

# Language and Identity Construction: Can We Talk about a *New* Puerto Rican in the United States?

Edwin M. Lamboy  
The City College of New York - CUNY

## 1. Introduction

Despite changes in the demography of Puerto Ricans living in the United States, the image of Puerto Ricans in this country continues to be that of the *boricua* from New York. For many decades this was the preferred destination of Puerto Ricans who settled in the United States and they became the largest Spanish-speaking group in this metropolitan area. The linguistic features of their speech, their language attitudes and loyalties, and their language maintenance and loss, which have been consistently and thoroughly documented in this setting by numerous scholars (e.g., Alvarez; Flores, Attinasi, and Pedraza; Flores-Ferrán; García et al.; Gutiérrez González; Lamboy; Pedraza; Schreffler; Torres *Mood Selection*; Torres *Borrowing Strategies*; Urciuoli; Zentella *Spanish and English*; and Zentella *Puerto Ricans*), have been the point of reference to characterize Puerto Ricans and their experience in the mainland.

Because of the political, economic, and social linkage between the United States and Puerto Rico, the question of how Puerto Ricans define and manifest their identity has received considerable attention. In this discussion, as Duany indicates, geopolitical definitions of identity take second place after cultural definitions (37). This explains why this discussion has generally centered around fundamental issues related to history, traditions, and ethnicity. Notwithstanding, language is the element that seems to generate the most effervescent and polarizing arguments. The coexistence of Spanish and English in a country that functions primarily in Spanish and where English has not been able to deeply infiltrate daily life and the essence of the Puerto Rican way of life forces those who engage in this dialogue to side with one language or both, leading to heavily-charged feelings that have been at the core of the Puerto Rican cultural identity discourse for decades, if not centuries. As Zentella explains, "the survival of Spanish has become inextricably linked for many with the survival of Puerto Rican identity and that of the Puerto Rican nation itself" (*Returned migration* 84). Furthermore, language loyalty and ideology has created tension among various sectors that have used language as an excuse for promoting their political agendas and their views, and this tension has had repercussions even on the Puerto Rican educational system (e.g., Ortiz-López).

Puerto Rican identity in general and the role of English in particular take a new dimension within the context of the Puerto Rican community in the United States, especially in New York, where most live. Like many other Latinos in the United States, Puerto Ricans living in New York consider their identity and self-identification as Puerto Ricans independent from language proficiency in Spanish. Thus, although they claim to maintain the Puerto Rican culture and to be psychologically and politically tied to the Island, they do not feel that using Spanish and being proficient in it is a defining prerequisite for identifying themselves as such. As Zentella argues, Puerto Ricans in New York clearly see themselves as Puerto Ricans and their definition is not dependent on the Spanish language (*Growing Up Bilingual* 53-54).

In the last two decades, the profile of Puerto Ricans in the United States has changed considerably: Newcomers differ from those who arrived in the middle of the twentieth century in terms of educational level, economic status, ability to integrate into mainstream society, and preferred destination. The State of Florida, particularly the Orlando metropolitan area, is now considered one of the fastest-growing enclaves for the Puerto Rican community, and its presence has undoubtedly helped

make the Spanish language more visible in this region. This is attested by the increased number of businesses of all kinds owned by Puerto Ricans to serve the needs of Puerto Ricans. The Puerto Rican presence is also evidenced in the number of organizations and associations such as the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida and the Puerto Rican Parade Committee that bring together members of this community and have helped them increase their visibility and participation in numerous areas of society. This change in the profile of recently-arrived Puerto Ricans provide new opportunities to question and reevaluate the definition of Puerto Ricanness in the United States and how it is molded by language. That is the focus of this study.

## 2. Puerto Rican migration to the United States: 1995-2000

According to the 2000 census, 242,973 Puerto Ricans moved from the Island to the United States between 1995 and 2000.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 61,179 relocated in Florida while 39,318 relocated in New York. Other states that attracted a significant number of Puerto Rican migrants were Massachusetts (19,568), Pennsylvania (17,318), New Jersey (16,961), Connecticut (15,649), and Texas (8,344). This shows a continuous trend of Puerto Ricans to relocate in the Northeastern megalopolis of the United States, but it also points to a new trend of settlement in areas without a large concentration of Puerto Ricans, areas that are typically associated with members of other Spanish-speaking communities.

If we take a closer look at the migration patterns of Puerto Ricans to and from Florida and New York between 1995 and 2000, we can draw some significant conclusions. For instance, if we consider the number of Puerto Ricans from these two locations who returned to the Island in this five-year period we can conclude that the Puerto Rican population in New York only increased by 9,613 members whereas in Florida it increased by 43,258 members. This is an important observation because, as a result of this shift in migration tendencies, the proportion of Puerto Ricans in New York "decreased from nearly three-fourths of the total in 1960 to less than one-third in 2000" (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2). Florida, in contrast, "displaced New Jersey as the second-largest concentration [of Puerto Ricans] in the U.S. mainland" (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2).<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1. Migration of Puerto Ricans to Central Florida

Duany and Matos-Rodríguez's policy report is the best source of information about Puerto Rican migration to Central Florida. According to data presented in their summary of main findings, Orange and Osceola counties became the preferred destinations of Puerto Rican migrants, displacing the Bronx and other counties in New York, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Furthermore, five of the ten places with more recently-arrived Puerto Ricans are in these counties, whereas three of the top ten metropolitan regions with large numbers of Puerto Ricans are in Florida (i.e., Orlando, Tampa, and Miami). More specifically, Orlando had the highest increase in the number of Puerto Ricans in the State, which makes it the fourth-largest city with the largest Puerto Rican population (after New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago).

### 2.2. Profile of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida

In terms of gender, the proportion of Island-born and mainland-born males and females is very similar. Thus, Puerto Rican migration to Central Florida has not been selective by gender. Also, about a third of all Puerto Ricans in Central Florida are between the ages of 25 and 44. This is the case in

---

<sup>1</sup> Source of census data: "Puerto Rico-United States Migration for Population 5 Years and Over: 1995-2000." *Census 2000 PHC-T-22. Migration for the Population 5 Years and Over for the United States, Regions, States, Counties, New England Minor Civil Divisions, Metropolitan Areas, and Puerto Rico: 2000.*

<sup>2</sup> The Puerto Rican population in Orange and Osceola counties (in Central Florida) increased by 16,420 between 1995 and 2000. In Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond counties, the counties that constitute New York City, it only increased by 1,259. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau: "Migration between Counties in the United States and Puerto Rico: 1995-2000." *Puerto Rico-to-U.S. Counties and Puerto Rico Municipio-to-Municipio Supplement to the County-to-County Migration Flow Files.*)

other parts of the United States, including New York; in Puerto Rico, however, more than one-fourth of the entire population consists of young adults within this age range. In addition, white Island-born Puerto Ricans are overrepresented. Consequently, Puerto Ricans from the Orlando area are more likely to consider themselves white than mainland-born Puerto Ricans.

The educational level of Central Florida Puerto Ricans is higher than that of the entire population of the United States and Puerto Rico. In the year 2000, 73.6% had a high school diploma or had some post-secondary education.<sup>3</sup> This compares to 64% in the United States, 60% on the Island, and 55.2% in New York City. Also, 63.2% of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida claim to speak English very well, compared to 64.2% in New York City and 28.1% on the Island.

Both in Puerto Rico and in Central Florida, Puerto Ricans concentrate in trade and services jobs, but in Central Florida they are more likely to have jobs in retail trade; real estate; professional, scientific, and technical services; finance; transportation; insurance; and other services than in Puerto Rico. This translates into better earnings: 33.3% of all Puerto Rican families in Central Florida earned more than \$50,000 a year in 1999, compared to 33.6% in New York City, 25.8% nationwide, and 11.3% on the Island. The median family income among mainland-born and Island-born Puerto Ricans was \$33,500, more than double the income of residents of Puerto Rico (\$16,543) and one-third higher than in New York City (\$22,201).

### 3. The study

Studies about the new wave of Puerto Ricans who have settled in Central Florida have focused primarily on the sociological aspects of this migration, but none has considered the potential relationship between language or language issues and the construction of a Puerto Rican identity in the mainland. This is an aspect that merits attention given the situation described above. Specifically, there is a need for research that can help answer the following questions:

- (1) Do Central Florida Puerto Ricans (CFPR) consider themselves different from New York Puerto Ricans (NYPR)? Do they feel that their Spanish is better than that of NYPR?
- (2) Are their opinions based on how they believe they are perceived by others, particularly the average American and other Latinos?
- (3) Do they use Spanish more frequently than NYPR?
- (4) Do maintaining direct contact with the Island and being aware of what happens there play a role on their sense of identity and their use of Spanish?

The answers to these questions were compared and contrasted with those provided by Puerto Ricans living in New York through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected at both sites.

#### 3.1. Methodology

Data gathered was obtained through surveys administered and interviews conducted from Spring 2008 to Summer 2009. The sample included 45 CFPR and 57 NYPR. For the quantitative analysis we focused on a subset of the seventy-six questions included in the survey. Participants answered the questions using a five-point scale (1=Completely disagree and 5=Completely agree) and means were calculated. Finally, we implemented discourse analysis techniques to analyze data gathered through interviews.

---

<sup>3</sup> According to Duany and Matos-Rodríguez, the average mainland-born Puerto Rican is better educated than the Island-born. The former has a median of 13 years of schooling, one more than the latter (3).

### 3.2. *Participants*

#### 3.2.1. *Puerto Ricans from Central Florida*

Of the 45 CFPR interviewed, 3 (7%) had lived in the area all their lives. Of the remaining 42 (93%), 29 had moved there from Puerto Rico (69%) and 13 from other parts of the United States (31%), primarily New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Their main reasons for relocating in Central Florida were job opportunities (62%), educational opportunities (12%), and retirement (5%).

In terms of their educational attainment, a significant majority had some college education or had a college degree (67%). Of the remaining, 24% had a high school diploma and only 9% did not graduate from high school.

Most of the informants from Central Florida are lower middle class (60%), followed by upper middle class (16%) and working class (13%). Only three out of the forty-five participants (7%) are lower class while two are upper class (4%).<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.2.2. *Puerto Ricans from New York City*

The great majority of the Puerto Ricans interviewed in New York City (80%) had been born and raised in this city. Of the 21% who were born and/or raised in other locations, ten came directly from Puerto Rico (83%) and two (17%) had moved to the city from other states, namely New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Like the interviewees who now live in Central Florida, most of these individuals moved to New York City seeking to advance economically (75%). The second most common motive was to be close to family members (8%).

Contrary to the CFPR interviewed, most of the New York participants only had a high school diploma (49%). Twenty-one of them (37%) had some college education or a college degree and eight (14%) had not graduated from high school.

Although, as expected, there are differences in the number of members of each social class compared to those living in Central Florida, there are only slight differences in the order. Most interviewees are lower middle class (54%), followed by upper middle class (23%), working class (13%), and upper class (11%). None of the participants belonged in the lower class category according to Thompson and Hickey's model.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *New York Puerto Rican Spanish or Central Florida Puerto Rican Spanish?*

As illustrated in Figure 1, each cohort believes that the variety of Puerto Spanish spoken in their respective geographical area represents not only the best model for what should be considered Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States, but also a more accurate model. The results indicate that residents of Central Florida yielded an average of 3.7 in the five-point scale (between "No opinion" and "Agree") while residents of New York City yielded an average of 4.2 (between "Agree" and "Completely agree"). These feelings were clearly accentuated when asked to indicate if the other group's Spanish was better. With an average of 1.5 (between "Completely disagree" and "Disagree"), CFPR undoubtedly rejected the notion that the Spanish spoken by NYPR should be the model of Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States. NYPR, despite attesting that their Spanish should be the model, do not feel strongly against the Spanish spoken by Puerto Ricans in Central Florida, with an average of 3.1.

It is readily apparent that CFPR are aware of how their experience is opening a new chapter in the overall Puerto Rican experience in the United States. For some, this is perhaps an opportunity to distance themselves from the image and stereotypes typically associated with the Puerto Rican community in the United States, and language is one of the tools they have at their disposal:

---

<sup>4</sup> The social class model used for classifying participants was the one proposed by Thompson and Hickey. It considers household income, education, and job stability as some of the primary indicators and it presents five categories: upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class, working class, and lower class.

- (1) a. Allá sí [los puertorriqueños] hablan español por todas partes, pero es un español como... Ay, yo no sé... Como diferente. Lo mezclan más con el inglés y como que no usan bien la gramática. Acá se habla más parecido al español de Puerto Rico. [(CF # 27; female; lower middle class; 20-35 years old)
- b. Bueno, yo, honestamente, creo que tiene que ver con la educación y la crianza. En Nueva York pasan unas barbaridades que aquí también pasan, pero no tanto. Allá, el boricua se cría en un ambiente más fuerte, ¿tú ves? Y aunque muchos hablan español como nosotros, en Orlando, cuando uno va a las tiendas y a la casa de la gente, como que la gente habla mejor que allá. Es diferente, yo no sé... [CF # 12; male; lower middle class; 36-50 years old)

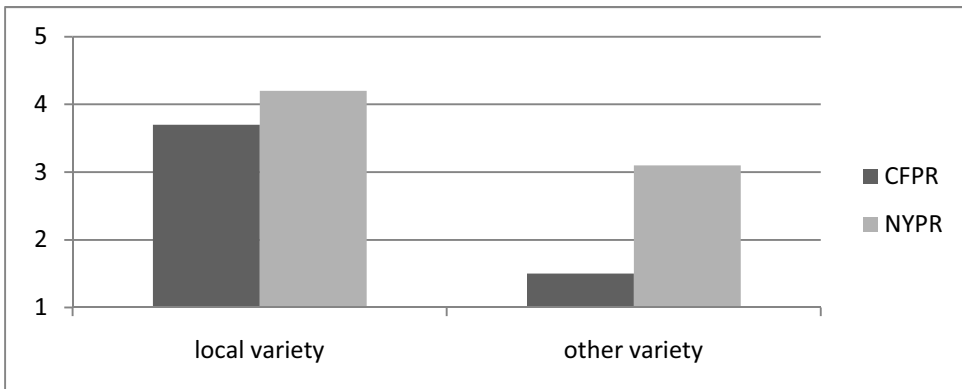


Figure 1

Means of best Puerto Rican Spanish model in the United States

(1=Completely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=No opinion, 4=Agree, 5=Completely agree)

This apparent desire to distance themselves from the traditional view of the NYPR as the symbol of Puerto Ricans in the United States seems to be more prevalent among older Central Florida residents. For some, this entails rejecting values and behaviors they associate with being American or African-American:

- (2) a. ¡Oh, no, no! Cuando yo me vine pa' acá yo quise venirme para Florida. Tengo un hermano en Nueva York y él quería que nos mudáramos para allá. Pero es que no me gustan las cosas que se ven; el puertorriqueño que vive allá está más americanizado y tiene más malas mañas. Yo no quería que mis hijos se criaran allá ni que fueran a escuelas como las de allá. En Florida yo quería empezar de cero. ¡Mira, con tantos problemas que hay en Nueva York! (CF # 35; female; lower middle class; 36-50 years old)
- b. Aquí no hay tantos de esos [puertorriqueños] que se creen que son morenos con las cadenas y los pantalones por acá abajo, y con ese hablar de la calle. Y hablan así en español y en inglés. (CF # 16; male; working class; 51+ years old)

A few younger subjects do not support the need to reevaluate what being Puerto Rican is. For them, the similarities outweigh the differences and sharing the same cultural background, pride, and language unifies both communities. Language is not an issue:

- (3) a. Somos lo mismo. Igualitos. Yo voy mucho a visitar [a] mi familia y lo mismo que se hace aquí se hace allá. Comemos lo mismo, hablamos igual... El lenguaje que usamos en esta parte es el mismo de Nueva York. Lo que nos hace iguales es que nos sentimos bien puertorriqueños donde sea. (CF # 44; female; upper middle class; 20-35 years old)

#### 4.2. What role do the perceptions of other Americans and other Latinos play in the perceived value of the language variety spoken in each location?

The value that NYPR attribute to their Spanish does not necessarily correlate with a conscious or unconscious desire to be perceived as different from CFPR; for them, what allows them to say that the Puerto Rican Spanish spoken in New York is a better model for Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States is the fact that this city was the original enclave, the place that is unquestionably associated with a strong Puerto Rican presence.

- (4) a. Los de Nueva York somos los originales, los que empezamos a romper piedra en Estados Unidos. Bueno, de hecho, nosotros fuimos de los primeros que hablamos español que vinimos para acá. Si no hubiera sido por nosotros, no hubieran tantos latinos, dominicanos y mexicanos en Nueva York ahora mismo. Y eso hay que respetarlo. (NY # 33; male; lower middle class; 51+ years old)
- b. We opened the doors for Latinos; we paved the way, as they say. There is no question about that. ... If you want to hear and understand real *boricua* Spanish, you have to come to New York. You're not gonna find *el saborcito* anywhere else. (NY # 8; female; upper middle class; 51+ years old)

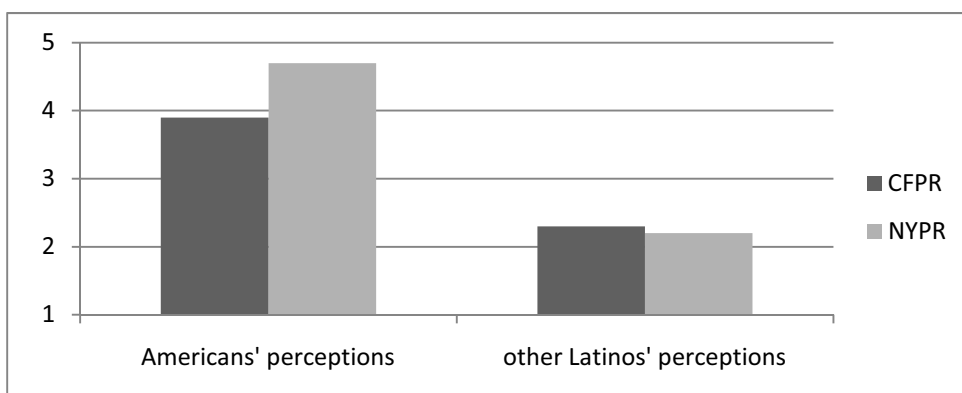


Figure 2  
Means of importance of Americans' perceptions and other Latinos' perceptions about them and their Spanish  
(1=Completely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=No opinion, 4=Agree, 5=Completely agree)

CFPR clearly base their opinions about their Spanish on the way other Latinos and Americans in general perceive them as a group and the way they speak the language. As Figure 2 shows, the average for Americans' perceptions among CFPR is 3.9 (between "No opinion" and "Agree") and for other Latinos' perceptions it is 4.7 (between "Agree" and "Completely agree"). The following comments suggest that members of this group see themselves as different mainly in terms of the way they behave and on the Puerto Rican image they portray.<sup>5</sup> This perceived distinction pushes some to also emphasize that language is yet another differentiating factor:

- (5) a. ¡Claro que tiene algo que ver! Cuando uno se comporta de una forma correcta, a las demás personas no le[s] importa tanto de dónde tú eres. Pero si saben de dónde tú eres, piensan más favorablemente de ti. (CFL # 13; male; working class; 20-35 years old)

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, as Duany and Matos-Rodríguez say, "Despite their achievements, Puerto Ricans have not attained socioeconomic parity with other major ethnic groups in Central Florida" (4). This includes Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups. Perhaps these ideas about how they are perceived by others are triggered by a desire to actually advance in the socioeconomic scale.

- b. A mí a cada rato me dicen «¿de dónde tú eres?» Porque la imagen que tienen es del puertorriqueño de Nueva York que no sabe hablar bien. Y yo rápido le digo que yo vine de Puerto Rico, no de Nueva York. (CFL # 21; male; upper middle class; 36-50 years old)

NYPR have a completely different perspective on this issue. The averages of means for Americans' perceptions and other Latinos' perceptions are 2.3 (between "Disagree" and "No opinion") and 2.2 (between "Disagree" and "No opinion"), respectively. The comments provided by one of the informants from this group point to the fact that the issue of assessing the value of the group's language and language variety according to the way in which others see this language and language variety has been already resolved by NYPR. They reference the struggles that this community faced in the early years of the Puerto Rican migration to New York City and depict the City as a more welcoming and tolerant location:

- (6) a. People don't care about that that much here.... and when you talk to people you just talk to them, you don't pay attention to their race, color, country... Maybe that was important in the past, when Latinos started coming to New York, but not now. (NY # 5; male; lower middle class; 36-50 years old)

#### 4.3. Are there any differences in Spanish language use among CFPR and NYPR?

Another issue that Central Floridians alluded to in their justification for believing that their Spanish represents in a more positive manner Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States is their use of the language in multiple contexts and domains:

- (7) a. Por lo menos, por lo que yo he visto, la gente lo habla en todos sitios y nadie dice nada. ... [En Nueva York], cuando lo hablan es en Spanglish porque es lo que se espera; es lo común. Aquí todavía se mantiene más puro. Hay como una división: no, en estos lugares hablas en español nada más y en estos hablas en inglés. (CFL # 38; female; lower class; 20-35 years old)

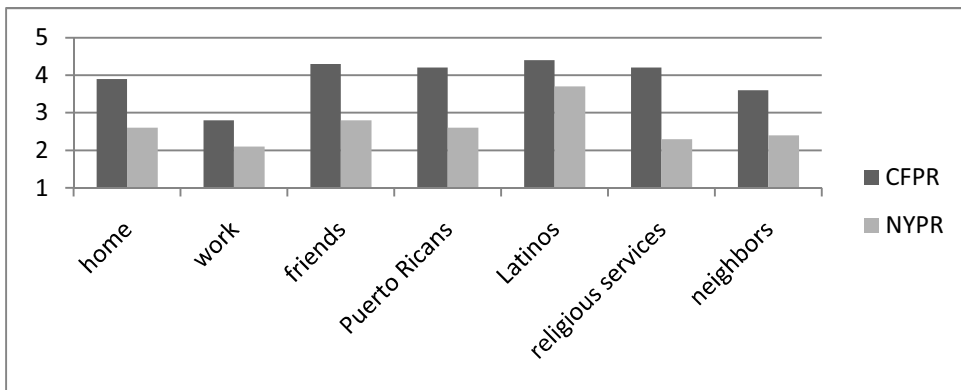


Figure 3

Means of language use in seven domains

(1=Only English, 2=Mostly English, 3=Both languages, 4=Mostly Spanish, 5=Only Spanish)

Figure 3 illustrates the language preferences of both groups in seven different domains. As the numbers indicate, CFPR generally use more Spanish at home and in conversations with neighbors. They use Spanish almost exclusively in interactions with friends, in religious services, and when speaking to other Puerto Ricans. The difference between this group and NYPR is less marked when it comes to language of the work environment and language used when speaking with other Latinos. The

former is easily explained by the fact that most members of the Puerto Rican community hold jobs that require the use of English and that attract members of other linguistic communities, not just Latinos. On the other hand, the latter is a result of the migration of members from many other Spanish-speaking groups to the Central Florida region in the last few decades. While many of these individuals are fluent in English, it is true that most are also fluent in Spanish. Therefore, their interactions with CFPR may well be in either language, just like in New York.

It may seem that for CFPR Spanish language use and the high value assigned to this language use go hand in hand, but this may be attributed to the relative short time they have lived in this area and to generational factors. In fact, the Puerto Rican migration to Central Florida is a recent phenomenon; hundreds of islanders acquired land and properties in the late 1960s (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2), but these early waves could not compare to the migration waves of the late nineties and the first few years of the new millennium. It is also imperative to point out that, as other studies have demonstrated (e.g., Lamboy, Pedraza, Zentella *Growing Up*), Spanish language use does not correlate with the feeling of group membership and the development of a clear cultural identity. Consequently, what we are observing now, at least when it comes to language usage in these domains, may simply be the beginning of a process that may lead to a shift in group perceptions after one or two generations.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.4. How important is it to maintain contact with the Island and to be aware of what happens there?

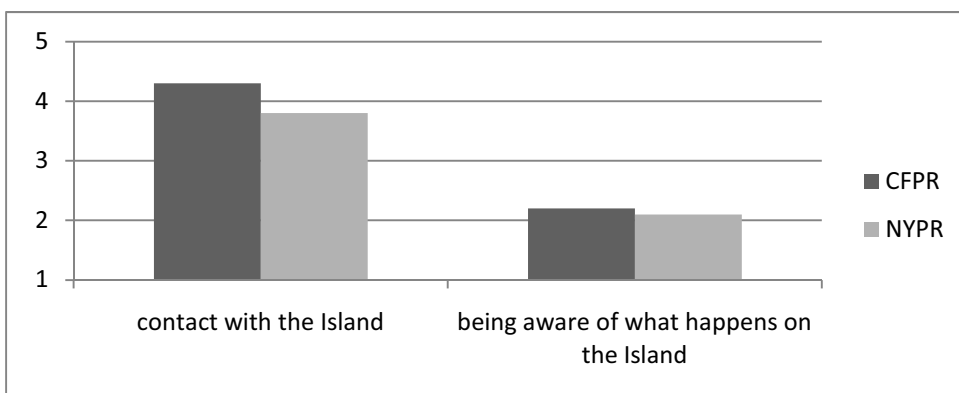


Figure 4

Means of importance of maintaining contact with the Island and being aware of what is happening there

(1=Completely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=No opinion, 4=Agree, 5=Completely agree)

Another difference found between the two groups studied relates to sustained contact with people from the Island and awareness of what is happening there. Figure 4 shows that CFPR feel that this type of connection with the motherland is necessary to maintain a sense of self in the new environment, with staying in touch with the people they left behind being a slightly stronger requisite. Some of the interviewees highlighted the importance of this connection not only for reinforcing the reality of who they are, but also for reinvigorating their language use and distinctiveness:

- (8) a. Ahora que todo el mundo tiene celular y computadora es bien fácil hablar con la familia y los amigos todo el tiempo. Y mandarse *emails*. Uno puede decir que casi está allá. Y eso es bien importante porque con la rutina del trabajo y de estar corriendo pa' aquí y pa' allá uno se olvida de quién es, de que uno no es

<sup>6</sup> One obvious assumption is that the profile of CFPR previously described and the findings of this study may change given the strenuous financial situation that the State of Florida has faced in the last few years. This calls for more studies about Puerto Ricans in Central Florida and the language, language use, and language attitudes explored in the current study.



simplemente otro más, que uno es un puertorriqueño que *happens to be here*.... Y uno escucha las palabras nuevas, las frases nuevas, y dice, «Mmm, eso es lo que la gente está diciendo ahora.» (CFL # 20; female; lower middle class; 36-50 years old)

NYNY seem to have a different view about this issue. In general, this group disagrees with the idea that, in order to maintain or strengthen one's Puerto Rican identity, it is imperative to have direct links with the inhabitants and the dynamics of the Island.

- (9) a. Ser puertorriqueño está en uno, por dentro. A mí me gusta saber cómo está mi familia allá y siempre estamos llamándonos, pero imagínese si uno tuviera que estar pendiente todo el tiempo. No se puede. (NY # 40; female; working class; 51+ years old)
- b. I can tell you one thing: you're not gonna find anybody *más boricua que yo*, *porque eso yo lo vivo to' los días*. But I don't have to be talking to people there all the time.... And anybody who says you have to don't understand what it is to be a real Puerto Rican. (NY # 52; male; upper class; 36-50 years old)

Despite these comments, members of this group do in fact maintain regular communication with relatives who live on the Island and have a good idea of what is happening there. Some interviewees also emphasized the positive effect that this has on speaking what they consider a variety marked with "true Puerto Rican" features:

- (10) a. ...como yo tengo tantos amigos de tantos la'os y países, me doy cuenta que a veces hablo un poquito diferente y después me preguntan, «¿Tú eres de verdad puertorriqueño?» Y hay que decirle que sí.... [Mantener contacto con los puertorriqueños de la Isla] es bueno para uno aprender lo que está pasando y español puertorriqueño de verdad. (NY # 15; male; lower middle class; 20-35 years old)
- b. ...if not you end up speaking more like New York Spanish, a language that's more neutral. You know, like when you're talking to other Puerto Ricans, everything comes out: *el qué chévere, bendito*... That's what happens when you talk to people that live there. (NY# 3; female; lower middle class; 51+ years old)

## 5. Conclusions

The Latino experience in the United States has involved, among many other things, constructing their individual and group identity in a diasporic context. This process entails adopting a set of behaviors, practices, and symbols that ultimately characterize each person and guarantees membership in the general Latino community as well as in the community directly associated with the country of origin or the region within the country of origin. Language is one of the various elements that come into play in this process, and research has demonstrated that Spanish is evidently adopted as a symbol, but its maintenance is not necessarily adopted as a behavior or practice. Puerto Ricans in the United States, like most other Latino groups, do not perceive being proficient in Spanish as a co-requisite for identifying with the Puerto Rican culture and way of life.

Although this has been the reality that has informed our understanding of how Latinos deal with the relationship between language and identity for decades, there may be differences in the way language is perceived by members of the same group. The current study suggests that CFPR seem to be testing the mainstream notions about Puerto Ricanness and Puerto Rican Spanish exemplified by NYPR. They are taking a more conservative stand on the relationship between language and identity while claiming to provide a better and new model for Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States. In the process they seem to be rejecting the stereotypical views of NYPR in order to position themselves in the Puerto Rican landscape in the United States. For them, Central Florida is not just a geographical

area with a high concentration of Puerto Ricans; it is a place where one can find Puerto Ricans who are different and speak differently.

This study is the first attempt to describe the Puerto Rican community of Central Florida and, for obvious reasons, there are many questions left unanswered. As suggested before, future research should look at language use and attitudes over time and across generations to determine if the findings of this study are the direct result of focusing on a population that, for the most part, consists of recently-arrived, Island-born Puerto Ricans who still have extremely strong psychological and linguistic ties with Puerto Rico. Furthermore, it is important to continue observing the migration patterns of the Puerto Rican community; Central Florida, most like the entire State, has been severely affected by the recent recession and it may not be as attractive to Puerto Ricans who migrate to the mainland. Despite its limitations, this study addresses a need in the research on Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States and provides evidence that we may in fact talk about a new Puerto Rican in the mainland.

## References

- Alvarez, Celia. "Code-Switching in Narrative Performance: Social, Structural, and Pragmatic Function in the Puerto Rican Speech Community of East Harlem." *Sociolinguistics of the Spanish-speaking World: Iberia, Latin America, United States*. Ed. Klee, Carol A., Luis A. Ramos-García, and Kerry Curtis. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual/Bilingüe, 1991. 271-298.
- Duany, Jorge. *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina UP, 2002.
- Duany, Jorge, and Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez. *Puerto Ricans in Orlando and Central Florida*. New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 2006.
- Flores-Ferrán, Nydia. "Spanish Subject Personal Pronoun Use in New York City Puerto Ricans: Can We Rest the Case of English Contact?" *Language Variation and Change* 16.1 (2004): 49-73.
- Flores, José, John Attinasi, and Pedro Pedraza Jr. "Puerto Rican Language and Culture in New York City." *Caribbean Life in New York City: Sociocultural Dimensions*. Ed. Constance R. Sutton and Elsa M. Chaney. Stane Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies of New York, 1994. 207-219.
- García, Ofelia, Isabel Evangelista, Mabel Martínez, Carmen Disla, and Bonifacio Paulino. "Spanish Language Use and Attitudes: A Study of Two New York City Communities." *Language in Society* 17.4 (1988): 475-511.
- Gutiérrez González, Heliodoro Javier. *El español en el barrio de Nueva York: Estudio léxico*. New York: Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española, 1993.
- Lambooy, Edwin M. *Caribbean Spanish in the Metropolis: Spanish Language among Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans in the New York City Area*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Ortiz-López, Luis A. "'Proyecto para formar un ciudadano bilingüe': Política lingüística y el español en Puerto Rico." *Research on Spanish in the United States: Linguistic Issues and Challenges*. Ed. Ana Roca. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla, 2000. 390-405.
- Pedraza, Pedro. "Language Maintenance among New York Puerto Ricans." *Spanish Language Use and Public Life in the USA: Contributions to the Sociology of Language*. Ed. Lucí Elías-OLivares, Elizabeth A. Leone, Rene Cisneros, and John Gutiérrez. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985. 59-71.
- Schreffler, Sandra B. "Nuyoricans: Puerto Ricans or Americans? Oral Discourse Markers as Indicators of Identity." *Language and Identity*. Ed. Leonard R. N. Ashley and Wayne H. Finke. East Rockaway, NY: Cummins & Hathaway, 2004. 383-390.
- Thompson, William E., and Joseph V. Hickey. *Society in Focus*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007.
- Torres, Lourdes. "Mood Selection among New York Puerto Ricans." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 79 (1989): 67-77.
- . "Borrowing Strategies in New York Puerto Rican Discourse." *Proceedings of the First Hispanic Linguistics Colloquium*. Ed. Javier Gutiérrez-Rexach and José del Valle. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1998. 150-164.
- U.S. Census Bureau. "Puerto Rico-United States Migration for Population 5 Years and Over: 1995-2000." *Census 2000 PHC-T-22. Migration for the Population 5 Years and Over for the United States, Regions, States, Counties, New England Minor Civil Divisions, Metropolitan Areas, and Puerto Rico: 2000*. 6 Aug. 2003. Web. 10 Oct. 2009.

- . "Migration between Counties in the United States and Puerto Rico: 1995-2000." *Puerto Rico-to-U.S. Counties and Puerto Rico Municipio-to-Municipio Supplement to the County-to-County Migration Flow Files*. 3 Mar. 2004. Web. 10 Oct. 2009.
- Urciuolli, Bonnie. "The Political Topography of Spanish and English: The View From a New York Puerto Rican Neighborhood." *Towards a Critical Sociolinguistics*. Ed. Rajendra Singh. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1996. 255-279.
- Zentella, Ana Celia. "Spanish and English in Contact in the United States: The Puerto Rican Experience." *WORD: Journal of the International Linguistic Association* 33.1-2 (1982): 41-57.
- . "Returned Migration, Language, and Identity: Puerto Rican Bilinguals in Dos Worlds/Two Mundos." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 84 (1990): 81-100.
- . *Growing Up Bilingual*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997.
- . "Puerto Ricans in the United States: Confronting the Linguistic Repercussions of Colonialism." *New Immigrants in the United States: Readings for Second Language Educators*. Ed. Sandra Lee McKay and Sauling Cynthia Wong. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 2000. 137-164.

# Selected Proceedings of the 13th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium

edited by Luis A. Ortiz-López

Cascadilla Proceedings Project Somerville, MA 2011

## Copyright information

Selected Proceedings of the 13th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium  
© 2011 Cascadilla Proceedings Project, Somerville, MA. All rights reserved

ISBN 978-1-57473-442-3 library binding

A copyright notice for each paper is located at the bottom of the first page of the paper.  
Reprints for course packs can be authorized by Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

## Ordering information

Orders for the library binding edition are handled by Cascadilla Press.  
To place an order, go to [www.lingref.com](http://www.lingref.com) or contact:

Cascadilla Press, P.O. Box 440355, Somerville, MA 02144, USA  
phone: 1-617-776-2370, fax: 1-617-776-2271, [sales@cascadilla.com](mailto:sales@cascadilla.com)

## Web access and citation information

This entire proceedings can also be viewed on the web at [www.lingref.com](http://www.lingref.com). Each paper has a unique document # which can be added to citations to facilitate access. The document # should not replace the full citation.

This paper can be cited as:

Lamboy, Edwin M. 2011. Language and Identity Construction: Can We Talk about a *New* Puerto Rican in the United States? In *Selected Proceedings of the 13th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*, ed. Luis A. Ortiz-López, 70-80. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. [www.lingref.com](http://www.lingref.com), document #2476.