

Not Correct but Not Bad Either: Another Look at the Social Meaning of “Velar r” in Puerto Rican Spanish

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1. Introduction

Posterior articulations of the canonically apico-alveolar trill /r/, traditionally grouped together and described as “velar r”, have been recognized as one of the most conspicuous characteristics of Puerto Rican Spanish since Navarro Tomás published his linguistic atlas of the island in 1948. “Velar r”, *R* henceforth in this paper, has attracted the interest of many researchers in part because, while dorsal, fricated rhotics occur in several languages of Western European origin (Maddieson, 1984), they are typical only of the Puerto Rican variety of Spanish¹. Regional differences in the frequency of *R*'s usage, its relationship to speaker characteristics and Puerto Rican's attitudes toward the pronunciation have all been the focus of considerable study. Nonetheless, questions remain regarding *R*'s social meaning.

R is often described as a stigmatized pronunciation (López Morales, 1979, 1983; Matta de Fiol, 1981; Medina Rivera, 1997). Yet, its social distribution does not completely conform to patterns expected of a linguistic variable with thoroughly negative social connotations. A number of studies (Alers Valentín, 1999; Emmanuelli, 1993; López Morales, 1983; Matta de Fiol, 1981; Valentín Márquez, 2007) have found that *R* is used more often by men than by women. Others (López Morales, 1983; Matta de Fiol, 1981) report that *R* is most common in the speech of those with lower socioeconomic status and is more typical of casual than of formal, closely-monitored speech (Graml, 2009; Holmquist, 2003; Medina Rivera, 1997). However, the absence of gender differences (Medina Rivera, 1997) and class differences (Emmanuelli, 1993) in *R* usage have also been observed.

The results of surveys assessing attitudes toward *R* (Emmanuelli, 1993; Graml, 2009; López Morales, 1979; Matta de Fiol, 1981; Medina Rivera, 1997) are also ambiguous; *R* frequently receives neutral and positive as well as negative ratings. These studies indicate that most Puerto Ricans are aware of *R*'s existence, a finding supported by the use of conventionalized terms to refer to the pronunciation. This type of conscious recognition is a prerequisite for the association of linguistic features with particular kinds of speakers and specific characteristics these individuals are perceived to possess. Information about such potential identifications, which would be considered stereotypes in traditional variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 2001) and indexical relationships in much recent work (see Eckert, 2008 for an overview), might help to reconcile some of the contradictions observed in findings related to *R*'s social meaning. However, as most studies of attitudes toward *R* have focused primarily on the pronunciation's nonstandard status and employed a questionnaire format with a closed set of response options, they provide only limited information about the speaker qualities associated with backed /r/.

The present study represents an initial attempt to identify some of the specific social and personal characteristics that may be linked with *R* and to flesh out its social profile. Individual interviews and a

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¹ The sporadic use of rhotics with posterior places of articulation has been noted in various parts of Latin America including Cuba, the Caribbean coasts of Colombia and Venezuela, and regions of Panama (Moreno de Alba, 1988) as well as in Trinidad (Thompson, 1957). See Willis (2007) for a description of the pre-breathy trills common in some parts of the Dominican Republic.

matched guise procedure were conducted with 115 individuals from two regions of the island, the South Coast and the San Juan metropolitan region. Residents of these areas have been found to exhibit distinct levels of *R* usage and are thought to also hold different attitudes toward the feature. Southerners have been observed to use backed /r/s frequently and to express relatively favorable opinions of them while Sanjuaneros rarely use *R* and are believed to view the pronunciation negatively. Results, although not representative of the island as a whole, will therefore allow for comparison of the two contrasting extremes within the Puerto Rican context.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 summarizes the findings of previous research on *R* while Section 3 describes study participants as well as the methods employed to collect and analyze data. Section 4 presents results and Section 5 concludes.

2. Previous Research on R

2.1. Geographic Distribution

Navarro Tomás (1948) divided the various types of *R* he observed in his initial study of the phenomenon into two basic categories; posterior fricatives and trills which he characterized as “velar” and sounds that began with a posterior fricative but ended with an alveolar fricative or semi-trill which he described as “mixed”. Based on interviews with one or two residents in each of 43 Puerto Rican municipalities conducted during the 1920’s, he concluded that the velar variety predominated in much of the island, including the South, while the mixed type was most common in the San Juan region. More recent research (Emmanuelli, 1993) confirms that *R* is still used frequently in the South and that the completely posterior type continues to be the variety heard most often in this part of the island (Graml, 2009). However, López Morales (1983) and Matta de Fiol (1981) report that *R* use had declined in San Juan by the late 1970’s; speakers who were young adults at that time used alveolar rhotics almost exclusively. It thus appears that the South and the San Juan region are now and have long been characterized by differences in backed /r/ use.

2.2. Previous Studies of Attitudes toward R

The five studies that have examined attitudes toward *R* to date (Emmanuelli, 1993; Graml, 2009; López Morales, 1979; Matta de Fiol, 1981; Medina Rivera, 1997) all collected data from slightly different types of samples (see Table 1). Four, Emmanuelli, Graml, López Morales and Matta de Fiol, assessed subjects’ opinions of *R* by asking them to agree or disagree with statements about the pronunciation and by answering multiple choice items. Graml asked participants specific questions about *R* use (e.g. “Is it typical of older people?”) in an interview format while the other three used written questionnaires. Medina Rivera’s subjects responded in writing to an open-ended question asking them what they thought of *R*.

Results of these surveys suggest that awareness of the pronunciation is widespread. Three of the five took Puerto Ricans’ familiarity with *R* for granted and asked subjects to evaluate it in the absence of auditory cues; Emmanuelli (1993) and López Morales (1979) communicated the concept of backed /r/ to their participants through use of the term “velar r” and Medina Rivera (1997) asked the participants in his study to rate the *erre raspada* or ‘scraped r’. Matta de Fiol (1981) did test awareness and found that 100% of her subjects recognized her recorded examples.

The findings of these investigations are most often interpreted as demonstrating *R*’s stigmatized status. The percentages of responses classified as negative, neutral and positive opinions of *R* in each of the attitude surveys conducted to date shown in Table 1 do indicate that the pronunciation often receives ratings classified as unfavorable. However, less than half the participants in Emmanuelli’s (1993) and Graml’s (2009) studies evaluated *R* in a negative fashion and all investigations except that of Matta de Fiol report a considerable number of neutral or positive opinions of the pronunciation.

These ratings are difficult to interpret not only because of the variation they present but also because, due to many studies’ focus on the dimension of (in)correctness and (un)acceptability, responses classified as representing negative attitudes toward *R* might be more accurately interpreted as opinions of whether or not the variant can be considered a proper pronunciation. For example, Matta de Fiol’s participants rated *R* by deciding between the descriptors “correct”, “incorrect” and “other” while López Morales elicited responses from participants by requiring them to choose between two

statements; *el fenómeno no puede ser aceptado* ‘the phenomenon cannot be accepted’ and *el fenómeno no tiene que ser rechazado* ‘the phenomenon need not be rejected’. In Medina Rivera’s investigation, the majority of “negative” responses to an open-ended question asking subjects what they thought of *R* apparently described the pronunciation as incorrect rather than identifying it with inferior social status or unattractive personal traits.

	Region	Population	Negative	Neutral	Positive
López Morales	All PR	University students	66.5%	---	33.3%
Matta de Fiol	San Juan Area	All classes	85%	5%	10%
Medina Rivera	San Juan Area	Middle class	67%	23%	10%
Emmanuelli	Ponce (South)	All classes	33%	20%	47%
Graml	All PR	All classes	42%	---	---

Table 1. Previous Studies of Attitudes toward *R*: Global Ratings

In fact, attitude surveys have examined *R*’s relationship to only a few concrete characteristics and these findings also fail to show that the feature is overwhelmingly associated with negatively-evaluated qualities. For example, Emmanuelli (1993), Graml (2009), López Morales (1979) Matta de Fiol (1981) and Medina Rivera (1997) report that their participants’ tendency to associate *R* with a lack of cultural sophistication or lower socioeconomic status was far from unanimous (see Table 2). As Table 2 also shows, many of López Morales’ and Graml’s subjects identified backed /r/s with rural origin, a potentially negative quality, but this finding was not replicated by either Emmanuelli or Medina Rivera. *R*’s connection to another possibly unfavorable characteristic, a speech impediment caused by a shortened lingual frenulum and popularly known as *frenillo*, was also assessed in several surveys. However, as the results displayed in Table 2 indicate, this relationship was found to be weak at best. The only quality that has been examined in connection with *R*’s positive ratings is its potential status as a national shibboleth. Several studies report that participants agreed with statements indicating that backed /r/s are typical of Puerto Rican speech. Two investigators, Graml and Emmanuelli, asked their subjects questions related to the situational conditioning of *R* use. Both found that *R* was considered more acceptable in informal circumstances and in interactions with familiar conversation partners.

	Rural	Low Sociocultural Level	<i>Frenillo</i>	Typical of PR
López Morales	48%	23.7%	17%	27.4%
Matta de Fiol	---	30%	5.8%	16.6%
Medina Rivera	11.5%	8%	---	9.2%
Emmanuelli	16%	44%	19%	48%
Graml	54%	32%	---	68%

Table 2. Previous Studies of *R*: Associations with Specific Characteristics²

Some of the discrepancies between these studies’ results have been interpreted as the product of regional differences. López Morales observed that participants from San Juan most frequently expressed negative views of *R* while Southerners had the most positive opinions of the pronunciation. This finding is supported by the high percentage of negative ratings in Matta de Fiol’s study of Sanjuaneros and the frequency of positive ratings in Emmanuelli’s survey of the South. Given that backed /r/ continues to be used frequently in the South but not in the San Juan area the existence of an attitude difference between the two regions would not be surprising. Regional variation cannot, however, account for all inconsistencies as diverse global evaluations of *R* and specific associations with the pronunciation are reported in both locations.

To summarize, the results of previous attitude surveys suggest that many Puerto Ricans recognize *R* and are conscious of its nonstandard status but do not clearly demonstrate that the pronunciation is

² López Morales (1979) reported associations with qualities he identified as negative only for the 66.5% of study participants who agreed with the statement that *R* is unacceptable. Percentages presented in this table have been calculated with reference to his entire sample in order to facilitate comparison with other studies.

strongly identified with specific, negative speaker characteristics. However, since most have used multiple choice questions and a written format that does not allow for discussion or clarification of responses, the specific information they have gathered about *R*'s social meaning is necessarily somewhat limited.

Also, the failure to provide subjects with auditory examples in several of these studies raises concerns about the validity of their data. The results of Matta de Fiol's study do indicate that Puerto Ricans recognize *R* but it is not clear that all are familiar with the all terms used to reference it. The existence of several phonetic realizations of posterior /r/ raises further questions; it is possible that at least the two major *R* categories have different social connotations and it is not evident which type of backed /r/ subjects had in mind when they gave their ratings.

Finally, these surveys' exclusive use of items that explicitly ask participants to give their opinions of *R* may have affected their results. Responses to direct questions can fail to accurately reflect true attitudes for various reasons, including participants' tendency to give answers they consider socially desirable and the fact that individuals are not always consciously aware of their own beliefs about language varieties and specific linguistic features (Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003).

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

One hundred and fifteen participants, 29 from San Juan and 86 from three locations along the Southern Coast were recruited to take part in this investigation during 2011 and 2012. These two regions were selected for study because, as noted above, their residents exhibit different levels of *R* usage and have been said to also hold distinct attitudes toward the pronunciation. Twenty-nine Southerners were from Ponce, a major urban center and the second largest city in Puerto Rico, 27 were from the mid-size town of Yauco and 30 were from the small town of Patillas³. Analysis of their responses will thus permit comparison of *R*'s profile in places that vary along the rural-urban continuum. This is of interest given previous claims that the feature is associated with rural speech.

Participants were all middle-class, college-educated professionals or university students in the case of younger subjects. Individuals from this socioeconomic group were selected assuming that their level of formal education and participation in the linguistic market would make them particularly sensitive to *R*'s social connotations. They were approximately evenly divided between 3 age groups in each location; 18 to 25, 30 to 45 and 50 and older. All subjects can be considered native residents of the place where they were interviewed as they had either been born there or had moved there as young children and had lived most of their lives in that location.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Matched Guise Procedure

The matched guise technique (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum 1960) was used to measure attitudes toward *R* indirectly. Participants rated four talkers, two women and two men in their 30s and 40s on various criteria twice, once after listening to them read the following sentence pronouncing the underlined letters as *R* and once after listening to them read the same text using the standard alveolar trill.

El rrepresentante de la agencia confirmó que varias compañías están interesadas en el cultivo comercial del arroz en los terrenos del sur.

The representative of the agency confirmed that various companies are interested in the commercial cultivation of rice in the southern fields

³ According to the 2010 Census, the population of Ponce is 166,327. 42,043 live in municipalities of Yauco and 20,152 in Patillas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Ponce is located in the central part of the southern coast. Yauco is situated in the southwestern region of the island and Patillas lies in its southeastern corner.

All talkers were professional Puerto Rican actors who were able to produce two guises, or readings, that were extremely similar in terms of intonation patterns, pauses, and segmental features with the exception of *R* and [r]. It is thus assumed that any disparities between the ratings assigned to individual talkers in their two guises reflect differences in raters' attitudes toward *R*.

The *Rs* used in these readings were completely posterior variants as all talkers produced this form spontaneously when asked to use the *erre arrastrada*⁴, or 'dragged out r'. Participants used an iPod to listen to the recordings at their own pace. They heard both guises of each talker interspersed with recordings of the same sentence made by other speakers of Puerto Rican Spanish. These additional audio files were included to reduce the likelihood that participants would realize that they were hearing some speakers twice. Two sets of recording were made so that approximately half of participants listened to the *R* guises of two talkers first and heard the [r] guises of the others initially while this order was reversed for other subjects. All talkers were rated on the following qualities using a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most): intelligence, education-level, likeability, trustworthiness and likelihood that they were of rural origin. Four of these traits correspond to the two principle dimensions often identified as components of language attitudes in the matched guise paradigm (Lambert et al., 1960); competence and social attractiveness. More standard linguistic forms are, of course, generally associated with high scores on characteristics linked to competence like intelligence and education. Less standard forms, however, often fare best on attributes identified with social attractiveness such as trustworthiness and likeability. Rural origin was included in the study due to the conflicting results observed in previous attempts to link this quality to *R* use. Participants were also asked to express their opinions of each talker by selecting descriptors from a bank of adjectives. These were a variety of specific terms related to some of the more general characteristics previously discussed as possibly related to *R*. They included elegant, urban, modern, *jibaro*⁵, modern, relaxed and formal. Finally, participants were invited to write additional comments about each talker in a space left blank for that purpose.

3.2.2. Interview

After completing the matched guise task, participants answered a series of open-ended, orally-posed questions that directly addressed their opinions of *R* and the qualities they associated with *R* users. In order to ensure that all participants' answers referred to *R* and, in fact, to the completely posterior realizations of *R* used in the matched guise, they were asked to listen to two of the *R* guises again and focus on the way that the 'r's and 'rr's were pronounced. The following questions were then discussed:

- (1) *¿Existe un nombre para esta pronunciación? ¿La reconoce?*
'Is there a name for this pronunciation? Do you recognize it?'
- (2) *¿Asocia usted esta manera de hablar con algún tipo de persona en particular?*
'Do you associate this manner of speaking with a particular type of person?'
- (3) *¿Asocia usted esta manera de hablar con una región particular de Puerto Rico?*
'Do you associate this manner of speaking with a particular region of Puerto Rico?'
- (4) *¿Piensa que esta manera de hablar ocurre solamente en Puerto Rico o que ocurre en otros países hispanohablantes también?*
'Do you think that this manner of speaking only occurs in Puerto Rico or that it also occurs in other Spanish-speaking countries?'

⁴ In the author's experience, this term is currently used almost exclusively to refer to *R* in Puerto Rico.

⁵ *Jibaro* is a multivalent term. It can be used to denote rural origin or in a negative fashion to indicate that an individual is rustic and out of step with the modern world. It can also refer to those who follow old-fashioned, authentically Puerto Rican traditions.

- (5) *¿Qué piensa de esta forma de hablar?*
 ‘What do you think of this way of speaking?’

4. Results

4.1.1. Responses to Interview Items: Awareness of *R*

Responses to the first interview question indicate that most Puerto Ricans are conscious of *R*'s existence, supporting the assumptions of some previous studies and the results of Matta de Fiol (1981). The majority (90%; 103/105) recognized the posterior articulations of /r/ played for them at the beginning of the conversation and most of them described the pronunciation using the term *la erre arrastrada* ‘the dragged out r’. Awareness of *R* was highest in San Juan where all subjects identified the pronunciation as a variant of /r/. In the South, rates of awareness were similar for participants from the small town of Patillas (25/30, 83%), the medium-sized city of Yauco (24/27, 90%) and the large population center of Ponce (25/29, 86%). Southerners who did not recognize the completely posterior articulations of /r/ in the recordings as distinctive were all older speakers who used *R* frequently in their own speech⁶. Inverse correlations between use and awareness of nonstandard features have been identified in other contexts (Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008; Labov, 2001). Presumably, this pattern reflects the tendency of those least exposed to other ways of speaking to both continue to use and fail to notice local forms. As many of the Southerners who did not recognize *R* completed their university degrees in San Juan, their lack of recognition cannot, however, be easily attributed to lack of linguistic experience.

4.1.2. Responses to Interview Items: Views on the Geographic Extension of *R*

Most of those who demonstrated awareness of *R* also considered it to be unique to Puerto Rican Spanish. Seventy-two percent (21/29) of Sanjuaneros stated that the pronunciation is limited to the island and 77% (57/74) of Southerners who were conscious of the pronunciation expressed the same opinion. Only very minor differences were observed between responses from the three Southern communities, with participants from Patillas being slightly less likely to associate *R* exclusively with Puerto Rican speech (17/25, 68%) than those from Yauco (20/24, 83%) and Ponce (20/25, 80%).

When asked if they associated *R* use with any particular area of Puerto Rico, 70% (72/103) of participants stated that the feature is widely diffused throughout the country. Some contrast between the two regions surveyed was apparent as 80% of Southerners (56/74) but only 62% of Sanjuaneros (18/29) replied that *R* could be heard anywhere on the island and 24% of San Juan participants (7/29) gave the more qualified response that the pronunciation occurred everywhere in Puerto Rico except their own city. Residents of Patillas (21/25, 84%) were somewhat more likely than were those from Yauco (17/24, 71%) or Ponce (18/25, 72%) to believe that *R* is used throughout the entire island. Most Yaucanos and Ponceños who did not consider *R* a pan Puerto Rican feature associated it with the South and Central regions of the island.

4.1.3. Responses to Interview Items: What Kind of People Use *R*?

Like participants' views on the geographic diffusion of *R*, the dominant theme in their responses to this question was widespread, generalized occurrence. Seventy-six percent of Southerners (56/74) and of Sanjuaneros (22/29) responded that all types of people use *R* and many explicitly resisted the idea the pronunciation might index specific personal or social characteristics as demonstrated in the following comments.

- (1) *Cualquier persona. Hay personas bien high class que hablan así. No nos dice nada de sus características ni de su educación.*
 ‘Anyone. There are really high class people who speak like that. It doesn't tell you anything about characteristics or education.’

⁶ Sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with all participants before they completed the attitude measures. Results will not be reported here due to space limitations.

- (2) *Viene de la cultura de la familia. Algunas familias lo hacen, otras no. Puedes escucharlo del más pobre y de él que más tiene. Gente muy preparada habla así.*
‘It comes from family culture. Some families do it, others don’t. You can hear it from the poorest person and from the richest. Very educated people talk like that.’

Most of the small group of participants willing to associate *R* with specific qualities mentioned rural origin (see Table 3), a characteristic often broached in discussions of *R* as a stigmatized variable. However, this identification was primarily expressed in a positive rather than negative manner, in both San Juan and the South.

- (3) *Lo asocio con la gente del campo. Personas que son muy conservadores, familiares y trabajadores. Con mucha generosidad y honradez.*
‘I associate it with country people. People who are conservative, family-oriented and hard-working. Very generous and honorable.’

- (4) *De los jíbaros, la raíz de nosotros. Pero no mide ni estudios ni cultura. Hay jíbaros muy preparados.*
‘Of the jíbaros, our roots. But it doesn’t reflect education or culture. There are jíbaros with a lot of education.’

The only other specific characteristics alluded to were lack of education and *frenillo* or the physical inability to produce [r]. Neither was mentioned often and none of those who discussed *frenillo* believed that all *R* use was attributable to this factor.

As indicated in Table 3, very few participants made comments linking *R* with negative characteristics. Most of those who did were Southern women; female participants from the medium-sized city of Yauco, were particularly likely to associate *R* with lack of education. Age did not appear to condition participants’ answers to this question in the South, but all negative identifications given in San Juan were mentioned by those over fifty.

	None	Rural	Poor Education	<i>Frenillo</i>
San Juan (29)	22	5	2	2
Ponce (25)	21	3	3	1
Yauco (23)	16	5	5	2
Patillas (26)	22	3	2	3

Table 3. Specific Characteristics Associated with *R*

4.1.4. Responses to Interview Items: What do you think of *R*?

Eighty-five percent (88/103) of participants’ overtly-expressed opinions of *R* included the terms “not correct”, “incorrect” or synonyms such as “error” and *descuido* ‘careless slip’. However, the potentially negative force of most (88%; 77/88) of these evaluations was undercut by comments specifically stating that, due to *R*’s widespread use in Puerto Rico, it is accepted and not considered a serious mistake. Approximately equal percentages of Southerners and Sanjuaneros both characterized *R* as an error and minimized the importance of the pronunciation’s lack of correction.

- (5) *No tan correcto quizás pero es muy normal en Puerto Rico. No tiene importancia.*
‘It isn’t correct maybe but it is very normal in Puerto Rico. It is not important.’
- (6) *Es un error, pero hay tanta gente que lo hace acá que es normal.*
‘It is an error, but so many people do it here that it is normal.’

A small number of participants (4), rather than labeling *R* as incorrect, described it as appropriate only in informal contexts and with familiar conversation partners:

(7) *Hay que saber donde y cuando hacerlo. Está bien si se tiene confianza.*

‘You have to know where and when to do it. It’s fine if you know people well.’

Only a few participants (5) described *R* in thoroughly positive terms, linking the pronunciation with Puerto Rican identity.

(8) *No es negativo. Yo lo respeto mucho porque es bien nuestro, bien puertorriqueño.*

‘It is not negative. I respect it a lot because it is really ours, really Puerto Rican.’

Only 9 participants made thoroughly negative comments about *R*, describing it as typical of the uneducated and uncultured. As in the case of the previous question, most were Southern women, particularly Yaucanas, and older San Juan residents.

4.1.5. Summary of Responses to Interview Items

Taken as a whole, responses to the interview items confirm several findings of previous research; residents of Southern Puerto Rico and of San Juan recognize *R* as a nonstandard variant of /r/. Rural origin, limited education, and *frenillo* as well as Puerto Rican origin are in fact the principle specific characteristics mentioned in connection with the pronunciation. However, none of them are mentioned with great frequency. In fact, the more detailed nature of comments made in a conversational context suggests that *R*’s lack of persistent identification with speaker characteristics may be the factor that underlies inconsistencies in overall ratings and associations with the pronunciation reported in earlier studies. According to these participants, backed /r/’s widespread use precludes its negative evaluation. Because it is believed that all types of people use *R*, it cannot be considered a glaring error nor can it be used as a reliable indicator of speaker characteristics.

These comments do not therefore support the contention that *R* is strongly stigmatized if stigmatization is understood as implying an association with unfavorable personal qualities. As only minimal differences are apparent between the responses of residents of San Juan and of the South, they are also at odds with previous claims of large attitudinal disparities between these regions. Comparison of responses obtained in the three Southern communities surveyed fail to indicate the type of discrepancies between residents of rural and urban areas that might be expected based on prior contentions that *R* is primarily associated with individuals from the country. While it is true that more residents of the midsize city of Yauco described *R* as typical of rural, results displayed in Table 3 demonstrate that the difference between their responses and those obtained in the other two locations is quite small. Of course, it is possible that these answers to direct questions do not express participants’ real opinions of *R*; their accepting tone may reflect an attempt to avoid appearing judgmental and criticizing a Puerto Rican way of speaking during an interaction with a foreigner. As an indirect measure of attitudes, the matched guise procedure provides a means of evaluating the validity of overtly-stated opinions.

4.2. Results of the Matched Guise Procedure

Speakers’ ratings in their *R* and [r] guises were evaluated using a principal component analysis procedure conducted with the SAS statistical software package. Data from San Juan and from the South were analyzed separately based on previous claims that these areas hold different attitudes toward *R*. The outcomes of Type III tests for significance are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

These results show that participants from both areas associated *R* guises with favorable rather than unfavorable personal characteristics. *R* does have a slightly less positive profile in the capital where, as shown in Table 4, speakers were judged to be significantly less educated in their backed /r/ guises. However, Sanjuaneros gave *R* guises ratings very similar to those for [r] on “intelligence”, the other competence-based trait assessed, and higher scores on “trustworthiness” and “likeability”, the two qualities related to social attractiveness. Furthermore, they gave *R* guises an average, not below average rating for education level. In the South, *R* guises actually received significantly more favorable ratings on all four personal qualities; speakers were considered more intelligent, educated, trustworthy

and likeable when they used *R* (see Table 5). As the discrepancies between the ratings assigned by Southerners and Sanjuaneros for these characteristics are distinctions of degree not of kind, these results, like participants' interview comments, do not suggest that residents of the two areas have extremely different attitudes toward *R*. While women from both regions gave *R* slightly less positive ratings than [r] and there was a tendency for *R* to receive higher ratings from younger Sanjuaneros, no interactions between guise types and rater characteristics achieved significance. Southerners' place of origin, Patillas, Yauco or Ponce, also failed to interact with guise type. Finally, it should also be noted that neither talker gender nor the order in which audio files were presented affected ratings.

It is unsurprising that Southerners judged talkers to be more trustworthy and likeable in their *R* guises. Nonstandard linguistic features often receive high ratings on these qualities in places where they are frequently used and this effect is thought to express a sense of solidarity with others from the same region. However, as many San Juan residents are aware that backed /r/ is rarely used in their city, the more positive scores they assigned to *R* guises on these qualities must reflect a national rather than strictly local identification if they are to be attributed to solidarity. Perhaps this result expresses the belief that *R* is typical of Puerto Rican speech.

The tendency for participants to consider talkers both educated and intelligent in their *R* guises provides more evidence that *R* is not invariably associated with negative qualities; speakers using the pronunciation were able to create the impression that they were smart and cultured. This finding also coincides with participants' responses to interview items indicating that all kinds of people, including professionals, use *R*.

	\bar{x} Rating, <i>R</i>	\bar{x} Rating, /r/	F Value	Probability Level
Intelligent	4.06	4.12	1.21 (1,24.2)	< .331
Educated	3.10	4.03	94.26 (1,25.4)	< .0001
Trustworthy	3.62	3.01	8.48 (1,26.1)	< .0074
Likeable	3.54	3.05	3.31 (1,24.4)	< .0805
Rural	4.53	2.01	70.49 (1,23.7)	< .0001

Table 4. Guise Ratings for San Juan

	\bar{x} Rating, <i>R</i>	\bar{x} Rating, /r/	F Value	Probability Level
Intelligent	4.40	3.58	59.16 (1,79.4)	< .0001
Educated	4.51	3.60	61.94 (1,76.3)	< .0001
Trustworthy	3.35	2.71	39.95 (1, 79.3)	< .0001
Likeable	3.42	2.79	18.64 (1, 79.1)	< .0001
Rural	4.00	1.78	92.10 (1, 75.8)	< .0001

Table 5. Guise Ratings for the South

Southerners' tendency to view talkers as significantly more intelligent and educated when using *R* is, however, puzzling. This pattern might be an additional result of solidarity, although this factor is normally adduced to explain ratings on traits that affect personal interactions rather than those related to competence (Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003).

The inclination of both Southerners and Sanjuaneros to rate speakers as significantly more likely to be of rural origin in their *R* guises is also unexpected based on their responses to the interview items. Rural origin was the specific characteristic most often associated with backed /r/ in the interviews but even so it was not mentioned with great frequency. The descriptors chosen by participants to characterize talkers in both their guises as well their written comments suggest that the materials used in the matched guise procedure may have been a factor in these ratings. The adjectives most frequently selected for talkers in their *R* guises were "professional", "urban" and "jibaro" (see Table 6) both in the South and in San Juan. Many participants chose all three of these potentially contradictory terms and, in their written comments, stated that talkers in their *R* guises were probably originally from the country but had moved to the city and now held professional jobs. The sentence used in all guises has a clearly formal tone and could easily have been a part of a news report or some other kind of official statement. Participants were told that talkers were reading a sentence that was in no way related to them. However, many seem to have created a mental backdrop for this decontextualized material, deciding that individuals who would employ *R* in this communication were in fact urban professionals

with a *jíbaro* past. As some evidence, both from previous research and in answers to the interview items used in the current study, suggests that *R* is more acceptable in casual speech, participants may have decided that those who would use it in such a formal context were likely to be of rural origin. Recent work by Campbell-Kibler (2008) has demonstrated how, in the matched guise paradigm, utterance context can activate specific elements in the array of related social meanings linked to a particular linguistic form. She found that reduced, alveolar forms of the English progressive *ing* were interpreted as indicative of a compassionate personality, condescension and greater as well as less masculinity depending on the content expressed in talkers' statements.

	Professional		Urban		Jíbaro	
	<i>R</i>	/r/	<i>R</i>	/r/	<i>R</i>	/r/
San Juan	75%	95%	73%	90%	83%	0%
South	78%	70%	59%	71%	70%	5%

Table 6. Descriptors Assigned to Guises

5. Conclusion

Based on the data presented here, *R* can be considered a stigmatized feature of Puerto Rican Spanish only if the definition of stigmatization is limited to an awareness that a linguistic feature is nonstandard or incorrect. Participants' claims, made in response to direct, orally-posed interview questions, that *R* is not strongly associated with specific speaker characteristics due to its pervasive use are corroborated by the matched guise ratings that indirectly assessed attitudes toward backed /r/. The high scores obtained by talkers in their *R* guises on traits related to competency demonstrate that backed /r/ use does not prevent speakers from sounding intelligent and educated. However, *R*'s strong identification with rural origins in this task does raise questions about a possible overall association with this characteristic. Future research should examine the impression created by backed /r/ use in an array of contexts, both formal and informal, in order to examine situational variability in *R*'s potential to index this and other speaker traits

Results also suggest that attitudes toward *R* may be more homogeneous than previously thought. Although some differences between residents of the South and the capital region were observed, it seems more accurate to say that Sanjuaneros have a slightly less positive view of backed *R* than Southerners rather than to describe their opinions toward the pronunciation as negative. Furthermore, results for urban and more rural areas of the South were largely similar.

Finally, all results reported here should be considered specific to completely posterior realizations of backed *R*. As the mixed and completely posterior varieties are fairly distinct acoustically, it is possible that they have different social profiles. Future research should explore the connotations of mixed *R* types.

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