousness as a *mestiza* goes hand in hand with her journey to New Amsterdam, which can be divided in four main adventures: the visit to Annie Beardsley, the first day of school, the second day of school, and the killing of Mariam Motoo. These all follow the same pattern, whereby an event occurs that triggers a critical reflective process on June’s part which leads to a disagreement or argument with Lucille.

June’s first adventure is the visit her parents force her to make to Overseer Beardsley’s daughter, Annie. During this visit, June experiences, for the first time, class separation and racism. Class differentiation is emphasized when the narrator details that the overseers live in large cottages “furnished by the state, [with] running water, electricity, and maintenance services” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 19), facilities that Lucille aspires to have. June also notices the presence of servants and pays particular attention to the fact that Mrs. Beardsley wears make-up, a practice not so common among the women of the village: “The women labourers wore no make-up at all except for blackpot, the soot which women collected on the cooking pot which they used as eye shadow. The young women who experimented with cheap make-up... were labeled ‘wild’.” (p. 22).

The main event of this first adventure is the interaction between June and Sarah. In it Sarah makes fun of June on multiple occasions for talking “bad English,” and for being poor and a coolie. When June is in the garden trying to play with Annie, Sarah hears June saying *bete-ruche* instead of *bête-rouge*. Immediately, Sarah starts laughing. At first, June “could not tell why,” but once she realizes “the child was laughing, because she used the wrong word,” she snaps at her: “I don’t care” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 24). For June it is completely normal to say *bete-ruche*, she is accustomed to hearing it from the people in New Dam, and “as long as they thought it was all right, it was all right” for her. But for Sarah it is an indicative of June not speaking properly, in her perspective June “pronounce[s] all [her] words wrong” (p. 24).

Although June is used to being scolded by her mother for speaking improperly, it amazes her that Sarah, being so young, criticizes her so severely. But what astonishes June the most is that Sarah seems to have a “fixed point of view” about her people (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 34), especially when, after June tells her that she went to St. Peter’s Elementary School, Sarah laughs mockingly at her and says:

the poor coolie children go there and they have millions of lice in their hair and that you have to use latrines there. And that you all get beaten with whips. And you all smell of coconut oil, and you use cow-dung, you daub it on the earth where you live. (p. 27)

June immediately gets angry with Sarah and yells that she is “a bad, wicked, evil little child” (p. 27). She also questions Sarah’s right to call people coolies and adds, “they are workers and if they did not work you would not have what you have” (p. 28).

On her way home she finds herself immersed in the memories of her childhood in Old Dam, a period that she remembers with great longing because she used to live in the same village with Africans and Indians. But all that has changed, the bulldozers have pulled down the *logies* and now they live in separate villages. Although she misses these days, June tries to tell herself that she is “glad that Old Dam ha[s] been destroyed” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 36). Like her mother “she told herself it (Old Dam) was not a clean place, that it was too near the factory which was noisy and dirty” (p. 36), yet her memories of it are happy ones, because she was never alone.

Lucille is responsible for June’s loneliness. If she has spent the summer playing teacher alone, it is only because her mother has been “against her keeping up her primary school friends” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 40). Lucille has also been trying to erase Hindi from June’s tongue by forcing her to read and speak English. Because of this June begins to understand that “it was not just different words but different points of view she was really hearing. They each had their own point of view” (p. 33). She also realizes that she does not have “her own fixed point of view yet” (p. 33).

The second and third adventures are fundamental for the development of June’s own “fixed point of view” or her *mestiza* consciousness, mainly because of her experiences in the school. After arriving in New Amsterdam, June first noticed the division between

country and city children: “It was the country children who were entering through the narrow bridge between the hedges. The children from New Amsterdam were streaming into the compound through the tall old wooden archway between the royal palms” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 59). The country children were of “all races and mixtures of the races,” united only by their poverty (pp. 59-60). The students from New Amsterdam were healthier, bigger, taller, spoke proper language and knew how to conduct themselves. On the other hand, the country children were, supposedly, lazy, less intelligent and stubborn. Students were therefore divided into two groups based on binary norms such as white/non-white and rich/poor, where the former were considered to be superior and the latter, inferior. Students and teachers alike promoted this idea.

The teachers in New Amsterdam’s High School follow a prescriptive and normative model of education very similar to what Freire (1968) calls the banking concept of education, where the students are receptacles to be filled with information (p. 71). June is not experiencing a liberating education but rather a colonizing one, designed to perpetuate the colonial condition, including its race and class structures. For this reason, the overseers’ children that stay in Guyana instead of being sent to study abroad are the students who are praised, and consequently the ones with more opportunities, while the country children enter school already at a disadvantage. This becomes evident when on the first day of school Mrs. Baxter, the Math teacher, irritated because the country children did not go beyond fractions at their previous school, says:

Well those of you who are behind will just have to do your best to catch-up. I will give one lesson in ratios, one only ... and you had better take it in. Then I will go straight into algebra. I am not going to tolerate any laziness at all. When I set work you do it, if you don’t do it, that is your lookout. (Shinebourne, 1998, pp. 74-75)

Here, the teacher “presents her/himself to [the] students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute” (Freire, 1968, p. 72).

June is aware of this, that is the reason why she tells Lucille, when she asks June about her first day of school and Mrs. Farley, that she does not like the teacher: “She shouldn’t talk like that to us, without knowing us, without giving us a chance. No need for her to talk like a pig to the children” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 92). At the same time, Lucille undermines June’s point of view by telling her that she is a very intolerant child, “determined to see the world in [her] own light” (p. 91), and that she does not know what is good for her. All this leads June to question the educational system when she asks herself:

What did this school have to teach them? To be upright citizens who did not know that British soldiers were here with guns in their own country to terrorize poor people on the sugar states? To be upright citizens who themselves despised poor people? (p. 109)

June’s journey would not be complete without the figure of a mentor, which in the female *bildungsroman* is often another mother figure or an *othermother*, as Troester

(1984) refers to “the other adult women who help guide and form the young girl” (p. 13). According to Troester, *othermothers* “provide a safety valve and sounding board and release the teenage girl from the confines of a single role model. They can be gentle and affectionate where the bloodmother must be stern and demanding” (p. 13). In June’s case the *othermother* is Nani Dharamdai, an old lady that is like an adoptive mother for Cyrus. Yet, Lucille, in her effort to erase all Hindu influence over June, prevents Nani from visiting the house. Nonetheless, throughout the narration, we notice the high esteem that June feels for Nani, because she taught her the Hindu religious traditions in her early childhood.

On her second day of school, June decides to leave early with the intention of never going back. On her way home, she waits for a while because she does not want her mother to know she has skipped school. However, when she arrives home with her dirty uniform, Lucille gets mad and starts an argument with June, in which, at a certain moment, June tells her mother that she is never going back to New Amsterdam. Immediately, Lucille calls her an ingrate for wanting to be a coolie after all she has done for bringing her up decently (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 123). In the passion of the moment Lucille yells: “You are a wicked wicked girl! God will punish you” (p. 124). To which June responds: “Which god? I don’t have a god so no god can’t punish me. And I don’t have no mother either” (p. 125).

Afterwards, June runs away and goes to Nani’s house. With Nani June finds the gentleness and affection that she does not find in her mother:

When she looked up and saw June, with her skin flushed, shivering, her face dirty with tears and sweat, her shoulders heaving with repressed sobs, she exclaimed, ‘*Aray bapray, Muluk!*’ (O my God, Muluk!) and continued in Hindi, opening her arms and beckoning her to approach. In Nani’s arms her tears dried, and her tension erased. (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 126)

Besides being a maternal figure, Nani is June’s strongest connection with Indian culture and traditions. It’s Nani who reminds June of the importance of her “real name even if the overseers and government official preferred to spell it how it suited them” (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 128). Nani’s words are important because June can only achieve a *mestiza* consciousness by admitting her origins, that is, by recognizing that she is the daughter of Indians and Chinese alike and without ignoring that she was born in an English colony. Hence, as with Anzaldúa’s (1987) *mestiza*, June:

constantly has to shift out of habitual formations from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and towards a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p. 79)

June’s journey ends when the military kills Mariam Motoo, and Ralph is arrested. It is at this moment when June finally understands that there are multiple points of view and

that all of them could be right. This is specifically suggested when the overseers and the council members, including her father Cyrus, are arguing with Sergeant Richards. The narrator says:

They shouted how Ralph was treated with so much injustice; Mr. Easen was right about the 1946 act preventing child labour, Boysie was right about the sugar workers' revolution and Cyrus was right that Ralph was being made a scapegoat for the police and army. (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 169)

In the end, as a *mestiza*, June creates a new mythos that is “a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 80), as is demonstrated in the final chapter:

When she cycled to and from the villages she was part of the movement between country and town. It was a continual movement of people which did not allow her to feel alone, a movement which the journey was witness to day after day. If in the end she did not have to remember the lessons which she learnt in the classroom, she would be sure to remember this movement of people of which she had been a part. The habit of memory on her daily journeys became her own discipline, separate from her parents, from the school and the politics of the country. (Shinebourne, 1998, p. 175)

It is only when she “learns to transform the small ‘I’ into the total ‘Self’” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 83) that June creates a new consciousness, a consciousness of her own, separated from her parents, the school, and the politics of the country, a consciousness free of oppression.

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# “NO POEMS; NO BIRDS:” DEREK WALCOTT’S *WHITE EGRETS* (2010)

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## Abstract

Derek Walcott’s *White Egrets* reflects on self and place. After years of wandering, the presence, disappearance, and return of a flock of egrets, prompts the poet to muse on his African and Caribbean roots. By quiet reflection, by sharing what he has gleaned from his literary apprenticeships in Europe and the United States, the symbolism of the birds that “speckle” the Caribbean islands chart a flightpath for the poet to return home.

**Key terms:** Derek Walcott, *White Egrets*, Walcott’s poetry, Afro-Caribbean

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In Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* (1990), a bird in the form of a sea-swift guides the protagonist, Achille, on an imaginary voyage of discovery to Africa which, when the epic poem was published, quieted criticism that the poet had neglected the presence and importance of the continent in his writing. The return journey from Africa and the meeting again with the waitress Helen (a symbol of St. Lucia, the poet’s birthplace) appeared to placate critics as the Caribbean now seemed to be the *novum terra* of Walcott’s poetry.

In *Tiepolo’s Hound* (2000), Walcott found himself embroiled again in a controversy of place. As the artistic twin of the impressionist painter Camille Pissarro, a Jew who was born in St. Thomas, Walcott asks which home - Charlotte Amalie or Pontoise (France), Castries or Syracusa (Sicily) – is the more conducive environment for artistic advancement and posterity. In Walcott’s long poem, the poet and the painter are portrayed symbolically as street dogs in the Caribbean and would-be pedigree hounds in Europe. While the latter is leashed, the former carries all manner of colonial fleas. The dichotomy placed both Walcott and Pissarro at the center of a dilemma that raises questions about the individual artist and his place.



**Figure 1** Derek Walcott (1930-2017) Source: “Derek Walcott” by Bert Nienhuis, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

In *White Egrets* (2010), Walcott mentions more than seventy places he has visited in a book of fifty-four poems. Drifting like a grand tourist from St. Lucia to Sicily, New York to Amsterdam, Walcott remembers, often with regret, the details of his artistic and personal life: his three marriages, the deaths of his friends, his failing health, his artistic gifts, and the extraordinary pull of the Caribbean populated by the egrets that “speckle the islands” (2010, p. 8). The need to be at home, the desire to rein in his wandering is the thrust of *White Egrets*. Like Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s peripatetic Ancient Mariner, Walcott seems condemned to drift from place to place due to his neglect of the Caribbean. This dooms him to walk the earth until a new sighting of his homeland allows him to see it again as if for the first time.

The poem “White Egrets” that begins the book introduces the reader to *Ardea alba*, the great white egret of the Caribbean. For Walcott, the bird, like the Sankofa of West African symbolism (both pictured below), is the catalyst that allows the poet to *fly* home. It seems that Walcott, identifying as Achille who was cuckolded by his rival, Hector, and two-timed by Helen, takes his revenge by wandering elsewhere and adopting European styles and mannerisms.



**Figure 2** Great white egret. Source: “Ardea alba in mangrove” by Tomascastelazo, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Worn at funerals, Adinkra cloth in Ghana is stamped with a symbol associated with the Sankofa, a version of which is depicted as a bird whose head faces backwards, its feet forward, as it carries a treasured egg in its beak. The emblematic bird is linked to an Akan language proverb which says that *it's not wrong to go back for that which you've forgotten* (Adinkra Symbols, 2024). The bird embodies the spirit and the reverence for the past and when invoked, it acts as a gentle admonition to those who, for whatever reason, have forgotten their history and their place (Adinkra Symbols, 2024). The need to retrace certain steps to make amends allows Walcott, by association, to finally emphasize the “strutting perfection” of the egret as his “pen’s beak,” one that plucks up “wriggling worms like nouns and gulping them, the nib reading as it writes, shaking off angrily what the beak rejects.” This leads Walcott to the conclusion that “*selection*, is what the egrets teach” (2010, p. 10). Having accepted Africa in *Omeros* as a reality - given the crossing of the Atlantic by millions of stolen people - Walcott identifies with the place of his birth by finally recognizing that which *is* recognizable. Like the poet John Keats in the great Odes of 1819, Walcott comes to see what he has stubbornly not seen.



**Figure 3** A version of the Sankofa symbol. Source: Ann Albuyeh, used with permission

The poem “White Egrets” was written in the Santa Cruz Valley of Trinidad and Tobago. This suggests that the book *White Egrets* begins at the end rather than the beginning and that the poet is already home. If this is so, Walcott’s book delineates a slow retreat from elsewhere and the eight-part sequence “White Egrets” initiates the collection, with the Caribbean as his new place of making.

In “The Wild Swans at Coole” (1919), the Irish poet W.B. Yeats writes of the swans he has observed over nineteen successive autumns and ruminates that one day the birds will simply fly away forever. In part three of Walcott’s “White Egrets,” the birds that have disappeared mysteriously return. In a reversal of Yeats’ magisterial poem, Walcott writes

The egrets are the colour of waterfalls,  
And of clouds. Some friends, the few I have left,  
Are dying, but the egrets stalk through the rain

As if nothing mortal can affect them, or they lift  
Like abrupt angels, sail, then settle again.  
Sometimes the hills themselves disappear  
Like friends, slowly, but I am happier  
That they have come back now, like memory, like prayer. (2010, p. 9)

In Gerard Manley Hopkins' "The Windhover" (1877), a tiny bird stirs the poet's heart and guides his lapsed soul back to Christ. Similarly, Walcott's white egrets return him to the open arms of the Caribbean. "Sepulchral" and "spectral white," the "egrets soar together in noiseless flight/or tack, like a regatta, the sea-green grass" (2010, p. 10). In the following poem, "The Acacia Trees," while saddened by the "doomed acres," by "yet another luxury hotel," and by "ordinary people fenced out," Walcott's *ghost* egrets astonish "his page" and the poet begins to feel "such freedom" as he writes "under the acacias" in the Caribbean (2010, p. 11).

If the chronology that I suggest is correct, then noticeably the poems written in Spain and Italy accord the egrets scant attention. Like Yeats at Coole, the birds seem to have disappeared from the poems forever. This implies, perhaps, that Walcott has fallen on poetic hard-times. "In the Village," he writes that "the birds have abandoned our cities" and the closest he comes to his "spectral" bird is the strange sensation that he is an old twitcher in a South American *telenovela* playing the part of "an egret-haired *viejo*" shaking on the studio set with an "obscene affliction" (2010, p. 47).

Even though the poet's heart "won't call it quits," Walcott sympathizes with, perhaps because of chronic ill-health, the suicide of an Italian poet as he searches "for a cage that calms" his "mind with its pitiful searching for an exit/ from itself." As he thinks of the last days of Cesare Pavese who killed himself in 1950, a "disheveled troop" of egrets that once were *the colour of waterfalls* has become "the bleached [r]egrets/ of an old man's memoirs, their unwritten stanzas/ pages gusting like wings on a lawn, wide open secrets" (2010, p. 16). As the shade of an ageing poet begins to haunt the pages of *White Egrets*, Walcott threatens "You, my dearest friend, Reader" (2010, p. 25) with an unequivocal: "No poems. No birds" (2010, p. 48).

In "Sicilian Suite", Walcott declares himself an "old man in a dimming world" (2010, p. 22). Like T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion" (1920), Walcott hints that he has lost his passion in the "cunning passages, contrived corridors" of Europe and were it not for the spot in time the white egrets afford him in an eponymous poem, his thoughts, like those of Eliot's ancient, might have been of "a dry brain in a dry season" (1988, pp. 30-31). Confessing that his grief is of his making, that his "shadowy treachery" has caused his marriages to fail, that "vanilla-coloured girls" no longer look his way, (Walcott, 2010, p. 33), that his paintings turn "their shamed faces to the wall like sins" (2010, p. 52), that "poetry's weather" is "not where palms applaud themselves and sails dance/ in mindless delight and gulls race the foam" (2010, p. 36) Walcott declares: "we are never

where we are, but somewhere else" (2010, p. 29). In the American poet Richard Wilbur's words, Walcott seems "homelessly at home" (2004, p. 148).

Towards the end of his life, Yeats asked the question "Why should not old men be mad?" (1969, p. 333) and answered himself by writing obliquely that life does not go to plan, that things do not turn out as expected, that the intellectual girl who knew the poetry of Dante by heart marries an uncomprehending dunce. Walcott, while raging like a bullish septuagenarian hiding in the "manchineel shadows" of lust, and eyeing "the black-haired beauties" (2010, p. 26) is able to recall the "immaculate egrets" (2010, p. 40), even as his "insomnia rages," as if, in Shelley's great phrase, "some awful Power" (2009, p.117) had intervened to *fly* him home:

Be grateful that you wrote well in this place,  
Let the torn poems sail from you like a flock  
Of white egrets in a long last sigh of release. (Walcott, 2010, p. 65)

While "White Egrets" is the signature poem of the collection, many of Walcott's poems that follow (or precede) are nevertheless sensual in the true sense of the word. We experience "the hot sea" that "crinkles like tin" in "In Italy" (2010, p. 34) or "no name except Andalusia would make sense/ from the train window of horses and galloping horses" in "Spanish Series" (2010, p. 24). Even the white egrets who once modeled for Audubon (2010, p. 8) are translated into an ornithology of others: bitterns, crows, ibises, parrots, rooks, seagulls, storks, swifts. During an unseen rapture, Walcott's mind suddenly becomes "an aging sea remembering its lines." In "London Afternoon," a praise-poem, Walcott greets "the scent and symmetry of Wyatt, Surrey" and gives thanks for the traditions that have kindled his poetry (and painting) with borrowed fire:

Spring grass and roiling clouds dapple a county  
With lines like a rutted road stuck in the memory  
Of a skylark's unheard song, a bounty  
Pungent as clover, the creak of a country cart  
In Constable or Clare. Words clear the page  
Like a burst of sparrows over a hedge  
'but though from court to cottage he depart,  
his saint is sure of his unspotted heart'  
and the scent of petrol. Why do these lines  
lie like barred sunlight on the lawn to cage  
the strutting dove? My passing image in the shops, the signs. (2010, p. 45)

This epiphany allows Walcott to range widely by invoking the colonial moments he first touched on in *Omberos*: the Conradian docks in "The Spectre of Empire" ( 2010, p. 39), the "sobbing bugle" of "the Raj," and "the Saharan silences" in "The Lost Empire" (2010, p. 37). While he has been content to be as irascible as the grumpy Irish poet "[Patrick] Kavanagh with his few acres" or for his heart "to be torn to shreds like the sea's lace" (p. 38), Walcott now can write again, of "canoe wood, spicy laurel, the wind-

“churned trees” that echo “the African crests” or “the sudden smell of a gust of slanted rain/ on scorching asphalt from the hazed hills of Jamaica” (2010, pp. 38, 76). In the “Elegy” written for the poet Aimé Césaire, Walcott, in essence, writes his own epitaph, one which fuses the Caribbean with the continent from which he is descended:

I sent you in Martinique, *maître*,  
The unfolding letter of a sail, a letter  
Beyond the lines of blindingly white breakers,  
Of lace-laden surplices and congregational shale.  
I did not send any letter, though it flailed on the wind,  
Your island is always in the haze of my mind  
With the blown-about sea-birds  
In their creole clatter of vowels, *maître* among makers  
Whom the reef recites when the copper sea-almonds blaze,  
Beacons to distant Dakar, and the dolphin’s acres. (2010, p. 87)

Just as the novelist Marguerite Yourcenar believed that if all things fail, if the philosophers have nothing else to say, then it is excusable to turn to “the random twitter of birds” (2005, p.26), so Walcott turns to the white egrets whose wings are as “certain as a seraph’s when they beat” to bring him home (2010, p. 8). There are, Walcott writes in “Barcelona”

No masterpieces in huge frames to worship,  
On such banalities, and yet there are days  
When every street corner rounds itself into  
A sunlit surprise, a painting or a phrase,  
Canoes drawn up by the market, the harbour’s blue,  
The barracks. So much to do still, all of it praise. (2010: 86)

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## **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE**



# EXAMEN DE LA RELACIÓN ENTRE LAS ACTITUDES HACIA LA ALTERNANCIA DE CÓDIGOS ESPAÑOL-INGLÉS Y EL NIVEL DE BILINGÜISMO EN PUERTO RICO: PREGUNTAS SOBRE USO Y DOMINIO LINGÜÍSTICO

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## Resumen

Este estudio es parte de una investigación mayor relacionada a la alternancia de códigos (AC) en Puerto Rico (PR) y a las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el bilingüismo. Para propósitos de investigación, se tomaron los resultados de cuatro preguntas binarias pertenecientes a un cuestionario atado a una técnica de máscaras, las cuales se contestaban al escuchar cinco versiones distintas (español, inglés, AC de inserción léxica [AClex], AC interoracional [ACinter] y AC intraoracional [ACintra]) de la lectura grabada de un correo electrónico. Los participantes de esta investigación fueron universitarios puertorriqueños con distintos niveles de bilingüismo, los cuales se dividieron en dos grupos: participantes con nivel alto de bilingüismo (Grupo A) y estudiantes con nivel bajo o nulo de bilingüismo (Grupo B). Al escuchar cada grabación, contestaban las preguntas según su percepción lingüística. Algunos de los resultados obtenidos exponen que los participantes del grupo A presentan mayores porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas para las versiones de AC en comparación con el grupo B, lo cual revela una mayor aceptabilidad de estas formas y una similitud entre su habla y estas formas. Además, se encontró que ambos grupos asocian la ACinter con mayor dominio del español y del inglés, lo que exhibe ideologías puristas de separación de las lenguas, incluso durante la AC.

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**Términos clave:** actitudes lingüísticas, bilingüismo, alternancia de códigos, español-inglés, Puerto Rico, técnica de máscaras

## Abstract

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This study is part of a larger project related to codeswitching (CS) in Puerto Rico (PR) and linguistic attitudes toward bilingualism. For purposes of this paper, we considered the results of four binary questions included in a questionnaire tied to the matched guise technique, which were answered by listening to five different versions (Spanish, English, insertional CS [LexCS], intersentential CS [InterCS] and intrasentential CS [IntraCS]) of a recorded email message. The participants in this study were Puerto Rican college students with different levels of bilingualism; they were divided into two groups: participants with a high level of bilingualism (Group A) and those with low or no level of bilingualism (Group B). After listening to each recording, they answered the questions based on their linguistic perception. Some of the results obtained here show that the participants in group A present higher percentages of positive responses for the CS versions compared to group B, which reveals their greater acceptability of this bilingual practice and the similarity between their speech and the CS forms. Furthermore, both groups associated InterCS with higher proficiency in Spanish and English, which suggests purist ideologies of language separation, even during CS.

**Key terms:** language attitudes, bilingualism, codeswitching, Spanish-English, Puerto Rico, matched-guise test

## Introducción

En el mundo, mayoritariamente bilingüe o plurilingüe (Montrul, 2013), existe mucha investigación sobre el bilingüismo o el plurilingüismo, que puede definirse, en términos generales, como el uso por parte de un individuo de dos o más lenguas en diversos aspectos de su vida. Este estudio forma parte de dicho cuerpo de investigación al enfocarse en el bilingüismo, particularmente en uno de los fenómenos asociados al bilingüismo, conocido como la alternancia de códigos (AC). Este fenómeno puede definirse como el uso fluido y natural de dos lenguas en el discurso—en este caso, el español y el inglés—, sin necesidad de cambiar de interlocutor, de tema ni de situación comunicativa. Aunque la mayoría de la investigación previa explora el uso de la AC, tanto en la oralidad como en la escritura (e.g., McClure & Mir, 1995; Montes-Alcalá, 2005, 2016; 2024; Poplack, 1980; Steuck & Torres Cacoullos, 2019; Torres & Potowski, 2016; Valdés Kroff, 2016), en el presente estudio se examinan las actitudes asociadas a dicha práctica bilingüe. En este caso, además, el entorno auscultado es Puerto Rico (PR), un escenario ideal para este propósito precisamente por su situación lingüística.

El dialecto puertorriqueño, por más de 100 años, ha sido influenciado por la lengua inglesa debido a la situación sociopolítica que presenta PR con los Estados Unidos (EE. UU.). A finales del siglo XIX, el archipiélago puertorriqueño fue entregado a EE. UU. como tratado de paz al finalizar la Guerra Hispano-estadounidense. Por lo tanto, al ser el inglés la lengua predominante de los EE. UU. fue traída a PR e impuesta para sustituir

el español. Aunque este proceso no fue exitoso, sí permitió que ambas lenguas coexistieran en el archipiélago y que se oficializaran como lenguas del país. Asimismo, luego de mucha inestabilidad y cambios en la política lingüística educativa, el inglés se integró al currículo escolar como materia obligatoria desde kindergarten hasta el duodécimo grado de la escuela superior, seguido por dos años de cursos de inglés básico en el nivel universitario (Pousada, 1999, 2018; Schmidt, 2014). Aunque la calidad de los cursos de inglés varía entre las escuelas de PR (Morales Lugo, 2019b), todos los estudiantes tienen alguna exposición al inglés durante su educación escolar y universitaria. Incluso en casos en que los cursos se dicten en español, muchos de los recursos utilizados en los salones de clase, como los libros de texto u otras lecturas asignadas son en inglés. La investigación sociohistórico llevada a cabo por Schmidt (2014) demuestra que la educación formal del inglés en las escuelas públicas de PR ha disminuido desde la invasión norteamericana; sin embargo, el uso del inglés en la sociedad ha aumentado, y dicha lengua está actualmente muy visible en el paisaje lingüístico del archipiélago (e.g., en letreros callejeros, nombres de negocios, etiquetas de productos e instrucciones) y en muchos aspectos de la vida diaria, e.g., los medios de comunicación y entretenimiento, el Internet (Nickels, 2005; Schmidt, 2014; Torres González, 2002).

A causa de esta relación sociopolítica y el contacto entre ambas lenguas, se ha provocado un bilingüismo en esta región del Caribe. Si bien se podría decir, en términos de Amparo Morales (2000), que en PR existe un “bilingüismo social” en general (p. 73), no se puede negar que el nivel de bilingüismo individual entre la población puertorriqueña es muy variado; algunos hablantes dominan el inglés en un nivel básico o principiante mientras que otros lo dominan en un nivel avanzado o nativo. Es decir, como sociedad, se podría expresar que PR es bilingüe; no obstante, se trata de un continuo de bilingüismo en el que hay puertorriqueños a lo largo de todo el espectro, desde casi monolingües del español hasta casi monolingües del inglés. Pousada (2000, 2010) apoya la idea explicando que los bilingües más balanceados en PR se encuentran en ciertos sectores de la población—el área metropolitana o bolsillos del archipiélago en que se encuentran migrantes de retorno e inmigrantes estadounidenses, clases sociales más altas, niveles más altos de educación formal, sectores laborales tales como el turismo, la medicina, la ingeniería y las leyes, entre otros.

Un elemento que refleja el estado actual de las variantes del español habladas en Puerto Rico son los anglicismos, los cuales componen más del 8% del léxico de este dialecto, según documentado por investigadores como López Morales (1999). De hecho, Cortés et al. (2005), en su investigación observacional, documentan una alta presencia de préstamos del inglés de diversos tipos en los contextos de la comida rápida. Igualmente, Bullock et al. (2016) reportan el uso de préstamos del inglés que consisten en una, dos o varias palabras en tres periódicos puertorriqueños: *El Vocero*, *El Nuevo Día* y *80grados*. Aunque extraen préstamos léxicos de los tres periódicos examinados, hallan que el

periódico dirigido a la clase social más alta y académica, *80grados*, es el que presenta los préstamos de inglés más complejos y extensos—definidos por las autoras como AC. Asimismo, se ha evidenciado la influencia del inglés en las formas morfosintácticas que se presentan en el español puertorriqueño, las cuales se asemejan a las del inglés, como, por ejemplo, la presencia frecuente del sujeto pronominal y el orden sujeto + verbo + objeto en la mayoría de las estructuras oracionales (Sobrino Triana, 2018). Aunque se reconoce que el inglés no es la única causa de los fenómenos morfosintácticos mencionados, sí queda más clara su influencia en el fenómeno de la AC, que ha sido documentado en diversas investigaciones, sobre todo entre la población joven del país. En su investigación sobre la relación entre lengua e identidad, Mazak (2012) encuentra varias instancias de AC entre puertorriqueños de una comunidad rural en PR, incluyendo a niños de edad escolar. Domínguez-Rosado (2015) quien también examina la relación lengua-identidad, pero esta vez entre miembros de tres generaciones familiares, encuentra que el fenómeno ocurre más frecuentemente entre los integrantes de la generación más joven. Los estudios de caso de Morales Lugo (2019a, 2019b) con estudiantes de una escuela pública y una privada confirman el uso de la AC entre la población escolar, aunque reporta su uso como algo extraordinario en la escuela pública, mientras representa algo ordinario—o común—en la escuela privada. En el nivel universitario, por medio de cuestionarios con juicios de aceptabilidad, Guzzardo Tamargo y Vélez Avilés (2017) encuentran patrones de uso de la AC similares a los de la población bilingüe español-inglés en EE. UU. Adicionalmente, Mazak et al. (2016) reportan que permitir el uso de la AC en los salones de clase y en los trabajos asignados puede, en ciertos casos, facilitar la expresión de conocimiento por parte de los estudiantes universitarios. Además del uso del español y el inglés, en PR también se han estudiado las actitudes lingüísticas hacia ambas lenguas. En cuanto al español, investigaciones como la de Sobrino Triana (2018) examinan—en este caso, por medio de un cuestionario dirigido a puertorriqueños del área metropolitana—las percepciones dialectales y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia su propia variedad del español puertorriqueño. La autora encontró evidencia de asociaciones del español de PR con usos no prestigiosos o no prescriptivos, alejados de una norma ideal, pero también valoraciones afectivas de orgullo y lealtad hacia su modo de hablar. Mientras tanto, Ortiz López et al. (2021), por medio de grabaciones y cuestionarios, se enfocan en las percepciones sociofonéticas y las actitudes lingüísticas de la población dominicana residente en PR hacia una variedad de voces dominicanas y puertorriqueñas, las cuales relacionan con diversos fenotipos, orígenes étnicos y niveles socioeconómicos, entre otros rasgos.

La presente investigación se enfoca en las actitudes lingüísticas hacia la AC español-inglés. Un número más reducido de investigaciones se ha acercado a este tema en PR. Las publicaciones más tempranas reportaban un fuerte rechazo del inglés en defensa del español, para preservar su dominio lingüístico y su cultura hispana (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987; Alvar, 1986; Clachar, 1997; López Laguerre, 1997; Schweers & Vélez, 1992). En

cambio, las investigaciones más recientes (Domínguez-Rosado, 2015; Mazak, 2012; Pérez Casas, 2016) apuntan a una postura más positiva hacia el bilingüismo, el inglés y la AC, particularmente entre la juventud. Estos participantes perciben su identidad puertorriqueña como una dinámica y cambiante. No consideran que el inglés represente una amenaza a su dominio del español ni estiman que el inglés llegará a sustituir al español en PR; a su vez, piensan que la AC constituye una parte integral de su repertorio lingüístico. Investigaciones aún más recientes añaden capas de análisis a los datos relacionados con las actitudes lingüísticas por parte de los puertorriqueños. Ortiz López y Rosario (2021), mediante un cuestionario de audio-imagen, examinan las percepciones hacia diversas pronunciaciones de los préstamos con /r/ y /l/, y González-Rivera (2021) recurre a un cuestionario con premisas directas sobre las actitudes hacia el inglés. En ambos casos, se confirman los hallazgos de actitudes más positivas y abiertas a los efectos del contacto lingüístico en PR.

Acosta-Santiago (2020) comparó las actitudes lingüísticas hacia la AC de la población puertorriqueña con las de la población miamense. A través de las respuestas a cuestionarios sobre el uso y la aceptabilidad de diversas formas de AC, halló que, aunque las actitudes de los puertorriqueños son menos positivas que las de los miamenses, las personas que tienden a alternar sus lenguas tienen actitudes más positivas hacia la AC. Acosta-Santiago (2020) también reportó que los participantes más jóvenes (18-30 años) mostraron más uso de la AC y actitudes más positivas hacia la AC. Aunque algunos participantes puertorriqueños todavía defienden ideales puristas de separación de las lenguas, sobre todo en situaciones formales, otros opinan que la AC es representativa de la cultura puertorriqueña y que facilita y enriquece la expresión lingüística.

### **El presente estudio**

Los datos que se discuten en este estudio forman parte de una investigación más amplia sobre el uso de la AC en PR y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia la dicha práctica bilingüe. De hecho, complementan los datos que se discutieron en dos publicaciones previas: Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2018) y Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2021). Como se explicará más detalladamente abajo, en ambas investigaciones previas, por medio de la técnica de máscaras, los participantes escucharon grabaciones y completaron cuestionarios con el fin de obtener información sobre sus actitudes lingüísticas hacia la AC. Los resultados que se describen y discuten en este capítulo corresponden a preguntas de dicho cuestionario que no se analizaron para las publicaciones previas.

### **Metodología**

Esta investigación utiliza la metodología de los estudios descritos por Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2018) y Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2021). En lo que sigue se explica brevemente la metodología; para detalles adicionales se pueden consultar los estudios anteriores. La diferencia principal entre este estudio y los anteriores es que aquí se combinan

los datos de los participantes de ambos estudios previos (2018 & 2021) y se crean dos categorías: personas con un nivel de bilingüismo alto y personas con un nivel de bilingüismo bajo o nulo. Además, en esta investigación se analizan datos actitudinales que no se han reportado previamente; esto se retomará en la sección de Resultados.

### ***Materiales y procedimiento***

El protocolo de la investigación (#1314-148) fue revisado y autorizado por el Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CIPSHI) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras (UPRRP). Para la investigación se utilizaron los siguientes materiales: un cuestionario sociodemográfico y una tarea principal de máscaras (*matched guise test*, MGT). Aunque la investigación amplia incluyó varias tareas de dominio lingüístico, en este trabajo solo se describen las pertinentes para el examen de las actitudes lingüísticas. Primeramente, el cuestionario sociodemográfico contaba con 68 preguntas, abiertas y cerradas, que auscultaban los datos sociodemográficos (género, edad, tipo de escolaridad, etc.) y el trasfondo lingüístico de los participantes (adquisición de las lenguas, exposición a las lenguas, uso de las lenguas, etc.). Por otro lado, la tarea principal, el MGT, consistió en 20 grabaciones y un cuestionario de actitudes lingüísticas. Las grabaciones eran de puertorriqueños que grabaron cinco versiones distintas de la lectura de un correo electrónico recibido por una de las autoras de los artículos previos. Para la creación de contenido de esta tarea, dos hombres y dos mujeres se grabaron individualmente realizando cinco versiones de la lectura del correo electrónico, para un total de 20 grabaciones de 25 segundos cada una. La primera versión contenía el mensaje leído solamente en español. En la segunda versión, el mensaje se encontraba solamente en inglés. Las versiones tercera, cuarta y quinta implementaban una lectura con la AC de tres formas: AClex o inserción (texto principalmente en español con palabras insertadas en inglés; ACinter o interoracional (texto con alternancias entre oraciones, es decir, algunas oraciones en español y otras en inglés; e ACintra o intraoracional (texto con alternancias dentro de oraciones, es decir, oraciones con algunas porciones en español y otras en inglés. Además, esta tarea contaba con un cuestionario de actitudes lingüísticas en el cual los participantes juzgaban la expresión oral de las personas que escuchaban en cada grabación. Este cuestionario consistía en preguntas que inquirían sobre 15 rasgos, que se contestaban con una escala Likert de cuatro puntos. Estos 15 rasgos eran los siguientes: algunos se relacionaban a la personalidad del participante (joven, amable, reservado, *geek*); otros aludían a niveles socioeconómicos (nivel socioeconómico bajo, residentes del área rural, residentes del área urbana, lugar de procedencia educativa y la cultura). Los otros rasgos se enfocaban en la etnicidad o identidad del participante con relación al bilingüismo. Comprendían los siguientes: bilingüe, blanco, estadista (término político para los que favorecen el Partido Nuevo Progresista de PR), nuyorican y puertorriqueño de pura cepa. Además, el cuestionario incluía siete preguntas binarias y de respuesta abierta. De estas, se tomaron

cuatro preguntas binarias para ser analizadas en el presente estudio, ya que los hallazgos de los 15 rasgos adicionales se reportaron en las publicaciones previas de Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2018) y Guzzardo Tamargo et al. (2021). Las cuatro preguntas analizadas en este trabajo—que aparecen en la sección de Resultados—concieren la opinión de los participantes sobre el dominio del español y del inglés de las voces de las grabaciones, al igual que su similitud con la forma de hablar de los puertorriqueños en general y con la forma de hablar de los mismos participantes.

Este estudio fue realizado en el Laboratorio de Lingüística de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, a donde acudieron individualmente quienes respondieron a la convocatoria mostrando interés en participar en la investigación de forma voluntaria. En el laboratorio, los participantes leyeron y firmaron la hoja de consentimiento informado. Luego, se les administraron las dos tareas: el cuestionario de datos sociodemográficos y perfil lingüístico y el MGT. En el caso de los participantes de la publicación del 2018, completaron primero el MGT y luego el cuestionario sociodemográfico en línea. En el caso de los participantes de la publicación del 2021, el orden de las tareas se invirtió. Para el MGT, los participantes escucharon las grabaciones—en distinto orden para cada uno—y, luego de escuchar cada grabación, se les administró el cuestionario de percepción y actitudes lingüísticas. La duración total de la sesión experimental fue de aproximadamente 1.5 horas; los participantes recibieron una remuneración de \$12 por hora.

### ***Participantes***

Para esta investigación se analizaron los datos de 139 participantes: 110 participantes con niveles de bilingüismo elevados que utilizaban la AC con frecuencia y 29 participantes que se consideraban con un nivel bajo de bilingüismo o casi monolingües del español y que no utilizaban la AC. Todos los participantes de ambos grupos eran estudiantes de la UPRRP. Aunque un porcentaje considerable de los participantes procedía de municipios fuera del área metropolitana, la mayoría de ellos residía en el área metropolitana al momento de completar el estudio. El rango de edades de los participantes con nivel de bilingüismo más alto era de 18 a 30 años y el de los participantes con nivel de bilingüismo más bajo era de 18 a 19 años, ya que este grupo consistía solamente de estudiantes del primer año universitario.

Los participantes proveyeron autoevaluaciones de su dominio del español y del inglés con una escala en la que 0 equivalía al menor nivel de dominio y 10 equivalía al nivel de dominio más elevado. Se llevaron a cabo pruebas-*t* de medidas dependientes para comparar las autoevaluaciones de dominio en español e inglés para cada grupo. Mientras que la prueba-*t* del grupo A no resultó en una diferencia estadísticamente significativa, la prueba-*t* del grupo B, sí,  $t(28) = 4.5, p = .00012$ . También se llevaron a cabo pruebas-*t* de medidas independientes para comparar las autoevaluaciones de dominio de cada

lengua entre ambos grupos. En este caso, la prueba-*t* de la autoevaluación de dominio del español no resultó ser estadísticamente significativa, pero la de la autoevaluación de

Características	Grupo A (nivel alto de bilingüismo)	Grupo B (nivel bajo de bilingüismo)
Género	55 M, 55 F	13 M, 16 F
Edad	20.3 (18-30)	18.5 (18-19)
Nivel académico	subgraduados y graduados	subgraduados
Lugar de origen	45% área metropolitana 55% resto de PR	66% área metropolitana 34% resto de PR
Lugar de residencia	100% área metropolitana	66% área metropolitana 34% resto de PR
Autoevaluación de dominio del español (/10)	9.1	8.9
Autoevaluación del dominio del inglés (/10)	9.0	6.7
Frecuencia de AC	56% siempre o casi siempre 44% a veces o pocas veces	No frecuentan hacerlo y cuando lo practican, es solamente escrito.

**Tabla 1** Características sociodemográficas y lingüísticas de los participantes

dominio del inglés, sí,  $t(137) = 8.9, p < .00001$ . Por lo tanto, el nivel de dominio del inglés del grupo B ( $M = 6.7$ ) es significativamente menor que su dominio del español ( $M = 8.9$ ) y que el dominio del inglés del grupo A ( $M = 9.0$ ).

## Resultados

Como se mencionó anteriormente, este estudio compara los datos recopilados con dos grupos de participantes: un grupo de 110 participantes con un nivel alto de bilingüismo (Grupo A) y un grupo de 29 participantes con un nivel bajo o nulo de bilingüismo (Grupo B). Los datos se recopilaron a través de la técnica de máscaras, con un cuestionario de actitudes lingüísticas diseñado para revelar las percepciones y opiniones de las personas en PR acerca de diferentes tipos de AC. Las preguntas cuyas respuestas se discuten aquí son las siguientes.

1. En su opinión, ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?
2. En su opinión, ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?
3. ¿Ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?
4. ¿Habla usted como esta persona?

### **Resultados del grupo A**

La tabla 2 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre el dominio del español de las personas masculinas (H) y femeninas (M) de las grabaciones del MGT.

En esta parte del cuestionario, se preguntó si los participantes consideraban que las personas grabadas dominaban o no el español, según las versiones presentadas de las grabaciones. Como se ve en la tabla 2, las grabaciones del español recibieron el mayor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las grabaciones masculinas (95%) como

<b>Grupo A: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?</b>			
		<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	95%	5%
	<b>M</b>	96%	4%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	37%	63%
	<b>M</b>	43%	57%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	86%	14%
	<b>M</b>	85%	15%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	90%	10%
	<b>M</b>	93%	7%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	82%	18%
	<b>M</b>	83%	17%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 2** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo A a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?

En esta parte del cuestionario, se preguntó si los participantes consideraban que las personas grabadas dominaban o no el español, según las versiones presentadas de las grabaciones. Como se ve en la tabla 2, las grabaciones del español recibieron el mayor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las grabaciones masculinas (95%) como para las femeninas (96%). A estas les siguen las grabaciones con ACinter, con un 90% de afirmación para las voces masculinas y un 93%, para las voces femeninas. En una posición intermedia, aparecen las respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del español a las grabaciones con AClex (86% para las voces masculinas y 85% para las voces femeninas) y con ACintra (82% para las voces masculinas y 83% para las voces femeninas).

En último lugar, las grabaciones del inglés recibieron el menor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del español. Incluso, las grabaciones tanto masculinas como femeninas recibieron porcentajes más altos de respuestas negativas: 63% para los hombres y 57% para las mujeres. Se llevaron a cabo pruebas de chi-cuadrado para examinar la relación entre las respuestas afirmativas y negativas de los participantes hacia las voces masculinas y femeninas para cada versión de la grabación. Ninguna de las diferencias en las respuestas afirmativas y negativas resultó estadísticamente significativa, por lo que se deduce que los juicios hacia las voces masculinas y femeninas eran similares.

La tabla 3 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre el dominio del inglés de las personas masculinas (H) y femeninas (M) de las grabaciones del MGT.

Grupo A: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?			
		Sí	No
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	24%	76%
	<b>M</b>	22%	78%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	95%	5%
	<b>M</b>	95%	5%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	85%	15%
	<b>M</b>	82%	18%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	94%	6%
	<b>M</b>	94%	6%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	93%	7%
	<b>M</b>	92%	8%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 3** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo A a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?

En esta parte del cuestionario, se preguntó si los participantes consideraban que las personas grabadas dominaban o no el inglés, según las versiones presentadas de las grabaciones. Por lo expuesto en la tabla 3, las grabaciones del inglés recibieron el mayor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las grabaciones masculinas (95%) como para las femeninas (95%). A estas les siguen de cerca las grabaciones con ACinter, con un 94% de afirmación para las voces masculinas y femeninas, y las grabaciones con ACintra, con un 93% de afirmación para las voces masculinas y un 92% de afirmación para las voces femeninas. En cuarto lugar, se encuentran las grabaciones con AClex, que recibieron respuestas afirmativas en un 85% (voces masculinas) y un 82% (voces femeninas) de los casos. En último lugar, las grabaciones del español recibieron el menor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del inglés. La mayoría de las respuestas a la pregunta fueron negativas: 76% para las voces masculinas y 78% para las voces femeninas.

Se llevaron a cabo pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar las respuestas afirmativas y negativas sobre el dominio del español y del inglés de los hablantes de las grabaciones para el grupo A. La tabla 4 exhibe las comparaciones que resultaron en significancia estadística.

<b>Grupo A: Buen dominio del español versus buen dominio del inglés</b>			
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del español $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 226.3, p < .00001$	
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del español $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 252.9, p < .00001$	
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 163.7, p < .00001$	
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 140.2, p < .00001$	
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	n.s.	
	<b>M</b>	n.s.	
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	n.s.	
	<b>M</b>	n.s.	
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 11.0, p = .000915$	
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 8.2, p = .004225$	

**Tabla 4** Pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar respuestas del grupo A sobre dominio del español y del inglés

Cuando los participantes escuchaban grabaciones en español, las asociaban con buen dominio del español con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés. También ocurría lo contrario: cuando los participantes escuchaban grabaciones en inglés, las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del es

<b>Grupo A: ¿Ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?</b>			
		<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	100%	0%
	<b>M</b>	99%	1%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	89%	11%
	<b>M</b>	91%	9%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	96%	4%
	<b>M</b>	97%	3%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	93%	7%
	<b>M</b>	92%	8%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	92%	8%
	<b>M</b>	93%	7%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 5** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo A a la pregunta: ¿ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?

pañol. El resultado más interesante, sin embargo, es que cuando los participantes escuchaban grabaciones con ACintra, las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del español. En otras palabras, este grupo de participantes reconoce que hace falta tener un dominio elevado del inglés para poder producir las ACintra.

La tabla 5 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre la familiaridad de los participantes con personas que hablen como las de las grabaciones del MGT.

En esta parte del cuestionario, se preguntó si los participantes habían escuchado a las personas en PR hablar de forma similar a las personas que grabaron las cinco versiones del texto del correo electrónico. La tabla 5 exhibe que los porcentajes más altos de respuestas afirmativas se le otorgaron a las grabaciones masculinas y femeninas en español (100% y 99% de respuestas afirmativas, respectivamente). Siguen las grabaciones con los tres tipos de alternancia de códigos. Las grabaciones con AClex recibieron respuestas afirmativas en un 96% para las voces masculinas y en un 97% para las voces femeninas. Aquellas con ACinter y ACintra recibieron respuestas afirmativas casi idénticas: para la primera, 93% para las voces masculinas y 92% para las voces femeninas; para la segunda, 92% para las voces masculinas y 93% para las voces femeninas. Las grabaciones en inglés recibieron respuestas afirmativas en un 89% para las voces masculinas y en un 91% para las voces femeninas.

La tabla 6 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre si los participantes hablan como las personas de las grabaciones del MGT.

Grupo A: ¿Habla usted como esta persona?			
		Sí	No
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	50%	50%
	<b>M</b>	50%	50%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	32%	68%
	<b>M</b>	39%	61%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	45%	55%
	<b>M</b>	42%	58%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	43%	57%
	<b>M</b>	39%	61%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	34%	66%
	<b>M</b>	35%	65%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 6** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo A a la pregunta: ¿habla usted como esta persona?

En esta parte del cuestionario, se preguntó si los participantes hablaban de forma similar a las personas que grabaron las cinco versiones del texto del correo electrónico. La tabla 6 muestra que los porcentajes son más variados que aquellos de las tres preguntas

anteriores. Los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas más altos corresponden a las grabaciones en español, aunque estas reciben solamente un 50% de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las voces masculinas como para las voces femeninas. Las grabaciones restantes recibieron porcentajes más altos de respuestas negativas. Las grabaciones de las voces masculinas y femeninas con AClex recibieron un 55% y un 58% de respuestas negativas, respectivamente. Las grabaciones en inglés y las grabaciones de ACinter y ACintra resultaron en porcentajes similares de respuestas negativas: 68% para las voces masculinas en inglés y 61% para las voces femeninas en inglés; 57% para las voces masculinas con ACinter y 61% para las voces femeninas con ACinter; 66% para las voces masculinas con ACintra y 65% para las voces femeninas con ACintra.

Se llevaron a cabo pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar las respuestas afirmativas y negativas sobre la similitud de las grabaciones con la forma en que se habla en PR y con la forma en que hablan los mismos participantes del grupo A. La tabla 7 exhibe las comparaciones que resultaron en significancia estadística.

<b>Grupo A: Similitud con habla de PR versus similitud con habla propia</b>		
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 143.2, p < .00001$
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 139.7, p < .00001$
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 146.2, p < .00001$
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 129.8, p < .00001$
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 141.9, p < .00001$
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 157.8, p < .00001$
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 124.0, p < .00001$
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 138.0, p < .00001$
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 159.3, p < .00001$
	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 440) = 161.8, p < .00001$

**Tabla 7** Pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar respuestas del grupo A sobre similitud con habla de PR y habla propia

Estos resultados muestran que la fuerza de asociación de las cinco versiones de las grabaciones con la forma de hablar de los residentes puertorriqueños era significativamente mayor que la de la asociación con la forma de hablar de los mismos participantes del grupo A.

### **Resultados del grupo B**

La tabla 8 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre el dominio del español de las personas masculinas y femeninas de las grabaciones del MGT.

<b>Grupo B: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?</b>			
		<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	95%	5%
	<b>M</b>	93%	7%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	21%	79%
	<b>M</b>	31%	69%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	78%	22%
	<b>M</b>	78%	22%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	90%	10%
	<b>M</b>	95%	5%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	74%	26%
	<b>M</b>	76%	24%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 8** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo B a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?

162 Como se ve en la tabla 8, las grabaciones del español recibieron el mayor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las grabaciones masculinas (95%) como para las femeninas (93%). A estas les siguen las grabaciones con ACinter, con un 90% de afirma-

<b>Grupo B: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?</b>			
		<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	16%	84%
	<b>M</b>	16%	84%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	98%	2%
	<b>M</b>	97%	3%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	76%	24%
	<b>M</b>	78%	22%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	93%	7%
	<b>M</b>	91%	1%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	90%	10%
	<b>M</b>	90%	10%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 9** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo B a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?

ción para las voces masculinas y un 95%, para las voces femeninas. En una posición intermedia, aparecen las respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del español a las grabaciones con AClex (78% para las voces masculinas y femeninas) y con ACintra (74% para las voces masculinas y 76% para las voces femeninas). En último lugar, las grabaciones del inglés recibieron el menor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del español. Incluso, las grabaciones tanto masculinas como femeninas recibieron porcentajes más altos de respuestas negativas: 79% para los hombres y 69% para las mujeres.

La tabla 9 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre el dominio del inglés de los hombres y las mujeres de las grabaciones del MGT.

Según la tabla 9, las grabaciones del inglés recibieron el mayor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas, tanto para las grabaciones masculinas (98%) como para las femeninas (97%). A estas les siguen de cerca las grabaciones con ACinter, con un 93% de afirmación para las voces masculinas y un 91% para las femeninas, y las grabaciones con ACintra, con un 90% de afirmación para las voces masculinas y femeninas. En cuarto lugar, se encuentran las grabaciones con AClex, que recibieron respuestas afirmativas en un 76% (voces masculinas) y un 78% (voces femeninas) de los casos. En último lugar, las grabaciones del español recibieron el menor porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del inglés. La mayoría de las respuestas a la pregunta fueron negativas: 84% tanto para las voces masculinas como para las femeninas.

Grupo B: Buen dominio del español versus buen dominio del inglés		
Español	H	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del español $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 73.8, p < .00001$
	M	n.s.
Inglés	H	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 72.4, p < .00001$
	M	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 53.9, p < .00001$
AClex	H	n.s.
	M	n.s.
ACinter	H	n.s.
	M	n.s.
ACintra	H	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 4.7, p = .029992$
	M	Porcentaje más alto para dominio del inglés $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 3.9, p = .049254$

**Tabla 10** Pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar respuestas del grupo B sobre dominio del español y del inglés

Se llevaron a cabo pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar las respuestas afirmativas y negativas sobre el dominio del español y del inglés de los hablantes de las grabaciones

para el grupo B. La tabla 10 exhibe las comparaciones que resultaron en significancia estadística.

Los resultados son muy parecidos a los que surgieron con el grupo A. Cuando los participantes escuchaban grabaciones masculinas en español, las asociaban con buen dominio del español con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés. Asimismo, cuando escuchaban grabaciones en inglés, las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del español. Finalmente, cuando los participantes escuchaban grabaciones con ACintra, las asociaban con buen dominio del inglés con una frecuencia significativamente mayor de lo que las asociaban con buen dominio del español. Al igual que el grupo A, el grupo B parece reconocer que hace falta tener un dominio elevado del inglés para poder producir las ACintra.

La tabla 11 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre la familiaridad de los participantes con personas que hablen como las de las grabaciones del MGT.

<b>Grupo B: ¿Ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?</b>			
		<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	<b>H</b>	100%	0%
	<b>M</b>	100%	0%
<b>Inglés</b>	<b>H</b>	86%	14%
	<b>M</b>	91%	9%
<b>AClex</b>	<b>H</b>	98%	2%
	<b>M</b>	100%	0%
<b>ACinter</b>	<b>H</b>	98%	2%
	<b>M</b>	100%	0%
<b>ACintra</b>	<b>H</b>	100%	0%
	<b>M</b>	98%	2%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 11** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo B a la pregunta: ¿ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?

La tabla 11 exhibe que los porcentajes más altos de respuestas afirmativas se le otorgaron a las grabaciones masculinas y femeninas en español (100% de respuestas afirmativas). También recibieron porcentajes muy altos de respuestas afirmativas las grabaciones con los tres tipos de alternancia. En los tres casos, AClex, ACinter y ACintra, las grabaciones recibieron respuestas afirmativas en un 100% y en un 98%, ya fuera para las voces masculinas o las voces femeninas. Las grabaciones en inglés recibieron los menores porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas, aunque todavía altas—un 86% para las voces masculinas y un 91% para las voces femeninas.

Grupo B: ¿Habla usted como esta persona?			
		Sí	No
Español	<b>H</b>	66%	34%
	<b>M</b>	57%	47%
Inglés	<b>H</b>	5%	95%
	<b>M</b>	9%	91%
AClex	<b>H</b>	26%	74%
	<b>M</b>	28%	72%
ACinter	<b>H</b>	29%	71%
	<b>M</b>	29%	71%
ACintra	<b>H</b>	7%	93%
	<b>M</b>	12%	88%

Nota: H: grabaciones con voces masculinas  
M: grabaciones con voces femeninas

**Tabla 12** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas del grupo B a la pregunta: ¿habla usted como esta persona?

La tabla 12 presenta los resultados obtenidos de la pregunta sobre si los participantes hablan como las personas de las grabaciones del MGT. La tabla 12 presenta porcentajes más variados que aquellos de las tres tablas anteriores. Los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas más altos corresponden a las grabaciones en español, aunque estas reciben solamente un 66% de respuestas afirmativas para las voces masculinas y un 57% para las voces femeninas. Para las demás grabaciones queda evidenciado que predominan las

Grupo B: Similitud con habla de PR versus similitud con habla propia			
Español	<b>H</b>	n.s.	
Inglés	<b>M</b>	n.s.	
	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 76.7, p < .00001$	
AClex	<b>M</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 79.5, p < .00001$	
	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 64.6, p < .00001$	
ACinter	<b>M</b>	n.s.	
	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 59.7, p < .00001$	
ACintra	<b>M</b>	n.s.	
	<b>H</b>	Porcentaje más alto para habla de PR $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 87.1, p < .00001$	

**Tabla 13** Pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar respuestas del grupo B sobre similitud con habla de PR y habla propia

respuestas negativas. Los participantes niegan hablar como se habla en las grabaciones en inglés, en un 95% de los casos para las voces masculinas y en un 91% de los casos para las voces femeninas. Sus respuestas negativas también son bastante elevadas para las grabaciones con ACintra: 93% para las voces masculinas y 88% para las voces femeninas. En último lugar, se encuentran las respuestas negativas hacia las grabaciones con AClex (74% para las voces masculinas y 72% para las voces femeninas) y ACinter (71% para las voces masculinas y femeninas).

Se llevaron a cabo pruebas de chi-cuadrado para comparar las respuestas afirmativas y negativas sobre la similitud de las grabaciones con la forma en que se habla en PR y con la forma en que hablan los mismos participantes del grupo B. La tabla 13 presenta las comparaciones que resultaron en significancia estadística.

Estos resultados muestran que la fuerza de asociación de cuatro de las cinco versiones de las grabaciones—exceptuando el español—con la forma de hablar de los residentes puertorriqueños era significativamente mayor que la de la asociación con la forma de hablar de los mismos participantes del grupo B. En cuanto al español, los participantes relacionan las grabaciones con la forma de hablar en PR y con su propia forma de hablar.

## Discusión

En esta sección se retoman los resultados expuestos en la sección de Resultados y se discuten de forma comparativa entre ambos grupos. La tabla 14 presenta los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas y negativas para cada grupo de participantes a la pregunta sobre el dominio del español.

Grupos A y B: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?				
	Grupo A		Grupo B	
	Sí	No	Sí	No
<b>Español</b>	96%	4%	94%	6%
<b>Inglés</b>	40%	60%	26%	74%
<b>AClex</b>	86%	14%	78%	22%
<b>ACinter</b>	92%	8%	93%	7%
<b>ACintra</b>	83%	17%	75%	25%

**14** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas de ambos grupos a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del español?

Las respuestas de ambos grupos a esta pregunta son similares. En ambos casos, como es de esperarse, consideran que las grabaciones en español son aquellas que evidencian el mejor dominio dicha lengua, y que las grabaciones en inglés son las que demuestran el menor dominio del español. En cuanto a las tres versiones de las grabaciones con AC, se ve que la ACinter es la que asocian con mayor dominio del español. Es decir, si las personas alternan sus lenguas, pero de forma que produzcan oraciones completas en

cada lengua, esto todavía representa para los participantes que esas personas dominan el español. Las grabaciones con AClex se asociaron con un dominio del español menor que el de las grabaciones con ACinter. A su vez, las grabaciones con ACintra se asociaron con un dominio del español menor que el de las grabaciones con AClex. Por lo tanto, si las personas alternan sus lenguas de forma más integrada, es decir, si insertan palabras o frases de una lengua dentro de oraciones en otra lengua, no se consideran hablantes con un dominio del español tan elevado. Aunque los patrones generales son parecidos en ambos grupos, los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas suelen ser menores en el grupo B. Estas opiniones exhiben claramente las ideologías puristas de separación de lenguas que conservan los participantes, sobre todo los del grupo B con menor dominio bilingüe.

La tabla 15 presenta los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas y negativas para cada grupo de participantes a la pregunta sobre el dominio del inglés.

Grupos A y B: ¿Tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?				
	Grupo A		Grupo B	
	Sí	No	Sí	No
<b>Español</b>	23%	77%	16%	84%
<b>Inglés</b>	95%	5%	98%	2%
<b>AClex</b>	84%	16%	77%	23%
<b>ACinter</b>	94%	6%	92%	8%
<b>ACintra</b>	93%	7%	90%	10%

**Tabla 15** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas de ambos grupos a la pregunta: ¿tiene esta persona buen dominio del inglés?

En este caso, se ven invertidos los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas asignados a las grabaciones en español y en inglés. Los participantes de ambos grupos asocian las grabaciones en inglés con el mayor dominio del inglés y las grabaciones en español con el menor dominio del inglés. Las respuestas afirmativas sobre el dominio del inglés para las grabaciones con AC se parecen a las de la pregunta anterior sobre el dominio del español. Nuevamente, entre las grabaciones con AC, la ACinter se asocia con el mayor dominio del inglés. Sin embargo, en esta ocasión, le sigue la ACintra con porcentajes bastante elevados. Luego, en tercer lugar, aparece la AClex con una asociación con el dominio del inglés menor. Por lo tanto, para estos participantes, el hecho de que las personas alternen frases de varias palabras u oraciones completas les muestra que tienen un alto dominio del inglés. No obstante, si las personas solo alternan palabras, no lo consideran necesariamente como una muestra de su dominio del inglés.

Este hallazgo es un reflejo de la situación sociolingüística de PR. Debido a la presencia del inglés en el archipiélago, muchas personas usan anglicismos o alternancias léxicas del inglés en su expresión oral en español; esto no significa, sin embargo, que esas personas tengan un alto nivel de dominio del inglés. Los participantes de este estudio

muestran, a través de sus respuestas, que son conscientes de esto. En el caso de esta pregunta, se repitió el mismo patrón de la pregunta anterior, según la que los participantes del grupo B generaron porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas hacia la AC menores

<b>Grupos A y B: ¿Ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?</b>				
	<b>Grupo A</b>		<b>Grupo B</b>	
	<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	100%	0%	100%	0%
<b>Inglés</b>	90%	10%	89%	11%
<b>AClex</b>	97%	3%	99%	1%
<b>ACinter</b>	93%	7%	99%	1%
<b>ACintra</b>	93%	7%	99%	1%

**Tabla 16** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas de ambos grupos a la pregunta: ¿ha escuchado a la gente hablar como esta persona en PR?

que los del grupo A, lo que demuestra que tienen opiniones menos positivas hacia dicha práctica bilingüe: no la asocian con el dominio del español ni del inglés al mismo nivel que los participantes del grupo A, que tienen un mayor dominio bilingüe y que tienden a usar la AC en su propia expresión lingüística.

La tabla 16 presenta los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas y negativas para cada grupo de participantes a la pregunta sobre la familiaridad de los participantes con personas en PR que hablen como las de las grabaciones. Basado en los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas a esta pregunta, se ve que los participantes están familiarizados con todas las versiones de las grabaciones del MGT. Afirman haber escuchado a personas hablar como las de las grabaciones en un 85% de los casos, como mínimo. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas exceden el 90%. Por lo tanto, según estos participantes, en PR conviven personas que utilizan solo el español o solamente el inglés, al igual que personas que alternan sus lenguas de diversas maneras. Curiosamente, ambos grupos de participantes parecen no notar diferencias en la frecuencia con la que se usan los tres tipos de AC en PR, ya que las tres versiones de grabaciones

<b>Grupos A y B: ¿Habla usted como esta persona?</b>				
	<b>Grupo A</b>		<b>Grupo B</b>	
	<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sí</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Español</b>	50%	50%	62%	38%
<b>Inglés</b>	36%	64%	7%	93%
<b>AClex</b>	44%	56%	27%	73%
<b>ACinter</b>	41%	59%	29%	71%
<b>ACintra</b>	35%	65%	10%	90%

**Tabla 17** Porcentaje de respuestas afirmativas y negativas de ambos grupos a la pregunta: ¿habla usted como esta persona?

con AC reciben porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas muy similares. Se puede recalcar, también, que, en ambos casos, las grabaciones en inglés son las que reciben los porcentajes más bajos de respuestas afirmativas, aunque la diferencia es leve.

La tabla 17 presenta los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas y negativas para cada grupo de participantes a la pregunta sobre si los participantes mismos hablan como las personas de las grabaciones.

En comparación con los resultados de las tres preguntas anteriores, en esta cuarta pregunta los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas se reducen notablemente. Los participantes del grupo A responden que hablan de manera similar a las grabaciones con AClex y a las grabaciones en español. Los participantes del grupo B solo hablan de manera similar a las grabaciones en español. Estas son las únicas grabaciones para ambos grupos que reciben porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas que sobrepasan el 50%. Las demás grabaciones—ACinter, ACintra e inglés para el grupo A y los tres tipos de AC y el inglés para el grupo B—no reflejan la forma de hablar de los participantes. Al enfocarse en los porcentajes reducidos de respuestas afirmativas, se ve que, por un lado, para el grupo A la ACinter es levemente más usado que el inglés, y en último lugar, aparece la ACintra. Por otro lado, para el grupo B, la ACinter y la AClex son un poco más frecuentes en su expresión que la ACintra y el inglés. Para ambos grupos, entonces, la expresión monolingüe en inglés y la ACintra, la cual, según estudios previos (Poplack, 1980; Torres & Potowski, 2016), implica el mayor dominio de las lenguas involucradas, son poco frecuentes o casi nulas.

Estos hallazgos llaman la atención porque, en primer lugar, se esperaba que la AClex recibiera porcentajes más altos de respuestas afirmativas debido a su predominancia en la expresión lingüística en PR. En segundo lugar, se esperaba que la ACinter recibiera los porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas más reducidos, debido a que no se ha documentado este tipo de AC como uno de los más utilizados en las comunidades puertorriqueñas bilingües de español-inglés. Es posible que los participantes no perciban con exactitud las diferencias entre los distintos tipos de AC. También es posible que haya otros aspectos lingüísticos de las grabaciones del MGT (e.g., pronunciación, tono de voz, vocabulario, velocidad de habla, etc.) en que se hayan fijado los participantes al contestar las preguntas del cuestionario. Aunque se trató de controlar lo más posible las características de las grabaciones masculinas y femeninas, es imposible saber con certeza que no hubiera otros factores lingüísticos influyentes en las respuestas de los participantes.

## Conclusión

Este estudio—que forma parte de una investigación más amplia sobre el uso de la AC en PR y las actitudes asociadas a dicha práctica bilingüe—examinó específicamente las respuestas a cuatro preguntas binarias de un cuestionario que formaba parte de un MGT. Los participantes se dividieron en dos grupos: uno con más dominio bilingüe que solía

alternar sus lenguas con frecuencia (grupo A) y otro con menos dominio bilingüe que no solía alternar sus lenguas (grupo B). De los resultados obtenidos en las respuestas a las cuatro preguntas examinadas, se pueden resaltar los siguientes. Los participantes del grupo A presentan porcentajes de respuestas afirmativas más elevadas que los del grupo B con respecto a las grabaciones con AC, es decir, sus respuestas son más positivas con respecto a esta práctica bilingüe. En lo que concierne el dominio lingüístico, ambos grupos asocian la ACinter con mayor dominio del español y del inglés que la AClex y la ACintra, evidenciando sus ideologías puristas de separación de las lenguas. Además, aunque reconocen que en PR residen personas que hablan de una diversidad de formas a lo largo de un continuo que va desde el español monolingüe hasta el inglés monolingüe, con diferentes grados de AC entre medio, también afirman que, por su parte, suelen comunicarse en español o con AClex.

La limitación principal de esta investigación se relaciona con las características de las grabaciones. Aunque se controlaron lo más posible las características acústicas de las grabaciones, es posible que los participantes hayan percibido diferencias entre ellas que influyeran en sus respuestas a las preguntas del cuestionario. Aunque se intentó que la única diferencia entre las grabaciones fuera la versión—monolingüe o con AC—, puede ser que otros rasgos como la pronunciación de algunos sonidos, el volumen o la velocidad de habla de las voces grabadas, haya jugado un papel en las respuestas de los participantes. Esto podría auscultarse por medio de breves entrevistas luego del MGT, en que se les pregunte a los participantes sobre las diferencias que percibieron entre las grabaciones o sobre aspectos de las grabaciones que les llamaron la atención. Este estudio también tiene la limitación de solo incluir una muestra de participantes universitarios. Ya que en PR existe un rango tan amplio de dominio lingüístico, es importante integrar a participantes de diferentes edades, regiones y sectores sociales, de forma que se puedan obtener resultados más representativos de la población puertorriqueña completa.

No obstante, a pesar de estas limitaciones, los hallazgos aquí reportados son reveladores de las actitudes lingüísticas hacia la AC de los estudiantes universitarios puertorriqueños con diferentes niveles de dominio bilingüe. Con certeza, sirven para complementar los hallazgos de las publicaciones previas sobre la misma investigación (Guzzardo Tamargo et al. 2018 & Guzzardo Tamargo et al. 2021). Es importante reconocer que las cuatro preguntas examinadas en este estudio ausultan más directamente las opiniones de los participantes que las preguntas de escala Likert examinadas en las publicaciones previas, por lo que los participantes son más conscientes de las respuestas que proveen. Este tipo de información es valiosa y debe tomarse en cuenta junto con aquella que se obtiene por medio de recursos más indirectos.

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# **PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS BILINGUALISM AND CODESWITCHING IN PUERTO RICO: THE EFFECT OF AGE AND CODESWITCHING PRACTICES**

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## **Abstract**

The practice of alternating from one language to another within one conversation or stretch of discourse, known as codeswitching (CS), has been a topic of debate for years with some people embracing it and others feeling strong distaste towards the practice. This study considers the controversy in the context of Puerto Rico, a United States colony, where bilingualism and codeswitching are related to culture, identity, and, in some cases, political ideology. This study describes and analyzes the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of adult Puerto Ricans regarding bilingualism and codeswitching in Puerto Rico. It is aimed to help to answer the questions: How is CS perceived in Puerto Rico? Do these perceptions vary depending on the participants' age and CS practices? The research method was mixed with quantitative and qualitative data from a Likert-style questionnaire, followed by interviews of a reduced sample of participants. The data were submitted to chi-square analyses and statistical differences were found based on the age and CS practices of participants.

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**Key terms:** codeswitching, bilingualism, language attitudes, identity, Puerto Rico

## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1. Bilingualism in Puerto Rico***

Puerto Rico is an archipelago and an unincorporated United States' territory. As such, Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship and are under the rule of the U.S. Congress (Garrett, 2022). However, Puerto Ricans are not allowed to vote in congressional elections; they vote instead for representatives of the local government, whose authority over "matters of internal governance" was recognized by Congress in 1950 (Garrett, 2022). Although Spanish is the native language of Puerto Rico, the aforementioned political context of the archipelago has resulted in the acquisition of English as a second language, to

varying degrees of proficiency. According to the United States Census Bureau (2022), an estimate of 4.7% of the Puerto Rican population speaks only English at home and 95% speaks Spanish at home. However, an estimated 20% of the Puerto Ricans who speak Spanish at home can also speak English very well (United States Census Bureau, 2022). The remaining 75% of Puerto Ricans report that they speak English less than “very well.” Based on these data alone, it is unclear what the exact level of English proficiency is in the archipelago because the 75% who speak English less than “very well” might not speak English at all, or might speak English considerably well but evaluate their own English skills as insufficient. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that a Spanish-English bilingual community exists in Puerto Rico.

The bilingual community in Puerto Rico has been bolstered by different factors, such as English instruction in Puerto Rican schools, migration, and entertainment/internet content consumption. English is a mandatory course in all schools in Puerto Rico. The quality and effectiveness of the English classes in public schools has been brought into question (Angrist et al., 2008; Pousada, 2000) and can vary from one municipality to the next. Nevertheless, these classes serve to guarantee that, at least during school hours, Puerto Ricans are exposed to English from an early age. Migration patterns are another contributing factor to the propagation of the English language in the archipelago. Puerto Ricans have migrated to the United States in increasing numbers throughout the decades, establishing themselves most frequently in New York and more recently in Florida; however, populations are sizeable in other states as well. Many of them eventually return, either temporarily or permanently (Duany, 2017). These return migrants bring with them the language practices they acquired during their time away from Puerto Rico. Finally, the entertainment industry and online communities play a significant role in the acquisition of English in Puerto Rico. As in many other countries, Puerto Ricans are exposed to English-language music, movies, and television.

In 1998, Fayer et al. published data collected through questionnaires about the functions of English in Puerto Rico; some years later, Pousada (2000) published the results of interviews with Puerto Rican bilinguals regarding the factors involved in creating competent bilinguals. Participants in both studies reported consuming English-language media, such as radio, cable television, magazines and newspapers. While browsing online content, Puerto Ricans are also exposed to English. One of the interviewees in Pérez Casas’s (2008) doctoral dissertation mentions that while his generation was the “MTV generation”—further highlighting the role of the entertainment industry in bilingualism—younger generations are much more influenced by YouTube and Google. The impression is that online spaces are mostly an English domain. As the use of technology and the internet has increased over the years, so has exposure to English.

These factors have created an environment where Spanish and English are in constant contact. As stated before, this contact has resulted in the emergence of a Spanish-English bilingual community, although the level of bilingual proficiency may vary within Puerto

Rico and some municipalities have higher percentages of English-speaking adults than others (Pousada, 2010). It has also brought about interesting linguistic phenomena, such as lexical borrowing and codeswitching. Lexical borrowing in the archipelago is evidenced by the work of researchers such as Cortés et al. (2005) and Bullock et al. (2016), which are studies that have documented and examined the use of loanwords in fast food restaurants and media outlets, respectively. Evidence of early codeswitching practices in Puerto Rico has been put forth by researchers like Pousada (2000) and Pérez Casas (2008), whose study sample of Puerto Rican bilinguals in Puerto Rico reported the use of codeswitching. More recent research demonstrates continued codeswitching practices in the archipelago (Acosta-Santiago, 2020; Guzzardo Tamargo et al., 2019; Guzzardo Tamargo & Vélez Avilés, 2017; Morales Lugo, 2019).

### **1.2. Codeswitching (CS)**

Codeswitching, a term coined and first defined by Uriel Weinrich (1953), describes the linguistic phenomenon where a bilingual or multilingual speaker changes from one language to another when producing speech or writing. As speakers move from one environment to another (e.g., from work to home), they may change the language they use to communicate more effectively or fit in better in that new environment. That is situational codeswitching (Cheng & Butler, 1989); it occurs in multilingual societies and is commonly practiced by speakers whose native language is not the dominant language in their country of residence (Timm, 1975). Speakers may also switch languages within the same discourse or conversation when their interlocutor or intended audience is also bilingual, which is referred to as conversational codeswitching (Gumperz, 1977). The latter is the form of codeswitching that is the focus of the present study.

The simplest type of CS takes the form of single-word insertion, also known as lexical codeswitching. It is the use of a word from a language that is different from the main language being spoken. Example 1 illustrates this CS type.

(1) *Me encantó el performance de esa muchacha.*

‘I loved that girl’s performance.’ (all translations are by the present author, unless specified otherwise)

Lexical codeswitching (lexCS) is different from lexical borrowing (or use of loanwords)—although, it is argued that borrowing is the result of lexCS and is, therefore, not a separate phenomenon (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Loanwords incur phonological, and sometimes graphical, adaptations to fit in the new language system; for example, the word *sándwich* in Spanish is an English loanword. Because they are highly integrated into the language, loanwords are not considered CS (Poplack, 1980). Another criterion that has been used to distinguish borrowing from CS is frequency of use (Myers-Scotton 1993), with particular instances of lexCS having a lower frequency than loanwords.

Codeswitching is also categorized as inter-sentential and intra-sentential depending on where it takes place in the utterance (Poplack, 1980; Muyken, 2000). A speaker can switch languages between sentences or clause boundaries, meaning they may be speaking in one language and then say a sentence in another language. Poplack (1980) labels this inter-sentential codeswitching (interCS). This type of CS is found in example 2.

(2) *Estoy muy cansada.* I'm going to take a nap.

'I'm very tired. I'm going to take a nap.'

When a speaker changes languages within sentence or clause boundaries, it is referred to as intra-sentential codeswitching (intraCS). IntraCS could mean the insertion of a word or entire phrases (be it noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial or prepositional phrases). This is presented in example 3.

(3) I can't today, *pero podemos salir mañana* after work.

'I can't today, but we can go out tomorrow after work.'

Codeswitching has been an object of steady linguistic research since the late twentieth century (Benson, 2001). Theoretical research on CS has focused on developing linguistic models that aim to describe the production process, the structural forms, and the rules and constraints of codeswitched speech (Lederberg & Morales, 1984; Poplack, 1980, 1981; Sankoff, 1998; Timm, 1975). Additionally, researchers with interests in theory have investigated bilingual CS competence (Lederberg & Morales, 1984; Toribio, 2001) to determine how bilinguals acquire the CS principles and constraints that guide their codeswitched production, while also allowing them to make acceptability judgements regarding the codeswitched speech of other bilinguals. On the other hand, sociolinguistic research has been conducted to discern the extralinguistic factors that affect CS, including, but not limited to, age, gender, overt and covert prestige, membership in certain communities, the desire to indicate certain nuances—intimacy, humor, politeness—in speech, the sociopragmatic functions of CS, and language attitudes associated with different types of CS (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Montes-Alcalá, 2016).

### **1.3. Attitudinal research on codeswitching**

Language attitudes are the perceptions and opinions of a speech community regarding any language variety and its speakers, and they are of interest as a research topic because they influence language behavior (Garret, 2010). Negative attitudes towards one language variety may stigmatize it and sway speakers to repress it in favor of another more prestigious one. This can mean that speakers change their own language and speech patterns, consciously and unconsciously; they may also try to force others to change what language they speak and how they speak it, either through social rejection of their peers or through systemic policies implemented by the government. An example of this situation is Ireland, where English became the majority language after the English monarchs attacked and nearly eradicated the use of the Irish language through their post-conquest policies and hostile discourse (O'Neill, 2021). Awareness of evolving

linguistic attitudes can therefore aid in describing and predicting linguistic trends and changes within a speech community.

Historically, general attitudes towards CS have been negative (Bentahila, 1983; Chana & Romaine, 1984); the recurrent discourse shared by language researchers and speakers alike was that CS is a sign of language deficiency and that languages should be kept separate, i.e., speakers should use one language at a time, to maintain language integrity and “purity” (Sánchez, 1987). However, with more study, researchers have, for the most part, adopted a more neutral, if not positive, view regarding CS. CS is now accepted as a natural phenomenon and is even lauded as a sophisticated and strategic language practice that denotes high levels of language proficiency (Ching & Butler, 1989; Poplack, 1980; Woolard, 1998). However, among speakers, CS remains a controversial phenomenon and both inter- and intra-speaker attitudes are varied and complex.

Dewaele and Wei (2014) researched attitudes towards CS among monolingual and bilingual language users from across the world through an online survey. The largest group of participants came from the United States and Britain. They evaluated individual differences in attitudes based on the following variables: personality, age, gender, linguistic background, and CS practices. Dewaele and Wei (2014) managed to find correlations between all these variables and language attitudes toward CS. Most relevant for the present discussion are the correlations between linguistic background and CS practices and positive attitudes towards CS. A high frequency of CS use correlated with more positive attitudes toward CS. This was particularly the case with speakers who used CS in a personal context (with family and friends). CS use in the work environment, however, had a lower correlation to positive CS attitudes. Linguistic background was also important when accounting for variation in language attitudes, especially in terms of age of acquisition and migration patterns: early bilinguals and multilinguals had more positive attitudes than late bilinguals, as did people who lived in a foreign-language country for more than one year versus those who did not. Dewaele and Wei’s (2014) study contributes knowledge regarding the individual variation in language attitudes, highlighting the effect of linguistic background and current CS practices.

Guzzardo et al. (2018) carried out an attitudinal study with university students between the ages of 18 and 30. They used a matched guised test to examine the participants’ perceptions of different types of CS (lexCS, interCS, and intraCS). After having participants listen to recordings of the same speakers using only Spanish, only English, and the three different types of CS, the researchers administered a survey where the participant had to answer whether they agreed or disagreed with certain attributes ascribed to the speakers in the different recordings. The attributes were related to personality (conceit, kindness, geekiness, and youth), socioeconomic status (cultured, high socioeconomic status, low socioeconomic status, private school, from the city, and from the countryside), and ethnicity/identity (bilingual, pro-statehood, white, Nuyorican, and true Puerto Rican). While the participants in this study seemed to disagree overall with the

negative attitudes and stereotypes regarding CS in Puerto Rico, when examined closely, the results show that participants are more likely to associate English and CS with conceitedness, geekiness, high socioeconomic class, private schooling, the metropolitan area, whiteness, and the pro-statehood political party (Guzzardo Tamargo et al., 2018). Acosta-Santiago (2020) researched Puerto Rican attitudes toward CS and compared it to the attitudes displayed by the Miami Cuban population, the latter being the control group. In the work of Acosta-Santiago (2020), participants answered surveys about the perceived usage (whether they would say the tokens themselves) and appropriateness (whether the tokens were appropriate or not) of codeswitched utterances. There was a correlation between the perceived usage of CS and the appropriateness for both the Puerto Rican and the Miami Cuban groups, meaning that people who use CS are more likely to have positive attitudes toward it. However, although the perceived usage average was the same for both groups, Puerto Ricans' average appropriateness score was lower than Miami Cubans' appropriateness score. This indicates that, overall, Puerto Ricans' attitudes toward CS may be less positive than Miami Cubans' attitudes toward CS. Acosta-Santiago (2020) also found correlations between age and CS perceived usage and appropriateness scores. These results showed that the younger generation (age 18-30) both used CS more and had more positive attitudes toward CS than the other age groups (31-43, 44-56, and 57+).

The participants in Acosta-Santiago (2020) also answered direct questions about CS. The results showed conflicting opinions among Puerto Ricans regarding CS in the archipelago. When asked if they thought combining Spanish and English in speech was improper, 43% said no, 32% said it was improper, and the remaining 25% said they were unsure (p. 42). These responses were accompanied by comments from the participants. Some of the positive comments stated that CS was representative of the Puerto Rican culture and that CS aids communicating different meanings more than using just one language. Negative comments included remarks such as the following: "languages have to be respected" (p. 47) and "combining languages denotes not having your own identity and not being cultured in the language" (p. 47), which shows that CS is still perceived by some people as language corruption, language deficiency, and even lack of identity and culture. Some comments also demonstrated intra-speaker variation: depending on the context, CS could be proper or improper. For example, some comments suggested that CS would be improper in formal situations (p. 45).

Regarding identity, Mazak (2012) conducted an ethnographic study of the relationship between language and identity in rural Puerto Rico. The participants of this study were observed over a period of four months, and the data collected consisted of field notes, analytic memos, interviews, and audio recordings. In a group exchange between the researcher and Pedro and Migdaly – two 8th graders – Migdaly told Pedro, who was practicing English, that if he wanted to speak English, he should find himself a gringo. Mazak (2012) argues that this statement carries an implicit belief that Puerto Ricans should

not speak English with other Puerto Ricans and if, like Pedro, a Puerto Rican speaks English they are betraying their Puerto Rican identity. Another participant in the study was Lico—a physical education teacher and a return immigrant who was proficient in English—who spoke English in a public setting where everyone was using Spanish. This was seen by the other adults as showing off.

The idea the Puerto Ricans should speak Spanish is not exclusive to Puerto Rican monolinguals or to those with low English proficiency like Migdaly (Mazak, 2012). In a more recent study, Morales Lugo (2019) observed students from two high schools—one private and one public—and their bilingual speech practices. Morales Lugo observed that some of the participants who used English frequently believed there was a limit to the acceptable use of English. If you exceed that limit by speaking English “all the time,” you are perceived as someone “cocky” or “snobby” who puts aside their Puerto Rican identity in favor of the American or “gringo” identity.

## 2. The present study

The present study aims to describe current CS practices and attitudes among Puerto Rican adults 18 years old and older with varying degrees of bilingual proficiency and to compare those practices and attitudes based on the participants’ membership in different subgroups. The participants were post stratified into subgroups according to their age, linguistic background (level and age of English acquisition), and CS practices (whether or not they used CS, and how frequently it occurs). These three factors were the independent variables that were used to compare individual attitudes towards CS. The research questions were the following.

1. How common are bilingualism and CS in Puerto Rico? Are bilingualism and CS more or less common at present than in previous years?
2. Do Puerto Ricans have positive or negative perceptions and attitudes towards CS? What positive or negative perceptions and attitudes do Puerto Ricans have toward CS?
3. Do CS practices and attitudes differ across generations? If so, how?
4. Do CS practices affect a speaker’s perceptions and attitudes toward CS? If so, how?

Based on the findings of previous studies, the following predictions were offered for each of the research questions.

1. Bilingualism and CS use are more common and more accepted at present than in previous years.
2. Although most participants have positive attitudes toward CS, some negative perceptions of CS, such as purist language ideals, may still be present.
3. CS practices and attitudes will vary across age subgroups and younger participants will codeswitch more frequently and will be more accepting of CS overall.

4. CS practices will affect CS attitudes, specifically, bilingual speakers who frequently use CS will have more positive CS attitudes overall.

This study was designed to contribute to sociolinguistic attitudinal research by providing data on language attitude variation among speakers from different age groups and their respective linguistic practices. They all belonged to under-researched communities, namely the Puerto Rican monolingual and bilingual communities. Because it included participants from multiple regions, the study also provided data from participants outside of the San Juan metropolitan area, which is the most frequently researched demographic in Puerto Rico.

### **3. Methodology**

The research protocol for this study was reviewed and approved by the University of Puerto Rico's Institutional Review Board (*Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación*, CIPSHI). The authorization number is 2324-116.

#### **3.1. Participants**

The inclusion requirements for participating in this study, as stated on the recruitment flyers, were the following: the participant must have reported being at least 18 years old and have identified as being from Puerto Rico. Participants were considered to “be from Puerto Rico” if they had spent most (75% or more) of their life in Puerto Rico. Participants were post stratified according to three main independent variables: age, bilingual proficiency (low, medium, high) and CS practice (no CS, some CS, a lot of CS).

A total of 24 people filled out of the questionnaire, and 22 participants were included in the final analysis. Two of the participants left many questions unanswered, so their results were not included in the quantitative analysis. The ages of the 22 participants ranged from 20-56 years. Ten of the participants (45%) were in their 20s, and eight participants (36%) were in their 30s. The remaining four participants were in their 40s (9%) and 50s (9%). A total of 13 of the participants (59%) were women, eight participants (36%) were men, and one (5%) was non-binary. Regarding formal education, 77% of the participants had obtained college degrees. Two of the participants were currently living in the United States although they are originally from Puerto Rico. The other 20 participants were from different parts of Puerto Rico. However, over half of the participants were from the northern region, and the San Juan metropolitan area was the most frequent answer (27% of participants).

The participant sample for the study was largely bilingual. 82% of the participants self-identified as “bilingual”, 5% self-identified as “somewhat bilingual,” and 14% did not identify as bilingual. 77% of the participants reported high English language proficiency, 14% reported medium proficiency, and 9% reported low proficiency. These percentages are consistent with the bilingual self-identification results. All bilingual participants were Spanish dominant, although some were much closer to balanced bilingualism than

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Men	8	36%
Women	13	59%
Non-binary	1	5%
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	10	45%
30-39	8	36%
40-49	2	9%
50-59	2	9%
<b>Highest Education Level Achieved</b>		
High school	3	14%
Some college	2	9%
Bachelor's	4	18%
Master's	10	45%
Doctorate	3	14%
<b>Place of residence</b>		
San Juan	6	27%
Las Piedras	3	14%
Hatillo	2	9%
Toa Alta	2	9%
United States	2	9%
Aibonito	1	5%
Carolina	1	5%
Luquillo	1	5%
Ponce	1	5%
San Sebastián	1	5%
Toa Baja	1	5%
Yabucoa	1	5%

**Table 1** Participants' demographic information

others. 73% of participants reported using CS in their daily life; 18% reported only some CS in their daily life, and 9% reported not using CS in their daily life.

<b>Bilingualism self-identification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bilingual	18	82%
Somewhat bilingual	1	5%
Non-bilingual	3	14%
<b>English language proficiency</b>		
Low (0-0.50)	2	9%
Medium (0.51-0.70)	3	14%
High (0.71-1)	17	77%
<b>Codeswitching practice</b>		
CS	16	73%
Some CS	4	18%
No CS	2	9%

**Table 2** Participants' language profile (questionnaire)

A subset of the participants (five total) completed the additional task—an interview—which is described in section 3.2. Two participants were men and three were women. Their ages ranged from 20 to 34. Two of them were self-identified bilinguals with high English proficiency and who reported CS regularly; one was a self-identified bilingual with high English proficiency, who reported CS only sometimes; one was a self-identified bilingual with medium proficiency who reported CS; and the last participant was not bilingual and, therefore, had low English proficiency and did not CS.

Bilingualism self-identification	Frequency	Percentage
Bilingual	4	80%
Non-bilingual	1	20%
<b>English language proficiency</b>		
Low (0-0.50)	1	20%
Medium (0.51-0.70)	1	20%
High (0.71-1)	3	60%
<b>Codeswitching practice</b>		
CS	3	60%
Some CS	1	20%
No CS	1	20%

**Table 2.1** Interview participants' language profile

### **3.2. Materials and procedure**

An online questionnaire was administered (in Spanish) to compile information regarding demographic data, linguistic background and language profile, language practices, and CS perceptions and attitudes. CS was referred to as Spanglish in the questionnaire because the latter is a colloquial term that was expected to be more familiar to participants than CS. The questionnaire was preceded by the informed consent form, which the participants read before choosing to continue with the questionnaire. They also created their own participant code using their initials. The questionnaire included 44 questions related to their linguistic background which were based on the Bilingual Language Profile (Birdsong et al., 2012). The researcher found it necessary to make the following adjustments: (1) adapt the wording of the questionnaire to everyday language in Puerto Rico and (2) adjust the amount and type of questions based on the study's objectives. The rest of the questionnaire was meant to obtain information regarding the participants' CS practices and opinions, as well as the opinions of those around them. Two open-ended questions prompted the participants to define what being bilingual and what Spanglish was to them. In addition, two close-ended questions prompted participants to report if they considered themselves bilingual and if they used Spanglish in their daily life. These questions were followed by the Likert scale section of the questionnaire. This section consisted of 39 Likert scale-style items for all the participants and 26 additional Likert

scale-style items only for the participants who reported using CS in their daily life. The participants evaluated each item as Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), or Strongly Agree (4). After each Likert item, a text box was included so the participants could expand on their responses, if they so desired. The questionnaire took approximately an hour to complete.

At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were asked if they were interested in being interviewed about the research topic. If they answered affirmatively, they would be asked to leave their email as contact information. A total of five participants were interviewed, one in person and four via Google Meet. The interviews were audio recorded using an iPad. The researcher was previously acquainted with one of the participants, but the other four were previously strangers. Nonetheless, the interview was carried out as naturally as possible. During the interview, participants were asked about their CS habits and the CS habits of people around them as well as their opinions regarding this phenomenon. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes on average.

### ***3.3. Data analysis***

Regarding the questionnaire, the responses to each Likert scale item were regrouped into two based on which side of the scale they fell: Agree or Disagree. The percentage of Disagree and Agree responses to each item was used to determine the prevailing perceptions and attitudes of the entire sample. Next, the participants were post stratified based on age. Because most participants were in their 20s and 30s, the participants were put in two age subgroups: 20-29 Group and 30+ Group; ten participants were placed in the first age subgroup, and 12 participants, in the second. The percentage of agreement versus disagreement in each subgroup was calculated and contrasted to find any possible differences between each subgroup. The data of the subgroups was imported into the SPSS statistical analysis package and analyzed using chi-square tests to see if any statistically significant differences regarding perceptions and attitudes arose based on age.

There were three subgroups regarding CS practice or lack thereof: CS Group, Some CS Group, and No CS Group. 16 participants stated that they use CS regularly in their daily life; four people stated that they use CS sometimes; and two people stated that they do not use CS at all. Because the three subgroups were disproportionate, the last two subgroups were merged into one subgroup. Once again, the percentage of agreement versus disagreement in each subgroup was calculated and contrasted to find any possible differences between each subgroup, and chi-square tests were also performed with SPSS to determine if any of the differences in perceptions and attitudes based on CS practice were statistically significant. With respect to the information obtained from the interviews, the participants' comments are integrated as a deeper discussion of the questionnaire results.

#### 4. Results and discussion

First, participants were asked to define “Spanglish,” the term used in place of CS in the questionnaire. Participants described it as mixing words from Spanish and English, mixing both languages, and alternating between both languages. Most of the responses defining Spanglish were neutral, such as “using both languages simultaneously,” “using words from both languages” and “just codeswitching.” However, a few included negative and positive sentiments. Participant FRP used the Puerto Rican word “*disparate*” to describe the phenomenon, which can mean that it is gibberish or incorrect use of language. Another participant stated that it is “laziness and/or ignorance when communicating.” On the more positive side of the spectrum, one participant stated that it is the “lovechild” of Spanish and English, and that although “everyone wants to hate it, it is part of our day-to-day.”

Among the 20 participants who said yes to using CS at least sometimes in their daily life, the most prevailing form of CS was lexCS, which was phrased as “I frequently use English words while speaking Spanish or vice versa.” The participants provided examples. Participant JMH mentioned using loanwords or Anglicisms. Participant ACR mentioned using career field related terminology in English; ACR stated: “my profession has words that would lose their original meaning if translated.” Participant ICR also mentioned that there are certain words or expressions that are difficult to translate. ICR also added that he uses lexCS when switching to more serious or severe topics, such as politics, academics, and law.

	Agree	Disagree
I frequently use English words while speaking Spanish or vice versa.	100%	0%
I frequently change languages between sentences.	85%	15%
I frequently change languages within the same sentence.	85%	15%

**Table 3** Types of CS

When it came to interCS and intraCS, some of the explanations about Anglicisms were repeated, so it is difficult to tell if the difference between the three types of CS was clear for all participants. One of the explanations provided by participant ACR attributed these types of CS to the need for fluidity. She stated, “you don’t want to stop the communication, and you’re speaking too fast to stop and translate something in your mind.” Participant ANMC stated that sometimes she wants to express herself using “the first word she can find.” This also alludes to the fluidity aspect. ICR once again brought to attention the topic of conversation as a deciding factor. He states that his CS happens more often when discussing an English-speaking celebrity or event. He provides a plausible explanation for this: “I probably regurgitate the content in the language I first consumed it.” Most participants do not perceive Puerto Rico as a bilingual country (59% disagreement). Participants explained that although there is a bilingual community in Puerto Rico, it is

not widespread enough to make that generalization. They do, however, perceive the use of English and CS to be common in PR. CS is perceived to be more common than just English, with 86% of agreement for CS in comparison to 54% of agreement for English. Participant AMPM stated that bilingualism may be found in specific places, but the main language used is Spanish. Participant ANMC explained her reason for disagreeing: “the use of Anglicisms does not necessarily make a country bilingual.” Participant ICR observes that most people acquire English out of necessity, not interest; so, if it is not necessary, they will not acquire it. FRP agrees that the prevalence of English hinges partially on necessity: “Depends on the job you have. A carpenter does not need English, a hotelier does.”

It is important to note that the participants who practiced CS were more likely to view Puerto Rico as a bilingual country. In fact, 56% of participants in the CS Group agreed with the premise. This contrasts with the Some/No CS Group whose members all (100%) disagreed. This difference proved to be statistically significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 5.712, p = .017$ .

Participants	PR is a bilingual country.		The use of English is common PR.		CS is common in PR.	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
<b>ALL</b>	41%	59%	54%	45%	86%	14%
20-29	50%	50%	50%	50%	90%	10%
30+	33%	58%	58%	42%	83%	17%
CS	56%	44%	56%	44%	81%	19%
Some/no CS	0%	100%	50%	50%	100%	0%

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**Table 4** Language practices in PR

English and CS are perceived to be more commonly used amongst younger people, particularly teenagers and individuals 20-40 (82% and 91% agreement, respectively). People aged 30+ were more likely to see CS as common among adults 40+ years old (50% split between agreement and disagreement), but people aged 20-29 perceived CS to be uncommon among adults 40+ years old (90% disagreement). This difference proved to be statistically significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 4.023, p = .045$ . Participants agreed that this phenomenon is more common in younger generations. FRP stated that it is more common among the generations born after the 1970s. RVJ stated that it seems to be more common among millennials than Gen X. YRA also agrees that it is more common among younger people; however, they made the concession that because of migration patterns some older people are good at English and use CS.

CS is common among teenagers.		CS is common among younger adults (20-40).		CS is common among older adults (40+).		
Participants	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL	82%	18%	91%	9%	32%	68%
20-29	90%	10%	90%	10%	10%	90%
30+	75%	25%	92%	8%	50%	50%
CS	81%	19%	94%	6%	31%	69%
No/Some CS	83%	17%	83%	17%	33%	67%

**Table 5** Perception of frequency of CS among different age subgroups

Participants perceive CS to be used more frequently by people in the metropolitan area (91% agreement), although they disagree that its use is limited to that region (64% agreement that it is used in all regions). Even though they agree it appears to be more frequent in the metropolitan area, some participants clarify that they are not knowledgeable enough about other regions to make that judgement. Other participants like AMPM mention that tourist spots are also places where English, and therefore CS, would probably increase among locals who must interact with English-speaking tourists. Participant YRA also highlights that there are people in rural areas outside of the metropolitan area who use English and CS because they were raised using the internet.

CS is used in the metro area.		CS is common in all parts of PR.		
Participants	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL	91%	9%	64%	36%
20-29	100%	0%	90%	10%
30+	83%	17%	75%	25%
CS	94%	6%	69%	31%
Some/no CS	83%	17%	50%	50%

**Table 5.1** Where is CS used?

CS was marginally attributed to people with a private education and high socioeconomic status with 52% agreement. Participants who disagreed recognized that people from “all walks of life,” as stated by participant RVJ, were bilingual and use CS. Even the participants who agreed did so conditionally by proceeding to explain that people from all socioeconomic backgrounds used CS. For example, participant FRP agreed with the premise, but he believed that it was contingent more on their direct and indirect contact with the United States and the United States media than on their financial background. This perspective was similar to participant YRA’s comment above regarding the correlation between the use of English and CS in rural areas and access to the internet.

Coupled with the fact that for the 20-29 Group there was 60% disagreement while in the 30+ Group there was 64% agreement, this result could indicate that the perception of English and CS as a trait of upper-class Puerto Ricans has been slowly phasing out among younger generations.

<b>CS is used by Puerto Ricans who received a private education or who have a high socioeconomic status.</b>		
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>ALL</b>	52%	48%
20-29	40%	60%
30+	64%	36%
CS	47%	53%
Some/no CS	67%	33%

**Table 6** CS and socioeconomic status

The participants displayed some positive attitudes toward CS. 77% of participants agreed that it is okay for people to use CS in PR. The participants aged 20-29 were more likely to agree with that premise (90% agreement) than the participants aged 30+ (67% agreement). This tendency did not prove statistically significant, but the difference based on the CS variable (CS group agreed 100%, but the Some/No CS Group disagreed 83%) was statistically significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 17.255, p = <0.001$ . 82% of participants agreed that CS is an acceptable way to communicate.

These sentiments were more common among the 20-29 Group and the CS Group. This difference was statistically significant for both the age variable  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 4.074, p = .044$ , and the CS usage variable,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 5.615, p = .018$ . Some of the participants stated that they do not mind CS if it is done with consideration of other people who might not be bilingual. Others add that the context is important; they are less accepting of CS in professional environments and other formal situations. They also do not think it should be used in writing. Some of the participants against CS, like participant FRP, indicated that “it sounds really ugly” and “we should aspire to speak correctly.” While also seen as acceptable, English had a lower percentage of acceptability than CS/Spanglish. The Some/No CS Group was the least accepting of English, and the 20-29 Group was split in half; meanwhile the 30+ Group agreed that English was acceptable by an overwhelming majority of 81%. The difference between the two age groups was not statistically significant, but the difference between the groups with different CS practices was significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 7.865, p = .005$ . Participants who previously expressed their acceptance of CS had a completely different perspective of the use of English (on its own). A few participants, such as YRA and FRP linked their rejection of English to their anti-colonialist beliefs. FRP stated that the only English that is acceptable is “Yankee go home;” YRA explained why they hate it when people use English in

		I think it is okay for people to use CS in PR		CS is an acceptable way to communicate.		I think it is okay for people to use English in Puerto Rico.	
Participants		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL		77%	23%	82%	18%	64%	36%
20-29		90%	10%	100%	0%	50%	50%
30+		67%	33%	58%	42%	75%	25%
CS		100%	0%	94%	6%	81%	19%
Some/no CS		17%	83%	50%	50%	17%	83%

**Table 7** General acceptability of English and CS in PR

		CS is not accepted in some situations		CS is appropriate in professional environments	
Participants		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL		91%	9%	45%	55%
20-29		80%	20%	50%	50%
30+		100%	0%	42%	58%
CS		88%	13%	50%	50%
Some/no CS		100%	0%	33%	67%

**Table 7.1** Appropriateness of CS

Puerto Rico: “Opposing English being spoken in our territory, which has been colonized by an English-speaking power, is anti-colonial resistance.” Another participant, RVJ—who found the use of English acceptable—recognized English as a colonizing language but pointed out that Spanish was also a colonizing language. He stated: “If we prohibited the use of the language of an empire/colonizer, we’d all be speaking Arawak.”

Although overall participants agreed that using CS was acceptable, there was a tendency to believe that people should speak one language at a time. This is particularly true among the 30+ Group and the Some/No CS Group. While the result of all participants was 59% disagreement with the idea that languages should be used separately, the 30+ Group showed 58% agreement, and the Some/No CS Group showed 83% agreement. The 20-29 Group and the CS Group disagreed by 80% and 75%, respectively. This difference was statistically significant for the CS Group vs the Some/No CS group,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 22) = 6.142, p = .013$ . The difference among the two age groups was not statistically significant. Among the participants who disagree with separating the two languages, RVJ stated that “codeswitching is natural,” and YRA labeled the ideal of separating languages as purist and arrogant. Meanwhile, participant ECP believed that CS can become

a “crutch” that hinders the improvement of vocabulary, and ANMC agree that they should be used separately, but only “depending on the context.”

When it comes to CS being seen as a deficiency of skills in one of the languages, participants disagreed by 91%. 100% of those who use CS disagreed, whereas in the Some/No CS group 67% disagreed and 33% agreed. This difference was statistically significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 5.867, p = .015$ . Participants also disagreed that people use CS to brag or show off by 73%. This shows that, although the majority rejected that perception of CS users, there was a tendency to view the use of CS by Puerto Rican bilinguals as a form of bragging. Participant YRA, who agreed that using CS can be a form of bragging, stated that it tends to be “perceived and employed as a show of status and intellect.” Participant EPC also agreed with the premise; he believed people related the use of English to modernity and progress. He stated that it could be used by people “to separate themselves from the outdated Puerto Rican.” He further elaborated during the interview that he has known people who used CS to fit in with certain groups or to separate or distinguish themselves from other groups of people. He did not, however, specify what kinds of groups these people wanted to fit in with or what groups they wanted to separate themselves from. Nonetheless, this idea implies that the use of English is associated with desirable traits, because if someone wants to fit in with a certain group, the group must be perceived to have something of value. These valued traits may be intellect and status, like YRA suggested, and prestige and power, like Mazak (2012) discussed in her study.

PRicans use CS to brag about knowing English.		PRicans who use CS struggle with one of the languages.		Spanish or English: people should speak one at a time.		
Participants	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL	27%	73%	9%	91%	41%	59%
20-29	30%	70%	10%	90%	20%	80%
30+	25%	75%	8%	92%	58%	42%
CS	25%	75%	0%	100%	25%	75%
Some/no CS	33%	67%	33%	67%	83%	17%

**Table 8** Negative attitudes toward CS

Participants agree that things have changed regarding the language practices of Puerto Ricans in recent years. 91% of participants agree that there are more and more bilinguals in Puerto Rico as time passes. JAEM who has lived in Chicago for the past five years mentioned that he returns home every year, and he is surprised every time by how many people speak English. YRA attributes it to cultural assimilation: “the process of Americanization and cultural assimilation is gradual but ensured.” ECP attributes it to

improvements in formal education levels in Puerto Rico. Alongside with bilingualism, 82% of participants agree that CS is more common now than before, and 77% agree that CS is accepted more now than before.

	CS is more common now than before.		CS is more accepted now than before.		There are more PRican bilinguals as time passes.	
Participants	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL	82%	18%	77%	23%	91%	9%
20-29	90%	10%	80%	20%	100%	0%
30+	75%	25%	75%	25%	83%	17%
CS	88%	13%	88%	13%	94%	6%
Some/no CS	67%	33%	50%	50%	83%	17%

**Table 9** Perceived changes in linguistic behavior and attitudes

Participants recognize that language use is not necessarily tied to cultural identity. They agree that Puerto Ricans who use English and CS are just as Puerto Rican as those who use Spanish. YRA says that “Puerto Ricaness is not measured in languages.” They add that there are different ways to be Puerto Rican, while mentioning various places where

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	PRicans who use English are just as PRican as those who use Spanish.		PRicans who CS are just as PRican as those who use Spanish.		People who CS are more attached to U. S. culture than PRican culture.		People who use English are more attached U.S. culture than PRican culture.	
Participants	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL	86%	14%	91%	9%	18%	82%	32%	68%
20-29	90%	10%	100%	0%	20%	80%	30%	70%
30+	83%	17%	83%	17%	17%	83%	33%	67%
CS	88%	13%	94%	6%	13%	88%	19%	81%
Some/no CS	83%	17%	83%	17%	33%	67%	67%	33%

**Table 10** Language practices and identity

the Puerto Rican diaspora has settled. Participants also agree that using English and CS does not mean someone is more attached to American culture than Puerto Rican culture. Nonetheless, it is very clear that, to some extent, participants relate English use to an attachment to U.S. culture over Puerto Rican culture. Here, they make a distinction between CS and English. When relating CS to being more attached to U. S. culture over

Puerto Rican culture, there is 18% of agreement, whereas, for English there is 32% agreement. There is also a difference between the CS subgroups. The Some/No CS Group agrees that people who use English are more attached to “American” culture (67% agreement), whereas the CS Group disagrees with that statement (81% disagreement). This difference proved to be statistically significant,  $X^2 (1, n = 22) = 4.618, p = .032$ .

EPC, who disagrees with the premise, sees CS as a tool of convenience rather than an issue of identity. YRA states that you can be submerged in both languages without detracting from either one. On the other hand, ICR, a participant in agreement with the premise, explains that he does not believe Puerto Ricans should identify with American culture or be overexposed to it because “the more you are exposed to it, the more you are exposed to the failures and atrocities of that culture and its history.” Another observation regarding the use of English in Puerto Rico comes from JAEM. JAEM is aware of complaints from some Puerto Ricans regarding English. He states that he has heard dissatisfaction regarding customer service in areas which are popular with tourists. He explains: “I have read about people who complain because they go to Old San Juan and a Puerto Rican waiter speaks to them in English from the get-go, and the Puerto Rican waiter intends to continue the entire conversation in English.” JAEM goes on to state that such a complaint is not a “linguistic complaint,” but rather that it pertains to ideals regarding Puerto Rican identity: “A Puerto Rican should speak Spanish. A Puerto Rican should not speak English because ‘the Puerto Rican identity is a Spanish-speaking identity.’ I disagree. A language is just a language.”

## 5. Conclusions

This study aimed to describe the current perceptions and attitudes of Puerto Ricans towards CS and to determine whether these have changed over the years, and whether there are differences in perceptions and attitudes correlated to the independent variables of age and CS practices. A questionnaire and an interview were conducted with 22 participants. This study is important because it provides data from Puerto Rican adults across different age groups who come from different parts of Puerto Rico when most of the previous studies of this kind focused primarily on participants under 30 from the San Juan metropolitan area. This helps to not only compare attitudes across generations, but also between groups with different linguistic practices and backgrounds.

The predictions of the study were confirmed as follows. Based on the data collected, bilingualism and CS use have become much more common in Puerto Rico than in previous years and the use of English and CS are viewed more positively. The participants in this study believe that this change can be attributed to factors such as formal education; the presence of English-speaking tourists; exposure to American culture directly or indirectly through media and the internet; and financial necessity because certain types of employment require knowledge of English. Attitudes towards English and CS are

generally positive. Participants find CS acceptable and for the most part harbor positive attitudes towards English and CS, and so do the people around them. However, much like what was predicted, negative attitudes towards English and CS are still present. Those who disapprove consider CS to be a lazy incorrect use of language, and English is seen as the symbol of hegemonic power and cultural loss.

As predicted, there were differences between the results of the subgroups regarding the acceptability of CS and English and the presence of negative attitudes. As predicted, there were some differences between age subgroups, but the variable that had the most significant and most frequent impact was the CS variable (whether the participants used CS themselves or not). The data were analyzed using chi-square tests, which proved that these differences—mainly those related to the CS variable—were statistically significant. However, it must be questioned whether these differences might ultimately be concluded to be statistically significant because of the disproportionate number of participants in each subgroup. 16 participants were in the CS Group and only 6 participants were in the Some/No CS Group. Meanwhile the age group variable, which did not result in many statistically significant differences, had a more proportionate number of participants in each group. This is not a reason to disregard the results, but rather a sign that these patterns and correlations must be further explored.

Initially, it was surprising that most participants did not view codeswitching as a sign of deficient language skills, because that has been a belief that has been commonly articulated and sometimes echoed by bilingual speakers. However, in the case of this study, not only were most participants bilingual codeswitchers, but they also had high levels of formal education. Most participants (77%) had a bachelor's degree or higher. It is likely that they had prior knowledge of the topic and understood the complexity of codeswitching as a language skill. Another possibility is that, as pursuers of higher education, they prided themselves in their intellect—and consequently their language skills—and, thus, rejected the notion of their codeswitching practices being a sign of any intellectual deficiency.

The results of this study indicate that perceptions and attitudes towards English and CS have gradually become more positive. Yet, the use of CS, and English particularly, continues to be a contentious topic. As mentioned above, this study could be improved by including a more representative sample of the population. More participants would be necessary, but also a more proportionate distribution among subgroups pertaining to age, bilingual proficiency, and CS practices. For future studies, this direct approach to attitudinal research could be coupled with a more indirect approach, such as the matched guise test. Additionally, this approach could be complemented with audiovisual materials to serve as specific examples of CS and CS situations that could then serve as a topic of discussion with the participants. Lastly, because participants show a higher degree of acceptance towards CS than the use of English alone; it would be valuable to further

highlight and explore prevailing anti-English sentiments in Puerto Rico and how they compare to the way that CS is perceived.

This study contributes new research and updated data to the field of sociolinguistics and to knowledge regarding language attitudes towards English and CS in Puerto Rico. As stated above, it provides a more varied sample than in previous studies. It explores individual differences in perceptions and attitudes using direct methods that require participants to reflect upon and communicate their observations and opinions explicitly. This provides insights into how aware the participants are of the topic of inquiry, their own thoughts and feelings regarding the topic, and the thoughts of others around them. The results of this study also point to new research topics such as the pragmatic motivations behind some codeswitching practices. For example, participant EPC mentions that some people codeswitch to separate themselves from certain groups of people. This begs the question: do people use codeswitching to align themselves with certain groups or communities and if so, how? What language(s) or type(s) of codeswitching are used to achieve that goal? What groups or communities are they trying to align themselves with and why?

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# COMPARACIÓN MORFOSINTÁCTICA Y SEMÁNTICA DEL FUTURO PERIFRÁSTICO EN ALEMÁN Y ESPAÑOL PUERTORRIQUEÑO A TRAVÉS DEL ANÁLISIS DE CORPUS

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## Resumen

En una era donde el multilingüismo adquiere creciente relevancia en la comunicación global, el aumento del interés por aprender alemán entre los hablantes de español, siendo esta la lengua predominante en la Unión Europea, conlleva oportunidades educativas y laborales únicas. A pesar de la abundancia de recursos para la enseñanza del inglés a hablantes de español, y viceversa, se observa una marcada falta de investigación y escasez de materiales equivalentes para el aprendizaje del alemán entre los hispanohablantes. Esta investigación pretende llenar este vacío mediante un análisis lingüístico contrastivo enfocado en las estructuras del futuro perifrástico, la cual existe en ambas lenguas. El objetivo final de presentar los descubrimientos es optimizar las estrategias de enseñanza y fomentar el desarrollo de recursos didácticos enfocados en el tiempo futuro para la enseñanza del alemán a hispanohablantes y viceversa.

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**Palabras clave:** comparación morfosintáctica y semántica, análisis de corpus, alemán-español, futuro perifrástico, adquisición de segundas lenguas

## Abstract

In an era in which multilingualism acquires growing relevance in global communication, the increase in interest to learn German among Spanish speakers, given that it is the predominant language in the European Union, implies unique educational and work-related opportunities. Despite the abundance of resources for teaching English to Spanish speakers and vice versa, there is a notable lack of research and scarcity of equivalent materials to learn German among Spanish speakers. This study aims to fill this gap by means of a contrastive linguistic analysis centered on the periphrastic future structures, which exist in both languages. The final goal of presenting the findings is to help

optimize teaching strategies and promote the development of teaching resources focused on the future tense for teaching German to Spanish speakers and vice versa.

**Key terms:** morphosyntactic and semantic comparison, corpus analysis, German-Spanish, periphrastic future, second language acquisition

**Lista de abreviaturas:** FP – futuro perifrásitico; FPE – futuro perifrásitico en español; FPA – futuro perifrásitico en alemán; LAC – países latinoamericanos y caribeños; VA – verbo auxiliar; VL – verbo léxico; V1-aux – verbo auxiliar de la perífrasis verbal; V2-lex – verbo léxico de la perífrasis verbal; SG – singular; PL – plural; O – oración; OT – oración temporal; SN – sintagma nominal; SV – sintagma verbal; SP – sintagma preposicional; ET – expresión temporal; INF – infinitivo; CON – condicional; LCC – Leipzig Corpora Collection; CORPES – Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI; L2 – segunda lengua

## Introducción

### *El contacto entre el español y el alemán y la lingüística contrastiva*

Los significativos movimientos migratorios desde España y los países latinoamericanos y caribeños (LAC) hacia los países de habla alemana, en particular Alemania, Austria y Suiza, han fomentado un incremento en el contacto lingüístico y cultural entre estas lenguas, trascendiendo la ausencia de proximidad territorial. Este fenómeno se debe, en parte, a las diferencias económicas entre España, LAC y los países de habla alemana mencionados.

La crisis económica en España ha llevado a una significativa pérdida de empleos, afectando principalmente a jóvenes de 16 a 29 años, quienes sufrieron el 86% de esta reducción. Como resultado, la tasa de desempleo en el país se disparó al 20-26%, y el desempleo juvenil alcanzó el 50-56% hasta 2016. Esta situación provocó una emigración masiva, incluyendo a jóvenes altamente cualificados hacia Alemania, un país que ha mantenido una economía más estable, reduciendo su desempleo del 10% al 6% y enfrentando una escasez de mano de obra calificada. Este contraste ha posicionado a Alemania como el principal destino de inmigrantes en la Unión Europea y a España como el país con mayor emigración (Heimann & Wieczorek, 2017, p. 70). La tabla 1 demuestra el incremento en el número y el porcentaje de inmigrantes españoles en países germanófonos entre los años 2011 y 2022.

Adicionalmente a España, los países de habla alemana constituyen receptores significativos de una considerable población migrante originaria de LAC, es decir, regiones donde predomina el uso del español. España se destaca igualmente como un destino atractivo, en virtud de los lazos lingüísticos y culturales compartidos. Sin embargo, pese a no ser el destino primordial, los países germanófonos acogen a una fracción significativa de migrantes provenientes de LAC (Bayona-i-Carrasco & Avila-Tàpies, 2019, p. 8). Para asegurar una integración exitosa en los ámbitos laboral, académico y personal,

los requisitos de competencia en alemán para inmigrantes no pertenecientes a la Unión Europea han aumentado progresivamente. En Austria, por ejemplo, se exigía el nivel A1 de alemán en 2003, A2 en 2006, y desde 2011 se demanda alcanzar el nivel A1 antes de entrar al país, el nivel A2 dentro de los dos años siguientes (el Estado cubre el 50% de los costos si el examen se toma dentro de los 18 meses), y finalmente, el nivel B1 para la residencia permanente, necesario para el acceso a ayudas sociales. Estos requisitos imponen una presión considerable sobre los estudiantes de alemán, quienes requieren de materiales didácticos más especializados y efectivos para asegurar su éxito.

Estudios previos sobre la comparación entre el alemán y el español se han centrado principalmente en la traducción. Este estudio representa un primer paso para cerrar la brecha investigativa en la interacción entre el español y el alemán, enfocándose en el ámbito de la adquisición de segundas lenguas. Su meta es desarrollar un entendimiento detallado de las diferencias y similitudes morfosintácticas y semánticas en el uso del futuro perifrástico, una estructura presente en ambas lenguas y similar en su funcionamiento. Posteriormente, en estudios de seguimiento, se pretende elaborar materiales didácticos más refinados y adaptados específicamente para hispanohablantes que aprenden alemán. Estos recursos buscarán aprovechar el conocimiento lingüístico previo de los estudiantes, al tiempo que destacan las características únicas que diferencian al español del alemán. A pesar de que el español y el alemán son dos lenguas notoriamente distintas, siendo el español una lengua romance y el alemán una lengua germánica, existen ciertas similitudes entre ambas que los estudiantes pueden aprovechar si son conscientes de ellas. Aunque se reconoce la necesidad de investigaciones adicionales, se anticipa que los hallazgos derivados de esta investigación contribuirán de manera significativa al ámbito de la adquisición de segundas lenguas.

Hasta la década de 1990, los estudios contrastivos y la lingüística de corpus investigaban predominantemente asuntos sobre el monolingüismo. Tras permanecer durante años en un estatus marginal, el interés en la lingüística contrastiva experimentó un auge hacia finales de dicha década, evidenciado por la publicación de la revista *Languages in Contrast* (Hasselgård, 2020, p. 1). Según Johansson (2008), el propósito de la lingüística contrastiva es el análisis y la comparación sistemáticos de dos o más lenguas, describiendo sus similitudes y diferencias. Desde sus inicios, se ha reconocido que la lingüística contrastiva aporta valor no solo práctico y pedagógico, sino también teórico y aplicado. Distingue entre los aspectos universales y específicos de las lenguas, mejorando la comprensión global y el análisis individual de cada una (Johansson, 2008, pp. 9-12). König (2012) afirma que la esencia de la lingüística contrastiva reside en la comparación entre dos lenguas o dos variantes de la misma lengua, aunque puede extenderse a tres o más cuando el objetivo no es tanto ofrecer una comparación exhaustiva, sino más bien el análisis detallado de segmentos específicos para contribuir a una tipología o un estudio de área. Dependiendo de su aplicación, la lingüística contrastiva puede encuadrarse en el estudio del bilingüismo (primera y segunda lengua), la traducción (lengua meta) y

la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras (lengua materna y lengua extranjera). Las parejas lingüísticas seleccionadas para el análisis contrastivo suelen tener relevancia en uno de estos tres campos (König, 2012, p. 17). Este enfoque guiará nuestro estudio del alemán y el español, dos lenguas que entran en contacto por las razones previamente mencionadas, centrando nuestra atención en la adquisición de segundas lenguas y su enseñanza.

### ***Lingüística de corpus, lingüística computacional y tendencias actuales***

Para llevar a cabo este estudio contrastivo, se optó por el análisis de corpus, aprovechando así el acceso abierto a extensos volúmenes de datos de ambas lenguas. Un corpus, a diferencia de un archivo, se compone mediante una selección cuidadosa de textos que buscan reflejar características específicas del lenguaje, abarcando diversas categorías como corpus diacrónicos, multilingües, especializado o de aprendices. Mientras que un archivo es una colección más amplia y general sin el propósito de representar una variante lingüística o género en particular, un corpus está diseñado con la intención de capturar la esencia de una variedad de lengua específica, convirtiéndose en una referencia estándar en el estudio del lenguaje. (Baker et al., 2006, pp. 48-49). Así, se intenta que la recopilación de datos interfiera lo mínimo posible en la naturalidad de la producción lingüística (Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 380). Aunque los corpus no proveen información nueva por sí mismos, permiten obtener nuevas perspectivas sobre el lenguaje mediante el uso de programados especializados (Baker et al., 2006, pp. 48-49)..

Aunque podemos detectar ciertos patrones lingüísticos, como la coocurrencia de palabras específicas en textos o entre distintos hablantes, solo a través del análisis a gran escala que ofrece la lingüística de corpus logramos identificar de forma confiable patrones recurrentes en una amplia variedad de contextos y entre muchos usuarios del lenguaje. Esta rama de la lingüística trabaja con grandes volúmenes de textos o discursos, requiriendo el uso de tecnologías computacionales avanzadas para minar los datos, analizar las frecuencias de palabras y generar resúmenes estadísticos (McEnery et al., 2019, pp. 75-76). En palabras de Simpson-Vlach y Swales (2001), “la lingüística de corpus, en esencia, es una tecnología” (p. 1). Tanto la lingüística computacional como la de corpus se enfocan en el uso de textos digitales para analizar y extraer datos lingüísticos, aplicando métodos parecidos en su investigación. Para este trabajo, utilizamos dos corpus diferentes: uno de español y otro de alemán, sin embargo, ambos comparten varios rasgos fundamentales

En el ámbito de la adquisición de segundas lenguas, la lingüística contrastiva realiza una comparación detallada entre la lengua materna (L1) y la lengua extranjera (L2), destacando similitudes y diferencias para identificar posibles dificultades y prevenir interferencias lingüísticas. Esta metodología se basa en tres pilares: (1) la descripción y comparación minuciosa de la lengua de origen y la lengua meta, (2) la predicción de desafíos de aprendizaje y (3) el uso de estos hallazgos para optimizar los materiales didácticos. En este estudio, el español servirá como lengua de origen y el alemán como lengua meta.

James (1980) sugiere que el análisis del presente estudio, centrado en un fenómeno grammatical específico, el futuro perifrástico (FP), se inscribe en la microlingüística.

### ***El tiempo y el tiempo futuro***

Comrie (1985) define el término *tiempo* como una categoría grammatical que indica la ubicación temporal de un evento o situación con respecto al momento de hablar o escribir. Según Comrie, el tiempo puede visualizarse como una línea que se extiende desde el pasado hacia el futuro, y esta categoría grammatical indica en qué punto de dicha línea se sitúa el evento o la situación. En otras palabras, el tiempo grammatical es una herramienta que permite situar los sucesos en la secuencia temporal y establecer relaciones temporales entre ellos. Comrie distingue entre tiempo absoluto, que se refiere al momento de hablar o escribir, y tiempo relativo, que se relaciona con otros momentos pasados, presentes o futuros.

Además Comrie (1985) distingue entre el tiempo futuro y la referencia temporal al futuro, aunque existe una estrecha correlación entre ambos. El tiempo futuro se indica mediante marcadores temporales que expresan futuridad, mientras que la referencia temporal al futuro puede darse sin marcador, siendo esta una condición necesaria para el tiempo futuro. Una de las características principales del tiempo futuro, en comparación con el tiempo pasado y presente, es su mayor grado de incertidumbre y menos certeza (Comrie, 1985, p. 56). Aunque todas las lenguas germánicas y romances, incluyendo el alemán y el español, pueden utilizar el tiempo presente para hacer referencia al futuro, las condiciones y la necesidad de su uso pueden variar significativamente en términos de estructuras sintácticas, semánticas y pragmáticas (Comrie, 1985, p. 57).

Este estudio se enfoca en analizar una estructura verbal presente en ambas lenguas para indicar el futuro, utilizando los verbos auxiliares “*werden*” en alemán e “*ir a*” en español, que quedan demostrados en la tabla 1.

**Tabla 1** Estructura perifrástica en alemán y español con valor futuro

	<b>Alemán</b>	<b>Español</b>
(1)	Ich werde morgen in Berlin sein.	Mañana voy a estar en Berlín.
(2)	Bald werde ich das Auto kaufen.	Pronto voy a comprar el coche.

Estas estructuras verbales, también conocidas como perifrásicas, poseen un elemento y significado comunes que anticipan el futuro. No obstante, es importante señalar que el concepto del futuro es intrínsecamente complejo y, en determinadas circunstancias, estas formas pueden interpretarse como suposiciones (Comrie, 1985, p. 59). La tabla 2 ilustra esta idea.

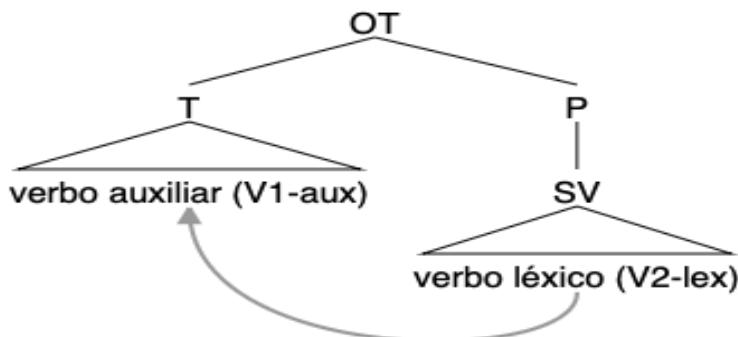
**Tabla 2** Estructura perifrástica con valor de suposición

	<b>Alemán</b>	<b>Español</b>
(3)	Er wird jetzt da sein.	Va a estar aquí.

Desde la perspectiva gramatical, no existe una diferencia aparente entre los ejemplos de las tablas 1 y 2. La interpretación de estas declaraciones, ya sea con un valor de futuro o presente, depende exclusivamente del contexto. Siguiendo a Comrie, no es posible arribar a una conclusión definitiva y el tiempo futuro es el que más debates ha generado en las investigaciones previas, ya que existen variadas formas de expresarlo (Comrie, 1985, pp. 51, 60). Por lo tanto, en este estudio, se tratarán los ejemplos de las tablas 1 y 2 de manera semejante, interpretándolos siempre con un valor de futuro para facilitar y uniformar el análisis de los datos.

### El futuro perifrástico (FP) en el español y el alemán

A pesar de las notables diferencias en sus orígenes y filogénesis, siendo el alemán una lengua germánica y el español una lengua romance, ambas comparten una estructura similar para marcar el futuro, empleando un verbo auxiliar (V1-aux) conjugado seguido de un verbo léxico (V2-lex) en infinitivo. La figura 1 demuestra la estructura básica del futuro perifrástico en ambas lenguas.



**Figura 1** Estructura sintáctica del futuro perifrástico

[OT [T verbo auxiliar (V1-aux)][P [SV verbo léxico (V2-lex) ->1]]]  
(ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

No obstante, existen diferencias significativas en el nivel morfosintáctico, las cuales se rán detalladas en las subsecciones subsiguientes.

### FP en alemán

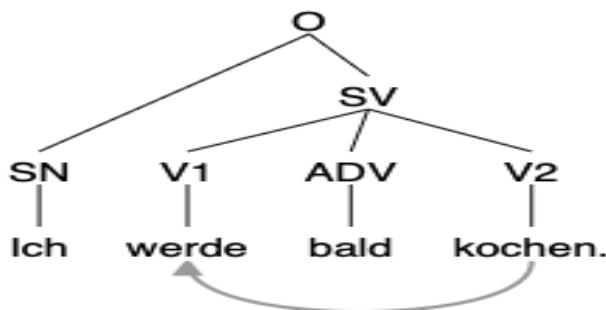
El futuro perifrástico en alemán (FPA), comúnmente también llamado *Futur I* ('futuro I') o futuro compuesto por su estructura sintáctica, se utiliza para referirse a una acción venidera. Es un acontecimiento que no ha ocurrido todavía pero que se espera que suceda en algún momento en el futuro, tanto cercano como lejano. Estos acontecimientos suelen ser planes, intenciones o predicciones, lo que implica un grado de incertidumbre asociado a ellos. Aunque existen otras estructuras morfosintácticas y semánticas, como los verbos modales y el *Futur II* ('futuro II') en alemán, así como el anteriormente mencionado uso semántico del presente simple para expresar futuridad, el FP añade, debido

a su estructura morfosintáctica, un grado de claridad de que la acción está situada en el futuro. Por lo tanto, suele necesitar menos contexto para expresar futuridad en comparación con el presente. Según Pfeffer y Conermann (1977), ocurre el FPA con más frecuencia en la lengua escrita que en la lengua hablada (p. 84).

A continuación, se describe la estructura sintáctica del FPA en diversos tipos de oraciones. Cabe recalcar que los diagramas arbóreos del presente trabajo representan un análisis sintagmático superficial o lineal, es decir, representativo de la producción oral o escrita, como es típico de los análisis descriptivos y contrastivos. Por lo tanto, exhiben la combinación secuencial de los elementos lingüísticos; no se circunscriben a una teoría lingüística ni reflejan los postulados acerca de la competencia lingüística ni la generación de oraciones (Hualde et al., 2010, pp. 206-210).

### *Oración principal*

EL FPA siempre se forma con el verbo auxiliar *werden*, conjugado con el sujeto de la oración, y el infinitivo del verbo léxico. En oraciones principales *werden* se encuentra en segunda posición de la frase, mientras el verbo léxico ocupa la última posición. Esto queda demostrado en la figura 2.



**Figura 2** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásitico en las oraciones principales en alemán

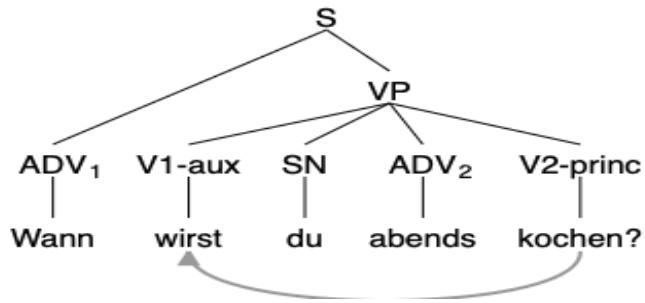
‘Yo voy a.PRES-1SG pronto cocinar.INF’

[O [SN Ich][SV [V1 werde][ADV bald ][V2 kochen ->2]]]

(ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

### *Oración interrogativa con partícula interrogativa (palabra-W) en alemán*

En preguntas que incluyen una partícula interrogativa (palabra-W), como *wer* ‘quién’, *wie* ‘cómo’, *wo* ‘dónde’, *was* ‘qué’, *warum* ‘por qué’, *wann* ‘cuándo’, etc., la estructura funciona de igual manera que en las oraciones principales: *werden* ocupa la segunda posición de la oración y el verbo léxico, la última. Esto se puede ver en la figura 3.



**Figura 3** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásitico en oraciones con partículas interrogativas (palabras-W) en alemán

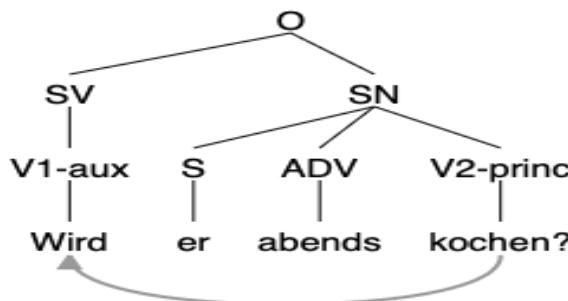
‘Cuándo.ADV vas a.PRES-2SG tú por la tarde.ET cocinar.INF’

[S [ADV Wann][VP [V1-aux wirst][SN du] [ADV abends] [V2-princ kochen? ->2]]]

(ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

*Oración interrogativa binaria (de sí o no) en alemán*

En oraciones interrogativas binarias (de sí o no), *werden* se encuentra en la primera posición de la oración y conjugado con el sujeto, que sigue en la segunda posición. En la última posición se encuentra el verbo léxico, igual que en una oración principal o una con partícula interrogativa (palabra-W). Esto queda demostrado en la figura 4.



**Figura 4** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásitico en oraciones interrogativas binarias (de sí o no) en alemán

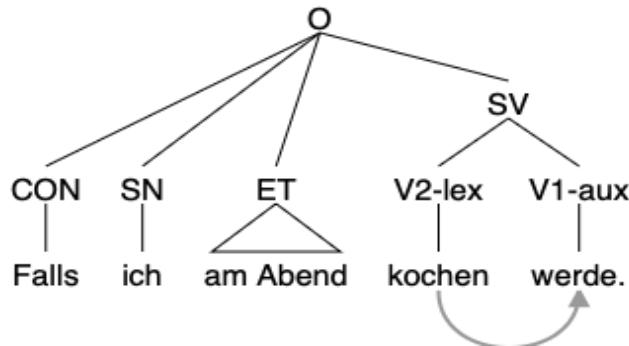
‘Va.aPRES-3SG él por la tarde.ET cocinar.INF’

[O [SV [V1-aux Wird]] [SN [S er] [ADV abends] [V2-princ kochen? ->1]]]

(ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

*Oración subordinada en alemán*

En oraciones subordinadas, se posicionan ambos elementos sintácticos, tanto el verbo auxiliar *werden* como el verbo léxico en infinitivo, al final de la frase. Sin embargo, en este caso, *werden* ocupa la última posición de la oración y el verbo principal, la penúltima posición. Esto se exhibe en la figura 5.



**Figura 5** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásitico en oraciones subordinadas en alemán

‘Si.COND yo por la tarde.ET cocinar.INF voy a.PRES-1SG’

[O [CON Falls] [SN ich] [ET am Abend] [SV [V2-lex kochen ->5] [V1-aux werde.]]] (ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

El desplazamiento de elementos sintácticos hacia el final de la oración es característico de la estructura gramatical alemana. Aunque este fenómeno se observa también con los verbos modales, en las oraciones subordinadas y con los participios pasados, este trabajo se centra únicamente en el futuro perifrásitico.

#### *Estructura morfológica*

*Werden, haben y sein* son los tres verbos auxiliares que existen en alemán. Un verbo auxiliar forma, en combinación con un verbo léxico, una categoría verbal del último. Mientras *haben* y *sein* se usan para formar el *Perfekt* (‘pasado perfecto’), *werden* se usa para formar el futuro perifrásitico. La palabra *werden* es altamente productiva en la lengua alemana y también puede cumplir otras funciones como verbo auxiliar (*Konjunktiv II* ‘subjuntivo’, *Futur II* ‘futuro II’, *Passiv* ‘voz pasiva’) y verbo léxico. Este trabajo se centra únicamente en su función como verbo auxiliar en la estructura verbal del futuro perifrásitico. *Werden* se flexiona según la persona, el número, el modo y el tiempo como queda evidenciado en la tabla 3.

**Tabla 3** Estructura sintáctica del futuro perifrásitico en alemán

	<b>persona</b>	<b>verbo auxiliar (werden)</b>	<b>complemento</b>	<b>verbo principal</b>
<b>1SG</b>	Ich ‘Yo’	werde ‘voy a’	ins Kino ‘al cine’	gehen. ‘ir’
<b>2SG</b>	Du ‘Tú’	wirst ‘vas a’	bald	umziehen. ‘mudarse’
<b>3SG</b>	er/sie/es/man ‘él/ella/uno’	wird ‘va a’	‘pronto’	
<b>1PL</b>	Wir ‘nosotros/as’	werden ‘vamos a’	im Wasser ‘en el agua’	schwimmen. ‘nadar’
<b>2PL</b>	Ihr ‘vosotros/as’	werdet ‘vaís a’		
<b>3PL</b>	sie/Sie ‘ellos/as/usted’	werden ‘van a/va a’		

Al hacer un análisis morfológico del futuro perifrástico en alemán, se encuentran los siguientes morfemas:

1. *werd-*, *wir-*: Representan la raíz del verbo auxiliar. Son morfemas léxicos, funcionales y de clase cerrada, ya que cumplen un rol gramatical en la oración y se combinan con el verbo léxico al final de la frase. Son dos morfemas ligados, ya que no pueden aparecer solos, sino que necesitan el sufijo verbal conjugado apropiadamente según el sujeto de la frase.
2. *-e*, *-st*, *-d*, *-en*, *-et*: Son sufijos que se añaden a la raíz del verbo y representan la conjugación del verbo con el sujeto respectivo. Son morfemas ligados y flexivos, ya que no pueden aparecer solos, sino que requieren la raíz del verbo.

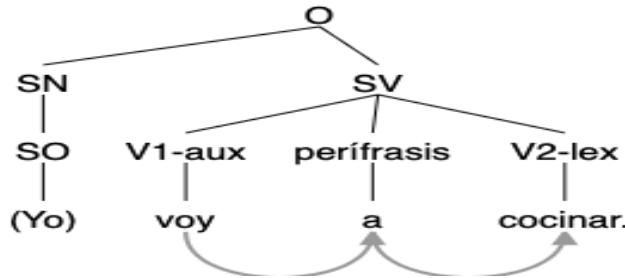
*Verbo léxico en infinitivo*, e.g., *kochen* ‘cocinar’, *essen* ‘comer’, *schlafen* ‘dormir’: Se clasifica como un morfema libre, ya que puede aparecer independientemente y lleva significado por sí mismo, como se exhibe en la tabla 9. No obstante, en la estructura del futuro perifrástico, debe aparecer junto con el verbo auxiliar.

### ***FP en español***

Los estudios anteriores sobre el futuro perifrástico en español (FPE) indican que, a pesar de las diferencias cuantitativas entre regiones, existe una preferencia marcada por el FPE en el habla, en comparación con la escritura. Esta tendencia es particularmente notable en Latinoamérica, donde el FPE es más común que en España. En contraste, el futuro morfológico (como en “comeré,” “comerás,” etc.) se emplea mayormente en textos escritos. Sedano (1994) señala que el FPE se utiliza con más frecuencia que el futuro morfológico cuando se acompaña de elementos que establecen una conexión temporal. Para indicaciones de inmediatez temporal, la escritura tiende a preferir el FPE, mientras que las referencias a momentos más distantes suelen emplear el futuro morfológico. Además, el estudio de Sedano muestra que, en los textos escritos, el FPE aparece principalmente en la tercera persona (SG y PL), seguida por la primera persona (SG y PL), y no se registraron instancias del uso en segunda persona (SG y PL; Sedano, 1994, 2006). Estos resultados pueden ser de relevancia para el análisis de los resultados de esta investigación. El FPE se constituye invariablemente utilizando el verbo auxiliar *ir*, adecuadamente conjugado según el sujeto de la oración, seguido de la preposición *a* y el infinitivo del verbo léxico.

### ***Oración principal en español***

En las oraciones principales, el verbo *ir* ocupa la primera posición cuando el sujeto es omitido, y la segunda, cuando el sujeto se explicita, un fenómeno común en español por ser una lengua de sujeto nulo. La figura 6 ilustra el FPE en una oración principal.



**Figura 6** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásistico en oraciones principales en español

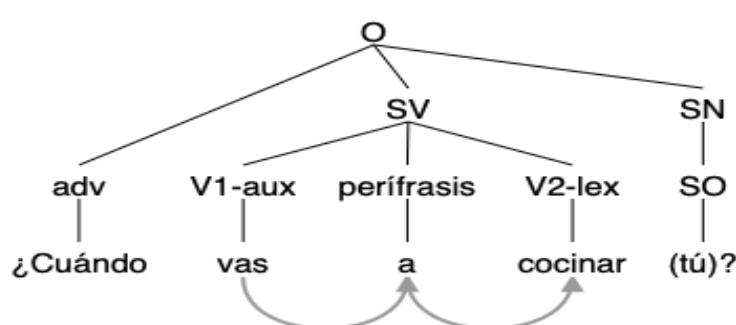
[O [SN [SO (Yo)]] [SV [V1-aux voy] [perífrasis a] [V2-lex cocinar.]]]

‘Yo                   voy a.PRES-1SG           cocinar.INF’

(ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

#### **Oración con partícula interrogativa en español**

En las preguntas que contienen una partícula interrogativa (*quién, cómo, dónde, qué, por qué, cuándo*, etc.), la estructura sigue el mismo patrón que en las oraciones principales, con el verbo *ir* en la primera o segunda posición de la oración, dependiendo de si el sujeto está omitido o no. A esto le sigue la preposición *a*, que precede directamente el verbo principal. Esta estructura se ilustra en la Figura 7.



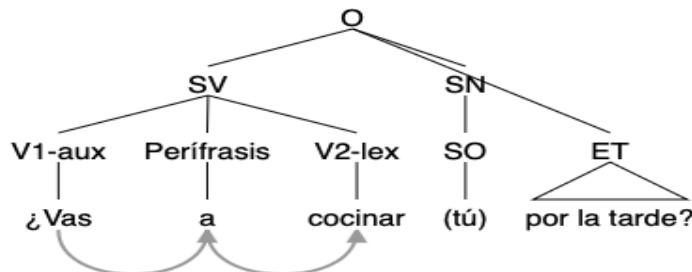
**Figura 7** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrásistico en preguntas con partículas interrogativas en español

‘¿Cuándo                   vas a.PRES-2SG           cocinar.INF (tú)?’

[O [adv ¿Cuándo] [SV [V1-aux vas ->3] [perífrasis a ->4] [V2-lex cocinar]] [SN [SO (tú)?]]] (ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

#### **Oración interrogativa binaria (de sí o no) en español**

En las oraciones interrogativas binarias (de sí o no), el verbo *ir* se coloca en la primera posición de la oración, seguido por la preposición *a* y el verbo léxico en infinitivo. Esta estructura se muestra en la Figura 8



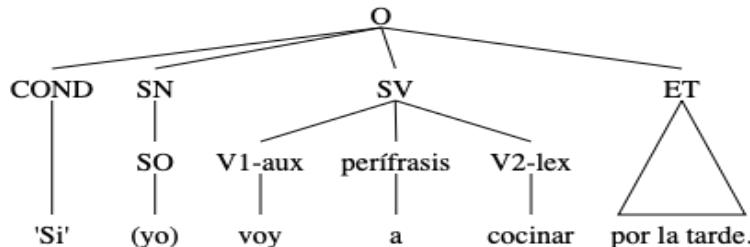
**Figura 8** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrástico en preguntas interrogativas binarias (de sí o no) en español

‘¿Vas a.PRES-2SG cocinar.INF (tú) por la tarde.ET?’

[O [SV [V1-aux ¿Vas ->2] [Perífrasis a ->3] [V2-lex cocinar]] [SN [SO (tú)]] [ET por la tarde?]] (ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

### *Oración subordinada en español*

En oraciones subordinadas, los tres elementos sintácticos que forman la estructura del FPE se posicionan después del conector subordinante (e.g., *si*, *porque*, *cuando* etc.) y, si se menciona, después del sujeto, este último puede estar omitido en muchos casos. Esto se exhibe en la figura 9.



**Figura 9** Árbol sintáctico del futuro perifrástico en oraciones subordinadas en español

‘Si.COND (yo) voy a.PRES-1SG cocinar.INF por la tarde.ET’

[O [COND 'Si'] [SN [SO (yo)]] [SV [V1-aux voy ->4] [perífrasis a ->5] [V2-lex coci-  
nar]] [ET por la tarde.]] (ironcreek.net/syntaxtree, véase Eisenbach & Eisenbach, 2022)

### *Estructura morfológica*

En español, *ir, haber, ser, estar, tener que, venir* y otros pueden funcionar como verbos auxiliares. Este trabajo se centra únicamente en el VA *ir*, ya que es el único relevante para la estructura verbal examinada en este estudio. Igual que la palabra *werden* en alemán, la palabra *ir* es un verbo altamente productivo en español y puede no solo funcionar como VA, sino también como VL. En su función como VA, *ir* se flexiona según la persona, el número, el modo y el tiempo, como queda demostrado la tabla 4.

**Tabla 4** Estructura sintáctica del futuro perifrástico en español

	verbo auxiliar (ir)	preposición	infinitivo	complemento
1SG	voy	a	hablar	con mi padre. portugués. en Miami.
2SG	vas			
3SG	va			
1PL	vamos		aprender	
2PL	vais		vivir	
3PL	van			

Al hacer un análisis morfológico del futuro perifrástico del español, se observan los siguientes morfemas:

1. *v-:* Representa la raíz del verbo auxiliar *ir*. Es un morfema léxico, funcional y de clase cerrada, ya que cumple un rol gramatical en la oración y se combina con la preposición *a* y el VL de la frase. Es un morfema ligado, ya que no puede aparecer solo y necesita el sufijo conjugado apropiadamente según el sujeto de la frase.
2. *-oy, -as, -a, -amos, -ais, -an:* son sufijos que se añaden a la raíz (v-) del verbo, y representan la conjugación del verbo con el sujeto respectivo. Son morfemas flexivos y ligados, ya que no pueden aparecer solos (ver tabla 11).
3. *a:* Esta preposición es un morfema léxico, funcional y de clase cerrada, ya que cumple un rol gramatical en la oración y se combina con el VA conjugado (ocupa la posición anterior) y el VL en infinitivo (ocupa la posición posterior).
4. *VL en infinitivo* (e.g., *cocin-ar, com-er, sal-ir*): Acompaña la estructura mencionada anteriormente (*ir+a*) y consiste en, al menos, dos morfemas.
  - a) Primero, la raíz del verbo (e.g., *cocin-*), que se clasifica como un morfema libre, ya que puede funcionar independientemente y llevar significado por sí mismo.
  - b) Segundo, uno de los tres sufijos del verbo en infinitivo (*-ar, -er, -ir*), que se clasifican como morfemas ligados, ya que no pueden funcionar independientemente.
  - c) Tercero, algunos verbos en español pueden tener prefijo (e.g., *re-, des-, contra-*) y, por lo tanto, tener tres morfemas: *re-hac-er, des-conoc-er, contra-dec-ir*.

### La presente investigación

Este estudio se inicia con un análisis cuantitativo dedicado a la exploración de la frecuencia de los verbos auxiliares dentro de cada corpus por separado, intentando determinar cuál de las lenguas muestra una mayor inclinación hacia el uso del futuro perifrástico. Se presta atención especial a las palabras específicas que se encuentran comúnmente en proximidad a estos verbos auxiliares, analizando las dos posiciones anteriores y posteriores a los mismos en cada lengua, con el fin de identificar patrones de colocación. Progresando hacia un análisis más detallado, el estudio examina tanto cuantitativa

como cualitativamente el tipo de palabras o sintagmas (como adverbios, preposiciones, sustantivos, etc.) que rodean a los verbos auxiliares en cada lengua, evaluando su frecuencia de aparición. Este análisis se complementa con una evaluación semántica, buscando agrupaciones semánticas o patrones culturales en el uso de estas palabras, con el objetivo de profundizar en el entendimiento de su significado y función dentro de cada lengua. Además, se lleva a cabo un análisis cualitativo para contrastar las diferencias y similitudes entre el español y el alemán, basado en los resultados obtenidos de cada corpus. La fase final del estudio se enfoca en la aplicación de estos hallazgos al campo de la adquisición de segundas lenguas (L2).

### **Metodología**

Dado el acceso a grandes volúmenes de datos para ambas lenguas, se optó por el análisis de corpus como método para llevar a cabo este estudio contrastivo. Al contrastar dos lenguas de orígenes distintos, el principal desafío radica en identificar y hallar elementos comparables, así como en su correcta interpretación. Los corpus en su forma bruta se constituyen de archivos que albergan exclusivamente el contenido del corpus, que puede abarcar metadatos, es decir, información predominantemente objetiva, que podría incluir información sobre cuándo se recolectaron los datos, una descripción de la fuente de los datos e información demográfica (Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 382).

En contraste, los corpus anotados también incluyen información lingüística, gramatical y estructural sobre los datos presentes en el corpus, por ejemplo, la tokenización, la lematización y el etiquetado de POS (*Part-Of-Speech*), la semántica, la pragmática, la prosodia, entre otros (Gries, 2009, p. 1234-1235; Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 382). La tokenización se refiere a determinar y definir claramente las unidades dentro del corpus que van a ser objeto de anotación, tales como palabras, números y signos de puntuación (Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 383). La lematización es el proceso mediante el cual las palabras en un texto se reducen a su forma base o lema (también conocido como tipo), tal y como aparecerían en un diccionario. En el caso del alemán y español, por ejemplo, todas las variantes del VL *gehen* ‘ir’, como *gehst* ‘vas’, *geht* ‘va’, *gehen* ‘vamos’, *ging* ‘fui/iba’, *gingst* ‘fuiste/ibas’ etc., se simplifican a *gehen* ‘ir’. Este método facilita la búsqueda de términos en el corpus, eliminando la necesidad de buscar todas las posibles conjugaciones de *gehen* ‘ir’. Se puede llevar a cabo usando bases de datos de lemas existentes, a través de la función de “stemming,” que reduce las palabras a su raíz básica recortando caracteres, o mediante enfoques combinados que pueden incluir análisis morfológico o sintáctico para precisar el significado en casos de ambigüedad (Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 383). Se etiquetan las palabras con categorías gramaticales (adjetivo, verbo, sustantivo etc.) y, en ciertos casos, también con morfemas o frases (Baker et al., 2006). La eficacia de la anotación automática de POS varía según múltiples factores, tales como las características morfológicas del corpus, la complejidad de los textos y el tipo de etiquetador empleado, ya sea simbólico o, más frecuentemente en la actualidad,

estadístico. Los corpus en inglés ya logran una precisión cercana al 90%. No obstante, el inglés, al ser una lengua con una morfología relativamente simple, presenta menos desafíos que lenguas con una estructura morfológica más compleja. En el caso de lenguas como el español y el alemán, que son centrales para este estudio, la precisión tiende a ser menor, ya que su morfología es más compleja (Gries & Berez, 2017, p. 383-384).

#### *Elección de corpus*

Para realizar este estudio contrastivo de manera eficaz, fue crucial elegir dos corpus que mostraran similitudes en varios aspectos clave. En primer lugar, se empleó la Leipzig Corpora Collection (LCC) (2023), un corpus proporcionado por la universidad de Leipzig, Alemania, que se puede acceder a través de la siguiente página: <https://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/>. Este corpus consiste en artículos de la prensa, web y Wikipedia hasta el año 2023, e incluye en total 292 lenguas diferentes, entre ellos el alemán en todas sus variedades. Para este estudio, se optó por la variedad de Alemania y artículos de la prensa hasta el año 2023, incluyendo, en total, 33,142,449 oraciones, 5,874,161 lemas o tipos y 520,813,152 tokens (LCC, 2023). En segundo lugar, se usó del *Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI* (CORPES), proporcionado por la *Real Academia Española (RAE)* y la *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española*. El CORPES se compone de una rica colección de datos que abarca prensa (40%), libros (40%), contenido web (7.5%) y misceláneas (2.5%) hasta el año 2023, sumando más de 365,000 documentos y superando los 395 millones de términos, entre textos escritos (90%) y transcripciones orales (10%). De estos, más de 284 millones provienen de libros de no ficción y publicaciones periódicas. Este corpus engloba una amplia gama de variantes del español de España (30%) y América (70%), incluyendo la andina (Bolivia, Ecuador, Perú), antillana/caribeña (Cuba, Puerto Rico, República Dominicana), del Caribe continental (Colombia, Venezuela), chilena (Chile), de México y Centroamérica (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, México, Nicaragua, Panamá), del río de la Plata (Argentina, Paraguay y Uruguay) y de Estados Unidos (Real Academia Española, s.f.). Para esta investigación, se optó por considerar la variante puertorriqueña y se conformó un corpus exclusivamente con artículos de prensa, lo cual permite comparar directamente el CORPES y el LCC.

La justificación para incluir estos dos corpus incluyó los siguientes factores: ambos son anotados, de acceso abierto y comparten varios rasgos fundamentales, e.g., la cualidad de los datos (textos escritos de la prensa), el rango temporal (datos hasta el año 2023), el tamaño (grandes cantidades disponibles para ambas lenguas y variedades), la posibilidad de seleccionar una variedad lingüística (Alemania y Puerto Rico) y el montaje de una página web moderna que permite buscar por palabras clave y descargar los resultados de manera eficaz. La preferencia por la variante puertorriqueña se debió a la vinculación del autor con la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Río Piedras, lo que abre puertas a la posibilidad de llevar a cabo futuras investigaciones en torno a los estudiantes de alemán de esta institución.

### Procedimiento

Aunque los dos corpus comparten ciertos rasgos básicos, es importante asimilarlos lo más posible a través de las opciones de filtro y personalización, para poder realizar el análisis contrastivo sobre la morfosintaxis y semántica del futuro perifrástico. Aunque las opciones de filtro no son iguales en ambos corpus, ya que las páginas web ofrecen diferentes filtros, se pudieron emparejar bastante las opciones. Por motivos de transparencia, se exhiben, en la tabla 5, los filtros elegidos en cada una de las páginas web.

**Tabla 5** Búsqueda y Filtros de LCC y de CORPES

búsqueda y filtros de LCC	búsqueda y filtros de CORPES
Deutsch	Elementos gramaticales
News 2023	Lema ( <i>ir</i> ), Forma (---), Categoría gramatical (verbo) Sensibilidad (---)
Palabra clave ( <i>werden</i> )	Lema (---), Forma ( <i>a</i> ), Categoría gramatical (preposición) Sensibilidad (---) Distancia: 1, Derecha
	Lema (---), Forma (---), Categoría gramatical (verbo) Sensibilidad (---) Distancia: 2, Derecha
	América, Antillas, Puerto Rico
	Desde (2000), hasta (2023)
	Escrito, No ficción, Prensa, Área temática (---)
	Tipología (---)
	Título (---), Autor (---)

Una práctica fundamental en la lingüística de corpus es analizar la frecuencia absoluta de ciertos fenómenos. La frecuencia absoluta nos ofrece una visión preliminar sobre la prevalencia del FP en cada lengua. Sin embargo, para lograr una comparación significativa entre diferentes corpus, es crucial ajustar las frecuencias absolutas al tamaño de cada corpus. Este ajuste, conocido como frecuencia normalizada o relativa, se normaliza y se expresa comúnmente por cada 1,000 o 1,000,000 de palabras (Gries, 2010, p. 6-7). Baker et al. (2006) describen la coocurrencia, también conocida como colocación, como el fenómeno por el cual ciertas palabras tienden a aparecer juntas más frecuentemente en contextos específicos, definiendo así las palabras colocadas como aquellas que se encuentran próximas entre sí (p. 36-37). Gries (2010) señala que una de las técnicas más esenciales en la lingüística de corpus es el análisis de la frecuencia con la que ocurren juntas expresiones lingüísticas. Este análisis puede abarcar la coocurrencia de palabras, la interacción entre palabras y patrones o construcciones, así como la relación entre

patrones, construcciones o palabras y posiciones dentro del texto. Aunque el método más directo para investigar coocurrencias es mediante la frecuencia absoluta, este enfoque a menudo no proporciona las informaciones estadísticamente más reveladoras. Para obtener resultados significativos de coocurrencia, lo más efectivo es emplear medidas de asociación estadística que evidencien las relaciones entre palabras y construcciones (Gries, 2010, p. 11). Actualmente, es posible calcular estas coocurrencias automáticamente gracias a programas y sitios web especializados en corpus.

Las colocaciones son particularmente valiosas en la enseñanza de lenguas, ya que permiten a los estudiantes familiarizarse con combinaciones de palabras que, aunque no son muy frecuentes, resultan naturales e intuitivas para los hablantes nativos. Al hacer conscientes a los alumnos de estos patrones lingüísticos, que podrían no ser evidentes a primera vista, se facilita el desarrollo de un dominio de la lengua más auténtica y cercana al de un nativohablante (Baker et al., 2006, p. 38).

Gracias a las páginas web de CORPES y LCC, se pudo realizar el análisis de la frecuencia normalizada. No obstante, no fue posible llevar a cabo el segundo estudio cuantitativo sobre las coocurrencias en las dos posiciones hacia la izquierda y derecha. Las páginas web solo muestran coocurrencias en el contexto general, pero no exactamente en las posiciones cercanas a los verbos auxiliares. Para realizar este análisis más detallado, se utilizó el programa AntConc (Anthony, 2023), especializado en el análisis de corpus

**Tabla 6** Instrucciones en el programa AntConc

Figura	Objetivo	Instrucciones	Columna
14	FPE frecuencia por su- jeto	Consulta de búsqueda -> pa- labras -> búsqueda avanzada -> lista de consulta de bús- queda -> palabras -> <i>voy a, vas a, va a, vamos a,</i> <i>vais a, van a</i>	Agrupación ordenar por frecuencia
16	Coocurrencias del FPE en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la iz- quierda	Tamaño de la agrupación: 2	Coocurrencia de 2L a 0R ordenar por frecuencia (L)
18	Coocurrencias del FPE en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la de- recha		Coocurrencia de 0L a 2R ordenar por frecuencia (R)
15	FPA frecuencia por su- jeto	Consulta de búsqueda -> pa- labras -> búsqueda avanzada -> lista de consulta de bús- queda -> palabras ->	Agrupación ordenar por frecuencia
17	Coocurrencias del FPA en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la iz- quierda	<i>ich werde, du wirst, er wird,</i> <i>sie wird, es wird, wir werden,</i> <i>ihr werdet, sie werden, werde</i> <i>ich, wirst du, wird sie, wird</i> <i>er, wird es, werden wir, wer- det ihr, werden sie</i>	Coocurrencia de 2L a 0R ordenar por frecuencia (L)
19	Coocurrencias del FPA en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la de- recha	Tamaño de la agrupación: 2	Coocurrencia de 0L a 2R ordenar por frecuencia (R)

lingüísticos y estudios cuantitativos. Es de libre acceso y permite un análisis mucho más preciso, incluyendo búsquedas con expresiones regulares (Regex). Los datos de la búsqueda en CORPES (ver detalles arriba) se descargaron en formato .txt y se importaron en AntConc. Los datos de LCC se descargaron desde la sección “Download Corpora German” de su página web, específicamente la versión "news, 300k."

Además de presentar los datos empleados en esta investigación, es esencial, por razones de transparencia, reproducibilidad y para asegurar la replicabilidad en futuros estudios, mostrar las instrucciones y los métodos de búsqueda utilizados en AntConc. A continuación, se describen brevemente estos elementos.

## Resultados

En esta sección se presentan, primero, las frecuencias normalizadas para el FP en alemán y en español. Segundo, se presentan las frecuencias por sujeto en el FPE y el FPA. Por último, se presentan las coocurrencias más frecuentes en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la izquierda y hacia la derecha de los verbos auxiliares en ambas lenguas. **Frecuencia normalizada**

El alemán, con 3,742 casos por cada 100,000 tokens, muestra una inclinación notablemente mayor hacia el FP en comparación con el español puertorriqueño, que presenta solo 1,048 casos. Esto podría deberse a que el español cuenta con otra estructura para expresar el futuro, el futuro morfológico (comeré, comerás, comerá, etc.). Esta estructura no existe en alemán, por lo que esta lengua debe utilizar el FP o el presente con valor futuro para marcar el tiempo futuro. En un estudio futuro se podría incluir la frecuencia normalizada del futuro morfológico para ver si llega, en combinación con el FP, al nivel del FP en alemán.

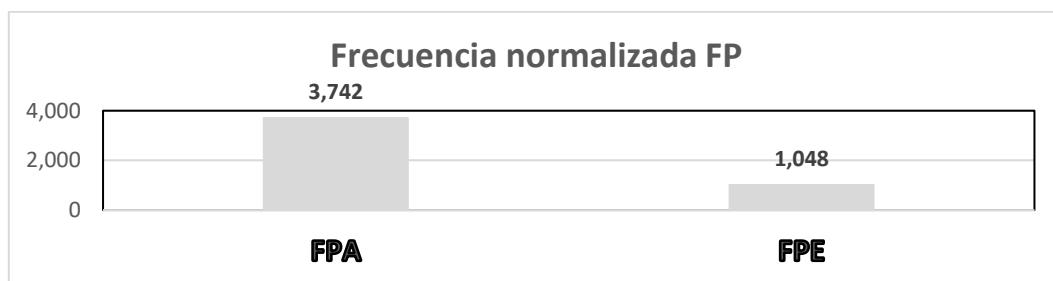


Figura 10 Frecuencia normalizada del FP en alemán y español

### Frecuencia por sujeto

Al analizar la frecuencia por sujeto, se observa una clara tendencia hacia el uso de la tercera persona del singular en ambas lenguas. Le siguen la primera persona del plural y la tercera persona del plural. La primera persona del singular se usa considerablemente en ambas lenguas, aunque notablemente menos que los sujetos previamente mencionados. La segunda persona del singular y del plural es la menos usada en ambas lenguas, un resultado esperado en el español puertorriqueño, ya que la última forma (vosotros/as) no existe en esta variedad del español. Este resultado simplemente confirma su ausencia en el corpus presente. Al ser el español una lengua de sujeto nulo no permite un análisis

de género para la tercera persona del singular (*él, ella*). Por el contrario, en alemán se evidencia una clara preferencia por el pronombre masculino (*er*) sobre el femenino (*sie*). En resumen, no hay diferencias significativas en el uso de los sujetos con el FP.

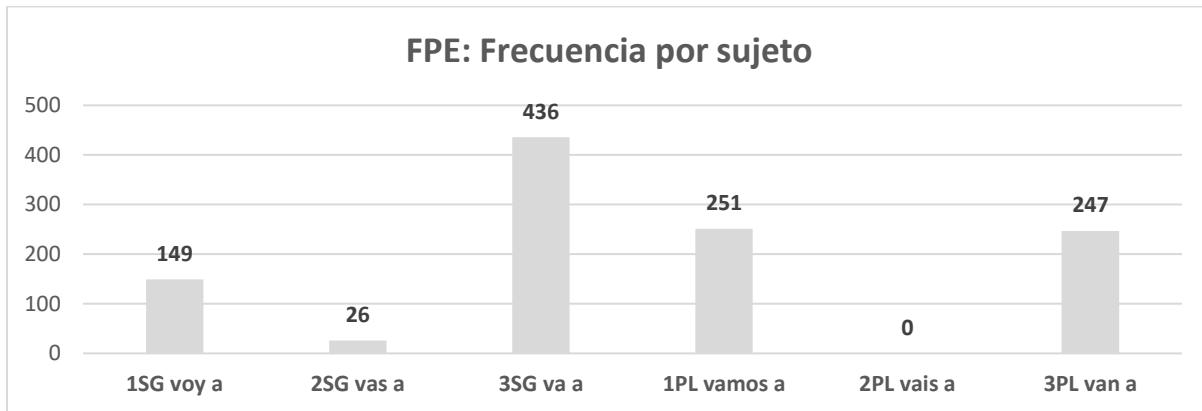


Figura 11 FPE frecuencia por sujeto

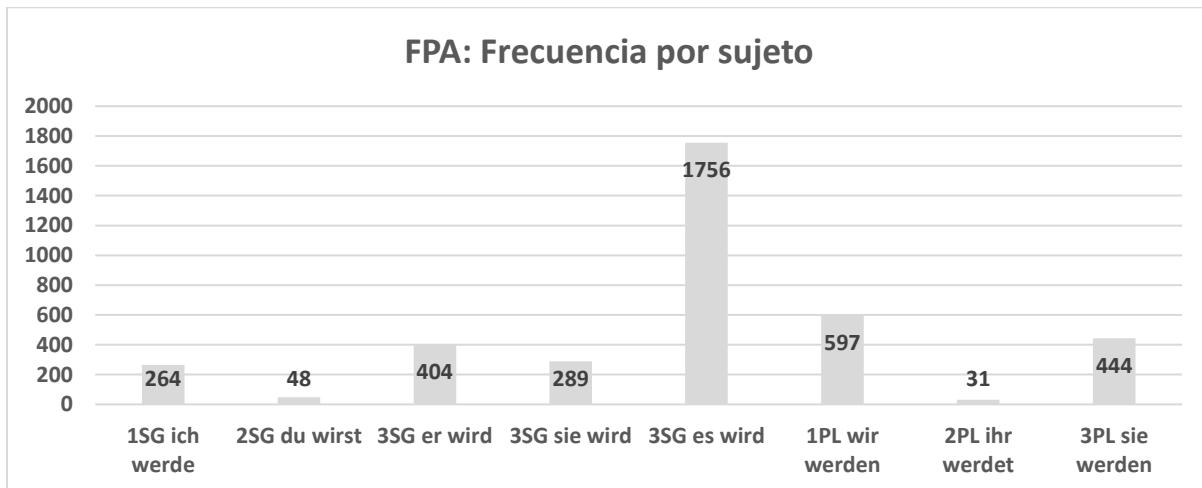


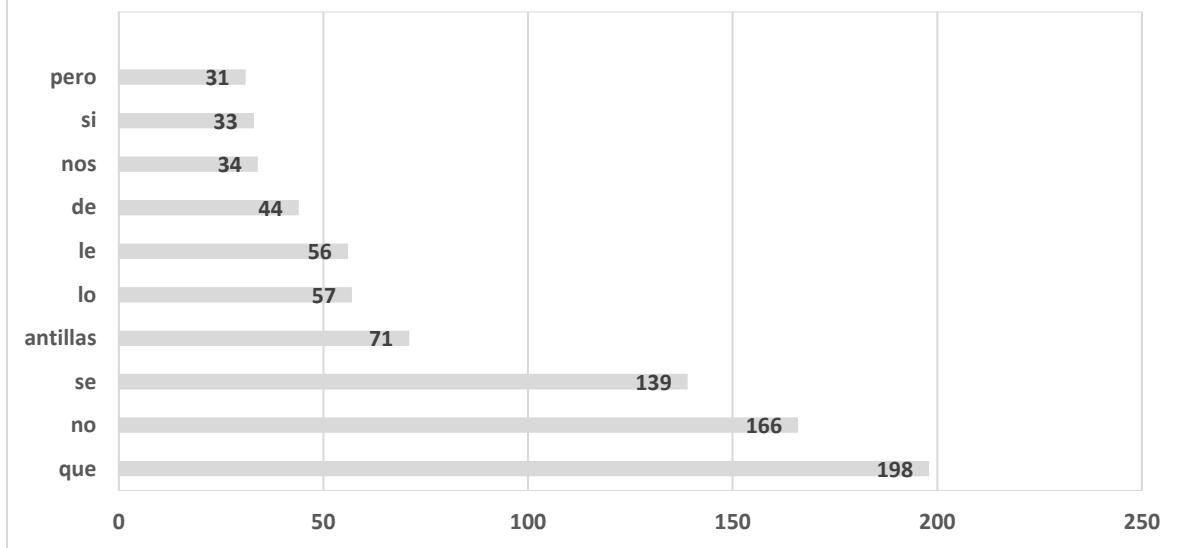
Figura 12 FPA frecuencia por sujeto

#### *Coocurrencias más frecuentes inmediatamente antes del verbo auxiliar*

Las figuras 13 y 14 muestran las 10 coocurrencias más frecuentes inmediatamente antes (hacia la izquierda) de la estructura del verbo auxiliar, que consisten en frases específicas en español y alemán, proporcionando así información sobre las estructuras sintácticas y los patrones de uso lingüístico de estas lenguas.

En español, las coocurrencias más frecuentes son *que, no* y *se*, con cantidades de 198, 166 y 139, respectivamente. La alta frecuencia de *que* sugiere que el FPE a menudo sigue cláusulas relativas o interrogativas. La frecuente aparición de *no* señala el uso predominante del FPE en contextos negativos y evidencia la posición de la negación

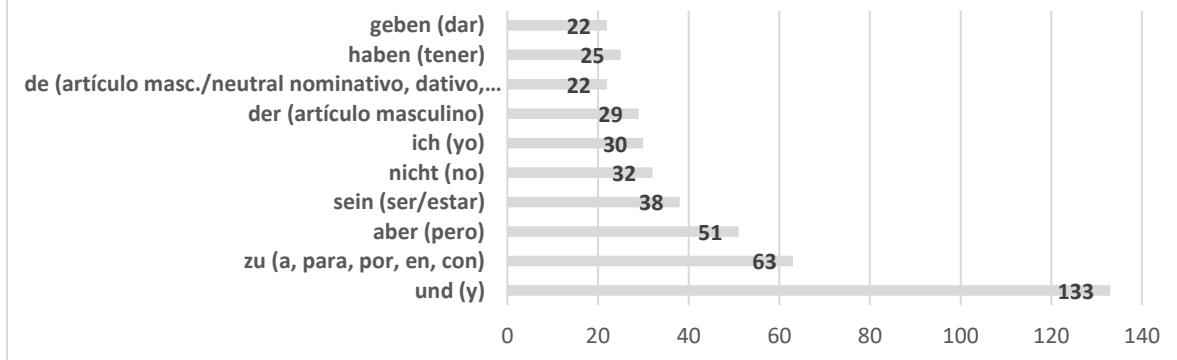
### FPE: 10 coocurrencias más frecuentes hacia la izquierda



**Figura 13** Coocurrencias del FPE en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la izquierda

antes de la estructura perifrástica, algo que funciona de manera opuesta en alemán. El pronombre reflexivo *se* sugiere que el FPE aparece con frecuencia en construcciones reflexivas o pasivas, destacando su papel en la expresión de acciones pasivas o sin agente. Esto es característico de los textos periodísticos.

### FPA: Top 10 de co-ocurrencias a la izquierda



**Figura 14** Coocurrencias del FPA en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la izquierda

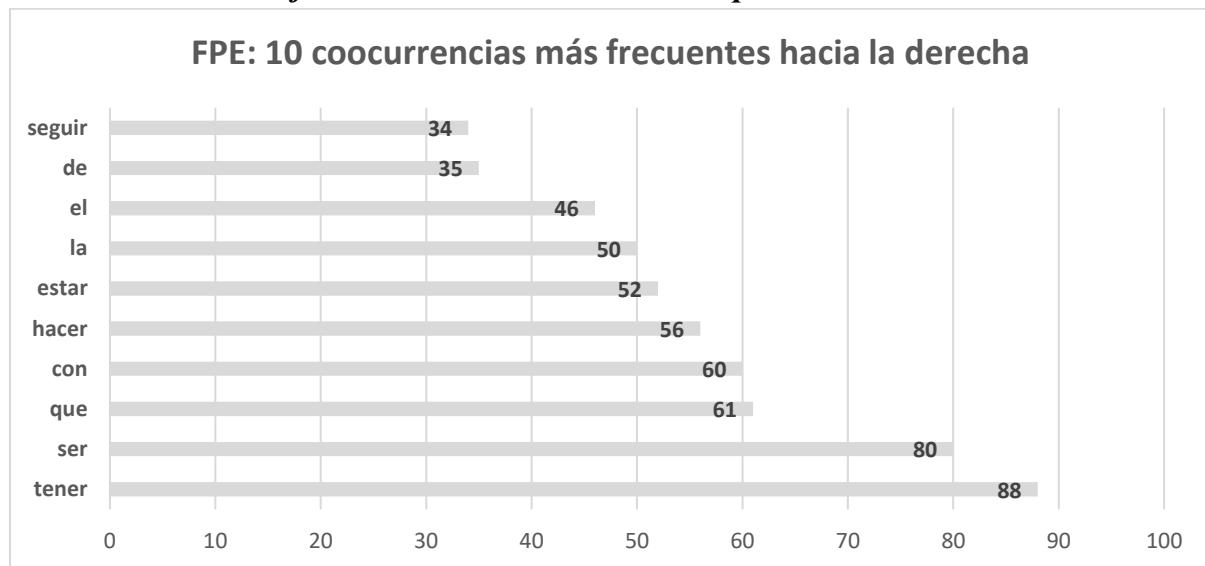
En alemán, *und*, *zu* y *aber* son las coocurrencias más frecuentes en las dos posiciones hacia la izquierda. El uso frecuente de *und* sugiere que el FPA a menudo aparece en oraciones compuestas o en listas, lo que indica una tendencia a enlazar ideas. La alta frecuencia de *zu* apunta hacia el uso frecuente de infinitivos, preposiciones o verbos modales, destacando las construcciones verbales complejas y el uso versátil de esta palabra en la lengua alemana. La presencia de *aber* indica que el FPA se utiliza a menudo

en contextos contrastantes o argumentativos, enfatizando la expresión de contraste u oposición en las oraciones.

Al buscar similitudes entre las dos lenguas, observamos en las 10 coocurrencias más frecuentes la presencia de la negación *no* y *nicht*, así como las conjunciones, *pero* y *aber*. Además, identificamos en ambas lenguas una preposición, *de* en español y *zu* en alemán. Aunque estas preposiciones no se suelen usar en contextos equivalentes, no es sorprendente encontrarlas en las 10 alternativas más comunes debido a su alta frecuencia en sus respectivas lenguas.

En cuanto a las diferencias, en el FPA destacan los tres verbos *sein*, *haben* y *geben*, mientras que en el FPE resaltan los pronombres *lo*, *le* y el pronombre reflexivo *se*. Además, es notable la alta frecuencia de la palabra *Antillas* en el FPE, reflejando la influencia de la variante puertorriqueña y subrayando el contexto regional y cultural de la selección de esta variante. En contraste, no se encontró ninguna palabra similar ni un sustantivo en las 10 coocurrencias más frecuentes del FPA.

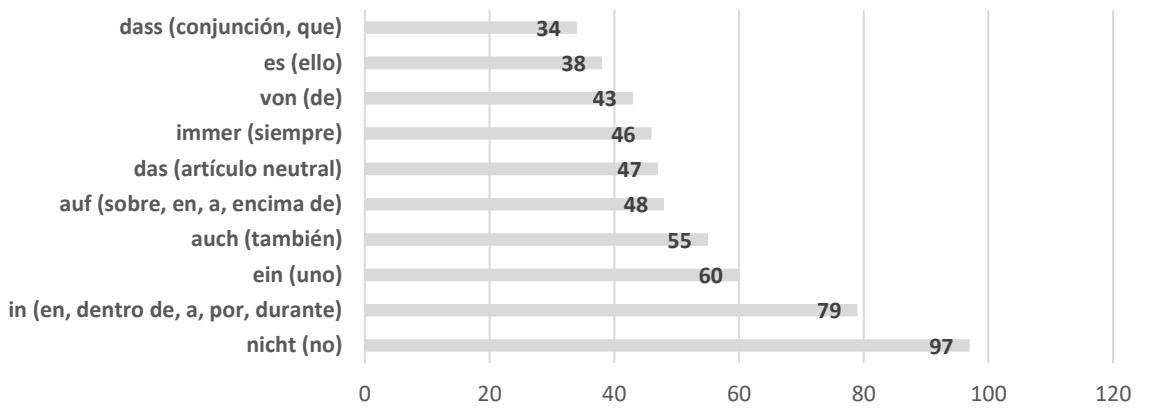
### ***Coocurrencias más frecuentes inmediatamente después del verbo auxiliar***



**Figura 15** Coocurrencias del FPE en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la derecha

El análisis de las coocurrencias inmediatamente después del FPE (en las dos posiciones hacia la derecha) revela una fuerte inclinación hacia construcciones verbales, evidenciada por la alta frecuencia de palabras como *tener*, *ser*, *estar*, *hacer*, y *seguir*. Esto no es sorprendente, ya que la estructura sintáctica del FPE es fija, y tras el verbo *ir* y la preposición *a*, debe seguir un verbo en la siguiente posición. Los verbos mencionados son de alta frecuencia en el español, lo que explica su aparición también en las alternativas más comunes del FPE. Además, la frecuente aparición de *que* indica que el FPE se usa a menudo en cláusulas subordinadas que añaden información sobre eventos futuros. Las preposiciones *de* y *con*, así como los artículos *el* y *la*, también son resultados esperados, ya que son palabras de alta frecuencia en general.

### FPA: 10 coocurrencias más frecuentes hacia la derecha



**Figura 16** Coocurrencias del FPA en las dos posiciones inmediatas hacia la derecha

Las coocurrencias inmediatamente después en el FPA (en las dos posiciones a la derecha) presentan un patrón similar al FPE, incluyendo entre las alternativas más comunes las preposiciones de alta frecuencia *in*, *auf*, y *von*, el artículo definido *das* y la conjunción *dass*. Dos hallazgos destacados en el FPA son los adverbios *auch* e *immer*, que sugieren que el FPA suele estar acompañado por un adverbio, aunque su estructura por sí misma ya indique futuridad.

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A diferencia del español, el FPA muestra la negación *nicht* con la frecuencia más alta. Esto se debe a que la negación en alemán es mucho más flexible en su posición dentro de la frase en comparación con el español, donde suele colocarse antes de la estructura del FPE. Es interesante notar la ausencia de verbos en las coocurrencias más frecuentes del alemán, lo que se explica nuevamente por su estructura sintáctica mucho más flexible que en español. El verbo puede aparecer lejos del auxiliar, algo que no sucede en español, donde la estructura del FPE debe mantenerse unida.

### Ejemplo didáctico

Al tomar en consideración los hallazgos de la presente investigación, se pueden generar ejercicios pertinentes para las clases de lengua en español que toman los hablantes de alemán y para las clases de lengua en alemán que toman los hispanohablantes. A continuación, se provee un ejemplo de estos tipos de ejercicios. Se intenta ser consistente con los hallazgos del estudio de corpus en lo que concierne las coocurrencias más frecuentes del FP en ambas lenguas. Además, al pedirles a los aprendices que subrayen los elementos del FP y de la negación, se les ayuda a notar las diferencias entre las lenguas con respecto a la ubicación de estos elementos en la estructura oracional.

**Tabla 7** Ejercicio 1, ordenar frases usando el FP

1.	<b>En cada una de las siguientes premisas, ordena las palabras y frases en una oración en que uses el futuro perifrástico en español y en alemán. Subraya los verbos auxiliares y los verbos léxicos con color verde en ambas lenguas.</b>
a)	las Antillas – viajar – en avión – a las – ella
b)	in die Stadt – fahren – immer – mit dem Auto – sie
c)	llena – estar – pesada – la maleta – y
d)	voll – sein – schwer – der Koffer – und

**Tabla 8** Ejercicio 2, negar las frases del FP

2.	<b>Ahora niega las oraciones en ambas lenguas (escríbelas como una negación) y subraya los verbos auxiliares y el verbo léxico con color verde y la negación (o las partículas negativas) con color rojo.</b>
e)	
f)	
g)	
h)	

Las posibles respuestas a los ejercicios anteriores aparecen a continuación.

**Tabla 9** Posibles respuestas para el ejercicio 1

Ejercicio 1	Solución
a)	(Ella) <u>va</u> a <u>viajar</u> a las Antillas en avión.
b)	Sie <u>wird</u> <u>immer</u> mit dem Auto <u>in die Stadt</u> <u>fahren</u> .
c)	La maleta <u>va</u> a <u>estar</u> llena y pesada.
d)	Der Koffer <u>wird</u> <u>voll</u> und schwer <u>sein</u> .

**Tabla 10** Posibles respuestas para el ejercicio 2

Ejercicio 2	Solución
e)	(Ella) <u>no va</u> a <u>viajar</u> a las Antillas en avión.
f)	Sie <u>wird nicht</u> <u>immer</u> mit dem Auto <u>in die Stadt</u> <u>fahren</u> .
g)	La maleta <u>no va</u> a <u>estar</u> llena y pesada.
h)	Der Koffer <u>wird nicht</u> <u>voll</u> und schwer <u>sein</u> .

Luego de hacer los ejercicios, se podría pedir a los estudiantes que inventaran un diálogo en el que usen las frases, de forma que también practiquen las estructuras del FPE y del FPA en la expresión oral.

## Conclusión

Este estudio cuantitativo buscó identificar diferencias y similitudes en el uso del FP en el español y el alemán. En primer lugar, se realizó una comparación meticulosa y exhaustiva a nivel morfosintáctico entre el español y el alemán, basándose en los estándares establecidos por la literatura gramatical existente. Ambas lenguas demuestran la capacidad de expresar el futuro utilizando un VA junto con un VL en forma infinitiva. Las

diferencias, principalmente sintácticas, incluyen que en español la estructura es fija, con una preposición intercalada entre el VA y el VL, y frecuentemente omite el uso del sujeto. Por otro lado, el alemán muestra una flexibilidad sintáctica superior, permitiendo separaciones considerables entre el VA y el VL o su contigüidad, con el VA posicionado a la izquierda o a la derecha del VL.

En segundo lugar, se efectuó un minucioso análisis de corpus que facilitó una comparación directa y basada en evidencia empírica entre las dos lenguas. Al realizar un contraste cuantitativo, se evidenció que el alemán presenta una tendencia más marcada hacia el FP en comparación con el español. Esta diferenciación puede atribuirse a la existencia del futuro morfológico en español, una estructura ausente en alemán. En relación con el uso de los sujetos, los resultados fueron similares para ambas lenguas: la tercera persona singular se utiliza predominantemente, seguida por la primera persona plural y la tercera persona plural.

Al analizar las coocurrencias en las dos posiciones inmediatamente antes (a la izquierda) e inmediatamente después (a la derecha), encontramos grupos de palabras muy similares desde un punto de vista gramatical, como partículas negativas, preposiciones y verbos de alta frecuencia. Sin embargo, la sintaxis flexible del alemán también revela diferencias significativas en las posiciones sintácticas. En algunos casos, los patrones parecen estar invertidos: en el FPE, los verbos suelen estar a la derecha, mientras que en alemán aparecen frecuentemente a la izquierda. Además, el FPA se caracteriza por un predominio de adverbios (*immer, auch*) y conjunciones (*und, aber*), mientras que en el FPE predominan los pronombres (*lo, le*) y reflexivos (*se, nos*). No se encontraron diferencias significativas en el uso de grupos semánticos.

Una de las limitaciones de este trabajo fue que se enfocó únicamente en las dos posiciones que están inmediatamente a la izquierda y a la derecha del FP. Tampoco se incluyeron otras estructuras que pueden expresar futuridad, como el presente con valor futuro en ambas lenguas, o el futuro morfológico en español. Estas limitaciones se pueden atender en estudios futuros. Un desafío fue realizar el análisis de las dos posiciones exactas ubicadas a la izquierda y a la derecha del FP, especialmente en alemán, debido al diverso uso de la palabra *werden* y a la sintaxis altamente flexible de la lengua alemana. Existe la posibilidad de que los resultados incluyan falsos positivos, lo cual es prácticamente inevitable en un estudio cuantitativo con grandes cantidades de datos. En un estudio futuro, con más tiempo y con recursos tecnológicos más avanzados, esto podría revisarse.

Finalmente, se creó un ejemplo didáctico que toma en cuenta los hallazgos encontrados. El ejemplo busca mostrar a los estudiantes las diferencias en la posición de las estructuras sintácticas de los VA y VL en ambas lenguas, además de resaltar la posición opuesta en ambas lenguas de la partícula negativa. También se incluyeron otras palabras de alta frecuencia cercanas a los verbos auxiliares, como el artículo definido, el verbo *ser/sein* y la conjunción *y/und*. En la segunda tarea, los estudiantes deben negar la frase y

centrarse en la posición de la palabra *no/nicht*, que suele encontrarse en español a la izquierda del verbo auxiliar, mientras que en alemán aparece a la derecha en oraciones principales. Queda evidenciado cómo un estudio de corpus preliminar a la enseñanza puede ser muy valioso al momento de cubrir el FP en un salón de clases del español o del alemán como segunda lengua. Estudios de este tipo sirven para preparar ejercicios que reflejen el uso más natural y frecuente de las estructuras cubiertas al igual que recomendaciones para los estudiantes que se fundamentan, no solo en lo que dicen los libros de texto, sino en lo que dicen las personas en su diario vivir.

Basado en las conclusiones de esta investigación, se anticipa que en el futuro será posible el desarrollo de más materiales didácticos. Un área de interés particular es la explotación del uso del FP por parte de los estudiantes puertorriqueños, investigado mediante cuestionarios dentro del marco de otra investigación experimental en curso por el investigador principal. Este estudio se amplía para comprender cómo los estudiantes de la Universidad de Puerto Rico usan, perciben, interpretan o comprenden el tiempo futuro, sumergiéndose en aspectos tanto lingüísticos como culturales. La investigación propone extenderse a estructuras verbales similares en español y alemán, como el uso del presente con valor de futuro y el pasado compuesto con verbo auxiliar, examinando las similitudes y diferencias translingüísticas.

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# **L3/LN ACQUISITION OF THE MANDARIN ONSET VOICED PALATAL APPROXIMANT /j/ BY PUERTO RICAN BILINGUALS**

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## **Abstract**

Puerto Ricans are part of a bilingual landscape of mostly native Spanish speakers who have had language contact with English. The present study examined the effect that Puerto Rican bilinguals' two language systems had on the acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ in Mandarin Chinese by means of a cross-sectional study involving reading tasks for Mandarin students from the University of Puerto Rico and acceptability judgment tests from a native speaker of Mandarin. The Cumulative-Enhancement Model (CEM) and the Typological Primacy Model (TPM) were put to the test because the participants were subject to cross-linguistic influence (CLI) from their first (L1) and second language (L2). There was potential to have negative transfer from the Spanish [+ obstruent] /j/ and positive transfer from the English [- obstruent] /j/ in the process of phonological acquisition through the reading of the <y> grapheme. Most participants were experienced L1 language learners who had a slight language dominance towards their L1 according to their Bilingual Language Profile (BLP), but were, moreover, balanced bilinguals with a strong L2 system. Furthermore, there was not much negative transfer from their L1, and it was concluded that the TPM holds true in this context. However, there was inconclusive evidence regarding the CEM.

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**Key terms:** Mandarin Chinese, phonological acquisition, third language acquisition (TLA), cross-linguistic influence (CLI), Cumulative Enhancement Model (CEM), Typological Primacy Model (TPM)

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Bilingualism in Puerto Rico**

Torres González (2002) states that there were six language policies instituted between 1898 and 1949 in which English was forced to be the medium of instruction in the public

school system of PR. From 1900 to 1903, the medium of instruction in elementary schools was Spanish while in high school, it was English. From 1903 to 1916, the language of instruction was English throughout all grade levels, K-12. From 1916-1934, the language of instruction was Spanish until the 4th grade, 5th grade was a year of language transition, and from 6th grade on, the medium of instruction was English. From 1934 to 1937, the language policy was brought back to the original policy that was in effect between 1900 and 1903. Then, from 1937 to 1942, yet again, they reverted to a previous language policy, the one that had been instituted between 1916 and 1934. Finally, the language policy in effect during the 1942-1949 era was that Spanish would be the language of instruction until the 6th grade and it would change to English from the 7th grade onward.

After the failed attempt to make English the main language in the public schools in PR, Spanish has mainly been the language of instruction and English has been taught as a subject in itself. Nevertheless, both Pousada (2017) and Torres González (2002) would argue that the language planning and language policies that have taken place after 1949 have also not been successful in building a bilingual landscape in PR. However, what we can conclude from the history of bilingualism in PR is that Spanish has mainly been the first language of the students while English has been the second language that they have learned in school.

## **1.2. Third language acquisition**

Given that the linguistic landscape of PR is a context of language contact between English and Spanish, when speakers of this language community learn Mandarin Chinese in a formal setting, they are in a Third Language Acquisition (TLA) setting. There is an ongoing academic debate about whether TLA is different from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and, thus, the field of TLA is arguably new. However, according to Rothman et al. (2013), TLA is different from SLA because the L3 learner has more previous linguistic experience in comparison to an L2 learner. Therefore, the L3 learner has access to more grammatical properties from their Universal Grammar (UG). Third language learners are experienced learners of a non-native system who have a different competence in comparison to L2 learners (Cenoz et al., 2001).

Because this is a young field of study, there are disagreements regarding the boundaries of its paradigm and theoretical framework. Nevertheless, according to Cabrelli Amaro et al. (2012), some of the major questions addressed in this field concern the classification of an L3 in adult acquisition when the learner is a simultaneous bilingual, a heritage speaker, or a learner of multiple foreign languages. Is a language system considered an L3 because of the chronological order of acquisition or does language proficiency play a role in the categorization of an L3? This is an important question to consider in this particular research because some participants are college students who are learning or have learned more foreign languages.

There are different approaches to TLA, such as the sociolinguistic approach, the educational approach, and the psycholinguistic approach (Rothman et al., 2013). In this research paper, we approach TLA from the psycholinguistic perspective. Some of the major psycholinguistic models of TLA include the Cumulative-Enhancement Model (CEM), the L2 Status Factor Model, and the Typological Primacy Model (TPM) (Cabrelli Amaro et al., 2012). These models are part of an ongoing academic debate about the source of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in TLA. According to Rothman et al. (2013), CLI from the L1 or L2 in TLA may be due to factors such as recency of use, L2 language proficiency, typological distance, psychoaffective factors, or the respective L1/L2 statuses. These models, the CEM and the TPM, will be discussed with more detail in sections 1.4 and 1.5 respectively. Nonetheless, what these models agree on is the concept of transfer, which will be further discussed in the next section (1.3).

### 1.3. Cross-linguistic influence

The concept of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) is a widely studied phenomenon in the fields of SLA and TLA. Interference, as it was also usually named, was originally introduced by Robert Lado. According to Lado (1957), when someone learns a second language, they can transfer linguistic habits from their native language. When the linguistic traits are present in both languages, it is positive transfer, but when they are not shared by both languages, then it is negative transfer. However, this term has fallen into disuse in academic discourse during the past few decades.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), this might be because interference and contrastive analysis were linked to behaviorist theories of SLA. According to Saville-Troike (2012), the field of linguistics shifted from that former behaviorist approach to a more cognitivist approach with the revolution of Chomsky's Transformational-Generative (TG) Grammar. There has been an ongoing debate on the nomenclature of the concepts of language transfer and interference. However, the term that has been growing in use is cross-linguistic influence. According to Odlin (2003), one of the biggest obstacles in the field of CLI is that it presumes some sort of movement and there has been no research that has clearly detailed the cognitive processing behind that movement.

Nevertheless, there have been psycholinguistic studies in CLI involving language contact between Sino-Tibetan languages and European languages. For example, Chen et al. (2007) conducted a study involving L1 Chinese/L2 English bilinguals and native speakers of English by monitoring their event-related potential (ERP) responses to stimuli of English verb agreement violations. Chinese is a language that lacks verb conjugation and inflection. Thus, the ERP responses from both groups of participants were different. Even though, language production varied and some of the bilinguals performed well in behavioral responses, some L2 speakers did violate the subject-verb agreement constraints of the English language, no matter how fluent or proficient they were. Based on

the cognitive data retrieved from the ERPs from this study, one might be able to conclude that there is CLI in cognitive processing of a second language system.

In fact, according to McManus (2021), there is research that shows that CLI occurs in both directions, from L1 to L2 (progressive transfer) and vice versa (regressive transfer). Therefore, pertaining to the present study, in the process of studying CLI in L3/Ln Mandarin acquisition by Puerto Rican bilinguals, there might be some data that show CLI between the speakers' L1 and L2. It is possible that there is negative transfer from Puerto Ricans' L2 English onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ graphemic representation <y> in a reading task of their L1 Spanish onset voiced palatal fricative /j/. If the participants have a strong L2 system, it might influence their L1 articulation.

#### **1.4. The cumulative-enhancement model**

As mentioned before, one of the main psycholinguistic models of TLA is the Cumulative-Enhancement model. According to Flynn et al. (2004), the CEM proposes that all known languages play a role in the acquisition of a third or additional language. They researched the acquisition of L3 English by bilingual speakers of L1 Kazakh and L2 Russian. Their study compared the results with previous research done on L1 and L2 acquisition of three types of restrictive relative clauses in English: lexically headed relative clauses with semantic content, lexically headed relative clauses without semantic content, and free relative clauses.

Previous L2 English acquisition research of these clauses by L1 speakers of Spanish and Japanese respectively concluded that in the native Spanish speakers, the free relative clauses did not precede the lexically headed relative clauses, in contrast to the native Japanese speakers. It was assumed that this was due to the fact that Japanese is a head-final language system while Spanish is a head-initial system. The Japanese learners of English were acquiring these structures for the first time just like L1 English speakers learn their relative clauses for the first time, i.e., the free relative clauses precede the lexically headed relative clauses.

On the other hand, the L3 English learners had a head-final L1 system and a head-initial L2 system and the free relative clauses did not precede the lexically headed clauses either, in the process of their acquisition of L3 English. Thus, it was concluded that their L1 Kazakh did not have a privileged role on their L3 acquisition, and their L2 Russian was an advantage to their acquisition of L3 English. This means that TLA is cumulative and previously learned languages do help in the process of acquiring an additional language. Up to that point, this was only an anecdotal and qualitative assertion made by multilinguals, but this study legitimized the CEM.

However, this study does not address order of acquisition. They point out that the successful CLI from L2 Russian to L3 English might be because Russian was the language system learned right before English. Thus, in the Bardel and Falk (2007) study, they put four CLI hypotheses to the test in the L3 acquisition of Swedish and Dutch syntax. The

four hypotheses were: the non-transfer hypothesis, the L1 transfer hypothesis, the L2 transfer hypothesis, and the CEM. The non-transfer hypothesis assumes that there is no CLI. The L1 transfer hypothesis assumes that there is L1 CLI primacy, while the L2 transfer hypothesis assumes that there is an L2 status factor. The CEM assumes that there is potential CLI from both the L1 and the L2.

The participants consisted of two heterogeneous groups. One group was made up of five female participants whose target language was Swedish. Their L1s included Dutch, English, and Hungarian while their L2s were English, German, and Dutch. The other group consisted of four participants (1 female) whose target language was Dutch or Swedish. Their L1s were Swedish, Italian, and Albanian while their L2s were English, German, and Dutch. The target structure was placement negation, which is post-verbal in the target languages under study.

The results favored the L2 transfer hypothesis, which brought forward the L2 status factor. As mentioned before, this was a concern that was addressed by Flynn et al. (2004). However, due to the heterogeneous nature of Bardel and Falk's (2007) participants and their bilingual profiles, the conclusions are questionable regarding their opposition to the CEM. Nevertheless, this research points out that the CEM asserts that previously learned languages can help in the acquisition of an additional language and that the more language systems that a foreign language learner knows, the easier it is for them to learn more, but it does not address the proximity in terms of language typology. Therefore, a new model was proposed as an extension to the CEM.

### **1.5. The typological primacy model**

The Typological Primacy Model (TPM) proposed by Rothman (2011) states that the acquisition of a third or additional language will draw on the most typologically similar language from the learner's linguistic repertoire. Rothman researched the L3 acquisition of a Romance language by two groups of bilingual speakers, one group had a Romance language as their L1, and the other group had another Romance language as their L2. The first group consisted of L3 learners of Spanish with L1 Italian and L2 English. The second group was made up of L3 learners of Portuguese whose L1 was English and L2 was Spanish.

Rothman wanted to examine whether their CLI was restricted to their previously learned language (L2), or the most typologically similar language system, regardless of the order of acquisition. To accomplish this, the two groups of participants had to undergo two experiments. The first one consisted of a semantic interpretation task and the second one was a context-based collocation task. The target structure of both experiments were determiner phrases (DPs) with post-nominal and pre-nominal adjectives.

The results indicated that both groups were able to accomplish the tasks successfully due to their previously learned Romance languages. Thus, their CLI came from typological proximity and not from the order of acquisition of their respective L1s and L2s.

However, as the study points out, the typological proximity is also based on the speaker's perception and awareness (psychotypology), and not necessarily on how similar the two language systems actually are. What it doesn't point out is that the TPM here seems to be based on general language typological proximity and not on specific linguistic traits. On the other hand, according to Rothman et al. (2013), some studies have concluded that CLI is a factor that can be applied to individual items or the entire system. In the case of L3/Ln Mandarin bilingual learners from Puerto Rico, their L1 and L2 are not similar, typologically or psychotypologically, to their target language in general, but they do have typological proximity in more specific domains of language and particular phonological and syntactic structures.

In a study by Villanueva (2011), the role of the linguistic proximity and the number of languages learned was researched in the acquisition of L3/L4 Spanish from speakers of L1 French/L2 English. The CLI from the participants' L1 and L2 on the acquisition of Spanish syntax was examined by means of a grammatical judgment test (GJT). The GJT consisted of Spanish sentences with syntactic structures that were grammatical in some, none, or all of the speakers' linguistic repertoires. If the participants responded positively to the sentences that were not grammatical in the L3/L4 but were grammatical in the L1 or L2, it was attributed to negative transfer (-T). If they responded positively to the sentences that are grammatical in both the target language, the L3/L4, and one of the two known languages, the L1 or L2, it was attributed to positive transfer (+T). There were eight grammatical variant sentences and further conclusions on whether there was +T, -T, or no transfer at all.

The author believed that there would be more positive transfer from French to Spanish because they are typologically closer than are English and Spanish. She also assumed that the participants with an additional language, the Spanish L4 learners, would outperform the Spanish L3 learners because they had a broader linguistic repertoire and cumulative linguistic experience. The researcher's results favored the earlier research conducted on the TPM but did not show any supporting evidence for the CEM model.

## **1.6. Phonology in third language acquisition**

According to Cabrelli Amaro et al. (2012), previous research shows an additive and facilitative effect of bilingualism in L3 phonology but focuses more on overall proficiency instead of specific linguistic experience. As for the role of the L1, prior research indicates that many L3 learners experience influence from their L1 accent and intonation patterns. Regarding the role of the L2, there is evidence of both positive and negative transfer in the acquisition of third language phonology. Various studies seem to show that there is not a privileged role of the L1 or L2 in L3 phonological acquisition. The research favors typological and psychotypological effects as driving factors of CLI in L3 phonology.

In Chen and Han (2019), the phonological acquisition of L3 Mandarin by native Cantonese speakers was studied. The research also favored the TPM.

Another research paper involving L3 phonological acquisition by Chen and Tian (2021) studied Cantonese L1 speakers of L2 Mandarin and L3 English. They examined the influence of language proficiency in the TLA of phonology. Reading aloud tasks, a questionnaire, and an interview were used for data collection. There was L1 influence found on both the L2 and L3 systems. The results also demonstrated evidence of L2 to L3 CLI and L2 to L1 regressive transfer. Typological distance was one of the factors involved, but they concluded that language proficiency was the driving factor to the CLI.

### **1.7. Phonological acquisition through reading**

Mathieu (2014) states that extralinguistic elements like written representations can contribute to the learner's SLA experience. In fact, according to de Groot (2013), the process of reading will activate sub-lexical memory units like phonological representations. When speakers of a native language that is Indo-European are in the process of learning a foreign language that uses an unfamiliar orthography like Chinese characters, it is useful to use alphabetic representations to learn the new language (Mathieu, 2014).

In fact, research shows that Chinese pinyin, the romanization of the Chinese logographic system, reinforces phonological acquisition of Mandarin as a foreign language (Guan et al., 2011). Therefore, to learn Mandarin as a foreign language, it is useful to learn phonology with the help of familiar graphemic representations. However, in the case of Puerto Rican bilinguals, this learning process would lead to a competition of three language systems when acquiring Mandarin as an L3/Ln, based on what has been stated thus far. That seems to be the case when learning the onset voiced palatal approximant which is represented by the *<y>* grapheme in Chinese pinyin. In the process of articulation, the production of the onset voiced palatal approximant competes with the phonemic representations of the *<y>* grapheme in Spanish and English.

### **1.8. The sounds represented by *<y>* in Spanish, English, and Mandarin**

In Chinese Mandarin, the voiced palatal approximant /j/ is represented by the *<y>* grapheme in the pinyin system (Lin, 2019). Pinyin is a romanization system for Chinese characters developed by the linguist Zhou Youguang and his colleagues around the 1950s (Wang, 2017). While the /j/ phoneme is not exclusively present as the onset of the syllable structure (Lin, 2019, see also Xún, 2019), the *<y>* grapheme is, in fact, exclusively an onset. According to Lin (2019), the possible syllabic constructions of finals in Mandarin could consist of the onset glides, vowels, and a nasal or offset glide. This syllable structure can be expressed as CGV[NG]). Lin (2019) states that there are a total of 12 syllable types in Mandarin Chinese. However, diphthongs and triphthongs are not included as separate possible sounds in the nucleus V of this syllable structure. Therefore, there are more possible syllable types. In syllables where the vowel *<u>* follows the

consonant <y> (<yu>, <yue>, <yuan>, and <yun>), it represents the voiced labio-palatal approximant /ɥ/ (Lin, 2019), or the high front rounded vowel /y/ (Xún, 2019). Neither of these sounds are part of the Spanish and English language systems. Therefore, under this classification, there would be no candidate for positive transfer from Puerto Rican's L1 and L2. For the purpose of this study, however, <yu> will be considered as [j<sup>w</sup>y].

According to Peña Arce (2015), the most common sound of the <y> grapheme in Puerto Rican Spanish is the voiced palatal fricative /j/. However, there are multiple realizations of the <ll> and <y> graphemes in the Spanish speaking world, including vocalic sounds as well as occlusive, fricative, affricate, and approximant consonant sounds (Quijada Van Den Berghe et al., 2023). In the Spanish language, the <y> grapheme can also represent the front high vowel /i/ and the <ll> grapheme can represent the /j/ phoneme or its allophones. There is an ongoing academic debate about the classification and geographic distribution of the sounds of <y> in Spanish. The debate mostly lies on the manner of articulation because most authors agree that it is voiced and palatal.

On the other hand, the <y> grapheme in English is also produced as the voiced palatal approximant /j/ (Zsiga, 2013). According to Kessler and Treiman (1997), the /j/ only occurs as the onset of a syllable or as part of a diphthong. The onset English <y> is classified as a semi-vowel and it is a consonant with one of the highest values in the sonority scale (O'Grady & Archibald, 2015). Because the onset English <y> is read as /j/, it is [- obstruent] in comparison to the reading of the Spanish <y> grapheme. Therefore, the phonological representation when reading <y> in Chinese Mandarin is typologically closer to English than Spanish. This would entail that Puerto Rican L3/Ln Mandarin students have the potential of drawing positive transfer from their English language system or negative transfer from their Spanish language system (See Table 1).

**Table 1** The sounds represented by <y>

Language	Sounds of the onset <y>	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation	Obstruent vs. Sonorant
Mandarin Chinese	/j/ or [ɥ] or [j <sup>w</sup> ]	palatal & labio-palatal	approximants	[- obstruent] [+ sonorant]
Puerto Rican Spanish	/j/ or [χ̪] or [dʒ̪]	palatal & palato-alveolar	fricative & affricate	[+ obstruent] [- sonorant]
American English	/j/	palatal	approximant	[-obstruent] [+sonorant]

### 1.9. Chinese SLA and TLA

The specific phenomenon upon which the present study is focused has not been researched before in the field of foreign language acquisition of Mandarin Chinese (see Zhang 2021). In Rodríguez-Fandiño and Tejada-Sánchez (2020), the phonological acquisition of L3 Mandarin by L1 Spanish/L2 English speakers was examined. Nevertheless, their target sounds were the retroflex consonants instead of the onset voiced palatal

approximant and the participants were not Puerto Rican. In Deng (2017), the acquisition of Mandarin as a second language by native Spanish speakers was examined. However, the participants did not speak Caribbean Spanish dialects as well as the previously reviewed paper and the study was concerned with the acquisition of syntax rather than phonological acquisition. In Freundlich (2016), the acquisition of L3 Mandarin by L1 Polish and L1 Ukrainian speakers was investigated. This study was concerned with CLI, but the participants were not native Spanish speakers. In Wu (2020), the acquisition of L2 Mandarin by English dominant heritage speakers and foreign language learners of L1 English was researched. This study also integrated CLI, but the target structures were referring expressions. The results displayed three types of CLI from L1 English in the L2 Mandarin narratives when introducing characters or maintaining reference to them. In Chang (2018), L2 acquisition of Mandarin Chinese by L1 English speakers was studied. This paper did not consider CLI and the participants were not native Spanish speakers, but it studied the effects of orthography in Chinese SLA and it is concerned with phonological acquisition.

### **1.10. TLA in Puerto Rico**

As for the previous research that has been conducted in the field of TLA in Puerto Rico, the following literature review will show that the subject matter of this paper has not been addressed before. Pérez Burgos (2022) examined the acquisition of L3 Mandarin by Puerto Rican bilinguals. However, the target structure of this study was the acquisition of the adjectival predicate, that is, the acquisition of syntax rather than phonological acquisition. The study was concerned with CLI, the CEM, and the TPM. Nevertheless, the L1 and L2 shared the same possible patterns of grammatical structures, but the target language did not share those same patterns. Therefore, there was no real candidate for positive transfer. The results showed that the learners with a higher proficiency were less likely to have negative transfer from their L1 and L2 systems. Conversely, in Santos (2020), the phonological acquisition of an L3 by Puerto Ricans was studied but the target language was Portuguese. Even though the study did not examine the L2 CLI, English was a candidate for positive transfer in the acquisition of the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ under study. However, the topic was approached from a pedagogical perspective. Likewise, in Beloucif (2017), the debate between implicit and explicit instruction in L3 acquisition was put to the test. The researcher examined the L3/Ln French acquisition of adverbial pronouns by Puerto Rican bilinguals. Some participants had L3 Italian or Portuguese in addition to L1 Spanish and L2 English. The study took CLI, the CEM, and the TPM into consideration. In this case, Italian was a candidate for positive transfer. The data supported the CEM and TPM models.

## 1.11. Justification

During research conducted by Ortega-Llebaria (1997), in an explanatory intelligibility test (EIT), there was a 27% deficit of the L2 English target sound /j/. The L1 Spanish participants, of which 30 were Puerto Ricans, produced the voiced palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ instead of the voiced palatal approximant /j/. Even though the severity of the deficit was not high, the study reflects that there is, in fact, a confusion that occurs between these two sounds in Spanish speakers with English as a second language (ESL). The study also shows that this could lead to intelligibility problems in ESL Spanish speakers. In the case of L3 Mandarin Chinese production, this [+ obstruent] vs. [- obstruent] confusion could also lead to problems of intelligibility.

In a study conducted by Repiso-Puigdelliura et al. (2021), the L2 Spanish acquisition of the voiced palatal fricative /j/ was examined. The participants were heritage speakers whose majority language was English. The data were obtained through reading tasks and the purpose was to research the influence that orthography had on their pronunciation. They wanted to know if there was interference between the pronunciation of the <y> and <ll> graphemes in English and their pronunciation in Spanish. The results showed that, in fact, there was CLI from their majority language in the reading of their minority language, when the target grapheme was <y>.

Based on my own subjective observations as an ESL educator, there are Puerto Rican students from different ages who mispronounce the <y> grapheme in English by producing more consonant-like sounds that could be /j/ or its variants instead of /j/, both in free speech and in reading. In fact, in my experience as a teacher of Spanish as a foreign language, L1 English students sometimes struggle to make this Spanish/English <y> distinction. As an instructor of Mandarin as a foreign language, I have also noticed that L3/Ln Mandarin students who are Puerto Rican bilinguals have also exhibited difficulties when acquiring the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/. When reading syllables with the Mandarin Chinese pinyin initial <y>, they sometimes produce sounds that could be misinterpreted as their minimal pair initials with the <j> and <zh> graphemes. According to Banegas and Cansoli (2020), “drawing upon the literature and our experience as teacher researchers, action research as methodology differs from other forms of inquiry in language education because it is context driven, practical, collaborative, cyclical, ecological, and transformative” (p. 179). In other words, based on the action research methodology, researchers who are also educators can recur to both academic literature and their own classroom experience to inquire about foreign language acquisition and instruction according to their practical context. For that reason, I have decided to include my own subjective observations as part of the justification of this research.

Given that the CLI negative transfer from Puerto Ricans’ L1 Spanish could potentially affect and influence their acquisition of L3/Ln Mandarin, the study of this linguistic phenomenon could lead to a further understanding on how to learn and teach Mandarin as a third language in Puerto Rico.

## 1.12. Objectives

This study has four main objectives, stated below.

1. To investigate L1 and L2 Cross-Linguistic Influence on L3/Ln acquisition
  - 1.1. To study the influence of English language proficiency on L3/Ln Mandarin acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ in the articulation of Puerto Rican bilinguals by means of reading tasks
  - 1.2. To study the influence of Spanish language proficiency on L3/Ln Mandarin acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ in the articulation of Puerto Rican bilinguals by means of reading tasks
2. To study the effect that the amount of previously learned languages has on Ln acquisition
3. To study the effects of language typology on third language acquisition
4. To examine the effects of exposure to and language contact with the target language, Mandarin, on the accuracy of pronunciation
5. To examine the effect of the L1 and L2 recency of use in L3/Ln language acquisition

## 1.13. Research questions

Based on the study objectives, the following research questions are proposed.

1. Is there L1 and L2 Cross-Linguistic Influence on the L3/Ln Mandarin acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ in Puerto Rican bilinguals?
  - 1.1. Is there positive transfer from English in the L3/Ln Mandarin phonological acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/?
  - 1.2. Is there negative transfer from Spanish in the L3/Ln Mandarin phonological acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/?
2. Does the number of previously learned languages affect the acquisition of an additional language?
3. Does language typology influence third language acquisition?
4. What are the effects of language contact with and exposure to Mandarin on pronunciation accuracy?
5. Does L1 and L2 recency of use affect Cross-Linguistic Influence in L3/Ln language acquisition?

## 1.14. Independent variables

This study will examine the effect that four independent variables have on reading pronunciation accuracy; these variables are:

1. English language proficiency level,
2. Number of previously learned languages,
3. Time of language contact and exposure to Mandarin Chinese, and
4. L1 and L2 recency of use.

## **1.15. Dependent variables**

The effect that the independent variables have on the following two dependent variables will be examined:

1. General reading accuracy (native-like pronunciation).
2. Reading accuracy (native-like pronunciation) of the L3/Ln onset voiced palatal approximant /j/.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

#### **2.1.1. Demographic, educational, and language learning information**

This research was conducted with three groups of Mandarin students from two University of Puerto Rico campuses: Mayagüez Campus (UPRM, G1) and Río Piedras Campus (UPRRP, G2 and G3). The participants were college students who were sequential or simultaneous bilinguals of L1-Spanish and L2-English. The three groups of participants had varying levels of Mandarin Chinese experience and proficiency: G1, from UPRM, had basic proficiency, and G2 and G3, from UPRRP, had beginner and intermediate/advanced proficiency, respectively.

The six participants in G1 were first semester students from the basic Chinese course in the UPRM Mandarin curriculum. They had not finished their first semester and they met three times a week for 50 minutes with a professor for regular classes. They did not have language laboratory contact hours with another professor, as UPRRP students had, but they did use the same books that UPRRP students used to learn Mandarin. G1 had a balanced gender ratio with 50% female participants. The participants were 18-23 years old and had a heterogeneous pool of birthplaces. They all started learning Spanish from birth and they all started learning English around or before six years of age. Two participants reported being simultaneous bilinguals. None of the participants had started learning Mandarin before their UPRM courses. Three participants had learned one or two additional languages (Korean or ASL).

G2 consisted of eight participants who were second semester students from the basic intensive Chinese course in the UPRRP Mandarin program. During the first two semesters of this curricular sequence, the students meet five times a week for 50 minutes with a professor for regular classes and five times a week for 30 minutes with another professor for a language laboratory. All participants from G2 were females born in the San Juan metropolitan area of Puerto Rico, who were 19-22 years old. They all started learning Spanish from birth and they had a mean English language learning age of five years. One participant reported to be a simultaneous bilingual; 25% of them reported to have started learning Mandarin before their UPRRP courses. Only one of the eight participants had not learned an additional language other than Spanish, English, or Chinese. The rest of the participants had learned one or two additional languages (German, French, Portuguese, or Korean).

G3 was comprised of eight participants who had completed, at least, the third semester of Mandarin Chinese in the UPRRP Mandarin curriculum. G3 had one male and seven female participants who were 19-29 years old. They all started learning Spanish from birth and they had a mean English language learning age of five years. Two participants reported being simultaneous bilinguals. Three participants reported having started learning Mandarin before their UPRRP courses. The mean amount of time studying Mandarin in G3 was 3.4 years with a standard deviation of 1.4 years, a maximum of six years, and a minimum of 1.5 years. All participants had learned between one and three additional languages other than Spanish, English, or Chinese (German, French, Portuguese, Korean, Russian, Arab, Italian, Japanese, or ASL). G2 and G3 were somewhat homogeneous in their university educational background. Most participants were language learning specialists, they had learned various additional languages, and they had had daily language contact with Mandarin for over six months, unlike G1 (See Table 2).

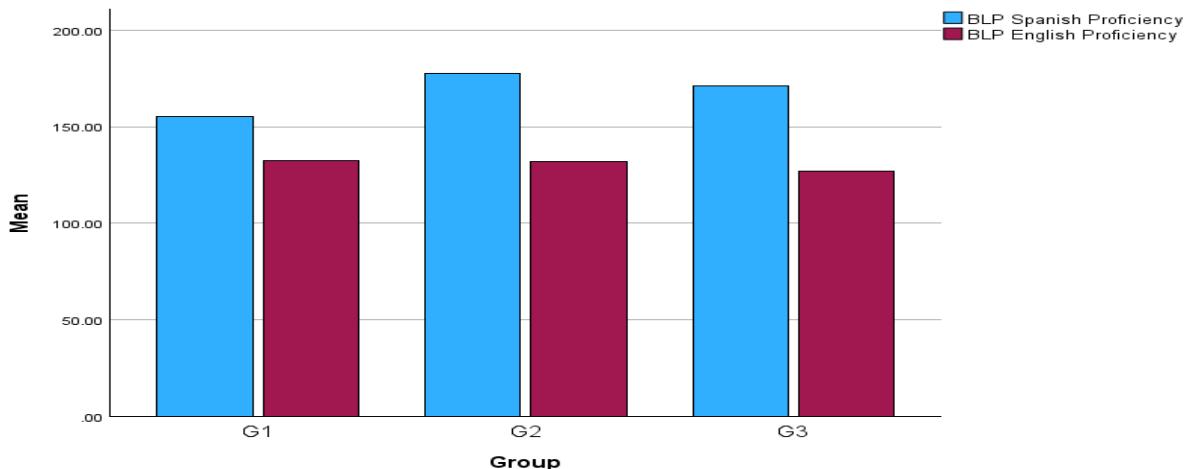
**Table 2** Demographic, educational, and language learning information

Group	Age	Gender	College Major	Spanish Language Status	Bilingual (L2 English) Status	Years of L3 Chinese Learning	Additional Languages Learned
G1 (UPRM)	18-23	Female (50%)	Engineering (67%)	L1 (100%)	Sequential (67%)	0.5	0-2
G2 (UPRRP)	19-22	Female (100%)	Modern Languages (75%)	L1 (100%)	Sequential (88%)	1	0-2
G3 (UPRRP)	19-29	Female (88%)	Modern Languages (75%)	L1 (100%)	Sequential (75%)	1.5-6	1-3

### 2.1.2. Bilingual language profile

In the entry questionnaire, after answering the demographic questions, the participants took a self-assessment test of their bilingual language history, language use, language attitudes, and language proficiency. These four components were used to determine each participant's Bilingual Language Profile (BLP). The BLP is an assessment developed by the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) from University of Texas at Austin. The total score of the BLP adds up to 218 points per language. The English BLP is subtracted from the Spanish BLP to get a language dominance score between -218 and 218 points. The closer the score is to 0, the more balanced the bilingual participant is. A negative score entails English dominance while a positive score entails a Spanish dominance. The results indicated that the three groups were balanced bilinguals with a similarly strong L2 English system and a slight inclination of language dominance towards their L1 Spanish. However, the participants in G1 were more balanced bilinguals, in comparison to the participants from G2 and G3 (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1** L1 Spanish and L2 English bilingual language profile (BLP) graph **2.2. In-**



### struments

The participants filled out two questionnaires: an entry questionnaire and an exit questionnaire. A demographic and linguistic profile questionnaire was provided at the beginning of the study (See Appendix 5.1). The participants answered questions about their personal information and did a self-assessment of their Spanish/English bilingual profile. In the exit questionnaire, the participants were also asked about the language of instruction, explicit instruction, and how they learned the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ (See Appendix 5.2). Both questionnaires were administered online through Google Forms.

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The material used for the reading tasks of this study was a Power Point presentation with six lists of words, two in Spanish, two in English, and two in Mandarin Chinese pinyin. When the participants were reading, there was one word per slide, some slides had instructions on them, and other slides had beginning/ending prompts. The corresponding Chinese characters were shown in the Mandarin reading tasks and neither the Mandarin pinyin list had tones, nor the Spanish list had accents written on the words. The document was shown to the participants on a tablet.

Each of the six lists had 28 disyllabic words (See Tables 3 and 4); seven target words that started with the <y> grapheme and seven distractor words with each of the other three onset graphemes (<b>, <p>, and <r>). The words were placed in a random order, but no consecutive words started with the same letter. Each of the 14 possible onset <y> syllables in the Mandarin language were read once. In the first list, S4 and S7 are syllables that start with <yu> and both are transcribed as [j<sup>w</sup>]. In the second list, S13 and S14 are also labialized palatal approximants because they are followed by a high front rounded vowel. The participants were audio recorded with a Marantz PMD660 digital audio recorder while reading the lists and texts out loud in the three languages.

**Table 3** Target words in the first Mandarin list

Target Syllable Code	Pinyin Transcription of Word	Word in Chinese Characters	Target Syllable IPA Transcription	English Translation of Word
S1	ye cai	叶菜	/je/	vegetable/s
S2	yan jing	眼睛	/jen/	eye/s
S3	ya chi	牙齿	/ja/	tooth/teeth
S4	yu you	鱼油	[j <sup>w</sup> y]	fish oil
S5	you hua	油画	/jow/	oil painting
S6	yin hang	银行	/jin/	bank
S7	yuan gong	员工	[j <sup>w</sup> en]	staff

**Table 4** Target words in the second Mandarin list

Target Syllable Code	Pinyin Transcription of Word	Word in Chinese Characters	Target Syllable IPA Transcription	English Translation of Word
S8	ying guo	英国	/jin/	England
S9	yong yi	泳衣	/jɔŋ/	swimsuit
S10	yao shi	钥匙	/jaw/	key/s
S11	yi sheng	医生	/ji/	doctor
S12	yang rou	羊肉	/jaŋ/	lamb
S13	yun duo	云朵	[j <sup>w</sup> yn]	clouds
S14	yue liang	月亮	[j <sup>w</sup> ye]	moon

The pronunciation of the 14 target syllables was judged by means of an Acceptability Judgment Test (AJT; See Appendix 5.4). The syllables were clipped from the audio recordings of the participants' readings. Without seeing the target syllable, a native speaker first wrote down what they heard after each utterance. After seeing the target syllable, a 6-point Likert scale was provided, and the native speaker chose how accurate the utterance was, based on native speaker pronunciation. Then, for each syllable, the native speaker reported if there was a non-target pronunciation perceived in the initial or final sound, in both, or in neither. The AJT was administered as an online questionnaire in Google Forms.

G1 also read two additional Chinese texts that had 17 target words (1-3 syllables) with the target sounds in the first, second, and/or third syllable. The two texts had their corresponding Chinese characters and the tone marks on top of the pinyin syllables. There were 29 types of Chinese words with the target sound (See Table 5).

**Table 5** Target words in the Mandarin lists

Text #1	Text #2
yǒu(2), yī, yīgè, yīzhǐ(2), yīngguó, nánpéng- yǒu*, yào, yǔyán, yě, xīyǔ, yīnyuè*, yang, yā, yóuyōng, yùn	yòng(2), yǒu/méiyǒu, yàoshi, xiāngyào*, xūyào, zhòngyào*, yuǎn, jiànyì, yībān, yībùfèn, yīnggāi, yīnwèi, yījīng, yě, fúwùyuán

\*These target syllables are preceded by a nasal and have a higher potential of showing negative transfer from L1 Spanish.

Finally, a questionnaire for the Mandarin professors was administered online through Google Forms (See Appendix 5.3). It first asked them if Puerto Rican students sometimes have non-target pronunciations of the pronunciation of the <y> initial. Then, they were asked about the frequency of this non-target pronunciation (always, usually, sometimes, never) and when they encounter it (when reading, speaking, ...). Lastly, they were asked about the sound that was often heard and perceived by them when they encountered this non-target pronunciation.

### 2.3. Procedure

The students were recruited with the help of the Chinese professors. The participants were informed about the study during their Mandarin Chinese classes. Interested students were then contacted by the principal investigator through their institutional UPR email. Once they decided to participate, they were sent the Google Forms link with the authorization form and the entry questionnaire. After that, we met in person to complete the reading tasks. The reading task data from G1 was collected at the Carlos E. Chardon building in UPRM. The data from G1 and G2 was collected at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Luis Pales Matos building in UPRRP.

The participants were given instructions in Spanish about what they would do during the reading task. Before each text, they were prompted to read the text in the target language. They were informed of this during the Spanish explanation and instructions at the beginning. A green image prompted them to start reading and swiping to the next word in the Power Point presentation and a red image prompted them to stop. The participants read the L1-Spanish list, the L2-English list, and the Mandarin pinyin list (i.e., their L3/Ln) in different sequences in order to counterbalance the effect of recency of use. They read the six texts in the following two sequences, L1>L2>L3/Ln and L2>L1>L3/Ln. Their reading was audio recorded and their reading time was monitored. After all the participants had finished the reading task, they were sent the exit questionnaire. The target syllables were clipped from the recordings using Audacity and the audio clips were attached to the AJT. Then, the AJT was completed by the UPRRP Mandarin Chinese laboratory professor. After the AJT was administered, the three Chinese professors from UPRRP and the Chinese professor from UPRM were sent the professor questionnaire, which was completed online.

## 2.4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses correspond to this study's objectives and research questions.

1. There will be CLI in the L3/Ln Mandarin phonological acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ when reading the <y> grapheme.
  - 1.1. There will be more positive transfer, if the participants report a higher proficiency in their English BLP.
  - 1.2. There will be more negative transfer, if the participants report a lower proficiency in their English BLP.
2. The results will favor the CEM and students who have learned more additional languages will outperform those who haven't.
3. Participants with a higher English BLP will have a higher reading accuracy of the <y> grapheme in Mandarin, supporting the TPM.
4. Time of language contact and exposure will have a positive effect on pronunciation accuracy of the <y> grapheme and the most accurate results on the articulation of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ in Mandarin Chinese will be from G3.
5. Spanish recency of use will produce more negative transfer and English recency of use will produce more positive transfer.

## 2.5. Data analysis

The audio clips were listened to by a native Mandarin Chinese speaker to complete the AJT. The quantitative and qualitative data was stored for analysis. Then, the data from the AJT and questionnaires were processed with SPSS statistical software to analyze and display the results in figures and tables. To test the first and third hypotheses, a correlation was run between the English BLP scores and the amount of affricate utterances of <y> (<zh>/[tʂ] or <j>/[tɕ]) produced per participant, according to the AJT. To test the second hypothesis, a correlation was run between the number of languages learned per participant and the quantity of affricate utterances produced per participant. To test the fourth hypothesis, a correlation was run between the three groups of participants and the number of affricate utterances produced per participant. To test the fifth hypothesis, the quantity of affricate utterances produced per participant were compared between the first and the second lists.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Exit questionnaire results

15 of the 22 participants from G1, G2, and G3 filled out this questionnaire. The results from seven exit questionnaires showed that they learned the pronunciation of the Mandarin pinyin <y> grapheme by comparing it to the English pronunciation of <y>. Therefore, these participants had a metalinguistic awareness of their similarity. Four participants reported to have learned the pronunciation of this grapheme by relating it to the pronunciation of the Spanish vowel <i>. The results of this questionnaire also showed

that both English and Spanish are used in the Mandarin Chinese courses of both universities.

### **3.2. Professor questionnaire results**

The three professors from UPRRP and the only professor from UPRM filled out this questionnaire. The results showed that all four professors agreed on the fact that Puerto Ricans sometimes have problems (non-target pronunciations) when learning the initial <y> sound. All of them reported that Puerto Rican students encounter this problem at the initial stages of their interlanguage development, and when they express themselves orally. 75% of the professors reported that the students encounter this problem when reading or during dictation. The professors reported that the students' pronunciation of <y> sometimes sounds like the Spanish obstruent consonant or the Mandarin pinyin <j>, <r>, and <zh>.

### **3.3 General results and discussion**

The results from the AJT for G2 and G3 showed that there were only three instances in which the [+ obstruent] Spanish-like affricate onset consonant sound occurred. Initially, these instances where the [+ obstruent] <y> was produced were not enough to analyze the quantitative data and support the hypotheses. For that reason, a third group with a lower proficiency and a lower frequency of language contact (G1) was included in the study, in order to see if CLI emerged in a more basic stage of L3/Ln acquisition. Nevertheless, after retrieving the data from G1 and running statistical analyses, few appeared to have statistical significance. The number of participants and [+ obstruent] affricate onset consonants were not sufficient to draw strong statistical conclusions. Thus, a questionnaire for the Mandarin Chinese professors was developed to further inquire about their qualitative observations of this linguistic phenomenon.

Even though G2 and G3 did not present much evidence of negative transfer from their Spanish <y>, the results showed that there were some issues in the production of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ by Puerto Rican bilinguals from the three groups. There were 18 instances where the affricate pronunciation of <j> and <zh> was produced among the list readings of all groups and the text readings by G1. In five of these instances, the target syllables started with the labialized voiced palatal approximant [j<sup>w</sup>]. Therefore, this might be because /y/ and the high front rounded vowel /y/ are not candidates for positive transfer from the participants' L1 and L2 systems. However, this could be further examined to see if the participants' L3/Ln French or German had an influence on those who did have an accurate pronunciation of these target syllables.

There were also some instances where the approximant pronunciation of <r> was perceived to be produced by G2 and G3 in place of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/. The Mandarin Chinese pinyin <r> has been transcribed to the IPA as the voiced retroflex sibilant fricative /z/ (Lin, 2019) or as the voiced retroflex approximant /ɿ/ (Chen,

2024). In addition, there were a few other instances in which other vowel and consonant sounds were produced instead of the /j/. As a matter of fact, S7 (yuan) was the syllable with the lowest mean pronunciation accuracy score and the highest amount of inaccurate variant utterances. This target syllable begins with the labialized voiced palatal approximant, it had instances where the onset approximant <r> was produced by the participants, and it ends in a nasal coda.

In fact, there was negative transfer from the Spanish nasal coda /n/. In Spanish, the voiced velar nasal [ŋ] is an allophone of the voiced alveolar nasal /n/. However, in English and Mandarin Chinese, these two sounds are in contrastive distribution because they are phonologically distinct. In some dialects of the English language, there might be some language variation where these nasal codas wouldn't constitute a minimal pair. However, this non-distinction of these nasal codas, whether from the participants' L1 or L2, would imply negative transfer in their acquisition of their L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, the first hypothesis turned out to be partially confirmed by the negative transfer of both the few affricate readings of <y> and the inaccurate minimal pair distinction of the nasal codas. There was indeed some CLI in the L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese phonological acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ when reading the <y> grapheme. The observations reported by the Mandarin Chinese professors also support this conclusion. However, the results were not sufficient to support hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2. Most participants were balanced bilinguals with a higher Spanish BLP and the correlations run between the BLP scores and AJT results did not show any favorable conclusions towards these hypotheses regarding the [+obstruent] affricate onset <y> realizations.

However, the Spanish BLP and average pronunciation accuracy correlation concluded that the higher a Spanish BLP was, the lower the average pronunciation accuracy was. The English BLP and the percent of non-target nasal codas correlation showed that the higher an English BLP was, the lower the percent was of nasal coda problems per participant. Only one syllable from G1's reading of the second text could have had negative transfer because of the influence from the post-nasal affricate realizations of <y> in Spanish.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the results did not show any conclusive evidence to deny or confirm the CEM. Students who had learned more additional languages did not show a tendency of higher performance than those who had none. There were only three students from G1 and one student from G2 who hadn't learned an additional language. No statistical significance was found after running correlations between the number of participants and the quantity of languages learned versus the average pronunciation accuracy scores, the amount of affricate onset <y> produced, and the amount of nasal coda non-target productions.

It could be argued that the third hypothesis was partially confirmed since, even though the participants had a Spanish BLP language dominance, they did have a high English

BLP and were relatively balanced bilinguals. The fact that there weren't many instances where the [+obstruent] affricate onset consonant occurred might be because these participants are proficient English speakers. The exit questionnaire supports this claim with the participants reporting the knowledge they have about the phonological similarity between the English and Mandarin Chinese <y>. As a matter of fact, the students from G2 and G3 were heard speaking among themselves in both languages, their L1 and L2, during the process of recruiting participants and collecting data. Therefore, due to their strong English language system, it could be argued that the results favored the TPM. The results from G2 and G3 were contrary to what was posited in the fourth hypothesis. The second semester students mostly outperformed the students that had taken four or more semesters of Mandarin Chinese. However, the *t*-test results showed the differences between the groups to not be statistically significant. On the other hand, the participants from G1, who hadn't finished their first semester yet, did produce more affricate onset consonant sounds. However, these participants read an additional two texts and those results are difficult to compare with the results from the first two groups. Thus, the time of language contact and exposure did not necessarily have a positive effect on pronunciation accuracy of the <y> grapheme and thus, there are inconclusive results regarding the fourth hypothesis.

There was not enough evidence to confirm the fifth hypothesis. It could be argued that the recency of use did not affect CLI. The participants didn't show a higher pronunciation accuracy during the reading of the first list, after reading the first English list, nor did they show a lower pronunciation accuracy during the reading of the second list, after reading the second Spanish list. In fact, the students from G2 and G3 were heard codeswitching during the process of recruiting participants and collecting data. They did orally report that it was challenging for them to change languages to read the three lists, but their performance showed that recency of use was not a driving factor to positive or negative transfer.

The average pronunciation accuracy and general good performance on the part of the participants implies that college educated Puerto Ricans from generation Y and Z, are generally balanced bilinguals that are successful in achieving phonological third language acquisition in adulthood. The results should also imply that both the UPRRP and UPRM Mandarin Chinese programs are effective in their pedagogical approaches and techniques in the teaching of Mandarin Chinese as a third language. However, this study did have its limitations, including the number of participants and the number of native-Chinese speakers willing and able to perform the AJTs. Further research should be conducted with more participants and judges.

In the future, the production of the affricate onset <y> consonants should be studied with the reading of texts, as was done with G1, to see if there is a higher rate of negative transfer. Research including open-ended conversations in Mandarin Chinese by Puerto Rican learners could also yield more conclusive data about the variables that affect CLI.

The data from future studies like these should be analyzed with programs like PRAAT, and learners' Mandarin Chinese phonological production should be compared to their L1 and L2. Furthermore, the acquisition of the onset voiced palatal approximant /j/ could be studied in and compared with L2 and L3 language acquisition by different populations of native Spanish speakers.

Other further research could be conducted regarding the acquisition of nasal codas in Mandarin Chinese by Puerto Rican speakers. Phonological research could also be conducted concerning the retroflex <r> realizations of <y> in Puerto Ricans' speech. In fact, the reading of the distractor syllables starting with <r> in Mandarin might have had some negative transfer because the production of the Spanish voiced alveolar trill was heard sometimes instead. In addition, some progressive and regressive transfer was observed in the readings of the Spanish and English lists. Therefore, the CLI between Puerto Rican's L1 and L2 language systems should also be further explored.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate L1 and L2 CLI on L3/Ln acquisition by Puerto Rican Bilinguals, and to study the influence of language contact and recency of use in the acquisition of the onset Mandarin /j/. In turn, the TPM and CEM were put to the test in this particular context. In conclusion, some CLI was observed from the [+obstruent] Spanish <y> during the L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese acquisition of the voiced palatal approximant /j/ by Puerto Rican bilinguals. However, the sample of participants and [+obstruent] instances were not sufficient to fully analyze the driving factors influencing this linguistic phenomenon. Nevertheless, some other negative transfer phenomena were evident in the language production of the L3 Mandarin Chinese nasal codas (/n/ and /ŋ/) by Puerto Rican bilinguals. The results were inconclusive concerning the CEM. In turn, the strong English language proficiency shown by the participants and the general phonetic performance accuracy displayed by them should serve as evidence to confirm the TPM. Conversely, the results were inconclusive regarding the influence that time of exposure and language contact with the target language has on CLI and the L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese acquisition of the voiced palatal approximant /j/ by Puerto Rican bilinguals. Finally, the recency of use was not influential in the L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese pronunciation of the voiced palatal approximant /j/ by Puerto Rican bilinguals. This study represents an important first step towards the examination of L3/Ln Mandarin Chinese phonological acquisition, together with the influence of CLI in this acquisition process. It makes methodological contributions with the development of study materials, as well as theoretical contributions that inform the debate surrounding the TPM and the CEM. Moreover, it opens doors for data and participant reorganization, as well as further statistical analyses to arrive at more specific conclusions.

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## 5. APPENDICES

### 5.1. Demographic and Linguistic Profile Entry Questionnaire.

<https://forms.gle/Rd3YHwpNCfmDoRAn8>

### 5.2. Exit Questionnaire. <https://forms.gle/4LhaVQcRRgwXNakN6>

### 5.3. Questionnaire for the Professors. <https://forms.gle/7U3awUVuszvq7GKQA>

### 5.4. Acceptability Judgement Test Template. <https://forms.gle/8yKspu61NzpAX2Fs5>



## **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF GENDERING**



# IDENTIDADES TRANS: ESTUDIO DE CASO SOBRE EL DISCURSO NO BINARIO

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## Resumen

Resumimos los datos de un estudio de caso sobre el discurso de una persona trans hispanoparlante, con sus elecciones de nombre, pronombres y otras denominaciones. Nomi (nombre ficticio, para proteger su identidad) nació en Latinoamérica, pero migró a Barcelona al año y medio de haber nacido. Se considera “agénero, pangénero y xenogénero fluctuoso” y se autoidentifica como persona trans y pansexual. No obstante, mantiene una posición de duda con respecto a las fronteras de uso de cada término y su concepto. Para Nomi, sus identidades no se encuentran en el espectro binario o en el género neutro sino más bien fuera de este. Actualmente, la mayoría de las personas que Nomi encuentra le tratan como “hombre biológico”. Del mismo modo, si tiene ropa “femenina” o si utiliza maquillaje, le consideran “mujer”. Solo aquellas que tienen una educación en estudios de género y han socavado sus discursos dominantes logran respetar sus identidades. Dentro de este artículo utilizamos los marcadores de género no binario “elle/elles” con la intención de respetar los pronombres de nuestro informante. Este estudio hace parte de un proyecto más amplio que pretende recolectar voces transmigrantes y no migrantes que viven en Barcelona. Esta utiliza técnicas etnolingüísticas y de análisis del discurso como bases teóricas y metodológicas.

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**Términos clave:** transgéneridad, trans étnicidad, no-binariad, inmigración, trans identidades

## Trans identidades

Nomi (nombre ficticio, para proteger su identidad) nació en Latinoamérica, pero migró a Barcelona al año y medio de haber nacido y, desde entonces, ha vivido en Barcelona. Percibe el hecho de vivir en Barcelona como un privilegio, ya que esto le ha llevado a conocer el catalán y entender cómo moverse con los “códigos” de Barcelona,

refiriéndose a las prácticas sociales (tipos de interacciones, cortesía, variedades lingüísticas, etc.). La siguiente cita de su entrevista da cuenta de sus percepciones sobre su contexto cultural: “he tenido como el privilegio de crecer aquí y aprender catalán; cómo moverme en los códigos de aquí, como tener una madre de nacionalidad española también” (todas las citas incluidas en este artículo provienen de una entrevista con Nomi efectuada en 27 de octubre de 2020 en Barcelona, a menos que se especifique lo contrario).

Debido a sus orígenes indígenas, Nomi sufrió mucha discriminación en la escuela. Sus rasgos indígenas, como por ejemplo sus ojos rasgados, provienen de su padre, que es descendiente de una comunidad indígena. Además de sentir disforia por las burlas sobre sus facciones indígenas también recibió burlas por tener un cuerpo andrógino.

Nomi no se siente ni migrante ni native de Barcelona, sino que es ambas al mismo tiempo. La siguiente cita muestra el estado de incertidumbre en que vive Nomi con relación a este punto de considerarse migrante o native de Barcelona: “pero, sabes... Decir que soy de aquí también es como... Me genera duda porque... Sí que soy más de aquí. Me muevo con los códigos de aquí, pero no al cien por cien. No como una persona de aquí que siempre ha sido de aquí”. En resumen, se considera que es más de Barcelona que de otro lugar, pero no al cien por ciento.

En la entrevista, notamos que a Nomi le da un poco de pereza hablar en catalán porque lo asocia a entornos más “blancos”. Por otro lado, asocia el uso del español con entornos migrantes, en especial con el lugar en que trabaja: la Associació catalana per a la integració d’homosexuals, bisexuals i transsexuals immigrants (Asociación catalana para la integración de homosexuales, bisexuales y transexuales inmigrantes, o ACATHI).

El hecho de que su padre haya intentado siempre mantener una conexión con las comunidades indígenas ha facilitado que Nomi intente también asociarse a las mismas. Desde la perspectiva de Nomi, dicha conexión es importante pero no suficiente como para considerarse indígena, ya que ha vivido la mayor parte de su vida fuera de Latinoamérica. Nomi no ha regresado allí desde que emigró a la edad de un año. Nos cuenta que el idioma utilizado, catalán o español, le afecta mucho para poder autonombbrarse catalán, mochó o migrante.

Nomi se percibe según varias identidades según el contexto. “En el *cau*” siente que sus pares le perciben como una persona catalana por la fluidez con que puede hablar con ellos este idioma. Pero en otros contextos, como la mencionada ACATHI, Nomi interactúa a menudo con migrantes hispanoparlantes (de México, Perú, Bolivia, Honduras y otros países) y tiende a sentirse entonces como migrante, al entrar en contacto con diversas variantes del español de Latinoamérica. Así, Nomi termina prefiriendo usar el término “*mestize*”, que ofrece ambigüedad sobre sus identidades culturales, además de explicitar el no binarismo.

El *cau* mencionado fue un espacio importante en la historia de Nomi, porque fue el lugar en que halló su primer referente de no binarismo, bajo la denominación de “identidades

disidentes”, a sus 16 años. *Cau* es un término catalán que significa literalmente “refugio, agujero o madriguera de animales”, pero que se usa también para referirse coloquialmente al lugar privado y ocioso en que se reunen los jóvenes. Con esta segunda acepción se utilizan también el término en Cataluña para referirse a las agrupaciones populares que organizan actividades al aire libre (acampadas, excursiones, juegos, etc.) para educar a niños, adolescentes y jóvenes en los valores de la comunidad (humanismos, ecología, democracia, etc.), siguiendo la filosofía del escultismo (del inglés “scouting”) o de los *Boy Scouts*.

Se trata un proyecto muy arraigado en barrios y ciudades catalanas, que pueden tener agrupaciones diversas, autónomas y muy dinámicas. Normalmente se agrupan los participantes por edades de entre 6 a 18 años. El método educativo del “escolta” o miembro consiste en desarrollar una relación simbiótica entre los pares de mayor edad y los de menor edad, siendo los de mayor edad los modelos a seguir.

La oportunidad de ser miembro de un *cau* dio a Nomi la posibilidad de identificarse como persona no binaria. Dicha identidad le ofreció todo un repertorio lingüístico.

En el *cau*, los pares mayores de Nomi le hablaron de la existencia de personas trans y de otras cuestiones relacionadas con la identidad de género. Este hecho fue fundamental para iniciar su proceso de comprensión de la identidad trans. Pero, a pesar de la importancia cronológica del *cau* en su biografía, Nomi realiza una crítica relevante. Nos comenta que su *cau* estaba compuesto por gente cisgénero. Para Nomi era importante que sus referentes trans fuesen pares cercanos, una comunidad trans con la que pudiera entrar en contacto y dialogar de forma presencial. El *cau* le ofreció referentes indirectos de personas trans. En otras palabras, era gente no trans hablando desde una tercera persona sobre identidades trans.

En definitiva, el *cau* despertó la inquietud o inicio un proceso de búsqueda de referentes y de educación alrededor de las temáticas de la identidad de género, que tiempo después desembocaría en lo trans. En el *cau*, las *caps* (‘jefas’ en catalán) o pares mayores de Nomi le informaron por primera vez sobre feminismo. Allí escuchó elle conceptos, como, por ejemplo, las *identidades disidentes*, las *identidades trans*, las *identidades no binarias* o las diferentes vertientes del movimiento feminismo, entre otras. Poco a poco Nomi se nutrió de conceptos menos binarios que le permitieron abandonar las denominaciones masculinas.

Fuera del *cau*, uno de los referentes importantes no trans que cita Nomi fue una chica que decidió cambiarse de nombre para apartarse del discurso eurocentrico. Esta chica instruyó a Nomi sobre la importancia del nombre personal. Le explicó que los nombres están cargados de significados, como por ejemplo los nombres de Romeo y Julieta, nombres asociados a la tragedia clásica de Shakespeare.

Más adelante, Nomi se interesa por la Asamblea Catalana Antiespecista. El concepto *antiespecista* surge de un movimiento de activistas que critican el concepto de “especie” y que, en el marco de dicha crítica, problematizan la supremacía de los seres humanos

sobre otras especies. Su postura intenta deconstruir dicha supremacía, colocando a los animales a un mismo nivel, legal y ético, que les humanes.

En este punto, Nomi establece contacto con su primera persona trans, la cual también era miembro de Joves Trans de Barcelona, la organización local e independiente que ofrecía apoyo y formación a personas jóvenes trans. Esta agrupación comenzó su activismo aproximadamente en 2015 y culminó en 2023.

El vínculo con Joves Trans resultó relevante para el desarrollo de sus identidades. Allí Nomi encontró una comunidad compuesta esencialmente de identidades trans. Este hecho le transmitió mucha seguridad, le permitió conocer otras experiencias equivalentes en el mismo contexto local de Barcelona y le ofreció interlocutores iguales para compartir todas sus inquietudes, dudas y preguntas. Este grupo supuso un apoyo o un salvoconducto con relación a las actitudes de rechazo e incluso a las agresiones que podía sufrir desde diferentes instancias a su alrededor.

Dentro de esta subcategoría, también pudimos señalar a Nomi como un auto referente y un referente no binario para una población que carece de referentes no binarios. Nomi aclara que: “es guai que entre la gente [elle] sea un referente entre ellas”. Otros referentes importantes en la vida de Nomi son las amistades no binarias y “xenogénero” con las que convive. (Las identidades xenogénero son aquellas que están asociadas a animales, plantas, objetos, sensaciones y/o sentimientos.)

En tiempos pasados, los referentes asociados al ámbito trans en España eran personajes mediáticos y populares como La Veneno, nombre artístico de la cantante, actriz, modelo, vedet y extrabajadora sexual española Cristina Ortiz. Esta mujer transexual consiguió mucha popularidad con sus colaboraciones televisivas en varios programas de prensa rosa y resultó muy influyente en la configuración de los discursos de inclusividad en España en las décadas de los 80 y 90 del siglo pasado. En cuatro ocasiones diferentes, Nomi describe el impacto que le causó esta actriz en el desarrollo de su personalidad trans, a pesar de que la identidad feminizada que mostraba distaba mucho de su propia, más cercana al no binarismo:

Sí, porque gente trans, yo sabía que existía. Pero los referentes que hay en general son como los de La Veneno, claro. Pero es eso, que es como una persona, como una mujer ... una feminidad muy concreta trans. Como una feminidad super concreta que a mí no me representa, pero por mi identidad, no por nada.

## Relaciones sociales

Nomi considera que viene de una familia desestructurada. A sus siete años la familia pasó por un divorcio complejo: “Como con siete años mis *adres* [padres] se divorciaron y de forma muy fuerte, con violencia machista”. Luego del divorcio, pasó varios años sin poder ver a su padre.

Como vimos, Nomi siente orgullo por los orígenes indígenas de su padre o también por su condición declarada de bisexualidad, que les ha permitido desarrollar una relación

más empática, según afirma. También cuenta que durante un tiempo vivió con él en una *masía* (casa de campo, en catalán) en condiciones precarias. Este hecho generó críticas relevantes de su madre, que consideraba que vivían en condiciones inaceptables y que se podía calificar este hecho casi como maltrato infantil. En resumen, dichas situaciones de desencuentro entre sus padres generaron más inestabilidad durante su juventud.

Con relación a la madre, Nomi detalla que, ya en su juventud, participó en varias actividades de la comunidad trans, de modo que ella sintió que era aceptada poco a poco. Respecto a su hermana, Nomi comenta que “tiene más passing” dentro de la cultura catalana, porque se parece más a su madre española y tiene menos marcados los rasgos indígenas del padre. En la comunidad trans, el término “passing” se utiliza para referirse al grado de aceptación que logra alguien en el grupo deseado; a través de varios cambios corporales, vestimenta, peluquería o maquillaje, las personas trans con más “passing” logran ser identificadas con más plenitud en el grupo “masculino” o “femenino”. Pero Nomi usa aquí este término sin vinculación con la comunidad trans, solo para mostrar la aceptación que tiene su hermana dentro de la comunidad catalana.

Finalmente, respecto a sus amistades, Nomi ha pasado de tener solo amigos binarios masculinos a rodearse mayormente de personas trans, en especial de gente no binaria. Incluso hoy día Nomi vive con amistades trans. En estos entornos, Nomi prefiere utilizar el español en vez del catalán.

### **Nombres y denominaciones**

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Desde muy pequeña, Nomi ha considerado que sus géneros gramaticales, nombres y denominaciones están íntimamente conectados con la espiritualidad, “Nomi... para mí seguía teniendo el valor espiritual y también como un poco como este valor de resistencia”. Esta conexión se debe a que su padre tiene en su comunidad indígena la consideración de chaman y a que, por su parte, la madre participaba de las danzas de las concheras. Según Arturo Leiva (1991), “al chamán dentro de la cultura mochó, se le define entonces como la persona con poderes espirituales especiales. Son capaces de dar acceso al más allá, utilizando ‘el trance’, con sustancias psicoactivas, como medio de comunicación” (p. 21). Según Santamaría (2014) “La danza de concheros es una manifestación popular de... las tradiciones y religiosidad de Santiago de Querétaro.... [que] condensa en todas sus expresiones elementos que hacen alusión a la conquista española del siglo XVI” (p. 1).

Al nacer sus padres le llamaron Pablo Yonomi (nombre ficticio, para proteger su identidad). Pablo es un nombre más occidental y bíblico y lo escogió su madre. En cambio, Yonomi lo escogió el padre porque es un nombre indígena, y no “gringo”, que significa espíritu del sol en la cosmovisión de esta comunidad. Durante la infancia, Nomi utilizaba más Pablo que Yonomi, porque le gustaba más; no le causaba incomodidad. Pero más tarde se dio cuenta de que la gente, al escuchar la denominación Pablo, le identificaba de manera automática como hombre.

En cambio, Yonomi, además de significar espíritu del sol, tiene otros significados relevantes dentro de la cultura indígena de Nomi. Se tiende a identificar el nombre con partes del espíritu, según Nomi. Dentro de la cosmovisión indígena, el espíritu se divide en tres y Yonomi representa la energía que se va del cuerpo cuando duermes. Por otra parte, este nombre fue materia de burla durante su infancia, ya que es un nombre inusual en Barcelona. A pesar de que le gustaba y de que las comunidades indígenas lo consideran un nombre neutro, los barceloneses perciben el nombre como masculino. Hasta hoy, Nomi no ha tenido nombres intermedios y tampoco pretende cambiar su nombre nuevo.

A Nomi le gustaban sus “nombres muertos” (esta es la denominación que usa la comunidad trans para referirse a los nombres otorgados al nacer vinculados con el género de nacimiento). Por ello, cuando se decidió a cambiarlos optó por mantener cierta conexión con el segundo nombre indígena, Yonomi. En el tiempo en que formó parte de Joves Trans, un amigo le ofreció una lista de nombres andróginos. Pero consideró que no le interesaban, ya que eran nombres “gringos”, ingleses o norteamericanos. Rechazó también estos nombres por carecer de conexión con su vida propia, como por ejemplo Sam o Page. Estos nombres “estaban vacíos”, para Nomi y no conectaban con sus identidades. Necesitaba un nombre que conectara con su identidad no binaria, ya que, en sus propias palabras, considera que cuando se nombra a alguien aclamas “energías” (discursos) específicas.

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De esta forma, Nomi decide jugar con el segundo nombre, el nombre que le otorgó su padre, de modo que su selección de nombres se vincula más con su cultura indígena. Entendió que Yonomi, la forma original, representaba sus identidades, aunque tuviera cierta carga masculina. En algún momento, este nombre empezó a crearle disforia, por lo que decidió cambiarlo. Empezó con algunas abreviaciones y mezclas como Yono o Nomi. Finalmente decidió eliminar el “yo” inicial y autonombbrarse “Nomi”. En resumen, la denominación “Nomi” aporta una conexión espiritual, política, indígena y no binaria con sus identidades trans.

En la época en que elle tomó la decisión de cambiar su nombre colaboraba con un grupo que hacía teatro del oprimido, y considera que este hecho pudo actuar como motivación para realizar dicho cambio. Tardó aproximadamente dos semanas en escoger su nombre. Según Augusto Boal (1989) el teatro del oprimido intenta mostrar en la práctica cómo esta práctica cultural puede ponerse al servicio de los oprimidos para que estos se expresen. Tiene como objetivo transformar al pueblo “espectador” para que tome presencia y agencia en la creación de la obra teatral.

A lo largo de la entrevista, Nomi utiliza la metáfora de “leer” para referirse al modo como las terceras personas le perciben interpretan sus identidades trans. Su intención es que no le “leyeran” (le percibieran) de forma binaria, ya que esto le genera disforia. Según elle, su nombre debía ser neutro para evitar en lo posible que la gente no le pudiera “leer” ni como hombre ni como mujer.

En cuanto a los apellidos, Nomi no utiliza ninguno de los dos en su vida cotidiana o en las relaciones informales con su entorno, con el objetivo de desconectarse de los discursos y contextos a los que están vinculados.

### Géneros gramaticales

A los 16/17 años, con el apoyo del cau y de Joves Trans, Nomi tomó la decisión de adoptar los pronombres *elle/elles*. Salir del marco pronominal binario fue una fuente de “ilusión” y “euforia”, en sus palabras. Siguiendo con su razonamiento, no sentía ninguna conexión genuina con los pronombres no binarios, pero creía que tenía que ofrecer algo a las personas de su entorno, para aclarar cómo quería que fuera llamada. Para Nomi no era necesario usar pronombres binarios o no binarios. Decidió utilizar los pronombres no binarios para que las personas tuvieran un repertorio más amplio a la hora de referirse a su persona.

Al principio Nomi utilizaba el pronombre “él”, que le habían asignado por nacimiento y que le habían inculcado desde pequeño. Antes de decidirse a utilizar el pronombre “elle” o el resto de propuestas de denominaciones gramaticales no binarias, a los 15-16 años, afirma que intentaba evitar los pronombres para autoreferirse en el día a día: “Yo, no; como decir: ‘tengo cansancio’ en vez de ‘estoy cansado’”. No sé, evitar como al máximo cosas con marca de género”. También intentaba evitar el uso de identificadores de género dentro de su repertorio lingüístico.

Nomi explica que, en ninguna de sus elecciones, en cuanto a la omisión de pronombres o al uso de los géneros gramaticales no binarios, no se siente respectado de manera genuina por la mayoría de las personas que le rodean: “porque si no uso pronombres la gente lo debería respetar, pues si puedes aprender otro idioma porque no puedes aprender a tratar bien conmigo.”

La decisión de utilizar pronombres no binarios se debió a que no utilizar pronombres representaba un problema, porque los interlocutores le seguían “leyendo” como hombre o mujer: al conversar con Nomi le seguían asignando uno de los dos pronombres. En cambio, el “elle” le asignaba una categoría no binaria de manera más explícita.

La disforia de Nomi va de la mano con sus experiencias lingüísticas y sus transiciones corporales. En un principio no le generaba angustia que la gente se equivocara con sus pronombres al conversar. Pero con el tiempo le generó disforia que, después de tantos años utilizando el pronombre no binario y autoproclamándose como agénero, la gente ignorara este hecho y siguiera usando los pronombres habituales que, para Nomi, no respetan sus identidades. Este cambio, aunque simbolizó una afirmación muy relevante sobre su género, dentro de Joves Trans, tuvo poco impacto en la visión del resto de miembros del mismo grupo, ya que continuaban ignorando sus pronombres y sus identidades.

Intentamos señalar la sistematicidad del uso de los pronombres “elle/elles” y de los identificadores de género no binario. Algunos ejemplos usados por Nomi son expresiones

como: *chiquite, pequeñe, cansade, yo misma, vegane*, entre otros. En la entrevista, no hallamos errores o vacilaciones de Nomi en el uso de pronombres, ni tampoco expresiones forzadas que los evitaran. Nomi ha integrado o naturalizado el uso de determinantes de género no binario a su forma de hablar. Esta elección lingüística particular y radical se ha convertido en una herramienta destinada a desligar las especulaciones y suposiciones sobre las identidades de género de su persona. Señalamos un total de 17 autoreferencias en las que Nomi utiliza el “*elle*” o la “*e/es*” para auto referirse.

Encontramos un total de 18 hetero-referencias, en las que Nomi mantiene una consistencia en su uso como, por ejemplo: *niñas, amigue, todes, elles*, entre muchas otras. También encontramos una palabra en la que no se utiliza la “*e/es*” para marcar el plural, para referirse a lo no binario o al desconocimiento de las identidades de género de la persona. Un ejemplo de esto es la palabra “*adres*” que utiliza para referirse a su madre y padre. En este caso se elimina la letra <p> o <m> para quitarle el peso del género masculino a la palabra; (m)adre, (p)adre.

En un principio, Nomi utilizaba la denominación de “géneros disidentes”. Esto se debía a que en ese momento esa denominación era la más utilizada por colectivos feministas y académicos en los estudios de la identidad de género. Hoy en día se prefiere la expresión “identidades no binarias.” Con el tiempo Nomi fue educándose y buscando diferentes referentes. En este proceso se empieza a autodenominar “agénero” o *genderscuer*, pronunciado en inglés. Actualmente Nomi se considera “agénero, pangénero y xenogénero fluctuoso”. Del mismo modo, se autoidentifica como persona trans y pansexual. No obstante, mantiene una posición de duda con respecto a las fronteras de uso de cada término y su concepto. Para Nomi sus identidades no se encuentran en el espectro binario o en el género neutro sino más bien fuera de este, usando sus palabras.

Su transición comenzó al tomar conciencia de que era una persona trans y de que este hecho no iba a cambiar nunca. Define “ser trans” como el hecho de no asumir el género asignado al nacer, ya sea una identidad que transita dentro del binarismo o una que transite fuera de este, en sus palabras. Aunque utiliza el término “transgénero”, prefiere utilizar el concepto “trans”. Considera que “transgénero” está más conectado a una idea médica, que considera la transexualidad como una patología. Por otra parte, percibe el término “trans” de manera más desconectada de estas concepciones.

Según explica Nomi, el pronombre “*elle*” es agénero, no tiene género. En su posición, ser “agénero” es también tomar una postura “trans”. Pero ser agénero para Nomi no es algo constante, puesto que en ocasiones se identifica como “xenogénero”:

Entonces, mi género aun no lo ubico tanto, pero está ubicado con la naturaleza y la magia también, la brujería y esas cosas... Pero como con otras energías... Pero a veces fluctúo y a veces pierdo intensidad y a veces soy como más agénero; a veces como no tengo identidad de género... Entonces, como yo creo que fluctúa allí, pero no descarto que fluya entre otras cosas. No lo sé aun, pero sí que tengo claro que está fuera del binario.

Del mismo modo, Nomi recalca que todavía no tiene clara sus identidades y pretende mantener el cambio constante y la ambigüedad en su género, porque ello le genera “euforia”. No descarta que en algún momento sus identidades fluyan en otras direcciones. Deja abierta la posibilidad de identificarse con otras identidades de género, pero siempre fuera del binarismo. Al respecto, también aclara que esta postura pueda aumentar de intensidad o disminuir según las circunstancias.

Finalmente, Nomi no utiliza el término “travesti” para auto referirse, pero sí que reconoce que, al retar con la norma al vestirse, termina “travistiéndose”, lo cual significa, desde su postura, utilizar una vestimenta contraria a la identidad de género asignada al nacer.

### **El género gramatical en el día a día**

En su adolescencia, Nomi se definía como chico, aunque no seguía las normas de género. Hoy considera que utilizaba esta categoría para no perder los privilegios que son asignados a ser hombre. Asumir una identidad trans no binaria implica abandonar estos privilegios para empezar experiencias nuevas en situaciones de empoderamiento, discriminación y segregación. Cuando empezó a definirse de forma distinta, se consideró pansexual; nunca ha utilizado la denominación *gay*. En su adolescencia, aunque se definía bajo la normalidad de forma inconsciente, según Nomi, no acababa de encajar con la norma. Esto le llevó a sufrir de acoso escolar e insultos de odio.

Según indica Nomi, diariamente se enfrenta a discursos patológicos que le asignan la categoría de hombre o la de mujer. Nomi utiliza la metáfora de un taladro para describir cómo la gente ha lacerado su tranquilidad. Pudimos señalar dos momentos en la entrevista en los que utiliza dicha metáfora, como este: “fue más el taladro de la gente que constantemente definen mi identidad como hombre o mujer”.

Del mismo modo, Nomi recibió la categoría de *masculino* al nacer. Tanto su madre como su padre le tratan en masculino, incluso después de varios años esforzándose en “reeducarlos”. Nomi ha explicado varias veces a su madre que es una persona trans no binaria. Pero ella no le toma en serio y piensa que es otra fase pasajera de su trayectoria, a pesar de que han pasado ya varios años desde que Nomi se autodefiniera como trans. Recordemos que la madre de Nomi ha asistido a reuniones de familiares de personas trans, entre otras actividades con temática trans, pero que sigue siendo “ignorante” con relación a los “pedidos” que le hace Nomi respecto a cómo denominarle.

Normalmente las personas son escépticas respecto a la identidad de Nomi. Por tanto, intenta no conversar sobre su identidad. Pero, cuando tienen que hacerlo, la mayoría de los interlocutores no le creen, no consideran posible la existencia de identidades no binarias y/o agéneras. Como mencionamos anteriormente, las percepciones de terceros que no aceptan su identidad no binaria han lacerado y acosado a Nomi con múltiples insultos, como por ejemplo “maricón”.

Actualmente las personas que no tienen una educación en estudios de género o que simplemente odian a la comunidad trans y no binaria, tratan a Nomi como “hombre biológico”. Del mismo modo, si tiene ropa “femenina” o si utiliza maquillaje, le consideran “mujer”. Solo aquellas que tienen una educación en estudios de género y retan discursos dominantes logran respetar sus identidades. En ocasiones también le consideran como un hombre trans y/o mujer trans, dependiendo de su vestimenta.

Una de las preocupaciones y frustraciones de Nomi es que nunca va a ser percibida por la gente como persona trans no binaria. Solo será percibida de esta forma por su grupo selecto de personas, las cuales sí están educadas y sí han abandonado discursos patriarcales. Nomi explica que las personas practican discursos de discriminación y que eso da paso a que le ubiquen constantemente dentro del espectro binario. Nomi aclara que la mayoría de las personas que encuentra en su día a día no tienen referentes de cómo sería una persona no binaria. Del mismo modo la mayoría de los referentes de personas no binarias en línea son referentes de personas de piel blanca y cuerpo estándar.

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# LINGÜÍSTICA TRANS PERFORMADA

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## Resumen

Explorar la lingüística desde un acercamiento performativo ha expandido mi entendimiento de lo que son las lenguas, de que todo lo manipulable es parte del arsenal mediático humano y que de esas manipulaciones resultan todas nuestras capacidades, ya sean sonoras, físicas, motoras, léxicas, lingüísticas, imaginativas, semióticas, afectivas, sistémicas, entre otras. Las motivaciones que nos impulsan a manipular el arsenal mediático nacen del cuerpo, sus necesidades fisiológicas, identitarias, sociales y capacidades multidimensionales, limitadas por el tiempo y contexto global. Estudiar el lenguaje desde lo performativo invita a profundizar esa manipulación, a centrar al hablante y verle como un acto que interactúa con su entorno, influenciándolo, dejándose influenciar, siguiendo o no siguiendo gramáticas establecidas, sean lingüísticas o performativas.

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**Términos clave:** acercamiento performativo, Vogue, ballroom boricua, transperformance, gramáticas performativas, jayaera

Interpreto y estudio el movimiento como un lenguaje que propicia relaciones con otros y con el espacio; soy una especie de lingüista del movimiento.

(Karen Langevin en Homar & Pastrana Santiago, 2022, p.243)

De la misma forma que adquirimos las lenguas verbales con sus gramáticas desde la infancia, adquirimos performances y sus gramáticas. A través de performances se internalizan, se encarnan y se naturalizan los roles sociales que una persona debe asumir a lo largo de su vida. La cultura occidental implanta lógicas y gramáticas identitarias a base del sexo, género, raza, religión, etnia, estatus socioeconómico y político. Desde nuestro nacimiento, adoptamos un sinnúmero de roles y performances que se asemejan a un gran ballet de gramáticas de poder. Mediante sistemas de control (institucionaliza-

ción), nos entran a internalizar estándares e ideologías jerárquicas coloniales de supremacía blanca cis hetero patriarcal capitalista y antropocentrista.

El estudio de la lingüística centra el estudio de la gramática y se enfoca mayormente en lo clínicamente observable y medible de los aspectos fonológicos, morfológicos, semánticos y sintácticos de lo que entendemos como lenguas. Aunque la gramática abarca temas pertinentes sobre el lenguaje como una capacidad de la mente humana, sus explicaciones teóricas e ideológicas pueden ser confusas e incompletas. Equiparar la lingüística con la gramática restringe demasiado lo que significa estudiar el fenómeno de los lenguajes. Podemos, incluso, ver órdenes fabricados particularmente en las gramáticas académicas. El estudio de cualquier tema a nivel académico implica una adopción de roles y una participación de gramáticas establecidas por una institución que dicta cómo acceder, permanecer y cumplir con requisitos arbitrarios para obtener un grado. No es sólo lo que se estudia, sino cómo se estudia, cómo se evidencia el conocimiento, qué formatos, tonos y vocabularios son aceptados. Desde muy temprano, la escolarización académica nos prepara para actuar y triunfar en el mundo real, un triunfo que significa que hemos internalizado el condicionamiento necesario para encarnar las gramáticas sociales, lenguajes y performances fabricadas de la cultura occidental, o sea, el mundo real.

En el campo de la lingüística, se parte mayormente desde la definición del lenguaje de Noam Chomsky, quien lo define como una propiedad humana innata y universal. Mi propuesta busca expandir lo que entendemos como lenguas más allá de las palabras. El lenguaje es una sombrilla trans performática y multimedial que se satura de gramáticas sociales. La lengua es un símbolo del cuerpo. El cuerpo es la lengua. Hablamos con todo el cuerpo, de diferentes formas en diferentes contextos.

La gramática de un contexto, como la gramática de un lenguaje, establece expectativas performáticas para interactuar con un contexto correctamente. Esta interacción del hablante con el contexto va a revelar entre otras cosas, un agente o agentes rectores que dictan la performance. En el contexto lingüístico, la teoría del ligamento de Noam Chomsky explica las relaciones y condiciones que conectan dos sintagmas determinantes (SD) en una misma oración. Se asumen principios que rigen las anáforas, pronombres y expresiones referentes. Una anáfora debe estar ligada en su categoría rectora, esto es el principio A de las anáforas (Poole, 2011). Esta racionalización contiene conceptos clave que me ayudan a analizar las gramáticas performativas. El concepto de la categoría rectora se usa para demostrar una lógica casi matemática de cómo las partes de una oración están conectadas o ligadas entre sí para que una lengua cumpla con sus reglas de gramática. Igualmente, en contextos sociales, se trazan unas conexiones y lógicas casi matemáticas entre el individuo y sus referentes sociales que dictan cómo este debe actuar dentro de los límites establecidos. ¿Quiénes o qué son los agentes rectores de nuestros contextos: en nuestros contextos familiares, contextos académicos, contextos legales, contextos de salud, contextos afectivos, contextos laborales y demás? ¿Quién o

qué dirige la narrativa, la performance? ¿Qué le da potestad de dirigir? ¿Cuáles son las referencias que yo habito? ¿Qué me liga a mis categorías rectoras? ¿Cuáles son las anáforas contextuales y sistémicas que me obligan a actuar de un modo esperado y en los lugares adecuados? ¿En qué contextos siento alineamiento con los referentes de mis múltiples contextos sociales, emocionales, espirituales o afectivos?

Mi metodología consiste en entrelazar mi trabajo como artista transdisciplinario y mi trabajo como lingüista con el fin de analizar mis propias performances, tanto las artísticas como de mi vida cotidiana. Esto requiere cuestionar cómo yo asumo esos roles, cuánto sigo o me desvío de las expectativas performáticas de estos roles y cómo esa capacidad de manipulación mediática cambia de contexto en contexto. Parto desde la autorreflexión sobre mi participación en tres residencias artísticas en 2022, examinando cómo se revelan los órdenes y desórdenes sociales performativos, cómo influyen y se manipulan los componentes sociales de identidad y lo arbitrarias que son las gramáticas sociales que habitamos. En las artes, cuando el individuo participa en diseñar, definir y encarnar el rol, las performances revelan gramáticas expansivas, flexibles, multifacéticas y altamente manipulables. Incluiré una selección de formatos textuales que harán de este trabajo un tipo de antología de textos sobre performances. Hago uso particular del libro *Habitar lo Imposible: danza y experimentación en Puerto Rico* de Susan Homar y nibia pastrana santiago (2022), dos artistas del movimiento que se dieron a la tarea de recolectar cuatro décadas de exploraciones experimentales en la danza puertorriqueña desde perspectivas de artistas independientes y estudiósas que analizan la danza y el performance. Este libro reconoce que, en Puerto Rico, la danza y la experimentación siempre ha incorporado temas de género, sexualidad, raza y el estado colonial de Puerto Rico, lo cual lo hace un libro excelente para demarcar las similitudes del lenguaje y las performances.

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### **Investigaciones performativas / performances investigativas**

Durante el año 2022 y parte del 2023 participé de tres residencias artísticas bajo la Puerto Rican Arts Initiative II (PRAI). La PRAI fue fundada por el profesor y director del Departamento de Performance Studies en Northwestern University, Ramon H. Rivera-Severa. La iniciativa se lanzó en 2018 para apoyar a artistas a reconstruir y desarrollar nuevos trabajos después de los huracanes María e Irma. El proyecto pudo ser expandido gracias a una subvención de Mellon Foundation y la Universidad de Texas en Austin que permitió apoyar un grupo de 11 artistas emergentes a sostener sus prácticas y convertirse en plataformas curatoriales para apoyar otros artistas (Lewis, 2021). Mis residencias fueron con tres artistas que trabajan conceptos performáticos y formatos diferentes, comenzando con Pó Rodil en “espacios transtransformados”, luego con Gisela Rosario Ramos en *El Templo de la Jayaera* y, por último, con Edrimael Delgado con su proyecto “LaBoriVogue”.

De la residencia con Pó Rodil, “espacios transperformados”, surgió La Otra Laboratoria (LOL), un espacio performático con y para artistas transgénero donde se trabaja con distintos discursos y conceptos relacionados a esta comunidad. El proyecto procura crear una conversación sobre le cuerpx trans desde el contexto actual y explorar el ideal de una supremacía trans. El proyecto de *El Templo de la Jayaera*, de Gisela Rosario Ramos, invita al público a ocupar espacios exteriores para activar la contemplación y la reflexión espiritual que conducen a la jayaera. Los servidores Jayaxs (Servidores de la Jayaera) identificarán espacios para intervenirlos y/o ambientarlos con el propósito de exaltar la experiencia contemplativa y la jayaera espiritual. Por último, participé del performance “Lecturas en Pose” del proyecto LaBoriVogue por Edrimael Delgado. LaBoriVogue es una laboratoria experimental y espacio de práctica para personas interesadas en generar comunidad en torno al arte del Vogue. La proyecta se ocupa principalmente de visibilizar a la comunidad LGBTTIQ+, propiciando prácticas abiertas en espacios públicos. También se encarga de generar eventos ballroom y espacios alternos y seguros para el aprendizaje del movimiento, fomentando la transformación individual en función de la liberación y la justicia colectiva.

Cada residencia tuvo sus propias agendas performáticas, sus propias prácticas, temas, medios, requisitos y estructuras particulares propuestas por le artista directore. Aunque sus propuestas eran mis agentes regidores, también existía libertad de expandir las ideas, de colaborar y para llevar los conceptos a extremos performáticos que solo existirían al ser interpretados y manipulados por mí. A continuación, presento tres textos de mi autoría publicados en octubre de 2023 en *Publicaciones PRAI II, Performance y Artes Efímeros*, una serie de publicaciones que presenta la gesta de les artistas becados durante la segunda fase de PRAI en un formato textual y de arte visual impreso. Haber participado de la visión performática de tres artistas multi y transdisciplinarios diferentes y, subsiguentemente, convertir esas memorias de performances a un texto con límites mediáticos, fue una especie de traducción entre un texto encarnado y un texto verbal. Cada texto está acompañado de explicaciones contextuales y un análisis reflexivo a fin de resaltar instancias relevantes que revelen gramáticas fluidas, rígidas, tradicionales o disidentes. Por respeto al contexto académico, se advierte que los textos publicados contienen lenguaje coloquial y colorido.

### **Residencia 1: La Otra Laboratoria**

La residencia en el 2022 con Pó Rodil constaba de reunirnos semanalmente para hacer ejercicios de performance, tomar talleres escénicos, estudiar estéticas, determinar nuestras necesidades creativas para crear una pieza colaborativa que sería presentada en el Teatro Victoria Espinosa. La publicación de La Otra Laboratoria se titula “El Otro Party”, el nombre de la pieza teatral. Describe Rodil en el prefacio de la publicación:

Con estos materiales decidimos crear El Otro Party, un cabaret situado en un bar mágico, punto de encuentro para un grupo de personajes míticos y fuera de este

mundo. Todos estos personajes llegarían a este bar a una fiesta a la cual nadie quiere ir. Todes creamos personajes para hablar sobre como experimentamos la dysphoria, el amor, la esperanza, la tristeza y el luto. (Rodil, 2023)

Mi contribución a la publicación comienza con una reflexión de quién es mi personaje, Randi, sus motivaciones, agendas personales y una mirada al proceso creativo del cual nace.

Texto:

¿Quién es Randi de Leonx? Randi es la nota - Randi - La Nota - de Leonx. Une científica-o químique que mientras hace ciencia, usa harness y fishnét, entre otras bellaqueras. Randi surge de un oráculo de flores y cartas de tarot que dijeron: "Become ephemeral relief. Sé alivio efímero." Randi entiende que el impacto de un alivio efímero tiene la capacidad de permanecer en cambios físicos y abstractos de manera infinita en nuestras vidas. Efímero, my eye. Elle estudia cómo la natura interactúa y colabora con la carne y espírita humana. La gente llega transquilita a Randi porque sabe que tiene el hookup. La clara es que Randi solo rasca la superficie y encuentra aquello que busca ser encontrado, aquello que está lleno de poder y belleza en sus simplezas. En primeros instintos. Lo que hace es mirarte, escucharte, conocerte y reflejarte pa trás lo que ya tú sabías, pero quizás no te atrevías, solo querías ver si alguien sostenía un espejo long enough to be witnessed in the finding of yourself. En lo que encuentras algo en tí, que wow, te alivia, te maravilla. Ese alivio que te jaya, esa nota, Randi quiere que la encuentres ~ en la tuya ~ con o sin receta. A cambio, casi nada, que busques estar bien contigo misma, que eso signifique que las personas a tu alrededor también lo estén. Randi dice: si tú lo que quieras es esta yerbita pa elevarte y relajarte, coge la yerbita. Si tú lo que quieras es ser el centro de atención y que te ilumine-mos, pues vamos a prender los flashlights. Si lo que quieras es mirarte al espejo y darla toda, dala toda. Si lo que quieras es soltar la furia, pues suéltala. Si tú lo que quieras es encontrar la espiral en un baile que te conecta ancestralmente a un color, a tu esencia, pues dale, linda-e-o, baila. Si quieras ser la rostra porque puedes, pues la que puede, puede! Si tu nota es solo existir, pues existe. Randi quiere ser testigo-a-e. Dáselo. Dátelo. Si lo que buscas, no es la nota de Leonx, si lo que quieras es estar en la tuya, perfecto, porque ese límite le da seguridad, que le digas, "mera Randi, conmigo no". They lowkey highkey have soft dom vibes, cuz lo que quiere es verte en tu jayaera, no solo porque le da placer, es also porque they feel SO safe in the witnessing of it que le llena de vida y propósito. Randi es un mapisongue que acepta y explora su rol en el telar de la seguridad en el placer trans, los trans vicios, las trans narrativas, las yuxtaposiciones y maneras en que colaboramos para sostener nuestros placeres y existencias. Aunque no siempre salen las cosas bien, cada persona que ha compartido la nota de Leonx, permanece en Randi forevel. (en Rodil, 2023)

### ***Grámatica, but make it trans***

Randi no deja de ser una persona de ciencia por querer hacerlo fuera de estándares estéticos y clínicos de las ciencias químicas. Las performances estéticas de las ciencias químicas son arbitrarias y deben responder y conectarse con el material que se investiga. Randi investiga desde un frente sexual, sensorial, químico, afectivo y efímero. Randi parece ser un químico clandestino, o en buen puertorriqueño, un tirador de drogas, pero su trabajo va más allá de “quick fixes”. Su trabajo comprende de investigaciones químicas y también conocer a sus pacientes/clientes para reflejar lo que es evidente en sus búsquedas de placer y alivio. Para cada persona, es algo diferente por razones diferentes; entonces, Randi representa un rol trans de la labor afectiva, mental, emocional y física necesaria para construir espacios seguros en donde los placeres y realidades trans pueden descubrirse y manifestarse. Randi también representa el anhelo de muchas personas trans en Puerto Rico de recibir un servicio de salud digno que provea lo necesario para sus necesidades particulares y su bienestar.

Una particularidad lingüística del personaje de Randi, es el uso de todos los marcadores de género de forma aleatoria, agrupada o simultáneamente desdoblada. Al decir que es “une científica-o químique”, establece su identidad de género como bi, tri, o poligénero de una forma sencilla y sin requerir mayor explicación. El concepto de múltiples marcadores de género nació de una colaboración con María Luisa “Mussa” Marín, otra de las artistas de la residencia. Para crear un dialogo entre Randi y Dandi, su personaje, le pregunté a María Luisa cuales eran los pronombres de su personaje, gemelx de Randi, a lo que contestó: “Dandi es de todos los géneros, es gender chaotic.” Trasplanté ese término a una resolución gramática que incluyera todos los marcadores de género de forma caótica simultánea, aleatoria y dispersa, pero siempre respetando la necesidad identitaria del personaje. De esta necesidad identitaria, surge una gramática de género caótico que puede usarse a la discreción del hablante y su sujeto y del hablante consigo misma. Cuando Randi hablaba con Dandi, usaba y pronunciaba todos los marcadores de género, pero de forma aleatoria. En un momento, decía “hermana-o-e”, en otro “¿estás liste-a-o?”, así sucesivamente, honrando la necesidad identitaria de su sujeto-a-e, sin confundir a la audiencia, manteniendo un mensaje claro y eficiente.

Las gramáticas de control sobre la fisiología sexual y biológica son temas aterrantes para reflexionar. En la cultura occidental, domina la idea de que existe un binario genital biológico contundente que evidencia o justifica un binario natural y correcto. Esta idea del binario fisiológico desnaturaliza e invisibiliza las realidades fisiológicas intersexuales que abundan en la naturaleza. Esta arbitraria naturalidad binaria se trasplanta al lenguaje, justificando reglas gramaticales de concordancia donde el género y número de un sujeto debe coincidir con el de sus determinantes. En las gramáticas sociales, el binario se utiliza para justificar los roles de género, expectativas performáticas que una persona debe satisfacer a lo largo de su vida en base al género que le asignan al nacer. Existen potenciales físicos que no se manifiestan o normalizan en todas las personas, ya que

confligen con las expectativas performáticas de sus contextos, sistemas que binarizan la fisiología humana para justificar su dominio sobre nuestras performances sexuales, expresiones de género, dinámicas relationales y demás. El lente trans de LOL implica que, al crear desde cuerpos trans, la narrativa y todo lo que se imagina en ella es trans, hasta las cosas que no tienen que ver. Al interpretar a Randi, exploré unas libertades imaginadas en torno a mi sexualidad, expresión de género, expresión estética, sueños prohibidos y traumas coloniales sobre un cuerpo feminizado, transformados en el propósito para convertirse en espacio de sanación, empatía y jayaera. Adoptar un lente todo poderoso es crucial para el proceso creativo y no es exclusivo del mundo teatral o de las artes, solo aparenta serlo.

### **Residencia 2: *El Templo de la Jayaera***

La jayaera es un concepto relativamente reciente. Aunque la palabra se utiliza en el Caribe hispano hablante como una versión del verbo “hallar”, en Puerto Rico el uso de la palabra jayaera surge cuando la artista Gisela Rosario Ramos lleva el concepto de “jayá” o “jayau” a otro nivel. La palabra y el concepto ha evolucionado, hoy día se usa de muchas maneras en la comunidad queer de Puerto Rico y su definición continúa expandiéndose. Es precisamente esto lo que busca explorar *El Templo de la Jayaera*, las diferentes formas en las que conectamos con esa sensación o estado de ser. Descrito en la publicación del *Manual para un Templo*, Rosario Ramos (aka Macha Colón, 2023) describe: *El templo de la jayaera* propone la expresión artística y la contemplación como herramientas para conectar en colectivo con la naturaleza con un fin espiritual.” Esta primera edición de *El Templo de la Jayaera* presentó artistas de arte sonoro. El *Manual para un Templo* se hizo precisamente para que otras personas creen su propio *Templo de la Jayaera* (Rosario Ramos, 2023). El manual contiene instrucciones y recomendaciones espaciales y mediáticas por Gisela Rosario, perspectivas de los servidores de *El Templo de la Jayaera* sobre formas de crear las condiciones que invitan a la contemplación y finalmente contribuciones textuales y visuales por cada artista sobre sus interpretaciones del *Templo de la Jayaera*.

Cada artista debía identificar un entorno natural accesible en donde se pudiese crear un ritual multisensorial que enfocara un elemento performativo sonoro. El aspecto natural con el cual yo quería interactuar era el de la resonancia espacial. Como artista de la voz, la resonancia y el eco siempre han sido fuentes de experiencias sensoriales muy profundas en mi práctica. La sensación de escuchar mi voz resonar en un espacio amplio provoca un estado de bienestar, de asombro, de maravilla y emociones difíciles de explicar con palabras, pero que me hacen sentir algo más allá de lo humano. Encontrar un lugar natural que cumpliera con los requisitos del templo y de mi exploración con la resonancia fue uno de los mayores retos para mi performance. El proceso me enfrentó a muchas realidades de la infraestructura inaccesible en Puerto Rico. Carreteras rotas. Lugares abandonados y descuidados. Control de acceso. Privatización. Pobreza extrema. Percibí

mensajes escondidos en el diseño de la infraestructura colonial que limitan el acceso a espacios naturales, que nos obligan a interactuar de unas formas prescritas demostrándome que el contexto del sonido es político. ¿Qué me informa el contexto del sonido? ¿Qué me provee? ¿Cómo el contexto influye en el sonido? ¿Cómo colabora? ¿Cómo el contexto dicta las narrativas que contiene? ¿Quién diseña estos contextos? ¿Cuáles son los motivos de estos diseños infraestructurales?

A continuación, presento mi contribución para el *Manual para un Templo* en donde comparto una reflexión de mi experiencia creando un *Templo de la Jayaera* en el Lago las Curías en Cupey, donde logré encontrar un espacio al aire libre con resonancia natural.

Texto:

Reflexión de una jayaera algaretística. Por Alice Mena.

La jayaera es exploración. No es solo el resultado de una exploración, es más de una cosa. Tampoco es necesariamente un logro, o lograr sentir algo. Es también una manera de acceder a ti. Es un reconocimiento bien cabrón de tus esencias, las que te conectan y permean en tu vida. Al recordar mi templo, sentía mucho cringe, mucho papelón en mi interior... pero no era yo, era un cadáver que cargo en mi piel. Era una ideología decrépita de mi valor, de mi talento y de mi experiencia que impedía mucho mi disfrute. Igual, no importa si no hago nada perfecto, ni estas palabras, ni mi templo. Al usar mi voz de la manera que la usé, imperfecta y medio all over, vi una extensión de mí. De mi garganta salieron dedos y todavía puedo acceder a este sentido táctil sonoro donde quiera que esté y me pregunto: ¿De qué otras formas mi cuerpo puede percibir y recrear un sentido dentro de otro? ¿Qué sentidos aún no tienen nombre? ¿Cómo el enfoque en los “cinco” sentidos nos limita de adquirir conciencia de otras capacidades que tienen nuestras cuerpos? ¿Cómo nos han enseñado a usar nuestros sentidos? ¿Cómo nos han enseñado a interactuar con nuestros entornos? Estoy convencida de que nuestra experiencia sensorial está limitada a nuestro entendimiento y adoctrinamientos de lo que podemos o no hacer con nuestros cuerpos y cómo debemos interactuar con un espacio. Yo existí en ese espacio, yo resoné, yo cringé y me dejé percibir... La cosa más tenebrosa a veces es esa idea de ser percibides, ser juzgados... por entidades externas, pero más bien por mí y por los juicios que he internalizado. Me pregunto si la gente percibió jayaera ese día... Aunque me jayé bastante, inexplicablemente me jayé más después, en mi memoria de ese momento y en la conciencia que he adquirido sobre mi voz, sobre mis sentidos. Quizás llegará el momento en el que yo sienta completa satisfacción al “performear” y no sentir ese peso de estándares performáticos o de mis ideologías de belleza, de crear algo de valor. Yo solo quiero seguir persiguiendo mi jayaera. Dándome cuenta de ella y no solamente persiguiéndola. A veces está ahí y ya, sin perseguirla. Esta ahí. Como siempre, termino encontrando lo que no se me ha

perdido. El concepto que me esboca es querer hacer lo máximo, ahí a veces está mi jayaera, en exploraciones múltiples en periodos cortos de tiempo. El algare-tismo es también mi jayaera. Al igual, reconozco que quiero profundizar, no por enfocarme solamente, no por concentrarme solamente, sino porque quiero pro-fundizar en cada uno de los elementos que propuse de sonido y resonancia, pro-fundizar en que yo tengo un cuerpo que conecta el entorno y que eso puede ser la cosa más increíble del fokin mundo. Sea en una canción, en una carcajada, en un grito, en un gruñido, sea en una emoción que no me permite sentir, sea en mi bloqueo conceptual, yo logro tener acceso a tantas dimensiones de mi ser que, al profundizar, puedo continuar revelándome mi poder. Se encuentra algo, se crea una nueva conciencia y, de momento, esta conciencia expande tu visión de tu propio timeline. De momento, puedes viajar en el tiempo a cualquier momento en tu historia e irradiar ese entorno del recuerdo con tu nueva conciencia y traer la jayaera de allá también para que esté contigo en el presente, porque está con-tigo en el presente. Piensa en todas las veces que hablabas contigo mismos desde el pasado al futuro, del presente al futuro, del futuro al presente, del presente al pasado. Piensa en todas tus versiones y usa la jayaera pa llegarle. Experimenta con la jayaera cuando la encuentres. Ponte los lentes de la jayaera y percíbete. (Rosario Ramos, 2023)

### **Darse permiso:**

En la primera parte de la reflexión hago el mejor esfuerzo de definir lo que es para mí la jayaera, permitiéndome aceptar que puede tener más de un significado. La idea de ‘permitirse’ es crucial para ser artista y existir en general. El “cringe” es una de las sensaciones con las que más batallo, el querer encogerse y esconderse por la sensación de vergüenza que da hacer o presenciar algo. Es muy común sentirse así cuando lo más importante de un performance es vulnerabilizarse para lograr acceder a emociones que impulsan el sonido a comunicar el mensaje detrás de las palabras. Al ser una artista emergente, cuestiono demasiado la validez de mi arte, mis esfuerzos y mi talento. Interesantemente, existe una gramática de poder que dicta esa narrativa interna. ¿Por qué siento vergüenza? ¿Quién me está juzgando? ¿Quién le dio ese poder de juzgar? ¿Cómo he logrado internalizar el miedo de usar mi voz? Al contestar esas preguntas, puedo identificar las entidades responsables de fomentar mi silencio y de crear las condiciones que alimentan la vergüenza e inseguridad de actuar en mis propios términos. Padres, novios, maestros, familiares, los medios, todos entrenándome a callarme, a no molestar. Permitirme actuar, hacer ruido, vulnerabilizarme y abrirme a la experiencia se convierte en el espacio en donde conecto con quien soy y donde escribo mis propias narrativas y gramáticas performativas.

Uno de los permisos performativos que continúo usando en las publicaciones, es el de emplear la gramática caótica de género, pero esta vez en palabras para cosas y no personas. Por ejemplo, uso la frase “nuestras cuerpos” y más adelante uso “nuestres cuerpos”. Esta práctica la he absorbido de otras personas puertorriqueñas y caribeñas queer en mis círculos sociales donde se utiliza de manera integrada. Mi explicación para la necesidad del género caótico en sujetos no humanos, no “generizados”, es precisamente que los sustantivos en español sí son binarios, pero solo al aplicar una versión binaria de lógica de concordancia género. Para que los idiomas flexivos como el español se consideren gramaticalmente correctos, las frases nominales deben guardar concordancia de género y número. Al texto ser escrito por mí como persona trans, el único permiso que necesito es el que me otorgo a mí misma al momento de escribir una frase nominal con género discordante, aunque prefiero llamarle género caótico. Si mi género asignado al nacer es incongruente con mi experiencia vivida y con mis deseos actuales, mi texto lo va a reflejar porque así lo decido. Aun siendo frases con gramática de género caótico, el mensaje no se pierde e, incluso, logro establecer información identitaria e ideológica. Si eso es así, entonces el español estandarizado también establece la información identitaria e ideológica que deben tener todos sus hablantes, pero lo establece de forma sistemática y forzada. La historia del español revela la metodología de invasión colonial que, dentro de otras performances, impone la idea de que una variante específica del español sigue el orden natural y correcto sobre la identidad de género de las personas y las palabras. Prueba de esto es que la población actual de hablantes de español ya no se le permite intervenir con el lenguaje, solo aceptarlo y cumplir con sus reglas, aunque estas no representen las necesidades identitarias de muchos de sus hablantes.

Otro aspecto que cuestiono en la publicación es la manera en que se utilizan los cinco sentidos, la manera en la que se separan y distingue un sentido del otro. Dentro de lo que me permite el lenguaje, describo la experiencia de haber percibido un sentido dentro del otro, no necesariamente como sinestesia, pero donde la vibración sonora se convertía en una honda táctil que me permitió percibir la imagen o huella topográfica del lago y su entorno. ¿Es posible que existan mutaciones sensoriales que expandan nuestra manera de percibir el mundo? ¿Quién nos da permiso de explorarlos? ¿Será verdad lo que nuestras madres decían, “se toca con los ojos y se mira con las manos”?

Las instancias donde más se percibía este sentido mezclado, proyectaba mi voz en dirección hacia las cuencas más resonantes del lago, a veces haciendo uso de unos alto parlantes hechos de cartulina, a veces sin ninguna herramienta externa. Empujaba suficiente aire desde el esternón sosteniendo sonidos vocales extendidos, pausando abruptamente después de un periodo extendido, mientras sostenía alguna intención emocional detrás del sonido. Este último factor, el de sostener la intención emocional, resultó ser clave en cómo mi cuerpo se abría a la experiencia y recibía información sensorial. Durante una práctica en el espacio con Gisela y los servidores, recibí una retroalimentación de mi ejecución, donde ella señalaba que solo estaba enfocándome en lo técnico de mi

voz y que, aunque sonaba bien, no lo estaba sintiendo. Me recordó que tenía que conectar con un sentimiento real, una memoria, algo emocional o espiritual, de otra forma iba a ser solo un sonido escuchado, no una experiencia sentida. Le recuerdo decir, “La función del artista es sentir” y, aunque esto no fue algo fácil de encarnar sostenidamente, los momentos más poderosos surgían cuando verdaderamente me permitía sentir algo profundamente. Para sentir algo profundamente, conectaba con memorias de eventos reales, con mi sentir durante conversaciones, rabias, deseos, placeres, etc. Cuando lo sentía yo, lo sentían los demás y las reacciones y afectos del público durante la performance confirmaban estos momentos.

También exploró brevemente la idea del tiempo, exponiendo cómo la conciencia de algo puede abrirnos a explorar nuestro timeline para afectarlo. ¿Cómo es que un concepto que se inventó una artista hace varios años, se convierte en una herramienta que conecta con partes de mí que solo existen en la memoria, en imaginarios futuros? ¿Qué se nos enseña en cuanto a cómo se mueve el tiempo? ¿Existen gramáticas del tiempo? ¿Pueden existir múltiples versiones de mí en conversaciones e interacciones anacrónicas? ¿Existe suficiente lenguaje para hablar de la dimensión del tiempo y cómo lo habitamos? ¿Por qué?

La segunda parte de mi contribución en el *Manual para un Templo* consta de un dibujo para colorear una silueta simple de los elementos espaciales del Lago Las Curías en Cupey. Desde la parte superior: un cielo con nubes, luego la línea de los árboles y el monte que rodea el lago, un puente, el hueco del lago, el lago y la orilla del lago. En cada sección, rellené el espacio vacío con un texto sobre los diferentes elementos de la experiencia. El dibujo y el texto fueron escritos a mano y en cada sección, la textura y estilo de las letras se relacionaba al elemento que representaba. La intención de esto era convertir la pieza en un tipo de juego interactivo. El papel como medio tiende a sugerir interacciones convencionales de cómo se usa un papel en una publicación. Aun así, la bidimensionalidad permite tantos potenciales como pueda imaginar quien imprime sobre el papel, facturando cualquier condición externa, real o fabricada que permita o limite la impresión sobre ese papel.

Texto:

*Templo de la jayaera.* Lago las Curías, Cupey PR 2022.

Para leer esta experiencia, deberás mover y girar el papel. Sigue las flechitas > Con lápices a colores, jáyate coloreando mi intención (cielo), mi canción (el monte), mi experiencia (el agua) y mi lección (la orilla pedregosa). Alice Mena

- Cielo - quería encontrar un lugar con resonancia, ganas de sentir un espacio fusionarse con mi garganta. mi cuerpo un galillo, el lago mi boca. quería ser la lengua dentro de esa cuenca sonora, resonancia, ansia, ansia, ruido, energía, quería fusionar mi ser con el lago al atardecer.

- Monte - oye al árbol cantar, en el viento silbar, el cántico del aire. mira ese rayo de luz, en las gotas brillar y en tus ojos reflejar lo que yo siento... que yo te siento. Siente mi voz como yo te siento. Siente el ritmo tocar tu corazón. Siente tu sangre vibrar dentro de tu piel. Siente mi voz como yo te siento. Yo sé que te siento.

- Lago - yo fui, respiré, conecté con el aire allí. con mi sonido toqué, con mi voz sentí hasta los dedos de coquís. vibró en mi la honda del lago. tembló mi ser. estremecer. sentí fluir un miedo intenso, una perse profunda. dolor cayó por el hueco. me vi en la hoja, suave meciendo. me vi en guacamayos, volando, riendo. me vi en la puerta, tocando, abriendo. me vi en el ente, cantando, entrando, cada vez más dentro de mí. me transmuté. ecolocalicé la figura del lago, su textura, su temperatura. con mi voz en el éter, impregné un amplio tramo. con sonidos temblorosos cargados de miedos y de duelos.

- Orilla pedregosa - abrazando la grima, el cringe y el saiqueo, en un momento efímero y turbulento, pulsó algo fuerte, lo sentí en los dientes, en la piel de mi cara me entró la huella del lago en la carne, en la cuerpa. me entró una jayaera que low key me cagó. ¡Qué mood! que producir sonidos en un espacio resonante pueda abrir una conciencia del poder táctil del sonido. achx. por eso la música da tan duro. que jodia jayaera, irse algaro, stimming como guacamayo y percibir un combo sensorial electro-magnético-sónico-fónico-táctil que te fusiona con el lago. (Rosario Ramos, 2023)

### **Preguntas**

¿Qué tipo de trabajo sería necesario para desarrollar lenguaje nuevo sensorial de ser necesario? ¿De dónde obtenemos permiso para hacer algo con la conciencia de los límites sensoriales aun no explorados? ¿Qué podría revelarse con el tiempo mediante la investigación continua de fenómenos multisensoriales como el de las Curías?

### **Residencia 3: LaBoriVogue**

La próxima pieza lírica fue impresa en la publicación titulada *LaBoriVogue: Belleza y Libertad* (Delgado Reyes, 2023). Se trata de un poema en donde comparo mi experiencia con la bomba puertorriqueña y la cultura de ballroom en Puerto Rico.

Texto:

Bitácora lírica de bomba y ballroom por Alice M. Rodríguez Laureano

exploración y aprendizaje  
de lenguajes ancestrales  
que me llegan en la bomba  
que me llegan en el room  
room, room  
ballroom

que florecen de la intención  
el mensaje que me llega  
desde labios trans-cestrales  
desde los brazos más abiertos  
desde portales mundiales  
que somos en la bomba  
que somos en el room  
room, room  
ballroom  
desde lo más poderoso  
desde el amor  
desde la honra  
desde la adoración y la veneración  
a la negritud  
a la trans-cestralidad  
a la herencia de la divinidad  
de la creatividad  
de la multi, pluri y trans-dimensionalidad  
desde cuerpos disidentes  
cuerpos diversas  
cuerpos racializadas  
desde privilegios interseccionales  
y desde esquinas coloniales transcontinentales  
desde posibilidades multidimensionales  
desde las llamas más calientes del infierno  
desde el relámpago, la nube y la mar  
desde las cosas impronunciables  
imposibles de representar  
desde aquello que solo se puede sentir  
al mover  
desde aquello que solo se puede mover  
al sentir  
intención  
y movimiento  
transgresión  
experimentación  
reconocimiento  
conocimiento real  
en la carne  
improvisade

para lograr  
conexión  
alineamiento  
con lo más interno  
hacia lo más externo  
desde lo más eterno  
desde lo efímero  
desde meses mirándome  
en rituales de bomba  
y vogueo tropicolonial  
- une puertorriqueñe -  
no se puede negar  
no se puede negar  
no se puede negar  
no se puede negar  
lo que se siente  
lo que se siente no se puede negar  
así que, ¿qué se hace con esa intención?  
¿cómo se rompe con el vicio  
a las mentiras imperiales  
del nuestre valor?  
¿qué tienen que ofrecernos?  
desde sus labios coloniales  
desde sus brazos cerrados  
desde heridas raciales, espirituales, culturales  
desde un legado de explotación  
desde la colonización?  
(saco dedos “malos”,  
presento con rabia)  
me reclamo  
mi cuerpa  
mi VOZ  
dejándome llevar  
por todo lo indomable  
que se despierta  
cuando veo  
cuando participo  
when I partake in  
tembandumbéo tropical  
con zandunguéo post-colonial

¡retumba el cuero en el batey!  
¡gritan les chanters por doquier!  
¡truncutumpá truncutumpá truncutumpá!  
rin-qui-ti-tin tan tiquitin tan! Já!  
encuentro mi intención  
dentro del batey  
en medio del runway  
en comunidad de libertad  
¡libertad, libertad  
intención de libertad!  
¡libre ser, libre ser  
intención de libre ser!  
¡encontrar, encontrar  
lo que no se me ha perdío!  
¡JA JA JÁ!  
¡jayaera!  
¡jayaera!  
en las caras de vogueras  
¡jayaera!  
¡jayaera!  
en las cuerpos de bomberas  
¡jayaera!  
¡jayaera!  
¡gritan cuerpos donde quiera!  
libertad  
libertad  
eso es period  
y no hay más ná.

### *Afro descendencia, género y semántica expansiva encarnada*

El factor de la raza juega un papel importante en el origen de los lenguajes de la bomba y el ballroom y en cómo me acerco e integro a estas comunidades. La bomba es una creación de personas negras puertorriqueñas y caribeñas, mientras el ballroom nace de personas negras y latinas LGBTQI+ en la ciudad de Nueva York. Ambas surgen y se mantienen como un frente de resistencia y comunidad ante un sistema opresor colonizador blanco cis hetero patriarcal y capitalista. La bomba y el ballroom existen gracias a las personas negras y racializadas de manera que acercarme a estas comunidades es algo que hago con mucho respeto al ser una persona blanca en Puerto Rico.

Crecer y vivir en Puerto Rico como alguien blanco es absorber y adoptar miles de performances y discursos racistas a lo largo de la vida, desde comportamientos

abiertamente violentos físicos o verbales, hasta sutilezas en dinámicas sociales que he tenido que enfrentar al deconstruir cómo me relaciono a las personas negras en mi vida. Los procesos que nos ayudan a deconstruir ideologías y performances de género, raza, clase, etc. son procesos dolorosos, arduos, llenos de realizaciones desagradables de cómo tomamos parte en la opresión de otras personas y cómo encarnamos nuestra propia opresión. Estos procesos también son procesos de humildad, procesos sanadores donde nos damos cuenta de que, al valorarnos, humanizarnos y vulnerabilizarnos podemos diseñar mejores performances relacionales a través y a pesar de esas diferencias de categorías sociales identitarias. La única manera en que puedo deconstruir las miles de performances de supremacía blanca es escuchando y aplicando la sabiduría de las personas negras y racializadas en mi comunidad. Llego a la bomba y al ballroom como parte de esa deconstrucción, porque ambas exploran la identidad desde la comunidad, la corporeidad, lo negro, lo pluri-racial y el movimiento expresivo. Como persona blanca puertorriqueña, se me hace necesario mantenerme en constante reflexión sobre mis intenciones, motivos, acciones e impacto en estos espacios. ¿Qué me conecta a estas comunidades de resistencia ante la opresión en Puerto Rico? ¿Cómo mis relaciones y búsquedas me acercan a estas comunidades? ¿Cuándo debo ceder espacio? ¿Cómo debo tomar espacio? ¿Cómo respondo cuando mi participación hace daño? ¿Cómo estos procesos benefician a mi comunidad y me hacen crecer? ¿Cómo y porqué estas comunidades comparten sus herramientas de autodescubrimiento y liberación en contextos multi-raciales?

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Para la fecha que escribí la bitácora lírica de bomba y ballroom, había pasado poco menos de un año de haber comenzado a integrarme a las comunidades puertorriqueñas de bomba y de ballroom. Integrarme a la comunidad de bomba significó visitar y conectar con personas de bateyes comunitarios, tomar talleres de baile de bomba para aprender los fundamentos, el lenguaje, la historia, los ritmos y movimientos básicos y eventualmente atreverme a participar en bateyes tocando instrumentos, cantando y bailando. Batey es el nombre que se le da al espacio/evento que contiene la práctica de la bomba. De forma similar, integrarme a la comunidad de ballroom boricua ha llevado atender y apoyar eventos locales, participar de prácticas públicas, tomar talleres ofrecidos por performeras destacadas de la comunidad y eventualmente atreverme a participar compitiendo por categorías durante prácticas o balls (eventos competitivos de ballroom). Al integrarme a estas dos comunidades de movimiento, comencé a notar poco a poco elementos en común que me hacían percibirlas como lenguajes en la misma familia, lenguajes encarnados que al integrarlos se convierten en herramientas que te cambian la cosmovisión, igual que cualquier otro lenguaje.

En ambas prácticas existe una dinámica particular entre dos performances, la de un movedor y la de un artista de sonido. En la bomba, les bailadores conversan con los subidores; el subidor, subidora o subidore es la persona que convierte los movimientos y piquetes de los bailadores a toques y ritmos en el barril. En ballroom los performeras se mueven al ritmo de la música de una DJ y le chanter “chantea”, inspirándose por la

música y por el movimiento de los performer, casi traduciendo el movimiento a sonidos vocales que complementan y acentúan los movimientos en la pasarela. En ambas prácticas los cuerpos presentes delimitan el espacio que contiene la performance. La bomba delimita y nomina el espacio como batey, un círculo de personas que cantan, aplauden, animan, tocan, acompañan, bailan y contienen las conversaciones entre bailadores y subidor. La energía de un batey se mueve hacia un centro en donde todas las miradas se encuentran fácilmente y se comparte de forma horizontal. En ballroom, se delimita una pasarela con el público, comúnmente una forma rectangular o con dos lados cerrados, un espacio al fondo para los jueces y una apertura final opuesta de la pasarela para que los performer entren. En ambas prácticas, las personas que contienen y no “participan” también desempeñan un rol activo en el acompañamiento, en ofrecer ánimo, retroalimentación y afectos cuando alguna performance les emociona o inspira. La bomba y el ballroom comparten similitudes en estas gramáticas de performance y acompañamientos, pero cada espacio es único en sus resultados visuales, estéticos, sonoros y culturales.

Una de las diferencias más palpables entre la cultura de ballroom y bomba en Puerto Rico es que todo lo relacionado al ballroom gira en torno a las identidades y particularidades de las personas LGBTQI+. Aunque hoy día la bomba es mucho más diversa e inclusiva hacia las personas LGBTQI+, los espacios de bomba en donde estas identidades son abiertamente integradas son limitados en Puerto Rico. Esto puede ser en parte porque, tradicionalmente, en el baile de bomba los movimientos se exploran desde performances binarias para la mujer y el hombre. Las mujeres integran el uso de faldas en sus bailes y piquetes mientras que los hombres hacen uso de la postura, la figura de los brazos y juegos de pies sin el uso de telas. Sin embargo, en años recientes, diferentes personas en Puerto Rico, como Lio Villahermosa, han roto barreras binarias del baile de bomba. Gracias a estos pioneros, se ha hecho más común ver hombres utilizando faldas o pañuelas intencionalmente en sus bailes, más común ver mujeres sirviéndose de las figuras y movimientos sin telas y ver a personas trans o cis género combinando y trascendiendo expectativas binarias del baile. Aunque la falda y el uso de la tela tiene significancias particulares en la energía del baile y lo que se comunica, el usarla o no le permite a los bailadores explorar expresiones más allá de lo tradicionalmente prescrito para su género asignado al nacer. Incluso dentro de un lenguaje no verbal como el baile, las gramáticas sociales de género juegan un rol en cómo una persona se acerca a esa performance. Al género ser un elemento relativamente arbitrario, se expone a ser transformado por nuevos actores en nuevos tiempos, profundizando el potencial expansivo del lenguaje de la bomba.

### ***Gramática y semántica expansiva encarnada en ballroom boricua***

Las categorías en ballroom son categorías de performance (movimiento), de moda, o del cuerpo que conforman las competencias de un ball, ya sea en la escena mainstream o de

la escena kiki. Un ball se crea por colectivos o casas de ballroom con un tema en general que propone la narrativa, la estética o actitudes performáticas que se buscan en las categorías. Las categorías son los espacios que permiten explorar esas narrativas mediante juegos particulares de performance, de moda, o de cuerpo (Cristobal, 2023). En general, para “dar” la categoría y/o ganarla, les performeress deben combinar elementos performáticos de la categoría e integrar el tema de la narrativa, la estética y actitudes.

En un ball, puede darse una dinámica de resignificación semántica y performática. Estos momentos de resignificación se dan entre batallas cuando los jueces no perciben sutilezas importantes en las interpretaciones o cuando no pueden decidir entre los competidores en la batalla final de una categoría. Los jueces son un panel de personas de la comunidad de ballroom, previos ganadores, madres o padres de casas de ballroom o personas que contribuyen a la comunidad de una manera significativa. Ellos reciben la información de lo que se busca en la categoría, con la cual deciden qué presentaciones entran a competir por la categoría y eliminan participantes hasta que sobresalga la persona que mejor interpreta la categoría. En estos momentos de resignificación, se hacen pausas para revisar detalles que no parecen estar siendo interpretados o añadir matices performáticos o de actitudes que empujen a los performeress a reinterpretar la categoría con nueva información y dirección. Incluso a último minuto, el significado o la dirección performática pueden ser alterados y así la categoría puede ser explorada y manifestada a su máxima capacidad. Esta flexibilidad semántica y performática se puede dar en otras dinámicas en el ballroom y no debe ser exclusiva de ballroom.

Veamos un ejemplo de esta flexibilidad usando la categoría de Old Way o Old Way Vogue. Esta es una categoría de performance que juega con movimientos lineares, angulares y precisos emulando figuras de poses en revistas de alta costura como Vogue, figuras o movimientos de artes marciales y figuras bidimensionales como en jeroglíficos egipcios. Hoy día, estos movimientos o figuras se exploran dentro de los cinco elementos: hands performance, catwalk, duckwalk, spins and dips y floor performance (Cristobal, 2023). A cualquier categoría también se le puede añadir aspectos de identidad que exploran la narrativa desde experiencias identitarias diferentes. Por ejemplo, una categoría de Old Way (o cualquiera) puede requerir algún elemento arbitrario como un color, material, o elemento específico para distinguir una identidad de género de otra. Al participar, cada performer no solo representa y explora su identidad de género, sino que participa de una metodología que profundiza y expande el significado de la categoría y cómo contribuye la diversidad de género a los potenciales de performance. Fuera de estos espacios, las identidades disidentes pueden ser motivo de marginación, pero dentro del lenguaje del ballroom se intencionan y convierten en herramientas de liberación.

Muchas de las temáticas de ballroom boricua son de índole política decolonial. Las identidades de las personas en la comunidad son políticas, así que el ballroom es un espacio político de resistencia para imaginar realidades alternas, crear conciencia social, exponer y responder a las injusticias que vivimos aquí y las que nos conectan al resto del mundo.

En los últimos balls navideños, en Puerto Rico se ha interpretado la categoría Jíbaro Vogue, propuesta por Ezequiel Díaz de la casa LaBoriVogue en 2018, la cual combina el tema del jíbaro puertorriqueño y la categoría Old Way. Díaz expone que Jíbaro Vogue nace como una respuesta de inconformidad con la situación política de Puerto Rico y su impacto sobre la identidad puertorriqueña y, entre otras cosas, “busca actualizar las narrativas de lo que es ser jíbaro en el siglo XXI” (Delgado Reyes, 2023). En esta categoría, los performerers deben servir los cinco elementos e integrar elementos de la cultura campesina puertorriqueña, tanto del jíbare moderno como la iconografía de jíbaro tradicional. Interpretar estéticamente la categoría significa la integración de accesorios, vestuarios como guayaberas, pavas, machetes, cosecha local y cualquier actitud o performance jíbara. La iconografía del jíbaro como un hombre puertorriqueño cis hetero típico de campo, se resignifica y transforma al ser interpretada y reclamada desde cuerpos LGBTQI+ en ballroom. Este es solo un ejemplo de cómo la temática de una categoría puede encarnar lenguaje de ballroom, ajustada al contexto socio político particular de Puerto Rico.

### **Reflexión final**

¿Qué encuentro cuando aplico el lente lingüístico sobre mis performances y el lente de performance sobre mis lingüísticas? El punto de encuentro del lenguaje es el ser. Una persona. Un cuerpo que actúa y decide. Un punto de vista extremadamente particular en contextos compartidos. Mis prácticas con la comunidad de LOL, *El Templo de la Jayaera*, el ballroom y la bomba, me lleva a espacios donde juego con incontables formas de expresión, bajo parámetros abiertos a la exploración. Estos parámetros me han permitido diseñar mis propias frases, mis propios movimientos, mis propios sentidos, gramáticas y actitudes. También he absorbido frases, movimientos, gramáticas, actitudes que reflejan esa naturaleza social del intercambio. Los lenguajes influencian el ser. El ser influencia los lenguajes. Estos parámetros abiertos me han hecho entender que las performances/ lenguajes son más expansivos de lo que la lingüística clásica o contemporánea tienen la capacidad de admitir y mucho menos el valor de explorar. Nuestros cuerpos, nuestras cuerpas y cuerpes tienen más capacidad creativa de lo que permiten nuestros agentes rectores.

Fuera de estos contextos creativos, sucede lo mismo, pero dentro de roles prescritos por agentes rectores en la sociedad. Constantemente absorbo performances, pero en vez de transformarlas en el intercambio, solo las refuerzo al cumplir con parámetros cerrados arbitrarios. Nacemos en contextos que nos condicionan sin nuestro consentimiento a encarnar y defender ideologías opresivas aun en contra de nuestros propios intereses, contextos donde nos sometemos a gramáticas de poder que deciden nuestro valor y cómo debemos actuar dentro de jerarquías coloniales fabricadas de supremacía blanca cis hetero patriarcal, capitalista y antropocentrista. En contextos prescritos, nunca quedamos

como agentes o hacedores; más bien ignoradas o descartadas como usuarias de repertorios prestados (Homar & pastrana santiago, 2022).

Es frustrante ver el potencial que tenemos de influir tanto el lenguaje como las performances en nuestros contextos, pero todavía sentimos obligados a seguir diciendo y haciendo lo mismo para sobrevivir y ser aceptados. Es aterrador saber la historia de cómo las instituciones de poder obtuvieron ese poder. A la vez que es frustrante saber que desde esos contextos de poder institucional no va a iniciarse ningún cambio significativo en los órdenes sociales, es alentador saber que al nivel comunitario las personas siempre van a crear lenguajes y estructuras nuevas, sin el permiso de nadie. Las identidades no son monolíticas, el lenguaje lo tiene que reflejar. El campo de la lingüística estudia un fenómeno vivo y lo estudia como si estuviese muerto. Más allá de observar y analizar lo predecible y matemático del lenguaje, hace falta integrar lo no racional en la ecuación académica. La adherencia al racionalismo que fundamenta las teorías chomskianas, rigen la mayoría del estudio lingüístico esencialmente limitando lo que podemos llamarle fuentes de conocimiento (Barman, 2014). ¿Cómo podemos decir que el conocimiento es completo si solo usamos la razón? ¿Cuánto se influencia el lenguaje y el conocimiento por todo lo emocional, sensorial, sexual, animal que es también innato en el humano? ¿Cómo podemos dejar fuera tantas capacidades humanas de lo que nos da conocimiento?

Queda mucho por performear, analizar y sentir para ver el impacto que espacios de intercambios creativos pueden tener en una comunidad y la cultura en general. Hace falta expandir lo que se considera lenguaje y los formatos académicos. Hace falta cuestionar las coreografías y gramáticas institucionales que mantienen ideologías de supremacía. Hace falta estudiar los espacios usando perspectiva de género, de raza, de clase y hasta de especie. Hace falta trans performear. Hace falta trans lenguar. Hacen falta más palabras, más performances y más gramáticas que permitan a más hablantes encontrarse en los lenguajes y los lenguajes, hay que trans performarlos.

Poema final:

*¿Cómo estudiar el queso sin derretirlo  
Sin rallarlo  
Sin echárselo a una tortilla y probarlo?  
Es como nunca tostar el grano de café  
Nunca echarlo en agua caliente  
Nunca colarlo, nunca saborearlo  
Es como agarrar un palito  
And poke around un mofongo  
Y jamás darle un ñaki.  
Te lo estás perdiendo  
Las miles capas del conocimiento.*

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# **“SHE FOR HE!” ENVISIONING A CULTURALLY RELEVANT CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN**

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## **Abstract**

That patriarchy has been around since the advent of imperial systems of domination is a truism that has characterized the social realities and lived experiences of men and women across the Caribbean. The resultant status quo exudes gender inequality with masculinism prevailing in major decision-making, leadership, and administrative spheres. Past and current streams of feminisms have entered the arena with the promise of establishing new epistemologies and ontologies for the region’s peoples in a quest to engender equality and justice. To date, the level of success has been mediocre at best, despite the valiant efforts of women and men across the globe. This impacts social, cultural, political, historical, economic and linguistic development tremendously as a more androcentric philosophy of Caribbean thought and action prevails, often to the detriment of female empowerment. In sounding the battle cry myself, I draw on my own experiences as a Caribbean man, scholar and researcher as I unapologetically propose a “She for He” campaign that is culturally relevant, necessary and central to the quest to end gender inequality and foster gender justice across the Anglophone Caribbean. This article initially discusses the tensions and contentions associated with patriarchy in the Caribbean, drawing heavily on feminist epistemologies and the work of feminists over the decades. It subsequently outlines a new proposed campaign as critical in achieving the very elusive goals of gender equality and gender justice in the Caribbean today.

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**Key terms:** patriarchy, culturally relevant, gender equality, feminism, Caribbean, “She for He”

When Martinican Frantz Fanon (2005, p. 26) opined, “Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it, in relative opacity,” it was largely meant to motivate reflection and subsequent activism in ways that herald positive change to the oppressive socio-cultural and politico-historical realties faced by the less powerful across the Caribbean. Within the context of gender inequality, these words become a clarion call to the current gender sensitive generation to advance the feminist agenda in the face of centuries-old patriarchy in its myriad forms. In so doing, gender-aware organizations, scholars, activists and students within the region are charged with the need to think historically, politically, thematically, culturally and geographically about the ills that have plagued generations by denying them access to the core benefits of true development. It is the undeniable effect of patriarchy that generations of Caribbean boys and girls grow up to be men and women, gender socialized to consciously and subconsciously accept the position of male dominance and female subservience. Against the backdrop of the Caribbean’s politico-historical landscape, a culturally relevant programme must be designed to address patriarchy’s entrenched myopia. The aim of this article is two-fold: initially, to briefly address the scourge of patriarchy as a pivotal developmental problem in the Anglophone Caribbean and, secondly, to propose a perhaps brow-raising She for He campaign, targeting an advancement of gender equality and transformation of values.

Reddock (2004) declares patriarchy as the overarching structure of male dominance and privilege which is reflected in all social systems and social relations. It may be seen as a system of social structures and practices in and through which men dominate, oppress and exploit women and less powerful men. Individuals are groomed to accept this androcentric paradigm as the acceptable behavioural norms and values to live by, and largely – though not absolutely – refrain from questioning its validity or challenging its precepts. Deeply problematic, the emergent masculine value-ridden status quo is perpetuated in the process of developing a gender identity through processes of gender socialization, gendered social learning and social interaction. And Jamaican poet Olive Senior (1991, p. 25) argues:

It is now well established that our values, attitudes, behaviour, choices and performance as men and women owe a great deal to the manner in which we learn to absorb the specific role which society associates with the male and female sex. Gender-role learning is an important part of socialization, which is the process by which every society tries to raise its young so that they will accept the values and ideas of that society ... Socialization experiences in childhood prepare people for the social roles they will be expected to assume as adults .... The gender role is one of the most important of these roles, for it determines our behaviour as men and women.

Caribbean sociologist Barry Chevannes (2001) contextualizes the magnitude of the problem of patriarchy’s masculine status quo on the socio-cultural landscape of the

Anglophone Caribbean via research done on gender socialization practices across five English-speaking countries. He reports that:

The street holds the key to socialization of the children in the community, especially the boys ... The young men, both teenagers and adults who control the street, engulf the prepubescent male, only to release him a pubescent boy fully socialized into values, predispositions and behaviors that leave many parents, the mothers especially, at loss as to what to do to counteract them. (Chevannes, 2001, pp. 173-174)

This is a critical issue worthy of open ventilation and critical discourse at all levels since its repercussions are felt in every aspect of society: from gender relations in the home and workplace, to policy-creation and praxis regarding developmental priorities that reek of androcentric values, gendered assumptions about men and women, and practices that perpetuate gender injustice.

A feminist perspective facilitates an understanding of patriarchy as a crucial developmental problem in the Caribbean since, over time, practice becomes institutionalized, leading to macro policies that impact the poor, especially women, who are left on the fringes of national development. Contrariwise, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID, see AWID, 2020) asserts that “adopting solely a “women’s economic empowerment approach” is merely to integrate women deeper into this system. It may be a temporary means of survival. We need to plant the seeds to make another world possible while we tear down the walls of the existing one” (2020, parag. 3) Women’s experiences with development in the Caribbean have often seen them remain also-rans, and critiques of major Caribbean models of development bear just testimony to this (Chainey, 2016). For example, in his analysis of Caribbean development, Development Studies scholar, Norman P. Girvan (1999), surmises that economic development thus far has not been a multi-faceted, people-oriented process which involves the continuous enhancement of the capabilities and welfare of all individuals in society. He advocates an alternative model that recognizes growth and structural transformation as necessary for development and avers that economic development is meaningless if there is not full participation and continued unequal access to resources. Arthur Lewis (2008, p. 170) states that, “One of the surest ways of increasing the national income is to create new sources of employment for women outside the home.” Linked to policy, this model becomes unattainable in the Caribbean due to its historical focus being an economic one, with the androcentric nature of development continuing to leave women on the periphery of society. Instead of empowering women, the economic system has relegated women to welfare in two forms – either by economic dependency on a husband, which itself endorses heteronormative patriarchy; or by economic dependency on the State. Rai (2011, p. 28) is critical of this marginalization of women in the face of male interests when she contends, “Women first came into focus in development [merely] as objects of welfare concerns.” Philosopher Karl

Polanyi declares, “The true criticism of market society is not that it was based on economics – in a sense, every and any society must be based on it – but that its economy was based on self-interest” (2008, p. 97).

The critique of the decades-old welfare approach gave rise to approaches such as Women In Development (WID) that has examined inequality of access to resources. The subsequent Women And Development (WAD) approach has questioned women’s invisibility in development, their reduced access to services, the lack of female land ownership, the non-documentation of women’s work, and gender segregation in work. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach critiques the male productive norm as well as the erection of social and political structures that demarcate men from women regarding equality in occupation and access to resources that would narrow the gap between the male-female divide in the workforce, both in terms of numbers as well as in job types and benefits. An enabling paradigm that focuses on the minimum necessary requirements to meet basic needs has been heavily critiqued for not ensuring a necessary process of social transformation and for not ending inequality.

The disparities between men and women in income-earning labour must be exposed in light of world statistics that depict gender inequality and economic injustice with women bearing the brunt of related atrocities. For example, according to the United Nations (2010, 2013, see also Heintz, 2015), women work two-thirds of the world’s working hours, and produce half of the world’s food, yet only earn ten per cent of the world’s income, and own less than one per cent of the world’s property. Two-thirds of the children who are denied primary education are girls, and 75 per cent of the world’s 876 million illiterate adults are women. Moreover, women hold only 14 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide, while only eight per cent of the world’s cabinet ministers are women. Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1966) states that, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Caribbean governments are complicit in violating this article by excluding categories of citizens such as women from exercising their constitutionally and conventionally enshrined rights to achieve and develop within the ambit of a just economy. For example, Trinidad and Tobago suffers from an overall loss in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) of 15.2% due to gender inequality. The HDI is an average measure of basic human development achievements in a given country. Like all averages, the HDI masks inequality in the distribution of human development across the population at the country level (United Nations 2016a, 2016b).

The recent international recession with resultant sharp declines in revenue has shocked the international community into a morbid reality regarding job losses and drastically falling GDPs; the Caribbean – with its one-dimensional economic focus – has not been spared. And as a legacy of the negatives of an androcentric status quo regarding economic macro policies and planning, women are bearing the brunt of the fallout. Ghosh (2011, p. 23) argues, “The effects of the crisis tend to be disproportionately distributed

among the population, with certain vulnerable groups, including women and girls, much worse affected than more secure or privileged sections.”

Apart from government policy, the education system and organized religion are two of the most virulent vectors of the masculine status quo, while so-called “men’s rights” campaigns are largely reactionary efforts to erase even the limited progress made toward gender equality over the past decades. Goetz (2007, pp. 23-24) however, proposes that a positive conception of gender justice that is part of a contemporary rights-based approach to development thinking. In making the case for gender equality and gender justice, Goetz essentially argues that women have a right to be empowered and endowed with the tools of human development. Though faced with many criticisms, the rights-based approach sees gender justice as holding the promise to end inequalities between women and men that result in women’s subordination to men (Goetz, 2007, pp. 30-31). It is an approach that challenges the perpetuation of patriarchy’s masculine status quo; that offers the promise of women’s sexual autonomy, the end to the sexual division of labor, and the end to gender-based violence against women.

To achieve this, however, a big vision is necessary; one that has high potential for success yet grounded enough to be practical, characterized by culturally relevant contexts and attainable goals, and one that would realistically allow women to fully participate at all levels. I propose a robust “She for He” campaign as satisfying these criteria. In 2014, UN Women introduced a He for She campaign that was meant to spark interest in men to develop gender sensitivity and, in so doing, help men to recognize that women are partners and not adversaries. Unfortunately, the campaign reignited deep-seated controversies surrounding patriarchal issues of power, ownership, rights, and entitlements (Heintz, 2015).

I propose a She for He campaign in the Caribbean that attempts to steer clear of such controversy and, instead, is conceptualized on empowering women to invest time and energy in targeting males by promoting new practices in gender socialization, becoming involved in formal and informal education, working at the community level, and lobbying for revamped national policies. The principles of a She for He campaign are based on sober reflection upon the continued atrocities women suffer at the hands of men in the name of development, religion, politics, and family life, such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, workplace bullying, unequal remuneration for the same job, and unequal access to education and employment. To continue life as it is now to allow a perpetuation of what exists; there is the critical need for positive social change and I believe that a She for He campaign can help generate this change, with a focus on prevention rather than subsequent treatment of issues.

Although the primary aim of such a campaign would be to change behaviour, attitudes and values of men at all levels, women would be the true beneficiaries. The investment made now in changing men’s behavior can be capitalized on later to propose a more humane, open-ended, gender equal and just system for development at all levels, that

would be characterized by the tenets of true development in terms of equity, equality, access to resources, justice, freedom, a higher standard and quality of life, and sustainability. The power dynamics governing social structures would be renegotiated and, whereas the eventual goal would not be for women to override men (as this would simply invert the current binary and would yield a different category of problems), there would be manifested a human dimension that speaks to a sustained systematic approach to gender issues, gender relations, gender equality and gender justice. A book written for Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) (Sen & Grown, 1987, p. 78) celebrates the capacity of women to achieve such a victory since,

Women drawing on their experiences have developed great capacities for internal resilience and resistance ... Women have learned to shed traditional submissiveness and withstand family and community pressures .... Women have organized to use traditional cultural forms to raise the consciousness of men and women about injustice and inequality.

In the home circle, a change in gender socialization practices that privileges males and almost invisibilizes females must end. The role of grassroots movements and networks within the community can be effective here. Traditional service-oriented organizations can organize community-based workshops and sensitization seminars that all capitalize on the history, experience and voices of women who want a better and more just life for their daughters. Research-based organizations can work with these grassroots and service-oriented networks to further the cause. This is critical as theory and scholarship – which feed policy-making – are hinged on the value of practical activity as well as solution-based public engagement.

The education system must also be targeted. Gender biases must be weeded out from hiring practices, textbook selection, assignment of female teachers to Kindergarten classes and male teachers to the national examination-based upper levels, etc. These create hierarchies in the school system that subconsciously speak to boys and girls fitting into a mold. Choice of subjects and who pursues which at the secondary level must also be re-examined. To cattle boys into Sciences and girls into Food and Nutrition reeks of gender inequality. An overhaul of the curriculum must be undertaken at all levels. Gender mainstreaming must be practiced at all costs.

The scope of a She for He campaign must not be static; early focus on the home and education system must be juxtaposed to other avenues such as popular culture and the media. The quality of print and online articles and the quality of cinema and television must be re-assessed to ensure gender equality and the related portrayals of both women and men. The level of awareness of women's subordination must be raised via popular culture, the media, and formal and informal education.

The periodic evaluation of the success of a Caribbean She for He campaign must be undertaken with a view to shifting gears as necessary. A SWOT (strengths, weakness-

es, opportunities, threats) analysis must be done to capitalize on its strengths, highlight its weaknesses, move forward with opportunities and eradicate potential threats. Gendering development is a slow, belabored process but remains an investment for future generations. Findings must be documented and the research can and should lead to manuscripts and conference presentations to edify the other nations of the Global South as to the merit of a She for He campaign.

The perpetuation of patriarchy's masculinist status quo remains an acute problem across the Anglophone Caribbean – and beyond – today. A culturally relevant She for He campaign can be a vehicle for transporting women – and men – out of the stagnant swamp that this problem has created in the region. Supported by big ideas, such a campaign's vision must remain practical. The shift from relegating women to the realm of blind submissiveness to one of active participation and investing in the future of both their daughters and sons, is one that speaks to the intersection of race, gender and class in the Caribbean. It must be part of a paradigm shift aimed at truly bringing about gender justice, empowerment of women, real development, and a transformation of gendered assumptions and practices.

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# LESBIAN DESIRE AND TREPIDATION IN SHANI MOOTOO'S *VALMIKI'S DAUGHTER*

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## Abstract

Many of the modern-day attitudes and viewpoints regarding homosexuality in the Caribbean have been influenced by the 1861 Offences against the Person Act which criminalized same sex relationships. The 1974 Trinidadian revision of the Act places homosexuals in a prohibited class that includes “drug addicts and those with severe infectious diseases” (Gaskins, 2013, p. 435). This has resulted in a silencing of homosexuals both in society and in literature. Despite this ban, a continuum of sexual practices is exercised both clandestinely and openly in the region. There exists, however, a relative absence of lesbian protagonists in Caribbean Literature. This article explores lesbian desire and fear in Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter*.

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**Key terms:** Caribbean, lesbian, gay, LGBTQ, Trinidad, Shani Mootoo

The Caribbean has long maintained a complex relationship with sexuality and gender that in a large part has been influenced and directed by the 1861 Offences against the Person Act. The Offences against the Person Act was imposed by the British colonial administration and criminalized same sex relationships and those found guilty faced imprisonment. While some Caribbean territories have repealed legal discrimination of LGBTQI+ people under the Act, in other parts of the region the Act has been revised numerous times. Each revision further defines “unnatural” behavior and often imposes even more limitations. The 1974 Trinidadian revision defined homosexuals as a prohibited class and included a ban on homosexuals entering the country. Joseph Gaskins points out that the prohibited classes under the Act lumps LGBTQI+ people with drug addicts and those with severe infectious diseases, as people that “do not belong – those who pose a danger to the nation.” (2013, p. 435) However, there are many Caribbean

writers who use their “fictional writing” as an instrument to challenge these discriminatory laws and epistemologies.

Brinda Mehta (2005) highlights Shani Mootoo as being an important voice among Indo-Caribbean writers who dare to address issues of homophobia, rape, suicide, and other forms of violence and oppression, which are typically “hushed incidents” within that community (Poole, 2010, p. 2). Poole emphasizes specifically how the novel *Valmiki's Daughter* exposes the existence of “culturally specific ways of inscribing a culture of violence and shame onto Indo-Caribbean female sexual identities.” (p. 2) It is from this critique of culturally prescribed gender behaviors that create a culture of violence and shame that a new history emerges of women that love women in the Indo-Caribbean community. This article explores lesbian desire and fear in Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter* (2008).

*Valmiki's Daughter* focuses on issues related to heterosexual and homosexual identities within the Krishnu family, utilizing both first person and third person narration. The family consists of Valmiki and his wife Devika, and their two daughters Viveka and Vasti, and takes place in modern day Trinidad. The first person omniscient narration shifts between Valmiki, and his daughter Viveka. The novel begins with an in-depth description of the streets and buildings in San Fernando, Trinidad, including the hospital, bank, The Victory Hotel, sporting goods store, cathedral, police station, the catholic high school, and the piano teacher's house, in which “an ageless man who wears dresses” rents a room (Mootoo, 2008, p. 14). One of the first memories introduced involves Merle Bedi. Near the high school, Vashti Krishnu buys food and heads back towards the school when she is approached by a homeless woman who is living in the bushes across from the school. The narrator describes her:

The woman appears to be old and haggard, but Vasti knows she is only a handful of years older than she is. The woman is, in fact, the exact age of Viveka, Vasti's sister. The woman is thin, with the depleted meagerness of the alcoholic. Her longblack hair is oily and clumped. She wears what was once a white shirt, a school shirt from not too long ago, but it is yellowed and soiled, and the trousers she wears, men's trousers, are covered in dirt, dust, urine. They are several sizes too big for her, held high above her waist with a belt and as if it were not enough, a length of heavy rope. She is barefoot. (Mootoo, 2008, p. 22)

Vasti wants to avoid this woman that people come from far and wide to catch a glimpse of, much like a circus freak show act. Vasti knows the rumors about this woman, named Merle Bedi, that she prostitutes herself at night for cigarette and rum money. Vasti also knows that she is a lesbian and for this reason she believes that her family disowned her and expelled her from their home. Merle approaches her and asks her for some money and also to take a message to a teacher, Miss Seukeran. Vasti tells her she doesn't have any money and runs across the street to school, leaving her standing by herself. The next day she tells Viveka that she saw her former classmate and friend Merle and that she

asked her for money. That opens a floodgate of memories for Viveka and she tries to “suppress” the memory of Merle disclosing her love for their science teacher and Viveka telling her that it was not love, just student-teacher admiration. She remembers Merle rebutting her and telling her that she wanted to kiss and hold Miss Seukeran, which makes Viveka confused and unsure if she feels embarrassment for having similar feelings for otherwomen, or simply embarrassed to hear her friend talk about such a taboo subject (Mootoo, 2008, pp. 22, 90).

In high school, Merle writes Miss Seukeran many cards expressing her admiration, and eventually the teacher stops speaking to her, which begins a precipitous downward spiral that leads to her depression. Remembrances vary, with some town people stating that her parents banned her from their home while other remembering that she left on her own, driven by “the same craziness that had her loving within her own sex” (Mootoo, 2008, p. 96). Either way, the ostracism of Merle Bedi is something that Viveka remembers often and which is why she never reveals her own feelings for her own teacher, Miss Sally Russell. Viveka recalls her crush on the “mannish” Miss Russell and how she admired everything about the way she moved and acted (p. 91). Viveka went as far as to join the track and field team which Miss Russell coached and admits that she “had wanted to throw the discus and javelin because it was her way of kissing Miss Russell” (p. 92) The crush eventually fades when Miss Russell becomes engaged and resigns, but Viveka’s attraction to women does not wane. This is the root of Viveka’s abandonment of Merle, her desire not to be associated with someone breaking one of Caribbean society’s biggest taboos (p. 95). Viveka already fears suspicion due to her stout build, love of sports, and masculine behaviors. Garvey points that the anxiety that Viveka has about her sexuality, not only stems from the example of Merle Bedi, but also from gender policing by her mother Devika and sister Vashti (2014, p. 1). While on the bus into town, Vashti tells Viveka:

Well, face it, Vik, You’re not like other girls. You walk so fast, and you don’t stay still, and you don’t dress up or wear makeup. You don’t even talk about boys .... So, look at the way you stand ... look at how you push out your chest, and how your arms stick out from the side ... you look like one of those body builders in those weird competitions. We females don’t stick our arms out so much. And walk with our chests so high in the air ... I am trying to say that you have a tendency to be muscular. I mean really: do you want big calves and harder arms -which you will get if you play sports? That’ so ugly on a ... whatever. It makes us look mannish. Mom says *you’re* sort of mannish. (Mootoo, 2008, pp. 87-89)

Garvey points out that these comments, which are regularly made by both her sister and mother, are a form of heteronormative policing that occurs not only in the Krishnu family, but in most Caribbean households (2014, p. 12). Crawford (2022) notes that the Caribbean has been subjected to a heterosexualization of sexuality where heterosexual remains the default and homosexual is not only the polar opposite, it is positioned as

unnatural. A multitude of reasons account for this, including reproduction as means of ensuring wealth accumulation amongst planters, the Christian church's influence on colonial ideology, cultural practice, and the previously mentioned legislation. Crawford reveals that familial, societal, cultural, institutional, and individual religious beliefs and practices sanction heteronormativity. Devika also chastises Viveka when she feels she spends too much time with Anick. Later, Devika calls Valmiki to tell him what transpired. She states that she told Viveka the following:

That their friendship was strange. It was unnatural. That if she wasn't careful, didn't put a stop to this nonsense right away, there would be a scandal. Single women should not have married women as friends. Marriages broke up because of that sort of thing. And the single woman was always blamed. (Mootoo, 2008, p. 341)

Viveka remembers the day she met Anick, who is married to her childhood friend Nayan, at one of her parent's parties and how she felt dwarfed by Anick's beauty and charm. Several days later, she is invited to dinner at Anick and Nayan's home where he monopolizes the conversation. He tells Viveka that they had met in a public house where Anick worked, near a ski slope. Nayan also reveals that he and his friends had a bet on which one would sleep with her first. He continues his boorish behavior during the entire meal and gives the women little time to participate in conversation. After dinner, Viveka steps outside for a moment and hears the couple arguing, Viveka can hear Anick admonishing Nayan for revealing so many personal details and details that have been twisted. He responds "I know what to say and what not to say. I am not, infact, discussing everything. You want me to tell her everything? I can do that you know. Let me see then if she will have a frigging thing to do with you." (Mootoo, 2008, p. 226) On the way home, Viveka resists the urge to reach out and provide Anick with a comforting touch. Once home, the row between the two continues, as Anick grabs a brass vase and throws it at Nayan while he shouts that he would be ashamed to tell people that she slept with women in her past. He tells her that he knows "people in my country and how they think," that they would never understand same sex relationships between women (p. 231).

Crawford (2022) explains that lesbophobia, which she defines as the "dislike or hatred of lesbians or women who are sexually, physically and/or emotionally attracted to other women," (para. 4) persists as a very real problem in the Caribbean. She goes on to reveal that lesbophobia is a combination of homophobia and sexism which are "two mutually constituted regimes of oppression that produce the effects of harm—whether it's prejudice, harassment, discrimination and/or sexual and physical violence—against women who love and have sex with other women" (para. 5). Crawford argues that lesbianism challenges heteropatriarchal control, which include men's access to women's bodies for sexual and reproductive purposes. The result of this challenge is often stigmatization, violence, or in Nayan's case, accusations of "sexual immorality." There also exists an

influence from Christian churches in the lives of indentured laborers and their descendants whereby same sex relationships are positioned as evil and in binary opposition to God. Despite her religious education and always being under the watchful eye of her parents and other society members, Viveka maintains her interest in Anick.

The next development in their relationship occurs when Viveka invites Anick and Nayan to her parents' home for dinner. This is the first time they have a chance to really talk, and they bond immediately as Viveka has learned a little French to communicate with Anick. As Viveka begins to speak broken French with Anick in environments where no one speaks French, language becomes a tool that allows the women to operate outside of familial scrutiny. Viveka observes that their verbal exchanges feel more intimate than when she kisses her boyfriend, Elliott. After dinner, Viveka sits on the loveseat near Anick and leaves a small space between them. Viveka recalls that Anick rests her hand in the small space, near her knee and she feels as if Anick's hand is "a flame as big and bright as one on the oil rigs in the gulf." After a while, Anick states "I feel something. Do you feel what I feel?" and Viveka makes a joke to lessen the tension. Finally, Nayan pulls the car around front so he and his wife can depart (Mootoo, 2008, p. 259). Viveka's remembrance includes a goodbye hug and feeling:

a rush of dizzying desire. It was a weakness, daunting and wonderful, that began in her toes and washed quickly upwards, to land between her legs, gripping her there in ecstasy, and then it made its way back down again. Over and over. (p. 260)

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In the subsequent days Anick does not call Viveka and she suffers internal turmoil as she oscillates "between two poles." On one side she recalls thinking that her intense feelings of lust and desire were "tricksters" designed to entrap her. Additionally, the thought that Anick is a "troublemaker" who is "disrespectful of Trinidad, its people, its ways." However, she also felt like she was being pulled by a "tidal wave" into the direction of her desire (Mootoo, 2008, p. 261). When Anick and Nayan move out of his parents' house and to a French plantation in the countryside, she is one of the first guests invited. While touring the plantation house and surrounding area, Anick brings Viveka to her garden, and the garden becomes a sanctuary away from the prying eyes of family and society. The narrator describes this encounter:

Anick maneuvered herself slightly behind Viveka. She brought her arms around Viveka and covered Viveka's eyes with her hands. She held her hands there, lightly, but they trembled a little, and from them came a heat that burned Viveka's face. She held her own hands up and placed them over Anick's to still the trembling. Anick pulled Viveka's head toward her, and before Viveka had time to be really sure that Anick had kissed the back of her head, Anick released her hands from over Viveka's eyes (Mootoo, 2008, p. 294). When she opens her eyes, she sees a rabbit in the garden.

Subsequently, back at the house, Anick and Viveka resume their romantic playfulness in the kitchen as the men were in the other rooms. Anick feeds Viveka mushrooms by

hand as the they gaze into each other's eyes and she smiles and says, "You know us French girls, we like both." She adds later "You in my mind all the time. Do you understand, Viveka, what I am saying? Is like you steal my brain. I cannot stop thinking about you," and then the women bring the food into the dining room (pp. Mootoo, 2008, pp. 295-296). The women spend the rest of the evening under the patriarchal gaze of Nayan and his father. Viveka is providing Anick with the emotional support and company that her husband is not.

Their relationship continues with Viveka visiting Anick in the countryside and Anick attending Viveka's volleyball games, and eventually it becomes sexual on one of these visits. Nayan picks up Viveka to bring her for an overnight visit, and he drops her off at the house with Anick while he attends a party with his workers. The women make love later that evening and the narrator describes how: "Anick's breathing quickened, and she made sounds of pleasure that fanned Viveka's fire. No touching had ever felt this good and true and right to her" (Mootoo, 2008, p. 320).

In the subsequent weeks their relationship becomes strained as Viveka hears less and less from Anick and she goes as far as to call her several times late at night as her husband sleeps. During these calls, Viveka goads Anick about her marriage to Nayan, questioning how she could be married to him. Eventually, Anick confesses that she married him because the French are not as enlightened about alternative sexualities as people think. She goes on to reveal that even in a highly racialized French society, her parents prefer that she marry a man of color as opposed to being in an open lesbian relationship (Mootoo, 2008, p. 346). Things reach a critical stage at Anick and Nayan's anniversary party when they reveal that they are expecting a child. When Viveka hears this, she starts to leave and Anick follows her and says, "we can wait until this child is born and then you and me and the baby, we can go away together" (p. 357). Viveka understands that two lesbians could never live in a Caribbean society with a child. She has also grown weary of waiting for Anick to leave Nayan and she leaves the party.

Sometime after the anniversary party, her mother, Devika, enters Viveka's room to tell her that she is planning an upcoming dinner party and that she invited a young man, Trevor, who had expressed interest in Viveka a couple of months previously. Viveka admonishes her mother, telling her that times have changed and if she wants to invite a young man to the house without asking her parents first, she can do so herself. Her mother reminds her that even though times are changing rapidly, there are still culturally prescribed behaviors for a "good girl from a good family" (Mootoo, 2008, p. 370) and that by calling the parents and asking permission, Trevor too adheres to the correct cultural behavior. Trevor courts Viveka for two months and she accepts his proposal for marriage, but he also lets her know that he is aware of her relationship with Anick. He asks her "Does Nayan know about you two?" and Viveka responds "Know what? I never said anything about us." Trevor then asks how long they have been lovers and Viveka responds "We *were*. We are not anymore," and Trevor stops asking about it

(Mootoo, 2008, p. 295). His response to her lesbian relationship is atypical as most Caribbean men would respond in a similar fashion as Nayan did during the fight that occurred after their first dinner together.

The novel ends with Viveka sacrificing her desires and sexual orientation to appease her family and conform to a Caribbean society that, as Nayan has stated, could never understand a woman loving another woman. Viveka's acquiescence also means she will enjoy all the benefits of conforming to prescribed sexual roles, including raising a family and the possibility of employment. In the final scene she tells her soon to be husband Trevor that she thinks they will only last two years because of "who I am," to which he responds that he thinks they could last as long as five years (Mootoo, 2008, p. 395). The memories reveal that Viveka chooses family and society over self, unlike her classmate Merle Bedi who communicated her love for another woman, was banished from home and society and was forced to live in the bushes across from her former school.

Both the clandestine and open episodes explored in *Valmiki's Daughter* (Mootoo, 2008) reveal the climate of secrecy, shame and violence that surrounds Indo-Caribbean women and men that do not conform to expected gender and sexual norms. These norms, which have been established and perpetuated by colonial edicts and driven by both church and state have driven the marginalization and criminalization of lesbian, gay, bigender, and transgender Indo-Caribbean people. Because of all of this hostility, and being forced to live under constant threat of arrest, rejection, and even death, many of these men and women oscillate between identities while living secretive double lives. Those that openly adopt only a non-conforming identity, such as Merle Bedi, are all too often ostracized emotionally and physically by both family and society.

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## **DEFYING DENIAL IN THE STUDY OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY**



# LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES IN THE AFRO-ATLANTIC: THE PUBLIC REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

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## Abstract

In this short article, we focus our analysis on an image which has been used to advertise a hair ‘relaxing’ product on a digital billboard aimed at Afro-Caribbean consumers, in order to underscore the fact that while racism racializes people and their discourse, people and their discourse also ‘language’ (discursively generate) race, and that where one process begins and the other ends is an impossible question to answer (Alim et al., 2020).

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**Key terms:** Raciolinguistics, linguistic landscapes, billboards, Afro-Caribbean

The past decade has witnessed a rapidly growing body of scholarly work focused on the dialectical and mutually co-constitutive relationship between discourse on the one hand and the categories that enable systems of domination such as race and gender on the other. It has been convincingly demonstrated that while racism racializes people and their discourse, people and their discourse also ‘language’ (discursively generate) race, and that where one process begins and the other ends is an impossible question to answer. This means that not only does racism perpetuate the racialization of language and the racing of people (for example, by assigning them to categories such as ‘black’ and ‘white’), but also that racialized language perpetuates racism and the racing of people (for example, by creating and perpetuating linguistic categories such as ‘black’ and ‘white’). The same processes can be said to be at work where gender is concerned, so that while patriarchy genders people and their discourse, people and their discourse also ‘language’ (discursively generate) gender.

Some of the most recent work on the complicated relationships between race and discourse can be found in Alim et al. (2020), who demonstrate the need for linguists and others to question and upend existing understandings of the relationships between

categories such as language, identity, ethnicity and race. Within a ‘raciolinguistics’ framework, one strategy that they recommend for doing this is: “viewing race through the lens of language and language through the lens of race to better understand them as co-constitutive processes … [because race] is created out of continuous and repeated discourses emerging from individuals and institutions within political economic systems and everyday interactions” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 2).

This new approach has particular relevance for the Caribbean in general and Puerto Rico in particular, because, as Faraclas and Delgado (2021a, 2021b, 2021c) point out, the Caribbean played a central role in the emergence of the racialization of modern Western societies and its “histories of genocide, enslavement, apartheid, occupation, dispossession, nationalism, capitalism and various forms of colonialism, as well as … [its] contemporary manifestations” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 2). Faraclas and Delgado (2021) demonstrate how, for Europe, the first successful transition to capitalism took place on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean. They also show how this transition would have been impossible without the transformation of Caribbean societies from pluriethnic, plurilingual, pluricultural pre-colonial societies, first to ‘societies with race’ under the pre-capitalist colonial paradigm of the Spanish, and then to completely ‘racialized societies’ under the capitalist colonial regimes of the Dutch and the English, in which enslavement was determined by African ancestry.

Alim et al. (2020) incorporate various key insights from the pioneering work on decolonial linguistics carried out by Severo and Makoni (2015), including the following:

- languages are historically and politically invented by a complex colonial apparatus that overlaid language, race, power and religion in specific ways
- the metalanguage used to frame communicative practices is historically invented and cannot be considered separately from the “objects” it describes and invents
- the colonial linguistics that helped to shape languages had material effects on language policies adopted by colonial powers, as in the role of education in the institutionalization and systematization of languages, mainly by inserting literacy as a powerful representation of what counts as language
- the concepts of language should be submitted to continuous revision so that we avoid using colonial frameworks to describe and problematize historical power relations (Alim et al., 2020, pp. 4-5)

Alim et al.’s embodied understanding of intersectionality is centered on the “need to analyze discourse and interaction as sites of formation of the harmful, intersecting ideologies of language, race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship and religion” (Alim, 2020, p. 12). In his contribution to the edited volume, Kroskrity (2020) presents language ideologies as “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation-states” (p. 69). Here the question of overt versus covert racism is highlighted. Kroskrity deepens our understanding of covert racism by going beyond

the question of whether harm is inflicted consciously or unconsciously to more systematic levels of bias, stating that the term ‘covert’ must take on “an additional meaning apart from its normal meaning in linguistic research of presupposed, or taken-for-granted … [because] not all forms of ‘covert’ linguistic racism are necessarily attributable to the unthinking, habitual response of speakers” (p. 83).

In their chapter of the same volume, Rosa and Flores (2020), promote a “raciolinguistic perspective which interrogates the historical and contemporary co-naturalization of language and race” (p. 90), by highlighting how:

raciolinguistic ideologies that organized … colonial relations continue to shape the world order in the postcolonial era by framing racialized subjects’ language practices as inadequate for complex thinking processes needed to navigate the global economy on the one hand, and as targets of anxieties about authenticity and purity on the other. (p. 93)

In her contribution, Urciuoli (2020) argues that “racialization as it now exists spread throughout the world over the last two to three centuries as a modernity project” (p. 109). This has particular repercussions in relation to the research upon which this article is based because one of the key effects of this project is that “racializing discourses … emerge in popular media … [such] as advertising” (p. 115).

In this short article, we focus our analysis on the image depicted in Figure 1 which has been used to advertise a hair ‘relaxing’ product on a digital billboard in Carolina, Puerto Rico. This particular billboard is located on public land and flashes its messages 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year through the windows of no less than 100 apartments in the 20-story building found directly opposite to it on the other side of an eight-lane highway. The intensity of the light emitted by this billboard is so great, that, when the windows are not completely covered by lightproof materials, the night-time interiors of all 100 apartments are drowned in an unending multicolored cacophony of blinding light, making any form of rest, let alone sleep, impossible.

This billboard centers on the image of a woman of Afro-Caribbean descent with an ambiguous semi-smile on her face, perhaps betraying some inner insecurities that she hopes have been addressed by her consumption of the product on sale. She appears alongside an image of the trademark for the product, which is named “Suave,” a term that is associated with words in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French for persons and hair which are both “smooth” (as opposed to “coarse”) in their presentation, and which “pass,” that is, which present themselves in such a way that they are maximally acceptable under the norms established by the dominant discourses of racialized societies. This product has



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**Figure 1** Billboard in Carolina, December 2021. Photo taken by the author.

been used for decades by African descended women (and to a lesser extent by African descended men) to straighten the curly hair associated with the phenotypical features stereotypically associated with people raced as “black” by the discursive binary [plus/minus white] ( $[\pm\text{white}]$ ) around which the racialization of societies in the Americas and eventually the rest of the Afro-Atlantic has taken place.

The trademark is situated above her to the left and an image of a bottle of the actual product is to be found below her to the right, as if she is enclosed in a set of parentheses. This configuration of images suggests that the product is defending her persona and social face, not only from external threats that may be aimed at her from one side or the other, but also from internal threats and insecurities associated with being positioned as [minus white] and [minus male]. The question arises as to whether this particular product is acting as an all-encompassing shield to defend and protect her or, on the contrary, as an all-encompassing set of prison bars to entangle her ever more deeply in a destructive spiral of self-rejection and denial that fuels ever more desperate and ever more pointless attempts to conform to a set of artificial and unattainable norms that were

created not in her image and interests, but instead in the image and interests of ethno-centric (racial) and patriarchal domination.

But this question is immediately answered by the slogan at the bottom of the billboard, which leads with the social media tag #HairPowerment followed by the words “[Suave] means disentangling/ relaxing your curls and disentangling/ relaxing your insecurities.” The messaging on the billboard is one that stresses the possibility of relief from insecurities about hair texture experienced by people, especially women, who are raced as “black” in Puerto Rico and beyond, through processes of “disentanglement” and “relaxing” designed to assist people who are raced as “black” with relatively lighter skin in “passing for white,” and those with relatively darker skin to demonstrate to the world that they are at least trying to “pass” by rejecting the stereotypical features associated with people raced as [minus white] and trying to conform to the dominant norms of beauty defined by the stereotypical features associated with people raced as [plus white].

The use of the tag #HairPowerment at the very beginning of the text gives notice to us that we can access much, much more information about the product with a few taps of our fingers on our devices, while the same tag notifies us that no more information is available regarding the woman depicted in the center of the billboard, whose personhood is effectively erased and enclosed by the seductive messaging. By incorporating the abbreviated form “powerment” from the term “empowerment,” the tag itself immediately sets in motion a series of associations that rely on dominant mental models, social representations and ideologies that center around discourses of domination that involve racialization of individuals and societies, as well as discourses of resistance to domination.

The irony and deception encapsulated in this slogan, where terms associated with liberation and empowerment are deployed to legitimize and celebrate the re-enslavement of the people of the Afro-Atlantic, in particular African descended women, to racially defined norms of beauty that fetishize physical features associated with stereotypes of people who are raced as [plus white], has become the rule rather than the exception in public discourse in the present era of ascendant fascism and rabid disinformation via the social media.

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# DRESSING AND STAGING (PUERTO RICAN) FEMININITY IN JUDITH ORTIZ COFER'S *THE CRUEL COUNTRY* AND *THE LATIN DELI*

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## Abstract

The article delves into Judith Ortíz Cofer's works, particularly her memoir *The Cruel Country* and two autobiographical short stories from *The Latin Deli*, to analyze the role of clothing in gender performance and the formation of a female Puerto Rican identity. Through the lens of Ortíz Cofer's narrative, the motif of clothing is highlighted as a source of tension, reflecting cultural expectations and personal identity struggles. The essay underscores the influence of Ortíz Cofer's mother in shaping her daughter's understanding of femininity and Puerto Ricanness, and how Ortíz Cofer ultimately navigates and redefines these inherited cultural norms. Remembering Luisa Capetillo's act of wearing pants in 1915 as an act of defiance against patriarchal dress codes imposed to women and the contemporary term 'jayá', coined by Macha Colón (2012), Ortíz Cofer's narrative helps connect clothing and the experience of wearing clothes as a Puerto Rican woman in the diaspora with societal expectations, and the broader discourses on gender performance, identity, and cultural legacy.

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**Key terms:** Gendering, Puerto Rican identities, *jayá*, Judith Ortíz Cofer, normativity

In November of 2012, Macha Colón and her band made public their music video titled "Jayá" and with this song a new term in Puerto Rican slang was born. On an interview with *80 Grados*, Colón explained the term *jayá* as the feeling of being content with who you are (Cintrón Arbasetti, 2013). As Puerto Rican women are accustomed to the pressure of looking "lindas," Colón understands that this societal expectation is defined by many things. These expectations fail to acknowledge the individual desires and subjective perceptions of women regarding their appearance, as they are built upon standardized norms designed to homogenize experiences rather than accommodate diverse perspectives. The word *jayá* has been appropriated mainly by women or femme-

representing humans to assert a sense of comfort and confidence in their skin, their appearance, and attire, as well as to dress and look “*lindas*” on their own terms, for themselves. Embodying the concept of *jayá* transcends the physical element of clothing, capturing a broader notion of personal agency. The act of choosing one’s clothing represents an exercise of resistance against societal norms that dictate how a woman should look or dress.

In 1915, Luisa Capetillo was arrested in Puerto Rico for daring to wear pants in public. A contemporary Capetillo would probably agree that wearing pants was part of her *jayaera*, but more importantly, an assertion of resistance against the patriarchal imposition of skirts for women. Capetillo’s wardrobe was the visual introduction of her discourse on the urgency for gender equality and social change. Capetillo not only established that she was the owner of her body but that she could and would occupy the same space as men. While she did not completely reject the idea of women wearing skirts, for Capetillo, skirts were meant for certain occasions: “in the theater and in dances of butterflies, or in dances with feather boas that use lots of color among the folds and pleated ruffles so that one can’t see the artist” (Tyson, 2005, p. 105). This correlation between space and skirts created by Capetillo allows to introduce the idea of clothing as a significant element in the performance of gender and appearance.

The literary representations and definitions of what it means to be a Puerto Rican woman vary from writer to writer. A common theme found in these representations, especially from older characters, is the idea of cultivating a sense of decorum so as not to be perceived as a prostitute. It is almost as if the Puerto Rican *marianismo* also includes a dress code. Proposing clothing as a tool to perform gender, this essay will explore the theme of clothing and Puerto Rican gender performance within Judith Ortiz Cofer’s memoir *The Cruel Country* (2015), along with two of her autobiographical short stories “Advanced Biology” (pp. 120-129) and “The Story of My Body,” (pp. 135-146) featured in her book *The Latin Deli* (1995). In Ortiz Cofer’s narrative, the motif of clothing emerges as a point of tension since it carries the imposition of her mother’s cultural expectations and personal convictions regarding the ideal appearance of a Puerto Rican woman in various settings. Ortiz Cofer’s mother appropriated clothing not only to perform her femininity, but also her Puerto Ricanness. These ideas of womanhood and the significance of clothing are portrayed in the author’s recollections, both as a young woman trying to find herself and as an adult looking on the influence of her mother’s teachings. These lessons, once imparted with the intention of instilling a sense of Puerto Rican identity, ultimately transformed into the pressure of adopting a Puerto Rican aesthetic. The importance that the author’s mother attributed to her personal appearance became part of her personality and an essential trait her family remembered her for when she passed away as she: “always kept her nails so pretty” (Ortiz Cofer, 2015, p. 117), “*Siempre estaba elegante y bonita*”, “I never saw her without lipstick and earrings.” (p. 118). The collective memory about the mother suggests her intention of performing, which

cannot be done alone. Performance is a public act, and “is always social” (Roach, 2010, p. 1081); an act that requires an audience. In her 2007 work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler poses the question: In what senses is gender an act? Butler asserts that “the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*” (p. 191, italics in the source), which implies a repetition of meaning established by a society. This gendered act, for Butler, is a public action (p. 191), one that was deemed imperative for the author’s mother to be transmitted to her daughter as a form of legacy. Jill McLean Taylor et al. (1995) point out that across different cultures, through conventions of femininity and womanhood, mothers educate their girls to ‘fit in’ (p. 70), a notion that resonates with the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin (as quoted by Charles Ramírez Berg, 2002) who stated that ‘the other’ “is necessary to accomplish...a perception of the self that the individual can achieve only partially with respect to himself” (pp. 28-29). For Bakhtin, an individual cannot do without the other. While the mother found that her daughter needed her guidance during her formative years to create a sense of self and of womanhood, the mother herself needed an audience and a space to perform her gender and identity. The mother could not perform without ‘the other’, and in this ‘other’ she also solidified the perception of herself.

In “The Story of My Body”, Ortiz Cofer (1995, pp. 135-146) highlights how her mother often gathered significant attention from strangers whenever they went together to stores or walked on the street. First, the author justifies this attention by explaining that her mother was “a stunning young woman by Latino standards” (p. 142). This statement is not followed by a commentary on what these standards are, but by a description of her mother’s body: long hair, curvy but compact frame. As Marisel Moreno reminds the reader, the author had spent her formative years between Puerto Rico and the United States, which led to an experience of displacement in the mainland. Her body (as her mother’s) is a “cultural marker that defines her as a foreigner in the United States” (Moreno, 2001, p. 442). Her mother’s body caught the attention of others because she stood out as different, as a Latina woman in New Jersey. What Ortiz Cofer aims to emphasize about her mother in the context of this attention is the lessons she learned from her, particularly referring to the art of conducting oneself with grace and charm: “how to move, smile, and talk like an attractive woman” (1995b, p. 142). This lesson suggests that one can learn to act as an attractive woman, even if one does not possess that quality. Perhaps, the looks her mother attracted were not necessarily because of her body but because of the performance of acting like an attractive woman.

The gendered performance enacted by the mother seemed to be linked to her desire for her daughter to be perceived in a certain light by others. The author not only remembers that she was rewarded for being pretty at the grocery store but also the way her mother dressed her as a young child: “in the pretty clothes, the stiff, frilly dresses, with layers of crinolines underneath ...” (Ortiz Cofer, 1995b, p. 142); these elaborate dresses were accompanied with leather shoes, hats, and white gloves. Her mother was not only proud

of her daughter's looks but enjoyed dressing her as a doll to be shown around to relatives or at the church. This idea of what her mother and her relatives considered pretty would result in an internal conflict when the author realized, as she grew older, that a Puerto Rican aesthetic is not as appealing to the white North American eye, or that she would be considered "exotic" (p. 146), which is not necessarily equivalent to being pretty. Contrasting to her experience as a young child who was considered pretty, later in life, her exotic features were identified by others as a sign of dirtiness. At the supermarket she was forbidden to touch the products, because Puerto Rican kids have dirty hands and "always look dirty" (Ortíz Cofer, 1995b, p. 138). In high school, the father of her date, Ted, told Ted he could not go out with a Spanish girl because he had "seen how the spics lived. Like rats" (p. 146). "In both instances, her body image is contaminated by imagery of dirt and animality" (Doyle, 2009, p. 104). These anecdotes of Ortíz Cofer's life underscore the interplay between gender, performance, and ethnic identity under the social gaze of two North American men. Despite the mother's effort to instill a particular gendered persona in her daughter, it becomes evident that her efforts were impeded by the stereotypes and dehumanizing perceptions about Puerto Ricans prevalent in the United States. While her mother and her relatives saw Ortíz Cofer as a pretty doll, who was praised for the paleness of her skin, from a North American perspective, she was associated with notions of dirtiness and assigned characteristics associated with animality. These notions not only exposed prejudiced views but also reflected a realization that within the mainland she did not fit in with the conventional standards of womanhood because she was not humanized.

As the author grew up to be five feet by age twelve, she remembers her mother adding this attribute to describe her: "Since you are tall, this dress will look good on you" (Ortíz Cofer, 1995b, p. 139). This action of wanting to dress her daughter did not stop when the author was old enough to choose her own wardrobe. In "Advanced Biology" (Ortíz Cofer, 1995, pp. 120-129) one can perceive that the topic of clothing was always present in their mother-daughter relationship. As the author lays out her clothes during her process of packing for a trip to Miami, and later to see her mother in Puerto Rico, she smiles as she remembers her mother's comments about her "conservative outfits" (p. 120). Her mother had replaced her previous labels for her daughter, now describing her as resembling a Jehovah's Witnesses rather than as tall.

Contrary to the author's preference for conservative clothing, the mother liked to dress in "tropical colors" (Ortíz Cofer, 1995, p. 120) to go dancing on Saturday nights. The reference to color is also found in "The Story of My Body" when the author explains that color is "always a way to attract and seduce" in the animal world (1995, p. 135). The juxtaposition of the mother's and daughter's preferences regarding clothing suggests a variation in their approaches to gender expression and performance. One can argue that the mother's choice of attire is not only part of a performative aspect of her femininity, characterized by the boldness her daughter lacks, but an interior desire made

external to find a partner. In contrast to the derogatory comparison of Puerto Ricans with rats made by Ted's father, the association made here between color and the animal world in connection to clothing reflects a desire for self-expression and the search for joy and pleasure. This desire enhances the humanity of the Puerto Rican woman, depicting her as someone who not only celebrates her freedom by going out dancing in a red dress, but also embraces modest attire for church the following day.

Published some 20 years later, the content in *The Cruel Country* differs significantly from that found in *The Latin Deli*. This memoir revolves around the author returning to the island during her mother's illness and, ultimately, following her mother's passing, staying for the funeral rites. While *The Latin Deli* exudes a more youthful tone, *The Cruel Country* is characterized by a mature voice that is not only remembering her mother but struggling with two losses. Ortiz Cofer expresses that by losing her mother, she would be losing her connection to the island and would now be received as a foreigner there. This touching memoir is centered on the relationship fostered by the author and her mother, in which clothing has served as a bonding element between the two women.

In the first chapter of *The Cruel Country*, Ortiz Cofer introduces her mother as a "performance artist," who once was a timid, lonely immigrant wife, depending on her husband, who later "made herself into a sassy, bold, and fully engaged woman" (2015, pp. 10-11). The reality of her mother's illness is made evident to the author when she finally arrives and notices that the roots of her hair are showing: "She has never allowed any gray to show. This gives me a clue to how long she has been really sick- several inches of illness" (pp. 12-13). In her seclusion, her mother did not need to perform anymore, she was alone and ill; appearances did not matter for her. From the daughter's perspective, the essence of her mother was already lost. Roger D. Abrahams explains the central importance of the individuals in the audience in terms of communication and participation during a performance: "The idea that lies behind performance is a remarkably simple one: to set up rhythms and expectancies which will permit indeed, insist upon a synchronized audience reaction" (1972, p. 8). Ortiz Cofer's mother had established a standard for her appearance, provoking the admiration of the people she was performing for. However, when this expectation was not met, there was a shift where the external became the mirror of the internal, as if her soul was already gone because of how her exterior looked.

In her chapter on Feminist Criticism, Lois Tyson explains that our gender "plays a role in forming our individual identity: both our self-perception and the way we relate to others" (2006, p. 108), adding that our gender influences how we are treated by others. Because Ortiz Cofer's mother performed her gender through her clothing and the way she looked, it was difficult for her daughter to recognize the illness in her mother's body since this body used to be the definition of health and attractiveness. During her visit, Ortiz Cofer is reading a book, titled *Cancer Caregiving A-to-Z*. She decides to browse

the book and randomly picks the letter G, pointing to the topic of grooming and appearance. It is through this coincidental finding, that the author encounters the importance of caring for the appearance of the patient, since this can help with their confidence (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 37). Beyond centering this advice about the ill body, one can reflect on the importance grooming had for the mother throughout her life. As an immigrant and military wife, taking care of her appearance was, perhaps, one of the only things she had total control of. In dressing herself she did not only assert her femininity and identity, but her agency as a person.

As the author remembers the life her mother lived, she is drawn to think about the love her mother had for beautiful clothes and shoes, and how this love was a way to bond with her daughter. During Christmas, mother and daughter would walk in downtown Paterson looking slowly through the racks of clothing and trying on outfits. From those days, Ortíz Cofer recalls the purchases to be “modest in appearance and price” (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 56), but most importantly, she shares her lessons from the experience of buying clothes with her mother: “those days taught me how a woman living through a gray winter may dream in color, and how it is style rather than cost that finally matters” (p. 56). Clothing, for her mother, was a way to escape a scenario that she did not necessarily choose. Through clothing and performance, her mother discovered play and a way to find the person she left in Puerto Rico. The author was aware that trying on outfits and the “fashion shows” her mother put on for her with the “fantasy choices” she probably could not afford, was her mother’s way of “playing dress-up” (p. 56). She describes these “fantasy choices” as “Puerto Rican extravagant to enhance her dark looks, her curves” (p. 56).

For the author, these choices might represent a fantasy but for her mother they could have been a recreation of her past. These outfits were real to her nature and to her femininity, an aspect of hers that did not seem to make her husband comfortable. The author writes:

I remember my father’s anger after my mother’s high heels had made tiny punctures on the linoleum when she forgot to remove them at the door, and how he had replaced the entire living room floor in a fit of anger. (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 67)

One can argue that the seemingly insignificant punctures on the floor were a reminder to the father of the freedom his wife exercised while wearing high heels. By removing the floor from the entire space, he was symbolically erasing a femininity that bothered him because, perhaps, it was not a settled one. As Ortíz Cofer described, her mother embodied an aesthetic that was extravagant. In his study about performance and behavior, Richard Schechner argues that theater “is a place to expose and play with behaviors, characters, and stories that not only fascinate us, but upset, disturb, shock, and change us” (1990, p. 99), adding that sometimes this place is “a way of criticizing the

establishment" (p. 99). Did the mother really forget to remove her high heels at the door or was she trying to make a statement of ownership over her body and actions?

When her mother died, her aunt offered to help select a burial outfit. "There was a story for every dress" (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 103). As the aunt brings out different options, she would tell a story about the garment related to the mother. However, the daughter started to resent the "new way of talking about my mother" (p. 103); now that there was a distinction between the "is" and the "was": "*Tú sabes como tu mamá era*" (p. 103). The painful reality of her mother being gone was reflected in the language of her aunt but also in the clothes she was not going to wear anymore; the ones she was sorting through to pick the last outfit she would wear. As the aunt expressed the mother's convictions that older women should not display their "*cueros*" (p. 103) and elaborated on her habit of coordinating a shawl with each dress she owned, the author finds herself thinking about her mother's opinion regarding her daughter's wardrobe:

She liked for me to wear clothes that showed off my best qualities. She would point out that I dressed like a Jehovah's Witness and said I would scare people away when I arrived at their door. I knew that it was her way of encouraging me to relax my self-imposed professional restraints, my need not to appear like the overdressed Latina, the loud Latina, the always-late Latina. I tended to overcompensate in my efforts to defy stereotypes, and in her view, I was becoming an oxymoron; a boring Latina. ((Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 103)

Ortíz Cofer appears to have grown up to be the antithesis of what her mother may have envisioned or hoped for her to become. She recognizes the difference between her and her mother drawing from the way they dressed: she desired to defy the stereotypes her mother exhibited whenever they went out. While her mother attracted all the attention with her curves, high heels, and colorful outfits, the author follows an aesthetic that would allow her not only to blend in with others, to not stand out like her mother, but also to reaffirm that not all Latinas dress or act in the same manner. Choosing her own aesthetic is both a statement of individuality and the representation of a female collective that does not want to identify as "loud" Latinas. Quoting Sander Gilman's theory, Ramírez Berg points to the root of stereotyping as a process that all human beings experience to become individuals (2002, p. 29). Ramírez Berg continues to draw from Gilman to explain that from "our social, ideological, racial, aesthetic desire we generate who we are" (p. 30).

Evidently, Ortíz Cofer developed a capacity to understand what a stereotype was, saw this stereotype reflected on her mother, and decided to separate herself from that; to become her own individual. This decision to become something different than what her mother was, should not be read as a rejection of her culture or of her mother. Ramírez Berg positions stereotypes as a cognitive tool that enables us to simplify and systematize (2002, p. 28), but Latinxs are not simple and cannot be put in a box. The author's decision to develop her own style calls attention to that aspect of multiplicity in Latinx

culture, especially in the United States. This idea of multiplicity is exemplified in Carmen Faymonville's (2001) exploration of communal distinctiveness in Ortiz Cofer's work: "Recognizing the ambiguity of the boundaries of diaspora, Ortiz Cofer posits a homeland as a place that also has to be imagined by nurturing a sense of communal distinctiveness" (p. 133). While Faymonville is examining the geographical imagination of home in Ortiz Cofer's fiction, the notion that this space does not have to look in a particular way for everyone, resonates with the diverse manifestations of identity and the way individuals express themselves.

When looking at caskets for her mother, the author and her relatives concluded that the options presented to them did not capture the essence of her mother. Her aunt whispered: "No se parece a ella" (Ortiz Cofer, 2015, p. 107). Acknowledging the peculiarity of expecting a casket to resemble a person, she agrees that she cannot bury her mother in something that looks like a tank. When the uncle finds a white casket, it seems like the casket transforms into an outfit that can fit the mother: "the casket looks feminine and somehow, with its fluffy pillow and white linen lining, more like a bed than any of the others" (p. 108). The feminineness of this casket mirrored her mother, and it was meant to keep reflecting her identity. For her mother, clothing said something about you, it became a symbol that represents you. The author understands that "appearances and public demonstrations of respect for the dead" (p. 114) matter in the *pueblo* of her mother. While she did not pack for a funeral and wondered if she was expected to wear black, later she realizes that the day her mother died and the day of her funeral "is the day for which I have apparently always dressed appropriately" (p. 128).

The idea of the funeral in *The Cruel Country* (Ortiz Cofer, 2015) resembles a sort of cultural performance. From choosing the right casket, to the daughter's anguish about respecting the customs of the country regarding *luto*; it was important for the mother to be properly dressed but also "fixed." In the memoir, the process of brushing the mother's hair and putting make up on her for the funeral was called "arreglo" (p. 118), but when the author refers to this process in English, she uses the word 'fix': "Someone will come to fix her, he assures me" (p. 117). This word suggests the idea that something was broken, in need of reparation.

Both fixing and *arreglo*, in relation to makeup and hair, connects to the proposal of the funeral as a performance in Puerto Rico. When people gather to pay their respect during a funeral, they take turns to admire and cry over the person in the casket. This act of looking and crying over a death can be seen as performative. In a similar manner, the expectation of seeing the deceased as presentable and in their best garments is a performative act in which the dead person is being judged by their looks. The process of fixing her mother is described by the author as a ritual:

They labor in perfect unison. Like surgeons, they lay out their bottles and tools on the table in front of my mother's picture. They work in silence, silently passing combs and brushes without looking up, and to my amazement, they even use a

hair dryer. They are priestesses performing a ritual as ancient as any. (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 117)

It worried the author as to whether her mother would be properly fixed for the funeral or not. She did not want her mother to look “as if she were dressed up for a party but had forgotten to comb her hair or apply makeup” (Ortíz Cofer, 2015, p. 117). The ritual her aunts performed left her at peace. She was taken care of by people that understood her mother’s aesthetic and the joy she found in looking her best.

Judith Butler (2007) quotes a very important reference regarding feminist studies from Simone de Beauvoir: “one is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one” (p. 8). As Butler explains Beauvoir’s idea that gender is constructed, the body is understood “as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed” (p. 8). While, through these and her other literary work, one is made aware of Ortíz Cofer’s mother’s desire to teach her daughter how a Puerto Rican woman should dress and act, one is also made aware of the fact that the author has come to her particular understandings of femininity and identity on her own, carving her own path. Despite her mother’s labelling of her as boring throughout her life, for her choices in clothing and the colors she chose to wear, it is evident that the author made a conscious effort to undress herself from the cultural burdens imposed upon her because of her gender. Her body became her own body. Her construction of gender became her own construction. Her performance, her own performance. Her *jayaera*, boring, but her own *jayaera*.

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# **CROSS-GENERATIONAL USE OF LANGUAGE TO CONVEY KNOWLEDGE OF HERBAL MEDICINE AMONG WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO AND IN PUERTO RICAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES**

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## **Abstract**

This article is an attempt to examine and bring to the light a small part of the extensive knowledge that women have about medicinal plants and the use they have given them to cure ailments and deal with female health issues in Puerto Rico its New York Diaspora. It is important to show feminine wisdom about medicinal plants, but it is also important to highlight that traditionally this wisdom is passed on through mother daughter relationships. The social-cultural process of conveying traditional remedies sometimes necessitates the need for secret codes, because of the historical stigmas of women being accused of witchcraft rather than recognizing them as healers and midwives.

**Key terms:** Women, herbal medicines, secret code, Puerto Rico, diaspora

Traditional knowledge of medicinal herbal knowledge of Puerto Rican women is a combination of wisdom, mainly passed down to us through our female Indigenous and African ancestors. According to Alegria (1978), the Indigenous legacy in Puerto Rico is extensive, with shamans, both male and female, specialized in spiritual matters as well as in knowledge of herbs and their medicinal powers. These Indigenous shamanic traditions merged with similar African traditions starting in the 1500s, as more and more people of African descent arrived on the island, sometimes as free people, but often as enslaved laborers. In her chapter on sacred plants, Fett (2002, pp.63-65) found that enslaved women's remedies were transmitted orally from generation to generation, with many of them serving their communities as midwives and healers. Using plant-based remedies and knowledge gained from experience, enslaved midwives delivered babies

and did what they could to alleviate complications with pregnancy and childbirth. Enslaved women used different plants as contraceptives, abortifacients, and to regulate menstruation, induce labor, and ease labor pains.

Women on the island of Puerto Rico and in the Puerto Rican diaspora have continued to have a particular interest in and relationship with herbal medicine. Women negotiate, but also transform and reinterpret, a series of dynamic, contested spheres in Puerto Rican culture and society. Puerto Rican women's knowledge of herbal remedies has been at best marginalized and worst demonized and criminalized, because it challenges male domination over women's lives, especially in areas such as fertility, inheritance, and ownership. Women's knowledge of herbal remedies can be seen as part of the successful strategies of women to create life in the midst of a dominant death-seeking patriarchal system.

According to Alegría (1978) during the 16th century islands such as Hispaniola and Puerto Rico were conquered by the Spanish and the indigenous men were nearly exterminated, while the women were forced to marry the conquerors. The women, however, kept their original lifeways and knowledges alive as much as possible, passing them down from mother to daughter. In the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, there were laws limiting enslaved African descended women's access to plants and preventing them from practicing medicine. The institutions of government, church, and patriarchy tried to purposefully disrupt the passing down of cross-generational knowledge. Still these women found agency and their knowledges have survived.

Scholars in resistance studies distinguish two traditions in conceptualizing resistance. One is rooted in research on social movements and overt politics, and is focused on visible forms of resistance such as street protests, social movements, strikes, or armed resistance. Another tradition focuses on everyday, subtle forms of resistance. This latter category applies to Puerto Rican women and how they have established and maintained spaces of resistance through everyday (often secret) exchanges among themselves. Women have been healing one another in secret and resisting. Hajosy Benedetti (1991) cites an example of resistance that she often found in the discourse of female herbal healers on the island that goes as follows: when enslaved women's reproductive health was threatened by masters forcing them to have as many children as possible, female healers or "*comadronas*" used the root of the cotton plant to prevent pregnancy (p. 80). These invisible tactics of resistance were aimed at subverting established relations of power. As stated by healer Dona Petra in her interview with Hajosy Benedetti, (1991, p. 83), because traditional healing activity is considered to be part of women's domestic work, it has not received recognition or financial remuneration. The contribution of plant-savvy women to the quality of life in Puerto Rico has remained invisible.

The United States government's post World War II program for the industrialization of Puerto Rico deliberately displaced the majority of Puerto Ricans from the countryside to become inexpensive labor in the urban centers of the island. Eventually, this resulted

in massive emigration, with a huge proportion of the island's population leaving the island to seek greater job opportunities. Thousands upon thousands of Puerto Ricans left and landed in New York City, mostly establishing themselves in the Lower East Side, El Barrio (East Harlem) and The Bronx. As Puerto Ricans arrived they found that Cuban immigrants in New York City had already created a network of what are called “*botanicas*” as local dispensaries that offer spiritual and religious goods to mostly Latino and Caribbean clients and stock many of the herbs necessary for traditional Afro-Indigenous Caribbean healing practices. This created a perfect space for Puerto Rican women to continue with their healing practices (Viladrich, 2013). Olmedo (2001) visited come 35 senior citizen centers and nursing homes across New York City, where it was found that the older Puerto Rican women were very articulate concerning their involvement in herbal healing first in Puerto Rico and thereafter in New York. Many still remembered specific herbs and remedies that were passed on to them by their mothers and their grandmothers, such as those mentioned in Table 1.

Remedy	Preparation	Purpose
<b>Agua de maravilla</b>	Fill the bottle with “Eucalipto.” Rub body.	Para cara y cuerpo, si uno se corta desinfecta todo
<b>Albahaca</b>	Tea, Tisane	Catarro, infección en el pecho
<b>Alcanfor</b>	Bath, dropped in glass of water left in the room.	Asma, congestión nasal
<b>Alcohol / Vinegar</b>	Pour over your head. Bath	Para los piojos, te baja rápido por el cuello con el alcohol
<b>Alcolado</b>	Fill the bottle with “Yerba buena, Menta, Alcanfor.” Rub on the body.	Catarro, dolor en cuerpo , dormir bien, fiebre
<b>Alumbre</b>	Bath and insert in vagina	Para cerrar la mujer, para que tu marido no se dé cuenta que estabas con otro hombre
<b>Anamu</b>	Tea, Tisane	Infección de la mujer, cáncer
<b>Anis</b>	Tea, Tisane	Gases
<b>Cundeamor</b>	Bath, create paste.	Picadas de insecto, heridas en piel, cicatrizante
<b>Eucalipto</b>	Tea, Bath	Asma, y destapar la nariz
<b>Jengibre</b>	Tea, Tisane	Dolores del cuerpo, muscular, antiinflamatorio
<b>Llanten</b>	Tea, Bath	Dolor de oído y cáncer
<b>Manzanilla</b>	Tea, Tisane	Para dormir. nervios

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<b>Menta</b>	Tea, Tisane	Todo tipo de dolor estomacal
<b>Miel rosada</b>	Bath and direct on skin	La piel, quemadura, o corte de la lengua o boca
<b>Nuez moscada</b>	Tea	Para abortar, aunque este grande el feoto
<b>Oregano brujo</b>	Make into an oil pour drop in the ear.	Dolor de oído y acidez
<b>Poleo</b>	Tea, Tisane	Dolor de estómago, diarrea
<b>Rosas blancas</b>	Bath	Para limpiar el alma, y para la piel suave
<b>Ruda</b>	Tea, Tisane	Sacarte un muchacho sin que tu marido se dé cuenta
<b>Salvia</b>	Suppository, and skin rub	Para la piel , suppositorio para vagina e intestino, bueno para todo
<b>Semilla de aguacate</b>	Grate the seed for Tea	Abortar parece una hemorragia, ni el doctor se da cuenta
<b>Yerba buena</b>	Tea, tisane	Macacoa, regla, cuando te canta el gallo

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**Table 1** Common remedies used by women in Puerto Rico and its diaspora. Source: Núñez Meléndez, 1982, p. 75.

The resistance of the human spirit is unrelenting. If we dig deep enough, we will find our ancestors trying to survive and thrive even in the most catastrophic conditions. Part of that survival is finding spaces and ways to create life, happiness and health. One of those spaces is that which allows Puerto Rican to secretly pass on their healing traditions to their daughters. Méndez Panedas (2020) explains how women on the island were treated as breeders, satisfiers of white men's lusts, and workers. Sexual exploitation shaped their lives. These historical conditions have had a lasting impact on how women experience oppression in Puerto Rico today and how they are currently resisting. Amato (2021) notes that there are a number of spaces of women's resistance that have emerged throughout the years in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora. This could be an herbal backyard garden your mother has in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, or it can be in a *botanica* in New York City. These spaces may seem unimportant and trivial, but their importance is indispensable for Puerto Rican women's endurance.

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# ***HELL UNDER GOD'S ORDERS: HURRICANE HUGO IN ST. CROIX--DISASTER AND SURVIVAL: US VIRGIN ISLANDERS NARRATING THE UNREPRESENTABLE***

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## **Abstract**

The periodic ecological, socio-economic, and infrastructural damage caused by hurricanes in the Caribbean have often been represented creatively by Caribbean writers, through various types of narratives: reflective, personal, fictional, and testimonial among other genres. In this article, I consider some the narrative representations of the terror and devastation caused by hurricane Hugo that swept through the US Virgin Islands in 1989 and left them in ruins. These narratives were collected, edited, and published as *Hell Under God's Orders: Hurricane Hugo in St. Croix--disaster and Survival* (1990) by Gloria I. Joseph and Hortense M. Lowe with Audre Lorde shortly after the hurricane. I argue that these narratives are coping strategies on the part of the survivors to come to terms with the trauma caused by the hurricane, and serve to rearrange and re-order the experiences resulting from the hurricane's landfall and aftermath.

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**Key terms:** Hurricane Hugo, natural disaster narratives, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, trauma

In *Hell Under God's Orders* (Joseph et al., 1990) Gloria I. Joseph writes in the Introduction to the section of the volume titled “Personal Stories from Hugo: Victims’ Short Stories and Episodes” the following words:

The personal stories that flowed, poured out, spilled over, and spouted forth, in the hours and days immediately following hurricane Hugo were chilling, and packed with emotions, they were catharsis, heartwarming and heart rending—many of them causing chill bumps to raise up on your arms. There were tales of heroism, courage, adventure, injuries, and tremendous losses. Later on after the shock wore off somewhat, humor crept into the re-living and re-telling. The night

of Hugo made griots out of many of us. In the days following Hugo there were recantations, testimonies, re-telling and regurgitating of personal and shared experiences. For some though the trauma was too great. More time was need for healing and for the realization and processing of what really had happened. (p. 85).

Recent trauma studies have shown that writing about one's trauma does open potential psycho-emotional pathways to healing. MacCurdy (2007) asserts that writing and telling about trauma can have therapeutic effects:

First, by unlocking these experiences from the parts of the brain that store iconic images and allowing us to put words to our difficult moments, it is not only cathartic, but it also creates understanding ... [enabling us to] realize just how bad we felt, that we are not crazy, that indeed these traumas were hard to endure. Our emotions are validated. Second, writing can join the cognitive and the emotional, resulting in a sense of control over that which we cannot control: the past. Writing produces a sense of agency that trauma threatened. We write our trauma; our trauma does not write us. (p. 2)

Similarly, Anderson (2000) contends that trauma "writing" is:

one of our richest and most powerful symbolic acts ... within which healing may take place ... [which] encompasses both physical wellness and dynamic socially driven symbolic processes that enable the sufferers to make sense of the traumatic or difficult experience, to integrate that experience into the ongoing narratives within which they live their lives, and to move on with those lives. (p. x)

Writing about it in narrative or poetic form, argues Anderson, enables the "sufferer ... to overcome limitations of past and present illness and trauma through the disciplined invention of language ... [to] create a more flexible, less restricted relationship with past, present, and future" (2000, p. x).

James W. Pennebaker argues persuasively that "[t]ranslating distress into language ultimately allows us to forget or, perhaps a better phrase, move beyond the experience" (2000, p.13). Furthermore, he contends that:

it is critical ... to confront anxieties and problems by creating a story to explain and understand past and current life concerns ... A constructed story ... [is] knowledge that helps to organize the emotional effects of an experience as well as the experience itself. (2000, p.11)

As a rider, he suggests that such a narrative serves very little purpose if done in the heat of the moment of trauma, but serves a better purpose if time elapses between the event and its re-narration (2000, p.11).

Richard Selzer, a surgeon turned best seller fiction writer who personally got healed from suicidal depression through writing, testifies that the writing process in trauma narratives often becomes an act of retrieval of painful images "from the shadows and set [ting] down once more the bright lip of ... life" (Selzer, 1990, p. 82). In this process,

the writer unpacks the subliminal and unspeakable images onto the blank page in a controlled environment that facilitates analysis, revisions, deferments, and/or erasures of the traumatic images. Henke (2000) reaffirms this by saying that the “very act of articulation, the trauma story becomes a testimony, a publicly accessible ‘ritual of healing that inscribes the victim into a sympathetic discourse-community and inaugurates the possibility of psychological integration” (p. xviii).

Anderson’s (2000) representation of trauma writing as “fluid representations of experience and self … to understand and to integrate experience … to act out alternatives, to see both experience and themselves as they are, as they were, as they might be” (p. xi), provides appurtenant grounding for my reading of selected stories from *Hell Under God’s Orders* (Joseph et al., 1990) as narratives of healing from the traumatic events caused by hurricane Hugo. Yet I must take cognizance of a discordant voice from one of these selected writers who struggles to find words to exteriorize his traumatic experience with Hurricane Hugo and come to healing through narrative/poetic vocalization:

I’ve been unofficially called the ‘poet laureate of St. Croix,’ yet to this day I’ve been unable to write any poetry about Hurricane Hugo. In addition to feeling numb all over, I feel I’ve been emptied of prose and lyrical words to describe life during and after Hugo made a mess of things. (Loving, 1990, p. 149)

Loving’s statement captures the psycho-emotional numbness that must have gripped Crucians both during and immediately after Hurricane Hugo. Carmen Saldaña captures this so much more powerfully:

We didn’t sleep that night. We couldn’t sleep that night. The worst thing for me was, since I had lost my glasses running from the weather, I could hardly see! I was feeling blind, and everything hurt from being banged against the fence.

The next day everything was so sad. I couldn’t believe it. Everything was destroyed. Everything seemed so helpless. I cried and cried. My house and property were all destroyed. Roads were blocked. No place to go. Homeless. Hugo left me sad and homeless, with no place to go. (Saldaña, 1990, p. 249)

This germane inability to project on the page the terrors brought by hurricane Hugo in 1989 to Crucians, is sufficient grounds to label the experience as a post-traumatic stress disorder or syndrome. My position is predicated on Audre Lorde’s confession that Hugo has generated in her a compulsive obsessive recurring fear of strong winds caused by the terrifying memory of Hugo. Lorde describes how “the trees gave up their leaves and the land almost gave up her name. Sometimes at night the wind blows, and the storm sounds start to howl and whistle from the sea and I am still afraid” (1990, p. 202). Lorde’s testimony is corroborated by a searing report made by The Adventist Development and Relief Agency, ADRA for short, documented the evidence of trauma among the 56, 000 people of St. Croix: “HELP was the one thing needed, and that cry rose with heart-rending urgency from the shimmering voices … eighty to ninety percent of whom were homeless, frightened, disoriented, and desperate. The situation was traumatic”

(Griffin, 1990, p. 232). Crucians across class, race, age, and gender categories needed a process that would help them create narratives of healing as they revisited the scenes of “desolation” caused by the “maniacal force seeking vengeance,” a demon that “gobbled the galvanized, ravaged the landscape, burned the earth alive” (Loving, 1990, p. 151). Notwithstanding these confessional testimonies by Loving and Lorde, I insist that a psycho-literary reading of these stories in *Hell Under God’s Orders* showcase how certain levels of healing are achieved through narrative recollections, selective rearrangements, and critical commentaries on traumatic incidents. These narrative strategies provide the writers with the spatial and mental possibilities for memory control, an enabling space within which they revise and reverse any damaging psychological effects the calamitous events of Hugo may have had on them as attested by Overcash (1990, p. 187):

For many individuals, this manifested itself in depression, and for others their response was anger, mixed with feelings of powerlessness ... But the trauma did not end with the storm. The combined confusion, anger and fear – and with no way to communicate the need for assistance to the outside world for days after the storm-compounded the effects of the disaster and made many declare that the aftermath was as bad as the storm itself. As the rebuilding and recovery period turns from weeks to months, there could be seen little hope in the faces of hurricane victims.

In their odysseys of remembering, narrative, whether oral or scribal, is the vehicle that conveys their shared experiences of Hurricane Hugo’s landfall. Thus, Overcash, in her rehash of the considerable psychological damage done by Hugo, examines four emotional phases following a disaster, namely, the heroic phase, the honeymoon phase, the disillusionment phase and the reconstruction phase (Overcash, 1990, pp. 187-188). The accounts of what happened during and after hurricane Hugo struck St. Croix reflect these phases, but the telling of the actions and events, I suggest, mobilizes potential healing forces, as theorized by psychiatrists who advocate writing or storytelling in mental health treatment programs, especially those dealing with psychological dis-eases caused by natural catastrophes. Thus, though Overcash explicates the psycho-emotional and somatic helplessness of Crucians during the hour of their near peril, she does not preclude the validity of the study that writing or speaking about one’s trauma opens pathways to healing.

Aware of my lack of professional training or knowledge in either psychiatry or literary psychoanalysis, I am nonetheless encouraged by evidence garnered from psychological studies that suggest that narrative revelations or expressive writing have therapeutic potential in mediating traumatic experiences. I therefore argue that through narrative, whether scribal or oral, traumatized Crucians may have succeeded in creating imaginary therapeutic ambiences that facilitated their healing after the devastating experiences from hurricane Hugo.

Let me draw a parallel here with Roman Catholic rituals of reconciliation. The narrative framing is the confessional, and the narrative details and rhetorical devices become the confession itself. In the performance space of the confessional, the reader and community is the priest, with critical neutrality and sympathetic (dis)engagement with the narrator, thus creating a participatory performance “of identification and consubstantiality” (Anderson, 2000, p. xi). Most of all, as in a confessional, the sacerdotal nature of the narrative enables the narrator to undergo multiple transmutations both during the creative process of telling/writing and beyond. The editors of *Hell Under God’s Orders* state compellingly that in compiling these stories, they kept in mind the “paramount importance of destruction and human suffering and took note of a persistent and recurrent theme” (Joseph et al., 1990, p. xix). The compiling of the stories as much as their telling, created a “totality of … emotional, spiritual and harmonious aura” (Joseph et al., 1990, p. xvi), an aura that animates psycho-emotional processes directed toward healing. Coincidentally, the recognition of Crucian people’s predilection for spirituality is in accord with the commonplace knowledge articulated by Dudley-Grant and Etheridge that, “West Indians may see disasters as the result of negative actions that are taken individually and collectively. Hence one can perceive a natural disaster as retribution for actions, engendering excessive guilt and anxiety” (2008, p. 222). Based on this observation Dudley-Grant and Etheridge subsequently conclude that “Anthropomorphism is common [among Caribbean people], and storms are very much referred to and thought of as living things … Indeed, fighting against a disaster such as a hurricane can be seen as a spiritual battle” (p. 224). This is partially upheld by Audre Lorde in her didactic deep-ecological stance in “Of Generations and Survival—Hugo Letter 12/89” (Lorde, 1990). After listing several instances of secondary traumas caused by the subhuman treatment of Hugo’s victim by both FEMA and the US Marines sent to help, she canvasses for an ideology of egalitarian interdependence between humans, non-humans, and the natural environment, and rejects the cornucopian environmentalist philosophy of dominant discourses of “development.” She asserts: “For those of us who live in the Caribbean, hurricanes are natural occurrences that we must be prepared to experience as we experience the beauty and other benefits of living in this region” (Lorde, 1990, p. 214).

As a deep ecologist, Lorde believes that Hugo was just earth’s way of healing itself from human inflicted damage in the name of “scientific progress” (p. 214). Drawing lessons from Vodun spirituality and rituals to buttress her point, Lorde, like Gereau (Gereau, 1990), but from a different ideological perspective, asserts that:

The earth is telling us something about our conduct of living, as well as about our abuse of this covenant we live upon. Not one of us can believe himself or herself untouched by these messages, no matter where she or he lives, no matter under what illusion of safety or uninvolvement we may pretend to hide. (Lorde, 1990, p. 215)

Lorde sees natural disasters then as evidence of the consequences of human malpractice that offset ecological balance. But, unlike Gereau, whose trauma drives her from post-Hugo St. Croix to the USA mainland, Lorde's idea of an egalitarian co-existence with nature to ensure a minimization of impacts of natural disasters on human and natural ecologies resonates with new ecological theories that tie global warming and increased frequency of natural disasters to human agents in environmental degradation (Lorde, 1990, pp. 214-215).

Nonetheless, Lorde's deep ecological stance coincides subliminally with Gereau's anthropomorphic position, though Gereau conflates it with biblical visions that conclude that Hugo is the Christian God's vengeful extortion of sin payment:

The howling of the wind in my bedroom was very intense and it just didn't seem secure ... I was saying a prayer when the first loud crash startled me ... I went to investigate the noise and was not prepared for what I saw! There was a hazy mist hovering in my living room, and my front door had been forced open ... My fear turned to anger and I cursed it, and told it that it was not getting into this house ...

In fact, the noises grew in intensity as the long night crept on. The wind's different voices, cooing, rattling, buzzing and groaning, were all experienced. I turned to my Bible for comfort through that night ... I said a long prayer because the frightening reality was that I had to handle this alone, with God.

(Gereau, 1990, p. 117)

Indeed, Gereau quotes John 3:8 "... the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth so is every one that is born of the spirit" (1990, p. 116) as a prelude to her narrative recollections of Hugo's traumatizing experience. Gereau's post-disaster representation of the utter unpreparedness of Crucians, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially enhances her perception that every natural disaster has spiritual origins and consequences. The ecological devastation caused by Hugo traumatizes Gereau as detailed in the description of her surroundings after the storm passed over: "I looked out my rear window and was horrified at my once beautiful surroundings!! No leaves, no flowers, galvanize and building debris everywhere" (p. 118). The psycho-emotional and somatic effects of Hugo cause Gereau to break down. "My knees were wobbly and I sobbed unabashedly" (p. 118).

Gereau does not hide her disappointment at the lack of community altruism often associated with post-disaster narratives. What further stresses her is not just the now ugly landscape, but "how ugly some people were acting. The togetherness and spiritual bonding that is necessary after such a major disaster ... was missing" (Gereau, 1990, p. 119). For Gereau, Hugo could have been a catalyst for what Picou et al. define as a "consensus-type crisis" (2004, p. 1495) or what Solnit (2010) sees as post-disaster altruism: "In the wake of an earthquake, a bombing, or a major storm ... most people are altruistic,

urgently engaged in caring for themselves and those around them, strangers and neighbours, as well as friends and loved ones" (p. 2). Davis sums up what she believes post-Hugo Crucians need, a new cooperative political democracy: "We need to operate in a cooperate mode, rather than the competitive mode. There's no one reminding us of this. We need a bombardment" such as Hugo, to generate what she calls a "surge of positive leadership, and one that is consistent with a humanistic approach" (Davis, 1990, p. 257). Davis realizes this is a mere utopian dream. But this dream ties in with Gereau's disappointment at how post-Hugo did not bring about that community bonding often associated with post-disaster communal altruism, and this has a lasting traumatic effect on her and her children. Gereau's conclusion runs counter to what Picou et al. consider to be "limited-long term trauma" (2004, p. 1495): "The experience of HUGO will have a lasting effect on all who experienced it, especially the children" (Gereau, 1990, p. 119). Her assessment is justified in the post-HUGO hysteria manifested by her daughter, Kimmie at a car wash:

When the noisy machines began spraying forceful gusts of water against the windows, and moving in circular directions, Kimmie became hysterical and jumped into my lap crying ... Even now when the weather becomes windy and the rain threatening, my children still ask, 'Mommie is HUGO coming again?' (Gereau, 1990, p. 119)

Gereau's account is given greater force and credence in Arnold Highfiled's comprehensive and cinematic descriptions of every moment during the storm in "Notes From The Eye of a Storm" (Highfield, 1990). Highfield memorializes in great and terrifying detail the uselessness of human preparedness and resistance to natural disasters and the damage that they bring. For Highfield, this is like a post-apocalyptic universe:

As I make my way back outside, I pass the others who are now picking their way into the house, muttering words of disbelief. I cannot stand to hear their words. This is the end of a small world that we had built as a family. This is war. This is the Ardennes Forest. This is Vietnam. This is one of life's very worst dreams come true. (p. 144)

Similarly, Loving personifies the hurricane in her sometimes-self-humiliating accounts of her struggles against "Hugo the horrible" (Loving, 1990). Hugo "crashed thru the glass louvres and sent shards of glass throughout every room in the house. He bore down relentlessly. He straddled the roof and ripped it apart! Hugo the Horrible had taken charge!" (p. 150). Loving's poetic description further details her helplessness as she is compelled to crouch in a fetal position in a confined space with fear and tears rolling down her face (p. 150). The incessant howling and screaming and groaning wind, her reduction to the level of a child is captured in being forced to unashamedly urinate out of panic in her pants in front of a man she hardly knew (pp. 150-151).

Again, like Gereau and most Crucians, Loving's deep spirituality begins at this moment when death seems to be staring her in the face and enables her to call on her God for

protection. She describes Hugo as a maniacal monster out to destroy everything she cherishes:

Hugo was gaining confidence now—throwing things around. More house noises ... Hugo was horrible and relentless and never, never tired. On he went. Hours and hours passed and yet he carried on like a maniacal force seeking vengeance. Like a pack of wild animals eat their prey, he gobbled the galvanize, ravaged the landscape, burned the earth alive. (Loving, 1990, p. 151)

Similarly, the demonic force of Hugo is captured in Highfield's post-hurricane eerie, almost gothic silences:

It looks like the island has been burned. Everything is a charcoal grey color or brown. There is no more color! ... Every leaf on every plant has been stripped ... The grass is sheared off even with the ground. ... With a closer look I see ... most of the plants and some of the trees have been stripped of their very bark ... I can hear no sound. No dogs, no roosters, no engines starting ... Nothing but the spine-tingling howl of the trailing winds of the hurricane that rush over hills, through the now denuded trees, causing them to resonate in a lingering cry of desolation that one usually associates with northern forests in the dead of winter. I stare at this broken place, bewildered. (Highfield, 1990, p. 143)

Josefina Cruz's recollection of HUGO in "La Familia Esta Salva, Pero La Casa Destuida" (Cruz, 1990) does not incorporate the anthropomorphic vision of Hugo evidenced in Gereau and Loving. Nonetheless, Cruz does confess to lingering post-disaster neuroses that are akin to post-traumatic stress disorder and/or syndrome. She writes:

If I knew ahead of time that another Hugo was coming I would ... leave the island! If I stayed, I would have a heart attack and die right here. The experience of Hurricane Hugo for me and my family was too severe, too traumatic. I feel a lot of anxiety—just talking about it. The entire night brings back so many frightening memories. The sounds, so many different ones. Sometimes it sounded like a monster, or someone crying, or screaming from low to high, over and over, again and again. And it lasted so long. (Cruz, 1990, p. 120)

Cruz's post-Hugo compulsive fear of hurricanes testifies to the lasting psycho-somatic and emotional damage that natural disasters can cause. Cruz shows how such disasters impoverish the lifestyles of many people, destroy the natural environment upon which so many depend, and initiate obsessive compulsive behavior patterns associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and/or syndrome. For Highfield, Gereau, Overcash, Cruz, and Loving as well as other Crucians therefore, "Hugo had happened and none of [them] will ever be the same. Hugo had happened and [they] were in awe and pain" (Loving, 1990, p. 151). Their painful recollections demonstrate how writing through this experience may have enabled them to revisit, revise, erase, expand, and critique their responses to the incidents during Hugo, and subsequently to gain narrative agency to structure their paths to psycho-emotional healing.

It must not be said that in these narratives, there is no room for sardonic humor. As psychiatrists who endorse narrative as a potential tool of healing a fragmented mind, the narrative of Leo and Dot Bryant (Bryant & Bryant, 1990) provides some refreshing analysis of the comic sides of human behavior during such catastrophic events. The self-mockery and irony in their voices as they look back provides the reader with a smile. Leo's narrative also shows how most humans pay little attention to warning signs when a natural disaster is about to strike.

The sun was shining beautifully. But we had heard that there was a storm coming. I paid it no attention. I went around doing my chores around the house. Sometime in the late morning hours I could feel a little breeze coming in, a little unusual, coming from the direction in which it took, but I didn't pay it much attention. I went on with my day. A little later on in the afternoon the little breeze picked up a little bit more. Though I felt the hurricane was somewhere close, oh, I paid it not too much mind. (p. 109)

Leo's careless attitude toward the hurricane warnings nearly costs him and his wife their lives. But in his narrative, he does not show the same type of bitterness that other narrators have shown. Indeed, the near-death experiences they undergo are mollified by the comic tone in the narrative. He does not describe the wind as a monster, but as naughty entity that frolicked and played games with them:

The front partition blew out, and the wind, oh, it had a good time. It picked up the mattress that we were sitting on, and blew us-on the mattress, right outside in the yard! We sailed right outside. Yes, the wind picked up the mattress and carried us right outside the house—there was hardly any house left anyway. (Bryant & Bryant, 1990, p. 111)

Leo shows and understands that the wind's fury, though frightening, also saved their lives. As he puts it, the wind had already blown away the front wall and other partitions, creating a smooth passage for sailing into the yard: "If the front wall had not gone down and the other partition caved in, we would have been trapped in there. But it blew the front wall out and we were able to sail right outside" (p. 111). Despite recognizing the strength of the wind, Leo still wryly questions how the wind could have lifted their grand piano straight out of the house when he could barely move it with his own hands.

By suggesting that Leo's narrative contains self-mockery does not subtract from the horrors he and his wife experienced. He acknowledges that what Hugo had done was mind boggling: "The mind was blown out at what Hugo had done ... I'm still shocked! I noticed at one point the storm hit pretty hard and I felt pressure in my ears" (Bryant & Bryant, 1990, p. 113). But Leo's most traumatic experience is not due to Hugo itself, but instead it is due to the absence of pre-and post-disaster preparedness to help the population, and the type of official blame-games and infighting that often follow such disasters. The Bryants' piece is hopeful, and details community bonding (p. 113), which belies Gereau's assessment that there was no community bonding after Hugo. For the

Bryants, despite the losses they incurred from Hugo, Leo says: “I love St. Croix and I haven’t found a place I would much more rather go. That’s the truth so I have to stay!” (Bryant & Bryant, 1990, p. 115).

Leo Bryant’s words foreground my conclusion to this essay. His unshakeable decision to stay in post-Hugo St. Croix in spite of his traumatic experience, is dictated by his ability to find healing in the retelling of his story and letting go the bitterness. But he is not alone in this positive process conditioned through narrative. David Cover (Cover, 1990) comes to a similar conclusion:

What the people of the Virgin Islands need to enable them to rebuild for the future is not peace and love, as so many have suggested, but a target on which to vent the poison that has been visited upon them. They have to. The public has to come out of its depression and continue life. Now is the time. (p. 298)

This understanding might never have been gained without providing the narrative spaces for Virgin Islanders to unpack their traumas caused by Hugo and the post-Hugo mismanagement of the chaos that ensued. Writing to deal with the traumatic experience of Hugo in St. Croix, has been more of a therapeutic process than all the counselling and hand-outs available to residents in 1989. Audre Lorde’s words to the effect that capture with clarity Crucians’ ongoing struggle to deal with the trauma of Hugo:

The nights are hardest. Even though the mangled landscapes are less visible after dark, there is more time to think and feel the true impact of this experience, to cry and marvel at all our varied powers of survival in the face of disaster. (Lorde, 1990, p. 213)

Her thoughts and reflections about how that trauma can be dealt with are encapsulated in these words: “I try to write in my journal as often as I can before weariness overtakes me” (p. 213). Writing in her journal is a form of exorcism that will free up her troubled mind and emotions and enable her to reestablish some balance in her life. Writing can be seen as an “agathonic” release of what is un-representable but narratively possible through the imagination.

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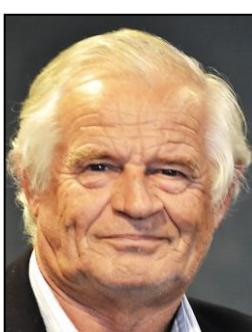
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