COLONIALISM, RACE, GENDER AND CLASS DISCRIMINATION IN THE SOCIETY, ACADEMIA, AND MUSIC OF PUERTO RICO, THE OLDEST COLONY

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Dedication

A tutte le persone al margine,
a quelle che non hanno potuto parlare,
a quelle che lo fanno per chi non riesce,
e a quelle a cui hanno tolto la voce.

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II. Abstract

This thesis exposes and analyses ongoing intersectional discrimination – through a focus on gender, race/ethnicity, and class – that exists at societal, academic, and musical levels in Puerto Rico, where bias includes 'subtle racism' and similar practices mostly unspoken and rarely theorized or addressed. My investigation identifies interconnections between socioeconomic inequality, biased educational practices, Western-centred academic institutions, and demonstrates the effects of colonialism, in which Puerto Rico, considered by many as the oldest colony (in the world), has endured a double occupancy, first by Spain and then, continuing today, by the United States.

I begin by posing a seemingly simple research question, asking whether there is an academic degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico.[1] The straightforward answer is "No", but this opens the door to my interdisciplinary study, in which I examine the connections between social groups and how they create and perform a musical style, the issues of discrimination these communities have historically faced in their colonized society, and the absence or lack of recognition their genres have in formal education and in academic discourse. Among Puerto Rico's autochthonous genres this thesis turns a spotlight on the oldest, and most African in derivation, music and dance style, *bomba*, and on its community, providing a case study of discriminatory practices affecting both people and artistic and cultural expressions.

My research was carried out between 2015 and 2022 and it draws on a variety of primary and secondary data, including interviews, participant observation, and personal training in bomba. The thesis begins with an analysis of issues of colonialism and intersectional discrimination at the societal level in Puerto Rico, and how these are manifested across its educational systems. Subsequently I investigate musical practices, analyzing sexism, racism, classism, identity issues, and current efforts to decolonize academic institutions, highlighting parallels between Puerto Rico and global realities. Drawing on ethnography, I also discuss experiences of resistance faced by Puerto Rican academics and musicians who have battled to introduce autochthonous music into mainstream programmes.

[1] I use the word autochthonous to refer to music that is indigenous, native, used, found, or performed where it was first created.

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This thesis is first, foremost, and ultimately, a labour of love. My love for music, equality, social justice, and Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans' love for their country, their ancestors, their culture, and their people. My mother's love for me and my work, dedicating long summers taking care of me, while I sat at my laptop 12 hours a day (or more), 7 days a week, to finalize writing this thesis.

I started this research because I care about the issues it tackles, and I was able to make it through only because I cared about ensuring the voices of my interviewees would be given one more platform, beyond the ones they regularly have access to. During the seven intermittent years of my fieldwork, all types of adversities occurred: three hurricanes (Irma, María, Fiona), several earthquakes in Puerto Rico in early 2020, the ongoing Covid global pandemic that started in 2020 as well, besides all the physical and mental struggles associated with working full-time while doing a PhD.

My first *thank you* goes to my first lead supervisor, Keith Howard. When I graduated from Università di Bologna, I was very disenamoured with academia. Despite having the highest GPA of my graduating class, professors in Bologna rejected my master's thesis on the basis that it uncovered ongoing gender discrimination in Italian academia and higher education musical institutions. Regardless of the abundant data provided in my thesis, the graduating commission made up of seven professors in Bologna claimed that there was no such thing as gender discrimination in Italy and thus my thesis lacked scientific basis. The university had no appeal system in place, so this injustice took place within a *perfect* system, where abuse of power could easily occur and where, as a student, I was left without recourse options. Consequently, I was denied the customary *cum laude* that is awarded to all students entering their final examination with 110/110 (like myself); I would also not be provided the reference letters needed to apply for PhD programs worldwide. I was facing a clear intent to undermine not only myself and my own research, but the *type* of research I was carrying out and the inequalities it brought to the surface. I was determined not to let the wrongdoing that took place at Università di Bologna define me – nor my academic career – so I used up all my savings to travel to New York to meet Suzanne Cusick and to Seattle to meet Patricia Shehan Campbell. I shared my research with them, and extracts of my Italian master's thesis, and they were both extremely supportive of the work I had carried out and the study I intended to undertake for my PhD.

Patricia advised me that the best place for me and my research would be SOAS in London, under Keith Howard, and this is how I landed in his office for a preliminary meeting, where I was able to discuss with Keith my ideas and my goals. Despite lacking references from my previous university – although I must mention Prof. Giani, who was the only academic who backed me and provided me with one – Keith sponsored my enrolment at SOAS for a PhD under his supervision. None of this work would have been possible without Keith, and he has supported me well beyond my PhD thesis. Keith personally worked with me to create the MESI (Music, Education and Social Inclusion) ICTM Study Group, and has informally supervised my work even when his formal relationship with SOAS ended. Keith embodies everything academia should be about; working with him was the opposite of the experience I had in Bologna. I will be forever grateful to Keith for everything he has taught me, for his support, and for him and his wife Charlotte welcoming my mom and me into their home.

Along these lines, I would also like to thank my current lead supervisor at SOAS, Richard Williams, for agreeing to jump on board during the last year of my thesis write-up, and being a flexible, empathetic human being and a very knowledgeable professor, who supported me in the best way he could within the time available.

Secondly, I want to thank Puerto Rico, the people of Puerto Rico, the Music Department at Universidad Interamericana Recinto Metro (Cupey), and the people of the bomba community. As a foreigner, usually perceived by locals as a White *gringa* (person from the United States) because of my skin colour, my early days in Puerto Rico were not the easiest experience. It is an extremely expensive place to live in, especially if one is self-funded, and the widespread anti-American sentiment in the communities I was trying to work with during the research made it difficult to engage at first. Thus, I want to thank Miguel Cubano, then Director of the Music Department at Interamericana, for opening the doors of the university to me, and for allowing me to attend classes there. A big thank you to Ricardo Pons and Noel Allende as well for welcoming me into their classrooms and for their precious teachings. When it comes to the bomba community, the person I owe my research life to is Marién Torres López – in short, she is my fieldwork equivalent of Keith: without her, this thesis would not have been possible. She not only brought me along to all her gigs, *bombazos* and bomba events, treating me like a sister and allowing me to enter this community as an *insider*, but she also invited me to live in her house for months at a time for free, knowing I was self-funded. I was also able to learn the basics of bomba

dance and percussion by attending her academy, Taller Tambuyé, at a discounted price. Marién is a force of nature and a role model showcasing how music can contribute to social change and breaking all kinds of boundaries of what a light-skinned, woman, *like her* “could or could not do” in bomba.

I also have a special thanks for each one of my interviewees, as they appear in the table in the Appendix. They kindly offered their time and their insights to me, agreeing to open and have some difficult conversations, which are still quite hard to engage with in present-day Puerto Rico, but are also necessary. I laughed and I cried with them while transcribing their words, and at many stages they were the only thing that kept me going when I wanted to give up with the tedious and rigid process of completing a thesis according to present academic requirements. I hope my work can help give them visibility and justice, and that it can contribute to improve the lives of historically discriminated and invisibilized people and social groups in Puerto Rico. That alone would make all the years and all my efforts associated with carrying out this investigation worth it. Along these lines, I would like to thank everybody in the bomba community who welcomed me, allowed me to enter and share their spaces, and made me feel *at home,* despite our differences in geographic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Strangely, and thanks to these people, I have felt more sense of belonging in Puerto Rico than anywhere else.

The last key person without whom this thesis would have not been possible is James Nissen; as my co-chair of the MESI Study Group, he has been instrumental in sharing the workload and showing me the ropes – as the exceptional human being and academic he is. He has also been an enormous help with this thesis and the process associated with it; knowing he was there at all stages, as a helping hand, an advisor, or a friend, really helped me maintain my balance. I cannot express how instrumental James has been, and I am forever grateful to him.

Finally, I want to thank various people who supported me – whether academically, professionally and/or personally – at key moments during the years of my research, without whom my work and I would possibly not be where we are at today: Ava, Biu, Bradford, Brandon, Estefany, Estrella, Fabiola, Giulia, John, José, Leonard, Mathew, Paulo, Rosemarie, Marie Ozah, Huib Schippers, Svanibor Pettan, Francesca Cassio.

Introduction

A. Fieldwork Location

I first visited Puerto Rico in the summer of 2014 to confirm the location for my PhD investigation, three years before Puerto Rican *reggaetón* mega-hit "Despacito" became a global phenomenon, redefining how many people outside Puerto Rico thought about the island.[2] Before "Despacito", when I told people I chose Puerto Rico for fieldwork, they usually asked, "How come you have chosen Costa Rica?"; on one occasion, Puerto Rico had turned into Portugal. It was clear Puerto Rico was not well known abroad, and neither were its history and culture. Following the hit, the most common response became "Ah, Puerto Rico, where 'Despacito' is from."

Personally, before researching Puerto Rico, as a musician and dancer I mostly associated it with its *salsa* tradition. Subsequently, besides being drawn by Puerto Rican rhythms, what really intrigued me was its unique history, especially in relation to the two long-term occupations it experienced – first by Spain from the early 1500s, followed by the United States seizing the island in 1898 – becoming what is considered by many *the world's oldest colony*.[3] Puerto Rico's colonial past and present make it a unique place to investigate the implications of uninterrupted double colonization in society, music, and education, and its consequences on practices of discrimination and identity creation.

B. Research Questions

I began formulating an approach to explore dimensions of discrimination and colonization in Puerto Rico by choosing to focus on dynamics of inclusion and representation in academic music curricula planning, where the curriculum itself is seen as a space for ethnography. My plan was to analyse the music curriculum not in its prescriptive contents but for its descriptive implications; that is, for what it documents as a by-product of the society and culture that create it.

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[2] https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2018/04/04/despacito-has-just-become-the-first-video-to-reach-5-billion-views-on-youtube/?sh=2d2393f24b21 (accessed 04/04/2021). As of April 2021, Despacito's official video on YouTube scored over 7 billion views: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJQP7kiw5Fk (accessed 04/04/2021).

[3] This historical fact will be explained in greater detail throughout the thesis. Substantiating the US occupation and seizure of Puerto Rico, see, for example, José Trías Monge's *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World* (1997).

To do so, I developed two key research questions, Q1 and Q2. The first was:

Q1) *In Puerto Rico, is there an academic degree in autochthonous music?*

This preliminary question was necessary to avoid making assumptions; based on the response to Q1, two options followed:

Q2A) Yes – *What does its curricula look like in relation to societal dynamics of inclusion?*

Q2B) No – *Why is there no academic degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico?* And – *Is the absence of this degree a reflection of societal issues of inclusion?*

After establishing the answer to Q1 was "no", as there was no degree in autochthonous music – despite a rich endemic musical production, and the existence of several autochthonous musical genres with extended repertoires played locally and internationally for more than 500 years – I started investigating Q2B. First, I looked at autochthonous styles, which are presented in Appendix I; then, I examined key markers most relevant to this investigation, including sound, repertoire and social groups who created each genre and are performing it. My goal was to choose one Puerto Rican autochthonous musical style to focus on, looking closely into its history, the people who created it and perform it, and its transmission journey, with specific reference to how it is taught in Puerto Rico and its presence (or lack thereof) in formal academic institutions and curricula.

In short, I wanted to conduct a thorough analysis of the chosen genre to study its trajectory, establishing whether there are connections between social groups creating and performing a musical style, issues of discrimination these groups have been historically facing in society, and the absence or lack of recognition this genre experienced in formal education and academia. This would allow me to establish the type of connections between (1) social group(s) creating and performing a subaltern autochthonous musical style, (2) discrimination said group(s) historically faced at societal level, and (3) the absence or lack of recognition this genre experienced in formal education and academia.

The preliminary literature review, and fieldwork carried out in Puerto Rico, brought to surface multiple issues of discrimination, invisibilization, under- (and lack of) representation social groups historically faced on the island, especially along the axes of gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomics/class.[4] Because of this, I found that the most

[4] Throughout the thesis, race and ethnicity are used jointly for their commonalities – as they both are social constructs, neither can be detectable in the human genome, nor can be traced to distinct

suitable autochthonous musical genre for me to focus on was *bomba*, for two main reasons: 1) being the oldest Puerto Rican endemic music and dance style, it gave me the chance to explore correspondences at societal/musical levels over the most extended period of time; 2) it is the most Afro-derived autochthonous expression and, given that racial discrimination is a key axis of my investigation, it gave me the best opportunity to investigate mutual influences among people performing it being discriminated in society, and the style being discriminated in musical environments and academia.

I wanted to test an assumption emerging from my investigation, also partially in response to my research questions. While conducting initial research, I perceived there was a direct association in Puerto Rico between (1) people who have historically been considered second-class citizens – because they are Black, have a distinct African heritage and appearance, come from a poor town or live in social housing, etc.; (2) the music these people create, play and perform – in this case bomba; and (3) the fact bomba is treated like second-class music and dance, not being awarded value, and considered unworthy of being taught in academia or awarded university degrees. Alternatively, from the viewpoint of those who discriminate against it, this societal/musical connection becomes:

> *They are poor, they are Black, and they play bomba → Bomba is the music of the poor and the Black → Black is lesser than White, it has less value and is of lesser quality → Bomba, being of the Black and the poor, is a music of less quality and less value in comparison to White/Western people's music (like European classical music, or US jazz).*[5]

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biological categories. Historically, race was used to identify groups of people with a kinship or group connection, and nowadays it refers to a categorization of people based on perceived shared physical traits. Ethnicity is a characterization of people based on having a shared culture, common ancestry and/or shared history. See, for example, Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race* (1998). Also see: https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race; https://www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/difference-between-race-and-ethnicity (accessed 01/12/2022).
The term "invisibilization" is used in political theory to refer to the opposite of public social recognition, i.e., social invisibility, which is often accompanied by mechanisms of control and silencing that lead to marginalization, disrespect, exclusion, and suffering (Herzog 2018, 2021).

[5] I specify that, consistently with concepts that words should be capitalized when referring to peoples and races, I capitalize Black and White when referring to social groups throughout my thesis. For recent guidelines and considerations over capitalization (or non-capitalization) of Black and White when referring to race and ethnicity, see: https://www.macfound.org/press/perspectives/capitalizing-black-and-white-grammatical-justice-and-equity; https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/; https://www.cjr.org/analysis/language_corner_1.php (accessed 04/04/2021).

Besides corroborating these assumptions, I wanted to find out how far all these elements were interconnected, and to what extent they interplayed, perpetrating discrimination in both society and music. I also asked interviewees for their views on this.[6] Christina, a Puerto Rican Black woman performing bomba for many years, and a doctoral student at the time, gave me my favourite response: “That’s a question there!! [laughs]… Uhm [sighs]… You know, I think… Oh man, you’re going to have a thesis there!!”

Indeed, I most definitely did.

C. Methodology

Participant observation and autoethnography

Ethnomusicology, as a discipline, developed in the 1950s within a White, Western, privileged and male-dominated academia, embodying the cultural values and worldviews of the colonial world creating it. Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley discussed how “conscious attempts by some ethnomusicologists to distinguish themselves from present and past colonial administrators, missionaries, tourists, and other ethnographers recognize our connection, for better or worse, with this legacy” (2008, 5).

The extraction of information for one-sided personal and economic gain, without “giving back” to the communities providing it, can be considered the academic equivalent of the looting of goods and people carried out by colonizers in the territories invaded.[7] To decolonize my investigation within a colonial model of academic research, I attempted deconstructing both extractivism (as a methodology), and one-sided personal economic gain (as an objective). This aligns with SEM discussions on decolonizing ethnomusicology through active and activist approaches: “As the next generation of ethnomusicologists, it is our responsibility to consider our history in colonialism, our role as students and global citizens, and to take action. Decolonizing ethnomusicology should not be a mere academic

[6] Throughout the thesis, whenever a person is referred to only by their first name, it is an interviewee whose full details are available in Appendix II.

[7] There are contrasting and complementary positions on these points among academics; Michael Church’s *Song Collectors* (2021) book points out what many ethnomusicologists advanced: Western scholars have helped preserving non-Western traditions.

exercise but a real and tangible value that is practiced withing and without the field on a daily basis."[8]

Practically, to avoid one-sided extractivist methods, I tried "giving back" to the community; most people interviewed were musicians, so I attended their gigs as a paying customer, I supported them on social networks, shared and publicized their performances, contributed when disasters hit, and involved them whenever possible in academic activities so they could access wider platforms.

In relation to one-sided personal (and economic) gains, I went sponsor-free, avoiding affiliations that could influence my research, and to have as much intellectual freedom as possible – within the restrictions of academia. I was self-funded and paid for fieldwork by working throughout my PhD, eliminating the controversy of economic gain. I also actively use my position to raise awareness on Puerto Rico's colonial reality and the repercussions it has at personal, societal, musical, and educational levels – resonating with the notion that, "Decolonizing ethnomusicology means to be human first and researcher second."[9]

Practically, to be "human first and researcher second" whilst carrying out my investigation, I applied a similar research methodology to what Adilia Yip describes in "Autoethnography and participant-observation in a cross-cultural artistic research". In Yip's words: "The autoethnographic approach is made up of a reflective self-introspection of a participant-observer, observations of the cultural happenings, and numerous interviews with members of the cultures involved in this study" (2020, 148). I trained in Puerto Rican bomba dance and percussion, embodying the experience, sharing the music, meeting musicians and being an active community member; during these interactions, I accessed interviewees and selected them according to criteria presented below.

My secondary data collection engaged with the fields of Gender and Race Studies, Education, Colonial Theory, Music, Puerto Rican and Caribbean Studies, and was further complemented by autoethnography and participant observation, which allowed me to identify the most discriminated social groups in academia and music. People sitting at the crossroads of intersectionality – especially of race, gender, and class – remain the least

[8] Sara Hong-Yeung Pun, available at: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.ethnomusicology.org/resource/group/dc75b7e7-47d7-4d59-a660-19c3e0f7c83e/publications/SEMSN12.2.pdf p.11 (accessed 30/09/2022).
[9] https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.ethnomusicology.org/resource/group/dc75b7e7-47d7-4d59-a660-19c3e0f7c83e/publications/SEMSN12.2.pdf (accessed 30/09/2022).

visible, and I ensured their voices were represented throughout my investigation. This is particularly important for Western researchers conducting anti-racist work, as discussed in the article “Fair conversation about racism and privileges of race and gender in Puerto Rico”:

> It is up to “white” or “light” people to face the ways in which they benefit from the work that Black and Afro-descendant people have already done to open the way for the discussion of racial justice. With this first step, a fair denunciation of anti-Black racism begins to be practiced. This debate must avoid paternalism and making Black voices invisible. Black voices must be essential and central to the discussion of racism.[10]

Democratic approach to interviews and thesis writing

This research relies largely on interviews with members of the Puerto Rican music community – performers, teachers, students – hearing their experiences in relation to the key axes of my investigation. My aim was for this work to be as *democratic* as possible. To this end, I tried ensuring that:

1) People interviewed are an assorted representation of individuals constituting the music community at the time of my research (2015–2022) in the San Juan area. I chose a group of students, teachers, and performers of diverse ages, genders, races, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. I also included bomba musicians and dancers, given it is one of the most discriminated genres.
2) People interviewed, and anyone interested, should be able to access my research and read this thesis comfortably. In other words, I aimed to fit this work within the academic format and fixed requirements (references, citations, and literature review), whilst avoiding language that is obsolete or overly intricate for non-academics.

At the beginning of each interview, I collected informed consent to use the material for academic purposes and summarized the key axes of my research, sharing how I looked at multiple layers of discrimination in Puerto Rican society, based on gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and their intersections, and how I was examining to which extent these are reflected within academia and music practices.

[10] https://www.80grados.net/conversacion-justa-sobre-racismo-y-privilegios-de-raza-y-genero-en-puerto-rico/ (accessed 30/09/2022).

Before proceeding with semi-guided interviews, I checked for potential concerns. Most interviewees shared support for me conducting this investigation and tackling such themes, because I was bringing them to surface, and presenting it across international academic settings. Danny stated: “Whenever you are making our music known, for me it’s worth it, whether it’s for commercial or academic reasons, that our music be known all over the world.” Interviewees also expressed appreciation for my line of questioning as they reflected on dynamics of their lives and experiences not previously examined under such lenses.

Once informants gave their consent, I asked to self-identify, so that I could analyse the information shared in relation to their belonging to social groups (re: gender, race/ethnicity, and class). As a reference, most people described themselves along the lines of “I am a man/woman”; “Puerto Rican”, “Black”, “Caribbean”, “Afro-Puerto Rican”, “Latino/a”; and “My family was low/middle-class”, or “We grew up poor” – as reflected in Appendix II.

Positionality, reflexivity and local response to the researcher “outsider” investigating autochthonous musical expressions

In a 2020 article, “Researcher Positionality – A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research – A New Researcher Guide”, Andrew Holmes provides an exhaustive reference for researchers in social sciences to place ourselves in relation to our research, our field, and our informants. Holmes defines positionality as “an individual’s world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context”, adding how “some aspects of positionality are culturally ascribed or generally regarded as being fixed, for example, gender, race, skin-color, nationality” while “Others, such as political views, personal life-history, and experiences, are more fluid, subjective, and contextual” (2020, 1–2). He also insists on the importance for researchers to develop great self-awareness about one’s own positionality, through reflexivity: “Self-reflection and a reflexive approach are both a necessary prerequisite and an ongoing process for the researcher to be able to identify, construct, critique, and articulate their positionality (2020, 2).” Citing Maggi Savin-Baden and Claire Howell Major (2013), the article also identifies three primary ways to define our own positionality as researchers: (1) locating ourselves about the subject, and “personal positions that have the potential to influence the research”; (2) locating ourselves about the participants, i.e. considering how we view ourselves, and how others might view us; (3) locating ourselves about the research

context and process – as these will influence the research (2020, 3). Throughout this section I discuss my own positionality, adopting the lenses of reflexivity from Holmes' framework.

Whilst carrying out my research, I added an additional layer, so that analyzing my own positionality turned into a two-way process: beyond self-reflection, I also asked interviewees to discuss how *they* perceived *me.*[11] Additionally, I asked what their opinion was of someone with my profile conducting this research, as I believe their personal views about *me* had the power to influence their responses, and thus must be acknowledged.

Reflexivity and key aspects of my positionality

The key aspects of positionality Holmes describes are those (1) "culturally ascribed or generally regarded as being fixed, for example, gender, race, skin-color, nationality", and (2) others, including personal life-history and experiences, that it defines as "more fluid, subjective, and contextual." However, I suggest nuancing this further, as there are no fixed aspects. Gender can be fluid, since individuals can change their gender identities during their lives, and race can also be perceived differently during a person's life depending on their environment – as discussed in Chapter 1.4. I now describe how I self-defined these key and fluid aspects of my positionality at the time of fieldwork and thesis write-up.

When it comes to gender, I self-identify as a woman. Race and skin colour are a more complex issue when self-defining myself. My colour is what most categorizations simply call "White", and I always struggle when asked to tick a box where the only option is White, whilst there are 10 boxes for Black (including Black African, Black Caribbean etc.). For instance, I would feel more comfortable ticking a "Mediterranean" box, being Italian. Alongside, my skin colour is closer to many Latinos, compared to, say, most British people, a difference that was used by White Anglo-Saxons living in the United States in the early 1900s to discriminate against Italian migrants. US Anglo-Saxons, in fact, did not consider Italians White, calling them, among others, "dago", or "guinea" – a term of derision applied to enslaved Africans and their descendants – and other racist insults like

[11] Before the recent "decolonial turn" in ethnomusicology, there are exceptional cases where this reflexivity was adopted in the past. In *Why the Suyá Sing* (1987), Anthony Seeger attempted to "end … some forms of colonial domination" by asking how the Suyá perceived them as researchers, leading to being referred to as "our Whitemen" by the Suyá, which Seeger notes "reversed the common possessive form once used by anthropologists who spoke of 'my tribe' or 'my village'" (1987, 23–24).

"white nigger" and "nigger wop".[12] Gardaphé describes the violence and oppression Italians faced, including "indentured servitude, mass lynchings, Klu Klux Klan terrorism against Italians, and strong participation in civil rights struggles" (2002, 188).

This history intertwines with my personal history: I grew up hearing stories of my Italian, poor, grandmother, marrying my wealthy grandfather from Chicago, and how she was treated like a servant by his family, relegated to the kitchen and excluded from family functions. These are examples of how colour intersects with socioeconomics, as was the case of Italians in the US, treated as lesser because they came from an impoverished country, and their skin was darker than wealthy Anglo-Saxons.

The complexity I face is not just about colour, it is also about race. As discussed more in depth in section D below, race is a social construct. The main issue I have self-identifying as White, beyond the colour issue described above, is that by ticking that "White" box, the assumption, by people of all colours, is that I must share beliefs commonly associated with hegemonic Whiteness. These include endorsing White supremacy culture, "inextricably linked to all the other oppressions – capitalism, sexism, class and gender oppression, ableism, ageism, Christian hegemony"; being anti-migrant; coming from a privileged family; being economically wealthy; endorsing Eurocentric approaches, etc.[13] Besides not sharing these views, I also spent my personal and professional lives counteracting such mindsets through the academic work carried out for my master's theses and this PhD thesis, the ICTM Study Group that I founded on Music, Education, and Social Inclusion, and working as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion expert in international development. Additionally, I volunteered and carried out activist work, advocating for Nigerian women victims of human trafficking, for refugees, Indigenous people, and undocumented individuals with disability. Because of racial associations with Whiteness, I faced rejection by both White and Black people. Some White individuals excluded me when they realized my views do not align with theirs; Black people have discriminated against me because of what they assume my views must be, but also associating me with negative experiences they had with people looking like me.

These points on colour and race touch other key aspects of positionality – personal life-history and experiences – leading to two additional personal considerations relevant to this

[12] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/10/12/opinion/columbus-day-italian-american-racism.html (accessed 30/09/2022).
[13] https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/characteristics.html (accessed 30/09/2022).

investigation. The first one relates to body-normativity, as throughout elementary and middle school, my body was not “normal” according to Italian stereotypes, and in relation to my peers. Firstly, I was consistently considerably smaller in size than all classmates; this attracted mockery, bullying, and being called “underdeveloped”, leading to internalizing a sense of inferiority and physical inadequacy. Additionally, Italian media and job adds advertised objectified visions of women with specific body/hair types, and I did not fit the parameters of that beauty ideal. For example, visiting my grandmother, the first comment I received was, “Why don’t you comb your hair, it looks bad”; I did indeed comb my hair, but I have thick wavy hair, so it always looked “bad”. This is significant in relation to my research, as I empathized with Puerto Rican women describing comments they received growing up making them feel unworthy and inferior, to which I related because of personally not complying with body (and hair) normativity – within my own environment.

Finally, socioeconomics is the last element of my personal history relevant to my positionality within this investigation. Italy, like other Mediterranean countries, has faced chronic poverty (one of the drivers of its historic outmigration); whilst growing up there, my parents never had job security nor owned a home. In high school, I attended a prestigious institution, publicly funded, that I accessed because of merit. Many classmates there belonged to rich or noble families; because I lived in the outskirts, and my family was not wealthy, I was mocked, excluded, or ignored, making it clear I did not “belong”. Later, in my early 20s, my father was left in ruins by a business partner: while I was already working several jobs to self-fund my studies, I had to take charge of him and work to sustain him, myself, and my studies. Consequently, during my adult life, I was economically challenged and lacked access to many opportunities. This is another key element of my positionality, as it places me in a similar class and economic bracket of several of my interviewees – relative to the countries, backgrounds, and communities we grew up and lived in.

Identifying my own positionality

I will now contextualize the key aspects of my positionality, as described in the previous section, in relation to my research, according to Darwin Holmes’ framework.

When it comes to (1) locating myself in relation to the subject, and “personal positions that have the potential to influence the research”, I acknowledge issues of sexism, racism, classism in academia, and the systemic discrimination and exclusion of underrepresented social groups they produced, are something I deeply care about. Equality and social

justice are ethical principles I stand by and believe should be an integral part of the work all researchers and educators conduct. Additionally, I experienced being a victim of discrimination during my academic career, as described in my Acknowledgements section.

In relation to (2) locating myself about the participants, i.e. considering how I view myself and how others might view me, I expected facing a disconnect between how I perceive my reality, and how I would be regarded by others in the field. Aware of Puerto Rico's colonial past, its current relationship with the US, and racial dynamics within the island, I anticipated people would assume I was a White American. As such, I imagined they would expect me to embody White privilege and White supremacy; only speak English; be largely unaware or uncaring for local socio-political dynamics; and be unable to understand the condition of "the oppressed". Also, as a woman in a Caribbean country, I expected facing sexism and machismo. Conducting research in Puerto Rico between 2015 and 2022 confirmed all these assumptions; additionally, as previously mentioned, I asked interviewees how they perceived me in relation to my research, to compare their views with my perceptions; findings are presented in the section below.

Finally, in terms of (3) locating myself about the research context and process – as they influence the research – this is where I believe I avoided personal subjectivity the most, as I lacked previous knowledge or experience of both context and process. Puerto Rico was a completely new country to me, so I had no preconceived notions. Also, my masters' thesis was mostly based on secondary research and participant observation; I never used questionnaires or interviews for previous work, these methodologies were new to me, therefore I had no former influences over such thesis research processes.

Interviewees' perception of my positionality

As anticipated above, in relation to (2) locating myself about the participants of my research, I asked their views so that I could compare their perceptions to my assumptions and verify whether these were aligned, also checking if I was positioning myself correctly within these interactions. Furthermore, as Nelie said, referencing Pedro Albizu Campos, "Identity is defined by those who perceive you… Who you think I am, that is my identity."[14] During interviews, my identity, as defined by interviewees, became the person they positioned themselves with, and targeted their answers towards. I enquired on these

[14] Pedro Albizu Campos was the most influential nationalist and anti-imperialist leader of the 20th century in Puerto Rico, also focusing on identity relating to nationality.

points at the end of interviews as I did not want to risk influencing the interview, asking a sample of 10 interviewees how they perceived my identity and defined me, what were their perceptions about me in relation to my research themes, and their opinion on the fact that an outsider was carrying out this type of investigation in Puerto Rico. Below are my findings over interviewees' perceptions, highlighting how, at times, both sides can make wrongful assumptions, which investigators must consider when conducting interviews and focus groups.

In relation to gender identity, all interviewees described perceiving me as a woman, which is how I self-identify, and assumed they would say. The racial identification they all attributed to me was, as expected, White; some would add "European", "Italian", "foreigner", and "a researcher". Amauri perceived me in neutral terms, in relation to the work I was carrying out, and not for the identity of the person behind it. Some confirmed how, at first, they assumed I was a *gringa*, which is a comment I receive all the time in Puerto Rico.

> At first when I met you, we thought you were American [from the US], then I realized you were European, Italian, and it surprised me because I would have never thought that at first. From looking at you, and for the work you are carrying out, I would not think you are of low social class… This can be the first impression, "She must be well off, she is White."[15]

Minirka's quotation perfectly summarizes general assumptions people in Puerto Rico make when encountering me, also showcasing the biggest mismatch taking place between people's perceptions of my socioeconomic background and reality. People assume that, just because I am White, I must also belong to a family with economic means; this happens because Puerto Ricans grow up in a country where race and class interact differently than where I come from. In Italy, similar assumptions would be based on where you live, how you dress, how you speak, but not on being White, as our population is overwhelmingly White. Among Italians, almost 10% live in absolute poverty, and almost 15% in relative poverty; therefore, for an Italian, my being White, does not immediately lead to assumptions of wealth.[16] As mentioned previously, the economic reality of my family growing up was disadvantaged. As a young adult, I was financially responsible for

[15] Minirka, interview.
[16] https://grafici.altervista.org/incidenza-di-poverta-assoluta-e-relativa-in-italia/ (accessed 30/09/2022).

my father and worked to maintain him and myself, which kept me in the low economic bracket.

Seeing me White, and assuming I am wealthy, also leads Puerto Ricans to think I am privileged. Privilege is a multi-faceted term, encompassing White privilege, US privilege, economic privilege, etc. Given I am seen as a *gringa*, wealthy, and White, the type of privilege they superimpose onto me contains all these facets. As an Italian, I break all these down: first, I did not have access to US privilege while growing up; and I have also discussed why economic privilege, and other advantages of being wealthy (like power, money, and connections), do not apply to my personal reality. When it comes to White privilege, I contend that having it depends on where you grow up, and what use you make of it. Growing up in Italy, and among my peers where almost everybody was White, I did not have access to preferential opportunities because of my colour. When traveling, studying, and working abroad, depending on the country, being White surely worked to my advantage in some cases, as I would not be stopped for "random searches" in airports like my Black colleagues. But it also worked to my disadvantage, such as being physically attacked in a market in Ghana by a Black man I never met before who targeted me for being White or being unable to apply for many scholarships as they only considered race or origins but not socioeconomics.

The assumption that I was privileged was confirmed in most interviews, including by interviewees who came from higher classes and better economic backgrounds than me, or who comparatively had access to more opportunities because of their families, or the countries we grew up in. Christina explained:

> I would definitely think you are in a position of privilege, because even access to your university, and access to education sadly is a privilege. And if you are White, there is privilege that came to you historically from being White and puts you in a position that a Black person wouldn't have, and will never have, they just won't. … I definitely consider European researchers with the access to education at privilege over other groups, including Puerto Ricans, because not everybody in Puerto Rico will have access to education, and that's the truth. … The resources needed, like having a tutor, are not there.

This is a case where somebody makes assumptions based on colour and geography, attributing to me privileges that White Americans, and Black Americans in some cases, actually have, and that on the contrary, I did not have. The reality is that, in the US, people of all colours, if they belong to middle-to-higher classes, have access to privileged

academic opportunities. They can access top institutions, and if their parents cannot afford them, they can get state, or bank, study loans. As poorer Italians, my family could not afford expensive tuition, Italy did not offer any type of loan when I went to university, and when I tried getting loans abroad to study in the US, they would not award these to foreigners. Therefore, as a (poorer) (White) Italian, in many circumstances I had less access to academic opportunities than several Black Americans, or Puerto Ricans. From various interactions on the island, I realized the following dynamic almost always takes place: people who had the same, or more, opportunities than I did, assume I had access to more economic or educational privileges than they did, simply because they see me White.

At the same time, my perceived privilege is seen by some interviewees as a useful tool and not something intimidatory, if managed properly: "You have a privilege as well, that you can navigate different environments and acquire more tools than what we could, for the simple fact that we are either poor, or Black, or women, or whatever. But I think that you recognize it and know how to use it. It doesn't intimidate me, it doesn't affect me, it seems very good to me."[17] Chamir and Xavier also discussed using one's privilege and positioning with good intentions – in relation to elaborating my investigation findings:

> I think it's positive, as long as information is used in a way that can help us convey the message. Wherever it comes from, it's positive, and it's necessary that it keeps being investigated, that it is documented, that the information can get to people. … That it can serve education, to be shared in schools and universities, that it has an objective, not just to get a degree (Chamir).
>
> I think it's super important. … As a colonized country, we appreciate more what comes from outside than what comes from here. Perhaps the fact someone like you, foreigner, White, European, gathers information about us and circulates it, it's more probable that we consider it valuable because someone from outside said so, than me. As I am working class, and I am visibly Black, I say it, nobody will listen to me. I can scream it, I can document it, I can have a thousand degrees, but nothing will happen (Xavier).

Christina also touched on the importance of intention in research, stating "It all depends at the end on how you frame us. … If you framed us like exotic animals that you're studying, then I would be very upset. But I don't think you are framing us that way, rather you are

[17] Lorna, interview.

exploring, [and you are] somebody who fortunately does it."[18] Pablo resonated with this, highlighting how, any voice, with properly framed research, is a resource for circulation:

> This is one of the themes where one is maturing and realizing that there is a necessity to take a stand for some things to happen. When you come to interview me, I am not thinking, nowadays, "Look at this White girl coming here." It's a person who is interested, and who will contribute to the discussion; it will be one more resource to which we can appeal. In the past it was not like this, I did not think like this, because I had not realized how this works, and I admit I had those same prejudices: "And why a White girl and not a Black one?". But seeing what happens in the academic world, and what happens in terms of interests, if there are people who get interested in conducting this type of research, and you are the one who got interested, we must give you the tools. Also, we must explain the elements, so that you can have the awareness.

The other risk that assumptions made on my privilege produce, is that informants might think I lack the life experience, tools, or empathy, to process the type of information my research focuses on, as Minirka explained: "[I realize some people could think] you cannot put yourself in the shoes of other people because you have not lived what we have lived, or because you are White, how can you understand how one can feel as a Black person, or being discriminated." Obviously, I never experienced the same type of racial discrimination a Black Puerto Rican has, but as demonstrated throughout the section, as an Italian, woman, from disadvantaged economic background, not complying with body normativity growing up, I endured being undervalued, bullied, and excluded. I learned how being discriminated for what you represent to others feels like from personal experiences, but these are not visible, thus most informants cannot imagine I might have the tools to process it. This assumption sometimes changed when people learned more about me, as was the case for Minirka and Lorna, who elaborated on (my) sensitivity as a necessary tool for this type of investigation:

> Identity doesn't necessarily have to do with nationality, and I know you're Italian. But for you to be conducting this type of investigation, and being very passionate with your questioning, as when you are asking questions, I can perceive the fire behind it, you have a sensitivity

[18] Christina referred to an image from a World Fair taking place in Belgium in the early 1960s, where a young Black girl (she believes from Congo, a Belgian colony at the time) was exhibited to a White crowd gawking at the child.

> that is quite distinct from any other person, regardless of where they come from. … and I think you are a person who can transcend the fact we see you White, blonde, European.[19]

Additionally, several interviewees mentioned they found it fascinating I was conducting this investigation and how, as Puerto Ricans, it gave them a sense of pride:

> I find it curious and fascinating that someone from Italy is looking into bomba. … Yes, the particular themes you are treating, it surprised me a lot when I discovered it … But I think it's so cool that there is somebody… who comes all the way here to try to understand a part of our history as a people, some specific aspects. I find it very important for it to take place to make us visible as an island, as it's easy for us to disappear.[20]

Danny acknowledged feeling proud too, also stressing how uncommon it is for researchers to tackle racism in academia: "For me, having a person who comes from another country and is interested in our music, it makes me feel very proud… I think your contribution will be very original… [Especially] when you get to conferences, because not many people are tackling racism." Antoinette also mentioned pride, whilst elaborating on feeling regretful that Puerto Rican students are not engaging in similar research, and the reasons why:

> This is precious, it's really precious, and it makes me very proud as a Puerto Rican. But it also makes me feel like, "What am I doing, I should be doing this." … We are forgetting to investigate about ourselves. … Personally, it makes me feel very proud that a person who is not from this country, and who is studying, wants to be cognizant and recognize academically the themes that you are tackling. … I think it is very powerful and it is a great value seeing a person with a distinct culture, completely different, with a distinct social development wanting to learn and carry a thread.

Melody echoed Antoinette: "I see it as something positive because this is something that must be done. … But in a certain way it gives me a bit of shame that nobody from here has had the interest to do it. Or perhaps they have not had the means, or they were unable to". Amauri actually considered being an outsider an added value as it can lead to a more objective and detached analysis:

> It seems very interesting that you come here to do it. … And very neat as a gesture, as a person with your point of view can be more proactive, and perhaps more neutral in the perspective that you are going to observe. … Your reality is different, you were born in a free country, with another history, it's an extremely different perspective from the one all the

[19] Lorna, interview.
[20] Minirka, interview.

> people belonging to the society you are investigating would have. And it seems to me that for investigation it is better for it to be that way.

At the same time, whilst an outsider can be seen positively by some in terms of objectivity, for others, belonging to disenfranchised social groups, the fact they see me White, despite my personal background and beliefs, remains problematic: “If you want to dig a little deeper into the process, for people who are a little more aware of all these circumstances, we can say, it’s good, it’s cool, but it keeps being a White person to whom they will give a bit more recognition when she’s carrying out her investigation, which is what any other Black person could have done.”[21] This quote highlights how racial issues are very present in Puerto Rico, especially for those experiencing them, and how, no matter what, my race, and perceptions of my race, constantly must be considered and navigated in my research.

D. Theoretical Frameworks for the Analysis of 3-Levels Intersectional Discrimination

Rationale

One of the things that struck me the most when I first visited Puerto Rico in 2015 was the ethnic diversity of its population. Most images of Puerto Ricans circulating abroad – like pop artists Jennifer Lopez and Ricky Martin – create the impression that Puerto Ricans are a homogenous group, referred to as Latinos, or “Brown” – across the US and most European countries.[22] In reality, on the island, it is common to meet Puerto Ricans with Black skin, curly hair, and African phenotypes, but also Puerto Ricans with White skin, blue eyes, blonde hair, and European phenotypes. During conversations, locals pointed out how the fact that most people think of Puerto Ricans as *trigueños* is not casual, as in promoting a certain image of *puertorriqueñidad* there is a deliberate socio-political intention to “whitewash” it to tone down its afro-descendant influences.[23] Puerto Rican ethnicity is a melting pot of Indigenous, Spanish, European, West African, and North American influences and most Puerto Ricans share this mix, but the individual make-up

[21] Lorna, interview.
[22] Various terms are used as umbrella terms to refer to people with family origins, or ties with, Latin American countries, including *Latino* and *Hispanic*.
[23] The term *trigueño* derives from *trigo* (wheat) – literally meaning “wheat-coloured” in Spanish. It is generally applied to people who are lighter skinned than those considered Black (in Spanish, *Negros*). *Puertorriqueñidad* refers to the character, or condition, of being Puerto Rican.

varies, creating differences on how people look like, how they self-identify, and how they are perceived by others.

When defining key social constructs at the basis of discrimination to focus my investigation on, early observations revealed that race and ethnicity act as some of the strongest discriminators on the island; this was based on indicators like the racial make-up of the main political bodies in the country, where Black Puerto Ricans were mostly absent, also reflected by mainstream media. Additionally, wealthy areas and urban developments are mostly White whilst poorer *barrios* tend to be heavily populated by Blacks, adding class as a social construct to focus on alongside race.[24] Finally, the low presence of women in leadership, paired with widespread discrimination, violence against women, and objectification of women's bodies in music and media, confirmed gender as a third key element of bias.

Therefore, based on observation during early research trips to Puerto Rico in 2015 and 2016, I established race, gender, and class as key factors of discrimination on the island. This does not mean excluding additional factors of bias – and the way they intersect with these key axes – but, for the purpose of giving my research a clear focus, race, gender, and class were selected. Interviews conducted during fieldwork with Puerto Ricans from various backgrounds confirmed this prioritization, witnessing how these three factors are intimately connected: their mutual interactions, and how they play out at the individual level, define distinct social identities. In other words, how people self-identify in terms of race, gender, and class, but mostly how one is perceived by others according to these parameters, has repercussions on most realms of life, including social, professional, educational, and musical spheres. This is why I approach investigating social constructs at the basis of discrimination – mostly race, gender, and class, without overlooking additional differentiators – under the lenses of intersectionality, as described in detail in the section below, "Intersectionality".

This dynamic is not unique to Puerto Rico, and is shared throughout North and South America, with regional differences and distinct nuances. Margaret Andersen and Patricia Collins (1992) argued that in the US, "race, class and gender are interlocking categories…

[24] The White population in Puerto Rico is made up of Latinos whose phenotypes mostly resemble those of their European (mostly Spanish) ancestors – including *White-looking* skin colour, hair colour and texture, facial features such as nostrils, etc. *Barrio* means, literally, neighbourhood, but with a sense of close-knit community.

that structure the experience of all people in this society", although there are other differences, for example in relation to the religious and cultural diversity of certain minorities like Muslims (Love 2009). In Brazil, race, class and gender are identified as key factors in a study by Layton and Smith (2017) and comparative research in Latin America suggests a "social inequality matrix" across societies in the region based on a variety of factors, particularly income and socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnic and racial inequalities (Bárcena et al. 2016). Finally, comparative research within South and Central America (Hopenhayn and Bello 2001) highlights the importance of race, class, and gender intersectionality to other key factors – especially economic, social, cultural, and political discrimination against Indigenous populations and xenophobia against migrants.

Additionally, with specific reference to research I conducted, it emerged from various interviews that the way discrimination plays out in Puerto Rico across society, music, and education, is affecting individuals both at the personal and interpersonal level(s), besides being embedded in all leading institutions. I realized that to properly answer my research questions, and examine the root causes of discrimination and the ways it manifests in society, music, and education, I had to critically examine:

1) what the key types of discrimination are taking place.
2) how the key types of discrimination interplay.
3) at what level(s) the key types of discrimination interplay.

I concluded that to approach investigating these three points, to then elaborate on research results, I needed to apply a multi-levelled framework of analysis. In the sections below I discuss (i) the concept of Intersectionality in my analysis, (ii) its customization applied to the Puerto Rican context, (iii) the adaptation of a framework developed by Camara Phyllis Jones (originally focusing on race-based discrimination in the field of health) – all applied to analyse intersectionality at the societal, educational, and musical levels.

Applying the concept of Intersectionality to Music studies, with the necessary adaptations, is a practice explored, or advocated for, by other researchers in the last couple of decades. Jill Halstead and Randi Rolvsjord (2017) note that feminist perspectives in music therapy recently started to include issues of intersectionality, particularly gender and race and gender and disability. As music therapy is an area that intersects musicology and health studies, using the concept in this context set precedents for further integration of

more elaborate models of intersectionality from health studies in the context of music education, such as the one I advance in this work. At a SEM Roundtable of 2018, scholars advocated for the application of intersectionality in (feminist) ethnomusicology, likely signalling a scarcity and the need for application of more substantial frameworks like that of Phyllis Jones. Bruce Carter (2014) argues that more research drawing on specific intersectional models is needed in music education studies to examine the complexities of multiple identities found amongst music students and educators; the study suggests that intersectionality as a concept has produced valuable studies in music education but mainly in terms of a general perspective in methodological terms without interrogating specific frameworks. Ellen Koskoff (2014), in her discussion of the possibilities of "feminist ethnomusicology", acknowledges that "intersectionality" is important for the future of the field and reflects that her own studies have tended to focus on the "intersections" between "feminism, gender and music" at the expense of other aspects of intersectionality. However, it appears the concept of intersectionality preceded its application to ethnomusicology; for example, Beverly Diamond and Pirrko Moisala incited scholars to oppose "a homogenous approach in gender studies" in favour of "a greater understanding of cultural and situational differences" that "encourages new participants in the study of gender and music" towards "an international conversation … [on] genderism … that give different solutions the right to exist" (2000, 3).

Intersectionality

Professor and Black legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "Intersectionality" in her essay, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989).[25] Crenshaw advanced Black women are discriminated as a combination of both racism and sexism, a fact unaccounted for by a legal system whose frameworks were centred around White women and (Black) men, effectively rendering Black women legally "invisible" thus without legal recourse. She uses a traffic analogy for Intersectionality to describe how multiple oppressions take place and are experienced: "If an accident happens in an intersection, it

[25] For an overview of the movement out of which the term "intersectionality" emerged, refer to Collins (2017), Atrey (2019), and Sargent (2020); Sargent advances that "the concept came into existence long before the term itself was coined" (2020, 166). Shreya Atrey (2019) describes it as "one of the most successful 'travelling' theories of our times", suggesting that "intersectionality-like thinking" existed in many different cultural contexts, providing the example of Dalit feminism in India.

can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination" (1989, 149).

In her paper, Crenshaw also refers to additional factors of discrimination beyond race and gender, including class – the third key factor my investigation focuses on. Interestingly, when Crenshaw analyses the overlapping of two factors of discrimination only, she mostly focuses on race and class, whilst *de facto* dismissing the interaction of gender and class:

> The paradigm of sex discrimination tends to be based on the experiences of white women; the model of race discrimination tends to be based on the experiences of the most privileged Blacks. Notions of what constitutes race and sex discrimination are, as a result, narrowly tailored to embrace only a small set of circumstances, none of which include discrimination against Black women. (1989, 151)

In this passage, Crenshaw states that the paradigm of sex discrimination is based on the experiences of White women, referring to White women as a homogeneous group around which a paradigm is created, not applying the lens of class to the White female group, and dismissing how the paradigm of sex discrimination might not include the specific circumstances of poor, White, women. On the contrary, when referring to race discrimination, she considers class as a factor of differentiation among Blacks, saying how the model of race discrimination is based on the experiences of the most privileged Blacks.

> In much feminist theory and, to some extent, in antiracist politics, this framework is reflected in the belief that sexism or racism can be meaningfully discussed without paying attention to the lives of those other than the race-, gender- or class-privileged. As a result, both feminist theory and antiracist politics have been organized, in part, around the equation of racism with what happens to the Black middle-class or to Black men, and the equation of sexism with what happens to white women.[26] (1989, 152)

Here, Crenshaw reinforces equating sexism to "white women" as a homogeneous group without class differentiations, in contrast to racism, which she associates to both "Black men" and the "Black middle-class". This is not uncommon in Black feminist theory, but it is nonetheless an interesting phenomenon, considering Black feminists coined the tag "White

[26] As a reminder, consistent with the concept that when referring to peoples and racial groups words should be capitalized, I capitalize Black and White when referring to social groups throughout my thesis. However, in these two passages, only *Black* is capitalized whilst *white* is in lowercase, reflecting the choice of the author, Crenshaw, in her original essay. I searched for papers or interviews where she would provide a rationale for her choice but found none.

feminist" to criticize feminists who do not acknowledge issues of intersectionality.[27] As pointed out by Ien Ang (2001) and Chijioke Obasi (2019), by using "white feminism" as an unreflexive term, Black feminist analysis is indeed dismissing addressing intersectionality when it comes to White women affected by both gender and class discrimination. Class, in fact, is a critical additional discriminatory factor converging with gender to analyse how the intersection of gender and class impact White women as well. Poor White women from underprivileged backgrounds experience oppression differently than those who come from wealthy or privileged environments – whether White, or, Black – and especially men.

These considerations become significant when one analyses – and defines – intersectionality beyond US borders in other contexts with different complexities. Based on my observation and multiple conversations with Black Puerto Ricans, I advance this kind of omission might be related to the fact that a sizeable amount of Black feminist theory originated in the United States, where racial dynamics and class divisions along racial lines are different when compared to other countries. In Puerto Rico, people acknowledge how class and privilege are primary factors of oppression across the board, for people and women of all colours. Indeed, most self-identifying Black Puerto Rican women from underprivileged backgrounds I interviewed, when asked which factor between race, gender, and class they believed is presently the strongest discriminator in their society, and affecting them the most in being oppressed, answered "class".[28]

Awareness of US-based approaches and lenses proves relevant when analyzing social dynamics in Puerto Rico, given the strong influence they actively enforced on Puerto Rican politics, economy, and education since the US seized the island in 1898. At the same time, they cannot be applied with a blanket approach, given the profound differences between Puerto Rico and the mainland. The US invasion and subsequent domination of Puerto Rico for more than a century add extra layers to concepts of privilege and US supremacy

[27] For examples where the term "white feminism" is used in Black feminist theory without differentiation, see Aziz (1992), McFadden (2011), Ahmed (2012), Jonsson (2015), and Nash (2019). For similar examples in "Chicana feminism" and "Latina feminism", see Cotera (1997) and Ortega (2006). For discussion of the "intersectionality wars", the debate over whether intersectionality should remain essentially about Black women's marginalization or whether it should be applied to all women, see Nash (2019).
[28] This is discussed further in Chapters 1 and 3.

that must be considered in analyzing dynamics of discrimination and oppression in Puerto Rico.[29]

Concepts of US supremacy and US privilege applied to the Puerto Rican context become significant when combined to mainland US dynamics of racism, classism, and privilege. Recurrently, in the US, it is supported by most African Americans that Black people cannot be racist, and that reverse racism (as it has been defined mostly by White Americans) does not exist (Norton and Sommers 2011; M. Green 2018).[30] Some Latinos disagree, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva substantiates: “African Americans can treat us [Afro-Latinos] as ‘lesser’ Blacks. Thus, we must also work hard to educate Black folks here (2010, 448).” He also argued that Afro-Latinos do not have a “double consciousness” (the famous phrase about the internal conflict of being Black in America), but a “triple consciousness”, as people of African descent who are not seen by many African Americans as “their kin”.

Indeed, during conversations and interviews, I heard Puerto Ricans of all colours reporting being discriminated against and treated like “lesser” by Americans, including Black Americans. Melody, a Puerto Rican who self-identifies as a Black woman, described how in mainland US, “People assume I am a Black American because of my colour. But as soon as they realize I am Latina, they treat me differently. At first, they treat me [better], but then it gets worse [as a Black Latina].”

Racist and supremacist behaviours towards Puerto Ricans also take place when (White and Black) Americans are on the island, whether visiting, or moving to Puerto Rico taking advantage of tax exemptions – acting on their privilege, benefitting from US supremacy. I met African Americans working in Puerto Rico for the US government leading lifestyles that no average Puerto Rican could afford, whilst contributing to the development of a double economy and the creation of elitist spaces, like public beaches being privatized and housing taken away from the locals. At the same time, many Americans treat Puerto Ricans (of all colours) as inferiors and of lesser value. Melody explained: “Generally, most

[29] For discussions on the history of US supremacy in Puerto Rico on a constitutional basis, see Burnett and Marshall (2001). For a critical analysis of the “questions of race, ethnicity, culture, language and religion” which “tainted” constitutional debates on Puerto Rico, see Tihanyi (2015).
[30] Meghan Green (2018) demonstrates this position in asserting that “reverse racism” is a “myth”, claiming that racism, which she defines as “a social system that disadvantages people of any non-white race”, cannot disadvantage Whites and, by extension, Black people, while capable of holding prejudices, cannot be racist.

of them have a prepotent attitude, as if 'I am [up] here, and you are [down] there, to serve me'. As, 'You are Puerto Rican, and you have to serve me', like they are [the owners]."

Historically, discrimination, land expropriation, acting on one's privilege at the expense of others, and supremacist attitudes, are all common themes Black Americans in the US have associated with White privilege and White supremacy – in their "own" backyard (Brewer 2020).[31] US (White) supremacy becomes dissociated from race and colour when Black Americans embody such values and behaviours at the expense of Puerto Ricans – of all colours. In Puerto Rico, high class and socio-economic status replace *Whiteness* as the sole factor of privilege; by the same token, *Blackness*, when combined to US supremacy, can become associated with Blacks acting as oppressors of (Black and White) Puerto Ricans.

In Chapter 1, I discuss in detail how Intersectionality, and most specifically gender-, race- and class-based discriminations play out in the Puerto Rican context. Below, I present the framework of analysis used to analyse Intersectionality across this thesis.

The Framework to Analyse Discrimination across Intersectionality

The Camara Phyllis Jones (CPJ) Framework[32]

Participant observation and interviews conducted between 2015 and 2022 confirmed the best way to analyse discrimination across intersectionality (of gender, race/ethnicity, and class) in Puerto Rico is by looking at it according to three levels:

1) First level: Institutional – discrimination that is macro-systemic and societal.
2) Second level: Interpersonal – discrimination by one individual towards another.
3) Third level: Internalized (or personal) – self-discrimination an individual directs at him/herself, as the product of repeated institutional (first level) and interpersonal (second level) discrimination absorbed over time, and internalized.[33]

[31] On the theme of "Black dispossession", see Brewer (2020). For reflections on "whiteness as embodied racial power" in various forms, see Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003). For a review of the history of land expropriation, see Williams et al. (2020).
[32] Across the thesis, the Camara Phyllis Jones Framework is abbreviated as the CPJ framework.
[33] This links with wider decolonization theories, including Ashis Nandy's (1983) argument that British colonization in India relied as much on the internalized psychological and cultural subservience of the Indigenous people as the economic and technological domination of its colonial rulers.

To analyse discrimination across intersectionality in Puerto Rico, I chose to draw from the theoretical framework of the "Three Levels of Racism", a model developed by Camara Phyllis Jones to understand racism in the United States and applied to the health field. Reading Jones's article, "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale" (2000), and the in-depth definitions of each of the three levels of racism, I realized they perfectly captured the tripartition needed for my research. I also found them applicable to analyse other social constructions beyond race (namely, gender and class), and believe that the framework is transferable to various fields beyond health. I thus decided to adopt it for my investigation given it was the most fitting framework for an interdisciplinary analysis like mine, as I could adapt it to the study of biased societal, musical, and educational practices in a colonial setting like Puerto Rico, and I could apply it to intersectional analysis thanks to the correspondences found.

Below, I introduce the framework as it originally appeared; in the following section I demonstrate its application to my research and analysis.

In her article, Camara Phyllis Jones presented and described the model of the three levels of racism, institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized, as follows:

- ✓ Institutionalized (first level), defined as differential access to goods, services, and opportunities. This level is normative, structural, and codified in institutions of custom, practice, law. Across the thesis the first level is referred to as *Institutional*.
- ✓ Personally mediated (second level), defined as prejudice over the abilities, motives, and intentions of "others", and discrimination by differential action toward "others", based on the personally perceived "difference". It can be intentional as well as unintentional, and it manifests as lack of respect and devaluation. Across the thesis the second level is referred to as *Interpersonal.*
- ✓ Internalized (third level), defined as acceptance by members of the stigmatized group of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth. It is characterized by their not believing in themselves and accepting limitations and it manifests by embracing "otherness", self-devaluation, resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness. Across the thesis the third level is referred to as *Internalized.*

The Framework applied to analyse Intersectionality in Music and Education

I here discuss how the CPJ framework of the three levels of racism can be applied across other areas of discrimination, such as gender-based discrimination, beyond the racial

component it was created for. Primarily, I believe the framework fits this cross-utilization as in her rationale, Jones refers to the variable race not as a biological construct but as a social one; in the same way, gender is a socially constructed category, differing from the notion of sex that is founded on biological differences (Butler 1990). Similarly, people of different ethnicities, or different biological sexes, are discriminated against and awarded uneven levels of access and opportunities not based on biological differences, but on historically inherited bias, and socially constructed stereotypes. Therefore, I advance how discrimination based on the socially constructed categories race and gender similarly plays out at the three levels modelled by Jones. Below I present practical examples of its application to the fields of music and education globally, substantiating the applicability of the CPJ framework to these specific fields from a theoretical standpoint. Across the thesis, I also make references to how Puerto Rican fieldwork findings fit within this framework.

For centuries women were confined to the private sphere of the household and excluded from public spaces (Rosaldo 1974; Ortner and Whitehead 1981), withheld from universities, and not permitted to publish under their names – like Fanny Mendelssohn (sister of Felix), publishing under her brother's name (Citron 1987, xli) or Augusta Holmès, a French composer of Irish descent, who had to publish early works under the male pseudonym Hermann Zenta (Henson 2001).[34] Rebecca Clarke, a British-American composer, published her famous viola sonata (1919) under the male pseudonym Anthony Trent, further exemplifying the difficulties for female composers: after her true identity was revealed, some commentators refused to believe she composed it (Citron 1993, 98). These examples of first level, institutional, gender-based discrimination created a situation in which, historically, female composers were unable to cultivate their talents and produce significant bodies of work – quantitatively and qualitatively (Citron 1990; Reich 1993).

In most educational institutions still adhering to patriarchal models, this reality is omitted; instead of teaching students how and why women were systematically excluded from educational, work, and artistic opportunities, female figures are simply absent in coursework and textbooks (Citron 1990; Raine and Strong 2019), contributing to the perception that women are not able or "good enough". In the field of music and music education this is further demonstrated by the systematic low presence of women in many fields, including composition, music production, and instrumental playing, especially

[34] For an overview of how public/private dichotomies were used to mark distinctions in musical contexts, see Post (1994).

instruments like brass, drums, electric guitars (McClary 1991, 18–19; Citron 1993; Green 2003; Doubleday 2008).

When it comes to second level personally mediated (interpersonal) gender-based discrimination, an example can be found in two statements male composer Aaron Copland delivered in 1978: “Writing a forty-minute piece that makes sense is not a sympathetic task for the female mind”, and “Music is too formal. The feminine mind doesn’t like to concern itself with abstract things and that’s what music is” (Pollack 1999, 213). Susan McClary (1993) argues that the exclusion of women from “formal” music education caused the absence of symphonic and opera works by women, but people dismissing it was the result of social exclusion, used it as evidence that women did not have the “greatness” required for works of this scale and should stick to vocal, piano, and small chamber ensemble repertoire, further reinforcing discrimination. Similar misogynist narratives might underpin Copland’s way of thinking, although by his time there were women who had composed substantial “works”, including operas and symphonies, and there have been many more since then.[35] Additionally, Suzanne Cusick (2001) has shown how musicology has been characterized by masculine/feminine distinctions, in particular the notion that women were assumed to study musicology as an art, while “scientific” studies (especially music analysis, aesthetics, etc.) were reserved for men, tapping into dualities of reason/emotion, and rational/irrational.

The first level institutional lack of access to opportunities and education, sided by the absence of women reference role models and the reiteration of second level personally mediated (interpersonal) devaluation of women by male role models, create the grounds for third level internalized gender discrimination for women musicians. Clara Schumann is usually only referred to as “the wife of” composer Robert Schumann, in spite of being a composer herself, one of the most distinguished pianists of her time, and the family’s breadwinner, also taking care of her husband – economically, while he suffered from various episodes related to his mental disorder(s) – and their eight children.[36] In spite of

[35] Recently, articles, blogs, and publications to promote knowledge around female composers and their works have come out; examples include the book, *Where Are All the Black Female Composers? The Ultimate Fun Facts Guide* (Holder 2020), the first children’s illustrated book about Black female composers, and ClassicalMPR (accessed 04/04/2021): https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2019/03/04/20-women-composers-we-should-all-know

[36] This is due to the fact that most literature remains biased and written according to male-dominated viewpoints, where women are defined according to their relationships to relevant male figures (fathers, husbands, etc.).

her passion for it, Clara lost confidence in her composing skills by her mid-30s; some of her statements exemplify third level internalized music gender-based discrimination, as an entry in her unpublished diary from 1839 testifies: “I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea. … A woman must not desire to compose – there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?” (Reich 1986, 267).

These examples show how the lack of women role models, plus institutional (first level) and personally mediated/interpersonal (second level) discriminations lay the grounds for internalized discrimination (third level). Women accept negative messaging about their abilities and self-worth, they stop believing in themselves, accepting limitations, and embrace self-devaluation, resignation, and hopelessness. Chapters 2 and 3 analyse in depth these phenomena as they apply to Puerto Rican women and female musicians.

In this section, I discussed the application of the CPJ framework to analyse discrimination across intersectionality, and how it can be applied to the fields of music and education. Drawing on this model to frame analysis and discussion of insights from literature and fieldwork, this thesis will demonstrate the intersectional discrimination of gender/race/class in music, education, and society at large in Puerto Rico. The overall goal is challenging the social inequalities that exist on the island, also contributing to a growing international conversation on decolonizing curricula and counteracting discrimination within academia.

Chapter 1. Colonial Contexts of Intersectional Discrimination in Puerto Rico

To examine the relationship between discrimination in society, education, and music in Puerto Rico it is fundamental to analyse its historical background, its ethnic and cultural make-up, and ongoing issues of colonialism and cultural imperialism, clarifying the context underpinning this research and its findings. Without such context, it is not possible to analyse in depth the reasons why there is no Puerto Rican music degree on the island.

This chapter looks at key components of Puerto Rico's history and social background necessary to understand the complexities that must be considered when investigating intersectionality in Puerto Rico. Fieldwork carried out showed how culture and society remain biased, as perceptions of "first class" vs "second class" citizens, based on socioeconomics, ethnicity, and origins, manifest through attitudes and practices. "First-class" broadly includes White European descendants or North Americans, usually highly educated, of stature and economic means; "second class" comprise "darker", poor, lower-class people, often Afro-descendants, or mixed *Latinos*. Another historically discriminated group in Puerto Rico are women, often treated as "second-class" citizens with lesser rights.

The intersectionality of race, gender and class produces widespread inequalities and imbalanced perceptions; to better understand these and how they play out, the historical context underpinning contemporary forms of discrimination in society, education and music in Puerto Rico is examined below.

1.1 Puerto Rico's Historical Colonial, Cultural and Ethnic Background

Puerto Rico is a Caribbean Island located in a strategic position, serving as the first port of entry for European ships arriving from "the Old World", leading to various colonial powers invading it and establishing colonies over the last 500 years.

It is estimated that 30,000 to 60,000 Taínos inhabited the island when Columbus first landed in Puerto Rico in 1493 during his second voyage to the Americas. Taínos were the Indigenous inhabitants of Puerto Rico living on the island they named *Borinquen*, "the

great land of the valiant and noble Lord."[37] Columbus renamed it San Juan Bautista, reflected by the current name of Puerto Rico's capital city, San Juan. What is now called Puerto Rico quickly turned into a Spanish colony; in a short time, the Spaniards created villages and settlements, enslaving the Taínos to work in their gold mines and plantations.

In the early 1500s, Taínos started organizing uprisings against their colonizers. Conflict between Spaniards and Taínos, alongside forced labour, disease, and famine (Reséndez 2016), resulted in brutal genocide, and more than 25,000 Taínos – 85-90% of the Indigenous population – were killed by 1520. This resonates with other colonial contexts in Latin America, where Indigenous populations were devastated by violence, slavery, and disease: in Brazil, an estimated 2.5 million Indigenous people were reduced to roughly 250,000 by Portuguese colonization (Totten and Hitchcock 2011). Overall, the average rate of death and destruction for Indigenous populations across the Americas due to colonization is believed to have been around 90% (Holloway 2011).

Following the Taínos' genocide in the early 1500s, Spanish colonizers realized they needed to enslave a new "workforce" for their plantations; in 1518, the Spaniards started importing African slaves from the Gulf of Guinea, and in the 1520s the island took the name of Puerto Rico, while San Juan became the name of its port.[38] By the 1600s the island had become one of the most important colonies of the Caribbean allowing Spaniards to export their products to other Caribbean islands and to Latin America. Puerto Rico also acted as the first gateway for Spanish Explorer Juan Ponce de León's "discovery" of Florida in 1513 – where Spaniards started settling 107 years before the Pilgrims, the first English colonists (settling at Plymouth in 1620), landed in other parts of North America.[39] Puerto Rico remained strategic in Spanish colonial policy, as explained by Patricia Gherovici:

> From the very first days of the conquest of the New World, the island's privileged geographical location as a key position in the defense of the Spanish Empire was evident… The island is situated between the Caribbean and Atlantic, becoming a strategic link between the two continents. All European navies wanted to invade the island and gain

[37] Further references on Taínos and their history can be found at https://web.archive.org/web/20060213164808/http://members.dandy.net/~orocobix/tedict.html and http://edicionesdigitales.info/biblioteca/rebeliontaina.pdf (accessed 04/04/2021).
[38] https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/colonial-genocides-project/puerto-rico (accessed 28/02/2021).
[39] https://dos.myflorida.com/florida-facts/florida-history/a-brief-history/european-exploration-and-colonization/ (accessed 04/04/2021).

> control of this crucial place, guaranteeing military hegemony and control in the Caribbean. (2003, 130)

Because of this strategic position, for centuries other European powers continually attempted to take over from Spain, including French, British, Dutch pirates and Carib groups from neighbouring islands (Mathews, Wagenheim, and Wagenheim 2020). In the 19th century, when the Spanish remained the only European colonial administrator of the island, the *Real Cédula de Gracias* (1815) allowed foreigners with ties to Spain to move to Puerto Rico; as a result, German, Irish, French, and Portuguese immigrants settled there (Carrión 2018). Puerto Rico remained under Spanish rule for just over 400 years, until the end of the 19th century, when several uprisings and the creation of the first political organizations including *Partido Liberal Reformista* – the Autonomists – strongly advocated for decentralization from Spanish rule.[40] Also, in a series of political and social reforms happening in the late 1800s, and subsequent local uprisings including the *Grito de Lares* revolt taking place in 1868, the Spanish National Assembly officially abolished slavery in Puerto Rico in 1873.[41] Finally, the struggle for autonomy led to approval by Spain of the *Carta Autonómica* (Charter of Autonomy) on November 25th, 1897, conceding political and administrative autonomy to the Island; on February 12th, 1898, the new government officially began.[42]

In April 1898, The Spanish-American war broke out; US forces led several attacks in Puerto Rico between May and July 1898 against the Spanish army and following that, the US claimed ownership over Puerto Rico. As part of the 1898 Treaty of Paris that concluded the Spanish-American war won by the US, Puerto Rico was ceded by Spain on December 10th, 1898, even after Spain had already technically granted Puerto Rico its independence one year earlier.[43] In 1898 Puerto Rico, a formally free country that already gained independence from its previous colonizer, became a US Territory under the military control of the United States of America.

Puerto Rico's designation as a "commonwealth of the United States" has caused revolts and debates until present-day, in relation to the dubious transfer of the island from Spain

[40] https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/bras.html (accessed 04/04/2021).
[41] In spite of slavery being abolished earlier elsewhere – including other Caribbean islands – the struggle to end slavery in Puerto Rico only succeeded on March 22, 1873, as documented at https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/slaves.html (accessed 04/04/2021).
[42] https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/intro.html (accessed 04/04/2021).
[43] Ibidem.

to the US in the Treaty of Paris (after already being freed by Spain), but mostly because Puerto Ricans have been denied the right to self-determination ever since.[44] The most striking revolt took place in 1950, when a short-lived violent uprising led by Puerto Rican nationalists in favour of the island's independence from the US occurred in various localities of Puerto Rico and was stopped by the US military deploying its National Guard. The Puerto Rican town of Jayuya was attacked by air by US bomber planes, and on land by artillery – also marking the only time in history the US launched an aerial attack against its own citizens. In Utuado, a small group of nationalists who had surrendered were machine-gunned without a trial, also known as "The Utuado Massacre" (Power 2018).[45]

During our interview, Ricardo provided further information regarding what happened in the 1950s in Puerto Rico against *Independentistas* – Puerto Ricans who were fighting for Puerto Rico's independence from the US:

> Puerto Rico in 1952 became what today they call a Commonwealth, *Estado Libre Asociado*, which… happened because the United Nations was founded, and the colonies were declared illegal, so in 1952 they did a makeover of the colony [and gave it a different name]. Right before that, there was a great majority of Puerto Ricans that wanted independence. In 1952 there was a revolution here, the repression that came afterwards was brutal, many people were killed, many people disappeared, many people went to jail for a very long time.

Ricardo explained how being *independentista* was still a problematic political position in the 1970s, as they had called out the falsehood of Puerto Rico becoming a Commonwealth in 1952, insisting it was just a term window-dressing the fact Puerto Rico remained a US colony, simply renamed when colonies were declared illegal.

Things gradually changed over the last half century; when I started my research in 2015, I witnessed a certain freedom in people declaring to be *independentistas and* showcasing awareness of social issues. Nonetheless, it remains one of the most polarizing issues in Puerto Rico at present. A recent testimony of how Puerto Ricans are divided regarding

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[44] In his book, *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony* (2016), Denis uncovers the unknown story of how the US government worked to undermine the growing Puerto Rican independence movement of the 1940s and '50s, also thanks to the release of nearly 2 million documents from secret FBI dossiers known as *carpetas,* and finally made public in the year 2000. This ongoing debate is well explained by Juan Declet-Barreto, available at: https://blog.ucsusa.org/juan-declet-barreto/unfinished-business-of-self-determination-for-puerto-ricans (accessed 03/04/2021).

[45] https://yosoyboringuen.com/utuado-uprising/ (accessed 03/04/2021).

their relationship with the US are two referendums results – one taking place in June 2017, and the other in November 2020, concurrently with general elections.[46] Both showed a society polarized between *estadalistas*, in favour of becoming the 51st state of the US, and *independentistas*, in favour of separating from the US. The Puerto Rico Statehood Referendum of 2020 had almost 55% voters' turnout, where 53% of them answered "yes" to the question "Should Puerto Rico be immediately admitted into the Union as a state?".[47] The growing number of Puerto Ricans wanting independency is also related to what happened in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of hurricane María, and the inadequate response of the United States; more than ever, Puerto Ricans realized they have no saying over matters involving them, and the grave consequences it produces on their lives. Ricardo already flagged this issue during our March 2017 interview, before hurricane María, when the US had imposed a Financial Oversight and Management Board as Puerto Rico could no longer pay its 71.5 billion USD debt because of a longstanding financial, economic, and social crisis.[48] Ricardo said: "It's become obvious that's all bullshit, there is no such thing as *Estado Libre Asociado*. The United States congress always has had, and still has, the power to decide what's going to happen in Puerto Rico, and the *independentistas* have always said that."

This brief compendium of Puerto Rico's colonial history showcases why the island is considered by many the worlds' "oldest colony", as witnessed by the image below, with grave consequences over its political, social, economic, cultural, and educational current reality – investigated in greater detail in the next sections and following chapters.

[46] Information on the 2017 referendum can be found at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/11/us/puerto-ricans-vote-on-the-question-of-statehood.html?_r=0 (accessed 30/08/2022).
[47] https://ballotpedia.org/Puerto_Rico_Statehood_Referendum_(2020) (accessed 28/02/2021).
[48] For further information on why the board, and the debt, are highly problematic also from a human rights' perspective in Puerto Rico, refer to: https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2016/12/puerto-ricos-debt-crisis-un-expert-warns-human-rights-cannot-be-side-lined-juan (accessed 30/08/2022).

Street paintings in Calle Norzagaray (Old San Juan, 2018) condemning the dependent relationship Puerto Rico has with the US, corruption on the island, expropriation, illegitimate land grabs, etc.

As a result of its colonial history, Puerto Rico is a melting pot of Indigenous, European, African, *Latino* and North American influences. This ethnic makeup and centuries of exchanges led to multiple layers of cultures, ethnicities, traditions, and beliefs coexisting and mixing in Puerto Rico – but not all of them are regarded in the same way. As explained more in detail in Chapter 3, Puerto Rican mainstream politics, education, and media celebrate and promulgate the history of Spain and the US ("the colonizers"). On the contrary, Taínos and Africans ("the colonized", "the enslaved") are systemically downplayed, and little is known about how each tradition contributed to present-day Puerto Rico. As substantiated in the next chapters, various sources reported how Taíno and African roots have been systematically downplayed by both colonial powers inhabiting the island. Below, I provide some background on the cultural inputs of Taínos and West Africans in Puerto Rico, exploring the contributions they brought to the societal fabric of the island and its musical expressions, both key aspects of this investigation.

Taínos ("good" and "noble" in the Indigenous language) were the first inhabitants of Puerto Rico, a tribe descendant of the Arawak of Venezuela, of the same ethnicity as people of *La Española* and of other neighbouring Caribbean islands (Márquez 1995, 94). Taíno religion was polytheist and they believed it was the reunion of various gods that could cause their destruction. *Juracán* was the name given to phenomena known today as hurricanes, and *Yucahu* was the name of their main deity and of the mountain where the most important ceremonies would be held – today known as *El Yunque,* a mountain within what is now El

Yunque National Forest, the biggest tropical rainforest in the Caribbean. Columbus described Taínos in his diary as slim, tall, handsome, of dark or olive colour, and wearing short hair; their language was described as gentle, the sweetest in the world, always with laughter.[49] Because of the hot weather, they all wore very little clothing, and women were adorned with body paintings, necklaces, bracelets, ear and nose earrings.

The *Cacique* was the chief of Taíno clans; when Columbus arrived, there were around 20 *cacicazgos* on the island. Taíno societal structure was divided according to social classes: *Nitaínos* (nobles, warriors, and artisans – estimated for their higher blood lines), *Caciques* (chiefs – descending from the Nitaínos), *Naborías* (servants carrying out tasks like fishing, hunting and heavy work – considered the lowest class) and *Bohiques* (healers). The *Cacique* was a privileged male hereditary position, and chiefs were polygamous, paired with some of their wives because of political reasons to unite tribes and create new allies. When it came to entertainment, Taínos held various community practices including dancing, music, and a ball game known as *batú*, played in a space called *batey* where religious ceremonies were also celebrated, accompanied by various instruments – mostly drums.[50]

Spaniards killed most Taínos while suppressing their revolts in the early 1500s. Various diseases brought by Europeans and West Africans (like smallpox, to which immune systems of Indigenous population had no defence) decimated those who were left, sided by mass suicides and forced labour. Common belief is that all Taínos disappeared 50 years after colonization began, but other sources report that the few who survived escaped to the Puerto Rican mountains. This is also reflected by the fact that in many Puerto Rican households, stories and traditions with Indigenous roots survived.[51]

There is evidence for significant intermixing between Spanish men and Taíno women, via marriages, consensual or forced, and rape; even by 1514, there are records referencing the descendants of intermarried couples (Castanha 2011). After the forced transportation of Africans to the island, intermixing also became common between African and

[49] http://www.elboricua.com/history.html (accessed 05/01/2022).
[50] https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/batu-the-ancient-game-lives-on (accessed 05/01/2022).
[51] This brief history of Taínos is a synthesis of information gathered from various sources, including: http://www.proyectosalonhogar.com/enciclopedia_ilustrada/indios_tainos.htm; https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Rico/History; https://welcome.topuertorico.org/history.shtml; https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/colonial-genocides-project/puerto-rico (accessed 04/04/2021).

Indigenous populations. The lasting Taíno influence was revealed in an island-wide genetics study of 2003 which, involving randomly selected subjects and suggesting that over 60% of people had mitochondrial DNA of Indigenous origins along with European and/or African markers, evidenced historical intermixing in multiple forms (Martínez Cruzado 2001). A study of 2019 conducted by Puerto Rican anthropologist Nieves Colón uncovers further information supporting that the Taíno population did not go extinct, with "evidence of the genetic continuity that is shared between Indigenous people born before the colonization and modern Puerto Rican."[52] Additionally, it demonstrated how the sample from the Indigenous people of Puerto Rico is genetically like that of people living today in Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, and the Amazon.

Besides Taínos, the other ethnic group whose influence and importance are downplayed in relation to the history and cultural roots of Puerto Rico is West Africans. Indeed, their presence and numbers reached over half of the island's population in the 1500s (Acosta-Belén 2006), to then settle around 11% in the 1800s (Van Middeldyk 2019).

Latin American transnationalism theorist Jorge Duany summarizes the impact of African slavery in Puerto Rico:

> The Spanish Crown first granted permission to introduce African slaves to the Americas as early as 1501, and several hundred were brought to Puerto Rico over the next few decades. By 1530, the first Spanish census of the Island counted 2.284 black slaves, more than half (54.7 percent) of a total population of 4.170. Throughout the sixteenth century, approximately 7.000 African slaves were legally imported to the Island, while others were brought through contraband. They worked in the gold mines and sugar cane fields, planted ginger, prepared hides, produced food, built forts and churches and provided domestic service. African slaves became the backbone of the sugar industry in Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean. They tended to settle on the island's coastal plains, near towns such as Ponce, Mayagüez, and Guayama, where sugar plantations concentrated. (2017, xx)

Additionally, "The Royal Decree of Graces of 1815 was issued to encourage Spaniards and later Europeans from non-Spanish countries to settle and populate Cuba and Puerto Rico", also providing "free land and encouraging the use of slave labour to revive

[52] https://www.elnuevodia.com/ciencia/ciencia/nota/aclaranelroltainoenlagenetica-2521861/ (accessed 15/11/2020).

agriculture."[53] As substantiated by David Stark (2009), there is limited knowledge regarding the slave trade in Puerto Rico, and it is difficult to establish with certainty the ethnic origins of enslaved African people brought to Puerto Rico; nonetheless, it has been traced they mostly came from West Africa:

> From the sixteenth century on, most slaves came from the coastal region of West Africa, especially from the Senegal River to the Gulf of Guinea, although many also came from the interior of the African continent, including the Congo and Angola. The Yoruba, Congo, Mandinga, Calabar, Wolof and other groups influenced the development of Afro-Puerto Rican culture. Their substantial contribution to language, music, dance, religion, art, and cuisine is still evident in contemporary Puerto Rico. (Duany 2017, 15)

A recent publication using data from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Database uncovered records collected from European voyages from West Africa to Puerto Rico after 1801, showcasing most slaves disembarked in Puerto Rico in the 1800s were transported from the Bight of Biafra and the Gulf of Guinea Islands by Spanish, British and French ships (Kalu and Falola 2019).

Map 5.2 Embarkation regions along the African coast
Source: Map by Author. Adapted from Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, http://slavevoyages.org.

Table 5.6 Cuba and Puerto Rico 1801–1875, Saint-Domingue before independence: embarkation ports of largest numbers of Africans

This map from slavevoyages.org showcases embarking regions on the African coast.

[53] Both quotations appear at: https://minorityrights.org/minorities/afro-puerto-ricans/ (accessed 03/04/2021).

Besides the cultural – and musical – melting pot that African slavery produced in Puerto Rico, it also led to other consequences, including the unintended result by Spanish colonizers of creating a large demographic of “free coloured” population:

> This population constituted a disenfranchised “caste” within Spanish colonial society, legally set apart from whites, Indians, and slaves. The free people of color were in turn subdivided into two main racial categories: pardos (light-skinned mulattos) and morenos (dark-skinned mulattos and blacks). By 1790, free people of color (40.2 percent) nearly equalled whites (43.3 percent) as the leading sector of Puerto Rico’s population (12.3 were slaves). The free colored group continued to grow during the nineteenth century. (Duany 2017, 15)

This section analysed the implications of colonization over Puerto Rico’s ethnic make-up; the following sections discuss its repercussions at the socio-political level.

1.2 (Post- & Neo-) Colonialism and (Cultural) Imperialism in Puerto Rico

Due to its previous colonization by Spain terminated in 1897, Puerto Rico can be considered a post-colonial country when analyzing the effects of Spanish domination. At the same time, because it was seized by the US in 1898, and Puerto Rico’s present condition as a US territory subjugated to its imperialistic dominance – also called by many Puerto Ricans a “US Colony” – it can also be seen as a colonial and neo-colonial environment. In contemporary Puerto Rican society intersections of post-colonial, colonial and neo-colonial dynamics contribute to the (re)creation of perceptions of “first-class” and “second-class” citizens, mostly based on ethnic, gender, class and socio-economic status. To this end, I specify below what definitions of Post-colonialism, Colonialism and Neo-colonialism I apply to this investigation, contextualizing them within Puerto Rican realities.

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism is a critical approach that sought to expose the persistence of colonial narratives and representations in previously colonized territories after the end of direct colonial rule; it emerged out of two pre-existing critical movements, post-structuralism, and Marxism. Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, though not specifically post-colonial thinkers themselves, can be considered foundational in post-colonial thought. Derrida’s (1972) “deconstruction” approach, aimed at challenging the universalist certainties of Western knowledge, to “knock down the hierarchy” of the dominant global order, and to

create space for “hybridity” beyond binary oppositions, brought attention to issues of inequality in knowledge and culture (Kraidy 2002). Foucault’s (1979; 1991) commentaries on governmentality, examining systems and techniques of subjugation as well as strategies of subversion and resistance, placed an emphasis on power relations and authority in everyday cultural practices (Venn and Terranova 2009). Ahluwalia (2010) argues that Foucault’s writings were already “post-colonial” as they were informed by his self-imposed exile in Tunisia, leading to an awareness of France’s policies towards its colonies and the activities of opposition movements against Western imperialism.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is arguably the foundational text of the field. Drawing consciously on Foucault’s discourse analysis, it deconstructs the depiction of the “East” by the “West” showing how this was inextricably linked to imperial aspirations, and how cultural constructs in other historical contexts can be deconstructed to reveal how they were used to exercise power, authority, and to justify colonial domination. Said also discussed the notion of “cultural imperialism” (1993), asserting that colonization is still upheld within the cultures of previously colonized peoples via ideas and stereotypes which reinforce European superiorities and maintain international systems of power. Said suggests imperialism can be identified not only in direct violent subjugation but also in cultural means that influence subjectivities and practices (Macleod and Durrheim 2002). Gayatri Spivak (1988) built on Said’s approach, arguing the removal of colonial administrators does not necessarily result in liberation, as the subaltern can retain colonial representations. Homi K. Bhabha (1994) took up the theme of resistance, theorizing on the idea of a “third space” in which subalterns can reappropriate dominant discourses to strike back at imperial ideology from within, breaking down distinctions between colonizer and colonized. Bhabha shifted the focus to postcolonial negotiations across colonial divides, inspiring subsequent work, such as that of Ien Ang (2003) and Stuart Hall (1997), which challenged hierarchical dualisms examining hybridity, difference, and resistance.

These theories are relevant for addressing colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism in Puerto Rico, and they influence critical thinking in Latin American contexts, despite also being met with scepticism there as they developed primarily with reference to former colonies of the British Empire (Pajuelo Teves 2001). Indeed, foundational thinkers in post-colonialism including Said, Spivak, and Bhabha, did not significantly address Latin American contexts; consequently, scholars from these regions have been uncertain about their applicability. However, García Canclini’s landmark *Culturas híbridas* (1989) shows

their relevance, locating Latin American postcolonial nation-states as caught between tradition and modernity, highlighting how narratives of *mestizaje* often remain rooted in Eurocentric paradigms of race and how imperialism can be identified in cultural means that influence subjectivities and practices. Edgardo Lander's (2000) collected edition involved intellectuals from various nations and backgrounds, putting post-colonial theories into dialogue with specific contexts in Latin America. Aníbal Quijano's (2000) contribution critiqued the *colonialidad del poder* and analysed how Eurocentric configurations in the world knowledge system serve to maintain categories and distinctions emerged under colonialism. Similarly, Walter Mignolo (1998) attempted to localize post-colonial theory by calling for *posoccidentalismo* to decolonize intellectual thinking within the Latin American academy itself, a theme subsequently applied to various contexts, including racial hierarchies in cultural practices in multi-ethnic Bolivia (Lopez Illanes 2019) and racialized socioeconomic discrimination in Peruvian business and higher education sectors (Kogan 2014).

In the context of music studies, Olivia Bloechl (2016) analyses postcolonialism as "the cultural history of colonialism" and "its legacies and continuities" in "music, organized sound and musical life."[54] Bloechl suggests that "Postcolonial musical research has taken two broad forms: critically engaged documentation of musical life in colonial or postcolonial societies, and critique of colonialism's effects on musical life past and present." Paul Gilroy's (1993) exploration of African American hybrid cultural forms, their roots in imperialism and the slave trade, and their continuing essentialist narratives provides a case of the former. Sanjay Sharma, John Hutnyk and Ashwani Sharma's (1996) critique of new Asian dance music and Radano and Bohlman's (2001) examination of the relationship between music and race in postcolonial contexts offer examples of the latter. Intersections of postcolonial dynamics and music have been increasingly addressed in Latin American academia too. One example is Fiorella Montero-Diaz's work focusing on class negotiation and reshaping in intercultural music-making in Peru, advancing how "ordinary musical life allows the white upper classes to self-recreate their identities through rapprochement with 'the other' (belonging) and to distinguish themselves from the role of exclusive discriminatory upper classes (2016, 206)." Another example is Michael Birenbaum

[54] This broad conceptualization of music links to the notion of music as "humanly organized sound" (Blacking 1973), applied in many ethnomusicological studies, from Laurent Aubert's (2007) post-colonial critique of "the music of the Other" in global popular music, to Jeff Titon's (2009) ethnographic review of music cultures around the world.

Quintero's (2019) research into musical meaning among the Black inhabitants of Colombia's southern Pacific coast.

In my investigation, both forms of Bloechl's definition apply, since it documents the legacy of (post)colonialism over Puerto Rican traditional and current cultural expressions whilst challenging ongoing effects of colonialism in its society and music through the analysis of societal, educational, and musical practices. Indeed, this research analyses the effects of the legacy of colonialism (post- and neo-) at the systems-level in Puerto Rican present-day society, music expressions and education, which corresponds to the first level of the CPJ framework. It also investigates thoughts and beliefs derived from colonial oppression engrained in Puerto Rican's mindsets – second and third levels of the CPJ framework – precisely because they are shaped in a post-colonial environment acting as an active force influencing present practices and the perpetration of discrimination and exclusion in music, education, and society. This is also in reference to Bart Moore-Gilbert (1997) presenting how post-colonial analysis examines the role of knowledge production on the recreation and perpetuation of inequalities in society and Said (1978) stressing the relationship between knowledge and power; by representing the "Other" as inferior, the "West" maintains a superior position that enables the colonizer (or occupier) to enjoy political, economic, and social advantages over the oppressed. Gianmaria Coplani (2022) suggests that, in the Latin American context, these dynamics become evident as forms of subaltern thinking outside the dominant geopolitics of knowledge shaped by Western theory surface.

This last point functions as a bridge to the section below, where I advance how I apply the concept of neo-colonialism to my investigation. In fact, the knowledge production and dissemination imposed by Puerto Rico's past and present occupiers focused on exalting and canonizing the history and accomplishments of Spain and the US, while vilifying and nullifying all things local and related to Indigenous and African roots. At best, these were referred to as "folklore", made expendable and often caricatured (Romberg 2007). This enabled both colonizers to establish and maintain, at their respective time of dominance, the "first-class" status they themselves attributed to their own creations and to the products of the West. It also reinforced perceptions that Puerto Ricans are inferior, "second-class citizens", thus perpetrating all three levels of discrimination of the CPJ framework.

The relationship between knowledge and power, where knowledge production has been manipulated by both colonial powers to establish domination reinforcing negative stereotyping and perpetrating discrimination, is applied to post-colonial, colonial and neo-

colonial analysis in this investigation. It is a lens to interpret the Puerto Rican context, given how both Spanish and US indoctrinations still actively condition local beliefs and socio-cultural expressions, music, and education.

Colonialism

Multiple definitions exist for the terms colonialism, neo-colonialism, and cultural imperialism. Their theoretical approaches can overlap, and based on what aspects are considered *sine qua non* – whether it's political or economic control being exercised, what means of subjugation are adopted, if there is population transfer or settlement, etc. – distinctions can become blurred.

To determine what term best describes the ongoing relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, in his article "Puerto Rico, Colonialism, and Neocolonialism", Gibrán Cruz-Martínez advances how:

> Simply put, Puerto Rico is a colony of the US subordinated to the plenary powers of the US Congress under the Territorial Clause of the US Constitution. The three branches of US government, Puerto Rican politicians, United Nations, and academics around the world have confirmed the colonial status of the Caribbean archipelago. Puerto Rico cannot be considered a neocolony because the US has direct control of the archipelago. (2019, 2)

When stating that Puerto Rico must be considered a colony and not a "neocolony", Cruz-Martínez refers to conceptual frameworks on colonialism like Jürgen Osterhammel's (1997) critique of a colony as "a system of domination and hegemonic relationship involving a territorial control of an Indigenous or native majority over by a foreign minority" where the "non-self-governing territory" becomes "subject to the sovereignty of a foreign country". Also, Kwame Nkrumah's (2002) argues that colonialism morphed into neo-colonialism after the Second World War where "the subordinate state is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty" and yet "in reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside". Even though Cruz-Martínez (2019) mainly refers to Osterhammel's definition when advancing his conceptual framework, he also mentions how "Chaturvedi clearly distinguishes colonialism and neo-colonialism as two forms of imperialism – simply understood as the control of one country over another country". More specifically, A. K. Chaturvedi defines the terms according to the forms of control of one country over another country:

> This can take the form of colonialism, the attempt to establish overt political control and jurisdiction over another country; neo-colonialism, control exercised through economic domination; or cultural imperialism, the destruction or weakening of an indigenous culture and the imposition of an alien one. (2006, 143)

For this investigation, I chose Chaturvedi's definition of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and cultural imperialism to describe all the forms of control the United States is presently exerting over Puerto Rico, as I find it the most fitting to the context based on research conducted and field observation. I will now discuss the contextual application of each term, starting with colonialism, defined as "the attempt to establish overt political control and jurisdiction over another country". As substantiated by Cruz-Martínez, all "three branches of the US government have confirmed the colonial status of Puerto Rico" (2019, 8).

Regarding judicial power, Cruz-Martínez examines how the US Supreme Court "was the first to confirm the colonial status of Puerto Rico" (2019, 8), first by calling it a "mere possession" of the United States (US Supreme Court 1901), then confirming the US Congress can make all requiring "rules and regulations respecting the territory" (US Supreme Court 1980), and stipulating "that a US citizen residing in Puerto Rico does not have the same voting rights as a US citizen living in any of the 50 states of the federation" (US Court of Appeals 2001).

Regarding Executive Power, Cruz-Martínez highlights how:

> In 2005, under the administration of George W. Bush, the Task Force confirmed that Puerto Rico is a territory subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause. It was noted that the US Congress could revise or revoke the current status at its discretion and legislate directly on local issues. Furthermore, the report noted that Congress had the power to grant independence to Puerto Rico or even transfer it to another nation-state. (2019, 10)

This showcases how the US have full power and can veto Puerto Rico's independence and even ownership, which again attests to the island's condition as a colony. Finally, regarding Legislative Power, Cruz-Martínez's article reports how:

> … the colonial status of the five territories was confirmed as all are subject to the US Congress's plenary powers and can be discriminated by the US Congress against US states. The best example is the second-class coverage provided by the US government in social welfare programs destined for its colonies. … See Duffy et al. (2016, 95–111) for a

> list of US federal programs under which Puerto Rico receives a discriminatory treatment in comparison to the US states. (2019, 10)

Puerto Ricans are in substance treated as “second-class citizens” by mainland US; they have US citizenship, but they enjoy fewer rights than US citizens of other states, including “taxation without representation”, as more than 3 million Americans living in Puerto Rico do not have anyone representing them in Congress nor in other US legislative bodies.

This concept was echoed in 2018 by then Puerto Rico’s Governor, who told CNN “We need to solve the century-old problem of colonialism in Puerto Rico. The truth of the matter is… we are treated as second-class citizens.”[55] The experiences of everyday Puerto Ricans resonate with these words, showcasing how the political issue shapes social behaviour: second-class citizens status is also reflected by the way US mainland citizens treat Puerto Ricans, whether in Puerto Rico or in mainland US. Noel recalled how his parents defined being Puerto Ricans living in the US as “being Black twice”: “There, [in the US] we were Black twice, because if you were Puerto Rican, they would treat you as Black no matter your skin colour, and if you were a Black Puerto Rican they would treat you as Black because you were Puerto Rican plus they would treat you as Black for being Black.”

Adding gender to the mix as an additional factor of discrimination as it intersects with race, Tata reported how she was mistaken for her daughter’s nanny – playing into stereotypes of Brown Latino women being “the help” in mainland US. It is also interesting to note how Tata recalled this racial stereotype was also enforced by Black Americans towards a Brown *Latino* woman like herself, showcasing how US supremacist behaviour, and treating people like second class citizens, go beyond colour lines, as they can also be perpetrated by Black Americans from mainland US towards Puerto Ricans of all colours.

Neo-colonialism

After discussing applications of the term colonialism in Puerto Rico, and perpetration of colonialist behaviour by mainland US citizens towards Puerto Ricans, I now analyse local contextualization of neo-colonialism, defined by Chaturvedi as “control exercised through economic domination”. There are several ways in which the United States have *de facto* exerted economic domination from the day Puerto Rico was seized in 1898.

[55] https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/15/politics/puerto-rico-hurricane-governor-cnntv/index.html (accessed 28/02/2021).

To “find new markets outside the US for the US manufactured and agricultural products” (McKelvey 2016, 756), the US started an expansionist foreign policy argued to be the origin of its imperialist policies. As US “capitalists hoped to solve the imbalance of production of demand through expansion into foreign markets” (Olson 2016, 771), Puerto Rico served as a profitable market for US exported goods. To create a need for Puerto Rico to start importing US agricultural products, Puerto Rico had to stop producing its own, so the US transformed the Puerto Rican economy from a “diversified agricultural export economy… to a monoculture economy that was almost exclusively dependent on sugar production for US market” (Caban 1999, 70). Historically, Taínos were skilled in agriculture and developed numerous main crops prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, and under the Spanish, sugar, tobacco, and coffee plantations were developed. After the US took over, they put in place the Foraker Act in 1900, allowing unrestricted free trade between Puerto Rico and the US. Coffee production was mostly dismissed, and the emphasis was put on sugar and tobacco production; up to the 1930s, 95% of Puerto Rico’s trade was with the US and until the late 1950s agriculture constituted Puerto Rico’s main economic sector.

The shift from an agriculturally based economy to a manufacturing one started in the late 1940s when “Operation Bootstrap” was launched. In order for the island to become industrialized, and to encourage foreign participation and the investment of external capital, tax exemptions and differential rental rates for industrial buildings were offered. The economic model became one based on local labour being provided, importing raw materials, and exporting the finished products to the US market (Luthringer 2016, 3; Wyatt-Nichol, Brown, and Haynes 2011).

To make this import-export the most profitable, the US Merchant Marine Act of 1920, also known as the Jones Act, was put in place, requiring that the transport of all goods transiting in American waters between US ports, including Puerto Rico, would be carried by US-owned, US-flagged, US-built ships, operated by US citizens. Up to this day, this produces costly repercussions on Puerto Ricans, as US ships are much more expensive to hire and operate than foreign operators in a free trade market, binding Puerto Rico in a forced dependency from the US. This arrangement also raises the price of commodities on the island by an estimated 20%, greatly impacting on the cost of living. As reported in 2019, two independent investigations into the impact of the Jones Act led to the following conclusions:

> The cost of transporting merchandise from the U.S. mainland to Puerto Rico in U.S.-flagged vessels, as required by maritime shipping laws, costs the island $1.5 billion in higher prices for goods, as well as in its effect on competitiveness and lost jobs. … According to the data obtained, transporting containers from the United States, costs on average 2.5 times, or 151 percent more, than transporting from foreign ports—$3,027 from U.S. ports versus $1,206 from non-U.S. ports. … Water transportation costs to Puerto Rico are $568.9 million higher, and prices are $1.1 billion higher than they would be without the Jones Act limitations. … Puerto Rico has 13,250 fewer jobs than it would have were there a free market for ocean freight. The jobs would pay residents $337.3 million more in wages and would result from nearly $1.5 billion in increased economic activity. … Overall tax revenue would be $106.4 million more were the island to be exempt from the Jones Act's provisions.[56]

These numbers are even more significant considering Puerto Rico has the lowest per capita GDP than any US state, very high unemployment, and ongoing recovery from Hurricane Maria that devastated the island in 2017.[57] In short, Puerto Ricans are poorer than the rest of US citizens, but have to pay an extra 20% for all basic commodities including food – and it is estimated that the island imports 85% of the food consumed.[58] In spite of most of its land being fertile, it is not used for agriculture, one of the many consequences of the US push for industrialization during the 1950s; also, competitiveness of the island is significantly reduced in relation to import-export issues and costs.[59]

Besides the fact that the US transformed the Puerto Rican economy from a "diversified agricultural export economy… to a monoculture economy that was almost exclusively dependent on sugar production for the US market" (Caban 1999, 70), Quintero Rivera advances how the monetary measures imposed by the US during the first years of colonization aimed at establishing the hegemony of US sugar corporations by replacing domestic producers and landowners.[60] Additionally, because of industrialization, sugar

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[56] See: https://caribbeanbusiness.com/studies-peg-cost-of-jones-act-on-puerto-rico-at-1-5-billion/ (accessed 15/11/2020).
[57] See: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/PR/INC910219 (accessed 04/04/2021); https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.pr.htm (accessed 15/11/2020).
[58] http://www.laht.com/article.asp?CategoryId=14092&ArticleId=342325 (accessed 15/11/2020).
[59] https://caribbeanbusiness.com/studies-peg-cost-of-jones-act-on-puerto-rico-at-1-5-billion/ (accessed 15/11/2020).
[60] Ángel Quintero Rivera is a Puerto Rican writer focusing on class conflicts in Puerto Rican colonial politics, both under the Spanish and North American regimes, analyzing the internal conflicts of Puerto Rican society whilst examining the conditions and relationships arising from

production also started deteriorating in the 1950s until the year 2000, when operations completely ceased at the last few mills still functioning.

Cultural Imperialism

Lastly, I discuss how Chaturvedi's definition of cultural imperialism as "the destruction or weakening of an Indigenous culture and the imposition of an alien one" applies to the Puerto Rican context. To impose the culture of the colonizers over the Indigenous one, the occupiers take over various socio-cultural aspects including replacing local customs, traditions, religion, language, and education. In Puerto Rico, one can witness how both Spain and the United States during their respective dominations imposed their cultural imperialism through the control of these aspects on the island.

The Spaniards were the first ones imposing their religion and language in Puerto Rico; MacDonald (2004) explains how Spanish colonial law ruled that each exploration would be accompanied by two priests with the goal of converting natives to Christianity. Some of these used torture, imprisonment, and death if Native Americans did not give up their polytheistic religions, to the point that "European contact with Native Americans resulted in the decimation of indigenous tribes, some almost to the point of extinction (such as the Taíno in Puerto Rico). … Catholicism also brought formal education to the Native peoples" (Murillo et al. 2009, 10-11).

When the US took over, they continued what the Spanish started in terms of language and religion regimentation; English was imposed as the new official language, and Protestant missionaries known as the Evangelical churches started their evangelization in 1898:

> Protestant missionaries landed just days after the troops to spread the message … In this enterprise, the interests of the missionaries, political authorities, investors and military all coincided… Along with evangelization would come the spread of American values and respect for its institutions and political processes, so much so that the evangelical churches would become one of the two principal agents of Americanisation, the other being the U.S.-run public school systems. (Taylor and Case 2013, 728)

colonial dependence. On US colonial policies, sugarcane, and Puerto Rico's agrarian economy, see Quintero Rivera (1973; 1974a; 1974b; 1982; 1988).

These sources showcase how language and religion were used by both Spain and the United States to manipulate local beliefs and value systems, also witnessing how education has been systemically used to exercise control and colonial domain.

This section brought to surface and substantiated how the three *isms* – colonialism, neo-colonialism, and cultural imperialism – contribute to constructing a colonized people, who "have the colonial thought so engrained, that the way we express ourselves, and the way we talk about themes, are a reflection of this colonialism, and it gives a different impression from what we are."[61] There are various levels at which these play out, in Puerto Rico, today, perpetrating discrimination – both externally and internally – and (re)creating perceptions of "first-class" and "second-class" citizens. Based on field observations, this categorization plays out at two complemental layers in modern-day Puerto Rico:

- ✓ Exterior/Mainland (US) – First-class citizens are born and raised in mainland US, while second-class are born and raised in Puerto Rico or are people of Puerto Ricans descent growing up in mainland US. At this layer, US citizens from the continental US can display discriminatory behaviours towards Puerto Ricans.
- ✓ Internal/Domestic (PR) – First-class citizens are White Puerto Ricans from a privileged background (typically a combination of ethnicity and socioeconomic status), and second-class citizens are the (dark, poor) underprivileged. At this layer, Puerto Ricans belonging to the social *elites* can display discriminatory behaviours towards their fellow Puerto Ricans from disadvantaged background.

At both layers, discrimination based on race/ethnicity, gender, and class plays out, manifesting across various aspects of Puerto Rican social, cultural, educational, and musical expressions. This affects people at all three levels of discrimination – as theorized by the CPJ framework – the institutional, interpersonal, and internalized: "This is part of the mindset of the colonized, of Puerto Ricans as colonized people, all three are at play here. … When it comes to internalizing, people very often are not realizing they are being discriminated against, and that they themselves are discriminating against others."[62]

In the following three sections I examine in detail each of the three key discriminatory factors – gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomics/class – within the Puerto Rican context.

[61] Nelie, interview.
[62] Amauri, interview.

1.3 Women and Gender Discrimination in Puerto Rico

Gender inequality, discrimination, and imbalanced perceptions around women's roles and expectations are widespread in Puerto Rico, caused by a combination of factors, and with significant repercussions over all realms of life. Commonly across the Caribbean, gender stereotypes are learnt primarily within the family context, where roles are segregated along gender lines. Barry Chevannes reports the dictum that "A man minds, but a woman cares" (2001, 222), referring to men's roles as protectors and financial providers, and women's roles as housewives and caregivers. The male/public and female/private divide is also witnessed by the way men enforced the public space as their territorial domain, intentionally engaging in "comments to embarrass women going by", as described by Merle Hodge (1974). Sharla Blank attributes these divisions to gender norms under slavery, as male slaves could hold elite or skilled positions, such as field commanders or artisans, while female slaves worked in domestic contexts (2013, 2).

Moreover, gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and wife beating also reinforced male supremacy and entitlement, as witnessed by Suzanne Ffolkes (1997); Isabel Molina Guzmán (2004) showed how stereotypes are reinforced by Caribbean mass media. Nevertheless, they also suggest these stereotypes are dependent on race and class, as they tend to be applied to poor Afro-Caribbean women, as upper-class White women in the Caribbean are still often portrayed as educated and as of "respectable" behaviour.

In Puerto Rico these issues, including gender violence and domestic abuse, are recurrent and have serious repercussions. Gender roles and navigating public spaces are problems affecting women, particularly those entering professions that "expose" them to the public and the male gaze, like musicians and entertainers. The fact that navigating public spaces or "going out" are gendered activities in Puerto Rico is instilled from a very young age. Minirka pointed out, "In the vocabulary of mothers, and of families, people always say that girls had to be home early, that girls should be picked up early", mentioning how she always had earlier curfews than her male peers. Other norms and expectations are deep-rooted from childhood, at the family level: "The environment would pressure you for it, and obviously, what the moral, and society expected was that you would just leave your home with your fiancé and that you would get married."[63]

[63] Minirka, interview.

Puerto Rico remains a gender unequal country according to several indicators. Its family code is discriminatory, as with parental authorization for the minimum legal age for marriage, which is 18 years for men, but lowers to 16 for women.[64] Indeed, early marriage is practiced in Puerto Rico – as the United Nations reported in 2000 – also related to young girls being more likely to marry older men, and becoming single mothers at a young age.[65] In fact, a very large number of Puerto Rican households are headed by single women, a phenomenon holding significant economic repercussions, as single female-headed households tend to have lower incomes in comparison to male headed households, who generally count on spouses' support over caretaking, childbearing, household chores, a double income, etc.[66] Unpaid caretaking and informal labour also disadvantage women economically, given this is not regulated and does not offer fair wages or working hours. Professor Laura Briggs, expert on reproductive rights and Puerto Rican politics, has discussed the economic pressures placed on women: "Women are more likely than men to have care responsibilities that will keep them out of the formal labor force. They're more likely to work in the flexible economy to accommodate care work."[67] Women have also been historically, and remain, significantly underrepresented in political participation: in 2019, in Puerto Rico's legislative branch, *Asamblea Legislativa*, women constituted only 16%.[68]

Gender-based violence is another recurrent phenomenon in Puerto Rico. Alice Colón Warren explains how socio-economic factors contribute to it: "In this context of generalized poverty and conflict for the broadest sectors of women, it is not surprising that gender

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[64] For an overview of US Marriage Laws across the Fifty States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, see: https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/table_marriage (accessed 04/04/2021).

[65] United Nations, World Marriage Data 2008, available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/marriage/data.asp (accessed 04/04/2021).

[66] Oficina de la Procuradora de las Mujeres (2006), "Situación de las Mujeres en Puerto Rico", available at: http://www.gobierno.pr/NR/rdonlyres/1B47CBF1-CDFD-4678-B210-693939B72D11/0/situacionycondiciondelasmujeresempuertoricoRev92006.pdf (accessed 15/11/2020).

[67] https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/10/gender-inequality-in-puerto-rico-is-going-to-get-worse-after-hurricane-maria.html (accessed 04/04/2021).

[68] https://www.indexmundi.com/puerto_rico/government_profile.html (accessed 04/04/2021). This is a particularly low figure compared to global data – given that women make up 24% of members of national legislative bodies around the world, as evidenced by: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/03/18/the-share-of-women-in-legislatures-around-the-world-is-growing-but-they-are-still-underrepresented/ (accessed 04/04/2021).

violence in interpersonal relations has become the most emblematic issue in their subordination and struggles" (2003, 667).

Socio-economic factors can only partially explain why gender-based violence is so recurrent in Puerto Rico. Local culture and traditions also create fertile grounds for harassment and violence towards women; machismo is widespread, and men's catcalls are not an uncommon form of harassment. Legislation to address sexual harassment in the workplace, tackle domestic violence, and improving access to justice for rape victims has been introduced, but to be effective it needs to be supported by changes in culture and people's mindsets.[69] In light of the severity of this problem, the Puerto Rican government declared a state of emergency over the gender violence crisis at the end of January 2021, following years of requests by advocates asking to take action by allocating resources to counteract it. The executive order stated: "Gender violence is a social evil, based on ignorance and attitudes that cannot have space or tolerance in the Puerto Rico that we aspire to. … For too long, vulnerable victims have suffered the consequences of systematic machismo, inequity, discrimination, lack of education, lack of guidance and above all, lack of action."[70]

Puerto Rican traditional gender roles ascribe what is expected from male vs female behaviour and division of labour – inside and outside the household; these perceptions fluctuate over time, leading to tensions and re-definitions, as Colón Warren points out:

> Among the most notable changes is the expectation among men that women contribute to the household's earnings but without a redefinition of women's responsibilities at home or support in their jobs. … Marital tensions, including domestic violence, have been explained as expressions of prevailing gender hierarchies and men's practices of power and control when male domination is challenged. (2003, 678–79)

Noel mentioned he witnessed advancements among his student body between the 1980s and the 2000s, but also how a side-phenomenon developed – the lack of awareness that most advancements on women rights and equality were achieved thanks to feminist

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[69] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2005), *Report of Puerto Rico on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*, available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/PUERTO-RICO-English.pdf (accessed 04/04/2021).

[70] https://abcnews.go.com/US/puerto-rico-declares-state-emergency-gender-violence-crisis/story?id=75469572 (accessed 04/04/2021).

movements, thus a denial on “being feminist”, despite embracing values and lifestyles that are now possible only thanks to feminism:

> They were born after the first, second, third and fourth feminism, so that way of saying “Yes, I have to get educated, I cannot depend on a man to maintain me, or for me to become a professional”, they do not associate it with feminism. Also, some of them will make a distinction and say, “I am not feminist, but he is not going to maintain me, I have an education, I will support myself, I have my own car”. … And that happens because what has triumphed is a right-wing belief that tells them that feminism is the machismo of women.

I directly observed the unfair division of labour in Puerto Rican joint households where women pay for the entire family food consumption, house bills, all medical and health expenses, but remain solely in charge of laundry and cleaning, which is also common for single mothers, while single fathers usually mostly give financial contributions for their children whilst spending limited time with them. This is a global phenomenon also called “women’s double workday”, referring to the day-long paid work workday and the “other” day-long unpaid work/caretaking workday women face, which is the root cause behind “(women’s) time poverty”, also associated with “women’s triple burden” – their triple role in society, including reproductive work, productive work, and community managing work.

In some societies, unpaid household work distribution between men and women has shifted towards a fairer balance, especially in Northern European countries, but this does not seem to be the case across Latin America and the Caribbean.[71] There is a severe lack of data on this issue in Puerto Rico. Women Count – the United Nation’s dedicated initiative to collect more and better gender data – has a dedicated indicator (5.4.1) on the “Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work”, but there appears to be no data collected on Puerto Rico.[72] Lack of data is another longstanding issue for gender inequality, as it contributes towards keeping major inequalities unreported, invisible, thus neglected.

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[71] https://splinternews.com/where-in-the-world-are-men-most-likely-to-share-housewo-1793861707; https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/the-countries-where-men-do-the-most-housework/284276/; https://phys.org/news/2016-09-year-countries-women-housework.html; https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/internationally-women-still-spend-more-time-doing-chores/; https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/total-work-time; https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/s2014006_en.pdf (accessed 04/04/2021).

[72] https://data.unwomen.org/country/puerto-rico (accessed 04/04/2021).

Additionally, Hurricane María of 2017 exacerbated the unfavourable situation of women on the island; commonly, when natural disasters hit, women are unevenly negatively impacted, as evidenced by the UN stating that conflicts and natural disasters "exacerbate gender inequalities, particularly against women and girls."[73] The World Economic Forum also mentions how "Girls in conflict settings are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school than boys", also due to the "threat of school-related gender-based violent in conflict situations."[74] In relation to gendered effects of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, Alieza Durana highlighted longstanding everyday issues of gender inequality:

> Even before María, a stunning 43.5 percent of Puerto Ricans were living in poverty, and the island's median wage was $19,350. Despite the fact that women have higher college graduation rates than men (this is true in the U.S. as a whole but heightened in Puerto Rico), Puerto Rico still faces major gender inequality issues, including high incidences of violence against women (which normally increase after natural disasters and times of economic stress), a high number of female heads of households, and low representation of women in politics and government. Most experts attribute these disparities to overall poverty in Puerto Rico and to the way the U.S. has structured Puerto Rico's economy, which has been hard on families and left women to bear the brunt.[75]

Additional pressures are placed on female headed households as single parenthood particularly affects women; it is not uncommon for mothers raising children alone, having repercussions on both single mothers and their children, as they face higher levels of poverty and lower socio-economic statuses. Minirka described how female headed households generate peculiar gender dynamics; on one hand, strong women raising their daughters alone act as role models of powerful women, counteracting historical negative portrayals of women subordinates and weaker creatures:

> The model I had [was] of a strong woman, my mother, a woman who worked tirelessly her whole life from day one, she would always push ahead, and she never let herself fall … Also, seeing how my mother took charge of my grandfather, of the family, she was left alone with everything. You always see in the families how women are the ones with higher responsibility and a gigantic burden of care. Nowadays we work and we do it all, we are

[73] https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO2019.pdf (accessed 28/02/2021).
[74] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/why-do-humanitarian-crises-disproportionately-affect-women/ (accessed 28/02/2021).
[75] https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/10/gender-inequality-in-puerto-rico-is-going-to-get-worse-after-hurricane-maria.html (accessed 15/11/2020).

> single mothers, or mothers with a partner, but still we are charged with most responsibilities for work, for feeding, for raising children, for everything.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the quotation, strong single mothers showcase a triple burden still disproportionately affecting women and girls, perpetrating the perception that even when women are *strong*, they remain subordinate and take on much more unpaid unrecognized work than men. The platform *Empowerwomen* describes the repercussions of the triple burden on women's poverty and lack of economic empowerment:

> The triple burden faced by women as a result of their triple role in society is a major barrier to women's economic empowerment. Women's work includes reproductive work… productive work … and community managing work. … This division of labour based on sex and time demands has confined women to the private sphere and inhibited women from venturing into other economic enterprises.[76]

In Puerto Rico, the triple burden contributes towards keeping large numbers of women under poverty lines, particularly affecting Black women, as the next section examines.

1.4 Race and Ethnic Discrimination in Puerto Rico

Discussing race, ethnicity and racism in Puerto Rico presents several complexities. Firstly, racial classifications and self-identification are fluid processes due to colonial powers superimposing their own unfitting definitions onto local realities, and the internalization of these processes by colonized mindsets. Secondly, official (political) discourse has promoted a whitewashed version of history and citizenship according to which "racism does not exist in Puerto Rico". In this section both phenomena are analysed and deconstructed.

As previously discussed, Puerto Ricans are a mix of Taíno, Spanish, European, African, and North American roots; like in other Caribbean and Latin American countries, procreation between all these populations produced over time an extremely racially mixed population. This is exemplified by Minirka, describing her racial phenotypical background:

> My grandfather was completely Black, from Loiza … and my grandmother was from Ponce, she was White, with dark brown hair, but her facial traits were the ones of a White woman … My mother was born with this mix, with dark skin … but with the facial traits of a White

[76] https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/community/discussions/2016/11/the-triple-burden-and-triple-role-of-women (accessed 21/09/2019).

> woman, straight hair … She got together with a Creole man, semi-White … with Afro hair, and full Caribbean roots, as he was from St. Thomas, and I was born, chocolate colour, the facial traits of a White woman as well, but with very curly hair.

In this context, race needs to be considered as a multi-category spectrum. While Black and White may represent endpoints, Joseph Fitzpatrick (1971) highlights that Latin American societies do not tend to rely on the Black-White dichotomy that characterizes race relations in the US. Instead, these involve many intermediate racial categories and definitions based on a wider range of physical and social characteristics.[77] Such traits include skin tone, facial features, hair texture, but also social aspects such as language use, demeanour, and attire, as all these have direct repercussions on an individual's sense of racial/ethnic belonging.

The notion of a "Latino race" briefly emerged in the Hispanophone context in mid-19th century, as a reaction to the threat of US expansion (Gobat 2013). Sidney Mintz (1974) also indicates that systems of social assortment for race in Caribbean societies tend to have less sharply delimited boundaries than in bipartite racialized societies. Furthermore, Clara Rodríguez (2000) affirms that Latinos in the Caribbean often identify with aspects of ethnicity in addition to race, placing an emphasis on heritage, cultural and social dimensions as well as physical characteristics. Nevertheless, some evidence suggests that, despite blurred racial categories and greater racial mixing, Latin American societies, ironically, tend to exhibit more awareness of ethnoracial inequality and discrimination than societies with more clear racial divisions and discrimination (Telles and Bailey 2013).

Adding to the complexity is how racial classifications, perceptions, and self-perceptions differ based on the geographic and socio-cultural background of those defining and self-defining racial designations. Mintz (1971) shows that "race relations" in Caribbean societies can change in different places, offering the example of the same individual who could be considered "Black" in the US, "Coloured" in Jamaica, and "White" in Puerto Rico, but may also be defined differently by different people within each of these places.

The practice of developing racial classifications and creating the language to express them, inventing variegated words to describe people in Puerto Rico of different races and ethnicities, was likely started by Spanish colonizers. Christina discussed this:

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[77] The complexity of racial and ethnic classifications is common across Latin America. Marisol de la Cadena (2005) discusses the hybridity of mestizaje, also in relation to indigeneity, in Peru.

> If I had to speculate on it, I would say that it all began with Spain categorizing levels of Blackness and Indigenousness. They made up words to express how mixed or how White you were, such as *mestizo*, *mulato* – it's very clearly defined. The same type of tree that they used for royal families, the Spanish used that for describing colours in the new world.

Since its occupation in 1898, the US also brought to Puerto Rico their own value systems and racial definitions, where race and ethnicity were perceived quite distinctly.

Additionally, as Noel explains, racial discourse and racist viewpoints have been used to justify the lack of progress of Puerto Rico as a nation, also internalized by Puerto Rican authors as showcased by Antonio Pedreira's *Insularismo* (1942):

> Here they would talk about it [race issues] in texts that were conservative and that raised it. They would tell us to read *Insularismo* which is an essay… stating that one of the reasons why Puerto Rico has never been independent, and it has not developed as a nation, is the racial mix, in other words, that Indigenous people and Blacks are guilty of the fact Puerto Rico has not progressed.[78]

Noel added how even responses to *Insularismo* ended up downplaying the presence of underrepresented ethnicities on the island:

> Tomás Blanco wrote a book answering to him, to Pedreira, in *Insularismo*, called *El Prejuicio Racial en Puerto Rico*, which, despite attacking Pedreira and defending Blackness, it did also say that in the end Puerto Rico is not a Black country, because there are very few Blacks, and there is very little evidence in our culture of a big influence of Blacks.

The relationship between Puerto Rico and the US continues to shape race discourse and the lived experiences of Puerto Ricans, both on the island and on mainland US. Nelie discussed how race is constructed and perceived differently in Puerto Rico vs in the US, mentioning how, when presenting a paper, she was positioned within the social category of *the* American Black woman, something she does not fully, or exclusively, identify with:

> [I objected] "Wait, I am a Puerto Rican woman, and among other things that define me there is also my Blackness, but this is not the only thing"; [and they responded] "Oh, so you are not proud of your Blackness". … This group, I call them *the professional Blacks*, as if their profession is *being Black*. … What worries me is the element of representation and division.

[78] Noel, interview.

Nelie also reflected on the influence constructions of race from mainland US have, specifically when they intersect with gender in Puerto Rico:

> They have forced Black women to become "the violent Black female", to be sufficiently representative of the Black woman from the United States. So, if you are not violent, or you don't have this expression of rage all the time, if you don't answer with attitude, then you are not Black. So, if you are refined, or your manners are more generic, then [they say], "You are whitening yourself".

Racial perceptions and self-perceptions are fluid and can change over time, for example when visiting mainland US; Christina mentioned how a "White" Puerto Rican can realize he/she is seen as a person of colour in mainland US (where Latinos are not perceived as "White"). Colón Warren adds to this argument, drawing from Briggs (2002) and Santiago-Valles (1999) to explain how US racial definitions are unfitting in Puerto Rico:

> The dichotomous racialization that is imposed in Puerto Rico by dominant (white) sectors in the United States on African Americans… contrasts with the hierarchy of racial mixture in Puerto Rico. On the island, race ranges along a continuum from white to Black, running through categories related to the presence of particular phenotypical traits, such as *Trigueño* (lighter skinned or as a euphemism for Black), or *grifo* (tight, curly hair). (2003, 668)

Definitions are complicated in Puerto Rico. Through field observation I realized it can happen that, based on the person talking, the same individual – especially if light-skinned Black, or Brown, and with features (nostrils, hair, etc.) not immediately attributable to a specific phenotype – can be defined *Latino/a* (usually if the person defining them was foreigner), or *Negro/a* (when the person defining them was Puerto Rican).[79]

A term used by several interviewees to self-identify, when responding to my question on their racial identity, is *Afrodescendiente* (Afro-descendant). Pablo explained the origin and use of this term in Puerto Rico:

> Afro-descendant is a concept that is relatively new, it's from the 21st century, and it's a term that we have adopted, us people who are descendants of Africa, and who recognize it as something important, precisely to give us visibility, and to make people understand and comprehend that there is diversity in society, and that we must respect such diversity.

[79] In Spanish, *Negro* is used to indicate a Black male, and *Negra* a Black female.

Despite differing definitions and (self-)perceptions of colour, race, and ethnicity in Puerto Rico vs mainland US, racial discrimination is still at play in contemporary Puerto Rican society, but being more nuanced than the White/Black dichotomy of continental US leads to downplaying its existence, or in some cases denying it exists at all, as Noel pointed out:

> Part of Puerto Rican racism is, first, saying that there is no racism, or denying it… [Also], the same person saying they condemn racism, they will also say, "Yes, he is Black, *but* he is a very good worker" … or "He is Black, *but* he is intelligent". … As if he is Black, *but* he has some quality that redeems him. … Or "*Es un Negro fino*" [He is a refined Black], … saying "You are Black, and this already works against you, so you have to pretend and act less Black as possible."

Ida Castro, President of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, defines how the phenomenon of systematically downplaying racism creates *racismo sutil* (subtle racism):

> Frequently what we confront are attitudes so ingrained and accepted that their impact on society is not even questioned. Worse still, it is vehemently rejected that our "subtle racism" carries any consequences. However, those who suffer and endure the reality of their condemnation to lower economic conditions simply because perhaps they "came out" too dark, or their hair is too curly, or their features are very Negroid; they do clearly understand the consequences of these entrenched attitudes. How many times have I heard that Puerto Rico is different because there is no racial discrimination here?[80]

This passage highlights discrepancies between the "official" version given in Puerto Rico that racism does not exist, and the reality suffered by those being discriminated against for their colour, enduring the practical consequences of racism daily.[81] Noel points out this happens because the racial problem in Puerto Rico was never addressed as such, and how the "official" version that "racism does not exist" is connected with whitewashing the racial identity in the name of a hegemonic Puerto Rican identity, at the expense of Blackness:

> Ideologically, what I lived was a reinforcement of what we were being told both in public and religious schools: "We are all Puerto Ricans" … "No, don't self-identify as Black or Afro-

[80] Translated by the author from Spanish. The original version is available at: https://www.trabajo.pr.gov/docs/Secretaria%20Auxiliar%20de%20Asuntos%20Legales/Ensayos/EEOC_ante_el_Discrimen_Racial_en_Puerto_Rico.pdf (accessed 04/04/2021)

[81] Wade and Figueroa demonstrate how the anti-racist strategy in several Latin American countries has been "to try to make lines of racial difference sharper, in order to highlight racism and racial inequality (2021, 42)". On the flip side, in Puerto Rico the opposite occurs: the reiterated denial of the very existence of racial discrimination leads to the issue repeatedly not being addressed.

> Puerto Rican, you must identify as Puerto Rican, since in the end we are all mixed". … Racially, they were always emphasizing being Puerto Rican first, and at that time I did perceive that the *puertorriqueñidad* that they were instigating in education was a *puertorriqueñidad* where priority was being given to Whiteness.

Consequently, Puerto Ricans growing up knowing very little about their racial backgrounds, and unaware of the contributions of Black African culture, can develop engrained and active racially discriminatory behaviours. This indoctrination, reinforced by families, has repercussions in the development of individual self-identification, as Noel describes:

> People like my parents who have skin much clearer than mine, despite their families being Afro-descendant, had the habit to talk as little as possible of any type of Afro-descendance … I had never considered myself Black. … [and] then I started noticing how I had also assimilated racist vocabulary, the concept of "improving the race". … It was a process… for me to express – not just understanding it, but also speaking about it – and to create a vocabulary of Puerto Rican *Negritude*, but also my self-identification, as an Afro-descendant.

Nelie shared a similar experience, growing up without acknowledging being Black:

> I didn't know I was Black, and when I say this, people go at me like, "What do you mean you didn't know you were Black?!" Because in my house, we wouldn't talk about these issues openly. We would talk about Black people's food, Black people's music, we would eat Black people's food. … When we met with the family, we danced bomba. … But being Black in my family was not [discussed]… But once you start becoming aware, then you realize, "Oh, this is why they don't allow me to do this, they don't allow me to do that, now I understand."

Lorna experienced mixed messaging in her household growing up, with part of her family raising her as a Black girl, and the other part portraying it as a less positive attribute:

> It was a mixed issue, as my father always wanted to identify us as Black, and my mother, even though she didn't want to identify us as Black, she didn't know how to deal with it. … My grandmother always wanted to put clips over our nostrils, so that they could become thinner. My family would say, "You will have to marry a White man, so you can improve the race." … There was always this disjoint, with my mom telling me I am not combing my hair, that my hair sucks, and my dad saying that I cannot straighten my hair because I am denying my race, and my grandmother telling me to put clips over my nose. This happened before elementary school.

Lorna elaborated on how her mother, in suppressing Lorna's Blackness, was reproducing learned behaviour, whilst possibly also trying to protect her from the discrimination she faced within her own family when she married Lorna's father, a Black man: "My mother is a great person, she did it because where she grew up, what was Black was bad. She married a Black man, defying all conflicts, and she was persecuted by her family. … She thought that by doing so, she was going to help us not being attacked outside our home."

This phenomenon of lighter skinned people denying Blackness resonates with an analysis conducted by Jay Kinsbruner who focused on *mulatto* people, tracing the socio-economic reasons behind why this group of Afro-descendants were raised as Whites in Puerto Rico:

> Puerto Ricans of African descent suffered an array of social and legal disabilities, but those with the greatest degree of whiteness tended to suffer the least and had the greatest chance of passing into white society. Puerto Rico's dominant white society rewarded those of African descent for their whiteness. Free people of colour understood the system very well and placed their own premium on whiteness, a practice hardly unique to Puerto Rico. (1996, 9)

The "premium on whiteness" produced a society where people of colour were encouraged to self-identify as White, and sometimes lived their entire lives in complete denial of being Black. Noel recalls his discovery of a book that exemplifies it by Isabelo Zenón Cruz, *Narciso descubre su trasero: El negro en la cultura puertorriqueña* (1974):

> In the 1970s, a book that I read too late in my life had been written, very important in Black Puerto Rican literature, called *Narciso descubre su trasero*. Narciso discovers his ass, in the matter that by looking at his rear he realized, "Oh wait, I am Black", and it's a recollection of all the racist expressions in Puerto Rican literature, and in Latin American literature.

Historically, a concept associated with the racial superiority of being White was captured in an expression recurrently used in Puerto Rico, *mejorar la raza* – literally, "improving the race" – coined in relation to mixed marriages, where a Black person would marry and procreate with a White partner, so that their child would be less dark than the Black parent, "improving the race" of the Black person's family tree. The amount of "White blood" a person had was used as the basis of the certificate of *limpieza de sangre* (blood cleansing), a practice originated in Spain and brought to the Americas (Martínez 2008), which could determine an enslaved person's freedom in the Caribbean under Spanish

rule, based on how much White or Black blood they were considered to have.[82] Against this background, the concept of "improving the race" can be linked to *limpieza de sangre*: the more mixing with Whites, the higher likelihood to be able to "clean the blood" and be granted freedom.

The expression *mejorar la raza* came up in several interviews conducted, demonstrating how it continues to shape the mindsets of present generations, in some cases more actively, and in others passively: "If you were in a White family, you should not worsen your race by going with a Black man or a Black woman, as your children would come out with *grifo* hair … and *bembones, y narizones,* and all of that."[83] Racist cross-messaging taking place at the societal level, in schools, and by the media (first level institutionalized discrimination), is so strong that even a six-year-old can display signs of internalizing this discourse (third level discrimination). This can last a lifetime, shaping self-perceptions, but also taste towards life partners, as described in a story shared by one interviewee:

> My younger daughter once asked us, "Mom, I'd like you to buy me this cereal brand with the princess", and we bought it for her. She was like six years old. And when she ate it, she said, "Oh, but I wanted to become White like the princess, I thought that if I was going to eat this, I was going to become White". She was six years old. … And up to this day, now she is 20, she says, "Mom, I cannot marry a Black person. If I look at a Black man, I cannot find him handsome. For me to kiss a Black man, I cannot."[84]

Xavier explained how when he was younger, as a Black boy with a White girlfriend, the first thing his family said was, "Oh how nice, you will be improving the race"; "When we listen to these commentaries, and to even worse things, we don't have a reaction because of how normalized it is… Many times, as a child, you listen to these comments, but when you grow up you start realizing, 'My whole life, they've been mistreating me'". Nelie, a Black woman bringing home a White boyfriend meeting her family, was also told about improving her race. Minirka described the hardships that her grandparents, a mixed-race couple, faced for being together, and how the expression would at times come up:

> It was a fight, for these two people to get together in a relationship, as it was not permitted. For example, by the way it was seen from my grandmother's family which was White, that

[82] Aline Helg expands on these concepts (2017, 81-82).
[83] Amauri, interview. In Spanish *Grifo* literally means "faucet" and is used as a pejorative expression to refer to Black Afro hair as bad hair. *Bembones* means big lipped and *narizones* means large nostrils.
[84] Anonymous, for sensitivity reasons.

> my grandmother would go and marry this Black man. … A phrase that was often said, and that my father would also tell me to tease me was, "Don't bring home a *Negrito* as a boyfriend, you have to bring a White one, so that he can *mejorar la raza*."

Racial discrimination in Puerto Rico affects Black people in all realms of life: they show higher rates of unemployment, and have lower incomes, phenomena also connected to inequality in education, another field where racial bias remains persistent – as discussed in detail in Chapter 3.[85] In *Not of Pure Blood*, Kinsbruner discusses the insidious effects that racial prejudice had on free people of colour on the island during the nineteenth century, and how they have been historically "a disadvantaged community whose political, social, and economic status was diminished by racism" (1996, 16). Racial discrimination impacts self-identification, as when an individual receives the message at the societal and interpersonal levels that their racial/ethnic identification has repercussions on how they are treated and on differential access to opportunities, it creates an internal pressure to self-identify with the most privileged ethnic group (usually, Whites). In other words, Black Puerto Ricans internalize the belief that social Whitening – i.e. *looking less Black* and *more White* or identifying as *less Black* – leads to higher acceptance, less discrimination, better treatment, and better opportunities, pressuring Blacks into modifying self-identifications.[86]

As pointed out by Kinsbruner, self-identification remains a complex and at times emotional process for Puerto Ricans, as it is "the result of the intersection of racial, cultural, and political considerations"; "The richness of the Latin heritage, a desire to know more about and recognize one's African roots… affect decisions about identity" (1996, 11). Noel explains how denying Blackness as a form of White silencing, or Afro-descendants self-identifying as Black as a form of self-affirmation, can turn into two opposing political positions: "In the case of Puerto Rico, to self-identify as an Afro-descendant is a political position. … Indeed, the most insidious form of a political position is to have [invisibilization] normalized and thought of as commonplace, and not as a political position. … This is why, when I started voicing this type of position, that's when I started receiving resistance."[87]

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[85] https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/locales/notas/el-censo-pone-en-evidencia-la-desigualdad-racial-en-puerto-rico/ (accessed 04/04/2021)

[86] There are clear parallels with ethnic inequalities in other Latin American contexts, such as those outlined by Peter Wade in Colombia (2018), Henry Stobart in Bolivia (2019).

[87] Politicizing and normalizing inequality, by rendering social groups affected by discrimination based on social constructs and their expressions invisible, is not uncommon; I witnessed a similar dynamic to what Noel described with race in Puerto Rico applied to gender in Italy. When I

Self-identifying as Black in Puerto Rico is complicated because of all the negative perceptions associated with it; third-level internalized discrimination and self-perceptions of inferiority, resulting from first-level institutional and second-level interpersonal discrimination, can develop among Black Puerto Ricans. Pablo explains: “I witnessed many experiences of low self-esteem, and that low self-esteem would leave them in a status quo that would not allow them to develop in other areas, and they would not recognize their value.” Pablo also commented on phenomena of social mobility and breaking away from neighbourhoods whenever Black people advance economically, as a reaction to negative associations of Blackness and poverty in Puerto Rico: “Poverty here is associated mostly with one social group, poor people here are not White, they are Black… So, Black people… feel like they must break with their community, ‘because I have to move onto another social strata, and there they are going to give me recognition, and I can be part of that.’”

Blackness started being a differentiator factor, and being problematized as such, first under White Spanish colonization and its own colour/caste system. However, immediately after, under US dominion, another layer of discrimination beyond race that is particularly strong in US capitalist society was emphasized – socioeconomics and class. This further reinforced the second-class status of poor (Black) Puerto Ricans, as analysed below.

1.5 Socio-Economic & Class Discrimination in Puerto Rico

The previous sections demonstrated how gender and race inequalities in Puerto Rico affect people’s lives and their access to opportunities. Another key determining factor is the socio-economic status of an individual – or their social class, used interchangeably in this investigation.[88] Class possibly acts as the strongest discriminator, as Christina explained:

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proposed a thesis analyzing gender discrimination in Italian society and music higher education institutions for my master’s at Università di Bologna, the professor of Ethnomusicology refused to supervise my thesis as he labelled it “political”. I replied that the systemic gender discrimination, female underrepresentation and invisibilization already taking place were political indeed, but that me investigating these issues through data was a scientific and academic undertaking. Nonetheless, he, and others, refused to supervise my work, and the thesis committee rejected the thesis once completed, perpetrating a sexist culture of suppression and invisibilization.

[88] Wyatt-Nichol, Brown and Haynes (2011) show how the widening gap between the rich and the poor contributes to economic segregation among regions and neighborhoods, having a direct impact on public service delivery, declining mobility, education, etc.

> I think that people here discriminate strongly by social class, strongly! Definitely, there's some people who might discriminate you and limit your opportunities according to your race, but definitely they do based on your class. They judge you for how you speak. … Because of that historic segregation and differentiation of people, depending on which of those classes you were categorized in, you are kind of in a status now, it lingers on.

As highlighted in the quotation, social class assignations depend on various factors, including a person's background, their family, the neighbourhood they live in, their education, income, and occupation. Danny grew up in a *caserío* in Loíza; in other words, he grew up in public housing (also called *the projects* in the US), in one of the poorest towns of Puerto Rico, also poorer than any US city.[89] Danny was discriminated for his origins:

> Here they also discriminate against you for this, for example they will say, "This man is from a *caserío*", and they treat you differently. I moved from the *caserío* when I was 18, but to get a job, before, I had to change my address in the application, denying where I came from, despite the fact I feel very proud of it. … If you lived in the projects, they would discriminate against you, and sometimes they wouldn't give you a job for the bad reputation.

Danny portrays the second-level interpersonal discrimination he faced from outsiders because of where he came from and demonstrates how, in Puerto Rico, a determinant of low social class, and thus discrimination, is living in public housing. These units, built with government funding and referred to as *Caserío Público* or *Residencial*, are areas where poverty and violence historically concentrated. In a study on homelessness in Puerto Rico, Florencia Velázquez Morales states how "due to the difficulties in accessing certain health, recreation and education services, those who live in these communities [public housing or low-cost housing] are at greater risk of facing socioeconomic problems that make them vulnerable to homelessness" (2016, 91–92).[90]

This showcases the harsh reality for people who are stigmatized for living in public housing, and the difficulties accessing basic services such as health, recreation and education when living in *residenciales*, also having repercussions on socioeconomics, vulnerability, and homelessness: "As an invisible barrier, the ability of residents to integrate

[89] See: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-city-rankings/poorest-cities-in-america, (accessed 01/01/2022); and https://datausa.io/profile/geo/loiza-municipio-pr (accessed 01/01/2022).
[90] Translated by the author from Spanish.

into these work centres without being discriminated against is limited… also in being integrated into these companies and agencies and in contributing to Puerto Rican society."[91] Discrimination and inequality based on where a person lives also display a marked gender dimension: in 2006, it was estimated that out of approximately 50,000 families living in public housing, 81% of them where female-headed households, showing how Puerto Rican women are specially affected by poverty and marginalization.[92]

Danny pointed out how socioeconomics can become an agent of discrimination within the *caserío* itself, explaining where he grew up people would not face race discrimination, given it was in Loiza, where "there is the biggest Black community of Puerto Rico." Instead, people were discriminated according to socioeconomic perceptions, based on "who had the best tennis shoes, who wore the best clothes, who can own the best things."

Class discrimination based on where people grew up or where they live is a widespread factor of discrimination among Puerto Ricans. Amauri, who was born in New York but grew up in a poor rural neighbourhood in Carolina after moving back to Puerto Rico, recalls: "My friends were from the *barrio* and didn't have economic means. They would speak with this farmers' accent, using words that were not common in the city… [They were] ashamed that in school people found out that they had chickens and hens, horses … it was something to hide."

Class, socio-economic background and where people live intersect with other social constructs like race and gender, multiplying factors of exclusion. Christina tackles some of the associations people make between class and race that shape perceptions: "I feel like people who are of lower economic social class have these cultural associations made to them just because they eat the food that they eat, or they like the music that they like, the fashion slightly changes, and these are all things that you can see outwardly which become associated with their race." Race, class, and gender intersect significantly in political representation for roles of power and decision-making, as Ricardo points out:

> In Puerto Rico, the higher you go up in economic class, the less you find dark people there. And you get people, to this day, who never spoke to a Black person. … If you look at the

[91] Translated by the author from Spanish, original text available at: https://www.elnuevodia.com/opinion/columnas/comosobrevivirlaviolenciaenelcaserio-columna-2524769/ (accessed 04/04/2021).

[92] http://periodismoinvestigativo.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FINAL-Informe-Audiencia-Pu%CC%81blica-PR-4-DE-ABRIL-2016.pdf, p. 110 (accessed 15/12/2020).

> Senate from the House of Representatives, I'd say the balance there is 9:1. … [But] it's implicit, and many people don't want to talk about it. [And for women], it's the same thing.

Minirka expanded on how the type of household one grows up in leads to further differentiation; single motherhood, or in her case growing up as the daughter of a single mother, was the greatest contributing factor in placing them in a lower social class bracket: "The social class in which I grew up my whole life is low-middle class. … I am the product of a single mother, a public employee, so that could classify as middle class, but it becomes low-middle class because we were alone, so that puts us into that bracket."

As a result, these combined markers affect access to resources but also perceptions and self-perceptions of what an individual can do, can achieve in life, and his/her overall outcomes based on socio-economic background and class belonging.[93] Poverty affects almost half of the Puerto Rican population, and it has racial and gendered dimensions: 45% of the population live below the poverty line, and the largest demographic living in poverty are females – in spite of the fact that almost 2/3 university degrees are awarded to women (34K degrees were awarded to women against 23K to men in 2017).[94] The level of income inequality is so high in Puerto Rico that in 2010-2013, it ranked as the fifth most unequal country in the world, with an average Gini coefficient of 0.55.[95] Individuals most affected by poverty and inequality sit at the intersection of gender and race; in other words, being a woman, and being dark-skinned, significantly increases the chances of being poor in Puerto Rico.

I interviewed Puerto Rican women self-identifying as poor, Afro-Puerto Ricans (or Black), asking them about issues of discrimination based on socioeconomics and class. I wanted to understand how this applied to their daily lived experiences, especially in relation to intersections with the other two key factors of marginalization – gender and race. In three separate interviews with women who self-identified as *Negras* and as coming from a low socio-economic background, I received the same answer, confirming that during their lifetime they had experienced discrimination for being women, for being Black, and for

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[93] http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-out-of-school-learning/i8102.xml (accessed 04/04/2021).

[94] https://datausa.io/profile/geo/puerto-rico (accessed 15/11/2021).

[95] The Gini Coefficient, or Gini Index, is a measure of the distribution of income across a population often used to measure the degree of inequality in a country; it is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 means the income is equally distributed, whilst 1 means that one person owns everything, but the rest owns nothing. 0.55 indicates a high level of inequality.

being poor. They also reported how the three factors of discrimination – gender, race, and class – acted both separately and jointly as factors of bias and prejudice. When I asked which one of the three they believed at present still affected them the most and kept them from being able to enjoy equal opportunities in various realms of society, they all responded "class". One of them, Nelie, described her process of "discovering" she was Black, and how as part of that path she started questioning how much the differential treatment she received was due to being Black, or a woman, or from low social class:

> I had never been taught I would be discriminated for the colour of my skin. This is something I learned later. When one starts becoming aware, then you go like, "Ah, this is why they wouldn't allow me doing this, and why I couldn't do that, now I understand." I was possibly being affected by it in some circumstances, but I would not attribute it to being Black. … But only later, looking back, I realized, "Wow, these things that were happening to me were a consequence of being perceived either as poor, and/or as Black, and/or as a woman."

Nelie's conclusion, like other interviewees embodying the same intersectionality – being Black, women, from low social class – is that in Puerto Rico, class acts as the strongest factor of discrimination among gender, race, and class:

> In my school, we were many of us with my same skin colour… Here, we segregate more for social class than race. Yes, we have racism, but classism is stronger, and I will say that has always been the case. … And I still know of people living in *caseríos*, public housing, that when they enrol at university, they pull out another address, or a PO box. Why? Because if they write Llorens Torres they will be discriminated against, no matter their skin colour, because people think that because they come from public housing, they have certain social characteristics. … These are very complex social phenomena that colonialism exacerbated and made more obvious.[96]

Amauri self-identifies as a Black middle-class man; he discussed how nowadays a poor White Puerto Rican is treated worse than a rich Black:

> People will make comments about the clothes he's wearing, what car he drives, where he lives, what cell phone he has, and these will be the main themes. From a racial standpoint,

[96] Located in Ocean Park, the *Residencial* Luis Llorens Torres is the biggest *caserío* in Puerto Rico, and the second largest housing project of the US. A film showcasing how art has served as a way out from poverty and gang violence there is available at: https://kristinapuga.com/tag/residencial-luis-llorens-torres/ (accessed 30/08/2022).

> here we understand that we have such diversity, that you can find a rich Black and a poor White, so daily people will focus on, “So, what work does he do?... He doesn’t have a car?”

Amauri commented that this value system, where material possessions justify considering somebody of higher or lesser value, and where socioeconomics are stronger drivers of discrimination than racial bias, is likely connected to the capitalistic-driven mindset of the US, where money attributes value more than skin colour does. Amauri also highlighted how such mindset, focused on showing off money and material possessions, creates a counterculture where being Black and growing up in the *hood* are not factors of discrimination anymore, as long as people acquire money and buying power. This also strongly relates to *urban* culture and the musical genres it produced, like reggaetón, trap, rap, and hip hop, and their iconographies:

> All these genres have been created by people from the hood, Black people, and sectors that have been lacking resources. It’s almost like a Black supremacy, but it’s actually a *barrio* supremacy, where it’s like “Look, I’m from the hood, but I have the car, I have the *bling bling*, and I sing whatever I feel like, I have it all.” But it’s focused on throwing at people’s face, “I come from the hood, but I was able to make it, and get out of it.”[97]

As reported by interviewees, money and economic wealth have become the highest discriminants when attributing value to people: in Puerto Rico, nowadays, rich people are considered of higher value, and of lower value if they are poor. Race and ethnicity have become secondary factors of discrimination behind the primacy of socioeconomics.

[97] Amauri, interview.

Chapter 2. Gender, Race and Class Discrimination in Puerto Rican Music

The inequalities affecting Puerto Rican society described in the previous chapter are reflected in its musical practices. Appendix I presents an overview of key Puerto Rican musical styles, discussing how social constructs have been determining factors in the creation of the island's autochthonous styles, but also for the contrasting reception they received among distinct social groups.

This chapter focuses on key aspects of discrimination across musical expressions. The first section discusses how gender bias at the societal level shows its by-products in Puerto Rican music production and performances. The second section examines how race and class are reflected into Puerto Rico's musical expressions, and the last three sections contextualize these phenomena specifically within the genre of bomba.

2.1 Gender Discrimination in Puerto Rican Music

When it comes to gender exclusions, I was able to witness how headliner bands and orchestras at the biggest festivals on the island are male dominated, being all-male combos where band leaders, lead singers and instrumentalists are exclusively men. There are some exceptions where bands have one female singer, and she is usually singing background vocals. This also holds true for the two most prominent salsa orchestras on the island, *El Gran Combo,* and *La Sonora Ponceña*. Between 2015 and 2022 I attended several festivals and major events in Puerto Rico, including the 2019 edition of Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastian, a yearly event taking place in San Juan in January attracting international tourists, and Fiestas Patronales de Cataño 2021, where both salsa orchestras, among others, appeared with their traditional all-male formations. Gender exclusions are not related to a specific genre or style, as they apply to plena combos like *Los Pleneros de La Cresta* and *Plenealo*, to merengue bands like *Grupo Mania,* and mixed bomba and Latin jazz orchestras like *La Tribu de Abrante*. No matter how traditional or innovative their sound is, the recurrent leitmotif common to all these combos remains being all-male productions.[98]

[98] This is a wider issue within the performance of Latin music, including outside Latin America and the Caribbean itself. For example, see Roman-Velazquez (2017) on salsa music in London.

The flier below of *Fiestas Patronales de Cataño*, taking place yearly, is a perfect example of a male dominated musical line-up, where the list of performances over three days comprises almost exclusively all-male bands. Also, in the images used, out of 33 people depicted, 32 are men – some of them pictured while singing, playing bass or with percussions – whilst only one is a woman, who is portrayed in a smiling close-up, without any visual reference to music activity or performance.

Flier of "Fiestas Patronales de Cataño" of 2021.

By contrast, Puerto Rico does not lack skilled female musicians, like percussionist and Meinl endorser Ama Ríos who has been music director for world renown urban singer Tego Calderón since 2014, and Resident Artist at the University of Washington in Seattle. Or Daniela Santos, a classically trained pianist who performs across the Caribbean, the USA and Europe, also playing keys and synth for urban singer Chencho Corleone. The

fact bands remain male-dominated, male-led, and that it is very hard for female instrumentalists to break the crystal ceiling, is the product of longstanding gender biased practices – in music, as in society.[99] Similar to what happens in other countries, female musicians are constantly excluded from being incorporated into all-male combos, and at times need to create all-women bands in male-dominated genres. For example, *Son Divas* was created in 2017 in Puerto Rico as an all-female response to male salsa orchestras, made up of 13 female instrumentalists and singers including graduates from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico and other preeminent music institutions.[100]

All-female bands can be 'reactionary' responses to longstanding misogyny in music production and performance, and can address key issues like gender bias, lack of representation and lack of positive female role modelling – also providing a chance for young generations of instrumentalists to identify as "women on stage" and women playing certain genres (Leonard 2007; O'Brien 2016). However, what all-female bands cannot address is the perpetual exclusion of female musicians from male-dominated genres and combos, resulting in lack of integration of performers and instrumentalists of both genders playing together across musical styles.

Other studies point out how Hispanic Caribbean musical expressions, and more specifically Puerto Rican, are ingrained with discriminatory practices and derogatory points of view towards women. Frances Aparicio in her book *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* presents a meaningful interdisciplinary and intercultural study on the island's genre, exposing

> The traditional masculine discourse that continues to imbue our everyday lives as Latinas/os with blatant objectifications and insidious mutings of women. … a musical industry dominated by men, salsa music continues to disseminate lyrics laden with problematic, misogynist, and patriarchal representations of women. … While Afro-Caribbean women… have sung with or against these discursive traditions, the politics of distribution and marketing, coupled with masculinist historiography, have systematically rendered mute their voices, relegating them to the margins of mainstream attention. (1998: xii)

[99] As noted in Chapter 3, gender discrimination in (music) academia is also a global issue. For gender gaps in the popular music industry worldwide, see Leonard (2007) and Jonas (2022).
[100] Available at: https://lasalsaesmivida.com/son-divas/ (accessed 31/01/2017).

Aside from issues of lack of female representation and absence of women instrumentalists in Puerto Rican orchestras discussed above, Aparicio (1998) highlights several additional elements common to salsa and other Caribbean musical traditions I also observed in relation to practices of gender bias within the music field. Recurrent aspects common to global and Puerto Rican music include male domination of the musical industry; misogynist and patriarchal representations of women through song lyrics and musical practices; female voices muted through systematic marginalization in school curricula – an aspect discussed in more detail in chapter 3, focusing on discrimination in music education.[101]

Beyond salsa, misogynist lyrics also linked to degrading representations of women in songs and music videos can be found when analyzing reggaetón through gender lenses. Appendix I points out how over time reggaetón has moved towards a focus on sexually explicit lyrics (which often are also sexist), a phenomenon strongly linked to the fact that most of the prominent exponents in the genre are men. Almost all reggaetón's #1 top artists and producers have been men over time, as pictured in this table:

#	**Artist**	**Earnings**
1	Don Omar	$22.5M
2	Yandel	$20M
3	Wisin	$20M
4	Daddy Yankee	$17M
5	Arcangel	$10M
6	Coscullela	$10M
7	Nicky Jam	$5M

Estimated earnings of top reggaetón artists of 2017 – all men.[102]

Interestingly, there was some change recently, as data collected above was from 2017; in 2022 a woman, Colombian reggaetón superstar Karol G, broke the male-dominated glass ceiling, entering in the top 10 of the highest net worth artists. However, the table below shows how exponentially lower the top female earner remains, at position number 8, with a net worth that is less than half than the top male earner, Bad Bunny – from Puerto Rico.

[101] The issue of sexist and misogynistic lyrics, particularly those glorifying violence against women, is a point of significant debate in relation to a range of musical styles, particularly rap and hip-hop in the United States (see, for example, Adams and Fuller 2006 and Sepehri 2020).
[102] Available at: www.dicomania.com (accessed 07/07/2017).

#	Artist	Earnings
1	Bad Bunny	$66.4M
2	J. Balvin	$42.6M
3	Rauw Alejandro	$39.3M
4	Myke Towers	$38.5M
5	Ozuna	$37.8M
6	Anuel Aa	$32.8M
7	Farruko	$32M
8	Karol G	$29.1M

Estimated earnings of top reggaetón artists of 2022.[103]

The overwhelming male presence in the genre translates into a predominant male gaze, promoting lyrical content and representational images of hyper sexualized female bodies, where women and girls are objectified and visualized as non-musical non-speaking/non-singing passive "sides" to active successful male reggaetón performers and their male crews.

For example, the 2014 reggaetón song 6AM of J. Balvin featuring Farruko says:

> *Ya son las 6 de la mañana* [It's already 6AM]
> *Y todavía no recuerdo nada* [And I still can't remember a single thing]
> *Ni siquiera conozco tu cara* [I can't picture your face either]
> *Pero amaneciste aquí en mi cama* [But you woke up in my bed next to me]

These lyrics showcase the artist singing about a faceless woman he just slept with, reiterating an imagery of women objectified and used as passive sides whose sole function is providing male pleasure. The song of 2017 *Diles* (Tell her) featuring Ozuna, Bad Bunny, Farruko, Arcángel, Ñengo Flow, DJ Luian, Mambo Kings, also reflects these elements; in particular, what emerges alongside women's hyper sexualization, is a man's idyllic and

[103] Available at: https://popnable.com/stories/51139-the-most-paid-latin-singers-in-2022 (accessed 06/12/2022).

antithetical dream of his woman to be generally prude but also very "dirty" at the same time – as long as she only does it when she's in bed with him:

> *Ella no es actriz porno* [She's not a porn actress]
> *Pero conmigo hace un pa'l de escena'* [But with me she makes a couple of scenes]
> *Ella fuma y chinga desde la high* [She's been smoking and fu**ing since high school]
> *Siempre jangueando a escondi'as del pa'i* [Always hanging out hiding from her dad]
> *Tiene un mahón que no es de su size* [She has a pair of tight jeans that are not her size]
> *Y yo loco de hacerle un creampie* [And I'm crazy to give her a "cream pie"]

There are exceptions to the rule, but these examples reflect much of the content of reggaetón chart-toppers, perpetuating gender discriminatory practices in Puerto Rico and beyond, given its popularity. These iconographies of reggaetón have direct repercussions on its young public; during fieldwork, mostly in early 2017, I observed reggaetón is extremely popular among Puerto Rican teenagers who gather at discos and clubs at very late hours, mimicking its clothing and dancing styles, *perreando* – literally, dancing like dogs, in reference to dance moves making explicit allusion to specific sexual positions characterized by male domination and female submissiveness.

There are other examples of scholarly literature stressing similar issues of gender bias in Caribbean popular music more at large; using ethnography, song lyrics and film as sources, scholars documented female stereotyping and sexist representations emerging from musical practices across the Caribbean.[104] Deborah Pacini Hernandez in "*Cantando la cama vacía:* love, sexuality and gender relationships in Dominican *bachata*" (1990), argues that "Dominican men are *machistas*, they want their orders to be obeyed. But their women don't like to obey them, and from this come their conflicts" (1990, 351). This is well expressed in the lyrics of bachata, the leading musical genre in the Dominican Republic, also through the differentiation between romantic love and sex. Pacini Hernandez explains how, in relation to social and economic changes, "While in early bachata a man might indeed complain that a woman has left him, in the later songs he often goes on to vilify her and to condemn all women" (1990, 354). Another relevant observation she makes in her study is that there was a shift from the 1960s, where most songs referred to the female subject of the song directly ("you"), to the 1980s when about half of the songs were

[104] See, for example, Rohlehr (1990), Cooper (2004), Aparicio (2022).

directed at the singer's male *gang*, referring to the woman indirectly in the third person ("she"):

> The use of the third person not only distanced the woman from the singer but objectified her as well: she became the problematic 'other'. These songs, then, are not so much a dialogue (albeit imaginary) between men and women, but a dialogue between men and men *about* women. The listener to these songs is not situated within an intimate relationship between a man and a woman, but in a more public, masculine narrative space defined by the absence of women. (1990, 355)[105]

These elements resonate with reggaetón and trap Latino not only in the use of language and the third person "she" to refer to the female subject, but also in the iconography that can be found in music videos, where the male lead singer is surrounded by a vast male *corillo* (his so-called crew). This male gang nods to his verses whilst being surrounded by semi-naked women acting like 'side pieces', whose activities are limited to caressing men and shaking buttocks in their faces, while men 'do their thing' sharing common activities.[106]

Along these lines, it is worth noting that even when women reggaetón and trap Latino female singers are chart-toppers, they mostly keep adhering to this model of femininity, with the same moves and outfits. Examples include Anitta, a Brazilian singer who had one of the biggest reggaetón hits of 2022, Envolver, that became famous internationally in association with the Envolver Challenge. Here, she performs a recognizable perreo move, usually with her buttocks completely exposed. The same goes for Farina, a Colombian singer and freestyler who appears in countless trap Latino and reggeatón musical featuring. In 2022 she and Dominican superstar El Alfa published a track fully dedicated to women's buttocks – the opening lyrics of the song are *un culo bendecido*, lit. "a blessed ass". Contrastingly, female exponents of the genre highlight how the fact they are appropriating of male-dominated spaces, and display of their bodies and sexuality how they choose to, is indeed a form of women's empowerment. Chapter 5, focusing on Puerto

[105] Further information on these themes can be found in her book of 1995 *Bachata: Social History of a Dominican Popular Music*.
[106] For more discussion of reggaetón as a sexist musical style, see Araüna et al. (2019). For musical video references displaying the dynamic described, examples include: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgZcLdDR7qw; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_NtAZBY13c; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5AUYuM3RkY; (all accessed 06/12/2022)

Rican bomba, discusses how women are redefining this genre according to their feminist views.

2.2 Race and Class Discrimination in Puerto Rican Music

Like phenomena examined in section 3.1 discussing how gender discrimination at the societal level in Puerto Rico is reflected in its musical expressions, a comparable dynamic can be observed in relation to race and class issues. The trajectories of musicians and composers on the island have been shaped by their racial and social backgrounds, and this is reflected in their musical production, their lyrics, but also in defining their goals as artists and the messages they can carry through their music. As Rivera-Rideau (2013) argues, “a cultural politics of blackness links salsa and reggaetón” denoting “a particular positioning that not only calls attention to the processes of racial exclusion embedded within Puerto Rico’s so-called racial democracy, but also situates the island within the broader African diaspora” (1). Since salsa and reggaetón were both generated by urban and working-class communities, they embed the lived and shared experiences of racial and class-based exclusions endured by these social groups. *Nuyoricans* (Puerto Ricans living in New York) were discriminated by large sectors of the US population in mainland in the case of salsa, and youth growing up in *caseríos* was discriminated by fellow citizens from higher socio-economic status in Puerto Rico in the case of reggaetón.

In Puerto Rico, there are examples of artists and songs across a range of styles tackling the issues of racism, racial prejudice and discrimination, the suffering of people of African descent, but also focusing on the (re)affirmation of beauty and pride for being Black – besides intentionally resorting to sounds from the African tradition.[107] Bomba, being the most Afro-derived of the Puerto Ricans autochthonous genres and one that was developed by enslaved people in many parts of the island, features several lyrics where the experiences of Black people are central to the storytelling.

An emblematic bomba song is “Los Negros de la Central” written by Jorge Ayala, where the whipping symbolizes the oppression of Black Puerto Ricans at the hand of Spanish colonizers in the plantation setting, who were treating them as inferior beings:

> *Los negritos de la central azucarera* [The Black people from the sugar mill]

[107] This can be understood as both a specific effort to transform conceptions of Blackness within Puerto Rico and also part of a wider black cultural empowerment movement in the United States (see Rivera-Rideau 2015).

Trabajan de sol a sol como si animales fueran [They work from sunrise to sunset as if they were animals]
Machete en mano abriendo camino al son de los latigazos [Machete in their hand paving the way to the sound of lashes]
Se alimentan de dolor, de angustias y malos tratos [They feed on pain, anguish and abuse]

In salsa, one of the key figures for the development of the genre in Puerto Rico is Rafael Cortijo, born in 1928 in Santurce, a predominantly Black area of San Juan; Cortijo was the leader of *Cortijo y su Combo*, an all-Black orchestra playing salsa at a time in which this was uncommon, especially in prestigious settings and in the media. Another important contribution Cortijo made in relation to the integration of Black culture into a Puerto Rican mainstream genre was that he combined bomba with salsa, "to reclaim blackness as fundamental to Puerto Rican identities" (Rivera-Rideau 2013, 6), and exported this Afro-Puerto Rican sound internationally, also exposing "the misrecognition of blackness as 'primitive' that is intrinsic to western modernity, and instead presented blackness as equally 'modern' as whiteness" (ibidem).

Several original songs recorded and performed by *Cortijo y su Combo* also explicitly dealt with racism, with the goal of addressing the issues of poor Afro-Puerto Rican communities, providing a critical space in a genre and through a medium that were not conventionally doing so. Examples include Cortijo's collaboration with Bobby Capó, a Puerto Rican born musician who moved to New York and experienced racism and exclusion from orchestras because he was *too dark*.[108] Together they produced *El negro bembón* ('The Black man with big lips') in 1958, a song that "can be read as a denouncement of racial violence and an account of the everyday strategies that black Puerto Ricans must use to avoid such incidents … pointing out the persistence of racism despite rhetoric to the contrary" (Rivera-Rideau 2013, 7). In the song, the big lip, a trope commonly associated with *Africanitude*, becomes the reason why he was killed:

¿Y saben la pregunta que le hizo al matón? [And do you know what they asked the killer?]
¿Por qué lo mató? Y diga usted la razón" [Why did you kill him? Tell the reason why]
¿Y saben la respuesta que le dio el matón? [And do you know what the killer answered?]
"Yo lo maté por ser tan bembón" [I killed him for having such a big lip]

[108] See Flores (2004, 70) and Glasser (1997, 76–77).

During our interview, Christina, mentioned how popular this salsa song is in Puerto Rico, also highlighting how the word *bembón* has a double meaning; on one side it can literally be translated into "big lipped", but the word can also be used to refer to somebody who talks too much, touching on 'street' culture lingo. "*Bembón* can also mean that you talk too much; there's a culture here of not telling authority figures of what happens in a neighbourhood, of people keeping it to themselves, like keep quiet or else you get street justice."[109] The duo Cortijo-Capó also produced *El negrito de Alabama* (The Black man of Alabama) in 1976, narrating the story of a young Black man who was lynched in the south because he had married a White blond woman. Besides writing songs denunciating racism and its by-products, Cortijo also celebrated Blackness, Afro identities, and the resilience and beauty of these communities, like he does in *Las caras lindas* (The beautiful faces).

Beyond songs and lyrical content, race and class issues also directly affect musicians and performers, especially in relation to the genres they play. There is a direct connection between playing autochthonous musical styles associated with Blackness and poverty, like bomba and plena, and the way the performers of these genres are treated on a professional and personal level:

> The musicians playing these genres are not at all put at the same level, and they would never be paid the same. Professionally, if musicians say they are playing in the symphonic orchestra they will be paid very differently as if they say they are working with Tambuyé playing bomba in Rio Piedras. It's completely a whole other vision, and it's not just about how much they pay you, but also how they see you as a human being. If you play classical music, you are a scholar, and even if you are the worst among all classical musicians, they will still consider you higher.[110]

During a conversation held with a small group of people while attending a bomba event, I was told how someone said about Marién, one of the most recognized and sought after bomba players and dancers on the island, "oh, but she's only a bombera", after having defined Amarilys, another bomba player and dancer, a 'musician' on her own right.[111] They both play *primo* solo drum, they both are considered among the best bomba players in Puerto Rico, they both teach percussion at Tambuyé, but the difference is that Amarilys has a conservatory degree in jazz percussion and Marién does not. Academia defines

[109] Christina, interview.
[110] Minirka, interview.
[111] Chapter 5.3 discusses in depth Marién Torres and her artistic trajectory.

whether someone is considered a musician or not, despite both playing and teaching bomba in similar settings. Danny also reported how bomba musicians are discriminated economically, as they face pay discrimination associated with their genre:

> [People organizing events] always ask how much we charge, and for my bomba ensemble I can charge maximum $1500 for 9 people; a salsa ensemble that can have up to 12 to 15 people will be able to be paid $5000. … It's the genre. In the negotiation they will ask me "Your band plays bomba, correct?", and I say, "Yes, it's bomba." Sometimes you want to play a big stage, like the one in Cataño, where they celebrate *Fiestas de Cataño*; to play there I had to accept $1000. … Just for belonging to this genre, I am discriminated.

When I asked Danny what justification he was given for being offered a lower budget simply because he plays bomba, Danny replied that nobody ever provided him with that explanation.

In the next section I expand on wider issues of discrimination and colonialism in Puerto Rican bomba, and Chapter 4 discusses the type of resistance faced in academia when trying to teach autochthonous music and introducing subjects like bomba in curricula.

2.3 Puerto Rican Bomba

Different types of discrimination analysed so far are reflected within bomba, as discussed in section 2.5 below. First, in this section, I outline its origins, instrumentation, practices, and entering fieldwork on it, and in section 2.4 I examine what bomba represents through the words of the bomba community.

During my research trip to Puerto Rico in 2017 I attended classes in the Music Department at Universidad Interamericana, recinto Metro, including Ricardo Pons's Conjunto de Bomba y Plena; through the connections I made there, I had the chance to hold interviews and conversations with music students, musicians, performers, and teachers. Still, I kept feeling I was only scratching the surface of an island with such an intricated past, socio-cultural, and racial complexities related to its double colonization, and with an incredible richness of sounds and music production – especially considering it is relatively small and has a population of only 3 million people. My perception during my early research trips was that Puerto Rico might have been 'hiding' other musical and cultural expression(s) embodying its multi-faceted reality, burdensome past, and present history, beyond those readily available in tourist areas and mainstream performances.

By chance, the day before I was to leave Puerto Rico in the spring of 2017, Ricardo Pons told me there was a *toque de bomba* I should absolutely see; unknowingly, I was about to make my most meaningful musical encounter right when I prepared to depart. Until then, I had seen all kind of performances, including salsa, plena*, música jíbara* and *troubadores*, but the only bomba I experienced was the one of the Bomba y Plena Ensemble at Universidad Interamericana.[112]

Ricardo had given me the direction of the site, COPI, which is in Piñones – also the house of a natural reserve, and one of my favourite places on the island.[113] As soon as I arrived, I perceived the atmosphere at COPI being extremely different from any other place previously visited in Puerto Rico. Usually, performances of the music styles mentioned above were held in city squares, touristic venues, fancy hotels, or celebrating special occasions, recurrencies, celebrations, fairs, and other events in high-profile locations. COPI was not fancy, and it looked like a converted farmhouse, quite low-key, but extremely well kept and cared for; it felt relaxed but also ceremonial and sacred at the same time. I was lucky to find a parking spot in the extremely crammed lot, and next to my car a horse was tied to a tree – another thing I had never seen in the San Juan metropolitan area.

Stepping out of my car, I realized the sounds I was hearing were different from anything I previously witnessed in Puerto Rico; they were raw, loud, deep, fast, extremely 'groovy' and 'direct'. Also, the instrumentation, the vocal delivery and the call-and-response pattern immediately made it sound more *African* than anything I heard in Puerto Rico until then. I felt that, if it weren't for the lyrics being in Spanish, one could have easily thought of having been dropped out of the Caribbean straight into some Sub-Saharan Africa location.

COPI was very crammed, and for me as a short person it is always hard to find a decent viewpoint; I was able to climb up a side window and sit on its sill, so I could be elevated enough to see the stage where the musicians were performing, and the batey where numerous dancers all wearing bomba skirts were lined up in a semi-circle. As I finally laid

[112] A *troubadour* is a type of singer (a trovador) who sings a variety of styles – e.g. boleros, tangos, romances, décimas, etc – grouped together as trova. Similar phenomena take place across Latin American countries, including Cuba and Chile. For further information, see Hernández (1993) '"Décima, Seis," and the Art of the Puertorican "Trovador" within the Modern Social Context'.
[113] COPI stands for Corporación Piñones Se Integra

my eyes on the performance, beyond hearing it, I was hit by many additional striking feelings at once.

First, as a musician and a dancer, what I was witnessing was simply marvellous – the steps, the clothing, the energy, the bodies in movement, etc. – but most of all, as a researcher, it finally clicked. What I suspected the island might have been producing musically because of its colonial past, its history and its mix of peoples and cultures (with a specific reference to the enslaved African people for whom Puerto Rico became a home), but I had not yet 'found', was finally there right in front of my eyes. I could 'see' and 'feel' the struggle, the redemption, the resistance, Africa, the *Negritude*, the 'soul', the community, the strength, the pride, the pain, and the power of this group of people. And I realized these were very likely those 'second-class citizens' my research had been documenting only through secondary sources and in few of my interviews until then.

Generally speaking, as a musician, and as a human being, what strikes me the most about music and during performances is the element of emotional transfer, of being impacted by the transmission of content and of a message (vs pure aesthetical beauty and formal perfection). In other words, I am impressed by art with a mission, with the power to change people, and that *says* something. This encounter with bomba, the power of representation it carried, the meaningful lyrics of the songs, how involved performers and public were, the spirituality connected to the music – embodied the very core of what I believe art and music should be about, and it is what impacted me so deeply and unexpectedly.

Also, in spite of our distinct upbringing in terms of geography and racial background, the class element and the discrimination encountered (because of a person's looks, or being judged because of the house one lives in – in short, being treated by others as the outsider, inferior) are what on a deeper level possibly made me feel a connection to this musical form and to how people were using it as a vehicle for expression, self-care, and cure for trauma.[114]

It was also the first time I saw so many Black Puerto Ricans gathered in the same place; another element striking an explicit connection to their African roots was the clothing used by dancers and performers, displaying three key colours – red, gold[115] and green – also

[114] The thesis Introduction explains how these elements resonate with my personal history.
[115] This seems to be more often referred to as gold, but in other contexts it is called yellow.

referred to as Pan-African colours, used by many Pan-African nns and by the Rastafarian movement.[116]

In retrospective, what struck me the most was the sense of community, democratic sharing and respect emanating in and around the batey – what Bárbara Abadía-Rexach (2019) has defined "*un espacio democrático para hacer cultura*", a democratic space to make culture. From the way both the public and the performers were behaving – and often mixing, because a spectator could suddenly turn into a solo dancer or a barril drummer – it was clear that most of the people at COPI knew each other, and that this performance was somehow a sacred space and a ceremonial they were sharing together. It was also evident there were hierarchies among those performing, but that these were not the product of an imposed enforcement. Rather, the result of praise and respect gained by a person for their dancing or playing skills, their community engagement and their status as mothers, fathers, seniors, or elderly.

Finally, it was astonishing to see how people of all ages were sharing and enjoying the same musical event with similar excitement and appreciation. Most of the genres I heard before on the island had quite direct age associations: salsa usually attracts a crowd of people mostly in their 40s and 50s, whilst reggaetón is heavily populated by teenagers. During this bomba performance I saw children accompanied in the batey by mature dancers teaching them how to *solo*, in addition to men, women, teenagers, middle-aged people and elderly all dancing, playing, and singing alongside. Entire families were hanging out together while attend to a live music event; various types of home-cooked food and an informal bar were also part of the scene. This cross-generation genuine and family sharing character of bomba is one of the aspects that, as a seasoned performer and live music fan myself, I found most unique. In fact, I had not previously witnessed it elsewhere in a music and dance performance not connected to specific holidays or events – such as national holidays, weddings, etc. People of all ages were simply choosing to be there, on a Friday night, with their entire families, to *hang out* and 'do' music together for the fun of it.

[116] The Pan-African colours – red, gold, and green – are derived from the flag of Ethiopia which, in homage to its resistance to European control during the era of African colonization, influenced the flags of many newly independent states in Africa after liberation as well as the 'Back to Africa' symbols used by the Pan-African movement in the United States and the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica (Chevannes 2011).

Bomba is Puerto Rico's oldest and most Afro-derived autochthonous musical style, originating in the coastal areas of the island with the highest concentration of enslaved people.[117] This is how Dr Marie Ramos Rosado summarizes the origins of bomba:

> Bomba is an example of the African heritage in traditional Puerto Rican music. Before the end of the first quarter of the 16th century, the first groups of Black people arrived on our shores, brought as slaves with the aim of making them work in sugarcane. These people could not bring their drums, but in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean they built them with rum barrels and pig skin to give birth to the barrel of bomba.[118] (2011, 37)

In Chapter 1, I discussed how Puerto Ricans are a melting pot consisting of the ethnicities and cultures populating the island for centuries: this translates into their expressions, including music. Bomba, alongside its African roots, incorporates elements and sounds from Puerto Rico's other cultural and ethnic groups, as Ángel Quintero Rivera (2003, 6) explains: "Bomba music that lasted until today is not strictly African. It is Puerto Rican music of clear African roots, which also incorporates elements from other heritages in our making, and the social experiences of some Blacks and Browns whose daily life was spent in exchange with people from other origins."[119]

Several towns can be considered the cradles of bomba, including *Cangrejos* (today known as Santurce), Loíza, and in *area Sur* (the Southern area of the island) the towns of Ponce and Guayama, among others. Distinct bomba styles correspond to each geographic area where they originated, and when taught, they are referred to according to the regions where they come from, such as bomba *Cangrejera* – in other words bomba of *Cangrejos*, which today is Santurce, therefore bomba of Santurce – bomba *Sureña* (of the South), etc. The various regional bomba styles present several commonalities, summarized below.

Bomba instrumentation comprises a *maraca de bomba*, *cuás*, and a minimum of two *barriles de bomba*: one *buleador* drum and one or more *subidor* drum(s). Maraca de bomba is made up of hardened fruit shells which are filled up with seeds; cuás are two wooden sticks; both maraca de bomba and cuás are elements derived from Taíno culture, although they also bear resemblance to some African musical instruments, such as the *shekere* (Manuel et al. 2006). Barriles literally translates into barrels, as these drums were

[117] For further detail, see Alvarez Nazario (1960), Barton (2002), Pérez (2002), and Rivera-Rideau (2013).
[118] Translated by the author from Spanish.
[119] Agüita de ajonjolí, El Nuevo Día, 24/08/2003. Translated by the author from Spanish.

historically made up of wooden barrels used to transport liquids in ships during transatlantic voyages. These were then repurposed as drums, with the addition of *cuero de chivo* (goat leather), similar to the design of various cylindrical, goatskin-covered drums of West African origin. The buleador drum is the one in charge of solos, and the subidor drum(s), provide accompaniment to the buleador. As with many other Afro-Caribbean musical forms, the complex timbrical textures created by this combination of drums and percussion in bomba represent adaptations of African musical practices (León 2007).[120]

Bomba performance protocols also share common aspects across different regional styles: the *batey* is the circular dancing area in front of the performers. The Taíno word batey was used to refer to a ceremonial space for communal performance and ball courts, and it represents a space that could be claimed by the poorest working-class communities for collective embodiment and expression (Power-Sotomayor and Rivera 2019).[121] In the context of bomba, it is inside the batey that dancers carry out their dance improvisation, one after the other, through a series of *piquetes* (improvised bomba steps), presenting slight performative differences based on the bomba style being played. Accents are marked by various body parts and in some cases by a skirt, traditionally used by female bomba dancers; in recent times some male performers have been challenging gender stereotyping by performing with skirts as well.[122] The most notorious male dancer in contemporary bomba often performing with a skirt is Lío Villahermosa, who can be spotted dancing at *bombazos* across the island.[123]

Piquetes are scored by the buleador drum marking an improvised dance that starts and ends with the dancer greeting the soloist drummer. The relationship between the solo dancer and the solo drummer during their musical dialogue varies, resembling a dynamic

[120] For more information on bomba instrumentation, refer to Cartagena (2004), León (2007), Peña Aguayo (2015), and Colón-León (2021). For further discussion of the African origins of bomba instruments, see Vega Drouet (1979) and Quintero Rivera (1992).
[121] The batey is also known by the Spanish word *soberado* which, in Puerto Rico, refers to the public floor space in a hut shelter, alluding to the collectivity and sense of shared space represented by the batey.
[122] Similarly, in Argentina, Sofia Cecconi (2009) describes dynamics of how the queer-gay-lesbian scene in Buenos Aires has been transforming traditional tango into so-called "*tango*-queer", challenging stereotypical dancers' role assignations separating "the roles from issues linked to the sexual or gender identification of the dancer, freeing the dance from labels" (translated from Spanish); Lenarduzzi (2012) reflects on gender roles and the body in the electronic scene there.
[123] Bombazo is a colloquial expression referring to bomba performance or bomba events. More on Lío Villahermosa, and the inclusive Community Batey in La Perla, can be found at: https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/bomba-resistance-puerto-rico (accessed 22/11/2022).

two could have in a conversation, or taking place during a duel, or happening while flirting, or in a close partnership. It all depends on the song's lyrical content and its message, or on the bomba musical style performed, but also on the skills of drummer and dancer and the mood of the batey in that specific moment, etc.

As Salvador Ferreras (2005) describes, while the overall mood during bombazos tends to be positive, in some circumstances the skills of the performers are challenged, and unwritten signals or codes of etiquette can be used to indicate 'victory' in a dance/drum duel. A drummer who is struggling to keep up with the challenges of a dancer for more *repiques* (solo strokes) may 'give up' by returning to the main drumming pattern of the accompanying drums. Similarly, a dancer who has overstayed their welcome or is not capable of matching the drummer's strokes may be forced out of the batey by a drummer returning to the patterns without any signals from the dancer. Julian Gerstin (2004) affirms that this kind of 'challenge dancing', representing an 'agonistic display' between a solo dancer and a lead drummer, is a widespread African type that involves equally complex dancing and drumming and thus relies on significant virtuosity from its performers.

The *cantador* (male) or *cantadora* (female) – lead singer, or soloist – starts each song *a cappella* by calling out the song's chorus (main theme), which must be recognized by the musicians and dancers to perform its corresponding rhythmic and dance style. Once the buleador plays the *llamada,* a fixed rhythmic pattern based on the bomba style played by the soloist drummer at the end of the singer's a cappella call out, the accompanying drummers join in, and the group performance starts. The vocal performance is characterized by a constant alternation between the lead singer and the *coro* – a group of singers made up of drummers, dancers, background singers and often the public, who collectively sing during the entire performance. The lead singer improvises lyrics and melodies over a fixed duration of bars, while the coro sings out fixed choruses throughout the duration of the song.

There are more than 30 bomba styles; among these, some bomba styles are more recurrent than others as they are taught and played more regularly, both on the island and by the diaspora. During fieldwork I had the chance to witness bomba performances across various regions of Puerto Rico. Additional knowledge was gathered while attending the Bomba y Plena Ensemble at Universidad Interamericana and undertaking bomba dance and percussion training at Taller Tambuyé, as mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 5. I witnessed how – with slight regional differences – a handful of most recurrent styles

are being taught and performed in present times; the table below captures the bomba styles more recurrently performed between 2015 and 2022.

Region	Bomba Rhythm
Santurce	*Sicá* – a 4/4 rhythm, the most commonly played throughout the island *Yubá* – a 6/8 rhythm, associated with intense, deep, dramatic lyrics and performances *Cuembé* – a 4/4 rhythm similar to *Sicá*, but with an extra hit *Holandé* – the fastest among the Santurce rhythms, in 4/4, often associated with the *plena* rhythm
Loíza	*Seis Corrido* – the fastest and quickest bomba rhythm, and the most played by Loíza peformers *Corvé* – it is a rhythm in 6/8 played from medium to fast tempos
Area Sur	*Guembé* – a quite similar 4/4 rhythm to Santurce's *Cuembé*, usually played slower *Leró* – a similar rhythm to Santurce's *Yubá* in 6/8, but with an extra hit *Belén* – a slow 4/4 rhythm, used generally for melancholic themes *Cunyá* – a 4/4 rhythm where low drum sounds predominate

Most popular bomba styles (2015-2022), grouped by their 3 main regions of origin.

Among Puerto Rico's autochthonous musical styles, bomba is considered the genre that most embodies and displays the island's African roots and inheritance, given it originated among enslaved African communities as a form of expression and protest. Bomba was, in fact, a way to communicate a whole range of emotions, from happiness to suffering, but also to pass along coded information among enslaved people in a form that slaveowners would not be able to understand through steps, gestures, movements, lyrics and rhythms.[124] Herrera (2020) highlights that bomba was used to call meetings among enslaved people and even organize revolts and escapes, suggesting it served as a form of resistance and protest in concrete and symbolic terms. Similar counterhegemonic strategies were used by enslaved African peoples to resist colonialism and fight for liberation in various contexts. For example, in South Africa, camouflaged messages and disguised tunes in songs were used to organize resistance in ways that could bypass the repressive censorship practices of the apartheid regime (Drewett 2003). There are many aspects related to bomba's origins and history that still live on today, for example its

[124] Narcisa Cordova Rodriguez, conversation on the road to Guayama, 2019.

character of resistance and its connection to forms of protest and dissent.[125] Besides its African roots, bomba also displays Puerto Rico's cultural and ethnic mix, for example in songs where lyrics are sung in a mixture of Spanish, Kreyol, French, and/or other African-derived dialects.[126]

Today, more than ever, and thanks to a revitalization that took place starting at the end of the 1990s, as further detailed in Chapter 5.1, bomba is very much alive and a living tradition. Dr Power-Sotomayor – a Latin and Caribbean performance expert – and Dr Pablo Luis Rivera – one of the major authorities on bomba and Afro-Caribbean culture, teaching at University of Puerto Rico – portray its nuances, multi-dimensionality and contradictions:

> [Bomba is] a living tradition that is simultaneously music and dance, culture and cultural product, political tool and fetishized commodity, community engagement and professional performance, historical archive, and embodied repertoire. … New bodies are always finding their way to the batey and new ways of being in it. Seasoned drummers hold it down for the amateurs. … Stories of new loves and new losses, new dreams and new memories are woven into songs. Artisans make a life – and in doing so make a living – through their carefully cultivated study of the secrets in the higüeras and seeds, wood and skins that make the bomba sound. Elders sit on the sidelines, discerningly waiting for the song that will get them up to dance. … Children run in and around. … Ancestors take it all in. … Some grow up on the island and don't come to know bomba until the experience of diaspora sends them looking for a way to connect home. Often, they are other AfroCaribeñxs, other AfroLatinxs, to whom bomba signals a place of reuniting with family, of remembering, of re-remembering. For many, learning bomba is part of a larger process of cultural and political awakening. … Outside the batey, politicians and artists varyingly cite and appropriate bomba for its symbolic power as a sign of resistance and as an oftentimes fetishized artifact of black life. (Power-Sotomayor and Rivera 2019, 6–8)

As described at the beginning of this section, unexpectedly, at the very end of my second research trip, I realized I finally found the type of music and community expression that embodied, and performed, the socio-historic dynamics I had been studying and documenting during my time researching Puerto Rico. I therefore decided to focus part of my investigation and my following research trips on the island on the practice of bomba and its community. My goal was to investigate their plurality of voices and capture what

[125] One recent example is *Barrileras del 8M*, as described in Chapter 5.3.
[126] Marién Torres, bomba classes at Taller Tambuyé, 2018–2019.

bomba is to them, how it expresses the story and the lives of a certain social group of Puerto Ricans through its sounds and movements, and how it is also 'giving back'. In fact, bomba acts as a vehicle to express, (re)appropriate and redeem the hardships of their present lives and their ancestors'. Even if I had yet not read up yet on all those aspects, through that first bomba performance in Piñones, it was crystal clear to me that bomba meant all of that to its community. Indeed, it was all of that and much more, as the next section discusses through the words of the bomba community members themselves.

2.4 The Bomba Community

This section discusses key themes presented across the thesis through the lenses of the bomba community, made up of those who perform, take part, study, teach, watch or listen to bomba in its dedicated spaces. It analyses what bomba means to them, and it provides testimonies of what bomba is today and what it represents.

During interviews, I invited bomba community members to reflect, elaborate, corroborate, and expand on themes dealt with in this research, especially in relation to discrimination and identity, vis-à-vis their experiences with bomba. By doing so, bomba can also be seen here as a case study showcasing how supporting autochthonous musical expressions – ensuring they are made visible in society, in public performances, and properly taught in a country's academic institutions at all levels – can act as a channel of anti-discrimination, anti-colonialism, empowerment, and identity-(re)affirmation. The testimonies presented below were collected mostly around the San Juan metropolitan area and demonstrate how teaching, learning and the transmission of autochthonous music can counteract all three levels of discrimination – according to the CPJ model.[127]

Chapter 1.4 discussed how Blackness, historically, was seen as something negative in Puerto Rico through the lenses of its colonizers; consequently, they also stigmatized bomba because of its associations with African heritage and Black identity, as Christina explains:

> The fact that something is associated with Black people, that just adds another layer saying that it's bad, as in people who are trying to oppress you telling you it's bad. And so, at some point, you get told something over and over and over, or something becomes criminal, or something becomes mocked and ridiculed, that it gets to you, and you believe it to be true.

[127] Appendix II presents a detailed list of all interviews.

Indeed, in bomba, Blackness in all its aspects, including aesthetic, physical, rhythmical, is uplifted to an absolute value. Puerto Ricans with Afro phenotypes (re)affirm their identity, often taking ownership of a newly discovered sense of pride in their aspect and roots. This contributes counteracting lifelong internalized negative self-perceptions for their colour and racial background (third level discrimination). Minirka explains how bomba supported her in a personal journey of self-liberation and racial empowerment:

> There are three levels: there is the musical part, the ancestral component, and the liberation, in a process where you are first bringing in some baggage, things you have been enduring, and various fears due to unfounded doubts or personal insecurities. So, you enter this space where you start connecting with many things that are linked to these ancestral fears, also related to your race and your ethnicity, to social discrimination for your social class and beyond, and there is a convergence of all these elements. So, suddenly, you feel like 'This represents me. Suddenly, *this* represents me. Finally, I am encountering something that I feel represents what I have lived for many years, in which they have silenced me, and I have been silencing myself', as these are two distinct things, one also decides not to speak. … There is an awakening, an empowerment for many people, who suddenly realize "Why have we endured all this situation, why have we believed in this."

Amauri shared how it was the connection between bomba, Blackness, history, and self-identification and empowerment that made him decide dedicating his life to teaching it:

> [Bomba] is the most appropriate tool, from a historical standpoint, to carry the message of Afro-descendants and of Black pride. It's about lack of representation as well … When I was young you would notice that it was most appropriate and more accessible to see rural music, it was the most accepted by the public, but bomba and plena would not make it to the stage, when I was a child, that did not exist.

Pablo also touches on how teaching bomba is a tool to educate Puerto Ricans on their African roots and history, uplifting Blackness, and awarding it the value it was stripped of:

> The simple act of practicing bomba makes you become aware of a historical reality… First, it awards [Blackness] the value it deserves, and secondly it generates other things inside the individual. I use bomba as a vehicle, and this vehicle can lead me to achieve other things: self-esteem at the personal level, recognition of ones' identity, recognizing being Afro descendant. Which for me is so important, not just for the person who looks Black phenotypically, but also for the others. As we say here, "We all have Spanish descent." But don't we all have African descent as well? … And they say, "That's true, I didn't know, I didn't understand, and nobody would explain."

Amauri describes how learning history is an integral part of bomba training: “I started by taking a private class of *barril* de bomba; during my first class I had the drum there, it lasted two hours, and I did not play a thing, my teacher only talked to me about history, and I am very grateful to him for it I always say it, because it is the way I think it must be.” Chamir also details how bomba and folklore studies contribute to learning about the ‘real’ history of Puerto Rico, vs the whitewashed version promoted in curricula designed by colonizers:

> Encountering cultural folk music was what completed my path to meet that history – the history of Black people … The same goes for people who have done research or produced documentaries on certain themes and who are working with specific information, such as El Antillano by Tito Román Rivera … which shows how deep is the lack of awareness of Puerto Ricans over their own history, and it invites people to get oriented and to dig deeper.

Xavier expanded on how working with bomba deepened his historical awareness too:

> Something that really helped me was starting to work with folk music… I was listening to things I heard before, but it had been from the perspective of the message that came from the books of the colonizer, and not from the perspective of Blacks ... [in bomba workshops] they would not say “Black people arrived in Puerto Rico”, but they would talk about how Black people were abducted, how they were brought by force without anybody asking them who they were, if within their society they were princes or kings, they just brought them here by whipping. In our books they say, “They brought them here”, or “They arrived here”, which is even worse, as if they came on their own accord. All these things made a *click*.

Danny explains how in Loíza it is actually a customary practice to incorporate elements of Afro-descendant historical commemoration to bomba bateys:

> That’s when I started to hear more stories about how things were in the past, and that’s when I started feeling prouder to know more about my history as an Afro-descendant, of what Loíza used to be … The good thing is, and I don’t know how it is in other *bateys*, but at least in Loíza there is this habit, when we are playing, that we commemorate things that happened in the past, how people used to play, how they used to dance, this essence is still maintained. It’s good to connect with the people who know more.

Bomba as a vehicle for storytelling is something Christina also described: “Bomba… it’s an opportunity for community, it’s an opportunity to tell stories as well, because music was telling stories when there was not a lot of communication, songs would turn into

storytelling.” Minirka, who did not grow up around bomba but explored it later, explains how it acted as an instigator to dig into her roots:

> Bomba awakened in me many emotions, it reconnected me with the ancestors of bomba, but also with my own family’s ancestors, it made me go dig back for the history of my grandmother in Ponce, the history of my grandfather, the older ancestry, I looked at the census … I went discovering all these things because bomba took me to that space, and to search for what had come before. Bomba generates spirituality, and you reconnect with areas that have been kept hidden from you musically and socially.

These quotes are a testament to how bomba can act as a vehicle of identity (re)affirmation for Puerto Ricans with Afro phenotypes, uplifting the aesthetics of Blackness and counteracting lifelong internalized negative self-perceptions related to skin colour and race (third level discrimination). Additionally, also with the support of the wider bomba community in a journey of self- and Blackness (re)discovery, they can develop the tools and (self-) empowerment necessary to counteract first level (institutional) and second level (interpersonal) discrimination. Minirka describes how bomba promoted challenging models, beauty standards, encouraging her self-recognition journey:

> To develop a conscience of “We also have worth, we are also worthy” … Bomba added everything and wow, it’s an analysis I’m doing here and now with you, as you are bringing me on this journey, wow, it’s wonderful and I’m thankful to you. Bomba arrives in my life, and it brings this physical self-empowerment of the body, the dance itself, the way it uses the hips [makes my body] perfect for it for this kind of dance. In addition to this, you also discover your face and your traits, the beauty of what you have and your phenotypes. … Only nowadays I can look at pictures of when I was a child or a teenager and say, “Oh my God, how could I think that I was so ugly” … and when it came to clothing, I would cover up. When I got started with bomba [laughs], now I even take off my clothes! It was like taking off and getting rid of a whole history, as we would start dancing, and all the women would celebrate how beautiful I looked. So, they start putting make up on you, they put a head wrap on you, and you start feeling connected with these other people who have also experienced a lot of what you have gone through. It’s a whole different thing, it’s like looking in the mirror and suddenly recognizing myself, when I was almost 40 years old! I could have spent my whole life without experimenting this, I could have remained in a little cave, hiding and living there.

Similarly, Christina mentions experiencing her body differently, and gaining confidence through bomba dance: “I don’t know how to do other dances, so I would not be

categorized as a dancer in life, but I do have with bomba the opportunity to dance and feel confident about it. And it's a very particular dance, because you get to express yourself also, and there is no other form in my life that allows me to express myself that way."

Chamir described her journey encountering bomba and how it supported her as well on her path to self-reaffirmation:

> What attracted me at first was my interest in being part of that dynamic, and then the empowerment process arrived while developing consciousness... At some point I was able to feel empowered, to consciously empower myself of the fact I am Black… Bomba was definitely connected to it. I never felt ashamed of being Black, but in my growth, there were dynamics making you believe you are less, or that the other is better looking. With bomba one reaffirms him/herself in what you are and how you feel with yourself.

The element of being positively influenced by peers of the bomba community is something Chamir also commented on: "It's about being together, feeling supported among people who are aligned and think similarly. Sometimes one feels like giving up, but there is backup from the rest of us, so we can become stronger."

Finally, Tata Cepeda shared her perspective, as a member of one of the most influential bomba families in Puerto Rico, on how the need to pass on bomba was at the basis of her self-development too:

> When I was a kid, I was very shy, and this is why sometimes I get to a place and I look very serious, but that's a shell, it's like a protection shell, because I have always been shy... And what really helped me to flourish, and to be able to talk, and express myself, and communicate, it was bomba. Because I would say… "Everything I learned in my family, how am I going to pass this on if I don't talk about it, if I don't communicate it, if I don't move, if I don't look around. I must do it."

The quotes presented in this section showcase how experiencing bomba has helped many practitioners in their process of self-empowerment and counteracting discrimination. The next section discusses more in depth the three levels of intersectional discrimination – analysed at the societal level in Chapter 1, at the musical level in Chapter 2, and at the academic level in Chapter 3 – through the context-specific lens of bomba.

2.5 Bomba and the Three Levels of Intersectional Discrimination

Across this thesis, I discuss discrimination and biased practices at the societal, musical and educational levels in Puerto Rico, with a focus on the intersectionality of gender, race/ethnicity, and class. People and social groups that display several of the characteristics discriminated against – for example being a woman, being Black, and being poor – are those who have been most excluded and underrepresented.

Bomba represents a fertile setting to explore discourse on race and ethnicity and their complexities in Puerto Rico – as an analysis ground for past and present practices of racial discrimination on the island. Historically, and due to Puerto Rico's colonial past, White was considered 'beautiful' and Black 'ugly' (Godreau 2015); consequently, practices associated with each race embodied this dual categorization, like bomba, as Abadía-Rexach explains:

> So, given Puerto Rican *Bomba* is undoubtedly a Black music, its recognition and non-recognition on the island has a direct relationship with the way in which Black-related matters are taught and learned. A Manichean story is taught: the good and the bad, the black and the white, the positive and the negative, the visible and the invisible, the strong and the weak. The Indigenous also, is completely limited and reduced. … Precisely because it is a Black music, thinking of Puerto Rican *Bomba* away from discrimination and prejudice based on race is very difficult. And the reality is that in Puerto Rico anything Black-related is always viewed with reluctance.[128] (2015b, 62)

Taking it one step further, as explained in the thesis Introduction, since bomba is the most Afro-derived autochthonous music and dance style in Puerto Rico, I interrogated: "Are there correspondences between the fact that the people who created bomba are a discriminated social group, and the musical style being discriminated against as a product, and/or a reflection, of that?" Or, in other words: "Is bomba treated as a 'second-class' musical style? And, if so, is this the product and reflection of the fact that the people who created it and largely perform it belong to the 'second-class' citizens social group?" Unsurprisingly, my research demonstrated the answer to both questions is a firm 'yes', advancing knowledge on the interrelation in society between, on one side, a musical genre being discriminated, disenfranchised, invisibilized and recognized a lower status and value, and, on the other, the people creating and performing it being a marginalized group. This resonates with Fiorella Montero-Diaz in Peru, demonstrating how "indigeneity is associated with cultural backwardness and marginal economic classes" with clear links to how "negative attitudes towards a particular social group resulted in negative attitudes

[128] Translated by the author from Spanish.

towards the music associated with that group" (2018, 425). I believe these are key points to be further and thoroughly substantiated for the fields of musicology and ethnomusicology, given how hierarchies among musical styles, *oeuvres* and composers often relied on Western aesthetics and the primacies they attribute to elements like harmonic progressions. In fact, Western aesthetics tend to neglect aspects that might be central to non-Western styles, like rhythm – or how discriminatory practices towards the social groups that create certain genres have impacted such genres in the value recognized to them.[129] This dynamic has implications on how an underappreciated genre considered 'second-class', 'minor' and of lesser importance is also attributed the word 'folklore', having repercussions on the musical status of the genre.[130]

The Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP) is a governmental body created in 1955 with the goal to research, preserve and promote Puerto Rican culture. In the 1970s ICP, to incorporate more folklore into its programme, established strict criteria to determine the 'authenticity' of folkloric groups that would represent the organization and those making the cut would receive funding and perform during ICP-sponsored events (Dávila 1997, 68, 74; Rivera-Rideau 2013, 621). Consequently, the economic incentives associated with a genre like bomba being considered folklore likely contributed to *bomberos* agreeing to fall under such categorization; Rivera-Rideau (2013, 621) explains that ICP programmes, events, publications, and policies institutionalized bomba as 'African' cultural heritage.[131] This also led to positioning the bomba style from Loíza as the island's most 'authentic' folkloric manifestation of African tradition and the primary signifier of Puerto Rico's African

[129] This is further examined in Chapter 4. A growing literature on decolonization in ethnomusicology addresses this point significantly. Presentations at 'ICTM Dialogues 2021: Towards Decolonization of Music and Dance Studies' addressed how Western hegemonic power hierarchies could be decentred so Indigenous and other local epistemologies could be recognized and empowered. For further discussion, see Mackinlay (2015), who critiqued the complicity of ethnomusicology in maintaining white settler colonialism; Tan (2021), who highlighted the need to decolonize music and the academy but also decolonization narratives themselves; and Douglas (2021), who explored the reflexivity instigated in the ethnomusicology establishment by the Black Lives Matter protests.

[130] For discussion of the implications of relegating musical styles into genres such as 'folk music' or 'world music', see van Elteren (2011) and Taylor (2017); in relation to Latin American contexts, see Hellier-Tinoco (2004), examining how the 'folklorization' of certain dances in Michoacán, Mexico, serves as a classificatory tool to maintain hegemonic control over Indigenous populations.

[131] The issue of music as cultural heritage, particularly in relation to the UNESCO concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage, is discussed by many scholars with regard to various musical traditions; for an overview of music as living heritage see Oliveira Pinto (2018). For more critical appraisal of the impact of UNESCO recognition, with case studies on Croatia and Peru, see Hameršak and Pleše (2018) and Chocano (2020) respectively.

heritage; “These connections between Loíza, bomba and folkloric blackness rely on perceptions of the town as a natural ‘place of Otherness’ within Puerto Rico” (Pérez 2002, 16).[132]

This passage highlights the complexity of racialization dynamics in Puerto Rico and their interconnections with bomba. The opportunity for selected bomba players to access funding and performance spaces can act as an enabler for accepting musical categorizations like folklore and being crystallized within fixed construed parameters like the concepts of ‘authenticity’ and ‘folkloric Blackness’. In some way, this can be considered a form of third level discrimination – where the victim of discrimination internalizes it and might mirror it. The people of Loíza can experience first level institutional and second level interpersonal discrimination throughout their lives and being treated like ‘the other’. But, if such “otherness” turns into an economic opportunity, disenfranchised musicians and dancers are not in the position of turning down a gig – thus reproducing some type of discriminatory dynamics (Zaidi et al. 2021). This creates a reality where “… social constructions of race and place converge with musical discourses about bomba to represent Loíza as symbolic of the folkloric blackness that is integrated into Puerto Rican racial democracy without compromising dominant images of the island as whitened” (Ibidem). As a result, besides stereotyping blackness as folklore, this leads to not challenging race constructs and reaffirming whiteness as the norm.

In terms of the status today attributed to bomba and the role recognized to it, during fieldwork I witnessed that in most notable occasions, like the many *Fiestas* taking place, usually salsa and plena are the only styles performed. If there is bomba, groups playing it will be the first ones in the line-up, usually performing in the early afternoon when the sun is high, the temperature adverse for playing and dancing, and the public scarce.[133] I attended several public celebrations between 2015 and 2022 in Puerto Rico, and during that time bomba acts never performed as headliners; usually, these were *salsa* bands, especially the *Gran Combo* y *Sonora Ponceña*, with few exceptions for *plena* fusion ensembles like *Plenealo*. The time and order of performances not only have repercussions on the status of players as detailed in Chapter 2.2 and the genre being perceived as

[132] The complexity of the interrelation between musical performance, nationalism, authenticity and identity in Bolivia is discussed by Michelle Bigenho (2005).
[133] This is witnessed, for example, by the line-up of Sanse 2020, available at: https://www.discoveringpuertorico.com/san-sebastian-street-festival/ (accessed 28/11/2022).

‘lesser’, but also on their economies, as musicians playing in opening acts earn less than main acts.

Black musicians, and musicians playing bomba and other Afro-derived genres, are a historically discriminated group in Puerto Rico, as witnessed by Tata Cepeda, who belongs to one of the two main Puerto Rican bomba dynasties. During her interview, Tata stated she never faced discrimination growing up in Santurce in a community where people shared similar socio-economic and racial backgrounds. Indeed, Tata first faced discrimination as a bomba performer, when people ridiculed her for the traditional bomba attire, and Blackness:

> It was for my colour, through comments. For example, since I was a young kid, I have been a cultural worker, and sometimes we had some shows where we had to put on our costumes before getting in the car and get to the venue for the presentation fully clothed... As we are driving to the venue, with the traditional bomba attire in the car [I would hear], “Look at this Black girl, she’s ridiculous, with the head wrap and that thing on.” … They despised us, they do despise us, and they still despise us a lot. The elitist element, they do not only despise bomba, but they also despise our colour, they reject it.

Abadía-Rexach also substantiates the widespread phenomenon of discrimination towards Black musicians of all genres, including bomba: “It is *vox pópuli* that the Black musicians in Puerto Rico could not use the same front door as the people seen as white. These examples of discrimination are the very evidence of how racialization operates in Puerto Rico through music, including among *bombeadores* (2015, 26).”[134] Furthermore, the musical value of bomba and the dexterities of its musicians and dancers are underplayed because of their connections to *Negritude* and *Africanitude*, as Abadía-Rexach (2015b, 62-63) also witnessed: “The complexity of making music out of the *tambores* and other instruments, and of executing the peculiar dance does not stop giving *Bomba* a lower status. Hence, the undeniable link between bomba and racism in Puerto Rico.”[135]

Interviewees and various sources also reported how in the past bomba was considered a ‘dirty’ and ‘deviated’ musical genre, and there was no place for it in shared spaces during public celebrations (Rivera and Vélez Peña 2019). The connection between Black people’s ‘degrading ancestry’, and bomba being ‘their’ music – thus considered degrading – is well documented in various writings (Duany 1984). Another important aspect Chamir highlights

[134] *Bombeadores* refers to people who play bomba
[135] Translated by the author from Spanish.

is the element of religion and how some people wrongfully associate bomba with "the music of Blacks, of *Santería*, and there is racism and discrimination as well towards Black religions." Whether it is music, religion, or dance, expressions associated with Blackness are considered lesser, unpleasant, dangerous, lower. Amauri explains how Afro-derived genres were regulated over the centuries by both colonizers, but to different degrees: "[The US] prohibited bomba and plena from being performed in public squares. The Spanish were 'good' because they allowed slaves on Saturdays to perform bomba, but it was hidden… When the US arrived, they enacted the Ley de Mordaza, so you could not be in the street."[136]

Besides being prohibited, bomba underwent other processes that Black people and their cultures were subjugated to by colonizers for centuries as part of their form of exerting power and control: silencing and invisibilization.[137] As bomba was excluded from public life for so long, people performing it were discriminated by Puerto Rican's political, economic, educational, and musical institutions. A most recent example was shared by Christina: "I was going with Marién to this show she was going to have with Yubá Iré in a hotel … They told them to go through the back door, because 'Musicians should go through the back door'. And she said to me, 'You know that wouldn't be happening to me if I had a violin, that happens because I have a drum, and drums are Black people instruments.'"

This example, besides showcasing how musicians associated with Afro-derived musical styles are still discriminated in Puerto Rico, sadly resonates with Black musicians being segregated during the 1900s. Ángel recalled the case of Ruth Fernandez:

> … one of our main female singers was a Mulatto, her name was Ruth Fernandez, this was in the pre-salsa time, she sang in ballroom orchestras. She was a Mulatto, and supposedly Mulatto musicians had to enter a grand hotel from the back doors, where service people and waiters would get in, and she refused. She said "No", that she is the lead singer, and she will enter from the main doors, and she did it. She was our [Rosa] Parks, she just got in there.

Throughout the centuries, bomba originated racist reactions from Puerto Ricans and foreigners, inciting reflections around discrimination and race relations on the island,

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[136] Law 53 of 1948, also known as the Gag Law. For further details visit https://senado.pr.gov/document_vault/legislative_measures/2680/document/ps0673-21.pdf (accessed 28/11/2022).

[137] On the use of art to understand processes of obfuscation, and as a sociological tool to analyze the silenced and invisibilized, refer to Herzog (2017).

including on a political level. For example, in 1922 a bomba performance staged in San Juan in front of the officers of a US Navy Cruiser and Admiral Cole at the ‘Union Club’, also frequented by colonial officials and Republican Party leaders, provoked a scandal. Besides bomba dance at the time being still technically banned within San Juan, it was the use and display of Black bodies and the implications this would have on the American public’s perceptions of what is ‘Puerto Rican’ that preoccupied a certain fringe of Puerto Ricans. The newspaper *La Democracia* ran a front-page headline titled “An Act of Savagery at the Union Club” (1922); as Román described in his paper “Scandalous Race”

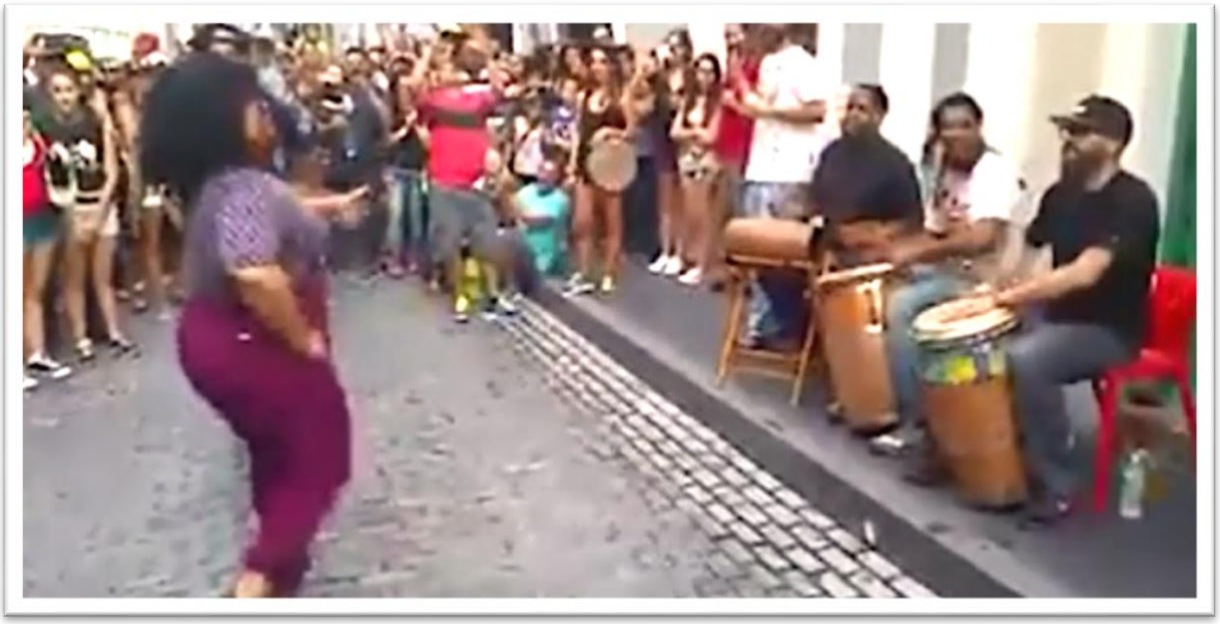
> The newspaper objected to the evening's program. According to the report, the booklet's cover bore a black figure, "though not the figure of one of our civilized and cultured negroes who worthily share civic life with us in Porto Rico, but that of an unfortunate, uncivilized and uncultured denizen of the Congo region in Africa." This decidedly foreign primitive, the journalist observed, was shown in "the attitude of a cannibal" with his mouth agape and eyes that betrayed bloodlust. (2003, 216–17)

La *Democracia*’s denunciation sparked a scandal and a political quarrel, with Secretary Conrado Rosario praising the publisher for criticizing this bomba performance he believed was ‘demeaning to the Puerto Rican people’ and ‘a manifestation of hatred’ against the superior ‘class’ of people at the club. As shown in Roman (2003, 234), Rosario positioned bomba as a threat to the entire island by presenting “Puerto Ricans as an uncultured and savage people’ foregrounding ‘blacks in the state of savagery.” What is central here is the choice of words and the derogatory discriminatory attitude of part of the Puerto Rican population, especially those in power, towards another part of the Puerto Rican population – its Black citizens. We can see words like uncivilized, primitive, cannibal, demeaning, ignominy, uncultured, and savage associated with a style of performance, dance, movement, music, and expressivity that belong to bomba as an African-derived form of artistic expression that has different aesthetics from White Western styles.

Some editorials of the time also documented that what a certain part of society found most offensive about the bomba performance was how it directly opposed a tendency of the 1920s that promoted Puerto Rico ‘whitening’ and modernizing, by leaving behind its past and forsaking ‘African ways’. In the end, following several discussions, Unionists and Republicans agreed that bomba was representative of something that did not exist (the Afro-Puerto Rican), so the best way to represent Puerto Rico’s cultural distinctiveness

would be *jíbaro* music (a more 'White', Hispanic, tradition). This averted conflict and satisfied all sensibilities, *de facto* shutting down discourses on race and blackness.[138]

Similarly, almost a century later, with strikingly similar epithets, a bomba dancer was ridiculed on Facebook for how her body looked and for how she moved while dancing bomba in a street performance recorded by a bystander and shared on social media.[139] The event took place in 2015 during the 45th edition of Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastián, or *Sanse*, a yearly recurrence in the month of January in Old San Juan. The bomba group *Tendencias* – made up of Pablo Luis Rivera, Rafael Maya, Amauro Febres and Gregory Palos – was playing at *Café Cuatro Sombras*; during their performance, dancer Glory Mar González-Mejías entered the batey.



An image from Glory Mar's 2015 bomba performance.[140]

Some bystanders filmed Glory Mar and published the video on Facebook, which was seen by more than 400,000 people who mocked and offended the way the dancer looked, her

[138] *Jíbaro* is "a Puerto Rican small farmer or rural worker, especially of mountainous regions" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jibaro, accessed 04/04/2021). The term is used for people from the countryside, farming the land according to tradition; this self-subsistence farmer is also elevated to iconic figure in local artistic expressions, including popular autochthonous songs.
[139] https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2019/10/11/more-americans-are-getting-their-news-from-social-media/?sh=374fc0c43e17 reports how Americans are getting their news from social media", thus I advance the parallel between the article in *La Democracia* and the Facebook post, because of similarities in content, but also in terms of exposure and reach. (Accessed 19/01/2022).
[140] Found at: https://www.facebook.com/pablo.l.rivera.7/posts/10155075294600322/ (accessed 15/12/2021).

movements, and the way she was using and displaying of her body in her dance. Comments included ridiculing Glory Mar for being overweight, for her big hips, and for the voluptuous movements of her bust and buttocks.[141]

This is how Pablo Luis Rivera, the leader of *Tendencias*, replied to these critiques:

> The people who uploaded the aforementioned video, and many of those who commented … showed that unfortunately they did not know what the presentation was about, and they tried to make fun of the people who were playing and dancing, and of the African roots components of our nation that were being presented in this space, which also shows many other prejudices and hatreds that … reveal a great lack of education in our country.[142]

Pablo reinforces how, what looked like a well-executed dance solo in the style of *Seis Corrido* to those who know bomba, to others who lack knowledge over autochthonous music and dance, this became an occasion to ridicule a Black female body performing and recalling the island's African inheritance. Also, discourses employed resonated with those used against Black bodies under Spanish colonial rule, when police repression against bomba dancers was justified as action against '*bailes de prostitutas*'. At this time, even *Mulatto* artists would scorn bomba drumming as 'savage' culture to distance themselves from slavery and gain 'decent' status (Suárez Findlay 1999). The paradoxical associations between the Black female body and wild animalistic hypersexuality on one hand, and Black bodies undesirability and ugliness on the other, were imposed in most European colonial regimes (hooks 2015). As shown by the reactions to Glory Mar's dance, they still influence applying beauty standards in postcolonial contexts (Magubane 2004; Santana Pinho 2010).

The 2015 bomba performance episode involving *bailadora* Glory Mar brings to surface another key dimension of intersectional discrimination in Puerto Rico – the targeting of Black female bodies. White, Western, ethnocentric aesthetics and concepts of beauty differ from other parts of the world and diverse cultural groups. Western powers, first through colonization, and more recently with other forms of domination including economic supremacy and media, keep dictating mainstream aesthetics and systems of thought (Shohat 1998). In other words, through media and various visual means – including social

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[141] Data presented here was gathered from users' comments to Facebook posts, other online discussions referring to this specific episode, and bystanders' conversations.
[142] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.facebook.com/pablo.l.rivera.7/posts/10155075294600322/ (accessed 15/12/2021).

media, fashion shows, beauty contests, commercials projected worldwide promoting Western products, etc. – the global West keeps defining what is beautiful and what is not. Placing such a strong emphasis on White, body normative, female bodies and biased concepts of femininity, also bears serious consequences on female objectification.[143]

Recurrent racially negative stereotyping of Afro-Puerto Rican women and their Black bodies targets their looks and attributes – mostly hair, buttocks and overall body sizes and shapes. Under attack is also how these bodies are displayed and being 'used', as it happened with Glory Mar's bomba performance; the way Black female bodies look, and move, causes offenses, vilification, and denigration.[144] Intersecting with racism, is the gendered nature of the strong negative reaction to Glory Mar's performance for what it represented for part of its public. Some people could not accept the freedom of a Black female body displayed publicly, in a raw and unapologetic manner, by a 'big' woman using her body proudly, in what is customarily associated with beauty and the pleasure of being watched – a dance.

In White, Western, male-centric and body normative aesthetics, this is the kind of body one is pressured to hide and be ashamed of, to the point that some viewers felt offended when encountering it in in the street during an improvised dance, with the added layer of a White aesthetic that finds 'inappropriate' to use the body so explicitly and so sexually.[145] As Verdejo Carron points out, the body-rhythm approach in African or Afro-derived cultures and regions is very different than what it is in White Western societies, and the aesthetics of Seis Corrido in bomba *de Loíza* embodies a direct connection with African approaches. As documented throughout the thesis, Puerto Rican society remains quite divided along the axis of gender, race/ethnicity, and class; what is "normal" for its Black population and "appropriate" for their cultural expressions, remains unacceptable for

[143] For a broader discussion on female objectification in relation to popular music and mediatized contexts, see Rose (1994), Lieb (2013), Hawkins (2017) and Fosbraey and Puckey (2021).
[144] Another testimony are the racist denigrating comments some Puerto Ricans directed at the 2019 Black South African Miss Universe, including saying she looked 'like a monkey', as reported by https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/nationworld/os-puerto-rico-miss-universe-20191210-qsdvlsvu2fffbbvu4sxfm6jpmy-story.html (accessed 28/11/2022).
[145] Mulvey's (1975) 'male gaze' theory has shown how gender power asymmetries in society have acted as a controlling force in cinema and other media contexts, sexualizing women as passive objects of heterosexual male desire and creating specific standards of beauty that are unrealistic and unattainable for women. Other scholars show how the Eurocentric racialization involved make this 'gaze' even more oppressive in sexualizing non-Western women and the standards of beauty even more unattainable (Hobson 2002; MisirHiralall 2017).

another fringe of Puerto Ricans who still carry sexist, racist and classist beliefs and behaviours. Black women (many of which also come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds) remain some of the most targeted and discriminated members of society, whether in their daily lives or in *their* cultural expressions, including bomba dance performance.

It is also important to consider how all these notions regarding what is appropriate are fluid and subject to ongoing change – at social, but also individual, levels. For example, a wider acceptation and re-definition from a negative to a positive (or from a *minus* to a *plus*), and celebration of Afro phenotypes and body traits has happened in recent times – like with Afro hair. Several interviewees shared how they were discriminated and mocked while growing up and in school settings because of their Black Afro hair; Christina describes how she still remembers the exact day this changed for her:

> For me it's a very pointed moment. I was walking home from university in 2012, and I was wearing my hair curly because I was like, "Curly it is, I'm not going to be torturing my hair with any chemicals anymore." This guy in his car stops me and goes like "Oh *chica*, I really like your hair", and he says he's a photographer who is starting a project celebrating curly hair. That was when I noticed that the trend was shifting. Also, he took pictures of me later on, and if you go to his webpage now it's full of pictures, and women submit their own photos to be featured on the web page.

This section discussed how bomba reflects all three levels of discrimination at the societal level; the testimonies presented by various members of the Puerto Rican bomba community in the previous section discussed how bomba can also provide the tools to counteract it at the individual level. Circling back to bomba acting as a platform for identity (re)affirmation, not just at the individual but also at the societal level, Tata shared how people in Puerto Rico resorted to bomba in the aftermaths of hurricane María:

> When hurricane María took place, it was so strong and so serious what happened, that many people said, "We were about to be erased from the world, from the map" ... As a result of that, people began to look more strongly for 'Who am I?', 'Where am I coming from?', 'Where am I going?', 'What happened?'. And so, they started searching for their roots again, and there was a boom of bomba.

This last quote summarizes how reviving autochthonous music and dance expressions like bomba not only can provide people with the tools to counteract all levels of discrimination, but it can also be a source of heritage (re)discovery and history (re)appropriation.

Chapter 3. Colonialism and Discrimination in Education and Music Academia

The historical, cultural, and social context of Puerto Rico and the issues of discrimination and underrepresentation discussed in Chapter 1, besides affecting Puerto Rican music and musical expressions like bomba as presented in Chapter 2, are also reflected in its educational and academic systems. This chapter analyses correspondences between society and education, how they mutually influence each other, perpetrating colonial legacies and intersectional discrimination – with a focus on gender, race/ethnicity and class, analyzing these first on a global level and then drawing parallels with the Puerto Rican context. These findings are then applied specifically to academic institutions offering higher education music degrees in Puerto Rico, answering key research questions on the absence of autochthonous music degrees on the island and the reasons why.

3.1 Colonialism and Discrimination in the Puerto Rican Educational System

Overall, the Puerto Rican school system is like that of the United States – except that Spanish is the main language of instruction, whilst English is a mandatory subject at all levels – marked by 12 years of compulsory education, divided between *escuela primaria* (primary school), *secundaria* (secondary school) and *superior* (high school). Most people attend public schools, but private schools are also an option, and oftentimes, they are faith-based, offering religious activities; roughly 75% of schools are public at primary and secondary levels.[146] At university level, Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR) is the country's public university, with its main campus in *Rio Piedras*, and several campuses across the island. In the 1960s, thanks to financial support and Pell grants, private universities expanded significantly, and it is estimated that in 2004 roughly 2/3 of college students were attending a private university (Helvia Quintero 2009). Nowadays, public universities

[146] This is lower than public-school share in mainland US, where private school share is less than 10%. See U. S. National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?ID2=7200030 (accessed 30/07/2022).

are the most academically selective, while many private institutions offer more inclusive "open admission" policies (Labandera et al. 2021).[147]

In spite of Puerto Rico having high scholastic attendance, it has one of the highest unemployment levels, a phenomenon also related to fixity in curricula offerings, and teaching methodologies not responding to current cultural, social, and economic realities.[148] Additionally, there are longstanding issues hindering high quality education: classes tend to be big (usually 27 students or more), often instructors are teaching subjects outside their expertise, cover classes at higher levels they are capable of, and resist changing old teaching approaches still focusing on memorizing information and repeating back.[149]

From a historical standpoint, under the Spaniards, education was mostly imparted by the Catholic Church; the first school in Puerto Rico was founded in the early 1500s by Spanish bishop Alonso Manso. Only in the late 18th century the first free primary public schools were established; throughout the 1800s, curricula and teaching methods were strongly influenced by Spain, and were like the rest of Latin America. In 1900, two years after the US invaded Puerto Rico, *Ley Foraker* created the *Departamento de Instrucción Publica* (Department of Public Education) with a clear intention to use public education for the Americanization process – as a tool to make Puerto Ricans culturally identify with the US. They also tried to impose English as the official education language in Puerto Rican schools, unsuccessfully, as the attempt received strong dissent. Rodriguez-Arroyo (2013) shows that, by 1949, it became clear that Puerto Rican people rejected assimilation into Anglophone education; their first elected governor, Muñoz Marín, established then the use of Spanish. Controversies over language continued after 1949, but Spanish remained the official language of instruction, and English became the secondary language.

As witnessed by Aida Negrón de Montilla (1990), the main goals behind Americanization ideology were the economic and political integration of Puerto Rico into the US federal

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[147] "Open admission" policy means the institution accepts all students applying regardless of test scores, high school GPA, rank, or recommendation letters (Labandera et al. 2021).
[148] The unemployment rate in Puerto Rico is around 7.5%, which is almost double the rate in the US. See US Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.us.htm (accessed 30/07/2022).
[149] https://ahoranews.net/factores-que-matan-la-educacion-en-puerto-rico/ (accessed 30/07/2022). Class sizes in Puerto Rico are larger than in US mainland, where the average is around 17 students. See US National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1718_fltable06_t1s.asp (accessed 30/07/2022).

system, relying on exploiting public education to teach young generations of Puerto Ricans to love and support the United States. Americanization brainwash ideology guided US colonial policies in the first three decades of the 1900s; in education, it was already applied in US mainland to European immigrants, African Americans, and Native Americans (Anderson 1988; Lomawaima 1994; Adams 1995; Child 1998), and by US missionaries in the Hawaiian school system (Silva 2004). As demonstrated by Solsiree del Moral (2018), citing Fredrickson (2002), Americanization processes did not "imply the formation of full-fledged U.S. citizens who enjoyed equal protection under the law", also showcasing how the Puerto Rican educational system was shaped around principles of gender and race discrimination, thus perpetrating biases in its classrooms. Drawing on Pablo Navarro-Rivera (2009), Moral (2018) also articulates how "the Americanization of brown and black Puerto Rican schoolchildren meant teaching them to aspire to a version of liberalism and citizenship that, in practice, did not exist. Puerto Ricans who studied in U.S. boarding schools, colleges and universities experienced the United States as a nation that maintained a rigid hierarchy of racial and gender exclusion."

Americanization campaigns ended in the 1930s in Puerto Rico; since then, local teachers have been negotiating goals and curricula with the appointed Secretary of Education, usually belonging to the political party in power. How education is politicized, and a direct product of "the colony", is described by Chamir and Xavier, both teachers within the Puerto Rican educational system, who taught at all levels and with a focus on special education: "Politically, we keep being a colony… [and] the educational system is completely politicized. The position of the Secretary of Education, which is the highest hierarchy in education, is directly connected to politics, and it changes every four years alongside political changes." Pablo highlighted how the politicization and centralization of the educational system, in the hands of colonizers and conservative political parties, contribute to creating an official whitewashed discourse, with severe repercussions on people's sense of identity:

> At the very beginning, the system that the US implemented was Americanization, led by people from the US. When that didn't work, the system passed in the hands of Puerto Ricans, but with curricula control. So, curricula kept glorifying Columbus, reducing the hours of classes on the history of Puerto Rico, giving classes on the history of the United States, so doing several things that do not focus on getting to know the Puerto Rican reality. Consequently, if you don't know your reality, you cannot embrace your identity.

Nelie also highlighted how the intimate links between a politicized educational system, the fact it remains in the hands of the colonizers, and the Puerto Rican political class being an extension of it, become tools preventing from identity development and (re)affirmation:

> Because we are a colony… this is an official political posture; it doesn't matter what political party is in power. … [We] have a government that does not believe in identity, in culture, in the expressions that make us different from the metropolis of the colonizing country. The public educational system is the official tool that the government has to transmit culture from one generation to the next; consequently, if the government in power wants its constituents to resemble the inhabitants of mainland, school curricula will be designed to create American wannabes. So, [they produce] books, subjects and programs that sponsor creating [another] identity, which goes against the *real* cultural identity, which is our country's own.

Another relevant aspect is the importance of religion in Puerto Rico, where faith systems were enforced by both Spain and the United States; oftentimes, parents adhering to a credo send their children to religious schools, with curricula shaped around its beliefs, and models imported from mainland where the religion and its educational system originated. This was the experience of Noel; his parents were 7th day Adventists, an Adventist Protestant Christian denomination originated in Michigan (US) in 1863. Adventism constituted a key component of Noel's upbringing, and he attended an Adventist school in Puerto Rico until 6th grade; by 7th grade, his parents couldn't afford the private Adventist school anymore, so they enrolled him in public school. There, he found more and much bigger classes, and people from all kinds of religious backgrounds, also exposing him to an education with a greater focus on Puerto Rico: "Learning to navigate this environment was quite different. Obviously, what was very positive for me was that it opened the doors to learning differently about culture, but also reading Puerto Rican authors." Later, Noel started questioning and deconstructing Adventist indoctrination, realizing it was profoundly US-centric, presenting controversies with embracing being Puerto Rican, "until I finally broke away from it."

In other words, by focusing on US/Euro-centred education and their biased approaches to teaching history and other subjects, colonizers deprive Puerto Ricans the opportunity to establish "their own" version of history, and their approaches to teaching it. They also keep Puerto Ricans from developing their own sense of identity, one based on knowing and

embracing their country's legacy, their endemic cultural expressions, and their stories.[150] Pablo reported how, up to present, students arrive at university with a complete lack of knowledge of Puerto Rican history: "I teach classes at UPR, at Interamericana University, in the system Ana G. Mendez – in the three most important university systems. When students come to my classes I give classes of history, humanities, social sciences, business administration; they come with a total ignorance of history."

The historical relations and the influence of the educational systems of Spain and the US explain why nowadays most Puerto Ricans are bilingual – especially those graduating from higher education institutions – facilitating the flow of ideas and academic exchanges between Puerto Rico and both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking countries. In fact, many lecturers teaching in Puerto Rican universities completed their education, or parts of it, abroad, either within Western frameworks (mostly US and Spain) or in Latin America. This is significant, because it places Puerto Rican academia at the crossroads of Western and Latino scholarly conversations, facilitated by its geographic position, peoples' bilingualism, and ease of mobility. Indeed, several of my interviewees mirror this trend. Professor Noel Allende, who taught at Universidad Interamericana, holds a Bachelor of Music from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico and a MA in History from UPR, whilst his PhD in Music (Music composition with a sub specialization in Ethnomusicology) is from Michigan State University, US. Dr Jaime Bofill Calero shares a similar trajectory; born and raised in Puerto Rico, he teaches at the Conservatory of Puerto Rico, but received his PhD in Ethnomusicology and Music Theory from the University of Arizona, US.

The background of professors is extremely meaningful, as they are the ones ultimately in charge of conveying curricula and play into, or outside of, whitewashed and revisited versions of history – or any other subject they teach. Pablo explained how the regular training of teachers in Puerto Rico does not include in-depth learning of local history, autochthonous musical styles, nor information about the cultural legacy of one of the main groups making up its people and history – Afro-descendants. Pablo says: "Teachers bear an incredible burden… but the reality is that in their degrees, when they do their bachelors

[150] Even in post-colonial settings developing intercultural education beyond Western models remains a complex undertaking, as in Peru. María Elena García (2005) describes challenges with bilingual education and in the construction of Indigenous identities because of the unequal power relations that persist. Turpo Gebera y Mendoza Zapata (2017) reiterate the need of intercultural dialogues in a country still marked by inequality and discrimination where colonial heritage is reproduced by educational institutions in which native peoples keep being the most excluded.

and masters, nobody talks to them in depth of these elements, nobody talks to them about bomba, plena, or *trova*, there is nothing of the sort."

Chamir and Xavier are among the educators actively trying to deconstruct sugar-coated versions of Puerto Rican history and colonizers' viewpoints applied across subjects. They explain: "There are teachers who responsibly try to revert all the damage that was done with history's disinformation, but a couple of teachers are not going to be able to make the difference. … The two of us are educators, and we try to do the work, and like us there are other colleagues, but it's not the majority, we are the minority." Most Puerto Rican teachers remain influenced by the official whitewashed education received; Chamir and Xavier described the reactions of the less progressive colleagues to their non-traditional forward-thinking approach:

> Most of them, in relation to the syndrome we have as a colonized country… they prefer to keep going with the same preaching that is found in books, "This is what the book says." They are part of a chain … "This is what I am told to do, and this is what I will do", even if this goes against their principles, and what they actually know is incorrect… We would have to educate teachers first, to be able to get this information to the students.

At the same time, textbooks are mostly chosen by educational institutions and usually come from the US, translated straight into Spanish; sometimes books are authored by Puerto Ricans, but display similar whitewashed versions of history, as those writing them were educated within the same colonized system. In rare cases, some words are modified to give different nuances, but these are exceptions, and represent limited changes. Also, the US enacts censorship and dominance over what gets told, or points of view expressed: "There are colleagues who are collaborating with some Puerto Rican editors and who are writing books, and some of these are good books. But the problem is that everything has to go through the filter of the Americans, of the government, and when they find in there something they don't like, well then, that book is not approved."[151] In theory, there is some flexibility around choice of textbooks teachers decide to use in their classrooms; in practice options are limited, and educators do not have the financial means to buy books on a large scale, nor have the time to redact their own materials.

The Americanization process described showcases how phenomena of colonialism and cultural imperialism, as defined in Chapter 1, play out in education; similarly, discrimination

[151] Xavier, interview.

based on gender, race and class is also reflected in Puerto Rican education, as discussed below.

Gender Inequality in Puerto Rican Education

In the Caribbean, gender inequalities within the home are reinforced by the educational environment: discrimination is practiced in gendered course selection, and "encouraged and reinforced through both explicit and implicit practices in schools" (Bailey 1997, 147). Although increases in women's employment during the 20th century led to advances in women's autonomy (Warren 2010), gender inequalities in education remained, even intensifying, during this period, particularly within Hispanic Caribbean countries (Manzel and Baten 2009). In her content analysis of 27 textbooks, K. Drayton (1997) demonstrated how men are still portrayed covering managerial positions, while women occupy unskilled jobs. Even in the school system where female teachers outnumber males, top management within educational establishments is occupied by men (Taylor 2001).

Puerto Rico reflects these trends, showcasing bias within educational practices; forms and methodologies in education reflect wider discriminatory practices in society and culture. In turn, a biased education fortifies and perpetuates the condition of inferiority that women and girls face in Puerto Rican society, becoming a vicious cycle. Harriet Presser and Hsiao-ye Yi (2008) showed that educational attainment is central to employment opportunities in Puerto Rico and that, although public sector growth supported greater women's employment, the exclusion of women from managerial positions reflects their marginalization within educational contexts at higher levels. This is demonstrated in country statistics published by the World Bank (2014), showing how the literacy rate between young females and males presents virtually no gender disparity at primary and secondary levels.[152] Interestingly, enrolment ratio at the tertiary level shows 30% greater female participation. This proves significant when compared to other World Bank essential gender trends: regarding economic opportunities, the labour force participation gap in Puerto Rico between women and men in middle income categories is significant – less than 50% for women and almost 80% for men. Also, in public life, the percentage of seats held by women in parliament is only 18-25%, illustrating how the promising data in tertiary school enrolment does not convert into tangible equality in any other area of life. Puerto Rican women are more educated and qualified than men, but still get inferior jobs, less pay

[152] http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/puerto-rico (accessed 30/07/2021).

for the same job, or remain out of employment, resulting in women having lower incomes and less decision-making power. Discrepancies between high literacy ratios and female tertiary education participation on one side, and women's lower labour force and scarce political participation on the other, are also related to biased curricula and teaching practices. In circularity, discriminatory practices in society produce a discriminatory education, and both perpetuate conditions of inferiority women face in Puerto Rico.

Several legislative measures were put forward to attempt responding to inequality and gender-based violence in Puerto Rican society from an educational standpoint, including Ley 108 (Law 108) of May 26th, 2006, known as Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación (Organic Law of the Department of Education). This law was created with the goal to "design and implement a curriculum aimed at promoting gender equity and the prevention of domestic violence in coordination with the Office of the Ombudsman for Women."[153] Ley 108 indicates it is necessary for educational institutions to implement curricula supporting gender equality, emphasizing how this can also contribute preventing domestic violence, a complex issue affecting all sectors of Puerto Rican society, endangering both victims' physical and emotional health and their families. It also touches on statistics showing women and girls are those most affected by domestic violence, advancing how children who are exposed to intra-household violence are most likely to reproduce patterns of behaviour they experienced growing up once they reach adulthood.

The rationale behind the creation of Ley 108 of the Department of Education was to design and implement a curriculum aimed at promoting gender equity and the prevention of domestic violence. Unfortunately, much debate followed – ultimately leading to long-term stalling, recurrent delays, and ineffectiveness over implementation – caused by political

[153] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://issuu.com/ampr/docs/ley_108_26_de_mayo_de_2006_ley_de_p (accessed 30/07/2021). Across this chapter English words "equity" and "equality" will be used interchangeably, as in Spanish the word mostly used across the policy documents analysed in this section is "*equidad*" which literally translates into English as "equity". On the other hand, the Spanish synonym to "*equidad*" is "*igualdad*", which in English translates as "equality", but also "sameness" and "evenness". In Spanish, when it comes to the framework of gender equality (as intended in English), it is most likely authors prefer the word "*equidad*" to "*igualdad*" to move away from misunderstandings around the concept of "sameness". In practice, across policy documents analysed in this section, when the authors write "*equidad de género*" the concepts expressed have direct correspondence with what in English is referred to as "gender equality" – thus why the interchangeable use of the terms "equity" and "equality" in the Spanish translations of the thesis.

parties unable to align over how these principles should be reflected by school curricula. When framing the discussion on gender, education and curricula in Puerto Rico, Loida Martínez-Ramos (2013) identified three key axes from national and international feminism: counteracting sexism in education, supporting curricula transformation, and gender studies. Indeed, it is the last axis that conservative groups and religious institutions opposed for decades, insisting changes to school curricula embedding a gender perspective into education should be left to parents, and not schools (Jarvinen 2022). Perceptions of Ley 108 being "paternalistic" emboldened those who resist "the gender perspective", and it might have unintentionally exacerbated sex discrimination in society even as the law enshrines protocols against it (Diaz 2014; La Fountain-Stokes 2018). La Fountain-Stokes, then director of the Latino/Latina Studies program at University of Michigan, explained:

> The rise of politicians affiliated with conservative churches (Pentecostals and Evangelicals) to power in Puerto Rico has seriously distorted public debates about morals and civil rights. These politicians mobilize large groups that do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the majority of citizens but nevertheless receive enormous media attention. Many of the traditional parties are also dominated by very conservative Catholics.[154]

In some cases, fundamentalist groups went to great lengths, mixing the concept of gender perspectives with something that "attacks marriage, defends abortion, promotes homosexuality and opposes religion."[155] Political discussions ultimately resulted in long-term stalling over implementing a gender-sensitive curriculum, leading to the Department of Education releasing several *Cartas Circulares* (memorandums) in subsequent years from the promulgation of Ley 108 in 2006 to lobby governmental bodies into taking action.

On 8th February 2017, eleven years after the passing of Ley 108 of 2006, the Puerto Rican Department of Education had to issue another *Carta Circular*, number 32-2016-2017, in response to persistent pushbacks on implementing gender equality regulations in educational institutions, also indicating the lack of concrete implementation mechanisms. The *Carta* of 2017 stated gender perspective would be applied "without concepts that create confusion", possibly alluding to concessions made following intimidation by

[154] https://espanol.umich.edu/noticias/2015/02/27/puerto-rico-debate-el-incluir-perspectivas-de-genero-en-la-educacion-publica/ (accessed 20/08/2021).
[155] http://www.80grados.net/perspectiva-de-genero-una-promesa-que-se-tiene-que-cumplir/ (accessed 20/08/2021).

conservative forces (Delgado-Ortega 2017). It also responded to what had become a recurrent subterfuge exploited by some political parties to stall implementation of Ley 108 of 2006 – the mix-up of the concepts of gender equality and gender perspective. The *Carta* of 2017 explains gender equality is intended as the promotion of equal rights between men and women like equal control and use of goods, equal opportunities, equal decision-making power, equal access to justice, and equal access and use to services in society – despite biological differences – in all areas of social, economic, political, cultural and family life. In a call to teachers and faculty to follow what Ley 108 established, promoting gender equality as part of the curricula, the department stated: "We reaffirm our commitment to equity, to the respect and dignity of all boys and girls in our school system … [they] will be treated as equals, without any distinction, promoting the full development of their capacities and capabilities."[156]

Shortly after *Carta* of 2017 was published, it was once again abolished.[157] In March 2017 senator Zoé Laboy kept pushing for a gender equality pilot in elementary schools but was openly opposed when the proposal went to the *Comisión de Educación y Reforma Universitaria del Senado* (Senate Education and University Reform Commission). Various religious organizations refused to teach gender equality as a mechanism to prevent gender violence, aggressions and sexual harassment.[158] In response to the persistent opposition of religious groups and some private institutions over teaching gender equality in schools, Zoé Laboy declared: "There is a lot of resistance in Puerto Rico to things as simple as equality between men and women. To the point that in 2017 we still must pass legislation to say that a man and a woman doing the same job should earn the same."[159]

The succession of events produced since the passing of Ley 106 showcases how problematic *per se* the concept of gender equality remains in Puerto Rican society. It also witnesses how the shift from focusing on eliminating gender violence, towards continuously exploiting misinterpretations of the concept of gender equality, have been

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[156] Translated by the author from Spanish, ibid.

[157] https://www.telemundopr.com/noticias/puerto-rico/derogan-carta-circular-de-perspectiva-de-genero-telemundo-telenoticias-puerto-rico/11361/ (accessed 20/08/2021)

[158] https://www.elvocero.com/educacion/departamento-de-educacion/insisten-en-ense-ar-equidad-de-g-nero-en-la/article_1d2bcd65-03fa-53a1-8247-405b0ca514a2.html (accessed 20/08/2021)

[159] Translated by the author from Spanish, https://www.elvocero.com/educacion/departamento-de-educacion/insisten-en-ense-ar-equidad-de-g-nero-en-la/article_1d2bcd65-03fa-53a1-8247-405b0ca514a2.html (accessed 20/08/2021)

strategies for political gains, ultimately stalling the implementation of educational policies designed to counteract gender inequality and gender-based violence. Since inequality between men and women is a key driver behind recurrent, unpunished, and socially accepted violence against women in Puerto Rico, if patriarchal mindsets and biased social norms are not deconstructed, gender violence cannot be successfully counteracted.

These realizations came once again under the spotlight in early 2021. On 25th January, the government had to declare a State of Emergency for gender violence, caused by the gravity of the unsolved situation of violence against women on the island. In 2020, an increase was reported in both numbers of femicides and domestic violence, Puerto Rico being amongst the five areas in Latin America and the Caribbean with highest rates of gender violence and femicides.[160] According to census data, femicide was already on the rise over previous years, with intimate partner murder rate doubling from 0.77 per 100,000 women in 2017 to 1.7 per 100,000 in 2018.[161] The increase in gender-based violence witnessed in 2020 was also caused by additional social stresses connected to the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, in many households, as an effect of the pandemic, women were forced into lockdowns in the same house with their aggressors, and men became even more violent when they were financially unstable.[162] Ayorkor Gaba et al. (2022) illustrated how these pandemic-related factors "compounded the pre-existing epidemic" of gender-based violence in Puerto Rico.

Activists had called the government to declare a state of emergency over gender violence for years, and in 2021 the Puerto Rican government finally responded. Furthermore, the committee PARE – the Puerto Rican Committee for the Prevention, Support, Rescue and Education of Gender Violence – was created in January 2021, made up of 12 subcommittees addressing the areas of public policy, legislation, security, housing, and education.[163] However, as had happened over the slow implementation of educational policies tackling gender inequality, funding and substantial actions were delayed in this

[160] https://www.dw.com/en/puerto-rico-declares-state-of-emergency-over-femicides/a-56332824. Also see a report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020): https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46425/1/S2000874_en.pdf.
[161] This was roughly double the per-capita rate in the mainland United States in 2018. See Criminal Justice Information Services: https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-1.xls.
[162] https://gen.medium.com/in-puerto-rico-an-epidemic-of-domestic-violence-hides-in-plain-sight-c459d31ef616 (accessed 20/08/2021).
[163] https://parelaviolencia.pr.gov (accessed 20/08/2021).

case too. Tragically, it took the particularly brutal murders of two young women within days of each other at the end of April 2021, to bring significant action. Andrea Ruiz was killed and burned by her ex-boyfriend and found on 28th April. The day after, on 29th April, Keishla Rodriguez's pregnant body was found floating in a lagoon after being drugged, beaten, tied to a rock, and thrown into the water while still alive and being shot at by long-term lover and famous married boxer Felix Verdejo. These events produced massive media coverage and social uprising, allowing civil society to put enough pressure on the government that finally approved $7 million to combat gender-based violence on the island.[164] Media outlets reported how as part of the "package" of government actions, a gender perspective would finally be applied to all educational subjects, and gender-sensitive curricula implemented across Puerto Rican schools, with updated curricula produced by the PARE committee and proper training of teachers and school personnel.[165]

The events presented showcase how various forms of violence against women remain recurrent phenomena in Puerto Rico, and how the government's legislative measures have been insufficient. This includes long-awaited reforms to embed gender equality in school curricula that witnessed stalling and delays for more than 15 years since the passing of Ley 108 of 2006 because of conflicting political interests. Linnette Arroyo Ortiz (2021) showed how gender equity materials are still largely absent from school curricula in Puerto Rico, with little potential to "promote the discussion of gender issues in a critical manner." This would require Lawmakers and educational institutions working together to change longstanding practices and social norms. Noel also pointed out how, beyond the importance of passing laws and creating committees, a gap remains in the implementation of gender aware curricula, if teachers are not properly equipped with the tools and the capacity to apply this lens. Noel explained: "At a certain level there is the surface 'Ok, *carta circular*, this is what we are going to do, women, gender, etc.', but how does this translate into the curriculum? In the curriculum of Spanish, of Mathematics, of History, of Physical Education, etc. and… to our lesson plans." Further studies should monitor what kind of gender sensitive curricula and training will be put forward, and over time observe

[164] https://abcnews.go.com/US/months-state-emergency-puerto-rico-finally-approves-million/story?id=77461758 (accessed 20/08/2021).
[165] https://www.elvocero.com/gobierno/para-agosto-s-o-s-la-perspectiva-de-g-nero-en-escuelas-dice-presidenta-de/article_85c061c0-ac2b-11eb-99a2-3b2d41ce5121.html (accessed 20/08/2021).

which repercussions a more inclusive education will have on endemic gender-based violence and inequality in Puerto Rico.

Various interviewees confirmed experiencing widespread underrepresentation of women in curricula, lack of a gender perspective in their education, and biased practices in schools. Christina mentioned how “most of the figures in Puerto Rican history books are male” and Minirka described how, “if someone had to clean the blackboard, that would always be girls, very rarely a boy would be asked to clean… the girls were the ones sent to make signs for the bake sale… the most physical tasks were given to boys. Basketball was basically not taught to girls”, consolidating perceptions that some things were for boys only, and other for girls.

One of the most worrisome gender issues in education also emerged during interviews – school-based harassment male professors direct towards female students, whether as an abuse of power using their authority without further benefits, and/or in exchange for grades and academic achievements. Even though this happens across disciplines, there is a higher likelihood for it in male-dominated areas and in academic structures where the highest positions (deans, directors of departments, etc.) are covered by older and powerful men. This aspect came up in few interviews; Brenda mentioned how she witnessed it, while she was studying at the Conservatory, where most instructors were men:

> There were a couple of professors that … were approaching me, flirting with me, trying to have some sort of affair with me, that happened. It’s likely they were taking advantage of the fact they were professors and tried to use their power. In my case, I entered the Conservatory when I was 27, so I was not a young girl; perhaps a girl who was 19 years old and just got out of high school could be tricked into that kind of situation, but in my case, I had the maturity to say, “Listen this is not going to go anywhere, so let’s move on.”

Another interviewee, who asked not being named because of the sensitivity of the subject, reported she witnessed male professors entertaining multiple sexual affairs with female students, within one of the largest universities in Puerto Rico. In some cases, she saw how the grades of these students were changed by the instructors after the physical relation took place. In other cases, there was no grading involved, and these men, married, usually twice the age of their female students (or older), and with daughters the age of their students, were using their power and privilege to trick young women into relationships.

Male predatory behaviours, where older males in positions of power use their standing to subjugate young inexperienced women, is another form of male domination and gender

inequality Puerto Rican academia suffers from. The ease, seriality, and second nature approach some male instructors adopt when approaching a female student, as Brenda describes in the quotation below, showcase the likelihood this phenomenon is widespread:

> A female percussionist colleague of mine, who was studying at the university in Puerto Rico, once called me to tell me she had asked a male musician to give her a private bongo class, and after they started playing, without even asking or saying a word, the guy simply jumped on top of her, and started attempting to have an intimate relationship with her. She got scared, and later found out he had harassment charges brought against him in Puerto Rico, one of these was for harassing a minor, so he had to move from the country, and he had lots of issues for it. She called me to let me know not to take classes with him. As a woman, now I know I need to be careful who I take classes from, who I meet with, who I can have in my house when I teach private lessons. We have to take precautions because there is always somebody who thinks they can do this to us because we are women, and these are problems that male students do not face.

Racism and Class Discrimination in Puerto Rican Education

As showcased above, ongoing issues of gender discrimination affect Puerto Rican education and students across subjects and at all levels. Similarly, racism and classism are also embedded in Puerto Rico's educational system, resulting in longstanding discrimination, underrepresentation and invisibilization of vulnerable groups. Chapter 1 discussed how in Puerto Rico racial discrimination is multi-faceted and widespread but mostly hidden; this section demonstrates how this gets reflected in education. Ana Irma Rivera Lassén analyses deep-rooted racial discrimination on the island explaining how racial differences have "officially" been erased there, and how this void is supported by the educational system – while making a reference to race and gender cancelling in curricula:

> In the same way gender discrimination does not occur in the abstract, neither do other forms of discrimination... Racial discrimination is perhaps one of the most hidden in our society because it is one of the most denied. Puerto Rico has officially "erased racial differences", and from very early on in our educational system we learn that our people are a mixture of three races: white people (Spain), indigenous people (Taíno society) and black people (Africa).[166]

[166] https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-conduce-dialogo-sobre-racismo-en-el-empleo-existente-en-puerto-rico (accessed 21/08/2021). Translated by the author from Spanish.

Lassén describes how official discourse, taught by standard curricula, promotes a clean-cut definition of what it is to be Puerto Rican, listing a mix of three ethnic backgrounds resulting in a light Brown "Latin" mix that defines the "prototypical" Puerto Rican: "supposedly a true Puerto Rican person should not look very white, nor very black, nor very indigenous."[167] This produces stereotypes, inside and outside the island, of what Puerto Ricans are supposed to look like: "What appears to be an acceptance of the mixture of races actually becomes their invisibility."[168] These statements summarize conversations I held in Puerto Rico with people from different backgrounds mentioning how during their lives, and in education, Taíno and African heritages – from ethnic, cultural or historical standpoints – were never presented with any detail. This happened especially in history classes, which focused exclusively on Europe and North America. The official widespread classroom version of the history of Puerto Rico and its people rests on a superficial narrative telling how first there were the Taínos, then the Spanish arrived, all the Taíno disappeared, the Spanish brought the slaves, and from this mix came out Puerto Ricans. From his early education years, in the 1960s, Miguel recalls: "The history they were telling us was not complete. … We would not talk about the history of Puerto Rico … they wouldn't refer to the contributions to our history of the Natives, nor the Blacks."

Noel also expanded on how the downplaying of Taíno, and African roots started with the official Euro-centred version of history taught in Puerto Rican schools: "[Our official history] starts when Columbus arrived. … They would mention the Taínos in a very mythological way, and that in the end they died, and we mixed. About Africans, they arrived as slaves, but no mention to how their societies were before being captured." Lorna described how schoolbooks depicted Spaniards as those who saved Puerto Rico from "the savages": "The books that were used in elementary schools put forward this concept that the Spanish arrived to save us because we were Indians in costumes … and it cost me a lot to understand it was actually not a salvation. … It was a genocide what they did, and these are harsh words that are not used, nor being taught." Chamir pointed out how history is manipulated to window-dress it as a pleasant and organic process, and not the product of slavery and genocide. Xavier added, "Even when they talk about colonization, they don't use the correct words. They will talk about 'people who were brought over' but they don't use the right word, they don't talk about people who were forced, abducted, and bound."

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[167] Ibidem
[168] Ibidem

Tata, while being taught the whitewashed official version of history in school, was also presented the *other* history of Black enslaved Puerto Ricans by her grandfather, a slave descendant, telling her: “I want you listen to what I tell you… [so] at least you can try to defend yourself from certain things, and you know the reality of what our history has really been.” This was hard to understand for Tata when she was young, but as an adult, she explained she believes the *scented* official classroom history was just a way of maintaining White power and control. Tata clarified: “This is what racism is, it’s the power, it’s people who have a lot of money who are normally White, versus the [others]… For me, there is nothing else to search for, it’s just about maintaining control.”

Pablo, who teaches courses at university focusing on Afro-descendants, explained how curricular omissions produce extensive lack of knowledge among his students, especially on Puerto Rico’s African roots. From a student’s perspective, Christina confirmed it, also highlighting the downplaying of Blackness alongside the construction of the “White saviour”:

> Mainly, I think that when Black people get mentioned in Puerto Rico it is when it has to do with a White person or a European helping them in some way, so it’s like “Oh, this person had a strong role in freeing slaves.” … So, it can indoctrinate you to believe that you need a saviour, and that the saviour is White, either European or North American, depending on the government change. … The role that Puerto Ricans had in fighting for Puerto Rican rights or Puerto Rican freedom is swept under the rug.

Miguel, who attended secondary education in the 1960s, witnessed how students were fetched biased information depicting Puerto Rico’s second invader, the United States, as the great saviour, contributing to the creation of a collective colonized mindset. Miguel recalled: “I remember her [the history teacher] saying that we would be nothing, us Puerto Rico, we would be nothing without the help of North Americans... They sold this message, that we are going to progress with the United States, with their help, because without them we are uncapable.”

Amauri expanded how deconstructing biased teachings can take very long, or never happen: “You must wait to get to university to unlearn, and only if you really find some professor who will teach you the truth, and there you must go backwards, connecting events, and realizing, ‘Wow, really, this is what actually happened.’ And this is only for those who manage to do this analysis, otherwise people just go on alienated.”

Interviewees identifying as Black/Afro-Puerto Ricans explained how these curricula deficiencies are connected to the "lower appreciation" towards Black people and the discrimination they experienced while growing up in the educational system. Nelie described an episode of second-level discrimination when her daughter was bullied in Catholic elementary school for being Black, without teachers opposing it: "In first and second grade, they were calling her 'Black Dominican, dirty Black', because there is this element too, that we think that we are better Blacks than Blacks from other countries." Christina mentions being made fun of her natural Afro hair in school: "I was made fun of, because my hair was like a *brittle pad*. For people who don't know what a brittle pad is, it's a wire sponge for scrubbing your dishes. You would be told 'Your hair is like a mop.'" Chamir explained how second-level interpersonal discrimination experienced in school also took place within families, and could turn into third-level internalized discrimination:

> For your hair, starting when you are a young child, you are told that you have *pelo malo* and it becomes internalized.[169] I would say, "I have *pelo malo*" without thinking I was saying something offensive; I was just saying something normalized, and it's caused by the fact that these phrases were repeated to you for so long that it all becomes internal… but it also makes you feel uncomfortable at the same time.

Experiencing racism and racial discrimination in education were substantiated by a survey centred on perceptions of racism in Puerto Rico; 93% of the respondents reported "Yes, racism exists in Puerto Rico." Also, 71% of the respondents who defined themselves Black – whether because they self-define as such, are defined Black by others, or both – reported having experienced racism on the island (Lloréns et al. 2017). This survey indicated racism is experienced both in society and within the household, and out of 19 social and physical contexts, school ranked first in terms of places where racism occurred most frequently (Lloréns et al. 2017, 168). This is in line with findings from previous research by Isar Godreau (2008; 2015) and Mariluz Franco Ortíz et al. (2009). The study attests to "normalized" episodes of racism in schools and the absence of key learnings on Indigenous and African cultures in the curriculum. It also demonstrated how mainstream discourse promotes the idea that "Puerto Ricans are all mixed, 'real' Blacks compose a tiny fraction of the population, and they never were treated violently like in the US."[170]

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[169] In Spanish *pelo malo* means, literally, "bad hair", and is used as a pejorative for Black Afro hair.
[170] https://www.aaihs.org/racialization-works-differently-here-in-puerto-rico-do-not-bring-your-u-s-centric-ideas-about-race-here/ (accessed 21/08/2021).

Another phenomenon showcasing the complexities of the racial question in Puerto Rico in relation to the "homogenization" indoctrination, is the Census. In their paper, "How Puerto Rico Became White: Boundary Dynamics and Intercensus Racial Reclassification", Loveman and Muníz (2007) explain how "according to official statistics, the Puerto Rican population became significantly whiter in the first half of the twentieth century." This is in reference to a census taken by the US in 1899, where almost 62% of Puerto Ricans were classified as White, whilst by 1950 that number had grown close to 80%. Something similar happened in the 2010 census, where 76% of Puerto Ricans identified as "white alone" – more than in the US overall, where only 53% of the population ticked the "white only" box.[171] This is significant in an island where most people have Taíno and African roots, and it is a phenomenon linked to historical negative stereotyping of Blackness and perceptions that being White can help achieve higher status. In the past, race reclassification had its own protocol: "By 1875, the Spanish crown had institutionalized the purchase of whiteness through a process called the *gracias al sacar*", a policy allowing Black and mixed-race Puerto Ricans to petition Spain to dismiss their status as *Pardo* and be reclassified as White for a fee.[172] Formal and informal practices of reclassifying people's race continued under US rule after 1898 – like *mejorar la raza,* discussed in Chapter 1.4.

This was also reported by Natasha Alford (2020) in a *New York Times* article titled "Why Some Black Puerto Ricans Choose 'White' on the Census", substantiating how "the island has a long history of encouraging residents to identify as white", materializing in the last census where "more than three-quarters of Puerto Ricans identified as white."[173] Part of the issue lies in the limited, and not fully representative, race categories listed in the Census – which is US-centred and applied to all US citizens with a blanket approach, whether they are in mainland or in a territory with different historic and ethnic backgrounds. When Puerto Ricans can only choose among "White", "Black" or "American Indian" (besides multiple options for Asian heritage), they choose "White". Lassén points out how

[171] Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
[172] On *gracias al sacar*: https://notevenpast.org/purchasing-whiteness-race-and-status-in-colonial-latin-america/ (accessed 21/08/2021); in Spanish slang, *Pardo* means Black.
[173] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/09/us/puerto-rico-census-black-race.html (accessed 21/08/2021).

“People who study the impact of racism on Puerto Rican society always run into this problem. How black, white or mulatto our society is, we do not know statistically.”[174]

Problematic statistics on race and ethnicity in Puerto Rico are sided by the absence of race discourse in society and institutions not addressing racism, intersecting with chronic underrepresentation of Taíno and African cultures in education. As discussed above, a recurrent manifestation of racial bias is the absence of African history in curricula and the teachings on notable Afro-Caribbean figures; additionally, when references to Black history or African heritage are mentioned, they tend to be misguided.

Abadía-Rexach (2015a, 211) explains it is necessary to put in context why Blackness is rejected in Puerto Rico by examining curricula deficiencies and highlighting the perpetual correlation of Blackness and slavery: “The image of Black people kneeling and chained is one that remains in the psyche of children and young people.” In contrast to negative demeaning imageries of Blackness, curricula “highlights the value of Europeans and underlines the supposed fragility of the indigenous” providing detailed information about all the accomplishments of White, European (and Northern American) leaders, politicians, scientists.[175] Also, the successes and strengths of other ethnic groups are absent, as Abadía-Rexach argues: “Rarely the skills, abilities, intelligence of the blacks who were forcefully taken to the island are discussed. The offering on race is totally reductionist.”

According to the CPJ framework, biases in education qualify as first-level institutional discrimination, creating and perpetrating, because of their cascading effects, second level interpersonal and third level internalized discrimination. Interviewees reported recurrent discrimination for being Black in school, and some experienced bullying and violence. Lorna, who self-identifies as a Black woman, explained how her Black schoolmate was beaten up because she was darker: “As an adult I understood that the only thing that saved me was that I was a bit lighter skinned than other Black people around me. For example, when I was in elementary school there was a girl… but she got attacked more, and I think the only reason why I was not beaten up was that I was lighter skinned than her.”

[174] https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-conduce-dialogo-sobre-racismo-en-el-empleo-existente-en-puerto-rico (accessed 21/08/2021).

[175] These race narratives are similar to white supremacism in education in Europe and post-colonial societies globally, and the relationship between Blackness and slavery appears to mirror this wider conflation in mainland US (King 1992; Dumas 2016; King 2017).

A strong testimony was shared by Danny, describing how schoolchildren from Loíza were treated during school trips where other schools participated: “You would get there with the school bus … and that was shocking for the other kids to see so many Black people. They would say, ‘These people are Black? And why?’, and sometimes these questions would shock me. You would look at yourself to check if there was something [strange with you], you would feel bad.” Danny expanded on the effect these episodes had on him as a child:

> It would make you feel depressed at times, within the school trip you would keep going, among your friends, but they would do evil things to you, they harassed us. They would throw rocks at us, they would throw rocks at our school bus, this would not happen to the other buses, it would only happen to the Loiza school bus. I perceived it as a provocation, as soon as our bus was parked basically a riot would start because of offensive comments being thrown at us like “dirty Blacks” or “stinky Blacks”, which would incite one to respond with violence. We are not going to throw flowers at those who are throwing rocks at you. So, it was very heavy to go on a school trip because these things were happening.

I shared with Danny how I was applying the CPJ framework of the 3 levels of discrimination; I asked him if, and how, second level interpersonal discrimination by others, directed at him during childhood, affected him in possibly developing third level internalized discrimination:

> Yes, you would feel undervalued, half depressed … Basically, what I felt was anger for the fact that whenever you are trying to have a good time somewhere, someone would just come and discriminate against you. Sometimes, then, you would feel hate towards them as well, without meaning to, because all you want is to share with others, get to the place, and get on normally. But if the jokes are starting, if the discrimination is starting, well then…

In 2009, Colectivo Ilé – whose mission since 1992 is to educate and strengthen anti-racist and decolonizing work for community and academic change in Puerto Rico – conducted a study showcasing how racism and xenophobia affect teaching environments and support discrimination at the institutional level in Puerto Rico.[176] It distinguished between institutional racism in society at two levels, the micro and the macro, analyzing how it manifests at each level, and how these are interconnected. Mariluz Franco Ortíz et al.

[176] https://colectivo-ile.org/?page_id=8 (accessed 22/08/2021). The study is described at https://colectivo-ile.org/?p=172 (accessed 22/08/2021). This sits within a broader context of growing anti-racist work across Latin America and the Caribbean, as described in Wade et al. (2019).

(2010), following their analysis of teaching practices in public education at macro social level, concluded that institutional racism "tends to make the contributions of blackness invisible, to stigmatize representations of blackness, to hide the complaints of white-centrism, to highlight *Spanishness*, to promote the myth of tolerance of diversity, and to legitimize cultural degradation by folklorizing Afro-Caribbean roots."[177] At micro social level, Black bodies remain a battlefield where racism is mostly manifested in Puerto Rico; as Godreau (2002) explained, references to hair, skin colour, hygiene and sexual behaviour, among others, are aspects in which racism is embodied. The Colectivo Ilé study reported everyday racism in school marked by a high level of physical and psychological abuse, racial prejudices, and discrimination, with various examples resonating with interviewees like Danny.

In relation to the CPJ framework, the study produces findings relevant to second level interpersonal discrimination in Puerto Rico, advancing how a feeling of "superiority" based on skin colour can be constructed on children with fair complexion, also judging inferior everyone who is "darker".[178] These findings attest how, in a racialized society like Puerto Rico, in educational institutions (first level, institutional), White children can internalize their superiority in relation to Black peers (second level, interpersonal):

> The world around them will affirm them and they will receive unequivocal messages of racial superiority. The early adulation of their physique (in relation to their phenotypic characteristics), the exclusive images of white heroes and heroines in story tales, the dolls and action heroes in their majority being white, among various stimuli, will be the first indicative messages of their racial good fortune.[179]

This shows how, in school curricula, the lack of representation of notable Black figures and the praise of White heroes are reinforced from an early age. Such messaging and imagery contribute to developing superiority attitudes and lack of empathy in White children:

> If these messages are not tempered, the child can develop an expanded and exaggerated sense of self that will incline him or her to judge others who are darker as inferior and even

[177] Further readings on institutional racism at macro social levels include Franco Ortiz y Quiñones Hernández 2005, 223; Varas-Díaz, Serrano-García and Toro-Alfonso 2004, 22; Godreau et al. 2008, 117, 130; and Lloréns and Carrasquillo 2008, 114, 115.
[178] Scholars noted similar white supremacist trends in education in the US (Blau 2003; Vaught 2011; Sánchez Loza 2021); Blau highlighted racial privileges and inequalities can be maintained without overt "racist" language or narratives, for example through reinforcing racialized achievement gaps.
[179] https://colectivo-ile.org/?page_id=8 (accessed 22/08/2021).

> lead them to verbal assault. At worst, they may develop a lack of empathy, lack of awareness of the pain of "the other", an inflated ego, and out of temper attitudes of superiority and arrogance.[180]

This passage highlights the importance of "tempering" messages for parents and teachers; also, it touches on the creation of "the other" and "otherness".[181] The "othering" of "Blackness" in colonial and post-colonial societies is well-established, and a key author writing extensively on it is Frantz Fanon; in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008 [1952]), he highlighted the power of imagery in creating the dichotomy of the Self vs "the Other". Fanon explains how "the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man The Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the non-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable." Research and testimonies discussed in this chapter show how Fanon's critique of racialized experiences remains relevant for Puerto Rico (2008, 124).

The 2009 Colectivo Ilé study produces findings also relevant to third level internalized discrimination (according to the CPJ Framework), where children with dark complexion develop a sense of self-inferiority. As defined by Dr. Raúl Quiñones Rosado: "The process of racial internalization can promote a negative image or self-perception, a limited self-concept, low self-esteem and lack of self-love" (2007, 63). Constant misrepresentations of Blackness in education produce, from very early on, self-rejection of Blackness by Black Puerto Ricans.[182] The absence of (positive) imagery for the Black child generates questions like "What is my place? Do I belong?" without finding answers, leading to "Invisibility, doubt, shame, anger, sense of helplessness, hopelessness, apathy, mistrust and self-hatred manifested by self-destructive behaviours" (2007, 87). Such inferiority complex produced by third level internalized discrimination and its side effects are a postcolonial phenomenon stretching beyond Puerto Rico. Fanon (2008) critiques how

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[180] Ibidem.

[181] Postcolonial theory is discussed in Chapter 1; in this context, "otherness" refers to the characteristics of the "other" i.e., social groups whose "difference" (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) is misrepresented by a dominant group, often through ethnocentrism or exoticism, to justify their "subaltern" social status, maintained through discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, etc. The concept was also used in feminist studies by scholars like Simone de Beauvoir and bell hooks to show how women were set up as the "other" of men and, in postcolonial theory, critics like Said and Spivak showed how the "East" was instrumentalized as the "other" of the West (Staszak 2008).

[182] There are parallels with these narratives of Blackness and negative impacts on Black students in other societies, such as the US (Yancy 2016; Norwood 2018) and Europe (Hall 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Mayorga 2011; Allen 2018).

upwardly mobile Black subjects appropriate and imitate the culture of the colonizer as a "white mask" to acquire power, status, and influence. In addition, negative internalized self-perceptions Black children develop can be so acute they can become aggressive even towards those similar to them, because of a generalized sense of (self-)hate towards Blackness. Colectivo Ilé reports how, "Feeling inferior to other racially similar children, the black child may be the perpetrator of violent acts towards other black children. Therefore, it is not surprising that the overt hostility comes from children of the same racial group."

Additionally, Michael Taussig (1987) showed how Indigenous peoples developed a "mimetic faculty" to "yield into and become Other." Similarly – as another side-effect of engrained negative perceptions for being Black, besides self-hate and hate of Black peers – some Black Puerto Rican children can grow up self-identifying as White. Indeed, Díaz Palenque investigated a group of thirty Puerto Rican disadvantaged children bringing to surface the existence of a mismatch in self-perceptions of Black children, as they identified with a White doll (1985, 62).[183] In an article on curricular development in multi-ethnic contexts, Lillian Lara-Fonseca (2013) explains this is one of few investigations, if not the only one, measuring racial perceptions of preschool children in Puerto Rico.

Finally, the 2009 Colectivo Ilé study also examined how intersectionality of race and gender produces even higher levels of discrimination, as in educational settings in Puerto Rico Black girls are affected by double discrimination.[184] The most common negative stereotyping and offences reported by Black girls are in relation to looks and aesthetics ("bad" hair, dark skin colour, the shape of their lips) or hygiene (bad smell, having lice, being "dirty") – resonating with the experiences of interviewees cited throughout the section. This type of racial discrimination over physical appearance and negative stereotyping of Afro-derived phenotypes affects Black girls more than boys because girls tend to be more influenced by beauty standards, as Isa Rodríguez-Soto and Shir Ginzburg (2019) found. This is, firstly, a gender phenomenon – also connected to issues of female objectification – but a race phenomenon too, as Black female bodies tend to be more hyper sexualized than White ones. Also, Black Puerto Rican girls can be particularly affected by White beauty standards, corroborated by Odette Alarcón et al. (2000) showing Black girls in Puerto Rico can develop a greater desire to measure up to White beauty

[183] This was based on the application of the three dolls test, an experimental and controversial model of Clark and Clark (1947) and Milner (1973).
[184] On Intersectionality, refer to the thesis Introduction and Chapter 1.

standards of fair skin than boys. This is echoed by Sumru Erkut et al. (2000) establishing how lower confidence in physical appearance affects girls more than boys, translating into overall worse self-perceptions and poorer self-esteem for Black women, as stated in the article “Fair Conversation on Racism and Privilege of Race and Gender in Puerto Rico”. It states how European beauty standards have repercussions on several realms of life, including perceptions that White women look more “professional” and are more suitable for office jobs, versus Black women being more suited for heavy work and domestic work.[185] Negative (self-) perceptions of Black girls in school can turn into lifelong issues, including bottlenecks in accessing work and life opportunities.

Finally, the experiences of those who embody the intersectionality of race, gender, and class – for example, being a Black, girl, of poor socio-economic background – attest discrimination in school is even more marked for them. Franco Ortíz’s research of 2006 over a group of 39 students aged 10–14 from the Loíza school district, confirmed that all participants had experienced various conflicts related to racism, sexism, and classism. Minirka, as a Black girl from lower social class, shared her experience being made fun of and bullied in school while growing up because of her appearance: “When I was 5, 6, 7, or 8 people used to call me *el Negrito Monchichi*; *Monchichi* is a gorilla stuffed animal toy. … These were jokes, racial jokes, with a negative connotation, and in school this would happen a lot … I studied in a private school which made it a bit more elitist.” This passage highlights how Minirka experienced being treated differently, and as “lesser”, due to the intersectionality of her condition as a Black girl, from a low social class, and her looks not matching societal expectations. She mentioned the episode of taking a class picture, showcasing how adults also adopted discriminatory behaviour towards students in schools: “There was a long table were all the girls were going to sit, and the boys were going to sit on the floor crossing their legs… [The photographer] told me to go to the floor, as his perception was that I was a boy, and nobody told him that I was a girl.”

Minirka described the effect on her self-perception (third level internalized) of the (second level interpersonal) discrimination she was constantly exposed to:

> At the earliest stages at childhood, one is so young that self-represses and endures it. You wonder about it, but you don’t dare asking about it to anyone else… “do I look like a

[185] https://www.80grados.net/conversacion-justa-sobre-racismo-y-privilegios-de-raza-y-genero-en-puerto-rico/ (accessed 22/08/2021).

> monkey, or are they just playing with me?" … As a kid, you are just confused … But it is a reality that when you enter your adolescence you don't feel like the prettiest girl … At that time, my own self-awareness was clear, "It is because I am Black, and I don't comply with the model."

This also led to artistic self-repression, as Minirka feared rejection, walking away from performing opportunities because she could never picture someone looking like her being the protagonist. For example, during the yearly Christmas plays Minirka was always assigned the shepherd's role: "Imagine, growing up your whole life as a shepherd, you would never get to be the leading character… and this was all I was always assigned. … So, you don't consider yourself capable, as they have been stepping on you over and over and over, until you get all the way down to the bottom." This imagery was also reinforced by media, and Minirka pictured only demeaning roles being assigned to her as a Black actress: "The soap operas that were broadcasted by television at that time, only had White characters; the only Black people who appeared in there were the servants. … In a Shakespeare opera, they would never put a Black woman as the leading character." The protracted messaging of what was considered beautiful, and worthy of being looked at, also affected Minirka's self-perception and confidence as a woman; it was only when she got to university that Minirka developed higher consciousness and self-empowerment.

Amauri also experienced intersectional discrimination being a minority as a Black child attending private school, since most children attending private schools in Puerto Rico came from privileged, richer, and *Whiter*, backgrounds. Despite the support Amauri's family provided him to develop tools and response mechanism to discrimination, he explains "You could play dumb, but deep down it was affecting you, and it would generate questions like: 'Why am I like this? Is it good or is it bad that I look like this? Am I less? Do I have something less?'" Third level internalized discrimination generated self-doubt, questions, and sometimes Amauri felt as a lesser because of being Black; self-perceptions of inferiority never got a hold only thanks to the active work his parents did at home: even when choosing a school, they first considered how equality was handled there.

Pablo described experiencing racial discrimination at university as a Black academic: "Where I really felt discrimination the most was at university, at the UPR in Carolina, and most specifically while working there… despite my preparation, no real opportunities were offered to me. Many things were being denied to me." Pablo mentioned how other people also believed he lacked access to work opportunities in academia because of his ethnicity:

> At a given time, an academic Dean told me directly, “What is happening with you is discrimination for your colour, because there is no other explanation, Pablo.” … What happens is that in academic instruction there are not many people [looking like me], there have never been many here, very few. For example, I know about another case who, despite now being a professor with tenure and benefits, he always comments how he had many problems with discrimination, and he had to make much more effort than the others to get what he achieved.

Pablo also described how this goes beyond the academic environment, as he keeps being discriminated against while covering academic functions: “Recently we did an interview… The interviewer assumed [Doctor] Pablo Luís Rivera was one of the others [the *Whiter* one]. … They simply cannot assume that a Black Puerto Rican can have a PhD, an academic preparation, have the knowledge, and the smarts … In some cases, they do it subtly, and in others, it’s absolutely evident.”

This section examined systemic issues of discrimination based on gender, race, and class in Puerto Rican educational institutions and curricula, necessary to understand the backdrop against which Music Departments, programmes, courses, teachers and students operate on the island. The next sections analyse in depth gender, race, and class discrimination issues within Music Academia specifically – globally, and in Puerto Rico.

3.2 Sexism in Music Curricula and in the Musical Canon Globally

The previous section demonstrated how women and girls are underrepresented in Puerto Rican educational institutions and discriminated by their curricula and practices. When investigating the absence of women in Puerto Rican music curricula and academia specifically, it is relevant to review literature first on women’s inclusion and representation beyond this region. In fact, during fieldwork, I witnessed correspondences between what happens in Puerto Rico and across the globe – as highlighted throughout this section.

The consideration of gender in ethnomusicology has led to many theoretical and ethnographic studies centred on female musical spheres (Wade 1972; Hawes 1974; Markoff 1975; Qureshi 1981; Hampton 1982; Vander 1982; Feld 1984; Campbell and Eastman 1984; Koskoff 1987). This was previously side-lined by research focused on male practices for various reasons, including easier accessibility for male ethnographers. In fact, historically, men were the majority among researchers, leading to androcentric approaches

and methods in the discipline, customarily adopted by both male and female fieldworkers (as discussed by Nettl, 1983). General discourse in ethnomusicology around gender also opened conversations on how cultural ideologies and gender-related behaviours are translated into musical practices and theoretical approaches. This happened in particular when the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) set up sub-groups to consider gender representation.

One early result was Koskoff (1987), examining the implications of gender upon music performance, addressing two central questions around (1) how gendered ideology affects music and, in turn, (2) how music functions in society to reflect or affect inter-gender relations, with a particular eye on how it relates to wider issues of power and control. These issues are also addressed by Farrer 1975, Seeger 1977, and Auerbach, Shehan, Sakata and Petersen in Koskoff's 1987 volume, and Judith Butler (1990) can be seen taking these concepts a step further. According to Butler, gender, sex, and sexuality are performative, i.e. culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts. Therefore, music can be seen not only as an active agent reflecting and affecting gendered practices in society, but also as a promoter of their construction, affirming that music can construct gender relations as well. This line of questioning is particularly meaningful in my research as I investigate these dynamics within the specificity of music curricula, also in connection to wider discourses around music practices. More specifically, I analyse music curricula creation, examining how it is affected by society's gendered ideology, and implementation, engaging with how it affects and perpetrates unequal inter-gender relations in society.

Given curriculum itself can be a space for ethnography, I will now focus on analyzing key texts tackling issues of gender inclusion and representation in music, circumscribing these aspects within educational settings. Teaching materials and textbooks are a vital part of formal educational practices, so how women are included/excluded, and the way they are represented in them, has a profound impact on all aspects of learning, and is therefore a central issue in curricula planning. In the mid-1980s, UNESCO launched an extensive programme to alert public opinion to the problem of sexism in children's literature and school textbooks. In 2009, UNESCO published *Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks: A Methodological Guide*, whose two major aims were to show how gender inequality is constructed in textbooks throughout the curriculum, and to provide tools for revising textbooks or using existing ones critically. The guide shows how misrepresentations of women in textbooks, reinforced through teacher/student interactions

continue to put girls at a disadvantage, and argues that gender representations in books and teacher training must be changed to avoid contributing to the transmission of gendered misrepresentations that maintain inequality*. Gender and the Curriculum: A List of Resources*, compiled by the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and published jointly with UNESCO in 2011, is of particular interest for its long list of references, but most specifically for its case studies from non-Western backgrounds.

Issues of gendered ideologies in music affecting music performance and transmission practices have been tackled by Lucy Green (1997) by putting school music programmes under the gender lens, bringing to the surface biases, misrepresentations, and inequalities towards women within music practices and textbooks. This was also pointed out by several other scholars, including Donna Pucciani (1983) through an early survey of music education curriculum, and Diane Jezic and Daniel Binder (1987) identifying the lack of mention of women in 47 college music history standard texts. Julia Koza (1994) described how connections between discourses embraced in aesthetic music education and power relations tended to perpetuate the oppression of women. Green examines how notions of femininity and masculinity underline the perception that certain musical roles are more "appropriate" for women (i.e. singing), and the longstanding resistance towards practices (i.e. conducting or composing) or instruments (i.e. drums and electric guitars) perceived to be realms of men. These preconceptions, she says, create gendered behaviour often influencing teachers who, in turn, transfer their views onto their students, recreating and perpetrating bias, female exclusion and gendered misrepresentations within educational practice. The totalizing male models and the lack of female ones, especially in the fields of composition and improvisation, lead to boys alone identifying with male figures in these spheres. Teachers, in turn, are more inclined to regard them as superior in such disciplines whilst perceiving girls to be lacking in the creative, intellectual, and musical qualities required in these domains. Regarding lack of female presence and its representation in the field of music education, Green states:

> Until recently, the field of music education has ignored gender. Countless books and articles about music education, syllabuses and curriculum materials for use in music education, have been produced as though women have played barely a part in the history of music other than as the wives, mistresses, mothers or sisters of famous male musicians. … Like a *trompe l'oeil*, first one sees no gender issues, then one sees them. (1997, 230)

Green's volume offers core groundwork on issues of gender discrimination within music educational practices, providing evidence and considerations on causes and implications. It also focuses on Western educational practices and the consequences of Western curricula transmission practices, relevant here given Puerto Rico's colonized educational system.

Gender stereotypes also affect instrument selection, another area of learning closely associated with formal and informal music educational contexts having direct impact on female inclusion/exclusion. John Eros reviews post-1996 literature in his article (2008), showing how, "The association of gender with particular instruments can significantly influence a student in choosing an instrument, thereby resulting in numerous negative consequences, including fewer instrument choices, limited ensemble participation, and peer disapproval." He cites the work of numerous authors who demonstrated this phenomenon, like Abeles and Porter (1978), Bruce and Kemp (1993), Delzell and Leppla (1992), Fortney et al. (1993), Griswold and Chroback (1981) and Tarnowski (1993). By considering all these studies, Eros establishes gender stereotyping still holds true in music programs, where brass and percussions are generally male-stereotyped instruments, whereas high woodwinds and high strings tend to be female-heavy, a fact also supported by timbre-based gender associations. Eros surveyed literature from research conducted in Western/non-developing regions, mainly relating to art music (with some jazz and few pop references). My investigation uncovered the same gendered associations for instruments happening in Puerto Rico, where it is mostly men who graduate in brass and percussions in university music programs and at the Conservatory, with a few sporadic exceptions of women musicians.

The reality of all-male traditional instrumental practices in non-Western contexts, testifying to female exclusions from playing, is witnessed by authors conducting fieldwork across geographies. Gregory Barz observes gendered musical traditions in East Africa:

> Women, for example, are typically discouraged from playing, and in some cases are not allowed to play musical instruments in eastern Uganda. Many men in this area believe that women should never play instruments... Some men are of the opinion that women should be discouraged from even touching musical instruments, especially drums, or passing near them; they tell women not to sit on drums let alone play a drum. (2006, 240)

Barz does not deal specifically with issues of formal instrumental instruction but offers first-hand accounts of discriminatory attitudes towards women playing instruments in eastern

Uganda. My research in Puerto Rico shows similar instrumental biases reflected in formal and informal instruction contexts, for both classical and autochthonous music.

Another musical practice and learning context where girls and women are still underrepresented is technology. Many areas of the music industry are characterized by strong technological tendencies, such as DJing, sound engineering and producing, where women remain in the minority (Theberge 1997; Cohen 2001). This issue was addressed by Andrea Bossi in 2020, in an article titled “Women Are Missing in The Music Industry, Make Up Less Than 3% Of Producers”.[186] In the field of music production, knowledge and skills are developed in the setting of the professional recording studio, which has historically been an exclusively male space of creativity (Negus 1992; Porcello 2004). This sort of gendered perception of technology is cited as a primary reason why women have either avoided, or been actively excluded from, pursuing careers in music production (Théberge 1997, 451). Given that music production is intimately related to contemporary composition, this can also negatively impact the role of women in songwriting. Moving back to education, Karen Pegley (2000) examined the gendered construction of music classrooms as new technological spaces, focusing on how this scenario impacts boys and girls differently. In fact, boys favour technological locations featuring individual activities, while girls prefer locations with less focus on manipulating computer software but encourage personal interaction.

Moreover, for many girls and women in most areas of the world, scarcity of resources and typical family structures contribute to the lack of access to own, or use, a computer, or cell phones. Consequently, access to internet is among the determinants that prejudice women and minorities, creating a technology-related bias (UNESCO 1996, 1997; Ntalaja-Nzongola 1996). This phenomenon, referred to as the “digital divide” (Kramarae and Spender 2000), hinders the distribution of information and communication technology, producing disparities in educational levels between genders. Consequently, equipment and music-related software, used in modern-day music production and composition, create access issues related to both income, and gender. Victoria Armstrong (2011) examined the gendered processes around music technology learning practices, their effect on student confidence, and the issue of male control of technological knowledge. Lisa Whistelcroft (2000) showed how in universities where music technology was not a

[186] https://www.forbes.com/sites/andreabossi/2020/01/22/women-are-missing-in-the-music-industry-less-than-3-are-producers/?sh=224cca7b4f1e (accessed 01/09/2022).

compulsory part of courses, women often opt out, particularly from studio and composition work.[187] Georgina Born and Kyle Devine (2015) highlight how music technology degree courses are mainly populated by males, a phenomenon that does not match demographics of traditional music degrees.

Women's exclusion and gender discrimination within school practices and in curricula are related to dynamics displaying similar biases across wider musical practices connected to them. Historically, the formalization of the classical musical canon and of the universal and "official" (or normative) histories of music on one side, and music educational practices on the other, mutually influenced each other, holding an intimate bond. Consequently, to investigate dynamics of gender bias in curricula and education, it is fundamental to look at these same issues in the classical canon and most specifically within the process of canonization when, as Lydia Goehr (1994) advanced, music became another "thing".

An interdisciplinary discussion around the classical canon can be found in Bergeron and Bohlman (1992), where Ruth Solie's essay on the book *Music and Women* (1948), written by Sophie Drinker, appears. In Drinker's volume, the female author presented the results of 20 years' worth of research and writing, trying to answer the basic question of why women musicians, often experts in performing vocal and instrumental music, did not use the same language to communicate their ideas and feelings within Western art music through composing. Unsurprisingly, in the same way Drinker dealt with the invisibility of women in various musical spheres, her book *Music and Women* remained virtually invisible to the musicology community, even though it was widely positively reviewed and credited as sound scholarship. Drinker raises several issues of interest to my investigation: the invisibility, exclusion, and lack of representation of women-based products and practices not only generated *by* women, but also focusing *on* them, and the fact that "their" history of music is not a collection of musical works, but of musical activities and cultural practices. In other words, women's history of music relates more to participation and music-making rather than collections of paper-based transcriptions. In contrast, the superiority attributed by the canon to written music still influences the way oral and unwritten music, whether created by women or other groups, is considered inferior and excluded from academia.

[187] https://econtact.ca/3_3/WomenMusicTech.htm (accessed 29/09/2022).

My research in Puerto Rico confirmed the detrimental effects of this dynamic in creating negative perceptions and exclusions of autochthonous musics orally transmitted by other disadvantaged groups like Black and poor people. This key aspect leads directly to a wider discourse on the form of the classical canon, and how exclusions of women and disadvantaged groups are positioned at its core because of its constitutive principles. As a model built on written musical works, the canon automatically excludes any work that has been orally transmitted, thus depriving it of equal status. Women's musical works – because women lacked access to formal musical instruction and publishing, among other reasons – were historically orally transmitted within the Western world, a reality at the very basis of their exclusion. In my research, I examine this phenomenon up-close, focusing on how autochthonous oral musics produced by those considered second-class citizens in Puerto Rico (women, Blacks, poor people) have been systematically discriminated against and excluded within institutionalized music instruction, as discussed in section 5 below.

Marcia Citron engages in a study on women composers and their music within the Western canon (1993), thoroughly analyzing the role different actors played in canon formation, and continue to play in its reiteration. She particularly focuses on the influence exerted by institutions of power like the academy, publishing companies, performing organizations and recording industries, where male authority and female lack of access to property/ownership rights historically determined the exclusion of women from realms like directing, composing, recording, and learning to play certain instruments. Citron describes how publishing and other restrictions related to divergent social positions and opportunities for men and women jointly created the circumstances that led to the canonization of male works over those of women, rather than their "real" abilities as musicians, or a legitimate discrepancy in the quality of their compositions**.** Up to the present time, social determinants have customarily been ignored by the official history of music and school curricula because maintaining the "greatness" of the classical musical canon has been considered of higher importance than examining social and historical factors. This reproduced and perpetrated prejudice, gender and other disparities. Citron's work proves relevant to my research as it established existing correlations between patriarchal societies and gender exclusions in the canon, across social and musical spheres. My investigation also demonstrates how Citron's considerations can be extended to recognize key factors behind the under-representation of other discriminated social groups, as is the case of Black and poor people in Puerto Rico.

As mentioned previously, the “official” History of Music is a term used to refer in a quite hegemonic and ethnocentric way to Western art music; when it comes to academic practices, what is customarily taught in a “History of Music” class is the history of Western classical music, as also witnessed by interviewees in Puerto Rico. The concept of the “official” History of Music is intimately bound to the classical canon and to dynamics of canonization, and unsurprisingly it reveals the same dynamics of exclusion and invisibility towards women and other disadvantaged groups. Given its androcentric and Western-centric nature in terms of both creation and narrative, it conveys a series of discriminatory practices which, because of the canon’s reification over time, has turned its musical content into an unquestioned catalogue with absolute and untouchable status. Mariateresa Lietti (2001) touches upon different nuances of bias and inequity towards women, and she ascribes women’s invisibility in the History of Music to the fact that such history has up to this day been mostly written by men, with methodologies and approaches also elaborated by them (see also Cavarero 1987). This resulted in women disappearing from the written account, even though in “music” itself, women have always been present and active. Lietti also touches upon how there is no “objective” history, but only points of view that facilitate certain events becoming historical facts, and a sequence of events framed by the choice of certain sources over others, making any pretence of neutrality a mystification. Another relevant point Lietti makes is that research, science, and historical reflection need to recognize the bias at the basis of such categorization. In fact, in the creation of a symbolic world, male elaboration has not recognized and declared its partiality, thus acquiring a neutral and universal value. The male-centred point of view has been imposed as an absolute, instead of assuming its partiality, causing that what is ruled out from male mental dispositions remains unheard and unseen, as it happened with female musical expressions and creations. My research in Puerto Rico demonstrates how these dynamics also apply to the invisibilization of other disadvantaged groups, like Black and poor people, from the “official” history written by a privileged White male elite.

A similar point is made by Elizabeth Minnich (1990), who analyses how knowledge can be transmitted and insists that language needs to be transformed to be made inclusive, also examining textbooks and revealing how music history books do not cover female composers. In recent years, books on women composers and their works have been more available, both via online and offline sources, but availability does not ensure inclusion in

formal instruction.[188] Some of the most notable examples of female classical musicians and composers traditionally excluded from the official history of music and the classical canon are Francesca Caccini, Clara Schumann, and Fanny Mendelssohn.[189]

Jane Bowers and Judith Tick also delve into the absence of women in conventional mainstream music history books, affirming:

> The absence of women in the standard music histories is not due to their absence in the musical past. Rather, the questions so far asked by historians have tended to exclude them… Musicologists have paid little attention to the sociology of music… [and] the institutional musical structures most studied by musicologists are those that either excluded women altogether or included them only in small numbers. (1987, 3)

In this quotation, Bowers and Tick touch upon some key aspects I explored during my field investigation. First, they highlight how the choice to create a History of Music around written documents has been a major factor in female exclusions. Fieldwork in Puerto Rico showed how the Eurocentric music curriculum implemented there perpetrates similar dynamics of exclusion, which also extends to music orally transmitted and created by various discriminated groups. Bowers and Tick also highlighted how women were excluded from professional positions – namely, from instrumental training and performing, composing, music publishing, academic learning, and teaching. My research shows how this phenomenon is also happening in Puerto Rico, and how the demographics of decision-makers within music institutions creating curricula and music materials are also determining factors of exclusion. In fact, Puerto Rican academia tend to lack gender and racial balance, besides awareness of equality and inclusion, as demonstrated in the next sections.

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[188] Offline sources include Kristen Marshall's *HerStory*, and Carol Kimball's *Women Composers.* Online sources include: https://www.stretta-music.com/female-composers#; https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/at-the-piano-with-women-composers-sheet-music/3533463 (accessed 29/09/2022).

[189] Francesca Caccini was considered by many the first female composer of a written opera or, as Cusick (2009) defines it, a "*balletto in musica*". Robert Schumann's wife, Clara, was one of the most distinguished piano players of her time and a prominent composer. Fanny Mendelssohn was Felix's sister, who apparently published several of her works under his name. Martin Jarvis (2011) also claimed that some of Johann Sebastian Bach's works were written by his wife Anna Magdalena.

3.3 Invisibilization and Exclusions of Women in Higher Music Education in Puerto Rico

As discussed in Chapter 1.3, one of the historically discriminated groups in Puerto Rico are women and girls; when inequality and imbalanced perceptions in society are widespread, gender bias also gets embedded across music and educational practices, as documented in the previous section. This contributes to the perpetration of discrimination in a perpetual circle, as they mutually influence each other, and counteracting such mindsets across music, education and society becomes extremely challenging. For example, in Argentina, research has shown how policies promoting gender equality in the music industry are not sufficient to challenge gender-based discrimination in the broader culture (Liska 2021).

In Puerto Rico, patriarchal representations of women, misogynist and problematic lyrics in salsa are some of the issues Frances Aparicio uncovered (1998), highlighting their relationship to the larger Afro-Caribbean sexist cultural and musical traditions from which salsa emerges. Twenty years later, my investigation advances how discrimination is still widespread in Puerto Rico's music practice, and also across its education; data collected through questionnaires and interviews shows how gender discrimination and female invisibilization are normalized in music and education, as discussed below.

Miguel Cubano attended the UPR in the early 1970s (1972–1976), witnessing how the music department there, both for student and teaching bodies, was almost completely made up of men: "It was men, men most of all, among students and teachers. There were two women professors who were pianists, very good pianists, both, and the rest were male professors, and the students were all men." Noel attended the conservatory almost a decade later, in the early 1980s, and described a similar student body make up: "Women… the issue was what instrument they were playing… always piano, obviously singing. … In percussion there weren't many." Despite systemic absence of women playing certain instruments, conversations on the issue were not taking place, as Noel explained: "'Let's go discuss this gender issue', let's discuss race problems, etc.'. It could happen at the individual level, or casually speaking, but the matter of posing it as a problem, or a recruitment problem in trombone, as 'I don't see any woman playing trombone', while I was studying there, this was not considered."

Noel also mentioned how gender discrimination limited work opportunities for female professors playing instruments uncommon for women at the time: “The one who dominated in the trumpet was a man; there was a female trumpeter in the symphonic orchestra, and until this individual died, she could not be first trumpet, and he did not allow her to teach. … It was also very difficult for a female trumpeter to take a class with the male professor.”

Fifty years later, between 2016 and 2017, sitting in various classes at the music department of Universidad Interamericana, I observed how the student body was still mostly made up of males, especially among instrumentalists. As Head of the music department, I asked Miguel for his views on this phenomenon:

> I totally agree with you, and it is something that I feel sorry about. … Beyond thinking that historically women have been subdued, they have been submitted to specific roles… this is still happening … it has not changed much. I had very few female professional musician colleagues back in the day. Nowadays, I have very few students who are girls playing with me in the big band; they are more singers … What is common and current it’s that it’s all males, the instrumentalists.

Miguel also brought to light the fact that women instrumentalists are slightly more present in classical music and orchestras than in popular music ensembles, where they remain even scarcer: “For example, here in the symphonic orchestra, there are more women than in salsa or *merengue* orchestras.” I shared with Miguel that this somehow resonated with traditional associations made between musical styles and gendered connotations; historically, in Europe, it was considered acceptable for young women of higher social classes to be taught classical instruments like piano or singing as part of their training to become a suitable wife (Bennett 2016). At the same time, in the US, women performing jazz or blues in clubs, usually at night, were seen as “bad” women (Rustin and Tucker 2008). Given the influence of both Europe and the US in shaping Puerto Rican mindsets, it is likely that playing classical instruments in an orchestra setting is considered more appropriate for women vs performing in bars and clubs, where alcohol is served, and female musicians come in closer contact with male spectators. Miguel agreed, adding, “Forget thinking trying to make a career out of it, playing an instrument, you couldn’t even dream about it. … Including there was a time in society when parents would not allow that.”

Miguel also mentioned key deterrents for female musicians in Puerto Rico, sharing the story of a female musician who left school because of an unplanned pregnancy and male partner pressure. Miguel explained: “I had a student who was a saxophone player in my big band… Very talented, very serious, very dedicated, but she got tied with a guy… They had a baby, and she stopped playing. …The girl was a bit shy, it’s like he almost imposed it. … She never finished her degree, she also stopped playing, she never played again.” Ricardo described how a female trumpeter stopped playing because of bullying from classmates, women and men, saying things like “Why the trumpet, are you a lesbian or something?” Ricardo recalled, “There was a girl that played trumpet in the band, and she was probably the best trumpet player in the band, but she got so much pressure from her friends in school, saying that trumpet was an instrument for men, that she quit.”

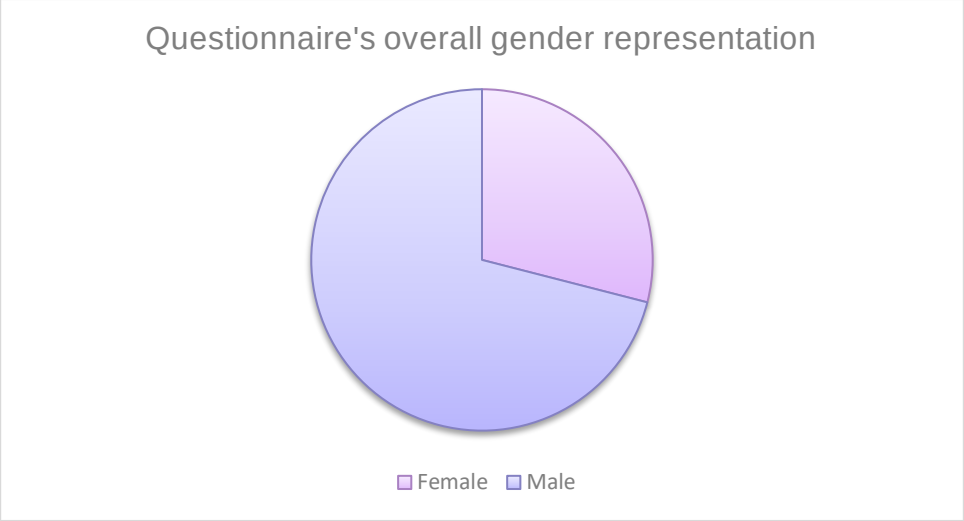
Miguel reported he was not aware of conversations or debates ever taking place in Puerto Rican academia or at the institutional level around tackling gender disparities in music – whether regarding education or performance – nor of quotas being discussed for music departments or other academic fields where female representation remains low. “It’s the conversation that has never been had, that people don’t have, but everybody knows. Everybody knows it happens, everybody knows it’s the reality, but nobody treats it as a theme to be tackled”, Miguel said. I asked him if he had heard sexist remarks attributing the lack of female instrumentalists to the fact they are “less talented” than men, without acknowledging that historically women were given less instrumental access; Miguel replied:

> On an informal level yes, informally yes, but on a formal academic level no. … Also, the opposite [happens], when one sees a woman playing an instrument that usually is played by men, or predominantly men, one will say, “She plays drums like a man” or “She plays conga like a man”, it’s like validating what she is doing because she sounds like men. Typical, typical. And where I see it the most, is in composition.

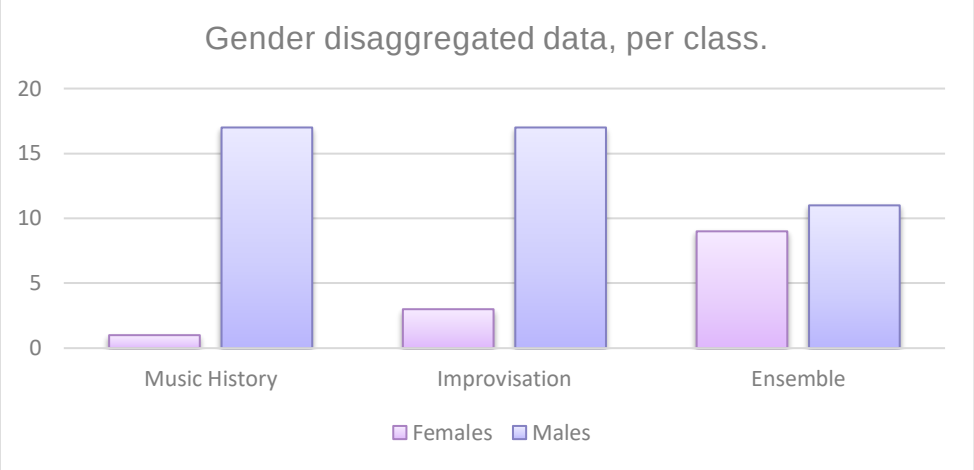
I administered a questionnaire to 58 students over three classes of the BA degree in Popular Music at Universidad Interamericana (Cupey) in March 2017.[190] In the graphs, data is disaggregated by gender (m/f).

The three classes showed an overall attendance of 13 female students vs 45 male students, meaning a 29% female presence vs 71% of males:

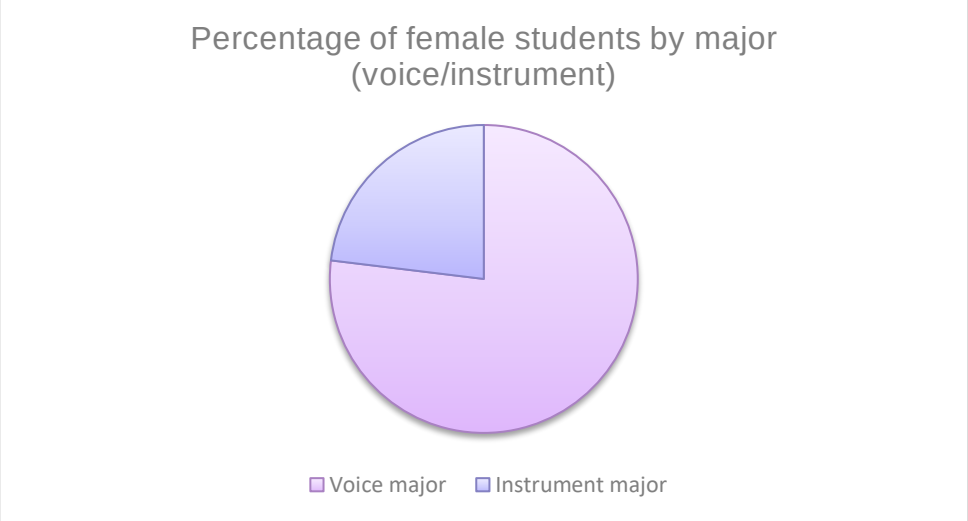
[190] The classes were: Comparative History of Music, Improvisation, Bomba and Plena Ensemble.



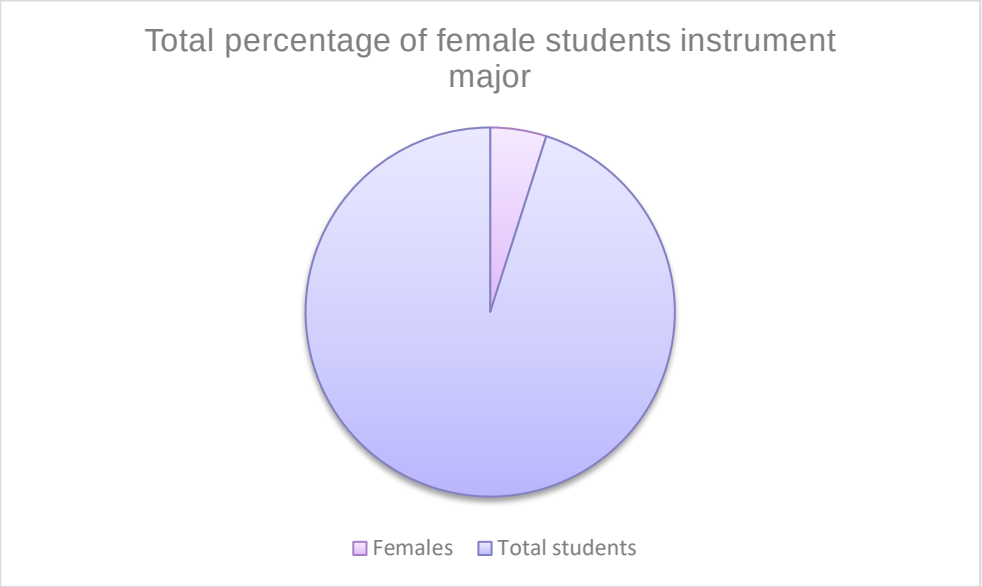
Female attendance was very low in Music History (1f, 17m) and Improvisation (3f, 17m) classes, whilst it was almost equal in the Bomba and Plena Ensemble (9f, 11m):



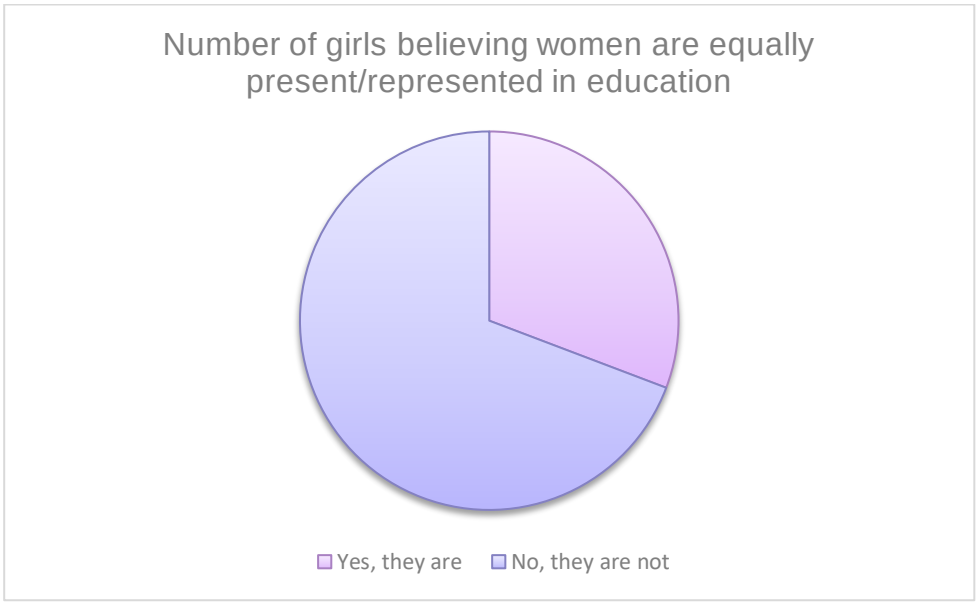
Of the 13 female students (out of the three classes) who filled out the questionnaire, 10 were majoring in voice, and only three in instrumental performance:



Consequently, the overall percentage of girls majoring in instrumental performance, over the 3 classes, was a mere 5%:

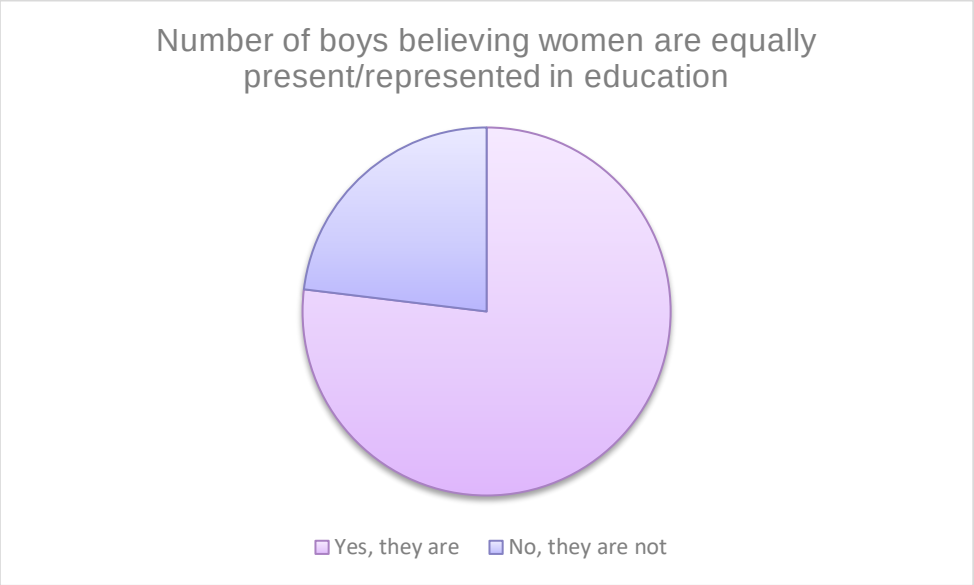


Particularly significant are the results when students were asked whether they believed women, as historic figures, professionals, writers, musicians, composers, instrumentalists, professors, etc., are equally present and represented (as men are) within school settings, education, and curricula. Approximately 2/3 (9 out of 13) of the girls believed women are neither equally present nor represented:



Boys showed the exact opposite trend, with 2/3 of boys (30 out 45) affirming they believe women are indeed equally present and represented in school and music education, even

in classes where there was only one female classmate, or where there were entire instrumental sections made up exclusively of male instrumentalists:



These numbers reflect discrepancies in perceptions of female under-representation between boys and girls, where most boys are unaware or oblivious to disparity, but with a significantly high number of girls (1/3 of them) also blind to it. This data attests to the normalization of discrimination by both genders – personal second level gender discrimination for boys and internalized third level discrimination self-inflicted by girls.

Fabiola, one of the students who responded to the questionnaire, and the only female instrumentalist among them, shared her experience in Puerto Rican educational institutions as a female trumpet player. She attended elementary school at Fort Buchanan, where curricula from the US were taught in English. In third grade, students were invited to pick an instrument, and because she saw an older girl playing trumpet, she chose it; Fabiola was always a minority playing in the brass section made up of boys, whilst girls were in choir. Fabiola kept playing trumpet throughout high school and, when she graduated at 16, she entered the music programme at Universidad Interamericana (Cupey), encountering sexist comments for being a female trumpet player: “The classic joke is ‘Ah, ella puede soplar’, ‘So she can blow’. Yeah. I’m already numb to all of this. … I used to be somewhat offended… but I’ve learned to control that. I just ignore everyone.” Fabiola also mentioned never receiving support from male peers: “The guys trumpet players, well… I would pass by them practicing, and they would suddenly start practicing all these fast things, trying to show off ‘I’m better than you’, and I would just brush it off.”

We also talked about her plans, and Fabiola mentioned she was considering taking another degree, either in communication or law, explaining it was related to her lack of self-confidence in playing trumpet, resonating with third level internalized discrimination produced by lack of support and differential treatment. Fabiola described how, in the big band, she was always given the third trumpet role by her peers; when she asked to switch parts, they repeatedly turned her down: “I was done asking. At one point, I just took the second trumpet sheet, but then they would just take it back eventually. … I was the only girl in the whole big band.” Fabiola also recalled being discriminated during private tuition classes by her professor, as he would never give her the same pieces that he was giving to freshmen male trumpet players, even when she was at a higher level. In short, Fabiola was not awarded the same learning opportunities given to her male peers, despite she pushed for it: “I took one of the harder pieces and I was like, ‘There are these options that I want to play’… and he was like, ‘No, no, let’s play a ballad’, and I thought, ‘Ok, I’m not going to argue since you are the professor’, but it’s not that I haven’t shown him that I was eager to play other things. … I really tried with him, but it didn’t work.” This affected Fabiola’s overall drive to continue playing: “There was one point where I was totally demotivated, because I didn’t have the support from my own professor. I was just stuck, I felt like I was stuck.”

Fabiola also felt nobody could help her change the situation:

> There was this one point when I really saw the misogyny, but … I decided to stay quiet because he [the director of the department] is not going to change anything, what is he going to do, he’s not going to scold 20-year-olds, since they are already old enough in their conscience to know what they’re doing. And I didn’t want to be pinpointed, I’m already the woman, “Oh, she’s also the rat with the tattletale.” No, I’m not going to do that, I already have enough attention, so I decided to just suck it up.

Fabiola’s sense of helplessness resonates with that of Clara Schumann when she abandoned composing; it also showcases how both institutional and interpersonal (first and second) levels of discrimination interplay in what female players experience, feeling isolated with nowhere to turn to. At the same time, Fabiola expressed her desire to be a positive female role model for other girls playing instruments: “I want to … try to motivate other girls, also because right now the [other] girl who was studying here… she just disappeared, she just stopped studying.”

Low female presence among instrumentalists also happens among professors, where women instrumentalists are almost absent; Miguel shared how he intentionally attempted reducing the gender gap when recruiting a new full-time music professor at Interamericana:

> The only woman who is full-time among our faculty is Brenda Hopkins, who is a pianist, and I proposed her because the call came up, and I told my supervisor… "Listen, there are various candidates, but this woman, I have played with her, she is very competent, very responsible, and additionally we don't have any women and we are 7 men, it doesn't look good that the entire full-time faculty, all of it, it's men."… It's that there are so few women, they are so few here with us now, it's really embarrassing, it makes one feel embarrassed because one knows that there are more, out there.

This quotation highlights how the consideration that among an all-male full-time faculty a female musician should be hired was purely individual, as there is still lack of systemic approaches at the institutional level to diversify hiring. Miguel commented, "There are individual voices signalling the disparity and the lack of alignment among the quantity of women actively working or who could do the job, and the number of men who end up getting the job." Miguel also specified how this does not happen at the systems-level, as it never goes beyond the superficial talk, "Yes, we must give more opportunities to women."

Brenda Hopkins, the only female full-time professor of the Interamericana music department teaching piano and improvisation, shared her experiences as a female instrumentalist in Puerto Rico:

> It's certainly a challenging path. I mean, if you're a woman in music, most people assume that you're a singer, not that you play an instrument, and if you play an instrument, they assume that it's classical music that you play, not jazz or whatever else you're playing. … The other surprise for them is that they assume that if you are in a band, it's because you look good, or they wanted to have a girl in the band. And when you play, and you play well, you can see the surprised reaction, once again, "Oh, she can really play." I even heard the recurrent, nasty comment, "Oh, you play like a guy", which is supposed to be a compliment.

Brenda also shared how she once wrote an article about women in jazz where she reported a lack of women instrumentalists in jazz festivals. As a result, she experienced backlash:

> I was voided from performing at the Heineken Jazz Festival in Puerto Rico. Because, at the end of the article, there is one short paragraph where I mention that they didn't have female

> instrumentalists at the Heineken Jazz Festival, and the guy who runs the festival got really mad. … It was a fact, I had proof … but since that day I was vetted off the festival or anywhere where they are the sponsors.

For Brenda, one of the biggest constraints for female instrumentalists is the lack of women peer-to-peer networks functioning like a "buddy" referral system for men:

> You know how you get gigs because somebody recommends you and things like that – men will recommend mostly other men. So, when it comes to finding gigs and places to play, I must do that for myself, on my own, because my guy friends are not like, "Hey, listen, they're hiring people to play at this festival." I never get that type of recommendation, even though we are friends… I see them recommending each other, but that doesn't seem to happen, to come my way.

Brenda highlighted another aspect fully resonating with Fabiola – the difficulty for female students to learn from male teachers. Brenda faced harassment due to the improper conduct of few male professors, to the point she had to drop some of her classes:

> When I was a student, it was very hard to learn from my male teachers because… there were several times where they were improper, you know. And I felt it wasn't fair, because the other male students were getting a lot of information from these teachers that I wanted to learn from, and I couldn't have access to that information because … I would get something else that I wasn't looking for. … I had to drop out of a few classes I was interested in because it got to the point that I needed to put some distance.

Julissa, who has a master's in music education from NYU (US) and a PhD in Ethnomusicology from Queen's University (UK), also teaches music classes at Universidad Interamericana. Julissa faced difficulties as a young, female, professor: "Obviously, I have a bad combination because I'm a woman and I'm young. … There are still very few women, and it's not that easy. Only people like Allende gave me the opportunity." Julissa described the discrimination experienced as a young female professor: "The first time I felt uncomfortable was during a faculty meeting, of history, where I was the only woman. Not only did I feel uncomfortable, but I also felt like I was not taken seriously … And I had more qualifications than some of them. … I remember saying something, and I was just dismissed."

In our interviews, Noel Allende expressed how during his university years he developed awareness over social issues, sexism, and feminist theory. As part of his own self-development path, he questioned and deconstructed practices, both at the personal and

professional levels, consciously developing teaching methods that are anti-racist and anti-sexist. Noel explained how he used his position in academia to actively support women – as he did with Julissa – but also explicitly encouraging female students, especially at the higher levels of education, as that is where he sees more double standard, and where they are most likely to drop out of school under societal and family pressures:

> I am much more forward with women than men in telling them "You have to watch out for your professional future" because especially at the master level, women are still receiving a double standard … For example, when they have a boyfriend, I tell them… "if you are not going to do your masters in Argentina, Alaska, Sweden, or China because you don't want to leave him, I promise you he's not thinking likewise. If he has the opportunity to go to Beijing, he will tell you "See you!", or "Come with me."' It's a double standard.

In this section I documented how global phenomena of discrimination, underrepresentation and invisibilization of women in academia and in musical practices spanning several centuries apply to modern-day Puerto Rican higher music education institutions. In Chapter 2.1, I provided examples demonstrating how similar dynamics recur in music performance across different Puerto Rican musical styles. In Chapter 5, I examine gender discrimination in bomba, especially in relation to playing percussions, also presenting the case-study of Marién Torres, one of the first women playing bomba solo drums, and the resistance she faced as a female light-skinned drummer performing the most Afro-derived genre on the island.

As the last two sections analysed in depth sexism and gender discrimination within Music Academia, globally, and in Puerto Rico, the next two sections present a complementary analysis, but with a focus on racism and colonialism.

3.4 Ethnocentrism, Racism in Music Curricula and Decolonizing Music Academia

Why is there no academic degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico? As I already indicated, the answer needs to consider intersectionality (Introduction), implications of colonialism and layers of societal discrimination in Puerto Rico (Chapter 1), and how these all play out across the fields of music (Chapter 2) and education (Chapter 3.1).

At the time of my research, the only offering on autochthonous music were few non-mandatory courses on salsa, bomba and plena taught at a couple of college-level Puerto

Rican institutions that started offering these in the early 2000s – including the Jazz and Caribbean Music Degree offered by the Conservatory of Puerto Rico.

Investigating the absence of a standalone degree in Puerto Rican music and the reasons behind it, led to uncover how wider phenomena of discrimination manifest in higher music education in Puerto Rico; academia becomes both a victim and a perpetrator, or a product and a producer, of societal bias. In the previous two sections, focused on gender-based discriminations, I highlighted how the drivers behind women's invisibilization in music and academia often also apply to other social groups – like Black and poor communities. Indeed, the underrepresentation of individuals belonging to discriminated groups, as reinforced by the canon and academia, results in perpetration of sexism, racism and classism against them, and the exclusion of these people and their musics, within formal institutions. To analyse such complex, layered, and intersecting relationships, it is vital to understand how all social constructs interplay within a system, and that an intersectional approach is necessary when looking at ways to deconstruct them and (re)build non-biased institutions, practices, and approaches. Therefore, while I considered gender in the previous sections, and race/ethnicity and class in the next ones, this is only to analyse selected aspects of each social construct in depth and for clarity purposes, as all three components are closely entangled. In relation to this, I reiterate these social constructs were chosen as key axes to analyse discrimination for this investigation because of their centrality and pervasiveness in the biased social, musical, and educational practices of Puerto Rico. At the same time, these components interact with several other factors of discrimination and exclusion both locally and globally. Localization, geography, background, and context, ultimately determine which constructs play out more than others in each given place. For example, in countries where the caste system was enforced (as in India and Nepal), caste would be one of the key elements to be prioritized and investigated in similar work (see e.g. Morcom 2014, Sherinian 2014).

My research in Puerto Rico showcases how music practices can reinforce exclusion, lack of agency and invisibility, based on whether someone – as an individual and/or as part of a cultural/social group – is included or excluded from them. My interest was investigating the extent to which, within this framework, music teaching and curricula – and not just "music" broadly – can be platforms where such exclusions take place. Most specifically, I examine how curricula and teaching practices function as sites where society and culture are passively reflected and actively shaped, looking how they connect to the construction of

identities and representations against the complex Puerto Rican reality. Indeed, excluding music created by social groups discriminated from academia can have repercussions over identity formation, especially in a place like Puerto Rico, where music served as one of the most important symbols of Puerto Rican cultural identity, as shown by Peter Manuel (1994).

Musical expressions produce and reproduce (in the form of aural and visual perceptions) cultural values and social realities within the communities in which they are created. As Christopher Waterman (1990) argued, musical performances externalize values and give them palpable form; they do not define culture and values by providing their name but by conveying their "feel". By claiming that music participates in a constructivist project, this advances how music does not only reflect social dynamics, but the way in which it also acts as an active agent in the creation of identity within social groups. Likewise, Martin Stokes (1994) also suggested that music is an active force that can become an object in which different parties see their key values delineated and reflected through musical practices that embody and enact political and moral order, thus participating in the construction of identity, ethnicity, subculture, and nationalism. This discussion describes how music, and what is included and represented through repertoire, performance, publication, and teaching, have the power to reinforce self-identity, cultural identity, and representation by conveying feelings of belonging, providing agency and visibility. As such, music curricula and the canon reflect the dynamics of the society and culture that create them, especially in relation to gender representation, race issues, and identity construction (Rice 2007).

Concerning broader complexities of identity construction, a research review by Uvanney Maylor and Barbara Read of the Institute for Policy Studies in Education of London Metropolitan University stated that "constructing categories of identities inevitably leads to construction of 'difference', inclusion and exclusion" (2007, 32).[191] This becomes particularly significant in relation to the necessity of the construction of a sense of collective "solidarity" and the need of a shared "culture" in the creation of the "nation" as a political category – which arose in the West "as a result of the need for large-scale economic and social government of peoples." Within this framework, education becomes an instrument to facilitate the development of a shared sense of culture and language,

[191] https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7782/1/RR819.pdf (accessed 01/09/2022).

reinforcing a sense of similarity, of belonging, and imagined “national” identities. As such, the imagined national identity incorporates all the aspects of a society planning for it to be developed according to given standards and its educational systems are designed, and curricula is administered, as tools to promote specific values.

In the context of educational systems contributing to identity creation, Minirka discussed how systemically leaving out key elements of the history and culture of a population, like art, can facilitate their oppression and identity erasure. Most specifically, Minirka explained how the lack of autochthonous music degrees in Puerto Rican educational institutions can be considered yet another tool for colonizers to oppress and erase identity:

> Music is folklore, music is art, and everything that is art is also the expression of its people, therefore if you can suppress these expressions, then of course you will start from the arts, as that is where the people are expressing themselves. If you take away their music, you are taking away their identity, you are taking away their history, but you are also taking away their musical identity that is also the expression of their oral history.

In schools, a sense of identity is developed not only along national but also ethnic, religious, class, and gender lines. In a circular motion, gender/race/class divisions in society permeate both formal and informal curricula, creating a dynamic where schools play a significant part in the production of gender/race/class identities, as explored by Máiréad Dunne (2007), with a focus on gender in Ghana and Botswana.[192] Dunne highlights this circular motion of students and teachers in schools, daily acting out their gender identities and at the same time re-constructing the very same gender boundaries through which their own identities have been framed.[193] Parallel findings emerge from a study conducted in the public sector schools of Karachi, Pakistan, stating that the “inter-relationship of the structure of the schools, the official curriculum, teaching and learning practices and teacher beliefs result… to perceived gender differential characteristics which serve to develop gendered identities of girls and boys” (Dean et al 2007, 88). The gendered shaping of identities is a common affliction that unites both non-Western and Western school systems, curricula design and implementation (McCormick 1994; LeVine et al. 2001, 2012; Kelly 2016). In the West, from Rousseau through to the 1950s, gender differentiation was an actual goal of education. This lost traction after World War II and the

[192] https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/26-30-2007.pdf (accessed 01/09/2022).
[193] These dynamics, beyond education, are also touched on by Giddens (1984), Butler (1990), Hall and Du Gay (1996).

political ideology of equal rights, but it retained many of the assumptions and practices constitutive of gender difference even if such phenomena were not immediately readily apparent (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Music education is no exception: practices and curricula design have embedded the same societal biases described in these studies, both in terms of gender and non-gender related preconceptions. Christopher Small (1997) shows how education is the product of a certain society, and challenges Western education models. His focus, in terms of disparity and prejudice, shifts towards the Western vs. non-Western axiom of power relations, challenging Western-inherited science-based attitudes and models used in the analysis and rating of non-scientific subjects, such as music, its products and its styles. Small states

> I shall try to show how both western classical music and western science speak of very deep-rooted states of mind in Europeans. … I shall suggest that education, or rather, schooling, as at present conceived in our society has worked to perpetuate those states of mind. … In holding up some other musical cultures to the reader's attention I shall try to show that different aesthetics of music are possible that can stand as metaphors for quite different world views, for different systems of relationships within society and nature from our own. (1997, 3, 5)

Ethnocentric approaches and worldviews, sided by the primacy attributed to Western musics, have dominated music discourse, approaches, and the construction of curricula in music departments and educational institutions in colonies like Puerto Rico. The classical canon, examined through gender lenses in the previous sections, also acts as a powerful tool of exclusion towards those who were considered second-class citizens at the time of its formation and crystallization – such as women, poor people, and non-White musicians. An interdisciplinary discussion around the classical canon can be found in Katherine Bergeron and Philip Bohlman's volume *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons* (1992), where various scholars representing the fields of historical musicology, ethnomusicology and music theory explore issues related to the canon, propose alternatives to it, and raise questions about the nature of its exclusions and the music that stays out. Don Randel's article (1992) tackles the issue of what the classical canon stands for, i.e. a higher authority and a standard of excellence immediately granting status to what is incorporated and lowering what is left out. He presents notation as one of the most prevalent measuring devices granting access to such higher status, creating an immediate

discrimination in the perception of value between the music that has been written down by being notated and the music that has been transmitted exclusively orally. This is a key element in the analysis of the main drivers behind what has been considered high music and low music, or music of value and music without value in Puerto Rico. In fact, the written musics of past and present White colonizers – classical music in the case of Spain, and jazz in the case of the US – have been considered worthy and high-status musics, and as such, entered academia. At the same time, orally transmitted autochthonous musics created by poor and Black people, are up to this day considered lesser and low, and as such have been kept out of formal educational institutions in Puerto Rico.[194]

Ethnocentrism as a paradigm of music educational practices is also a concern in Lee Higgins (2012), where he advocates for "community music" as an alternative to traditional western models of music education. He defines this as a manifestation of cultural democracy with the capacity to "point toward an expression, through music, of a community's local identities, traditions, aspirations and social interaction" (2012, 4). This touches upon the aspect of developing democratization in school and through curricula, an interest expressed also by education theorists such as James Graves who defines community music as "a system of support for cultures… that gives voice to the many who have been historically excluded from the public domain, and that makes no claim of superiority or special status" (2004, 34). Advocating for cultural diversity in music education are also the contributors to *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century* (Campbell et al. 2005) and David Elliott in *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995). Key issues in cultural diversity in music education are examined by Huib Schippers stressing the importance of music education in identity construction, stating "Many societies appear to be moving from socially constructed to more individually constructed identities. Musical identities can play a significant role in that process" (2009, 30). Valerie Peters also touches upon the importance of music education in identity construction, alongside many other contributions from different authors around the meaning and practice of social justice in and through music education, including Beatriz Ilary and Mark Campbell's – all appearing in *Exploring Social Justice: How Music Education Might Matter* (Gould et al. 2009). Lastly, in a discussion that is pivotal to my research questions, Schippers cites C. Kati Szego (2002)

[194] These points are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

referring specifically to music education, transmission and learning practices embedded in larger discussions of socio-musicological phenomena. Szego asserts: “Still, ethnomusicologists and folklorists have spent proportionately little time studying these processes or the ways they are shaped by culture” (2009, 710).

In summary, societal biases influence the shaping of identity and create representation issues in education in relation to several aspects, including gender, race, and class construction. Green (1997) shows how the contemporary school music classroom can be viewed as a microcosm of wider society, testifying to how a patriarchal society has led to musical patriarchy, which in turn has shaped gendered musical practices and meanings reproduced inside and outside the classroom. Female invisibility in music history texts (non-representation) and the role of the music composer or director strictly associated with men (identity/lack of identification) are examples of how musical practices influence and shape a gendered mentality, in turn being themselves the cultural product of a sexist society. The same applies to race representation: the invisibility of Black composers and musicians in music history, courses, and textbooks – and Black women even more so – is yet another example of how music education and academia influence mindsets and shape racial perceptions, whilst being the cultural product of a racist society.

Multiple identities are defined, and actively define themselves, within the classroom. Roberta Lamb and Niyati examine the dynamics of music education and gender by analyzing the identity exploration, definition, and contradictions that music educators face, meaningful also because “music educator identity is the point through which elements of curriculum are filtered to the music students” (2015, 132), having direct repercussions on students’ perceptions and definition of their own identities.

These mutual exchanges among music, educational practices and identity construction take place within the Puerto Rican social and cultural realities where its school system is embedded, as colonial dynamics continue to influence academic practices. Below, I provide an overview to contextualize this phenomenon within postcolonial music educational settings sharing a similar past, also considering academic discourse on colonization, and progress on decolonizing (music) education globally.

The earliest calls for decolonization may be traced back to Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and other scholars of the postcolonial movement. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon explains, from the perspective of the Black man, how the relationship between the

colonizer and the colonized is normalized, how racism promotes a construct that institutionalizes the subjection of Black people and universalizes the White norm, and how such cultural values are internalized and “epidermalized” into consciousness. In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said laid the groundwork for postcolonial theory, arguing how Western discourse fabricated a false image of “the Orient” as the primitive uncivilized “other”, and has put this in antithetic contrast with the civilized and advanced West, or “the Occident” – also outlining how it was vital for colonial powers to teach the “other”, using education as a tool for promoting this discourse. Education indeed has been a crucial element of imperialism, as colonial powers used educational programs to produce a colonized people internalizing Euro- and Western-centric norms and knowledge systems through indoctrinated mass schooling, often promoted as a mission to civilize the “other”. Spivak is considered one of the most influential postcolonial theorists, bringing a non-Western feminist perspective to the subject by focusing on the space occupied by the subaltern, especially subaltern women – pioneering the intersectional study of non-Western women, and bringing together gender, class, and race. Spivak wrote: “Colonialism was committed to the education of a certain class. It was interested in the seemingly permanent operation of an altered normality” (2004, 524) and, consequently, to decolonize, the mind of the oppressed has to be (re)trained, as “the world needs an epistemological change that will rearrange desires” (2012, 2).

Academic debates focusing on decolonizing the music field, music education, ethnomusicology and music academia have been ongoing in both English- and Spanish-speaking worlds and associated scholarship. Juliet Hess has written several articles on decolonizing music curricula through activist methodology, including highlighting the risks of “tokenism” as decolonization increasingly becomes a popular “buzzword” (2015). Shzr Ee Tan (2021) addressed how previous efforts in decolonization within the academy in Europe and North America ultimately failed to tackle the systemic racism embedded within ethnomusicology as a neo-colonial enterprise.

In 2016, the Fall/Winter edition of the SEM Student News, Volume 12, Number 2, *Decolonizing Ethnomusicology* contained several contributions on the topic, including the results of a survey administered online with questions covering “the permeation of English throughout the field of ethnomusicology; thoughts on decolonization in relation to ethnomusicology; students’ roles and experiences in decolonizing ethnomusicology; professional organizations’ support of decolonization; and the influence of

Indigenous/'non-Western' ways of knowing" (5). As too often still happens in academia, despite contributions to the edition came from ethnomusicologists from across the globe, these researchers were almost all associated with educational institutions of Western and Northern Hemisphere countries. This can be problematic when talking about decolonizing and deconstructing systems of thought if most of the voices heard, regardless of their place of birth, are people being schooled by and within the same Western institutions, where ethno- Euro- and Western-centric mindsets and ideals are embedded into systems and practices. To realize the epistemological change that Spivak called for in the fields of music education and academia, it is indeed crucial to ensure bringing to the table a diversity of voices and thoughts that encompass national origins and places of birth. Also, the inclusion of researchers who are trained and schooled in non-Western countries, besides representatives from local musical communities, musicians, and non-scholars is fundamental. For real diversity of thoughts, actual diversity of voices is needed.

In 2017 the article "Towards a decolonial music education in and from Latin America" by Favio Shifres, of Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentina), and Guillermo Rosabal-Coto, of Universidad de Costa Rica was published. This is a relevant piece, touching on decolonizing music education in Latin America and advancing a framework to promote epistemological alternatives. Based on my participant observation in Puerto Rico, I found several themes in the article that apply to the realities of music education on the island. This includes how colonialism imposed a racist concept that devalued "other" cultures, classifying musics, building hierarchies among them and among the people creating them, and using music education to create individuals in the image and likeness of the colonizer.

Contributing to these discussions, and to foster advancements in the field, in the same year, 2017, I founded the Study Group Music, Education, and Social Inclusion (MESI) which was officially recognized by the Executive Board of the International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM) that year. The idea spurred out of a widespread interest around some of the themes advanced in 2016 at a previous ICTM conference, where:

> I discussed how structures, forms, and systems in place in society and academia have been shaped by dominant social groups, and how, as such, they transmit and perpetuate discriminatory values and attitudes. I advanced how biased, societal practices are reflected into education and how, in turn, the unevenness embedded into academic institutions is shaping biased societies, perpetuating a closed cycle. (Selleri 2022)

Since then, the MESI research group held symposia in London in 2017 and in Beijing in 2019, and presented at the 2017 Limerick, 2019 Beijing, 2022 Lisbon and 2023 Accra ICTM World Conferences, engaging with scholars and practitioners across the globe on themes spanning from disability inclusion to racism in education. The goal of the MESI Study Group is to drive academic and non-academic conversations on decolonizing music academia and on the fundamental anti-racist and anti-sexist role academic institutions can play to produce more inclusive societies and increased tolerance among their citizens.

As this section examined issues of colonialism and efforts in decolonizing academia globally, the next section focuses on Puerto Rican Music Academia. It analyses how systemic discrimination based on race and ethnicity – tied to Puerto Rico's colonial history – of the cultural and artistic expressions of underrepresented social groups is reflected by its higher music educational institutions, academic curricula, and practices.

3.5 Colonialism, Race Discrimination and Underrepresentation in Puerto Rican Music Academia

As discussed in previous chapters, colonialism is a system where racist concepts are fostered, creating categorizations of who is worth more and who is worth less, tied directly to perceptions in Puerto Rico of first- and second-class citizens. In relation to this binary categorization, the knowledge systems and worldviews of first-class Western peoples are given higher value and used as the template all should aim for, whilst other bodies, languages, cultures, religions, economies, forms of social organization and subjectivities remain undervalued (Quijano 2000; Wynter 2003). Colonial powers legitimize a hegemonic classification of what has worth, which human beings have value, which systems are rightful, what knowledge is recognized, and who is the authority that can establish all the above – something referred to as the "coloniality of being, knowledge and power" (Maldonado-Torres 2007).[195]

The double-colonization of Puerto Rico by Spain and the US had serious repercussions on its educational system, translating into the celebration of the music of the West and the downplaying of autochthonous expressions. In music academia, this phenomenon is most evident in (a) academic courses and curricula content, and (b) the viewpoints and lenses through which courses are shaped and curricula are taught. In Puerto Rican academia, the

[195] Translated by the author from Spanish.

music(s) and repertoires of the local, Black, and poor are left out, and coursework is shaped according to Western universities, whilst teaching approaches and viewpoints adhere to White paradigms and Western music(s). This is, in general terms, how race and class discrimination – also taking form of invisibilization and under-representation – play out at the musical level in academia in Puerto Rico. During interviews, I asked respondents whether they knew if a degree in Puerto Rican autochthonous music existed in Puerto Rican universities or at the Conservatory. Most of them knew the answer was "no", and those who had never thought about it, once they realized it, responded with shock and dismay; Lorna said: "How do I feel, well, between empty and in pain. It's like being stabbed, because it makes me feel *lesser.*"

In other words, ethnocentrism and the primacy given to Spain first and the US later – and consequently to their educational systems and musical expressions – are the most recurring root causes coming to surface when looking for an answer to my main research question: *Why is there no academic degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico?* During our conversations, all interviewees aligned on the root causes described above, when asked why they thought a formal degree in traditional Puerto Rican music had never been offered. Noel responded, "Because we use the North American educational system, and it was the same before, because the Spanish system was used." Jaime echoed, "European music has been a dominant discourse, and music, and the arts, are simply a reflection of the colonial mentality that dominates and is still dominating in Puerto Rico. Because we are the last colony."

When it comes to music degrees offered by Puerto Rican academia, the influence of the two colonial powers that ruled over Puerto Rico for more than 500 years translates into the systemic primacy attributed to European and North American music genres, and the downplaying of autochthonous traditions. During our focus group, students expanded on the active role Spain and the US had in manipulating and using the educational system in Puerto Rico to exert power and to brainwash Puerto Ricans into believing colonizers, their culture and their musics, are superior. The students explained how, "they have put in our mind, directly and indirectly, that we have to listen to American music, and that American music is better… they have always told us that Americans are better than Puerto Ricans."

Antoinette pointed out another relevant aspect about how Puerto Rico was never able to develop a postcolonial educational model, "We were very junior when they [the Spaniards] came… and to get to the same point of maturity that the [Spanish formal teaching of]

classical music had, we still have a long way to go. This is why." When the Spaniards occupied the island and set up an educational system shaped according to their model, Puerto Rico had not yet developed its own, and it never had the chance to do so afterwards because it went immediately from being a Spanish colony to being occupied by the US.

Nelie brought to surface another phenomenon that goes hand in hand with Antoinette's remarks, which is how, in the 19th century, the first generation of people born in Puerto Rico had just started developing their own cultural expressions and sense of identity:

> In the 19th century we have the first generation who had never seen Spain… and that brings, as a consequence, a series of cultural manifestations that never took place with the same magnitude before, in the lyrics, in politics, in music, and in the sense of identity. This generation doesn't feel Spanish, nor exiled, [and this is when] a sense of *Puertorriqueñidad* [started developing].

This quote highlights how the US invaded Puerto Rico when it had just begun to develop its own sense of identity as a country and defining its autochthonous cultural and artistic expressions – a process that the US started to redress from the first moment of occupation, by taking over the educational system and (re)shaping political discourse.

Ricardo Pons summarizes the three main ways in which the educational system reflects colonial pressures, resulting in the absence of a degree in Puerto Rican music:

> [First], it becomes political… anything that has to do with reaffirming identity, or knowing better where you're coming from, they see it as a step away from statehood. [Pro-statehood parties] have formally attacked all programs that deal with identity... The second I would say is that there is a sense that anything that is not formal in music is not worth teaching and, also, within that same context, anything that comes from African heritage is not worthwhile studying, "Because these were savages that came here as slaves." … And the third thing is that we are a colony of the United States.

Colonialism and the politicization of the educational system utilizing academia to advance discourse of US supremacy and Puerto Rican dependency, underpin the lack of recognition of Puerto Rican culture and musical expressions in academia, as Gabriel pointed out: "We cannot be teaching how glorious our music and our culture are… we cannot promote this at the same time they are bolstering being part of the US … the system wants to promote a vision that prevents letting us know how grand our country is."

Based on the recollections of interviewees, the scarcity of Puerto Rican music in formal education starts from the absence of autochthonous music within the entire system at all levels – going beyond the non-existence of dedicated degrees in higher education. First, it must be clarified that music as a subject is not mandatory during primary and secondary education in Puerto Rico.[196] Most schools offer music as an elective, and it also tends to be offered in a discontinuous manner.[197] A student who attended a Catholic private school reported how the only music class offered was only learning to sing ecclesiastical songs in Spanish "that were sung at mass" from the European tradition. She also highlighted how the only way to really learn music was to either attend private classes or music-based schools like *Escuela Libre de Música*. This turns music learning into something only for the few, "very exclusive", "Eurocentric" (as *Libre de Música* focused on classical music, repertoire, and instruments) and territorial, as there is only one *Libre* on the island.[198] Miguel, in catholic elementary school, recalls: "What we were singing was all in English … from the United States. [From Puerto Rico] there was nothing, nothing at all."

Ricardo Pons attended the elementary school of UPR and when he was in 5th grade, a band program was created for the first time and he started playing flute, later taking classes from Rubén López, a flute player for the symphonic orchestra. "At that time the only formal music program that there was in Puerto Rico was at the Music Conservatory, and you could only study classical music there", Ricardo recalls. It was only during his university years in New York City whilst attending City College, that he had the opportunity to take courses in Caribbean Music History and Latin Band, where he was taught Puerto Rican music history and repertoire for the first time within a formal educational setting. Similarly, NYC is where Ricardo had his first in-depth encounter with bomba and plena, thanks to his interactions with the Puerto Rican community there, which led him to play with Los Pleneros De La 21, a bomba and plena ensemble formed in New York in 1983 by Juan Gutierrez:

> I started playing with Los Pleneros de la 21 and that… was my real first school in bomba and in plena. … In that group I met a lot of practitioners with the genre. … It was the first

[196] For information on music teaching in public education in other Latin American countries, see the comparative study *Educación Musical en México, Cuba, Brasil y otros países: Tomo I. Programas de educación artística y Procesos de formación inicial docente* (Gutiérrez Sandoval et al. 2016).
[197] Focus group, 2019; all 4 students participating reported similar experiences.
[198] Ibidem. Escuela Libre de Música is the most prestigious music-focused high school on the island.

> time I was really involved very closely to people who had been practicing this forever. … I believe that most formally trained musicians in Puerto Rico don't have a clue about bomba and plena, because they are never taught formally, and these styles only existed informally.

These experiences underline how in Puerto Rico the limited choice of music degrees offered create an extremely enabling environment for instrumental instruction in classical instruments and repertoire, but a lack for autochthonous musics. Brenda also recalls how in her early years she was exposed to Western music in school and to Western approaches to the study of music. During elementary school, she attended music classes from first grade, and she was taught piano and music theory according to the Western tradition. Julissa described a similar experience whilst attending music classes at a US private Protestant primary and secondary school in Puerto Rico:

> [They were teaching] classical flute. … When I was a student, there was nothing [of Puerto Rico]. It wasn't even repertory, it was mostly basic notions of music reading, white and black notes, there were some books… from the United States, as in my school they were teaching in English… nothing of bomba and plena in school. I entered the choir in school, and I started singing classical repertoire, even Black *spirituals.*

At university as well, in the early 2000s, when she studied music at UPR, Río Piedras – which was offered either under the education or the humanities departments – she was mostly exposed to classical music as a voice major. Julissa explained how, "at UPR you study music that is completely classical. … My private classes covered *arias*, so I was an opera trained singer." Julissa specified that most of the autochthonous repertoire was *danza Puertorriqueña* which "of all the Puerto Rican genres, danza is high class, and if you go to the history of Puerto Rico, danza is the music of the higher class, completely", signalling how nonetheless a class dimension was associated with the choice of repertoire in the rare cases students would be exposed to local music. Julissa explained how this system was normalized, as she was "forced" into classical music training to be able to get academic degrees, despite performing other types of music outside of academia: "It was normal for me, I never questioned it … because it's part of the indoctrination they give you… it was a given that you were going to study western classical music."

When it comes to exposure to autochthonous music, both Julissa and Brenda mentioned how it mostly happened during festivities; Julissa explained, "Puerto Rican music: you will hear it mostly during Christmas, people associate Puerto Rican music with Christmas." Brenda also recollected how her exposure to Puerto Rican music whilst growing up mostly

happened “whenever you would go to a family gathering, or what we call the *parrandas*. At Christmas there are all these songs that everybody knows, and you can join and sing and play something.” Similarly, Puerto Rican genres like bomba and plena popped up within educational settings only when children were performing some kind of school play, like a Christmas show, usually merged as if they were an inseparable *combo*, without information about the styles nor the songs, interpreted as local folklore with standardized repertoire.

Danny reported a slightly different experience as he went to school in Loíza, one of the birthplaces of bomba. In elementary school, he took part in a performing arts lab, where he was exposed to bomba, but “they wouldn’t play it live, they would play recorded tracks of the Ayala, as this was what most people were listening to in Loíza.” When he got to middle school in Loíza, Danny enrolled in a 1-year music class, the only one offered there, and that mostly focused on Mozart and other European composers, teaching Western notation, but no bomba was taught there at the time Danny attended it.

The absence of Indigenous history and music, at all levels of schooling, reaches its peak in higher education, with the lack of autochthonous music degrees across Puerto Rican universities and conservatories. When discussing this astonishing deficit, and that the only degrees offered are in the musical genres of past and present colonizers, Christina drew an analogy based on her experience attending science courses at Puerto Rican universities:

> I studied wildlife management in Puerto Rico, and I studied about deer. Is there deer in Puerto Rico? Absolutely not, just one sort of deer on the island of Culebra, invasive, but that’s another thing. I studied the dynamics of forests in temperate regions. Are we in a temperate region? Absolutely not. Did I take a tropical biology class? Absolutely not. Are we in the tropics? Yes, we are. Who shapes curriculum? The US shapes curriculum, Europe shapes curriculum. … If a music program is doing the same thing in Puerto Rico, not a surprise, because it’s something that plays out in so many parts of our culture. … I’m sure that in music they’re going to be looking at what European composers do.

Indeed, classical music from Europe and US-based jazz (the musics of first-class citizens – because they are White and/or European, or from the US) are seen as “higher” forms. Autochthonous local traditional music including salsa, bomba and plena (the musics of second-class citizens – because of being Black, or from poor Puerto Rican *barrios* and farm towns) are considered “inferior”. This is reflected by their role in formal education,

where all official music degrees in Puerto Rican universities and in the conservatory are either in classical, jazz or anglophone popular music – but there is no standalone music degree in Puerto Rican music. In some instances, some courses like a Bomba and Plena Ensemble can be offered as electives of a music degree, but ultimately it is possible to receive a Bachelor of Music in all Puerto Rican universities (and conservatory) without having taken any course or having learned to play any of the autochthonous musical styles. This is a reality that generations of musicians playing autochthonous genres in Puerto Rico are aware of. Tata recalled the words of Rafael Cepeda Atiles, who dedicated his life to spreading knowledge about bomba across generations of Puerto Ricans: “One of the things my grandfather was always mentioning was ‘I want this to reach the universities, I want for this to happen.’ He didn’t get to see it, but at some point, it will happen.”

On the contrary, it is possible to obtain a Music Degree in Puerto Rico studying exclusively Western music or jazz. The case of jazz deserves particular consideration, given it is a US musical genre strongly associated with Blackness, and I have accounted so far how the African roots of Puerto Rican autochthonous styles are one of the key reasons behind their downplaying in academia and beyond. Firstly, in Puerto Rico, US supremacy dynamics are always at play; therefore, given that jazz is a musical genre taught in prestigious US universities with entire musical degrees dedicated to it, in Puerto Rico it automatically acquires first-class status. Additionally, as Xavier points out: “Yes, it is Black music, but it is elitist, [because they are Black, but from the US], but also because even in the US nowadays jazz is for the Black élite. Young Americans in the Bronx won’t be playing much jazz, they’re doing hip hop, rap, trap, but not jazz. Jazz is for the Black élite; it’s what Obama listens to.”

Minirka, who is a UPR university graduate and an educator specializing in the Montessori method, agrees the lack of a university degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico is the product of colonial dynamics, and a serious shortcoming that should be tackled:

> It’s the product of colonialism, they are erasing our history, the less you are offering to next generations, the easier it is to do a wipe-out and start from zero. When you eliminate the roots, you eliminate the plant. Therefore, if you don’t present these genres in the music education of the country, less people will know it, less people will practice it, less people will diffuse it or share it, including the values that the genre is incorporating. … [*Nueva trova*, or plena and bomba, or danza] how is it possible that in music education there are not these kinds of specializations, so that students could study them in every university in the country,

> not just at the music conservatory, and that the same University of Puerto Rico that has its own music department, it does not offer a Bachelor specializing in Puerto Rican music? It seems absurd to me, but also something extremely important that should be there.

Chamir highlighted how the regrettable absence of a Puerto Rican music degree in higher education is connected to the long-standing invisibilization of African history and anything related to Blackness in education: “It is due to our political situation, and the fact that folk music is associated with Black people… in the end, there is no legitimate reason why in the schools dedicated to preparing our country’s musicians these musics are not being taught.”

As exemplified in the quotes above, Puerto Rican academics and musicians I spoke to believe the fact that there is no official standalone degree in Puerto Rican music, and the second-class status autochthonous musics are awarded, are not related to their intrinsic musical value, or lack thereof. Indeed, it is caused by the fact that historically they have been artistic expressions of second-class citizens – the Blacks, the poor, the farmers, those growing up in the *hood* – bringing to surface discriminations embedded in the interchange between socio-cultural practices, academic institutions, and musical expressions.

Danny explained: “As this was music born into the *barrios*, it is not given the same importance. Plena came out of the suburbs, and bomba is of African descent, so this is why.” Danny agreed that an elitist academia would not recognize value to these musics, adding “Those who manage to be recognized, win prizes or be nominated, had to transform the raw forms into something more elite, like mixing bomba with jazz”, as these are genres given higher value. Amauri added: “[The reason we lack] recognition of the importance of our music… is that it is the music of the people who do not matter, or who are considered less important.” Tata also expresses she believes the lack of an academic degree in Puerto Rican music is caused by elitism, benefitting from keeping the voices of poor, Black Puerto Ricans, and their history, hidden:

> It’s an elitist plan, it’s a plan to keep *scenting*, to keep giving a good scent to our history, trying to make us appreciate other cultures so we don’t focus on our own. Because once you know your history, as they say, “Those who know their history are not condemned repeating it.” ... So, we are absorbing other histories through the musics of other countries but not ours, [because] in these cultural genres of bomba and plena, in the songs, when you listen to them you can hear the pain, you hear the abuse of what has happened here.

Testimonies collected during this investigation responded in unison to my main research question, insisting the lack of degrees in autochthonous musics is related to social and not musical factors against the backdrop of an elitist, White, academia.

These points are further substantiated by the fact that, beyond the lack of standalone academic degrees in Puerto Rican music, even teaching single courses on autochthonous music from the oral tradition took a significant amount of time to enter the conservatory and Puerto Rican universities. Miguel recalled how in the 1970s it was not even possible to study Puerto Rican autochthonous instruments at Puerto Rican higher educational music institutions like the conservatory; additionally, musicians who were playing autochthonous instruments alongside classical instruments for a living, were discriminated against:

> At the conservatory you could not study cuatro, it did not exist a curriculum for cuatro, it was not possible to study it. … [and] it was not well seen if you played *popular* music, included to make a living. It was not well seen because they considered it a distraction from the study of "serious" music. … Only classical music was serious music, and serious music was what you studied at the conservatory.

Miguel explained how the music programme of the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, founded in 1959, was set up by one of the most renowned musicians of the 20th century, Pau "Pablo" Casals, born in Spain in 1876 and died in Puerto Rico in 1973. Casals was a classically trained cello player, composer, and orchestra director with a European upbringing and classical musical training who applied a Eurocentric curricula and Western approach to teaching music at the Conservatory in Puerto Rico. Miguel described how strong the influence of Casals was: "Here in Puerto Rico he was *the* musical influence. 'Serious' music was Pau Casals, or what Pau Casals did, or after he died what his descendants and followers were doing. Everything else was considered less, not only at a curricular level at the conservatory, but also when it came to music appreciation." Brenda also witnessed this longstanding influence in the 1980s:

> The only place available to study music at that time was the conservatory, and the only thing available to study was classical, so I had to follow that path, even though I knew I didn't want to be a classical player. … It was painful at times, because the way classical music is taught is very anti-creativity and it's so strict and rigid… but I didn't feel I had any options.

Whilst studying there, Brenda challenged a series of limitations – besides classical music being the only option available to obtain a degree in Puerto Rico – such as the rigidity of its music teachings:

> I even questioned the way classical music was being taught too, I couldn't understand why you wanted ten pianists to play exactly the same, and exactly the same song. I always thought that art was supposed to be about being who you are and being able to develop your essence and your identity, and I thought that the education system was doing the opposite.

Noel also attended the Conservatory of Puerto Rico, in 1979, and as an Afro-Puerto Rican vocal student, he witnessed a certain level of judgement and questioning when he chose to sing repertoires associated with Blackness and write a thesis analyzing race in the context of Puerto Rican music. Miguel recalled: "When I started singing songs from the Black repertoire… and when I started my Master… [my professor] got worried and asked me, 'But why so much emphasis [on race]?', and I said, 'Precisely, it seems like I give much emphasis because nobody looks at it'. My thesis [focused on] historical discourse and race in Puerto Rican music."

Ricardo described how the primacy attributed to Western classical music is still a reality at the conservatory: "Up to this day, 2017, the Conservatory of Music is still a very conservative institution, and a lot of people there think classical music is better than any other type of music, it's still the mentality. … Anything that has to do with Europe and the European background is seen as "better" than what is not from a European background."

Brenda described the shift from an all-classical European music focus to what she defined the "jazz invasion" – and how similar elitist dynamics that previously applied to art music were now being utilized within one additional style, jazz, as it entered formal academia. This encompassed the genre being considered *higher* than the others, and an emphasis on standardization over execution (at the expense of creativity and uniqueness of sound):

> Now it's not even classical music, now it has become something else… and there's a jazz invasion, and it's the colonial mindset that has people thinking things that come from other places are better than the ones that come from here, are superior, you know. … And everything begins to sound the same … it has invaded, it has contaminated the local sound. … And the students don't even notice that this is happening to them.

Another relevant aspect Brenda highlighted is how this *superior vs inferior* hierarchization of music, where classical and jazz are now seen as first-class styles and everything else is

considered second-class, has repercussions over the way students playing different genres are treated within academic institutions: “Because of jazz being seen as this superior music, students who have other interests besides jazz, or that don’t even like jazz at all, they suffer a lot of bullying, or looks, and comments, and they start feeling as if they’re not accepted, and they go down this path of feeling isolated and frustrated.”

It is also worth mentioning how, with intersectionality constantly at play creating multiple layers of discrimination, there is a further hierarchization taking place on the island. The genre that has the strongest European influence, like danza, and the instruments and musics of *White* Puerto Ricans, like cuatro and *música jíbara*, are awarded higher value than those associated with Blackness, like bomba and *barriles*, as these quotes explain:

> The dominant discourse within Puerto Rican music is still danza because of its European influence, which is so strong, to the point that danza has always been considered more European than Creole. … In Puerto Rico, we say there is a mix … the Spanish, the African and the Indigenous, and from three the *Jíbaro* came out. However, the Jíbaro looks much more Spanish [than African or Indigenous]. Puerto Rican identity is based on a simulated racial equality that is not really present, [as] we say, “We are a mix”, and that we identify with *música jíbara*, when in reality, the Jíbaro is White.[199]

> The way people would see it when I started [learning Puerto Rican cuatro], was that people playing string instruments belonged to a higher social class, even if they were from rural areas, which is absolutely contradictory, just as long as they were not Black. The Jíbaros from the countryside were considered nice and cool.[200]

> For example, in Puerto Rico nowadays if you ask anywhere, “What is the national instrument of Puerto Rico?”, they will say the cuatro. But there was an instrument that was developed here before that, which is the *barril de bomba*. Bomba is a lot older. They don’t know … and if they knew they would probably disregard it, most people, “Because that is the music of the Blacks”. You know, there is a very strong mentality like that.[201]

The fact the music of (poor) Black Puerto Ricans has been considered of lesser value than the music of *Trigueños* and Jíbaros, produces repercussions at the educational level:

> If you go to Libre de Música, you see they’re giving a class of cuatro. There will be a class of percussions, but they will not be playing *barriles de bomba*. They play cuatro because it

[199] Jaime, interview.
[200] Amauri, interview.
[201] Ricardo, interview.

> represents the White Jíbaro from the mountains, the landowner… there is an association that the music of Black people is the music of poor people – and the two go hand in hand. Those who play it, those who listen to it, those who create it – they all have this association, "This is of the poor people, this is of the Black people."[202]

Amauri shared his trajectory, going from being a cuatro student to playing *barril de bomba* in the early 2000s. He also highlighted how autochthonous genres and instruments have been absent from academic instruction. Amauri explained: "You could not go to university and study cuatro, and nowadays you still cannot study *barril de bomba* as a specialization; it has to be *congas, timbales*, other percussion instruments that are globalized, but giving importance to *barril de bomba* or to *pandereta de plena* is something that is just beginning now in academia." He also mentioned how, even when a student was given the chance to study cuatro – the only Puerto Rican instrument admitted in formal education at his time – the repertoire and styles played were mostly Western. When Amauri attended Escuela Libre de Música, the other instruments taught were from the classic European tradition, and vocal instruction was also exclusively focusing on opera singing.

Photo taken from the Facebook profile picture of Escuela Libre de Música (uploaded 2017).

These testimonials demonstrated how a colonized mindset applying Euro-centric Western supremacist aesthetics to Puerto Rican music act as key determinants, imposing Western classical music as *the* referent and the status quo, whilst positioning Puerto Rican autochthonous music, instruments, and repertoire as *second-class* and of lower value.

[202] Chamir and Xavier, interview.

In Puerto Rico, phenomena of colonialism, ethnocentrism, supremacy, and patriarchy analysed in previous chapters produce multi-layered forms of intersectional gender, race, and class discrimination that are embedded in Puerto Rican formal higher music education institutions. This chapter discussed, drawing from literature and ethnography, the ways in which these phenomena are constructed, and manifested. The following chapter presents the efforts of those who have been trying to deconstruct colonialist and discriminatory approaches in Puerto Rican music academia by introducing autochthonous musics and methodologies, the resistance they have faced, and key considerations on best practices.

Chapter 4. Facing Resistance in Music Academia

As demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3, in Puerto Rico, over time, music performance and education have been exploited as platforms of invisibilization, suppressing autochthonous cultural expressions to exalt Western practices of colonizers. European education systems and curricula focusing on classical music were imported under the Spanish, and then US-based formal musical instruction took over under their dominion, resulting in local scholarship remaining predominantly influenced by Western practices. This also happens on a global level, but what differentiates Puerto Rico from other countries, today, is that it remains a colony, thus its citizens and institutions are facing internalized colonization, as the inheritance of more than 500 years of Spanish and US rule combined. Additionally, they are subjected to the active external power of the United States, which still treats this territory as a *de facto* colony. Consequently, in Puerto Rico, counteracting colonized, indoctrinated mindsets in society and institutions is not just an effort to deconstruct Western hegemonistic views of the past to reconstruct localized, self-empowered and self-owned approaches. It is also a daily battle of affirmation against an active economic and political power that continues to impose its rule and ethnocentric frameworks over the country and its educational system.

This chapter discusses ongoing processes undertaken in Puerto Rico by educators, musicians, and institutions introducing autochthonous musics and alternative approaches in academia. Alongside, it examines how these processes are effective in relation to tackling the discrimination, ethnocentrism, and colonized mindset Puerto Rican society and music academia are presently facing.[203] Finally, it showcases the resistance people who promote these changes face, and the discourses used most frequently by those opposing change.

4.1 Oral Autochthonous Music in Academia

[203] Chávez and Skelchy (2019) discuss colonial frameworks and decolonization in music studies in various contexts globally. Tan (2021) also questioned "*whose"* decolonization is at stake within decolonization projects in music education, problematizing the academic privilege of postcolonial scholars, musicians and educators from the Global South claiming to challenge colonial power dynamics, and yet risking reproducing these dynamics as they relocate to the Global North to receive "Western" training and advance their careers.

Teaching autochthonous musics in Puerto Rican schools, curricula, courses, and dedicated degrees within academic institutions would produce significant social advancements. Christina reflected on how the lack of dedicated autochthonous music degrees and coursework at all levels of schooling is yet another way for colonial powers to keep oppressing Puerto Ricans, and highlighted how music, and especially bomba, has the potential for empowerment and social change:

> I think it's devastating. I think it's just another tool to oppress people, and to keep them from their history and their identity. … I think [autochthonous music degrees and courses in formal education] would lead to strong social change because… music has a strong social influence on how you perceive the world, because it's not just the sound, it's a whole culture that is associated, a sub-culture that is associated with that music.

Additionally, she advances how in-depth teaching of Puerto Rican music(s) like bomba would also transmit to students the untold history of its people – and, more specifically, their African roots: "If people would integrate it into the curriculum with the history of the rhythm… if it is contextualized, it could lead to knowing more about your ancestors and knowing them not as weak people who were 'saved', but rather as strong people who survived the abuse." Teaching the true history of Puerto Ricans, beyond the colonizer's whitewashed version, is something Tata also mentioned in relation to her approach to teaching bomba:

> When I start the semester, on the first day, I always talk about history. I don't make them dance, I always talk about history… and when we start talking about history, I always tell them, "I cannot teach you how to dance if you don't know the history … Here, you need to understand why it is that you are doing this, so that you can learn to respect it … and you can defend it."

Danny also highlighted how teaching bomba music and dance is intimately connected with teaching the history of the subaltern people who created it: "First, for those who want to learn bomba music, they must learn history, it must start from the time when slave owners and enslaved people arrived in Puerto Rico. For me, a big part of learning an instrument is that you must know its history, how it was made, how it was built, how the terminology of each part of the instrument was defined." For Danny, "just by learning the basics of barril, that it came from a ship, and what kind of ship", involves teaching what is not taught in official history books. Danny also pointed out how most of what was written about bomba came from White people, and he believes this information should come from somebody

from the bomba community, not external, White academics.[204] He added it is important that when bomba enters academia it is not whitewashed, and that it is not taught according to forms and methodologies of Western education. Indeed, institutions should not change the form, shape, and methods used to teach and transmit bomba for 500 years but should instead recognize and respect its methodology and adapt to it. In other words, it should not be bomba adapting to academia, but academia adapting to bomba, positioning it at the same level and affording it the same status as other, Western, musics and teaching methods.

The importance of offering bomba and other autochthonous styles in Puerto Rican public schools and universities with fully developed curricula is also tied to socio-economic factors in terms of equality, inclusion, and accessibility for poorer people. Currently, unless they are born into a traditional bomba family, aspiring bomba practitioners must enrol in private academies and pay fees. Antoinette and Melody attended the Bomba and Plena Ensemble at Universidad Interamericana, and this lab served as a platform to be exposed to the style. At the same time, because of the limited space dedicated to bomba, to genuinely grow as a practitioner, it is still necessary to attend private schools that specialize in the genre. Antoinette witnessed: “At the same time, I incorporated myself to Taller Tamboricua… and that’s where I learned more about the history”, and Melody explained:

> When I entered the university to study music… it wasn’t until I joined the ensemble that I learned about bomba and plena. I didn’t know anything, I just knew they were Puerto Rican genres, but I didn’t know the difference between bomba and plena, nor the differences in their instruments. ... Being in the ensemble aroused my interest, and since then I have been reading up, looking for all the information I can find, going to places… basically everything I know is because of the ensemble, or because I read, and I watch.

Economic and career development opportunities related to performing autochthonous musics can benefit students and aspiring musicians. For example, Antoinette’s training in bomba and plena turned her into one of the most sought-after professional singers of the

[204] Martin Greve (2016) argued for a “necessary decline” of musicological models marginalizing “non-Western music” within ethnomusicology and privileging the perspectives of European academics, while Ferhat Arslan (2018) and Nalia Ceribašić et al. (2019) both discussed how “native” ethnomusicology helped decolonizing the discipline, transforming the “horizons” of “fieldwork” from the production of “exotic” depictions of locations abroad by cultural outsiders to critical insights into “home” contexts based on deep knowledge from insiders.

young generation for bomba, plena, and other *popular* genres, including performing in rumba, Afro-Caribbean and *tropical* bands. Her trajectory witnesses the importance of providing musical training in autochthonous styles traditionally excluded from academia, as they can transfer relevant skills to young students to work 'in the real world'. This contrasts with the experience of many musicians graduating from music programs with obsolete curricula focusing on Western musical styles, who have more limited performing opportunities as they specialize in genres losing public engagement such as classical music and jazz, which mostly rely on scholarships or other types of funding to keep afloat.[205]

Brenda explains the issue academia faces with the styles traditionally taught, classical and jazz, as they have little relevance in the job market:

> We are producing music to be consumed by the university, but the music we are producing here, when you go outside, is not reaching people. The students that graduate here, they put out a concert, and the only people who go to their concert are the other musicians, because the music that they are creating is made for musicians, it's not made for the public. And we are not producing artists, we are producing academic technicians of music.

On this disconnect between the musical genres acclaimed in academia and the scarcity of performing opportunities for musicians playing them outside the academy, Brenda added:

> Where are the people that went to the university? They are playing the smaller gigs in hotels and things like that, you know. And for a jazz festival to survive, they must bring in artists who play other types of music and make it more eclectic, so the festival will survive. … And it's happening here too. This past Heineken Jazz Festival they had Viva Nativa which is a rock band, and they had to open it up, because otherwise people were not going to show up.

Introducing autochthonous musics in academia is not just about creating new courses and adapting textbooks, because teaching Western music in formal higher education is not limited to learning repertoire or acquiring instrumental skills. Indeed, it also translates into absorbing Western aesthetics and an "epistemology that hegemonizes and validates the construction of knowledge at a global level through a musical learning model that, in

[205] Various studies show that a focus on pop genres and music technology rather than classical music may improve employability prospects of students and help them feeling more valued and socially included (Parkinson and Smith 2015; Tettey 2019). See also Nielsen's (2014) report on the declining popularity of jazz: https://news.jazzline.com/news/jazz-least-popular-music-genre/.

general terms, considers music as an object elaborated to be contemplated, distanced from the subject who performs it or participates in its construction" (Shifres and Rosabal-Coto 2017, 86). Approaches to music and value definition, based on key markers differing across traditions where people experience music differently, vary greatly in Western classical music and Puerto Rican autochthonous styles. Discussions on how to teach musics historically orally transmitted and maintain their own aesthetics and markers within a Western-centric academia developed for centuries around profoundly diverse values, is central to this study. There is indeed an almost antithetical conception of the musical experience that performers and audience encounter in classical music, defined as "an object elaborated to be contemplated, distanced from the subject who performs it or participates in its construction", and the one witnessed during a *bombazo.* In bomba, contrarily, the success of the performance is directly linked to the active participation of the public and how they, alongside the performers, altogether construct the music and the dance.[206] Active participation, connection, and collective expression are fundamental qualities in bomba, diverging from how classical music crystallized as a genre focused on musical aesthetics. In my experience, having trained in both, the distanced, score-based, aesthetic-centred approach also hinders freedom of expression, creativity, spontaneity, and naturalness. As a result, classically trained musicians often have difficulties improvising, something that bomba musicians do regularly. The expressiveness in bomba also comes from connecting to a deeper significance, using one's instrument, body, and voice to express meaning, personal and collective histories, not just executing a stylistic exercise or showcasing skills.

Western approaches to music and formal music teaching also lead to creating classifications of what is considered "good" and "bad" music, who has the ability and skills to be considered a "musician" and the qualifications to teach it in formal settings. This determines hierarchical roles for people participating in musical experiences – composers, musicians, and audience alike (Shifres and Gonnet 2015). Vazquez Cordoba explains how Indigenous knowledge was "marginalized and excluded" through colonial systems across Latin America, deeming "certain ways of knowing as 'superior'" (i.e., Western-centric) and using music as "a tool for exacerbating disdain and discrimination towards some peoples" (2019, 220). This is mirrored in the elevation of European classical music and the rejection

[206] Refer to Chapter 2.3.

of Indigenous musics in Peru (Romero 2021) and Colombia (Ochoa Escobar 2016a), demonstrating how Eurocentric biases permeate higher music education across the region.

People I interviewed explained how Puerto Rico displays the same Western-centred dichotomy, where European classical music and US jazz are considered "good" and superior, whilst autochthonous oral musics inferior and less worthy, sharing the substantiations classical musicians employ to devalue traditional musics. Miguel mentioned how they use quantitative and qualitative arguments:

> The most rational argument some musicians have used when we had this conversation is repertoire. The repertoire of classical music vs the repertoire of popular music. … They say it cannot be compared, because "You cannot compare Beethoven… qualitatively and quantitatively it's superior." … But they are not thinking of the repertoire of autochthonous popular music, they are only thinking about pop music, what is being played on the radio.

In relation to the *quantitative* argument, Miguel highlights the ignorance of many classical musicians towards their "own" Puerto Rican autochthonous genres and repertoire, believing the repertoire of classical music is comparatively much larger, simply because they are unaware of the repertoires of traditional, autochthonous, and popular genres. Also, their lack of awareness around stylistic and historical differences between all the styles they choose to cluster under the umbrella term *popular*, is another determining factor in downplaying traditional musics.

Regarding the *qualitative* argument, Miguel explained traditionalists say, "You cannot compare Beethoven or Debussy with Dizzy Gillespie, or Chuito el de Bayamón, or with Danny Rivera… because the harmony is more complex, orchestration is more complex, forms and structures are more extensive." Miguel rebutted these critiques pointing out how rhythms are actually more intricate and complex in bomba and Afro-Caribbean music than in classical music, receiving this type of responses: "This is just one element, 'But there is rhythm in Bartók and in other classical composers like Stravinsky that have more rhythm than bomba and plena.'" Miguel commented: "I think the word is ignorance. When you don't know the other side and you only know your side, well, 'This is what I know, the other, bah', [it remains only] an opinion, a perception."

Nelie, a bomba singer who trained classically and teaches at the conservatory, mentioned the negative stereotyping received by colleagues:

> My colleagues from the music department heard me sing once during a recital at the conservatory, and told me, “Oh, but you sing very well, how is that?”; “And why is it that I am not supposed to sing very well?”; “Well, because what you sing is bomba.” … And that is a musical concept that comes from the idea that there are *better* and *worse* musics. [For them] if you do *música popular,* then you cannot be a good singer or a good instrumentalist, because you play by ear and are from the street. To be good, you need to come from academia.

In summary, both qualitative and quantitative arguments used by classical musicians in academia to justify why they think *their* music has higher value than autochthonous traditional music, can be largely attributed to negative stereotyping, unsubstantiated beliefs, and ignorance over the *other* musical styles. Brenda addressed the concept of complexity and how, historically, academia has praised complexity over other attributes:

> There are a lot of myths that are being perpetuated. These two musics that we are talking about, classical and jazz, their main thing is that they are very complex harmonically and melodically; but rhythm is in an inferior place. … So, it feels like it’s very important to fill the blackboard with all these formulas, and it becomes a music that seems to fit the academic mindset pretty well, because the academic mind wants complexity.

When ranking musical styles according to intrinsic value, the Eurocentric approach is to measure it against complexity, awarding harmony more importance: the more complex the harmony, the more worthy the genre. Indeed, if other musical elements were awarded more value – like rhythm, social function, expressivity, improvisation, creativity, circulation – musical hierarchies would reverse. Ricardo witnessed these value judgements in practice. He formally trained in classical music throughout his educational career, from elementary school until graduating from high school. When he moved to the United States, he had his first encounter with bomba and plena through the Puerto Rican community in New York, also playing with Los Pleneros De La 21. These experiences made Ricardo realize how elements fundamental to bomba and plena, like rhythm and *being groovy,* were not targeted during his formal education, also realizing how the musicians who were best at it were those who learned oral traditional music by ear, not academically:

> One thing that I learned early on from that experience was that none of the formalities that sit in classical music, and a lot of times in jazz, [applied]. In this music [bomba and plena] the people that really have the swing, that have the *zest* of the music, they are not formally trained musicians. This shows how classifications are a matter of perspective, and whose vision and lenses are awarded recognition.

These views are echoed by Ángel Quintero Rivera, author of *Salsa, Sabor y Control* (1998), where he challenged the aesthetic values commonly attributed to musical styles. He pays particular attention to cultural values and problematizes race/class in relation to how traditional genres often express underrepresented and excluded social groups and how, as a result, their music and values are systematically dismissed. During our interview, Ángel also reported hearing people opposing teaching popular autochthonous music in academia and attributing higher value to classical music and jazz based on granting more importance to complexity, highlighting how their own definition of complexity dismisses the rhythmic element as a key musical aspect. Ángel explained: "[They think that] you must learn the music that is more complex, that is their idea. Even though, if you knew bomba, you would know that the rhythm is super complex."

The inequality that persists between higher and lower musics, leading to the absence of degrees in Puerto Rican music, produces further consequences, including that "the musicians who specialize in [autochthonous] music, usually are not academically prepared."[207] Generally, many of the musicians who master bomba do not have academic degrees – certainly neither in bomba nor autochthonous musics, as these never existed – creating further issues related to the qualifications required to teach them in university or conservatories, once such courses are created. Pablo explained:

> Tied to the issue of teaching [bomba in academia] is that to give classes at university, you must be qualified, and such qualification, almost nobody in Puerto Rico has it. … They don't look at the fact that these people are specialists, are experts, they probably know more than I do and execute the genre better than I do, but they are not given the opportunity at university because they do not qualify. In university it's not about playing practice, it's about formal studies.

Fixed requirements for teaching in academia, unaligned to the reality and practice of oral traditions like bomba, remain unchallenged in Puerto Rico.[208] This fixity perpetrates the exclusion of culture bearers and traditional musicians from academic teaching, and at the same time their musics remain excluded as well, since they are the only ones who could teach them properly. This also produces another recurrent argument, that courses on these musics cannot be created, because *nobody can teach them*, when the reality is that

[207] Gabriel, interview.
[208] This diverges from some recent efforts within Western conservatoires to improve diversity and inclusion by broadening entry requirements beyond European classical music performance skills.

nobody qualifies only according to academic criteria created according to Eurocentric cultural and musical canons, which should only apply to Western traditions and not be imposed upon non-Western practices.[209] Pablo witnessed how this type of argument is used to justify pushback against teaching bomba in academic institutions: "It's a way to justify that it won't be taught." In fact, saying "I want there to be a bomba class, but there's nobody who can teach it", is "a way to discriminate in a more subtle way, without people saying it explicitly."

The case of William Cepeda exemplifies how far immovable requirements and obsolete pre-requisites create exclusions of culture bearers and primary exponents of musical genres like bomba in academia, preventing autochthonous music from being taught and barring its experts from entry into academic institutions. Cepeda is a four-time Grammy nominee, considered one of the highest authorities in bomba among living practitioners; his work and research on Puerto Rican music, dance, and culture contributed to him being awarded an honorary doctorate from Berklee College of Music in 2013.[210] In spite of this, he was not permitted to teach within Puerto Rican academia because he cannot provide a full academic transcript. Pablo explained:

> William Cepeda had a PhD honoris causa from Berklee. At some point in time, the university wanted him to give this bomba class with credits – the one I created, and they wanted William to teach it. They asked him for his academic information; obviously, being a honoris causa degree, he had the PhD diploma, but he didn't have the transcript of credits. So, they said, "Well, we cannot qualify him then." They see the honoris causa PhD as a very prestigious prize, but when it comes to academia, they do not recognize it. They did not qualify William, so they would not qualify Modesto either.[211] And they have a PhD!

The other fundamental aspect related to perpetrated exclusion of autochthonous musics in academia is the fact that not only are their repertoires and instruments left out, but their methodologies and approaches as well. Consequently, music reading based on Western

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[209] This problem was highlighted in Brazil by José Jorge de Carvalho and Juliana Flórez-Flórez (2014) who started the "Meeting of Knowledges" project in 2010 to integrate traditional knowledges into Brazilian universities, including in music teaching and research. They highlight that the inclusion of "masters of traditional knowledges" in the teaching of the program was fundamental for the "expansion and democratization of music curricula" and "the validation of traditional knowledges in formal education" (De Carvalho et al. 2016, 111).

[210] See https://valencia.berklee.edu/visiting-artists-and-guest-speakers/william-cepeda/ (accessed 01/09/2022).

[211] Modesto Cepeda also belongs to the historic Cepeda family and was awarded a PhD Honoris Causa from Universidad Metropolitana (UMET).

traditions is the main skillset taught in schools, whilst aural skills, required by the oral tradition, are not developed. In other words, *what* is taught is interconnected to *how* it is taught, and conversely, *how* it is taught has direct repercussions on *what* has been allowed to enter academia. Beyond *what* to teach and *wha*t is taught, issues of *how* music is taught in academia, and the methodology applied over content and curricula, are key to this conversation. Eurocentrism shaped teaching approaches, which are applied to non-European styles, once they enter academia and are taught there, as Western-centred methodologies and worldviews remain unquestioned. Brenda shared how she struggled at the Conservatory of Puerto Rico, where she was forced to train in classical music for the lack of other options, due to extreme rigidity in the approaches and a total lack of support for creativity and artistic expression. Brenda added how, "nobody seems to question things, like 'This is the way I was taught, so this is the way I am going to teach'. And at some point, somebody has to say, 'Well, maybe there's a different, better way to do this.'" Here she highlights how, also in the case of methodology, as supremacist approaches establish which music is *higher* and *lower*, there has been a lack of open discussions on challenging obsolete colonial practices.

As outlined above, Puerto Rican academia is shaped around Western music principles – mostly classical music from Europe and jazz music from the US – awarding higher value to complexity, form, theory, harmony, aesthetics, reading and writing. Julissa's experiences provide further evidence of this. When she wrote her master thesis to obtain a degree in music education from the US-based university NYU, she was asked to explain why she believed that, in Puerto Rico, she considered a curriculum based on autochthonous music was better than one shaped exclusively around the musical traditions of Europe and the United States. This showcases how the colonial mindset prevails, and how challenging ongoing Eurocentric academic practices and fixed methodologies applied to non-Western musics still has a long way to go.

Brenda insisted on the importance for academia to adopt methodologies that belong to autochthonous genres without superimposing Western paradigms, when teaching musics from the Puerto Rican oral tradition like bomba and plena:

> I mean, probably the best thing that has happened to those musics is that they haven't been institutionalized, and one of the reasons is because the people that teach wouldn't know how to teach the way these musics need to be taught. They can't be taught the same way that we're teaching jazz and classical, they must be taught in a different way. Because

> if you try to teach them that way, you're gonna come up with something that is not what you're supposed to be teaching… That's actually what happened to jazz, I mean the jazz that you are listening to now is not what jazz is meant to be.

She also mentioned how the artist in resident program is a successful way to teach musics orally transmitted "because that's the way that students get access to the artist" and can learn through imitation and repetition according to the methodology of these traditions.[212] Brenda's comments shift the focus beyond methodologies to who should be the people teaching autochthonous music from the oral tradition and thus applying *new* methods in academia. Interviewees who are experts in playing and teaching Puerto Rican music agree that educators must have the specific skillsets required by each genre, such as improvisation and dancing skills. Also, they insist that pre-requisites established by Western societies for teaching other musical styles must not be forced onto them, like reading musical notation. In short, a mindset shift is needed where, in music, the written form stops being considered higher than the oral form, so that universities and conservatories incorporate teaching autochthonous musical styles according to their own paradigms – also awarding them the same status of written Western music, musicians, and skillsets.

For example, in the case of bomba, Danny describes how when teaching *primo* many steps and hits are codified, where specific drum hits correspond to certain dance steps, thus music and dance must be taught together. Consequently, the genre requires academia to adapt, creating a blended course, where musicians also learn to dance as part of the training required, and where teaching and transmitting knowledge should be through oral and visual means, and not by reading or transcription. This also questions the type of teaching materials autochthonous music courses require and whether, with the technology available, books are necessary, or if audio and video are sufficient, given that this genre was historically orally transmitted and not passed on through books or notation.

When it comes to coursework requirements, in the same way that notation should be an elective for a bomba musician – but dance must be a mandatory course – dance should also be an elective for a classical musician, whilst notation a mandatory course. Notation

[212] There are similarities between how Brenda describes the artist in resident program and how de Carvalho (2016) describes the "meeting of knowledges" project, providing students with "the development of multiple skills and different methodologies of teaching and learning distinct from those included in the conventional, Eurocentric, curriculum" (114).

to a classical musician is as essential to the genre as dance is to bomba – and they are both less essential the other way around. Developing musicality, and the *ear*, are fundamental for a professional bomba musician. A classical musician can graduate without the ability to listen and play back a song, in the same way a bomba musician should be given the option of graduating without needing to read Western notation.

This section discussed some of the key challenges and considerations autochthonous musics from the oral tradition face when entering academia and its "formal" contexts of teaching, and how the supremacy attributed to Western musics produces hierarchization among methodologies and executors associated with specific musical genres. Classical music is given higher status, thus its transmission and teaching methods, particularly reading notation, and its musicians are likewise considered superior to oral transmission practices, the development of oral skills, and those performing it. The next section analyses hierarchies and ongoing tensions, when challenging obsolete practices, within contemporary music academia.

4.2 Written Music vs Oral Transmission in Academia

In the musical academy, historically, greater importance has been attributed to musical literacy and the inscription of musical “works” – including reading, writing, and sight-reading – which become reified as mandatory means of expression for all musicians (Holguín and Shifres 2015). This is common across Latin American countries, where colonizers imposed their musical approaches and curricula, implanting the models of Western conservatories or nationalist projects of musical literacy to create performers in the image and replication of the Eurocentric ontology. Shifres and Rosabal-Coto explain: “As a result of this, a double pedagogical program is maintained by seeking on one side, to train musicians – within institutions specifically conceived for it – and on the other, to train listeners – in general schooling, regardless of [local] cultural traditions and of the expressive and social-affective needs of people” (2017, 86).

Puerto Rico is no exception, as reported in the previous section by interviewees who witnessed the primacy attributed in academia to classical music and jazz and to their written methodologies, considered higher than autochthonous musics and oral transmission methods. Learning music and playing instruments through the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, and reading off music sheets, lead to the development of different skillsets than those gained by learning from listening, imitating, and repeating. The result is

a disconnect between the work of the eye and the ear: in other words, classically trained musicians develop expertise reading music – and ultimately rely on it for playing – whilst musicians trained in the oral tradition develop advanced aural skills. Because of the associations between these skillsets and the styles of music they are connected to, in the same way classical music and jazz are considered superior, the visual/reading method is considered higher. Likewise, the lower appreciation attributed to autochthonous musics from the oral tradition creates an environment where the aural skillset is seen as lesser. Ochoa Escobar (2016b) shows how emphasis on the written score in music education continues to underpin racialized hierarchies whereby 'real' musicianship is defined more by reading and writing than actual musical skills. This section analyses this reality in the context of Puerto Rico and the tensions encountered when questioning Eurocentric approaches that award primacy to written music and formal academia, rather than adopting oral-aural transmission and learning by doing.

Ricardo Pons trained in both (formal academia and oral transmission) and explained what he believes are the biggest differences in how the two types of musicians play – academically trained classical and jazz musicians vs musicians playing bomba and plena traditionally – and in their musicality. According to Ricardo, "[it's their] understanding of the music; I would say, informal musicians usually are a lot more loose, and a lot more honest I would say, honest when they interpret… They're very honest, and there's a lot of spontaneity… in jazz, there's a lot of structures." Other practitioners highlighted how classically trained musicians tend to miss out on fundamental aspects of musicality, such as the ability to play without reading, and a well-developed ear. "This is completely missing, completely; [people are graduating in classical piano after 10 years' training] and they can't even find the pitch", said Julissa. Nelie, who teaches at the conservatory, explained:

> I have students that, if you take away the piece of paper, they are unable to play. … And I tell them it's a combination, you need to know how to read because it gives you solid grounds, but you also need to have a well-developed ear. … It's sad when I get students in their last year, and they must transpose and change keys… they cannot do it… because in all their classes, they don't teach them the practical application between what you learn in school, with music reading, and actual music … and it's very painful for them to realize that they actually need their ear, to be musicians.

Jaime, who also teaches at the conservatory, echoed Nelie, saying it is common for musicians graduating there to be unable to play unless they are reading music on paper, as “there is a big disconnect, [because] they [only] teach you reading, harmony, and to practice dexterity”, whilst aural skills and developing musicality are not cultivated.

The extreme focus on music theory instead of developing musicality can have serious implications, as systems in place permit creating music theorists who might not be skilled musicians, but nonetheless can earn qualifications to teach music. Gabriel expanded: “I am conscious that academia wants to create theorists, not instrumentalists, who have a general knowledge of music, of theory, of solfege, of harmony, of arrangement and after that, if they play well or not, is not decisive… as to be teachers, it is not needed for them to play well.”

Conversely, the opposite is not possible: extremely skilled musicians, whose goal is to be performing artists, and at the same time want to earn academic qualifications attesting to their mastery and giving them access to additional career opportunities, are not given the possibility of doing so without having developed advanced theoretical skills. The implication is that degrees in music can be issued to people who are not skilled musicians and are also exclusively awarded to those with a strong theoretical orientation. The fact that skilled musicians are not awarded music degrees unless they also become advanced theorists underlines the power-play in academia between music theorists and practitioners, where skilled musicians are left behind. Jaime expanded on how musicians who develop both skills, as they study music formally in academia but also have “street” experience, are the ones better placed in Puerto Rico to work professionally, insisting on the equal importance of both skillsets: “Most people who graduate from the conservatory nowadays, and who find work in music, are the ones who learned music in a variety of ways, including in the oral tradition, and who know how to play bomba, and to play salsa.” Similarly, Ángel highlighted how the generations of musicians who grew up in both traditions, learning autochthonous genres in the oral tradition and then receiving formal training in notation and reading, are also the best positioned to bring about change in academia towards embracing learning methodologies from the oral tradition. Ángel explained: “There are people who know how to read [music notation], but who are also involved in popular music, and they come from this [popular] tradition, of these dances and these musics. … They go developing both skills… and it becomes easier to break away with this tradition, that the only thing taught is classical.”

Gabriel expanded on the importance of ensuring that when autochthonous musical styles enter the academy, they are taught according to their own transmission and learning practices, developing the ear and making sure the written methodologies of Western musics are not superimposed onto them. This is a point highlighted by Ochoa Escobar (2010) who insists that dismantling the dominance of European 'classical' music and the jazz 'canon' requires rethinking teaching practices towards more inclusive, less discriminatory pedagogies.[213] Gabriel insisted on the effectiveness of the oral learning method, describing how the best musicians he encountered throughout his musical career were those who did not "go to school" and who learned to play "by ear" through oral transmission: "The best players I know, the ones I learned the most from… none of them went to academia… and they all learned through the oral tradition." Gabriel also mentioned how, when talking to these musicians about bringing bomba to academia, "we always hear the critique that all the material that exists, to get it into schools and universities, when it enters education, it starts being systematized. That's when the critique that it cannot be systematized pops up, because 'This is not how you teach it.'" Indeed, there is a risk Eurocentric academic approaches get applied to traditional genres, reducing autochthonous musics into a fixed system. This happens when, for musics to be considered serious and worthy within academia, musicians feel pressured into forcefully applying methodologies, such as sheet music transcriptions, to genres that were taught for centuries without ever needing it. By doing so, academia develops methodologies that are inappropriate and discriminatory when administered according to a one-size-fits-all blanket approach. Both methodologies, the written and the oral, should be awarded the same value and status as equally worthy in the transmission and teaching of music in academia, and adopted according to the specific needs of each musical style.

Julissa explained why she also thought that if a style like bomba was taught at the conservatory, they would try to superimpose teaching forms that were used for other musics like classical and jazz: "It's more like the people that are teaching, they don't know a different way of teaching, so whatever you give them, they would turn it into this rigid method." Another related aspect is how the supremacy of developing music reading skills to learn to play an instrument not only dictates how students and future musicians are trained within academia, but also outside of it. Julissa shared being forced to learn music

[213] See also Ochoa Escobar and Cardona (2020), emphasizing the need to study not only new genres but also new ways of learning and interpreting them.

reading by her classical piano teacher during private lessons, when she could play everything by ear:

> At that time, I hated it [taking music lessons], I thought my parents wanted to punish me. … All the pieces were classical, but I did not want to learn music reading. As I was learning everything by ear, I had to record my classes, so that I could learn by ear. And when my teacher realized it, she went back to give me music reading exercises again… but in the end I was playing by ear. … She tried, over and over again.

This quotation attests to another consequence of the supremacy given to classical music and its teaching methods: because oral tradition transmission and developing aural skills are seen as inferior to classical paper-based training, it is not accepted by classical teachers that all music, including classical music, could be taught, and learned by ear.

Julissa, who learned to play by ear as a child, and was later trained in classical music during her bachelor and master studies, expressed how she thinks that, while learning to read music is a useful skill, autochthonous musics should be taught orally, and that conversely aural skills should also be acquired by all musicians:

> I think music can be seen like one more language, so it's always good to learn to read, let's put it this way. But I think that when it comes to teaching, I don't find any problem in teaching orally and maintaining the teaching tradition methodology. … For this reason, I think we should preserve the oral methodology, but one can be exposed to both autochthonous and classical music, like the classical musician to the oral methodology.

Tata Cepeda, who founded a bomba academy in 2001 and has been developing curricula for teaching bomba, also insisted on the importance of maintaining its *own* language of teaching – the oral transmission – when it enters formal institutions. As there are musical, lyrical and cultural factors that cannot be conveyed through a piece of paper, the written form should not be superimposed. Tata said: "In bomba there are syncopations, where you play with the verse, and in the lyrics, we 'eat out' a lot of letters… and the accents… but, also, you are caught, because I am singing with the pain that my history has… it's like gospel, because there is a pain locked there in each song, in each verse, in each word."

Additionally, Xavier and Chamir pointed out how a negative side effect of learning music only from reading notation without developing a musician's ear, is lacking the ability to interpret stylistic peculiarities:

> What we are seeing a lot, nowadays, is that musicians from younger generations cannot distinguish the particularities of genres: it doesn't matter if they're playing a *bolero*, if they're playing R'n'B, jazz, they keep playing as if it were all the same. There are no differences. From a singer's perspective, what is happening is that there are singers with an amazing voice, whose sound is nice and pleasant, but who are not executing the specific stylistic characteristics of singing bomba. If you don't develop your ear, you won't be able to notice the differences in each style, and you won't realize you're not doing it properly.

A well-developed ear, creativity, musical personality, and the ability to improvise are fundamental skills that musicians learning within the oral tradition develop. Danny confirmed that, thanks to his bomba training, despite not reading notation, he can pick up entire sequences of percussion hits by ear and repeat them on the spot:

> Reading music from a piece of paper can turn musicians into zombies, they are not connecting with the music, they lack personality. A musician needs to have his/her own personality, they need to be able to create. We are constantly creating, even if we are playing the basic rhythm pattern like a Sicá or Cuembé, we still must create music within that base, and often for those who read music it is quite hard to do so.

Both Julissa and Danny discussed how, having developed highly advanced aural skills through learning by ear from the oral tradition, they, respectively, learned classical piano repertoire by ear without reading sheet music, and constantly create while playing. The other way around is arguably much harder to develop, as musicians trained in the classical tradition, who can only play through reading or memorizing note by note, struggle to create or improvise over any genre. Ricardo reiterated: "The thing is, I can read music… and I can also improvise in plena or in jazz, but that's something that formally trained musicians can't do. They can't do both things. … They can't play by ear." Interviewees who learned through both methodologies, agree it is easier to learn written formal music for those who have developed their ear previously, but it is not the same the other way around – developing the ear for somebody who was only trained by reading. This is one additional reason why academia should stop awarding primacy to notation in music programmes, especially those teaching non-classical and non-written music whose original form is oral transmission. All these examples show how this practice is not justified by making more musical "sense"; in fact, quite the opposite: it is an ethnocentric elitist discourse inherited from the colonial past.

The quotations above highlight several refined skills that musicians from the oral tradition develop, including ear, creativity, the ability to connect with the audience, aural learning, to perform with the correct sound quality, rhythm, accents, feel and groove. Sheet music cannot provide any equivalent means for achieving these; thus, it is fundamental for autochthonous genres to be taught orally within academia to maintain the character and language of their music. Jaime confirmed that no Puerto Rican academic institution is focusing on teaching autochthonous music from the oral tradition according to its methodology, nor with a focus on developing aural skills versus music reading. Doing so, Jaime says, would be a revolutionary advancement, and it would also produce better musicians:

> This method of teaching would be revolutionary within the institutions, and not just in the music department, but inside the university system itself, as there is no degree focusing on studying oral traditions, even folklore degrees are not studied that way. It's about how do you reconcile the oral tradition with these institutions of higher learning. There's a lot of work to be done, but we can reach a middle ground. … The way in which the two worlds can coexist, the oral and the written, in an institution like the Conservatory, is if we start thinking in this way, recognizing these people already have their language, which is not codified in the way we are used to, so we need to understand these languages, and we are going to transmit them in their way. This would be revolutionary, and it would produce better musicians. … Where I see the future being, is in the collaborations between the cultivated and the popular, that unites and combines the oral learning and the written tradition.

Amarilys discussed how she is bridging the divide between her formal academic music studies, where she built her knowledge on different genres and learned music writing and reading, and her bomba training outside of academia within the oral tradition. In her job as bomba percussion teacher at Tambuyé, she starts by teaching basic rhythms through listening and repeating at level 1. However, by level 3 she introduces music notation, so that students can also develop reading skills and learn how to transcribe what they play – which is something that historically would not be part of the skillset of bomba musicians. Even though she is teaching this class outside of formal academia, she is experimenting with ways to combine developing both skillsets.

Ricardo is tailoring teaching oral tradition genres like bomba and plena in academia, aiming to keep their spirit, whilst adapting to an environment where circumstances for transmission are profoundly different, including time constraints, classroom settings, etc.

Ricardo highlighted the importance of learning and practicing these musics “in the street”, beyond formal schooling: “I think [for] any type of genre that you want to learn how to play, you need to hang out with the people who know how to play it… where the people are playing it… and you need to know who played before you.” He also explained how one of his key challenges is getting musicians who trained formally with paper-based fixed methods away from this rigidity, whilst having very limited time to build a repertoire for the end-of-the-semester academic concert. With students who primarily developed reading rather than aural skills, Ricardo is forced to resort to sheet music even if it is not the best, or most appropriate, way to teach and learn bomba and plena:

> I think one of the challenges is trying to get the students away from that formal thinking that I’m going to put a paper, a sheet of music in front of them. But it’s much more than that. I try to teach them to listen better and to work with the groove of the music. … I have three hours a week with them. … I think if I had more time, like if I saw them 4-5 times a week, I probably wouldn’t use any sheet music, because I would do it so often that they would just learn the stuff by memory. … But if I take students who have had this type of training for all their musical life, it’s not worthwhile for me to try to teach them [differently].

This highlights how sheet music is necessary to learn songs within the timeframes of academic scheduling when the only skillset developed by schooled musicians is reading – and not the oral method, regardless of its appropriateness for autochthonous genres. The time required to develop a new skillset – aural learning – and absorb the repertoire, are key priorities when discussing “how” to teach oral tradition musics in formal academic institutions. Although the written form is not needed to learn bomba and plena, it becomes essential for classically trained musicians when learning songs within the tight academic timeframe. Another aspect worth considering is how within this hybrid model – where the intrinsic transmission form of a style is oral/aural, but students have only developed reading skills – it is necessary for teachers to master both. In fact, to translate the oral form onto the written page, whilst trying to make students develop new skills like an improved ear, teachers like Ricardo need proficiency in both types of training.

Interviewees commented how an enabling environment for academic debates on teaching methodologies and challenging Eurocentric inherited models is still non-existent in Puerto Rico, both at the institutional level and among academics. Brenda said:

> The environment for this conversation is not here, I mean, I was sent by the university to take some leadership courses, and I went to Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. … I

> designed a project for this music programme, on how to get it to grow into this new vision… and this project won the first prize, a medal. When I presented the project here, nothing happened with it. I mean, I don't see the environment for that type of conversation at this time, it's like, "We've always done things this way, and that's the way it's going to be."

Noel confirmed the lack of an enabling environment for conversations and debates to take place in Puerto Rican music departments and academic institutions, where key issues could be discussed, where the function of music could be problematized, and where its definitions and methodologies could be questioned: "This department, since its foundation, has never conducted a discussion, at the faculty level, or philosophic, in terms of defining 'what is popular music', and why such an emphasis in jazz." Moreover, he mentioned how he never had the chance to have a real discussion, or a dedicated forum, to debate the content of the classes he teaches, key themes and axes followed, or educational material used – especially in relation to his active anti-racist and anti-sexist academic approach. Noel described how, when he was tasked by Interamericana (Cupey) to teach Music History classes and revise curricula, one key change he brought about was removing the separation between history of classical music and "other" musics, focusing instead on social function and themes. He also noted how when other teachers came to use teaching materials he developed, they mostly reverted to traditional approaches; Noel attributes this to the fact that many of them are neither trained in up-to-date teaching practices, nor equipped to tackle sensitive issues like racism and sexism embedded in the history of music. Noel finally mentioned how his emphasis on challenging Western music history and the sexism and racism embedded in it, was rejected by some teachers and students without the "capacity to understand and manage it."

This section analysed key considerations, hierarchies, and ongoing tensions within contemporary academia between Western vs autochthonous music teaching approaches, methods of transmission and value awarded. The section below presents testimonies from practitioners of the resistance faced when introducing autochthonous music in Puerto Rican academia.

4.3 Facing Resistance while Introducing Autochthonous Music in Academia

Across this thesis, I demonstrate how the systemic downplaying of autochthonous musical forms, and the cultural expressions of people historically considered second-class citizens,

perpetrate discrimination of disadvantaged social groups at all three levels of the CPJ framework. Longstanding biased systems and practices cause widespread underrepresentation and exclusion of disadvantaged social groups and their musics. Such discrimination takes place across higher music education (first level institutional), normalizing devaluation by others (second level interpersonal), and on a personal level (third level internalized). This can also result in "victims" turning into "perpetrators" themselves, as expressed by Rosabal-Coto (2016), who explores how individuals who have been colonized through socialization and education can become re-colonizers of peers, reinforcing subalternity. Colonized people can re-enact dynamics and replicate the mindset of colonizers, resulting in a "global aesthetic hierarchy where Western forms of beauty and tastes are privileged and non-Western forms of beauty and tastes are downgraded… [and] a global pedagogical hierarchy where Western pedagogies of Cartesian matrix are privileged over non-Western pedagogies institutionalized in the world school system" (Grosfoguel 2006, 380).[214] In the previous sections, interviewees shared their experiences, showcasing how these dynamics take place in Puerto Rican music academia, awarding supremacy to the music and methods of Western occupiers over autochthonous musics from the oral tradition and their transmission methodologies. This section investigates what happened in Puerto Rico when musicians and educators attempted to incorporate autochthonous genres like bomba and non-Western subjects or musical practices into the formal higher educational system.

First, I asked interviewees whether they were aware of debates in Puerto Rico, at a formal or theoretical level, on double standards and the systemic undervaluing of autochthonous musics in academia. They all agreed these never happened openly, only behind the scenes; Ricardo mentioned how a key problem is that issues become easily politicized: "It's not mainstream because of all the persecution that there was. You know, anything that empowers you is seen as subversive. It becomes political." Miguel added:

> No, I think this has never come out in the open. This theme at a theoretical, formal, or academic level, no, I do not recall it happening. [It would make things better] because one could argue, and bring examples … But this discussion is never taking place. I have had it with musicians, individually, of the symphony. There are musicians saying that music ended with Wagner.

[214] Translated by the author from Spanish.

Besides the lack of debates on the subject, interviewees implementing ground-breaking academic courses on autochthonous musics – at the conservatory and at universities with the most renowned music programs – reported it has been very challenging, facing resistance at both the institutional and interpersonal levels.

Dr Pablo Luis Rivera is the Director of AFROlegado, a project of cultural revitalization in Puerto Rico; he is also professor at the Faculty of General Studies in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), offering courses on Afro-descendance, and teaching classes across campuses. Pablo described how, when he was invited by the UPR in 2006 to give classes to music teachers, faculty challenged why bomba was a genre included in the course. At first, he was also generally treated poorly by colleagues at university, because of his academic focus on Afro-descendants and bomba:

> When I graduated people would mock, “Look, now bomba dancers are getting degrees.” … Now it has changed, because we have managed to educate them with conferences, dialogues … You have no idea how many times I heard “You play African music”, without even recognizing bomba is Puerto Rican, which also leads to “And because it’s African, then it’s lesser.” And there, you must educate … It’s a process of education, to reach acceptance.

Another type of subtle resistance Pablo faced was his classes not being given credits: “The institution would justify it by saying that since it was a non-traditional multi-disciplinary course, it would just be done this way. … Bomba had never been taught with credits at university.” Over the years, the same academics who mocked Pablo started recognizing his work, proposing collaborations on the same subjects Pablo had tackled all along, in an opportunistic manner to benefit themselves and ride the wave, once Pablo obtained international acclamation:

> Years later I met those same people. … One of them was at a conference I was giving, taking pictures of my PowerPoint. … The other one asked me, “What is it that you’re doing that they are calling you so much from the United States?”, and I responded “Dancing bomba” [laughs]. And he remained speechless. The one who was taking pictures of the PowerPoint, now, no matter where he sees me, tells me “Listen, I want to do a project in the Caribbean, we have to do a project to connect the Caribbean, where we exchange cultures”, and I respond, “Like the project *Unión*, the one I’ve already been doing.”

Beyond interpersonal pushback from colleagues, several interviewees who tried to increase the presence of Puerto Rican music, culture, and history in formal education on

the island rarely received support at the institutional level. In most cases, it was an uphill struggle. Pablo testifies to both open-minded and antagonistic institutions:

> At Interamericana, in the Fajardo campus where I mostly teach online classes, they really give me free rein, whatever I choose to do. … Similarly, at Ana G. Mendez they gave us the chance to co-participate in creating courses that were focusing on introducing these new themes, and they received a lot of success. … But here, at UPR Carolina, I faced the situation that my proposal was not accepted until I gave it in Washington. And when I came back, they told me "Listen, what a great idea, you should give this class here." And I responded, "But this is the proposal I have been advancing to you for the past 10 years!"

Pablo also held conversations at the Conservatory of Puerto Rico regarding the creation of a bomba course there:

> I presented at a conference, three years ago [2016], at the conservatory, and the Dean, after he saw me, told me, "Hey brother, we should offer a standalone bomba course here." The student themselves, during my presentation, were asking, "Why is that not being taught?" … The Dean called me, and we had a meeting, but in the end, it did not happen.

Nelie Lebrón is a professor in the Music Education department at the Conservatory; she explained how she indeed presented a proposal for an autochthonous music ensemble several times, but it was turned down as deemed unvaluable:

> The first time they replied that it did not have an academic value in the students' preparation, in their musical preparation. And my focus has always been that it should be available for the students of music education, because of the lacks they have in their curriculum. It's just intolerable that we have teachers graduating here who don't know anything about *their* music. The second time they told me… "No, we don't think that an ensemble like that should exist at the conservatory, because our students need to have ensembles in styles that contribute to the chance they can play professionally, and something of value."

Nelie is a trained opera singer, holds a bachelor's in education, and is one of the most recognized voices of bomba; nonetheless, her expertise in bomba does not receive the same recognition, nor is she valued at the same level of other instrument professors at the conservatory. This is also due to the fact she does not hold a degree in bomba, as no such degree exists in Puerto Rico (or elsewhere), showing how elitist requirements and hierarchizations perpetrate the discrimination of musicians, styles, and approaches, producing *de facto* exclusions supported by an antiquated academic system:

> Of course, this is part of the brainwashing, like the fact things cannot be "proven" simply because the paper trail does not exist. And every time I want to focus on issues that are important for the development of identity, all doors get shut; you are perceived as a person concentrating on things that have no value. If I want to focus on Puerto Rican traditional expressions, then I am unworthy. I am a "scholar of Pocahontas."[215]

Jaime Bofill, who holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology from the University of Arizona, is a Musicology professor at the conservatory; he explained how obsolete curricula produce systemic exclusions of autochthonous musics from being taught there:

> I think Puerto Rican curriculum, from first grade to university, still sells the archaic idea that Puerto Rican music doesn't have the same value than European music. And this is noticeable at the conservatory. … Even in something so basic as sightreading exams, the only choices are "Do you want to do it in a more *squared* [classical] rhythm, or swing?", and I ask, "Why not in plena or bomba rhythm?" … For the students, there is a Jazz Music History course, but not on Puerto Rico.

Jaime expanded on how the curricular advancements Nelie mentioned are needed, but he also mentioned the necessity to go beyond isolated labs and create entire programmes:

> I think that if Puerto Rico and the Conservatory of Music wanted to exploit the cultural capital that we have, we should offer a specialization in bomba, in cuatro. Right now, we don't even have an ensemble of traditional music – there is one, but it's not institutionalized. … Some time ago a person contacted me at the conservatory, from Mexico, asking, "Do you have a degree in Puerto Rican music?", and I said, "No, we'd have to design it for you."

I interviewed Nelie with her husband, Emanuel Dufrasne González, who embodies a further example of how a mixture of ignorance combined with Eurocentric supremacist visions of music and academia lead to discrimination and exclusion of people, subjects, and scholarship within educational institutions. Emanuel holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology with honours from UCLA university, one of the best and internationally renowned in this subject. However, because of his interest in Puerto Rican autochthonous musics like bomba and plena, and his focus on their African roots, Emanuel was never offered a job within his field of expertise at a Puerto Rican university:

> I have been teaching here [UPR] for 31 years, at the faculty of general studies, within the humanities department; nevertheless, my degree is in music, with a specialization in

[215] Nelie, interview.

> ethnomusicology, but I never taught in the music department. … I have never been given the chance. … The department directors chose others, some even without a PhD.

Miguel Cubano, Head of the Music Department at Universidad Interamericana (Cupey), described the process leading to the creation of a Bomba and Plena Ensemble there. This was the first course dedicated to autochthonous music taught at a Puerto Rican university with credits, as "this was the first university in which there was a curriculum designed with the goal to promote [Puerto Rican] popular music, or musics." Miguel's experiences as a performer consolidated his belief that no music was higher or better than another, and that autochthonous and classical musics should be given equal recognition in Puerto Rican academia. He contributed to creating a non-traditional academic offering when Universidad Interamericana tasked him to design a syllabus for the new Popular Music degree:

> I wrote one for Puerto Rican cuatro, one for theory and sightreading, one for composition. We started in August 1998. The idea came from a professor… Jorge Pérez Rolón. … He played classic oboe; his studies didn't have anything to do with popular music… [but] he had this political awareness of music. So, he started reaching out to musicians who were playing and were already renown in the realm of popular music.

This is how the first degree in popular music in Puerto Rico was introduced at Universidad Interamericana, *recinto* Metro, in Cupey, under the impulse of Jorge Pérez Rolón, a classically trained oboe player who was previously Dean at the conservatory. It counted on the collaboration of likeminded professors Miguel Cubano and Ismaél Rodriguez (a pianist), designing new curricula appropriate for the teaching of contemporary, popular – and not classical – music.[216] The three were employed full time by Universidad Interamericana to design curricula for general music classes for the new degree; like Pablo, they experienced resistance from other music professors, especially a Puerto Rican and a North American, who were teaching traditional music courses within the institution:

> There were three full-time professors, and all three opposed themselves to the start of the [popular music] degree. [There] was a North American professor, and his opinion was much

[216] The term *popular* music is here related to a Western-centered application, as the degree features Euro/US-centered modern music approaches in subjects like Harmony and Theory. The degree has very limited offering in autochthonous Puerto Rican music, like the Bomba and Plena Ensemble, which is not mandatory, thus it is possible to graduate without playing any autochthonous instrument or repertoire. In short, this university degree is the first one in Puerto Rico offering one lab with credits in bomba and plena, but it is far from being a degree in Puerto Rican music.

> harsher; first, he said we didn't have people who were capable to teach popular music here. But also, in his doctoral thesis, he stated "Why waste any time teaching bomba and plena, and these Afro-Caribbean rhythms, since in a couple of years nobody will be remembering about them." This is written in his doctoral thesis; I could not believe it when I read it.[217]

Miguel discussed how these statements included in the PhD of the North American were value judgements that lacked scientific basis: "This is prejudice, it's pure and rampant prejudice. There was no rationale, just that this music was going to disappear in a couple of years." Regardless of opposition from professors who held power inside the institution, the new degree was approved by the academic senate thanks to its president, Manuel Fernós, and the popular music degree finally started in 1998.

Despite these efforts, classes in Puerto Rican music are not compulsory requirements of any of the music degrees offered on the island; on the flip side, to graduate in music, one must study a Western genre in great depth. For example, at Interamericana, to obtain the degree in Popular Music, a musician could study exclusively jazz and US popular music, and graduate without having taken a single class in Puerto Rican music. Jaime confirmed the same is true for the programme in Jazz and Caribbean Studies at the conservatory: a student can focus exclusively on jazz, without taking any course in Puerto Rican music, and graduate. This is because in both cases, the few classes offered in autochthonous music are non-mandatory electives. At the same time, the opposite cannot happen; students could never study exclusively Puerto Rican music to graduate, as they are forced to take several mandatory classes in jazz.

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of economic drivers to overcome the monopoly held by classical music in higher education in Puerto Rico, enabling the creation of new music degrees in academic institutions, like the Popular Music degree at Interamericana and the Jazz and Caribbean Music Conservatory Degree. Noel explained:

> The popular music programmes that were established in Puerto Rico in 1998 here at Interamericana and later at the conservatory, at the end of the day, they ended up being offered under economic pressure. … So, what happened here [Interamericana, Cupey], going against the couple of the teachers who were here and who did not want a program in popular music, was that they convinced the administration that a program of popular music would have been more economically viable than a program of concert music.

[217] Miguel, interview.

Similarly, at the conservatory, Miguel mentioned how:

> The conservatory [started offering courses in] jazz and Afro-Caribbean [music] around 2004–2005… and the reason was economic. … The administration of the conservatory observed the growth our [Interamericana] department had, where we started in 1998 with 75 students, and by 2004 we had 700. … They saw our success and thought, "Wait, we have to do something similar, so we can get a share of this public."

I discussed with interviewees the possibility of having entire degrees on Puerto Rican music in relation to the concept of demand and being demand-driven. Amarilys mentioned how, indeed, the Conservatory Degree in Jazz and Caribbean music, from the start, marked a shift. The number of students enrolled in classical music degrees at the conservatory was diminishing, but student enrolment for jazz and Caribbean music was increasing: "The student body has been changing its appetite for Afro-Caribbean music and for jazz, and generally speaking for what generates money." It is highly possible that a degree focusing on Puerto Rican autochthonous music would receive a similar reception, with high demand.

These cases demonstrate how, following significant resistance from music professors and an academy shaped by regressive and obsolete views, institutions are quick to adopt new methodologies when they sense a financial incentive from student buy-in. When I interviewed Miguel in 2017, he reported how the music department at Interamericana was the largest in modern music, and far larger than the one in jazz and Caribbean music at the conservatory. During a focus group, a student with classical music training, but playing popular music professionally, explained he chose Interamericana because it was the only institution with a degree relevant to the styles he played in paid gigs.

Pablo also described how economics played the rolling dice at UPR:

> At UPR, before the current administration, they had managed to not depend too much from students' enrolment, and to depend more on governments funds, therefore they would select who entered, who they would allow to stay, what they permitted to be taught. … Now, they depend on people coming, and if they don't come, it will close. … What happened with bomba schools that are self-managed, they have demonstrated that the clientele exists.

These examples show how, as soon as people overcame institutional challenges and created new courses or degrees, these proved to be very successful and in high demand. This was the case for the degrees in Popular Music at Interamericana, in Jazz and

Caribbean music at the conservatory, and the courses on Bomba, Afro descendants, and Racialization that Pablo has been teaching at UPR in Carolina and Río Piedras.[218]

Another relevant aspect related to teaching autochthonous Puerto Rican musics in academic institutions – and particularly creating entire degrees dedicated to them – is the positive effects this could have from an international standpoint, as it could bring international students who are interested in studying these musics to Puerto Rico, whilst also allowing Puerto Rican musicians and academics to acquire fundamental knowledge on their musics that they could export abroad. Pablo mentioned the many international students and musicians who could be attracted to the island to conduct academic studies, whether short residencies or entire degrees, in Puerto Rican autochthonous musics: "This would attract people from abroad to come study here. … Imagine if they want to do six months, one year, or get a certification – but there is none. It would be useful for a professional career; people would come." Pablo also insisted on the importance for all Puerto Ricans to learn about their own music, "because these are the foundations that each person must have, at least having the knowledge over what is *your own*. You know, what happens is that you go to another country, and they ask you about your music and you say 'No, the only thing I know is this'; 'Ok, explain it to me', 'Oh, I don't know.'"

Amarilys touched on the irony of giving classes on bomba when she was invited to Seattle to teach bomba at the University of Washington, something she never saw happening *at home* in Puerto Rico:

> I was artist-in-residence at the University of Washington in Seattle, from January to March [of 2019] where I was giving classes to ethnomusicology graduate students – of bomba! In Seattle! To these people who didn't even know where Puerto Rico is, in something we don't even offer here [in Puerto Rico]! … Pablo Luís is creating it from a historical perspective in the University of Carolina here. Pablo Luís is the one who recommended me in Seattle.

Pablo described how he has faced conflict within academia not just in Puerto Rico, but also internationally: "In the conference I attended in Bremen [Germany] there was a group of people who were students of Spanish, and one of them stood up and left, because he said that 'this is not the reality'. I was talking about how we were presenting the contexts in our educational project *Afrolegado* in Puerto Rico, based on the discrimination issues we

[218] See https://pulsoestudiantil.com/recinto-de-rio-piedras-ofrecera-cursos-sobre-afrodescendencia/ (accessed 01/09/2022).

have here.” The way Pablo explains such resistance in academia is in relation to the background of the people who perpetrate discriminatory behaviours: “People who are not being discriminated will not understand discrimination. Or they are the ones discriminating.”

This point highlights the issue of power in academia, and how people actively displaying discriminatory behaviours usually belong to the social group holding power and control and benefitting from it simply trying to maintain their privileges. Pablo recounted how dominant figures would maintain their control: “[They would say] ‘You want to publish this? You want? I am in charge’… The other problem is that, if they graduate you, then you would move up to the next level, and they need to make sure you do not get up there with them. That is why they created so many obstacles for me.” From a gender standpoint, in Italy I witnessed second-hand similar dynamics of abuse of power, where older male academics in positions of power were using their status to extrapolate sexual favours in exchange for better grades or job placements. In Puerto Rico, two of my informants reported older male academics in universities using their positions to have sexual relations with young female students in exchange of higher grades. Located at the top of the institutional hierarchy, men operating within an academic system historically granting them privilege, power and the highest decision-making positions can develop abusive and dominant behaviours towards young women and people from other disadvantaged groups.

Whether it is gender or race, these experiences indicate how social constructs are still used in academia by dominant groups to exert power and maintain control. This resonates with, and circles back to, colonial and patriarchal dynamics of supremacy at the societal level. Dominant groups impose their rule with all means necessary in the name of a (self-proclaimed) superiority, usually justified by manipulating social constructs like gender and race, creating the binary duality of the “superior me” and the “inferior other”.

Chapter 5. Facing Resistance in Bomba

In Chapter 2, I discussed how bomba as a musical genre, and people performing it, have been victims of historical discrimination; the previous chapter documented how bomba and those teaching it have faced discrimination in academia. In other words, bomba music, its teachers and performers have been discriminated by institutions and fellow Puerto Ricans (first level institutional and second level interpersonal discrimination). Fieldwork brought to surface examples of how victims of discrimination can sometimes be, or become, *perpetrators* as well, displaying discriminatory attitudes. People of the bomba community who have been discriminated against – because of their colour, their socio-economic background, where they grew up, etc. – at times might themselves display discriminatory behaviours towards other members, or those entering it. This is what I refer to when I speak of 'inner discrimination' based on gender or race/ethnicity within bomba; in this chapter I analyse these aspects, and discuss the resistance faced by people affected by discrimination.

Because of my studies and professional experiences of over 15 years – including a master's in interdisciplinary Gender Studies and working as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Lead in the field of international development – I developed a tendency to automatically adopt a gender and inclusion lens. For example, without necessarily meaning to, I immediately pick up on how a meeting room is gendered, how a performance is non-inclusive of people of a certain gender or race, how certain spaces are racially segregated, and so on. During my first bomba encounters I picked up several gender and race markers, ranging from unconscious bias to discriminatory behaviours, mostly based on associations of what gender or race bomba drummers or dancers were expected to be and *look like*.

First, I noticed it was common that mostly men played drums – especially the *primo*, the solo drum – and that women would largely be dancing and singing (men not being excluded, but women predominantly taking over). This was quite aligned with many musical traditions across the globe and recurrent gender role assignations to drums, singing, and dancing. Koskoff (1995) argues that musical instruments should be understood as 'a locus of power' which can be used to reinforce 'gendered notions' of 'control', and the kind of role assignations outlined here in the case of bomba resemble

those described by Doubleday (2008) explaining how these represent ‘a gendered division of labour’ and serve to reinforce ‘male exclusivity’ and ‘male control’.

Secondly, I perceived that the colour of a person’s skin and their phenotypes did matter within bomba circles – basically, it was not a ‘non-issue’ – and that the value system in this case was opposite to the one applied by the largest part of the population in Puerto Rico. In other words, historically most Puerto Ricans attributed a higher value to White skin and discriminate against Black people; in bomba, a higher value seemed to be given to Black skin, and sometimes discriminatory behaviours seemed to be carried out towards ‘clearer people’ (whether Brown or White).[219] This is an example of how it is possible for victims of discrimination to become *perpetrators*. In other words, people discriminated against because of the colour of their skin, and fighting for equality and equal treatment, might display discriminatory behaviours based on skin tone towards others who do not belong to their racial or ethnic groups, or who are not the same colour.

During various interviews I expanded on these points, digging for evidence either corroborating or counteracting my initial observations on possible discriminatory practices or unconscious bias based on gender and race/ethnicity/colour in bomba. Christina shared her personal experience in bomba related to this topic, confirming my initial observations:

> The first day I went to Nuestro Son in Viejo San Juan to take the class I was surprised that Marién was White, and I felt ashamed of myself because I said, “Why am I surprised that she is White, why was I expecting her to be Black?”[220] … The fact that Marién is White surprised me. … What I do think is that people think that, because I am Black, I dance better than I do; I don’t think I dance bad, but I’m not the best dancer out there. Definitely, people wait for me to dance, they think what I did was spectacular, and I’m over here thinking I messed up this one step, I did this wrong. I don’t care, but I can notice that they’re staring at me, waiting because I’m there, and I think it’s because I’m Black.

Given musical practices reflect the society in which they develop, to best analyse gender roles and race relations in bomba, and how transformations taking place in Puerto Rico over the 500 years during which bomba developed also led to changes, I first discuss the journey from *traditional* to *contemporary* bomba. In the following sections, I analyse the specific case of inner race/ethnic and gender discrimination in bomba practices.

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[219] Always refer to these categorizations within the Puerto Rican viewpoints and applied definitions, as explained in Chapter 1.
[220] Nuestro Son is a bar, dance, and night club in Old San Juan.

5.1 Contemporary Bomba

During interviews with Puerto Rican *bombeadores/as* two of them, Ricardo and Marién, explained in detail how there is a 'before' and an 'after' for bomba.[221] Roughly, the 'before' comprises several centuries in which bomba developed and was played and performed in various areas of the island, mostly by few 'culture-bearers' families and circles considered its sole referents; the 'after' starts from the early 2000s, witnessing a *bomba renaissance*. There was also an 'in-between' period, taking place during most of the 20th century, when bomba was relegated into a folkloristic standardized expression quite 'stuck' in its forms, without undergoing much renovation nor fusion of new elements. Also, at this time, the last *mayores* were becoming of age, and their knowledge was at risk of not being passed on.[222]

During bombazos, when it came up in conversations that I was researching bomba as part of my thesis, people's immediate conclusion was that I must be focusing on the *Ayalas* and the *Cepedas*. These two dynasties, respectively representing bomba *de Loíza* and bomba *Cangrejera*, are considered the 'beholders of all truth' when it comes to bomba tradition on the island. When I explained that I was trying to run a 'democratic' investigation, focusing on what bomba meant to all those who perform it and inhabit it nowadays, independently from blood lineages or background, I received some puzzled looks. Nonetheless, I made sure to include references to these traditional families in my work, and I also had the chance to interview Tata Cepeda. She shared the rationale her family applied when they decided to finally open and share their bomba knowledge with the wider Puerto Rican public. Tata recalled: "In my family, this comes from my grandfather's great-great-grandparents, this is not just from my grandfather… It's not about ego, it's about culture, it's about history, it's about values, and us, the Cepeda family, we have done this with much love for our country first."

Tata recalled that another extremely important contribution of her grandfather, Don Rafael Cepeda Atiles, was to use bomba as a deterrent for young people who were at risk of

[221] A *bombeador* (male), or *bombeadora* (female), is someone who practices bomba; they can also be referred to as *bombero* and *bombera*, as used sometimes in the thesis, but this in Spanish translates into 'firefighter' and can cause confusion. I heard both variations in Puerto Rico.
[222] *Mayores* is a Spanish word, and in bomba is used to refer to the elders who held the knowledge of bomba playing, singing, and dancing passed on to them by previous generations, usually by lineage – belonging to the same family, or being affiliated to it.

getting into drugs, whilst slowly creating a movement of young *bomberos* at a time bomba was at risk of extinction:

> He also used this strategy when he saw some young people that were in danger of getting into drugs or things like that, he would say, “Listen, are you interested? Why don’t you come, and I can teach you, so you can learn to dance, to play, to do bomba, to make culture”, and subtly, he was moving them away from drug addiction. And many things like that, and many people respected him, and they still remember him, because he dedicated many years of his life to exalt bomba because at that time it was in danger of extinction, and there were very few people who were doing what he was doing for culture. And that is why at the University of Puerto Rico they proclaimed him *el Patriarca de la bomba y la plena*, and he took it to many sides of the world with a lot of pride, whilst there were other families, as originally this was being done as family groups, that would only do it in a close circle. We opened it up, and thanks to this, to my grandfather’s struggle, this could start sowing the seed in many youths that could stay with him, one by one, teaching classes, until there was a big boom.

The Ayalas are the referent family of bomba *de Loíza*; the most notable traditional event associated with their dynasty is a bombazo taking place yearly at the end of July, in proximity of *Las Procesiones de las Fiestas de Santiago*, staged in the *Batey de Los Ayala* in Loíza. Jaime Bofill Calero provides a good description of this event in his article, “Bomba, danza, calypso y merengue: Creación del espacio social en las fiestas de Santiago Apóstol de Loíza” (2014), distinguishing between the ‘sacred space’ of the batey, where drummers and dancers become one, and the ‘chaos’ of the ‘profane world' outside this imaginary circle:

> On this day in the Ayala *batey* there were well-known musicians from Loíza such as the Ayala Brothers, Marcos Peñalosa and Tatá. Although there is an order and a great sense of respect for the musicians, for the drums and for the dancers within the circle, outside of this space what reigns is chaos. … Running along an imaginary circle within the inner edge of the space, [the dancer] delimits the sacred territory from the profane world surrounding him, initiating his dialogue with the soloing drum, known as the primo drum. The dancer proceeds to impose his presence through bodily movements sonically imitated by the *repiques* of the primo drum. It is through this dialogue that the culmination is reached during moments of total synchronization between body and drum, where the dancer reaches a

> point of ecstasy and achieves a personal and spiritual liberation and transformation which also becomes collective for those who take part in the circle. (128–29)[223]

An interesting element emerging from conversations during bomba events and during classes given by Ricardo Pons and Marién Torres, is that in the past and for many centuries these traditional bomba dynasties kept their knowledge and *sabiduría* (knowledge of the elderlies) as a secret to be kept within their closed circles. Similar practices of keeping musical knowledge secret existed in various musical cultures, to preserve the primacy of selected musicians passing the learnings from one generation to the next within the same family.[224]

For Puerto Rican bomba, everything changed when it stopped being performed almost exclusively inside these private family patios, or in stereotyped crystallized folkloric performances as a display of *Puertorriqueñidad* during formal celebrations. This happened starting in the late 1990s onto the early 2000s, when a new generation of Puerto Ricans, both within and outside these dynasties, started bringing bomba into the streets, bars, and other public places. Such change was gradual, as was the shift in perceptions of Puerto Ricans that bomba could be something for everybody, and not just for a close circle of 'chosen' people. This is well exemplified by Minirka's recollection of her own experience, describing how bomba was something she would casually listen to during childhood, was exposed to in her late teens, but never dared to participate because of this longstanding perception it was something only *for the very few*. Finally, bomba turned into an art Minirka was able to fully embrace at a later stage in life:

> As a child, I used to go to the beach in Isla Verde with my mom during the weekend, and afterwards we would go to Piñones to eat and meet family and friends. In some small spaces there you could hear the drums rumbling somewhere, and one would go looking for it, but it was something that you would run into by chance, it was not something accessible, nor something that you could find outdoors … When I started university and was an independent adult who could go out, I started going to *Rumba* in Viejo San Juan, where bomba was played. You would listen to it, you knew somebody would start dancing, there were some bomba skirts but not many, and there were very few people who would go and dance. There was a lot of curiosity but very little participation, most of us felt very

[223] Translated by the author from Spanish; *repiques* are specific drum hits the primo does while soloing to imitate the dancer's improvisation.
[224] The efforts of ethnomusicology to disseminate such knowledge has sometimes proved controversial (Beaudry 1997; Reigersberg 2019).

> intimidated. I didn't even think this was an autochthonous rhythm that I should naturally know, it almost seemed as something new that they started doing there. So, for me, it was very intimidating, as I realized that the circle dancing, singing, playing, practicing it was very close-knit and made up of only few people. You would see many men, men were dominating bomba, and the most women could do, was singing and dancing. I would never dare asking about bomba, nor dare learning to dance.

I asked Minirka if she thought her reluctance was due to her own insecurity, or rather to the fact that this circle of people projected a sense of exclusion towards outsiders; she replied:

> A mixture of both, that is your perception when you arrive and see that the people are always the same, that there was not an inclusive dynamic like "People let's go, let's dance." It was very peculiar, and it would make you feel like you must know what you're doing, because you must respect what you're doing. You could see that respect, but at the same time you felt like you really wanted to learn, but there was a wall, and you couldn't enter.

After many years, including some time spent abroad in the United States, in 2015 Minirka was able to attend bomba classes taught for free in Carolina and she fell in love with it, finally learning all about it within an environment based on open participation and that promoted sharing. Danny also explained how in the early days this perception of bomba being just *for the few* was still there, especially when it came to playing it:

> When I first saw bomba, if I remember well, it was *El Gato* – he's very dynamic when he plays, and when I saw him in his repiques with the dancer – practically what was happening to me is that I would get goosebumps, and since I didn't know much about it at the time, I remained a bit on the side. Back then not everyone could get in, not everybody could integrate themselves to bomba, unless it would be just to dance, but to play and sing, it was only for those who knew. It's not like now, they are giving that opportunity, and they are teaching you a bit more; I do the same in my own ensemble sometimes, when I get the chance, but back then you remained distanced.

Amarilys also highlighted how the perception that bomba belonging to an élite, plus being discriminated against as a woman approaching barriles (historically the exclusive domain of men), plus being a White Puerto Rican entering a Black genre – all created a triple barrier she had to work her way through:

> I felt more rejection for the colour of my skin than for being a woman. That was one aspect of it, but another was not being part of an established bomba family. This also happens, whether you are White or Black, if you didn't have a bomba last name you were just

> considered a student for the rest of your life, even if you knew more than your teacher. These are things that I think happen in every musical genre if you are not part of an élite.

In time, the new bomba generation has worked to ensure the learnings and the knowledge secretly kept by the last groups of elderlies would be passed on, shared, and made available to the wider collective and to communities in Puerto Rico. There were several reasons that moved these *trabajadores culturales* to do so, including ensuring key elements of bomba music, dance and culture not getting lost, also in relation to demographics changing and migration being more recurrent, which led people from family dynasties moving abroad or not picking up family traditions.[225] By the same token, until recent times, it would have been hard or close to impossible for people not belonging to these family *clans* to learn bomba and take part in it, given it was an oral tradition passed on within these families and there were no outer sources – written or recorded – to resort to.

Amarilys, who has been learning and teaching bomba as part of this new generation of bomberos, explains:

> When it comes to bomba, and where we're at within bomba, we are contributing to a change process. We are still in diapers according to how far we need to get to. We have made some advancements, those of us who have been part of this have seen the change. For example, I studied bomba in the patio of a house; now there are bomba academies, which is something that did not exist before. In the past you had to teach at home, "Ok, let's go, let's do it", and it was something way under the table. Now Marién has an academy offering classes six days a week, which is something that never existed before. Marién obviously started in the same way, from down below, and now she has an amazing academy, which I think is the one that has the highest enrolment in all of Puerto Rico.

For younger generations of bomberos*,* bomba represents a contemporary cultural project, whose aim is to contribute to increase awareness, within and without Puerto Rico, of the island's roots and autochthonous forms of cultural and artistic expressions, their history, and their meaning. There is a clear educational purpose in the work of bomberos – in terms of preparation, content and reach, as Pablo explains:

> I assumed the responsibility of teaching and doing educational projects because, in the beginning, you would go to a bomba workshop, and they would speak about it in a

[225] *Trabajadores culturales* in Spanish means cultural workers, as they often refer to themselves.

> superficial way. And there was never a clear reference; "So-and-so told me, it's because I saw it", which is ok because it's an oral tradition, but there is more. You must reconstruct the historical background, if shoes were used or not, all of it has a historical perspective. As soon as I realized that educating was not widespread, I said "Then we must undertake it ourselves." Maybe we will not reach all of Puerto Rico, but at least whomever you can get away from this mindset, and wherever you manage to interrupt the historical disruption, that is one more contribution one can make. And we created an organization that is called Cultural Restoration, restoration because precisely we need to decodify these brains that were thinking in a certain way, show them what else is part of their historical reality … For this I did my PhD in History of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean because I also wanted to have research foundations, a methodology, to be able to understand what could be contributed, what was lacking… and I've already seen the difference. When I started in 1989 and what is happening now, there has been abysmal growth, now you can see bomba everywhere, there is bomba in Japan.

Another key element of contemporary bomba is that it started being performed by youth in local *hangs*. For many Puerto Ricans who had been casually exposed to bomba but only in its most traditional and crystallized version, the real switch happened when they saw it performed within urban settings, by and for young people:

> When I saw bomba at an adult age I could connect it to what I was seeing as a child at the Batey of the Ayalas, but I took a real interest in it when I was already in university, through a friend who was always inviting us to the activity of a band he was part of. When we finally managed to go see this group [at Rumba in Viejo San Juan], that's when my life changed. It was the barriles, it was the songs, but most of all it was seeing that there were many young people who were playing it. What really captured my attention is that these were young people, the hang, the venue was full, people were having a good time, I felt like I could be included. After that I started telling my friend I want to sing it, I had no idea how to do it, but I felt I could be a part of what they were doing.[226]

Chamir highlights an important aspect that already emerged in conversations during bomba events with members of the community – that a key reason behind the success of this bomba *renaissance* was moving beyond the perception it was a crystallized form that could only be performed by a restricted *élite* of few bomba families. The new generations of bomberos focused on making bomba *from the people*, *for the people*, and bringing it *to*

[226] Chamir, interview.

the people; Chamir explained how the Emmanuelli brothers are credited for beginning this crucial innovation that started taking place in the 1990s:

> It's very important to mention how the Emmanuelli brothers changed a lot the dynamic of what was taking place in bomba. There were families like the Cepedas and the Ayalas who were the maximum exponents of folklore at that time, and their stage shows made people feel like bomba was something that only they could do because they were the only ones who knew how to. The Emmanuelli brothers brought bomba to pubs, without a uniform or costumes, they took it down from the stage and closer to people, allowing for people to participate. People started feeling like "Ah, this is *our* music", we can do it, we don't have to be an expert from the Cepeda family … As I like to say, "The Emmanuelli were our own grandparents", and they made it happen for young people wanting to be part of it.[227]

Abadía-Rexach (2015a) has shown how framing contemporary bomba as a cultural project, transforming it from a long-established musical tradition associated with Blackness, to a symbol of present-day "racial democracy" in Puerto Rico, also contributed to raising the status of bomba. Danny also witnessed this phenomenon:

> I can tell you about how, in 2005, if this is low, bomba was still here [his hands show a position lower than low]; in 2010 there was a peak [shows a higher jump to a middle position], and now, it is here [his hands reach the top]. After María, people connected even more with Puerto Rico, it was like people realized they were Puerto Rican, they left their comfort zone and their colonialist mindset, like that because they had money they would not go to certain venues. Many of these places, where rich people used to go, had to close because of the hurricane, so rich people had to go down to the level of the middle class.

The point Danny raised regarding the relation between hurricane María, a renewed sense of Puerto Rican pride, and bomba, also came up in other conversations, including with Tata. This was also partly caused by the way the United States treated Puerto Rico in the aftermath of the hurricane, and the demeaning actions of then President Trump, reaching the lowest point with the episode involving the toilet paper – symbolizing and embodying

[227] Emmanuelli brothers Náter, José, Jorge, and Victor are founders of the group Bomba Evolución, and are credited with coining the term bombazo to identify bomba events open to a wider public of non-experts in public locations like bars and pubs. More information on them can be found at https://pachs-chicago.org/bombalectureemmanuelli/ (accessed 29/11/2022).

the lack of respect and second-class status the island has been suffering at the hands of its occupier over the previous century.[228] Danny added:

> When I saw the foulness that Trump did throwing toilet paper, it really made me want to reach through the tv screen and grab that wig from his head … "You are just not going to treat me like this!" After the hurricane, everybody started buying Puerto Rican flags and exposing them over their cars, in their houses. I think that was the time when people started searching for their own essence, each person was looking for their core… What the president did was denigrating, but what really gave the strength to people to keep going was the necessity we all had to find a way to survive, you helping me, and me helping you, as it was not going to come from the outside… It was solidarity, but people were also just trying to connect, to find connections by talking, and inviting others to go to venues where bomba was played, to find a bit of that essence of our music, and the meaning of being Puerto Rican.

Interviewees explained how this search for their roots, the desire to reaffirm their *Puertorriqueñidad,* and the need to assert what being Puerto Rican was, represented a reaction to both the derogatory attitude received by the US mixed to the sensation of having come so close to being wiped off the map once and for all by the natural event.

Abadía-Rexach (2019) expanded on the 'appropriation' of bomba by the new generation, also advancing some remarks regarding the episode described in Chapter 2.5 involving dancer Glory Mar:

> *Bomba* is assumed to be an inalienable symbol of Puerto Rican identity. From such discourse, it is clear that the Puerto Rican identity is unifying. Glory Mar urges Puerto Ricans to learn about their roots and their culture, which implies learning about *bomba* and knowing the meaning of the movements used when dancing it. Therefore, *bomba* performance fulfils the roles of entertaining, attracting and educating. In this sense, the discourses of which traditional *bomba* was made are reconfigured and it is perceived as a democratic, inclusive and open *bomba* that operates from national and cultural identities, moving away from the racial element.

[228] Trump's 'toilet paper' episode was picked up and reported by news outlets worldwide, including: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41504165; https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/it-totally-belittled-the-moment-many-look-back-in-anger-at-trumps-tossing-of-paper-towels-in-puerto-rico/2018/09/13/8a3647d2-b77e-11e8-a2c5-3187f427e253_story.html; https://thehill.com/latino/406069-san-juan-mayor-puerto-ricans-will-never-forget-images-of-trump-throwing-paper-towels/ (accessed 29/11/2022).

This quote highlights the democratic, inclusive, and open approach of the "new" bomba – one that can be learned and experienced by everybody, unlike in the past where a limited number of families kept it as private knowledge and hidden secret. Dr Modesto Cepeda – one of the key exponents of the Cepeda family and of the group of *mayores* most involved in teaching bomba to new generations beyond family lineage – explained this phenomenon:

> Puerto Rico cannot afford to lose these rhythms after all the work my father went through … We were educating a people who did not know … You couldn't teach what you knew to anyone because your identity was going to be stolen. Us, we opened the doors. Many people said that I was crazy because that is not something to be taught, because it was a family tradition. But … I do not regret it, because *bomba* now is not owned anymore by only the Cepeda or the Ayala families, *bomba* is in all of Puerto Rico and in the whole world … I'm not telling you that it was easy, because I had to jump over a lot of gates, but now bomba is a cache.[229]

Musically, this is creating interesting phenomena, where musicians and dancers of all backgrounds are now learning bomba and fusing it with other genres and styles.[230] These ensembles, especially because they fuse bomba with the most popular genres among teenagers, help expand bomba audiences locally and internationally, besides reaching across all age ranges. By mixing bomba with genres like reggaetón, reggae, and hip-hop, groups like La Tribú de Abrante have transformed bomba into a popular phenomenon. During an interview published by the New York Times in 2018, their frontman, Hiram Abrante, explained that the band wanted to "make bomba more accessible to listeners around the world while maintaining respect for its traditions and history" and to show global audiences that bomba, rather than reggaetón, is "the traditional music of Puerto Rico."[231]

Interestingly, these concepts of promoting a democratic, inclusive, and open approach to bomba and fusing musical elements, are nowadays appreciated by older members of the traditional families too, who also actively take part in passing their techniques to a larger

[229] https://www.primerahora.com/entretenimiento/farandula/notas/familia-cepeda-estrena-centro-de-bomba/ (accessed 29/11/2022).
[230] Puerto Rican contemporary bands mixing bomba with other musical styles include: Tribú de Abrante, Bomba Evolución, and Tambores Calientes.
[231] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/07/style/bomba-puerto-rico-music-dance.html (accessed 29/11/2022).

group of bomberos beyond their own family circles. This is what Jesús Cepeda commented about these changes in a New York Times interview:

> Regarding the success of La Tribú, I want to be sincere, mixing reggaeton and reggae with bomba – on the one hand, it's good, it's beautiful. Young people are representing the same idea that we are … They're helping bomba, but I have 65 years of doing this, giving classes, direct from folklore. It's not a mix. I can speak to the masters of generations before me, but they can't. They're not masters, they're students.[232]

This quote highlights how members of traditional families are accepting and taking part in the bomba democratization process, whilst still maintaining a differentiation among what bomba was, what it is becoming, and their sense of hierarchy in its execution practices.

Other interesting elements that the bomba *renaissance* has challenged and that are changing in recent times are traditional perceptions and roles assignations, in relation to race/ethnicity/colour, as discussed in the next section, or in terms of gender, as examined in the last section of this chapter.

5.2 Inner Discrimination in Contemporary Bomba

To pick the correct term to use when speaking about the inner discrimination within bomba based on race, ethnicity, or colour, I carefully consider, and contextualize, various options among possible definitions. Words commonly associated with racial discrimination, and often used interchangeably, include 'racial prejudice' and 'racism'. As discussed in the Introduction, there is a notion that, "Black people cannot be racist" towards White people; in this section I question this concept within the context of bomba.

Most of the discourse around "Black people cannot be racist" (towards White people) has originated in the United States. Racism as a concept is considered a combination made up of a basic element of racial discrimination, and the aggravating factor of it being displayed or enacted within a system of power and oppression. Therefore, members of a marginalized or minority group can be victims of racism but cannot be racist themselves, even when displaying discriminatory behaviours towards people of another colour because of racial, ethnic, or colour-related reasons. In other words, a White American discriminating based on colour against a Black person in the US is considered racist, but a Black American discriminating based on colour against a White person in the US cannot be

[232] Ibidem.

considered racist.[233] Alongside, within such systems, the concept of 'reverse racism' is disputed as 'non-existent'.[234]

Given the topic of my thesis, conversations about colour, discrimination, racism etc. in Puerto Rico came up on many occasions when people asked about my investigation; these conversations took place between 2015 and 2022 during bomba events, interviews and casual chats. I can relate that many Afro-Puerto Ricans, and those self-identifying as Black, agreed with the conceptualization from mainland US that Black people cannot be racist. At most, they can display racial prejudice. Others disagreed, mentioning how Puerto Ricans can be racist towards darker people and "other Blacks" like Dominicans.

My participant observation in Puerto Rico and within bomba circles, the words of interviewees, and a context-based application of the leading definitions of racism (race-based discrimination within a power dynamic) led me to believe that in bomba it is indeed possible to question whether racism from Black people towards White people – or towards those considered 'less Black' because of a clearer complexion – can take place.

Before discussing key findings that interviews brought to surface, I advance why the definition of racism – made up of an element of racial discrimination and unbalanced power dynamics – might apply in the context of bomba, reversely (from Blacks towards Whites). In a Business Insider article titled *Here's why 'reverse racism' doesn't actually exist in the US*, Carlos Hoyt Jr. is quoted explaining how the concepts of power and privilege have been added to the notion of racial discrimination by those who have been requesting revisions of the definition of the term racism. Hoyt states: "To be guilty of racism, however, to be a racist, say the revision proponents, one must have power, and power of a special sort … For the revisionists, racism is prejudice plus power leveraged at an institutional level to maintain the privileges of the dominant social group."[235]

Within bomba circles, it can happen that those who have 'power' and act as the dominant social group are Black Puerto Ricans, and they might use racial divisions to maintain a privileged position. In this interpretation, knowledge itself is seen as a form of power, and

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[233] https://www.thecrimson.com/column/between-the-lines/article/2018/8/10/gao-who-can-be-racist/ (accessed 29/01/2022), in addition to sources mentioned in the Introduction, see Norton and Sommers (2011) and Green (2018).
[234] https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/politics/race/fish.htm (accessed 29/01/2022).
[235] https://www.businessinsider.com/heres-why-reverse-racism-doesnt-actually-exist-in-the-us-2016-4 (accessed 29/01/2022).

ways of holding onto power are its various manifestations, such as maintaining certain traditions closed and not passing down bomba music and dance expertise to 'outsiders'. This ultimately allows only a closed circle of those with the privilege of belonging to a certain lineage, and race, being able to execute it.[236] Consequently, the privileged group made up of the socially dominant within the genre might have at times maintained and leveraged such position by, for example, denying opportunities for learning, performing, and taking part in professional bomba acts because someone was not 'Black enough'. According to this interpretation of an expanded definition of racism, contextualized in the reality of bomba in Puerto Rico, the word (reverse?) racism could possibly fit to the racial discrimination perpetrated by some Blacks towards some Whites – or Brown, and anyone considered 'less Black'. To investigate this point, I present several interviews substantiating the dynamics described above in the context of bomba in Puerto Rico.

Ricardo Pons, a light-skinned Puerto Rican, explained he had never perceived racial discrimination, or being a minority, until he first went to a bomba event in Loíza with his Black girlfriend:

> I was like 16 years of age, and I went with my girlfriend to Loíza to listen to bomba in a neighbourhood that is called Las Carreras, which is known for a very strong bomba tradition … My girlfriend was dark skinned… And the kids there used to look at me and tell her "And this *gringo*, is he with you?" … I was the only one [there] that looked like me… I grew up with people with all types of skin colour; to me, it had never been an issue.

Iveliz self-identifies as a Dominican-Puerto Rican mixed, Black-Hispanic woman. She shared her experience of the time she had been put forward, based on the quality of her singing and the fact she was performing with bomba ensembles from there, for being the lead singer of the Loíza delegation at the *Encuentro de Tambores* yearly performance. In the end, it was decided she would not be given the role because she did not look the part as she was not 'dark' enough, besides not being from Loíza.

Indeed, colour often does not act as the only discriminator, as it mixes with geography and a certain level of territoriality, maximizing factors of exclusion. Chamir and Xavier, who are both dark skinned, explained how, despite having family members from Loíza or living

[236] Foucault (1980) cemented the relationship between knowledge and power, or 'the deployment of force and the establishment of truth', with the concept of 'power/knowledge', where knowledge is understood as an instrument of power and control, and where the goals of the two cannot be separated. This has been applied to various music cultures in ethnomusicology, as shown by Nooshin (2016).

there, ultimately would never be considered from Loíza, or a *Loiceño*, and because of that they would be treated differently within Loíza bomba circles:

> They know, they identify who is not from there, and there is always some level of resistance on their part towards you, even if you are Black and like them. Perhaps nowadays with the dynamic that is taking place among young people who are mixing more and playing all together, maybe it has changed, but yes, the two of us experienced it. For example, I remember one time we had just finished a bomba show, and we decided to go to *La 23* in Loíza, and you could see the pressure, the resistance, how they were looking at you. If one of our guys would sit down to play, they would accelerate the rhythm on purpose to defy your resistance, and if someone started dancing, immediately a dancer from there would come out and get you out of the batey. It's not like they would openly tell you "Leave", but they would create obstruction.

Danny, a *Loiceño,* explained how this can be associated with territorialism:

> What happens is that we don't have any issue at all with people who come to dance and to sing or to play an instrument: the problem is when you want to be in charge in our territory. If you danced, if they clapped at you, it's all good, but don't try to steal the lead of the show, because you're in my territory. You can share, you can dance, but no more. We're very territorial.

As a follow-up question, I asked him whether he thought this could be a form of self-preservation and defence towards White people and outsiders, and Danny replied:

> Unconsciously we do it. We try to preserve our dance and our essence as Blacks, as bomba players, so I think that unconsciously this is what we are doing, but we are not discriminating, at least I am not discriminating someone for being *Blanquito*. I try to treat everybody the way I like to be treated … You can see it in my band, the diversity. What I wanted to do with my band was to ensure the presence of women would be preserved within bomba, as the majority are men.

The resistance to outsiders in Loíza as a form of self-preservation, but also as a natural reaction to having been historically discriminated, is something that Chamir and Xavier also pointed out, being on the receiving end of this resistance by the people in Loíza: "The resistance also has a lot to do with the discrimination that Loíza has suffered, so it's natural that they react like this, because they have been highly discriminated, so this also plays a part in it." This is echoed by Abadía-Rexach (2015a), who frames these dynamics from a theoretical standpoint by advancing how "Afroboricuas exhibit, in turn, a racial ambivalence insofar as, on one side, they wish to get rid of explicit racism, but, at the

same time, use their Blackness in *bomba* to exclude and categorize. There is a threatening potential to perpetuate racism and endoracism under *bomba* (60)."[237]

These paragraphs advanced how inner racial discrimination is a phenomenon that can take place within bomba performance and its circles. Below I discuss how inner gender discrimination and sexism manifest in the history of the genre, and section 3 further analyses similar dynamics of discrimination (for being a woman, playing bomba drums, and a light-skinned bombera) through the experiences of Marién Torres. As discussed earlier, the 'new' bomba and its democratic approach have been gradually breaking away from these differentiations, but the legacy of past biased practices still lingers on at present.

Gender discrimination in music, musical expressions and music education – whether formal or informal – has taken place throughout history and across the globe.[238] Recurrent manifestations of societal gender inequalities happen at the musical level when women are not permitted to play certain instruments, are not allowed to enrol into universities, or are kept from publishing their compositions. Previous chapters demonstrated how gender bias manifests in Puerto Rico and in its music(s). When it comes to bomba, unsurprisingly – being one of the most recurrent tropes associated with gender discrimination in instrumental performance – the biggest difference in male and female role assignations was drumming. Below, first I analyse major components of bomba performance through a gender lens, and afterwards I study key gendered manifestations more in depth.

Bomba performance consists of singing (one lead singer and coro), playing (accompanying percussion instruments, and one solo drummer), and dancing. Singers tend to be indistinctively males and females, often including drummers also singing the chorus, and people of both genders from the public joining in. Dancing initially used to be the realm of men, but women entered the batey as dancers during the 20th century, as Tata recalls:

> Men were the ones playing, but women did not dance. There was the Ponchinela, who was one of the first women to dance. My mother, my grandmother, who also came from a family

[237] Translated by the author from Spanish; *Endorracismo*, as the term appears in the original Spanish version of the article, is defined by Abadía-Rexach as the denial and self-rejection of the ethnic group a person belongs to.
[238] All these aspects are discussed in depth in Chapters 2 and 3.

> of dancers, they were the first women who marked this precedent, and started to bring some change in the dance… That is why now you see more women than men dancing.

As Marién and Narcisa explained, from the time dancing became acceptable for women, being an accomplished dancer represented the highest achievement for women. On the other hand, for men, dancing traditionally only marked a steppingstone, or a rite of passage, into something higher and with greater status – playing drums. In fact, there was a proper induction training for future buleadores and primos, which entailed becoming proficient dancers first in all the bomba styles they were going to play over drums. The elderlies would establish when someone was a sufficiently accomplished dancer to move onto the small percussions first, and barriles after – demonstrating recognizing properly and executing correctly while dancing the various bomba genres, and showcasing advanced stylistic interpretation, sense of rhythm, level of improvisation, knowledge of repertoire, etc.

When it came to playing instruments in bomba, traditionally that was the realm of men except for the *maraca*, as the lead singer is the one usually playing it, making it the only small percussion women might play, since women could sing. But when it came to *cuá* and barriles – whether buleadores or primo – that was exclusive male territory. In modern times this is gradually changing, as I discuss later in this section and in the following one through the experience of Marién Torres, one of the first female bomba drum soloists. First, I delve into an aspect of the interaction between the soloist drummer and the dancer during their improvisation quite unique to bomba.

The first time I saw the performance of bomba de Loíza in Piñones (described in Chapter 2.3), among the many aspects that struck me was the singularity of the ‘dialogue’ between the lead drummer and the soloist dancer, especially as it was clear that solo drumming was a male-only territory, whilst dancing was performed mostly by women and girls. In many other performances I witnessed globally where dancers were the centre of a performance, a solo instrument (whether drums, guitar, piano, sax, etc.) would play their musical solo as the lead, and the dancer(s) moved accordingly. In other words, the musician playing the solo led it by choosing the melody, harmony, and rhythm to play, whilst the dancer responded to the music through his/her movements. What I found unique in the case of bomba from direct observation, because at the time I had never trained in it and therefore did not have direct knowledge, was that things took place differently. It seemed like the female dancer was the one in charge of the musical solo, by choosing

through her improvisation the patterns and hits that the soloist drummer performed in response, creating polyrhythms against the basic steady sequence played by the rhythm section. The drum solo was a response to the dance; later, when I started bomba training, this was confirmed: the dancer is the one leading the solo, improvising through her/his body movements. Responding hits on the drums are executed by the solo drummer in an almost simultaneous reflection of each gesture made by the dancer, hitting different areas of the drumskin and applying distinct hand pressures according to a specific code assigning specific drum strikes to each dance step.

Analyzing this dynamic between lead drummer and dancer through a gender lens, I found it quite surprising, especially considering this protocol developed from the very start of bomba, before the 'new' generation took over with its challenging of traditional forms and gender roles. What I found intriguing was that a woman who was not allowed to 'graduate' and play percussions, let alone be a solo drummer, would be in charge and lead the drum improvisation – which is considered the culmination of a bomba performance and the hardest musical skillset to display in a bombazo. Basically, she (the dancer) was telling him (the solo drummer, and the man with the highest status in the batey) what to play and when. At this point I advanced two conjectures: either women were somehow able to carve out this role and take control, or this was a manifestation of how different gender roles might have been in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Or, possibly, a bit of both – and something that could be investigated in further studies.[239]

As mentioned earlier, in recent times the strict gender roles in bomba drumming, and especially soloing, are changing, as witnessed by Power-Sotomayor and Rivera, substantiating how "Line-ups of women drumming, although still not the norm, have certainly become a more common occurrence" (2019, 2). Nonetheless, this has been a process, and one still taking place, as a generation of young women is actively working to break stereotypes, train, learn, purchase and own solo barriles, and inhabiting spaces that traditionally were men-only. Amarilys Ríos was one of the first female bomba percussion soloists in Puerto Rico, starting her drums training in the early 2000s. Her early musical

[239] This could provide further substantiation to the adaptability of living musical traditions in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts. Iyanaga (2015) argues that Afro-Brazilian samba dancing has been integral to Catholic contexts not only in postcolonial context or as a kind of veiled resistance, but also during colonial times as a mixture of 'fragments of their and their oppressors' pasts'. Musical expressions can indeed evidence links to African culture under colonialism, which involved pre-colonial African culture mixing with other influences from their present reality.

training encompasses studying piano, composing jingles, creating a character transmitted on the radio, and singing urban music self-taught. Amarilys encountered bomba during her university years at UPR through informal workshops offered by Jerry Ferrao on the UPR grounds. Today, Amarilys is one of the most established percussionists on the island, with a music degree from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico, whose collaborations as both percussionist and vocalist include world-touring reggaéton musicians like Tego Calderón and Chencho Corleón. Amarilys is also a bomba dancer and primo soloist drummer. Her trajectory in bomba exemplifies challenges faced both as a woman getting started on barriles in the early 2000s, at a time when no woman on the island would be seen playing them, but also as a White Puerto Rican – which is how she self-identifies, and how she is perceived by others. Amarilys explained how she faced resistance on both levels, also mentioning how, as a White female drummer, race acted as a stronger discriminant than gender.

When she first started learning bomba, Amarilys faced prejudice and standard role assignation; on one side, her family pushed her to be a dancer (and not a drummer), and on the other, her first percussion instructor showed surprise when she asked to play drums:

> Once a week, Jerry [Ferrao] would bring together a group of friends who would casually meet up at UPR on their own accord ... I remember he had 6 barriles and 6 students, and that's when I approached him, and I told him "Jerry I want to play." He looks at me going like, "You??", and I answer "Yes", and he goes like, "It's just that I don't have another barril", so I replied, "It's ok, I will come as a listener." So, I started attending as a listener … By the 4th class students started missing the class, so I told him, "Look, there are some available barriles." He usually taught one new rhythm every two weeks, and in one class he gave me, I learned 3 rhythms, so he got impressed and went looking for an extra barril for the next class. That's how I started to play drums … At that time there were no women playing – this was between 2001 and 2002. I remember that during those years my mom would tell me "Why don't you learn dancing, it's just that ladies dance and they look so nice… I will pay for your classes, I will pay for your first skirt, so you see if you like it" … In the end I accepted, so while I learned playing, I also learned dancing.

Amarilys enrolled in Tata Cepeda's bomba dance classes and kept playing barril on the side. When she started as a bomba performer, professional ensembles would only call her to dance but never as a drummer, as there were still no women playing barriles. At times, by the end of performances when the stage turned into an open bombazo, she would sit to

play, and there was always a surprised reaction by the public because a woman showed she could play bomba drums. Amarilys explains how she processed this experience at the time, also touching on the element of intersectionality and being discriminated twice in bomba – for being White, and for being a woman playing drums:

> From day one, I decided not to care about what people were saying, if someone was critiquing me… if one was saying that a woman cannot play. I never paid attention to these things, [I created a] wall and barrier … But I felt more rejection for the colour of my skin, than for being a woman. I can explain it this way, but also for not being part of a family that established itself in bomba.

Amarilys went on describing how things have changed over twenty years:

> When it comes to female drums execution, it completely evolved: now women play. I have had all-woman ensembles, women are taking percussion classes, there are more women subidoras and more women buleadoras, women work professionally, just playing. In 2007 the first all women group was created in Puerto Rico, Grupo Nandí, the director was Oxil Febles, and Marién was also part of this group. There, we had to face the reality that there was no subidora in Puerto Rico, so we always had to have a guest artist who was a male primo subidor. That's when I gave myself the task, with Victór Emmanuelli, *Vitito*, to prepare myself as a subidora, so that the group could be completely an all-women group. But, also, because for me it was exciting, as I actually really wanted to play primo. That's when I also started playing with other ensembles, people started calling me to work in other groups professionally. From 2007 until now, in 12 years, the genre has grown incredibly, and you can see the seed Nandí planted, as all the women who were part of that ensemble are currently bomba players, and they are leaders of their own projects.

This quote highlights another important advancement that took place since 2000, which is that women started covering leading roles as heads of their own bomba ensembles, normalizing being directors and decision-makers, as discussed in the next section. When it comes to recognizing women's leadership, it is important to highlight the relevant work some men have been doing in normalizing and supporting women's equal place in bomba. One example is Amauri, who explained how since he started playing bomba he was part of ensembles where women were equals in decision-making and roles:

> Since my beginnings in bomba, in the first ensembles I took part in, there was always an important participation of women in these groups, like in *Paracumbé…* the presence of women is essential, and they are the protagonists when it comes to the lead voice, the bass … There was always equality in all the ensembles I participated in, and the importance of

> women was on the same level as men when it came to sharing opinions and execution. In another group, Amarilys was the one playing primo; for me this has happened all along, that we are all on the same level, like in Tambuyé where the boss is Marién, and she is a woman. I also had the chance to sit with Ausuba and support with drums playing.

Figures like Amauri are important, as they can act as role models towards other men in normalizing being active supporters of women's resistance against a patriarchal society and traditional role assignations. Amauri explained how other men have become aware of his agenda, as he is openly using his role as educator and performer to sensitize over women's rights; in time, they start breaking their own resistances:

> I can imagine that there are men who are not necessarily supporting this kind of performances or decisions I make, but they are not in the position to say it to my face for what I already represent and for the kind of actions I have undertaken in my life, but also for the fact I am an educator, and I carry my message through the way I educate. I am inclusive in the way I write, in the way I speak, for the opportunities I give to my students, which are equal whether they are men or women, and [men] know that.

Finally, despite ongoing changes and all the advancements women have made as bomba drummers and bandleaders in Puerto Rico, there is an awareness that they still experience additional pressures to demonstrate that they are as good as men, or good enough, when they enter traditionally male-dominated fields where women were historically excluded. Amarilys describes how she was able to achieve this role thanks to exemplary work ethics:

> When it comes to discrimination, I am extremely perfectionist in what I do. I am young, but I have always been extremely serious when it comes to music so, part of my achievements is due to the teachers that I counted on, but the rest is due the fact that I was very fiery. I would practice until everything, literally every single thing, would come out perfect. I would clean up every single hit, so that there would be no kind of excuse to say "Oh, she's a woman, she cannot do it." And if someone thought so at first, which I don't doubt, well then, my execution ended up changing their mindset.

Amarilys also mentioned how she often heard comments like "you play like a man" or "you play so well *for a woman*", but she says she does not get personally offended, as she views it as part of the process of changing mindsets:

> Of course, this happens, but these things they don't make me mad. I take them gracefully, it's like, "I just made your jaw drop, you are seeing that I am doing it and that I can do it, you are impressed." At the same time, internally, I am thinking "Wow, what a small mind you have." … But these have not been the majority of experiences I have had; I am in an

> environment where I'm surrounded by men where maybe 30% of my interactions have been like this, but the other 70% have been positive, with musicians who were able to handle it, or who treated me like any other musician.

Finally, she highlighted how discriminating against female musicians can be related to the music environment remaining highly competitive, and the fact there are too many qualified musicians for a low number of high quality high paying jobs. Amarilys explained how, "people are capable of all sorts of things to achieve what they want, without caring who they have to get out of their way. So, it's hard to say when they are really discriminating against me or trying to toss me over just because I am a woman, or if they are simply using it like they would use anything at their disposal to get rid of their competition."

The testimony of Amarilys and the others presented in this section showcase how dynamics of race and gender discrimination are intertwined, and how intersectionality is always at play, must thus be considered, in this type of analysis. The next section focuses on Marién Torres, one of the leaders of the new generation of contemporary bomba who also faced intersectional discrimination for being a light-skinned, woman, playing drums.

5.3 Marién Torres, a Light-skinned, Woman, Bombera

As previously mentioned, my decision to focus part of my investigation on bomba was made while I was already in the field and I realized that observing and experiencing bomba transmission, performance, community and lived dynamics were necessary for this type of research, but initially I had no idea how to go about it, nor where to start. During the first half of 2017, I kept linking up with local musicians, carrying out interviews and attending classes at Universidad Interamericana, including the bomba and plena music lab. I was trying to attend more events where live autochthonous musical genres were played, but these were not so easy to find, as most performances promoted were of pop, jazz or salsa. Música jíbara, plena and bomba were not easily available or accessible to outsiders.

At the beginning of April 2017, I attended the 3rd Symposium on Musical Research sponsored by the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, and the Institute of Musical Research of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. The theme of the symposium was "Andanzas: New perspectives on *danza* in the Caribbean" and it brought together local and international scholars, composers, and musicians who perform and research danza, with the objective of highlighting the Caribbean's rich shared history and culture. The program presented a good mix of paper presentations and performances in

various autochthonous styles beyond danza, including plena and bomba. Among them was Marién Torres, a Puerto Rican bomba dancer, choreographer, and percussionist, who, through a performance-based presentation, focused on the links between the musical and dance languages of the various traditions of the region. I was immediately struck by Marién, because of her clear mastering of bomba and her skills as a presenter and performer, but also because it was evident that her knowledge, and her interest in transmitting it, went beyond an academic formal presentation on a musical style – she was actively performing, and transmitting, culture. At the end of her presentation, I approached Marién and introduced myself; during our exchange, she told me she was the owner and founder of Taller Tambuyé, a bomba academy in Río Piedras where she taught dance and percussion. I asked Marién if I could interview her for my PhD research and if I could attend her classes; her positive response marked the beginning of a completely unexpected journey for me into the world of contemporary bomba in Puerto Rico, besides a lifelong friendship. I conducted several interviews with Marién between 2017 and 2022; additionally, as we developed a strong bond, and knowing I was self-funded, she was so kind as to offer me to stay in her daughter's room during two of my research stretches in 2018 and 2019. I also attended bomba dance and percussion classes conducted by Marién at Taller Tambuyé between 2018 and 2019, therefore all the information contained in this section is the product of continuous exposure and interactions with Marién between 2017 and 2022 – unless indicated otherwise.

Marién was born in 1980 in Río Piedras (San Juan) to a Peruvian mother and a Puerto Rican father; she spent her first years (1980-1986) in Río Piedras, then from 1986 to 1994 she lived nearby, in the Roosevelt neighbourhood in Hato Rey, until her family moved to Jayuya, a rural mountainous town in the heart of Puerto Rico. From 1994 to 1997 Marién attended high school in Jayuya, a town she previously held a strong relationship with, as she visited her extended family there every weekend while growing up, developing a feeling of belonging and grounding. Marién recalled how, "in San Juan there is more individualism, I had a small circle of friends; in Jayuya the relationships are different, everybody knows each other, and there is a sense of community." This sense of community is a defining element in Marién's trajectory, something she has been recreating in everything she does:

> The environment and geography [in Jayuya] are very different; in San Juan I was in a bubble, in Jayuya I could have a different freedom and closeness to nature. It is this

> conscience of nature that gave me the sense of being an environmentalist, and being active in environmentalist organizations, in a *lucha* that I would later bring on a musical level too.[240]

In high school, Marién started singing in a ska band with lyrics centred on environmental issues, including protesting against deforestation in Tres Picachos – an emblematic mountain, significant also for "Puerto Rico's independence battles, and our Taíno roots." At that time, in Tres Picachos, some contractors wanted to build illegally; Marién was part of a local movement that managed to stop the construction works by stalling them until the community got an injunction, also thanks to her father, a lawyer. Tres Picachos became a natural park protected under the law and considered a non-construction zone.

At the age of 17, in 1997, Marién went to Italy on a one-year high school programme; she describes it as a life-defining experience because it made her realize that a different society is possible, but also for experiencing how stereotyping works from both sides:

> I learned tolerance, and to position myself against other perspectives. I also learned about prejudice and discrimination, as in Italy I was discriminated against because of my ethnicity, and it really helped me in breaking stereotypes, understanding how stereotyping works. For the first time I also realized how much diversity there was there, and how different Italy is from the movies. This made me realize how even I had stereotypes, and how even if one doesn't want to, we have stereotypes.

The diversity Marién mentions in her quote is related to meeting people that were very different among Italians, but also many Latino migrants from various parts of Central, Southern America, and the Caribbean:

> These are people I would normally not interact with in Puerto Rico, so I was meeting this reality for the first time in a different country, with a different perspective. When I came back to Puerto Rico, I realized I cannot generalize, the reality of people is going to be very different from mine and from what I would expect. It helped me to be more human and to have a higher sensibility. From living in Italy, I realized there are many layers of social interaction, my life changed, and the way I was looking at myself changed too.

Marién described how when she came back to Puerto Rico, due to her expanded sensibility and the experience of living outside her country, she had developed greater pride in being Puerto Rican – which overlaps with her life-defining "click" with bomba. In

[240] Lucha in Spanish literally means fight; it is often associated with activism and activist forms of protest.

her family nobody ever performed bomba, “but they were very strong on [Puerto Rican] culture.” The first encounter Marién had with bomba was at the age of five, when her mother took her to the Traditional Festivities of Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, with a deliberate intent to expose her daughter to autochthonous cultural expressions. The imagery of the powerful female bomba dancers from Loíza stuck with Marién: “I had escaped from my mom, and when she found me, I was in a *batey* watching this gigantic woman moving her buttocks, and I was so impressed; I remember the heat, the smell, the sweat.” But it was only when Marién was 18, after her Italian experience, that she took a life-defining interest in bomba, also thanks to exposure she had had at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras. Marién recalled: “I entered the UPR in 1998 and that year they held the Bomba y Plena Festival. I didn’t know anything about bomba and plena. I knew they were different things, but I didn't really have a deeper understanding of these cultural practices, because in my house they are not *pleneros* nor *bomberos*.”[241] There, she saw Plenibom perform, directed by Norma Salazar, marking a life-defining moment for Marién and her future in bomba:

> It was a bomba performance recreating scenes like *La Curandera*, Norma was declaiming, and there were bomba dancers improvising. It was mostly a show to observe, but during the last song, *The Carnaval,* they would take people from the public, and they picked me and my sister dancing. The dancers were young people like us, whilst all the other people playing were older. After we finished dancing, my sister and I went up to the young dancers, and they told us in 2 weeks’ time there would be a *toque de bomba* in Piñones in a place called Soleil.[242]

When the show ended, Marién went to Norma Salazar, “And I said, ‘Hi, I’m Marién, and I’d like to learn bomba and plena.’ And she said, ‘bomba!’, and gave me her card.” Marién considers this 1998 encounter a steppingstone in her life and professional career; also, Norma became her mentor, and they later performed alongside.

Norma Salazar was born in Ponce in 1940 and dedicated her life to promoting Puerto Rican culture and cultural expressions in Puerto Rico; as Marién explains “she was very well connected with the poor and Afro-descendant community of this country”, another recurring element among contemporary bomba cultural workers. Norma was a tireless

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[241] https://www.primerahora.com/estilos-de-vida/ph-mas-de-mujer/notas/resistencia-en-la-bomba/ (accessed 15/01/2021).
[242] *Toque de bomba* is a bomba performance.

cultural promoter with a unique capability of bringing people, of all ages and backgrounds, together, to teach them about their heritage in a way the school system in Puerto Rico had not been able to. John Rivera, one of the fifteen members of her group Plenibom, explained: "She believed in culture but not to just sit with it, instead, in teaching it to others. She loved bringing that knowledge to children, to families in underserved communities. … She would tell them where bomba and plena came from ... all the things that are not taught in school because the teachers do not know it."[243]

I had the chance to observe Marién and her work closely, especially while living with her, and I can say that much of what is said about Norma who died in 2014 is now living in Marién, who learned from Norma about bomba, but mostly the essence of cultural work and her approach to transmitting culture. Marién has indeed the capacity of bringing together people from all kinds of backgrounds to dance, sing and play bomba, while also teaching them about Puerto Rico's history and their roots.

After her first encounter in 1998 with Norma's ensemble at UPR, Marién started attending other bomba events on the island:

> Two weeks later we went there [Soleil], and this was quite gentrified, there were not many people from Piñones there. The music was played by a group called Bombazo de Puerto Rico directed by José Emanuelli, whilst the dancers were from Plenibom. … My sister and I were very impressed in seeing the variety of people who were there, you could even see people from Guaynabo against the *tambores* playing.[244] Jose Emmanuelli was playing, and Mara Betancourt was dancing with a skirt. … This was the beginning [of contemporary bomba], when Bombazo de Puerto Rico started bringing bomba to the *barrio*, to the streets, to the people. Women would take their heels off, nobody understood bomba language, but we were enjoying it and hanging out altogether.

Once Marién realized she wanted to be part of the contemporary bomba movement, she took her first steps learning and training:

> … there was Junito who, from our generation, is the one who has been doing bomba since he was a child. He danced with the Cepedas. There was also Jerry Ferrao. I approached them and asked how I could learn, and at that time José Emmanuelli was teaching at Arthur

[243] https://www.pressreader.com/puerto-rico/el-nuevo-dia1/20140524/281500749292077 (accessed 02/02/2022).
[244] Guaynabo is one of the island's richest neighbourhoods, associated with local wealth and Whiteness.

> Murray. Tato (Conrad) always had his space for bomba in the African Workshop Museum, and that was one of the few places where you could give classes at that time.

A key bomba ensemble during Marién's early days was Bombazo de Puerto Rico, led by José Emmanuelli Náter, whom she saw perform for the first time in 1998 in Piñones. She highlights how one of their fundamental achievements was being the first ensemble to fully dissociate from the traditional – and most often stereotyped as folkloric – clothing that was associated with bomba, including long skirts for women. Moving away from old mannerisms, costumes, and turning towards a more modern form of dance, allowed this new generation of bomberos to look at the genre with a fresh perspective and attract young people who had felt estranged. To play to this public, Bombazo de Puerto Rico moved their performances to the streets, to bars and pubs where most of the young university students were gathering, fostering a youth movement around bomba, and elevating bombazos to a new form of *hang*, which was unheard of and unimaginable for previous generations.

Marién's early bomba dance training, besides being mentored by Norma Salazar, took place as she spent her early 20s traveling around the island visiting the key *mayores* (elders) of the different bomba traditions to learn each style directly from them. Marién approached this process by first establishing a relationship with the leading bomba interpreters of the main regions and their clans. She explained her interest in learning and transmitting bomba beyond the dance or musical aspects, but as a cultural project to teach Puerto Ricans about their roots, their culture, and ensure all the forms and expressions of this tradition would be passed on to the next generations. Marién explained: "I wanted Puerto Rican people to understand the value of bomba, and for that, things needed to be done bottom up, so that they could last. I also wanted to share with *mayores* to learn directly from them. Today, I would learn even more because I have more depth." Marién spent extended time with the *mayores*, traveling to their locations, remaining several days, sleeping on their couches or camping out, while living, training, and learning from them.

Marién explains how, when she started learning bomba in the late 1990s, the main bomba regions were not sharing practices among one another: "There was no exchange, it would be very rare, and there was no sense of a bomba community." She also recalls a certain level of competition and hostility: "When I heard a leader of *bomba Cangrejera* saying that what they did in Loíza is not bomba, I stood up and left. A Black person was telling me that what those who are Blacker than her are doing was not bomba. So, I went to Loíza."

Marién shared how her trajectory developed in Loíza, a town with one of the strongest bomba traditions, but also where outsiders had never previously ventured as Marién did:

> When I got to Loíza, there was no other outsider. I didn't dare dancing, I was there as an observer, respectful, quiet. I used to watch and then go back home, in front of my mirror, and try to mimic and decipher what I had just seen, as at that time there were no video mobile phones. The first one who held me a hand and called me out to dance was Canario. I was in my early 20s, and he was 30. I was going to Loíza every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, going with public bus, without knowing how I was going to come back, as no buses would be there. So, people in Loíza would let me sleep there, in their hammocks, sofas, etc. I was studying bomba in a passive way at *La 23*, and they were playing bomba every Sunday there. Canario had seen me several times there, so he took me out to dance. That was such an important time, we are talking of a time in which bomba was not inclusive, nobody was making you feel as if you were somewhere where you would be accepted.

Marién stresses the importance of Canario, the first person she met in Loíza showcasing an inclusive approach to bomba which was quite uncommon at that time:

> Canario represented this inclusive attitude, he had an understanding that there was other bomba, like in *Cangrejo*. Now it's a normalized knowledge, but at that time nobody was talking about that. I told him, "I don't know how to dance", and he replied, "Follow me" … and it was the first time, I danced for the first time in Loíza. The reaction of the people was, well they knew me, as we had talked, I had sung *coro*. But when they saw me dance with Canario, they were like "la nena puede bailar."[245]

Marién explained how she believes some of the resistance outsiders might encounter when entering spaces usually inhabited by locals in Loíza, like a bomba batey, is due to a sense of protection, as people from Loiza became ostracized because of ongoing discrimination and mistreatment they historically faced.

This first experience, learning the typical bomba style of Loíza "on the field", made her realize she had to approach the other regions in the same way:

> This was the experience that taught me, "If I want to learn bomba of Mayagüez, then I have to go there." It taught me about regionalism, so I gave myself the task to go out there. The first time I went to Mayagüez … it was a *toque de bomba* in the house of Félix Alduén Caballery … People from bomba recognized me when I got there, but I didn't know anyone. This is because there was a photographer, José Rodriguez, very close to Norma Salazar,

[245] Lit. "the girl can dance", in Spanish.

> of Nuevo Día who was doing reporting on culture. Around that time, he had started making my face visible – when there was a bomba event, or cultural reporting, he would use archive pictures of me, or pictures of me dancing with Norma. So, that opened the doors for me in Mayagüez.

After approximately one year of bomba training in Loiza, Marién decided Mayagüez would be her next training ground, and kept going there for years; "I met the whole family, as it was family-based. I started knowing of and recognizing bomba personalities there."

Regarding her experience in the South, with *bomba del Sur*, Marién recalls the importance of researcher Melanie Maldonado who introduced her to key bomba exponents there, in particular Isabel Albizu, who became another fundamental figure in Marién's trajectory:

> There, it was thanks to Melanie Maldonado, a researcher, who just got to Puerto Rico … When Melanie got to Puerto Rico, she started asking about bomba; she only spoke English, so everybody was telling her, "You have to speak to Marién." Nobody was willing to help. The friendship with Melanie was immediate, like the two of us… Melanie wanted to go to all bomba events, she rented a car … and then we went to the South, as she had to interview Isabel Albizu – *la Señora de la bomba Sureña.*[246] So, we went to meet Doña Isabel, and when Melanie introduced us, she recognized me, probably through the newspaper. She was a very serious person, of difficult access, if it weren't for Melanie I would have not gotten there… Isabel lived in the poor *barrio* of Ponce, where Black Afro descendants had created their community; we drank coffee, and she asked me like 40 questions to check me – as a protection mechanism – with a lot of respect. It was a fantastic conversation; she went from being a very closed person to showing us pictures of her family … I already knew people in the South, but nobody with that role of a leader, a Black woman, as there were no Black women leaders back then. But in the case of Isabel, like Norma, she was using culture to maintain kids from her community in a healthy and productive environment, taking them out from the streets, and from criminality. She always maintained a sense of community.

Marién's itinerant bomba field learning across the island was particularly important at that time, because due to societal and economic factors, younger generations of Puerto Ricans were moving to the United States to study or work abroad more than ever, leaving behind local customs and traditions at a pace never seen previously. Marién explained:

[246] Lit. "The Lady Master of bomba of the South", in Spanish.

> There was a generalized idea that past practices were something old and obsolete … Many descendants of great bomberos stopped practicing bomba as they thought it had no importance for their lives. This was related to class and economics, but also to racism, as Puerto Ricans that were not Afro-descendants or not *Black* had the idea that what came from negritude was inferior. For lack of knowledge and lack of access to information, society was not giving value to art, especially Black art; it had great prejudice.

Marién explained how she consciously decided she wanted to explore what she could do and how she could best contribute, using her position; in fact, as a woman with what is considered a light skin colour in Puerto Rico, she was navigating a peculiar space:

> I am very sure that the spaces where I started to bring bomba, well, it would have been different if I were a Black woman – bomba would have not entered those same spaces. It's not something I had initially thought about, I wasn't thinking of doing something reactionary, but when I started to see the background in which [contemporary] bomba started to be performed, there were no Black people. For me performing bomba has never been a space for show or entertainment, for me it's about educating. I would meet a public expecting a folkloric show, and to be entertained, but there I was, questioning and teaching about how each one of them could embrace his/her culture and their African heritage, independently from their colour, as in the Caribbean we are all Afro descendants.

Marién highlights the importance of teaching Puerto Ricans about their heritage and history to counteract negative stereotyping and longstanding discriminatory attitudes that are embedded in people's behaviours and practices as the result of double colonization:

> To accept your African roots, it helps you not hating or rejecting the Indigenous and African heritage, and everything that is non-White, as you have been taught by the system. We develop a psyche of people living in a colony, whilst having a government that is not using the concept of colony; and others, outside, know we are a colony. But many *Boricuas* don't assume this concept, so we end up counteracting the instruments that our culture could provide us to be free and connected with our people.

Marién also had to fight against some discriminatory attitudes in bomba in her early days as a dancer because of the 'light' colour of her skin:

> "There were a couple of battles, if you weren't Black or from the *hood* you couldn't learn that (referring to dance techniques). Suddenly they would hire me to be a dancer in a certain group because someone had recommended me, Norma Salazar, or Tite Curet Alonso, and when I arrived, they found out that I was white. Although there are no white people in Puerto Rico, I am light-skinned, and it was shocking how they underestimated my

> skills or my knowledge of the genre because of my skin colour" … For Torres, time has shown that fair-skinned people can be just as skilled and knowledgeable about bomba. "Sometimes we come to a place, and they think I'm the student."[247]

During our interviews, Marién expanded on this point: "I think this was an initial reaction, completely natural, as it was not common to see a person who was not visibly Black who knew how to dance bomba and dance it well; the initial reaction would break as soon as I started dancing." Marién specified how this only happened at first:

> I think I gained respect also because when they killed Canario, I was the only person from outside of Loíza who went to the funeral, and I spoke in the name of the Cangrejera community. I spoke of how he opened the doors for me, which was something very rare, that someone would tell you, "Come and learn." My life could have been very different if he had not been there. These are the people who create alliances among one another; from that point on, the ensembles from Loíza called me a lot.

Marién mentioned how many years later a public discussion started, saying that Black women dancers from Loiza were not visible enough; also, "In bomba Cangrejera there were many 'White' dancers, people who didn't have family origins in certain neighbourhoods, or a *barrio connection;* It was also a lot of bomba students." We reflected on why Black women bomba dancers from traditional families would possibly not project themselves as professionals, and the family and societal pressures keeping them from performing:

> A single woman, or a group of all women from Loíza, would not just *go out and hang*. Black women from Loíza did not see bomba as something that could provide for their household's livelihood, and for poor Black women, seeing themselves as a bomba dancer was not an aspiration. But also, social norms and poverty could be factors differentiating my access to professionalism as a bomba dancer, as I was a single young student.

Marién also took it upon herself to be understanding and accepting of being passed on, or passing jobs, when Black women are available – to fill the historical gap of professional Black bomba female performers:

> So, when that happened, I recognized that when there is a Black woman who can do the job, then she should do it. There was an active reflection on my part of not being racist, as the word anti-racist is much newer. I surely lost opportunities I had built through my hard

[247] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://dialogo.upr.edu/tambuye-y-la-bomba-una-expresion-caribena/ (accessed 18/11/2022).

> work. … suddenly, they stopped calling me, or called me much less. Then I saw that they were calling other Black women, but nobody explained me what was happening. I thought it was very good… That experience helped me grow a lot and made me realize the importance of anti-racist work. I was developing the concept of bomba as a tool, but I still did not fully know the magnitude of this work, on a social level, with adults. And what happens in bomba reflects what is happening in society.

When it comes to playing bomba percussion, Marién started learning drums few years after training as a dancer:

> I had always seen myself as a dancer, but it wasn't until I saw in Carnaval de Rio Grande in 1999 África Clivilles playing with Plenibom, when Norma put a woman playing in her band, that I started to see differently. África was a Black woman, empowered and playing barril, and Norma was giving her visibility. She really impressed me, as it was just with Plenibom that I saw a woman playing publicly; there were others, but they played in private and family spaces. Some women had been playing bomba all their lives, they could play, but they wouldn't do it publicly.

Marién explained how the initial difficulties she faced learning drumming were not related to her skin colour, like in dancing: the main issue playing bomba drums was her gender. In fact, in the early 2000s it was still uncommon for a woman to play bomba drums, especially *primo*. Marién struggled to find male drummers willing to teach bomba drumming to women, or barriles artisans accepting to make a drum for female players, as these were not sold in shops and had to be custom-made. At first, Marién and other Puerto Rican women who were dancing bomba and wanted to learn to play percussions started gathering in a park to train playing the main rhythms, using wood sticks and brooms over wood boards and other wooden-based surfaces to mimic barriles. Marién described these early experiences:

> I had travelled to New York to participate in the Bomplenazo that they carry out in the Bronx and there the first female bomba group called Yayas had emerged, led by Manuela Arciniegas. I came back inspired. In 2010 I created a workshop that was open to women of all ages. We started meeting, more than 30 women, once a week. Mothers would come with their daughters, grandmothers, university students, young professionals, and all these women, we would get together. We had a single barrel for more than 30 and it was on loan, because I didn't have my own barrel. We chopped broomsticks and with that we began to learn the patterns that we already knew by ear, but with technique. Little by little we began

> to call the [male] companions. But it was a very interesting process because we couldn't call them in groups. Not even two men together.[248]

During our interviews Marién added that the reason they could not hire two male bomba drummers at once was that if that happened, these would “buddy” up, or act uncomfortably around the female group, resulting in a strange and ultimately unproductive atmosphere: “There was a very strong resistance. Now they say they support us, but it was a growth process for them too, to evolve from that thought that the drum is only for men.” By calling one male teacher at a time and leveraging on his professionalism, and the fact they were ultimately contracting him and paying for a musical service, eventually proved to be the winning strategy for the female collective, resulting in a ground-breaking and rewarding path for both sides: "For them it was a taboo and even disrespectful for a woman to touch a bomba barril, but then later their minds changed. It was a genuine process and at the same time a positive one that led to a transformation."[249]

In the passages above, Marién’s experiences resonate with several concepts presented throughout the thesis, especially how learning autochthonous music, and most specifically Puerto Rican bomba, act as tools for anti-discriminatory work: “We must speak about it from bomba… the patriarchy, the colony, race, religion. Not speaking about it is what turns it into a taboo. We can have a formative process, as happened to me. During the process I could not fully understand it, as I was trying to understand the *why*.”

After summarizing key elements of Marién’s formation as a bomba dancer, performer, and drummer, I will now discuss her trajectory in becoming an entrepreneur and a bomba teacher developing a method for bomba informal training at Tambuyé, besides showcasing the main ensembles she created and the events she has been leading.

As I observed Marién from up close for several years, I noticed that besides being an accomplished dancer, musician, teacher, choreographer, producer, and community leader, she is also a natural-born entrepreneur. Unsurprisingly, in 2010 Marién turned the community-based drums learning circles described in the section above into an all-female bomba professional group she leads called Ausuba – an Indigenous feminine noun that

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[248] https://www.primerahora.com/estilos-de-vida/ph-mas-de-mujer/notas/resistencia-en-la-bomba/ (accessed 19/01/2022).
[249] https://www.efe.com/efe/usa/puerto-rico/una-puertorriquena-se-convierte-en-lider-del-baile-autoctono-de-la-bomba/50000110-2714291 (accessed 19/01/2022).

indicates a type of tree.[250] Ausuba is composed of Puerto Rican female percussionists, singers and dancers of all ages, roughly from their 20s to their 60s. The number of performers and the group's make-up vary from gig to gig, according to members' availability as they all run very busy lives – whether as professional musicians performing with several bands, or having full-time jobs, being mothers and caretakers, or a combination. Ausuba usually perform with 5 or 6 components, holding regular gigs once or twice a week (with peaks of 4-5 gigs/week during festivities, holidays, festivals etc.), in bars, festivals, and high-profile events.[251] Ausuba play a mix of traditional bomba songs – sometimes with lyrics adapted to fit the context, meaning and language of female performers – and original songs. As Marién expressed, it was her explicit intention to write new songs to appeal to Puerto Rican youth when she recorded the Tambuyé record, but when choosing the repertoire for Ausuba, the group decided to use the band as a platform to *feminize* bomba. Traditionally, in bomba, the songs' lyrics had been mostly written *by* men and *for* men, expressing male-dominated viewpoints, sexist approaches, and promoting stereotypical roles men and women should take on – according to the male gaze. Consequently, re-writing bomba and composing new songs according to a female perspective, denouncing gender discrimination and violence, and protesting ongoing abuse against women, turns Ausuba and their performances into a lived and ongoing form of music and arts-based activism to counteract machismo and gender-based violence.

No me va a dar (You are not going to hit me), one of the songs written and performed by Ausuba, epitomizes how they advance their anti-machismo musical offensive through bomba, as well explained in an online article of Fundación Nacional Para la Cultura Popular:

> Popular music, led by a predominantly male industry, with the macho and patriarchal charge that this implies, has been dyed in grey chapters for promoting the mistreatment of women. … One of the most offensive songs is the bomba "Si te cojo" by Bobby Capó, which Ismael Rivera stamped on the LP *De todas maneras rosas* of 1977.[252] The lyrics state that the man spends his time working and that the woman takes advantage of it,

[250] https://tesoro.pr/lema/ausuba (accessed 19/01/2022).
[251] These numbers are based on performances I attended between 2017 and 2021, and photo and video footage available at their webpages, including: https://www.instagram.com/ausuba/?hl=en and https://www.facebook.com/ausubapr (accessed 19/01/2022).
[252] Si te cojo means if I catch you [flirting]; *De Todas Maneras Rosas* is an affectionate ode to women with the scent and variety of flowers as metaphor for females, according to https://fania.com/record/de-toda-maneras-rosa/ (accessed 05/12/2022).

> spending her time flirting, which is why he threatens to hit her. … It was in 2020, when Puerto Rico was shaken by an unprecedented wave of femicides, that music offered an answer to this social evil. And it crystallized to the rhythm of a bomba played by the girls from Ausuba … "No me va a dar" is a denunciation of violence against women and its inspiration comes precisely from Bobby Capó's song, "Si te cojo", considered today one of the saddest episodes in the career of Sonero Mayor.[253]

Besides representing a tool to protest domestic and gender-based violence, the original song *No me va a dar* also gave great exposure to Ausuba, resulting on the list of 20 Salseros Hits for more than three months in the fall of 2021, including hitting position 16 in the week of 11-18 September 2021. This surpassed extremely popular bands on the island, including Pirulo y la Tribu and El Gran Combo.[254]

Another feminist bomba collective Marién has been spearheading is Barrileras del 8M, an Afro-feminist and trans-feminist movement that first came together in 2017 through an open call to bomberas in Puerto Rico to create an all-women batey as a symbol of collective resistance during the March 8th demonstrations. Barrileras del 8M support a range of feminist causes, including gender equality and protesting abuse and gender-based violence. The movement has been organizing through a WhatsApp chat where members are added as they join the activities, and where they also post daily to update each other, share relevant news, information, events, initiatives, and calls to action.

I had the chance to perform with Barrileras del 8M for the feminist batey on March 8th, 2019, as part of the dancing and singing *coro*, and have been a member of the collective ever since. That year we performed four bomba songs, including the original composition *No me va a dar*, holding the batey in Hato Rey (San Juan) in front of the bank district, which is a meaningful location for this demonstration for several reasons. Firstly, manifesting in that stretch led to temporarily closing roads that are main arteries of the financial precinct; having a high impact on traffic, the act gained visibility and resonance in local media. Secondly, a striking feature of the event was the juxtaposition between the tall concrete buildings where economic interests rule the island remote from people's and women's actual needs, and the women collective raising their voice to advocate on women's rights.

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[253] https://prpop.org/2021/09/ausuba-contra-el-machismo/ (accessed 19/01/2022).
[254] https://prpop.org/2021/09/ausuba-contra-el-machismo/ (accessed 19/01/2022).

Since it started in 2017, Barrileras del 8M appeared during several events and manifestations across Puerto Rico, for diverse causes and on different dates (not just on March 8th), always with the goal to sensitize around key gender-based issues, inequality, and male's violence against women. "For its members, playing barriles becomes part of the process of healing wounds that the patriarchy has inflicted throughout history. Also, Barrileras del 8M challenge the macho discourses that nurture the concept that women are weak or unable to support each other."[255] This process of denouncing and healing involves members of the collective, but also victims and survivors of gender-based violence and their families. "We have connections to the vast majority of women who have been murdered or raped because we are such a large group and from so many parts of the island that suddenly we have access to the families and people who have lived through this cruel reality", said Marién in an interview to *Todas*. This was the case for example when Barrileras 8M conducted a public manifestation on May 2nd, 2021, on the Teodoro Moscoso bridge, another main artery of the island leading directly to the airport. It was a tribute Keishla Rodríguez Ortiz who was brutally murdered by the father of her unborn baby, a famous boxer, who beat and drugged her, tied her to some rocks and threw her off that same bridge, while shooting at her restrained body to make sure she was dead.

> Under the slogan "We are the Cry of those who are no longer there", from early in the afternoon, various feminist organizations and activists in their individual character were occupying the bridge… For several hours, the activity was conducted by the Barrileras del 8M and other companions… repudiating sexist violence and [promoting] the need to implement an education with a gender perspective in all spaces of society."[256]

Another significant achievement of the Barrileras 8M took place in August 2021, when they released the *Canción Sin Miedo* bomba version video. The original song was written by Mexican female singer-songwriter Vivir Quintana, quickly turning into an international feminist hymn. It describes the different shapes of male violence against women in Mexico, including femicides and disappearances, and the daily fights activists engage in:

> *Cantamos sin miedo, pedimos justicia* [We sing without fear, we demand justice]
> *Gritamos por cada desaparecida* [We scream for each woman who disappeared]
> *Que resuene fuerte "¡nos queremos vivas!"* [Let it resonate loudly: "we want to be alive!"]

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[255] https://www.todaspr.com/les-barrileras-del-8m-a-tocar-sin-miedo-la-bomba-colectiva/ (accessed 19/01/2022).
[256] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at https://hi-in.facebook.com/AsambleaDePuebloBayamon/posts/554735105930986 (accessed 19/01/2022).

Que caiga con fuerza el feminicida [Let the femicide perpetrator fall with force]

Barrileras 8M proposed an Afro-Boricua bomba adaptation of *Canción Sin Miedo*, under the musical supervision of Marién and Nelly Lebrón Robles who curated the vocal arrangements, denouncing the ongoing and growing wave of femicides on the island, giving visibility to those who "are not with us" anymore, and demanding justice for them. At the end of the musical video, against a deafening silence, the long list of femicide victims in Puerto Rico scrolls across the screen. The recording is filled with additional symbology:

> … the turbans worn by the singers have the three colours depicting the fundamental colour-coding of feminism: violet, representing feminism in general; green, which symbolizes the struggle for the rights to decide on one's own body; and orange, which responds to the separation between church and state… The batey shown, meanwhile, is a perfect circle and not a horseshoe, breaking with the traditional hierarchy of bomba. In this way, not only the deconstruction of patriarchy is proposed, but also of certain roles in bomba that historically have been exclusive to men, such as playing drums.[257]

The video premiered on Youtube on August 5th, 2021, and reached almost 100,000 views at the end of 2021.[258] Members of Barrileras 8M made media appearances in the main outlets and shows of the island, also broadcasted internationally and across Latin America.

Besides being a leading figure of the Puerto Rican feminist movement, Marién is also an affirmed cultural leader of the bomba community, attested by her role as organizer of several editions of *Encuentro de Tambores*. This yearly bomba event was created by Norma Salazar in 2010, to bring together diverse bomba communities, both from Puerto Rico and the diaspora, all performing in the same batey, creating alliances, educating, being exposed to different styles, regionalisms, whilst also presenting new tendencies within the genre. The only year the *Encuentro* did not take place was 2014, when Salazar died unexpectedly; since 2015 Marién has taken over, and Encuentro de Tambores has been happening yearly under her direction ever since, ensuring Norma's legacy and tradition.

The yearly events are held in different locations across the island; I attended the ninth Encuentro de Tambores of March 31st, 2019, held in Cataño, and witnessed it is a very powerful experience. Besides the variety and diversity of musical bomba traditions one can

[257] https://www.pressreader.com/puerto-rico/el-nuevo-dia1/20210827/281642488265007 (accessed 19/01/2022).
[258] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpIHH_jShcI (accessed 19/01/2022).

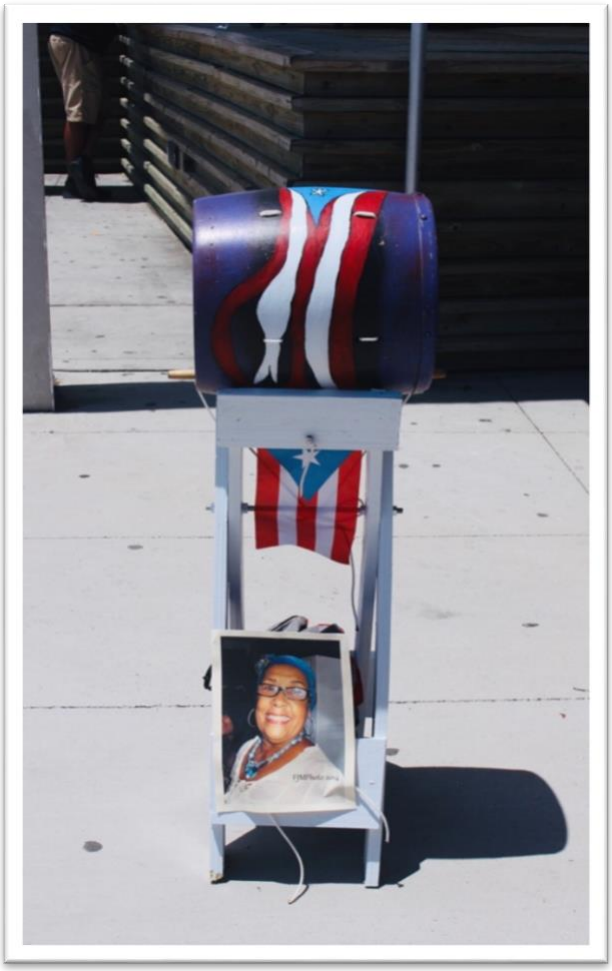
see, the peculiarity of the costumes and dresses, and the different dance styles performed during the first part of the event – where each bomba collective performs a rehearsed set for 10 minutes – the second part, the open batey, also leaves a mark. What was most striking during the improvised section of the Encuentro was that all the musicians who gathered for the event, and their drums, play at once, creating an unprecedented wall of sound produced by hundreds of barriles resonating together.

I was also able to access the backstage of the event where I had the chance to strike meaningful connections with key bomba exponents and take some exclusive shots.

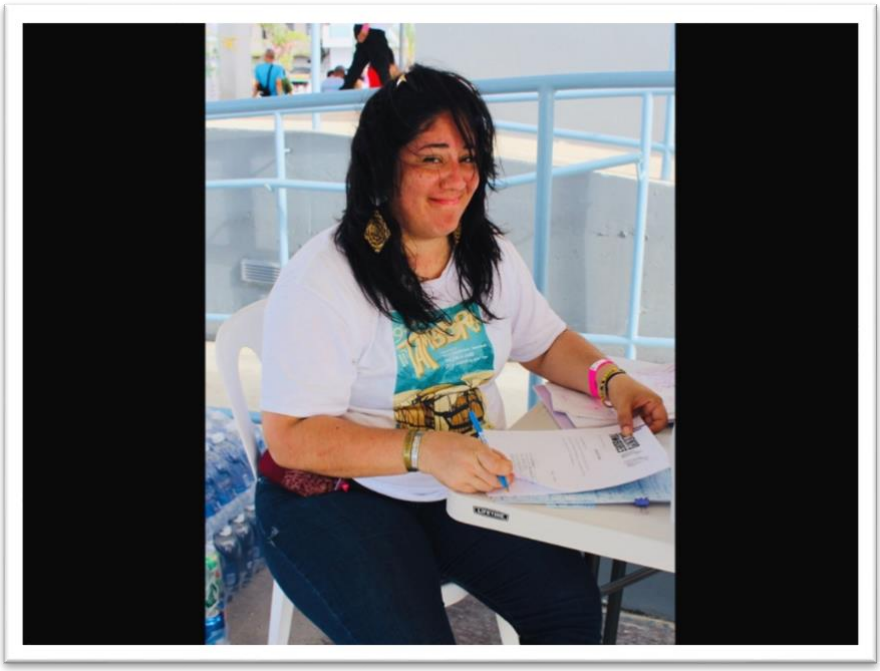
Official performance of the Este delegation – main stage.

Bomba dancers with traditional dresses – backstage.

Open batey performance with dozens of drummers playing – on and off stage.



Tribute to Norma Salazar over a bomba cuá with a hand painted Puerto Rican flag.



A happy and exhausted Marién doing paperwork at the end of the event – backstage.

During our interview, Christina highlighted what an achievement it is for somebody like Marién, a female bombera, to be leading this kind of events: “The fact that Marién is constantly being asked for things, for approval of things, for instructions about things is for me a big deal: this woman is the centre, and nobody does anything unless they ask her about it, or they tell her about it.”

Marién’s own formative process through bomba also motivated her to become a teacher, starting her trajectory as a bomba educator when she was 19 by holding workshops in various spaces, including underserved communities like *la Comunidad de San José* in Río Piedras:

> I wanted to learn more, I didn’t think about teaching, but people started recognizing me as someone who was always there, always dancing and singing, and bringing people in. Initially I didn’t choose to be a bomba teacher, but they would ask me to share, to teach them, so I realized I wanted to share with them my learnings about my country and our culture.

Only a few years later, in 2003, did Marién found her own school, Taller Tambuyé – a Creole term that means *drum player* – an appellation used to name both the bomba music and dance academy she opened in Río Piedras, and a musical group connected to the school that performs bomba in public venues. She describes how the Tambuyé academy started, and her early experiences as a teacher in training: “My first year, teaching at

Tambuyé, it was all motor, physical, choreographic, folkloric ballets, like the ones I was doing, the shows. There was no analysis, as there is now. Teaching allowed me to put in words my knowledge, and the love for teaching became something that now I cannot not do."

Even the Interamericana University (Cupey) called Marién to design a curriculum and teach bomba there:

> Before 2010 I was giving classes in bars, living rooms, parks – Tambuyé was a nomadic taller. Norma and other people would recognize me as someone who could give a bomba class from a social perspective, since many of the bomba classes I saw were not talking about the historical perspective…. In 2010, at the Interamericana they asked me to give a class of bomba history and dance as part of their offering … So, I sat at my laptop at 10 pm and decided "I'm going to put down everything I know about bomba." I started from the seeds of the *maraca*, the process of creating *cuá*, who are the artisans, how you hold the bomba skirt, how you make up the head wrap Cangrejero, and the head wrap Sureño, and the head wrap of Loíza, and I finished at 6am, without eating or going to the bathroom. Afterwards I made it into key topics, without details, and they offered me the class immediately. This exercise of writing everything down, made it that when I left Interamericana, and had already started having the space for Tambuyé, it allowed me to have an initial curriculum for Tambuyé.

Marién commented on how her experience teaching at Interamericana gave her the chance to test what worked and what didn't within a university setting:

> The course was about teaching information, but it was also a lot about teaching dance. The classroom was not such an open space as Tambuyé, that was a disadvantage of the academic space. Also, there were limits of time of how long a semester lasts, and a set time for a final presentation that did not necessarily correspond to bomba learning times.

Benefitting from all these experiences, Marién kept tailoring her bomba teaching method. At Taller Tambuyé Marién teaches bomba dance and percussions according to different levels of dance and percussion classes with specific curricula. Students can choose whether they only want to focus on dance, percussion, or train in both, and to advance to the next level they must pass a test at the end of each semester course. There are four levels of *Bomba Baile* group training offered at Marién's academy for adults: Bomba I, Bomba II, Bomba III and Bomba IV; additionally, there is one weekly children's class. The first two adult levels are taught in bi-weekly classes of one hour each, whilst levels III and

IV only take place once a week; all dance classes are accompanied by at least one live barril de bomba.

Between 2018 and 2019 I attended the courses of Bomba Baile I, II and III, as I wanted to expand my personal knowledge of bomba "from inside", whilst also experiencing the training as it was given by one of the most recognized educators on the island.

Marién's teaching style is friendly but also very scrupulous and detail-focused; each class is centred on periodic repetition of the same steps over and over to prompt muscle memory to absorb the dance, so that it doesn't remain an exercise just for the mind. There is a good balance between a learning pace that is not too slow, to prevent classes from becoming boring or monotonous, and a reasonable time for the body to assimilate the dance. Marién's training method focuses on learning-by-doing through repetition, at first while looking at the teacher performing steps for 15-20 minutes at a time, and then repeating the sequence while she corrects students individually. When teaching a new style or a new steps variation, Marién provides first a historic and contextual presentation of the form, followed by a listening practice to focus on how the style sounds. In fact, when dancers enter the batey, to know which steps and what technique fit the style being played, they must recognize the rhythm. As such, bomba musical training is a core activity for dancers.

Also, the atmosphere Marién provides among students at Taller Tambuyé is very constructive, one of mutual help and collaboration; there is no concept of primacy, competition, or rivalry – on the contrary, the shared feeling is of doing one's best towards a common goal, while having fun. This is something that showcases the direct link between Afro-Caribbean artistic expressions like bomba and their motherland – Africa. As Blacking pointed out, a key element distinguishing Western approaches to performance from those found in several African cultures, is the competition-based method vs collaborative & participatory techniques.[259] This also helps in fostering bonds and friendships among students, who usually end up socializing after classes as these are usually held in the evenings, attending bomba events and bombazos while increasing their learning together.

[259] John Blacking conducted extensive field research with the Venda people of the Northern Transvaal, South Africa, drawing parallels between fieldwork in Africa and his own Western musical background to demonstrate the relationships between patterns of sound and patterns of human organization inherent to all societies, while also highlighting cultural differences.

As a musician, I found the live drumming during dance classes a privilege to experience, and as a dancer it was also a rare encounter; live playing really helps getting a *feel* for the style, also embodying the in-the-moment and improvisational nature of the genre. Reverberations coming from the wood and skin of the large bomba barriles also resonate with the moving bodies, making the dancers *feel* the music, aside from just listening to it.

Besides being a bomba academy, Tambuyé is also the name of a correlated bomba ensemble Marién leads. She describes the early days of the Tambuyé musical group:

> The Tambuyé group started having a fix gig on Thursdays at El Boricua in Río Piedras; these bomba nights became bursting with university students and those who were taking classes at Taller Tambuyé, benefitting the bar, the school – as more and more young people were turning up for classes after the Thursday hangs, ultimately contributing to cementing this newly acquired perception that bomba was indeed a genre of the people, for the people, and of the youth, for the youth.

In 2015 Marién also made a record with Tambuyé, where she appears as singer, percussionist, and producer, distinguishing her as the first woman on the island to direct a production dedicated to bomba. This record was the product of her musical trajectory and included 12 tracks featuring some of the main bomba rhythms, like *Sicá, Cuembé, Yubá, Holandé* and *Seis Corrido*. The record, titled *Tambuyé*, is also a testimonial to Marién's trajectory as a social and cultural change facilitator; in fact, the main driver behind it was to compose new bomba songs by fusing tradition with new lyrics. This fusion speaks closer to Puerto Rican younger generations, so that more can be drawn to bomba during this revitalization period thanks to songs and content they can relate to. Marién explained:

> I wanted to renew the music of a bomba album, because I noticed that most of the songs that were included in the albums of other groups were from another era and not from today… [so I] began to compose original songs that spoke of social issues such as lament, love, protest, loss, as well as "rescuing what was lost from the 90s to the 21st century." … I wanted to present in the record all that knowledge and diversity that I had learned.[260]

The trajectory of Marién and her achievements are the embodiment of several key themes presented across the thesis and also of the transformation that Puerto Rican society, music, and bomba practices have undergone in the last decades.

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[260] https://www.efe.com/efe/usa/puerto-rico/una-puertorriquena-se-convierte-en-lider-del-baile-autoctono-de-la-bomba/50000110-2714291 (accessed 20/02/2022).

Conclusion

I write this conclusion one week after Hurricane Fiona hit Puerto Rico on 18th September 2022. Fiona was only a category one hurricane; nonetheless, one week later, people on the island are still without power and water, hospitals are running out of diesel for generators, and people whose lives depend on machines like respirators are dying. The country is once more, unnecessarily, on its knees, and Puerto Ricans keep suffering, not for a minor natural event, but for the lack of emergency preparation and response, caused by Puerto Rico's perpetual colonial status, alongside the inadequacy of local governing institutions.

The status of the island – being under the ongoing dominion of the United States and the double colonization endured by Puerto Rico over the last 500 years – and the repercussions this has at societal, institutional, educational, cultural, and musical levels have been demonstrated across this thesis. This was in response to my key research question: *Why is there no academic degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico?* To respond to what may have seemed like a relatively simple query, an extensive, interdisciplinary analysis followed, whose findings have critical implications not only for the Puerto Rican context, but for the field of ethnomusicology and academy as a whole.

In terms of thesis methodology, a simple research question generated a complex and multifaceted investigation; once I established there was no university degree in autochthonous music, I went on to examine the reasons why. I brought to surface how this absence reflected societal issues of inclusion, discrimination, underrepresentation and invisibilization of historically excluded social groups who were behind the creation and performance of these genres. Participant observation led me to adopt an intersectional approach, focusing on three key factors of discrimination on the island: gender, race/ethnicity, and class/socioeconomic background.

Considering this, I spent extensive time researching bomba, the oldest and most Afro-derived autochthonous music and dance style, training in bomba percussions and dance, attending countless performances, and engaging in autoethnography. I consciously sought to run a democratic investigation, interviewing an assorted spectrum of music students, academics, and members of the bomba community, from culture bearers to bystanders. This allowed me to establish connections between (1) social group(s) creating and performing a subaltern autochthonous musical style, (2) discrimination said group(s)

historically faced at the societal level, and (3) the absence or lack of recognition the genre has experienced in formal education and academia. Particular attention was given to my own positionality through self-reflexivity and asking how my informants perceived me, which highlighted the complexity of (mis)perceptions and assumptions, especially in contexts of cross-cultural/racial interactions, and because social class cannot be visualized. In fact, in Puerto Rico, people commonly assumed that I must come from a privileged socioeconomic background simply because of the colour of my skin, dismissing my particular personal circumstances. This highlighted the importance of considering the various shades of privilege any individual might embody independently from skin colour, and the subjectivity of this concept, as well as the need to deconstruct assumptions on both sides.

Considerations were also made around the status of being an outsider, representing both a limitation and an added value – not necessarily in conflict, as this can happen concurrently. Being a European (woman) researcher allowed me to maintain critical distance in the field over certain aspects, for example analyzing racism through the lens of somebody who did not experience it personally whilst growing up as a Puerto Rican. In this context, the importance of allyship towards “other” social groups one does not belong to when conducting this type of work, and sensitivity and empathy as necessary tools when entering the field are also evident. At the same time, externality means lacking the type of insider knowledge and understanding that locals have over the same issues. Consequently, as I wish for studies like this to be continued and expanded, I suggest that both local and international researchers, of different gender/race/class backgrounds, conduct this type of investigation, as it allows advancing knowledge on important topics with varied lenses and multi-faceted interpretations.

For the analysis of key social constructs – gender, race and class – I adopted an intersectional approach, also examining how discrimination affects individuals at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional level(s) in society, music, and academia. I thus conducted a multi-layered critical examination over 1) what are the key type(s) of discrimination that are taking place; 2) how the key type(s) of discrimination interplay; 3) at what level(s) the key type(s) of discrimination interplay – according to the framework originally developed by Camara Phyllis Jones for the health sector, adapted to the field of ethnomusicology.

Several advancements were made by the investigation. First, examining the lack of a degree in autochthonous music in Puerto Rico brought to light greater omissions in school curricula, across all grades and subjects (especially history classes), of various social groups historically discriminated and invisibilized on the island: especially women, Black, and poor people. Racism, sexism, and classism in society and academia were substantiated by primary and secondary research findings, analyzing their historical roots and how they manifest in society, music, and education today. The first contribution of this investigation is thus to challenge the official narrative in Puerto Rico that "racism does not exist on the island." Racism, sexism, and classism in academia are issues "everybody knows about", but "nobody talks about", as official debates on these subjects have not taken place within educational institutions. In most cases, counteracting measures are not being designed, and when they are created, their implementation fails.

Secondly, this thesis demonstrates the causal (inter)connections between what happens at the societal, educational, and musical levels, contributing to ongoing conversations in the field of ethnomusicology, and beyond, especially in relation to decolonization. In fact, Puerto Rico's past and present colonial status maintains the island's subjugation to Western-centric, (White) supremacist, racist, capitalist, and patriarchal mindsets, imported first under Spain, and afterwards from the United States. Against this backdrop, ongoing efforts by academics, practitioners, and musicians to decolonize music, education, and music academia are extremely challenging, whilst incredibly meaningful, and inspiring contributions. Success stories showcasing how single professors like Pablo Luis Rivera have created and fought for institutional approval of anti-racist courses, teaching the untold history of Afro-descendants in Puerto Rico and the autochthonous musical traditions of enslaved people, like bomba, advance the body of knowledge on the subject.[261]

Thirdly, the thesis offers a critical framework for the analysis of intersectionality – with a focus on the gender/race/class nexus – which could be applied in ethnomusicology. I adapted a framework created by Camara Phyllis Jones – originally designed to analyse (exclusively) racism in the health field – for use in ethnomusicological and sociological research. My analysis shows how the framework can be applied to other social constructs beyond race (like gender and class), and, particularly, to intersectional discrimination. The

[261] This kind of anti-racist work is gaining momentum across Latin American countries, as outlined by Wade and Moreno Figueroa (2021) who enquire on the role art might play in relation to racism and anti-racism in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Camara Phyllis Jones framework provides an analytic lens that can be applied both during fieldwork, supporting the development of in-depth research questions for interviewees, and in elaborating the findings afterwards accordingly, to uncover and examine discrimination at three main levels: institutional, interpersonal, and internalized.

In brief, the key contributions of the thesis are that (1) it brings to surface and sheds light on ongoing, and often silenced, biased practices in Puerto Rican society and academia, and (2) it advances recommendations on decolonizing institutions, musical and academic practices. This research substantiates how various forms of discrimination are embedded in Puerto Rican society, academia, and musical expressions, and thereby contributes to developing critical awareness of processes that have become normalized and are considered standard. This is the first crucial step to question the status quo and ongoing biased approaches. The research also advances practical measures, reflected in the experiences and views of interviewees presented across the thesis, on how to successfully counteract perpetrating discrimination at the systems-level – in society, academia, music, and education – but also at interpersonal and self/personal levels for people belonging to underrepresented social groups.

Another interesting finding worth highlighting includes the testimonies of forward-thinking professors showcasing how they overcame institutional challenges to create new courses and degrees beyond the traditional offering of Western-centred music academia in Puerto Rico. These courses proved indeed to be very successful and in high demand, resonating with ongoing discussions in the field of ethnomusicology on the interrelationship between decolonization and capitalism. In July 2022, Samuel Araújo, of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, presented a paper at the 46th ICTM World Conference in Lisbon on "Transforming or Reforming Music and Dance Research? Obstacles to the Decolonization of Knowledge under Capitalism". In relation to current "efforts to decolonize music", impacting "for good academic fields around the globe", Araújo highlighted "the need to reflect upon their potentials and shortcomings."[262] Central to Araújo's enquiry is "how and to what extent these efforts may be contributing to more fundamentally transform or rather to just reform music and dance studies." My findings from Puerto Rico, against the

[262] Citing Fraser and Jaeggi (2020) and their book *Capitalism: Conversation in Critical Theory* (2018), Araújo argues that contemporary emancipatory movements "have – on one hand – raised a much-needed worldwide consciousness of the complexity and interrelations between different kinds of dominance and oppression, while – on the other – obfuscating if not entirely by-passing the previous problematization of a world political economy still."

backdrop of a US-driven colonial and capitalist academic system, can contribute to this query.

Firstly, interviewees discussed how, in the case of Puerto Rico, moving from a public-funded to a consumer-driven academia, as in the case of UPR, opened the doors for positive innovations and the decolonization of music curricula. The fact that oral autochthonous musics mostly associated with Black and poor people were introduced for the first time once the demand from students – their customers – increased, whilst reducing the scope of Western musics of their colonizers, likely falls under the category of music studies "reform". An academia that responds to capitalist imperatives can thus contribute to the reform of music studies and the partial decolonization of knowledge, when student-customer demand is driven by anti-colonial mindsets, an interest in autochthonous cultural revitalization, and/or wider social movements of identity (re)affirmation. At the same time, there are limitations to decolonization in a consumer-driven academia: if the only change lies in the creation of new courses focusing on subjects previously excluded, but practices and methodologies remain unchallenged, real transformation cannot take place. In other words, as analysed in Chapter 4, if autochthonous musics from the oral tradition previously excluded in Puerto Rican academia are taught at university but only through the mediation of Western approaches like the primacy of music reading, then transformation is not taking place, and the decolonization of knowledge is only partial: the topics are decolonized, but the methods remain colonial.

A final, personal consideration. I had to develop this work wearing a researcher's hat, packaging the information according to the strict criteria required for a PhD thesis, and ensuring that it meets the expectations of a contribution to academia – as it is, still, shaped and defined mostly through White, Western, privileged, male-centred approaches. On a personal level, as a human, it was always very clear to me that, first and foremost, I wanted this thesis to be a true contribution and to represent an advancement for the people of Puerto Rico, and for those discriminated across society, music, and education globally. Shedding light over systems of oppression currently at play, using academic platforms to support much needed social change, instead of focusing on personal achievements, has always been my goal. I tried to manage both roles, the researcher and the human, at all times, without compromising either, to extreme personal cost. I must say this experience demonstrated to me once more how current academic one-size-fits-all

approaches, forms, and methods, are unfit for people with diverse learning skills, and might also not be the most effective in terms of productivity, reach and opportunity creation. Higher flexibility would lead to increased, real diversity in academia. The entire time I sat behind a laptop to fit in a lifeless document all the very much alive music, dance, experiences, and opinions of interviewees, in a strict word written thesis format was a challenge. My mind couldn't help but wonder if, for example, spending the same amount of time and energy to create a documentary film perhaps would have been a much more effective way to get my research findings out there, besides a much more enjoyable experience for a person like me.[263] Which perhaps begs the question of whether I am unfit for academia, or if academia is unfit for me. Possibly, the solution is allowing greater flexibility to find a happy medium, so that people with diverse skills or types of intelligence do not escape academia; in my case, I was the one who had to do all the back bending, choosing to endure it instead of quitting. An academy that keeps favouring a systems-centred approach, as opposed to a human-centred one, is the cause for the dispersion of much talent along the way, as many people are not willing to pay this price, and the great mental and physical toll associated with it.

[263] I acknowledge that the primacy given to writing in academia has been already challenged by some institutions. For example, RAI and BFE have solid film prizes and showcases, and some universities welcome film or other non-written (or partially/largely non-written) submissions for a PhD, including in dance, film, theatre, fine arts. There have been several reports on alternative forms of documentation for higher degrees over the last 20 years or so – some in the UK, more at ELIA, and a couple in the US. At the time I am writing and submitting this thesis, my institution, SOAS, does not offer alternatives to the traditional written thesis format. I understand that in the past, the SOAS MMus Performance, and previous SOAS PhD regulations allowing alternative forms of submission, existed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I. Introduction to Puerto Rican Musical Expressions

Historic Overview of Puerto Rican Music (early days – 1950s)

The pluralism of ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultural influences of Taínos, Europeans, Hispanics, Africans, and Northern Americans has contributed to the shaping of a rich and variegated Puerto Rican music and dance culture. This complex transcultural fusion can be seen in various musical practices across the Caribbean (Moore 2010; de Jong 2022). When it comes to the specific context of Puerto Rico, these cultural complexities are closely related to dynamic and unequal social processes that took place on the island over the past 500 years, which are in turn reflected in its music and musical practices (Aparicio 1998).

Taíno musical influences have mostly survived in two instruments that are central in many contemporary autochthonous Puerto Rican genres: *la maraca* and *el güiro*.[264] Unfortunately, there are not enough sources to be able to trace back to a high level of detail what the musical expressions of Taínos were; what is known from 15th and early 16th century Spanish chroniclers is that *areito*, also spelled *areyto*, was the name given by the Spanish *conquistadors* to an important Taíno ceremony that played a key role in their social, political and religious life.[265] Historical reports and archaeological evidence show that the Taínos used musical instruments including the *areito*, güiro and maraca for everyday activities such as dances and parties as well as ceremonies and religious rituals (Thompson 1993). The extent to which Taíno music itself influenced subsequent Puerto Rican folk music is unclear, but there is speculation that certain elements, such as nasal vocality, originated from Taíno practices.[266]

Beginning in the 1500s, when the Spanish colonized Puerto Rico, they brought along their instruments, teachings, and musical traditions – mostly related to church music and military bands – including drums, bells, the harp, the harpsichord, and the *vihuela* (Manuel 1994). The mixing of these Spanish musical influences with Taíno instruments and sounds

[264] Both instruments will be described more in detail below.
[265] For more information on Areito and its variations across the Caribbean, see Scolieri (2013).
[266] https://kitlv-docs.library.leiden.edu/open/335987737.pdf (accessed 24/08/2021).

that were already present on the territory changed forever the musical landscape of the island – especially in relation to two key agents: the Catholic Church, that brought new instruments and teachers, and the army introducing small bands.[267]

Following the beginning of the slave trade in 1511, when the Spanish King Fernando authorized the mass trade of slaves, massive numbers of enslaved African people were brought to Puerto Rico by the Spaniards. At this time, many West African music and dance traditions started fusing with local sounds and adapting to the instruments that were readily available. Music and dance performance was heavily and recurrently resorted to because they were intimately tied to local traditions and ancestral beliefs in the countries of origin of enslaved people. Consequently, in Puerto Rico, enslaved Africans were using music and dance as an important means to preserve their roots and connect spiritually to their motherland, families, and ancestors (Denis-Rosario 2012).

Various ethnic groups from Africa have influenced the cultural and musical landscape in Puerto Rico, including the Ashanti and Fante (Ghana), the Carabalis (Nigeria), the Congolese and, later, the Yoruba and Mendé from West Africa (Vega-Drouet 1979). Their influences can be found in some of the instruments that were created and used to execute their musics, such as *barriles de bomba*, in their characteristic method of playing them, but also in certain songs, rhythms and dances that have been passed on as oral traditions – especially into the genre known today as bomba. In fact, enslaved African people mostly developed their music and dance traditions in several coastal towns, currently municipalities that include Loíza, Guayama, Ponce and Cataño, and it is not by chance that some of the main bomba expressions originated from these towns and still bear their names to indicate each distinct style (Rivera-Rideau 2013). The two biggest influences that shaped the different Puerto Rican rhythms were the African and the European (mostly Spanish) musical cultures, as their presence on the territory started taking place relatively at the same time and they remained the longest.

When it comes to European musical influences, a range of religious and secular musics were introduced to the island during the Spanish colonization, including church songs sung during mass and other rituals, and the *vihuelas* and *atabales* which were used to perform

[267] There are parallels with the Spanish conquest of the Philippines in the use of church and military music as a powerful agent of colonialism (Irving 2010).

zarabandas.[268] European and African traditions started melting together as enslaved African people originating from the West coast of Sub-Saharan Africa were often participating in these European-sounding musical and religious events, in the same way Spanish colonizers were exposed to African-derived music and dance expressions. As such, African and Afro-descended dance coexisted with one another as part of the colonial social reality.

Additionally, over the centuries people migrating to Puerto Rico from other European countries, including Italy and France, brought several of their musical traditions and genres to the island, as certain groups in Puerto Rico adopted French dances such as the minuet, *rigodón* and *contradanza* (Daniel 2011). From 1820, visiting artists and opera companies came to Puerto Rico including the *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti which premiered on the island in 1842 (Thompson 2002).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, all these cultural and musical currents – from Western Africa, Spain, and other European countries – assimilated in Puerto Rico, fusing additional elements imported from Europe to the sounds brought by the Spanish colonizers and the enslaved African people that had already been mixing on the island since the 16th century. Alongside the blending of sounds, another merging took place, particularly important from a socio-cultural standpoint, as social groups from the church, urban settlements and rural communities converged in the capital of San Juan. This phenomenon led to the definition and evolution, by the end of the 18th century, of autochthonous musical expressions in Puerto Rico that were the product of musics that originated in very faraway regions and with quite different functions.[269]

The continuous mixing of elements of sacred and profane, urban and rural, African and European have been key ongoing phenomena lying at the very basis of the creation of Puerto Rican musical styles and have marked all aspects of musical performances,

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[268] https://kitlv-docs.library.leiden.edu/open/335987737.pdf (accessed 24/08/2021). The *vihuela* is a 15th century Spanish string instrument with the shape of a guitar and the tuning of a lute; the *atabales* is a percussion instrument of 15th century Spanish origin whose name is derived from the Arabic word الطّبل (aṭṭbál) meaning “el tambor” (the drum); the sarabande is a slow dance in triple meter developed during the 16th century in the Hispanic colonies of the Americas.

[269] This complex blending of sounds and cultures in Puerto Rico, though often celebrated, has also been treated critically with regard to the power inequalities involved in this “mixing” and the ways in which different groups were racialized (see Baerga 2015).

including the instrumentation and types of musical ensembles.[270] By the start of the 19th century, there was already a typical format for the "rural music" ensemble: the *tiple*, the *cuatro*, the guitar and the *bordonua*.[271] At this time Black people and Mulatto Creoles could also become professional musicians, showcasing how people from different ethnic backgrounds were already establishing themselves as professional musicians playing various Puerto Rican styles in the 1800s (Allende-Goitía 2022).

Aside from racial differences, it appears that social class distinctions were at the basis of who would attend the two main different types of *bailes* (social dances) that were taking place at the time: *bailes de sociedad* (social dances taking place in the city) and *bailes de garabato* (social dances taking place in the countryside).[272] City social dances displayed creolized versions of dances including contradanza, waltz, mazurka and polka. Country social dances, which were predominantly for people of the working class, featured a combination of European and autochthonous expressions, such as the *fandanguillo*, the *cadenas*, the *sonduro*, and the popular *seis* alongside the waltz, polka and mazurka as well as the social "chain" dances derived from Andalusian *seguidillas*.[273]

When the US invaded Puerto Rico in 1898, people were mostly playing music by local composers and songwriters, some adaptations of traditional songs, and some hits from Spain or Cuba (Glasser 1995).[274] Beyond song borrowing, Cuban music also played an increasingly important role in shaping the Puerto Rican musical landscape, especially for

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[270] This mixing has been a feature of various musical styles across the Caribbean and indeed other "bomba" forms which can be found in the region, e.g. "Bomba de Chota" in Ecuador (Lara and Ruggiero 2016).

[271] "Rural music", translated literally from *música rural* in Spanish, mostly referred to *música jíbara*, the Puerto Rican style that originated in the rural areas of the island and was played by farmers; the *tiple*, which dates back to the 18th century, was the smallest of the three string instruments that made up the ensemble of Jíbara music; the Puerto Rican cuatro, which translates as 'four' to designate its total number of strings, is the most popular of the Jíbaro instruments, and the national instrument of Puerto Rico; and the *bordonua* is a bass guitar native to Puerto Rico.

[272] For further information on Puerto Rican social dances of the 1800s refer to Manuel Alonso, *El Gíbaro* (1845), and http://www.proyectosalonhogar.com/enciclopedia_ilustrada/Contradanza_a_danza.htm (accessed 24/08/2021). These kinds of 'set' social dances, such as the contredanse and the quadrille, were popular throughout the Caribbean (see Manuel et al. 2006).

[273] The *seguidillas* were a form in quick triple time that originated in Andalusia, Spain.

[274] Puerto Rican lyricists also wrote songs to originally instrumental danzas; for example, 'La Borinqueña' was an adapted song whose lyrics captured revolutionary and nationalistic sentiments towards the end of the 19th century (Glasser 1995).

styles like danza and salsa (Manuel 1994); further references to the role Cuba and Puerto Rico played in shaping contemporary salsa can also be found in the section below.

In the early 1900s, the musical influence of the United States began to permeate the Puerto Rican musical landscape, including through the adoption of some dance steps like the *one-step*, *two-steps*, *rags*, and in the early 1920s a tropicalized form of waltz also developed but it did not quite catch on in the long term (Glasser 1990). In the same decade, Puerto Rico witnessed an increasing interest for US jazz and Argentinian tango, as shown by the warm welcome Carlos Gardel received when performing on the island (Serrano 2015).

It is worth noting that US occupation, in addition to bringing Northern American musical influences, also brought to Puerto Rico cultural imperialism associated with US supremacist views, which took the form of a significant pushback on local traditional autochthonous music. With the emergence of a ruling class from the US, indigenous musical forms, including *seis* and *plena*, were excluded from the casinos and music lounges (Miller 2004). Thus, cultural imperialist dynamics enacted by the US had repercussions on which music(s) would be considered of higher or lower value in Puerto Rico. The repercussions of this are still evident nowadays in what can be considered first-class music(s) vs second-class music(s) on the island, including the consequences this reality has generated in the differential treatment, income retention, value recognized, and discrimination, of the musicians playing the less valued styles like bomba.

In the context of poverty and unemployment on the island, and the perception of better life conditions in the United States, various Puerto Rican musicians and composers moved to the US as part of the mass migration to the mainland from the 1900s and especially during the 1930s, both in search of better economic conditions but also to expand their artistic and musical horizons (Duany 2008). In the 1940s big ballroom orchestras – based on the model of US Big Bands – were created in Puerto Rico, as typified by the groups of Noro Morales and Xavier Cugat. At the same time, Puerto Rican musicians in New York like Tito Puente also started developing a new musical genre – salsa – based on the fusion of various musical elements, many of which came from Puerto Rican traditional autochthonous styles like bomba and plena. In the next section salsa's roots and evolutions will be analysed in detail.

Key Puerto Rican Musical Genres (1950s – present day)

There are several musical genres that are associated with Puerto Rico, either because they originated on the island, or because they were created abroad by the diaspora and display heavy influences of various Puerto Rican musical elements. However, in both cases the most popular genres have been created by people of lower social status.

Considered the oldest autochthonous style still widely played nowadays across the island, bomba is a musical genre that developed in Puerto Rico and is the most Afro-derived among all autochthonous music and dance styles. The precise timeline of its creation is uncertain, but it was created by enslaved African people after their arrival through the slave trade since the 16th century and became more formalized during the 1800s (Abadía-Rexach 2016). Bomba is mostly played within Puerto Rico, even though there is a growing movement within various communities of the diaspora (mostly in the United States) that are playing it also as a form of Puerto Rican cultural revitalization and identity reaffirmation (Flores 2000).

There are several styles of bomba, based on the location in which it originated, but all the different styles of bomba showcase some common elements, including the instruments that are used to play it. These are one *cuá* (a small wood barrel hit by two wooden sticks), one maraca (a direct inheritance from Taíno culture), and two or more *barriles* (bigger wooden drums originally used to transport alcohol in slaves ships, showcasing the strong African roots of the genre – because of both their origins and the way they are played).

> [Bomba] is played with two or more drums called barriles. A maraca that is played by a singer, and some sticks that are played against the side of one of the barrels or against a bamboo, called cuá, are also used. Bomba is defined as a duel between the dancer and the player of the drum that is called subidor or primo and who marks the hits that the dancer makes.[275]

Bomba is considered an Afro-Puerto Rican genre, as it fuses rhythms that have strong West African influences, Spanish lyrics at times mixed with some words of Creole or other Indigenous expressions, and a dance style that is a blend of various elements and that retains similarities with autochthonous dances of Martinique and other countries in the Caribbean. Also, the practice of having one dancer at a time enter the *batey* (dancing area – a word derived from Taíno, expressing the concept of a shared social space) and

[275] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.artesdelcaribe.com/los-estilos-musicales-folkloricos-de-puerto-rico/ (accessed 31/01/2017).

engage a musical dialogue with the soloist drummer is an inheritance from African traditions.

Often associated with bomba through the widely used expression “bomba y plena” (bomba and plena), plena is a music and dance style that developed at the end of the 1800s artistically in Ponce, the “capital” of the south of Puerto Rico (Cartagena 2004). The association of bomba and plena is mostly due to the fact they are both considered by many “folklore” from lower social classes, whereas musically they are actually quite different. Plena was originated by sugar cane workers, farmers, enslaved people and other migrants, incorporating elements of different cultures, including West Africa, Spain and Cuba (Miller 2004). Initially, the main goal of plena was to share news, designed to narrate events that had transpired over the past days or weeks. As a kind of “singing newspaper”, plena could transmit this information without the need for literacy (Howard 2018). Examples which demonstrate this function include “Cortaron a Elena”, “Tintorera del Mar”, “Temporal” and “El Obispo” (Duany 1984; Rivera and Vélez Peña 2019).

Plena’s key musical elements include three *panderos* or *pandereta*s.[276] These instruments interact as follows: “The basic rhythm is played by the largest tambourine called *seguidor*, the medium tambourine plays a complementary rhythm and is known as *punteador*, and the requinto, which is the smallest tambourine, improvises over that baseline. In addition, the *güiro* is used to keep the rhythm.”[277] In some cases, plena can also be heard with instruments such as the accordion and the guitar for harmonic accompaniment, and clarinet, trumpet, or trombone for adding melodies. As in bomba the Taíno roots of the genre are marked by the use of the maraca, in plena they are made evident by the use of the *güiro*. In the last decades, plena has been mixed with other musical styles and arranged with several instruments that were not part of the original combo – including piano, various percussions, drums, horns and bow instruments – being often played in *fiestas populares* (festivals and celebrations for common folks), luxury hotels and clubs on the island.

Different from plena but sharing the commonality of being created within farming communities, *música jíbara* is a term used in Puerto Rico to indicate autochthonous music

[276] Both *panderos* and *pandereta*s can be translated as tambourines.
[277] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.artesdelcaribe.com/los-estilos-musicales-folkloricos-de-puerto-rico/ (accessed 31/01/2017).

that was originated in the countryside by people who farmed the land. *Jíbaro* in fact refers to self-subsistence farmers, sharecroppers, land tenants, or people simply working the land. Several musical styles fall under what is considered música jíbara in Puerto Rico, including mazurca, pasodoble, polka, vals – all fused with Creole elements – and its main genres seis and aguinaldo. When it comes to instrumentation, the key elements are:

> The Puerto Rican cuatro, the guitar, the *güiro* (of Taíno heritage) and nowadays the bongo is used to add rhythmic emphasis. Additionally, instruments from the family of the guitar and the cuatro known as *bordonúa* (which has the function of a bass) and the tiple (soprano or high pitched). To this combination what cannot be missed is one of its most important elements, the troubadour.[278]

We see how the *güiro*, an instrument inherited from the Taínos and present in plena as well, is also a characteristic sound of música jíbara, and how all the various instruments used together in this genre reflect in this autochthonous genre the ethnic mix of Puerto Rican people – with its Taíno, African and European roots. The origins of troubadours indeed trace back to Europe – most specifically the South of France and the North of Spain – during the Middle Ages. Troubadours were traveling poet-musicians and song performers, and the first poets to write in the vernacular, as until then Latin and Greek had dominated for over a millennium as the only official languages of the literature of Western Europe. Troubadours are also associated with the invention of "romantic love", and many of their songs dealt with themes of courtly love and chivalry, besides sagas and improvised accounts of warriors.[279] Improvisation was also a very important element of troubadours performance, and one that is also recurrent in Puerto Rican *música jíbara* interpreted by its lead singer, the troubadour:

> The typical singer improvises his poetry on the spot, following faithfully the structure of the *decima espinela*.[280] From Spain comes this poetic style which is used to sing throughout Hispanic America, but it is in Puerto Rico where a higher number of musical styles exist to improvise and sing on it. It is also in Puerto Rico where this structure is adapted, originally

[278] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.artesdelcaribe.com/los-estilos-musicales-folkloricos-de-puerto-rico/ (accessed 31/01/2017).
[279] For more information on the origins of Troubadour Music in Europe, see Aubrey (2000) and Abraham (2012).
[280] In Puerto Rico and other parts of Latin America, the decima is often sung and improvised. The form is also sometimes referred to as *espinela* after its founder, Spanish writer, and musician Vicente Espinel. Reference available at: https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/decima-poetic-forms (accessed 31/01/2017).

from octosyllable verses (of 8 syllables), making it from hexasyllable verses (6) to be sung in Aguinaldos known as *decimilla*.[281]

Danza Puertorriqueña (Puerto Rican Danza), out of all the autochthonous Puerto Rican musical styles, is the genre that showcases the highest European influence in its harmonic and melodic elements, as it was derived directly from *contradanza* and other Spanish ballroom dance styles. Nonetheless, the influence of certain African rhythms can be heard in its syncopation and in other elements shared with other Afro-Caribbean styles such as Cuban *son*.[282] Danza has a structured form, it starts with a *paseo* (literally, stroll or promenade) that is followed by a dance in the merengue style, replaced then by a *bombardino*, a "call" played by a homonym instrument covering a leading role and improvising in a virtuoso style. From a dance standpoint danza is performed in pairs; during the paseo the couples would stroll around the dancefloor until they started dancing over the more rhythmic merengue. Merengue was officially prohibited in 1846 by Spanish General Don Juan de la Pezuela, but still "by 1850 the merengue had totally replaced the Spanish country dance" (Aparicio 1998, 12). Finally, in terms of stylistic classifications: "Danza can be classified into one of two styes: festive like "No me toques" o "Sara" and romantic like "Margarita", "Idilio" or "Mis Amores". The style that is best known and in which the greatest number of Dances is written is the romantic one. The festive is a much faster and more cheerful style, perhaps a bit similar to the old guarachas."[283]

The autochthonous genres described so far – bomba, plena, música jíbara and danza – are the four pillars of autochthonous traditional Puerto Rican music. Another key genre associated with Puerto Rico, but whose origins are often the reason for disputes, is salsa. As I had the chance to experience during a trip to Cuba in 2017 and multiple stays in Puerto Rico between 2015 and 2021, when traveling to both islands it is not uncommon to run across conversations and claims over the origins of salsa music and dance – whether

[281] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.artesdelcaribe.com/los-estilos-musicales-folkloricos-de-puerto-rico/ (accessed 31/01/2017).

[282] African musics are diverse and not reducible to an essentially rhythmic phenomenon (Agawu 1995), but there are specific rhythmic elements that are associated with certain rhythms which originated in Africa which influenced the Puerto Rican Danza (Aparicio 1998). An example common to several Afro-Caribbean forms is the "syncopated bass" where various devices are used to create a sense of syncopation in the bass, for example the *tresillo* or *tumbao* pattern or the bass anticipating its first beat (Manuel 1985; Fitch 2016).

[283] Translated by the author from Spanish, available at: https://www.artesdelcaribe.com/los-estilos-musicales-folkloricos-de-puerto-rico/ (accessed 31/01/2017).

salsa is Cuban, or Puerto Rican, who started it and where, etc. I also witnessed similar conversations held by Cuban musicians of the diaspora in London in 2016 and by the Cuban and Puerto Rican diaspora in Miami in 2017, attesting to how salsa remains a topic Cubans and Puerto Ricans are very passionate about, and where some remain unaligned when it comes to its origins and ownership. All in all, I can attest that the interpretation that seems to find highest consensus among people of both countries is that salsa originated in New York, where both Cuban and Puerto Rican diasporas – in addition to the diasporas of other Latin American countries – were interacting:

> By 1946, a new style of musical performance had begun to be cultivated among orchestras and musical ensembles of Latin American extraction in New York … By the late 1950s the salsa music movement had invaded New York dance halls, hotels, and clubs. This musical genre was born in New York and was performed by first-generation young Puerto Ricans who identified with their roots through music.[284]

Musicians and theorists have advanced historical and musical examples to support ownership to either Cuba or Puerto Rico, highlighting common elements from each country's autochthonous styles (Manuel 1994; Berrios-Miranda 2002). Overall, there is a generalized agreement over Hutchinson's statement that salsa music and dance "both originated with Cuban rhythms that were brought to New York and adopted, adapted, reformulated, and made new by the Puerto Ricans living there" (2004, 16).

The Cuban musical genres deemed to have influenced salsa most heavily are the Afro-Cuban *son montuno, guaracha, mambo, rumba, cha cha cha* and *bolero*, whilst on the Puerto Rican side bomba and plena are seen as the greatest contributors to salsa. Because of its origins in New York, it can be considered a Pan-American phenomenon. In many cases, Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians and composers living in New York or other big cities in the US would aggregate and create their ensembles there and then travel back to their motherland to perform; at the same time, local Cuban and Puerto Rican salsa productions also developed on the islands and would in turn tour abroad. Key figures in the delineation of salsa include Tito Puente, also known as "The King of Timbales" and "The King of Latin Music", a New York born American musician of Puerto Rican descent who introduced orchestration influenced by modern jazz, and Rafael Cortijo, considered the pioneer of Puerto Rican salsa, as he "mixed folkloric rhythms such as bomba and

[284] Ibidem.

plena in the salsa. Later it incorporated to the traditional Puerto Rican rhythms Cuban rhythms such as: charanga, pachanga, bugalú and guaguancó."[285]

Salsa also spread throughout Colombia and the rest of Latin America, becoming a global phenomenon, adding other sounds like the ones of *cumbia* and *samba* to the mix. This is tied to the social background in which salsa developed, as a "Mulatto Caribbean [genre] with a Pan-American perspective created in a multicultural social environment and hostile to our traditions and customs." The hostile environment refers to how salsa developed in the United States, where *Latinos* and their cultural expressions were customarily marginalized and given second-class status.[286] This social rupture phenomenon also had repercussions on the musical stylistic elements and on the instrumentation of salsa ensembles, where musicians and composers expanded and experimented with various combinations, moving away from traditional setups and mixing elements of various Caribbean and Latin American musical styles.

When it comes to instrumentation, percussions are a key feature of salsa, including claves, cowbells, timbales and conga, and various melodic instruments are often used, such as guitar, trumpets, trombones, saxophone, and piano. Bands can be of different sizes, but they usually include around 10 – 12 musicians, including a band leader who directs the musical ensemble. Musicians are typically specialists in particular instruments, such as horns, bongo, conga, bass guitar, piano, and *timbales*; singers will often play the maracas or claves, and the bongo player tends to switch to bells for the *montuno* section (Mauleon 1993). Another instrument worth noting that is often played in salsa is the güiro, witnessing to the Taíno roots common to both Cuban and Puerto Rican music (Padilla 1990).

Salsa was the most commercial and popular style people danced in Puerto Rico until the last decade of the 20th century and into the early 2000s, when it started being overshadowed by a new genre that was meant to take over the global charts in the decades to come: reggaetón. Reggaetón is a musical genre that originated in the poorest *barrios* (neighbourhoods) of Puerto Rico in the 1990s, also through the exchanges

[285] Available at: https://enciclopediapr.org/encyclopedia/musica-puertorriquena-y-su-historia/#1464543220308-5be998aa-0ee4 (accessed 31/01/2017).
[286] Available at: http://www.arecibo.inter.edu/wp-content/uploads/biblioteca/pdf/salsa.pdf, p.21 (accessed 31/01/2017).

between Puerto Rico and Panamá, and that reached global fame starting from the early 2000s (Marshall 2008; Rivera et al. 2009).

From its beginnings, the sounds of reggaetón were characterized by lyrics being delivered in a recitative style over syncopated rhythms produced electronically; when it comes to its musical influences, early reggaetón sounds were based on various Afro-Caribbean styles including calypso, soca and other Antillean rhythms (Alleyne 2008). At first known as "underground", among other names, reggaetón is a combination of rap and reggae in Spanish, which reached its peak in the so-called "housing projects" of Puerto Rico.[287] At its inception, it was produced by and for the urban youth of the poorer sections of society (Negrón-Muntaner and Rivera 2009).

My interviewee Danny grew up in a *caserío* in Loíza, Puerto Rico, and he described his own experience of how the first music he was exposed to and got started on was urban music (a synonym for reggaetón in Puerto Rico):

> We didn't have many means, but all considered our childhood was good. Since I was a kid I liked urban music, everybody started messing around with music, starting with urban music, as it was the most *underground*. That's where I started with a speaker, rapping, looking for rhymes, doing freestyle, in the *caserío* itself this is where we were doing this. … We would buy tracks, sometimes they were selling CDs, and I would rhyme with some of my buddies, this was happening when I was 7 years old, from 7 until 10 years old. That was the trend back at that time, underground and reggaetón were just starting, and we were recording these *cassettes*, and we were listening to all those people like Daddy Yankee and others, we would imitate them but also compose our own songs, many of them didn't make any sense but what mattered was that they would rhyme.[288]

Vico C, born in Brooklyn in 1971 and raised in Puerto Rico, is considered the founder of reggaetón; his lyrical production is marked by social criticism, and musically the roots of reggae can be heard quite strongly in many of his songs, besides rap, hip hop, and other genres. Vico C himself has acknowledged these roots of reggaetón, stating that it was "essentially hip hop but with a flavour more compatible to the Caribbean" (Nadal-Ramos

[287] In the United States publicly subsidized housing for low-income families is commonly referred to as "housing projects"; based on the circumstances, in some cases they might also acquire pejorative connotations similar to the concepts of slums or ghettos.
[288] Cassettes, which can be translated as *mix tapes,* were very common in the barrios where reggaetón first appeared. Young people would buy on the street instrumental background tracks recorded on tapes or CDs, rap over those while playing them, and record their freestyles through a tape recorder into these cassettes.

and Smith Silva 2016). This “flavour” includes a range of lyric and rhythmic devices drawn from genres across Latin America, most notably the *dembow* rhythm from Jamaican dancehall which drives many reggaetón tracks and is partly responsible for its infectious danceability (Marshall 2008).

Over time, hip hop and trap have replaced the primacy of reggae sounds and, lyrically, reggaetón has increasingly moved towards a focus on explicit lyrics, a phenomenon that is strongly related to the ‘urban’, or ‘street’, character of the genre that was mostly picked up by the young generations living in Puerto Ricans *caseríos* (housing projects). Reggaetón lyrics are in fact mostly centred on themes connected either with violence or sex, which are elements that have created a class divide, where people from higher social classes (and often those who are also the most conservative and traditionalists in professing their religious beliefs) disdain the genre mostly in relation to its rawness and provocative content. By the mid-1990s, reggaetón had become an object of hostility due to its sexually explicit lyrics and its tales of daily violence (Negrón-Muntaner and Rivera 2009).

Daddy Yankee – who has been active since the 1990s and coined the word reggaetón to describe the new style in his album *Playero 36* of 1994 – is a Puerto Rican singer, songwriter and rapper considered the “King of Reggaetón”. His song *Gasolina* released in 2010 is considered the classic anthem of the genre. His trajectory, this song, and the album *Barrio Fino* that contains it, summarize a series of reggaetón tropes. Firstly, Ramón Luis Ayala Rodriguez (aka Daddy Yankee) grew up in the housing projects of Río Piedras, attesting to the ‘urban’ nature of the genre that largely developed within lower social classes, and something that he touches upon in his 2010 album. Secondly, the album title, *Barrio Fino* (Refined Neighbourhood), is an antithetical metaphor referring to social inequality in Puerto Rico because the “refined neighbourhood” where Daddy Yankee was raised was and remains extremely poor. Regarding the beginnings of the genre, he has stated: “Many people tried to stop us … As a pioneer, I think I can talk about that, about how the government tried to stop us, about how people from other social extractions … looked down on young people from the barrios, underestimating and seeing us as outcasts.”[289] Reggaetón became a means of expression for young people from underprivileged backgrounds and lower socio-economic class, and also because of this it

[289] Javier Andrade, “Who’s Your Daddy? Daddy Yankee Takes Reggaetón to the Next Level with ‘Gasolina,’” *Miami New Times*, March 10, 2005.

has been discriminated against by those who consider themselves belonging to a higher social class and having a higher *status*.

As a final consideration, all the styles discussed in this section and relevant to the key axis of this thesis have a (lower) social class element in common – whether because they were considered second class for being created by people from poor backgrounds in Puerto Rico (e.g. bomba, plena, reggaetón), or because they were developed by Latinos and thus considered inferior in US Mainland by upper class White US citizens.[290]

The Significance of Musical Expressions in the Lives of Puerto Ricans

Music and dance have played a central role in the lives of Puerto Ricans, both because they are central to the way people socialize, but also as cultural and identity markers.

> Music, in the history of Puerto Rico, has had a role of great significance as a medium of cultural expression. The musical activity of five centuries reflects that Puerto Ricans have created, developed, and fostered a diversity of genres ranging from folk music, concert music and new genres. Puerto Rican music and musicians have forged and enriched the identity of being Puerto Rican.[291]

This quote summarizes some of the key experiences I made first-hand while in Puerto Rico. At first, I was quite shocked by the variety, quality, and frequency of live music performances I had the chance to witness on the island since my first visit in 2014. Before then, I had lived and performed across Italy, a country with a great music tradition, and in Los Angeles, one of the music capitals of the United States. I had also lived in Madrid, Spain, a very lively city musically, and in London, considered the music capital of the European continent. Therefore, when I state that the musical production of Puerto Rico and the live performances on the island surprised me, it is an observation that comes from somebody with experienced ears. I was also drawn by the shift I witnessed in performances being 'music for people' (as I had previously experienced in Western countries) to becoming the 'music of people' in Puerto Rico. Any given day, in the surroundings of the San Juan metropolitan area, one can find multiple offerings, ranging from open air venues, bars, restaurants, streets, big squares, or the coliseum of live music events, with styles including autochthonous bomba, plena, salsa, and "imported" styles like

[290] This is a common trend in popular music and culture worldwide (see Hall 2009; Friedman 2013).
[291] Translated from Spanish, available at: https://enciclopediapr.org/encyclopedia/musica-puertorriquena-y-su-historia/#1463492689874-dd12c211-136e (accessed 31/01/2017)

reggae, flamenco, jazz or hard rock. The quality of performances and musicians on the island is also very high, something that a world touring Salsa musician from Cuba and living in London who visited me in Puerto Rico in 2019 also remarked on, after attending 'regular' free salsa concerts played across the island over a long weekend. Another striking difference from other regions is that people hardly ever use 'background tracks' to play or sing over during a live music performance – as can happen for example most commonly in Italy, the country where I grew up, where 'suonare con le basi karaoke' (playing over karaoke background tracks) has become particularly common after the economic recession of 2009 and salaries for full bands dropped exponentially, besides a generalized acceptance of this practice among the public that tends to have a less sophisticated ear for live music than Puerto Ricans.

The importance of musical expressions as a Puerto Rican identity marker and social aggregator is affirmed by its double colonial past and multiple impositions from Spain and the United States. For the past 500 years Puerto Ricans have not been able to make independent choices over fundamental aspects that define a state and its citizens – such as the legal and the educational systems that have been superimposed by their colonizers. Consequently, music, dance, and the arts became the only outlets where Puerto Ricans could practice a certain degree of freedom to develop a style and define their own identity away from the colonizers' impositions. This differs indeed from other Spanish colonies like Mexico, where autochthonous music expressions were prohibited to Indigenous people; in Puerto Rico the Spaniards were not so concerned with this particular aspect.[292]

Spanish influences, and most recently those of the United States, are surely permeating the Puerto Rican sonic space, but in a quite holistic and integrated way, and not as the product of impositions or prohibitions. Thanks to the multiple transculturations taking place in Puerto Rico across centuries, its musical legacy is still deeply rooted in practices and sounds that have Taíno, Spanish and African Roots, whilst the influence of US-based music is still quite limited because it has been a territory of the US, thus of the English-speaking world, for only a little over a century vs. four centuries of the other abovementioned crossovers.

The use of music as an aggregator for citizens to fight for a common cause and using music with a purpose such as protesting for rights advancement or political change was

[292] See, for example, Hernández (2013) on musical censorship in Mexico under Spanish rule.

witnessed during the protests that took place in July 2019 where protesters got creative and used music as a peaceful and effective way to bring about political change (Espada-Brignoni and Ruiz-Alfaro 2021). Underground music overcame censorship to gain popularity and political power, and Puerto Ricans got very creative in showing their dissent for offensive comments Governor Ricardo Rosselló had made. This included protesting on horses, jet skis, kayaks, and motorcycles, but people dancing provocatively *perreando* (lit. 'dogging', reggaetón's characteristic and very sexually explicit dance) was what might have sent the strongest message. In fact, after several days of protest, a *perreo combativo* (the provocative dance style, used with a combatant purpose) was organised outside the governor's office to generate political power through dance and, after a few hours of the provocative dance, Rossello's resignation came.[293] What was further remarkable about this episode, also in light of the considerations made above about reggaetón's origins and social class element, was that this music, which had originated in low-income communities, successfully unseated the highest elected official in Puerto Rico by tapping into its political power. This episode shows how Puerto Ricans have expressed social commentary and political critique, resisted state control and censorship, and defied racism and social inequalities through the collective action of music and dance.

In conclusion, the phenomenon of societal discrimination described in Chapter 1, contextualized to the field of education in Chapter 3, has also played out at the musical level in Puerto Rico. This was substantiated above, discussing key Puerto Rican musical genres, and showcasing how in bomba, plena, música jíbara, salsa and reggaetón the divide between first-class vs second-class citizens is reflected according to where these genres were born and who played them. Likewise, gender discrimination and race-based inequalities also come to surface in Puerto Rican musical expressions, as discussed in Chapter 2.

[293] Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/01/how-music-took-down-puerto-ricos-governor/ (accessed 27/08/2021).

Appendix II. List of Interviewees

NAME	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Social Class/Socio-economic Background	Interview Place, Date and Language[294]	References or affiliations
Amarilys Rios	F	Puerto Rican "White/*India"*	Middle class	Río Piedras (PR), 29/04/2019, Spanish	Bomba percussion teacher at Taller Tambuyé; percussionist and background singer for Tego Calderon and Chencho Corleone.
Amauro M. Febres Merced	M	"Latino, Puerto Rican, with Afro-descendant racial traits"	From a middle-class family but grew up in a poor Carolina rural neighbourhood – both parents were born very poor, and they were the first ones in their families to study in university and get a PhD.	Hato Rey (PR), 16/05/2019, Spanish	Founder of La Bomba Va; teacher.
Ángel G. Quintero Rivera	M			Ocean Park (PR), 14/04/2017, Spanish	Author (see bibliography)
Antoinette Rodz López	F	"Puerto Rican"	Middle class, from Carolina.	Inter Cupey (PR), 23/04/2019, Spanish	Member of: Yubá Iré, Tamboricua, Sak Entertainment, Laberinto del Coco. Bomba teacher at Tamboricua.
Brenda Hopkins Miranda	F	"White Puerto Rican"	Her mother is a Puerto Rican from Corozal with simple rural background, and her father is from the US and grew up in a farm.	Inter Cupey (PR), 18/04/2017, English	Professor at the Music Department of Interamericana University; artist at Brenda Hopkins Miranda.
Chamir Bonano *La Voz Dulce de la Bomba*	F	"Black Puerto Rican"	Poor-middle class, she was mostly raised by her grandparents, and she grew up in Sabana Abajo (Carolina).	Inter Cupey (PR), 02/05/2019, Spanish	Founder and singer at Chamir Bonano; singer at Pirulo y la Tribu, Laberinto del Coco y Bataclán; educator.

[294] All interviews originally conducted in Spanish have been translated into English by the author.

Christina N. De Jesús Villanueva	F	"Black" Puerto Rican		Rio Piedras (PR), 17/04/2019, English	Biologist and bomba dancer.
Daniel "Danny" Ayala Pizarro	M	"Black, Afro-descendant"	From a poor family, he grew up in a *caserío* in Loiza.	Inter Cupey (PR), 20/05/2019, Spanish	Founder of La Resistencia.
Fabi Billoch	F	"Family with Spanish last names and direct lineage"	Middle class.	Inter Cupey (PR), 29/04/2017, English	Trumpeter and graduate from Interamericana University.
Focus Group	2F, 2M			Inter Cupey (PR), 30/03/2017, Spanish	Four BA students from the Music Department at Interamericana University.
Gabriel Oliver	M	White "but my brothers are Black" (from the mother's side).	Upper-middle class, his father is a doctor, and grew up in Trujillo Alto.	Inter Cupey (PR), 09/05/2019, Spanish	Drummer and percussionist.
Iveliz Calderón	F	"Dominican-Puerto Rican mix, Black-Hispanic"	Fluid, from poor to middle class, she grew up in Trujillo Alto.	Hato Rey (PR), 13/05/2019, Spanish	Member of La Resistencia.
Jaime O. Bofill Calero	M			Miramar (PR), 18/04/2017, Spanish	Professor at the Conservatory of Puerto Rico.
Julissa Ossorio Bermúdez	F		Middle class	San Juan (PR), 13/04/2017, Spanish	Professor at the Music Department of Interamericana University.
Lorna León Lugo	F	Black, aware of colourism, "as I'm not super Black nor super White, but I identify as a Black woman."		Hato Rey (PR), 18/04/2019, Spanish	Member of Ausuba.
Marién Torres López	F	Light-skinned Puerto Rican	Middle class	Río Piedras (PR), 20/04/2018; 06/05/2019; 24/05/2019. Hato Rey (PR), 25/02/2022; 04/03/2022; 11/05/2022;	Director and Founder of Taller Tambuyé and Ausuba; Director of Encuentro de Tambores and Barrileras 8M.
Melody Stair	F	"Black, father from Panama, mother from PR"	Middle class	Inter Cupey (PR), 16/04/2019, English	Singer

Miguel Cubano, Ed D	M	"White Puerto Rican"	Low middle class, born in Santurce, grew up in Puerta de Tierra in a working-class neighbourhood, mostly made up of people working in the docks.	Inter Cupey (PR), 27/03/2017, Spanish	Director of the Music Department, Interamericana University Metro campus (Cupey).
Minirka Cabán Casanova	F	"Black Puerto Rican"	Raised by a single mother of low-middle social class	Hato Rey (PR), 29/04/2019, Spanish	Singer at Ausuba, educator.
Narcisa Córdova Rodriguez	F	"Afro-Puerto Rican"	From Loíza (one of the poorest towns of Puerto Rico)	Conversation on the road to Ponce, 2019	Historical bomba dancer from Loíza with a trajectory of more than 50 years who specializes mostly in corvé.
Prof. Nelie Lebrón Robles, M.A.	F	Black Puerto Rican		Interviewed with her husband, Dr. Emanuel Dufrasne González. UPR Rio Piedras (PR), 24/05/2019, Spanish	Nelie is the Director of the Music Education and General Studies Department at the Music Conservatory of Puerto Rico, and the lead singer and vocal arranger of Taller Conjunto Paracumbé. Manuel is an Ethnomusicologist, a retired Professor or the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, and director of the Taller Conjunto Paracumbé.
Noel Allende Goitía	M	"Black Puerto Rican"	Poor, working class parents, 7th day Adventists.	Inter Cupey (PR), 1st: 20/03/2017; 2nd 23/03/2017; 3rd 04/04/2017, Spanish	Music Professor, Independent Researcher.
Dr. Pablo Luis Rivera	M	"Afro-descendant" Puerto Rican	From *barrio* San Antón in Carolina, his father was a construction worker, and his mother was a teacher with a low salary. He grew up in a poor neighbourhood, but with a great quality of life.	UPR Carolina (PR), 15/05/2019, Spanish	Professor at the Faculty of General Studies, University of Puerto Rico; co-director of Proyecto AFROlegado.

Ricardo Pons de Jesús	M	Light-skinned Puerto Rican	Born in Santurce and grew up in Rio Piedras in the suburbs with his mother, a university counsellor, and his stepfather.	Ocean Park (PR), 27/03/2017, English	Musician at Viento de Aire; Director of Conjunto de Bomba y Plena at Interamericana University.
Marguerita "Tata" Cepeda *La Mariposa de la Bomba*	F	"Black, *Latina, Boricua*."	Poor social class, then turned into working class/lower-middle class, grew up in Santurce.	Viejo San Juan (PR), 07/05/2019, Spanish	Founder and Director of Escuela de Bomba y Plena Doña Caridad Brenes de Cepeda.
Xavier "Piro" Rosario De Jesús	M	"Black Puerto Rican"	Poor-middle class, working class, he grew up in Carolina.	Inter Cupey (PR), 02/05/2019, Spanish	Musician and Educator.

Appendix III. Questionnaire

Background information

- Gender assigned
- Gender he/she identifies with (if different from above)
- Race (as usually described in official docs/questionnaires)
- Race he/she identifies with
- Family ethnic background (countries parents/grandparents came from)
- Religion/religious beliefs
- Other social groups you feel you belong to besides gender and race you would like to add

Questions

1) Do you think genders that make up Puerto Rican social make-up are equally represented in the curricula across all the courses you have been taking so far? Y/N
    - If not, please say why not and why you think it is so.
2) Do you think genders that make up Puerto Rican social make-up are equally represented in the curricula of this course? Y/N
    - If not, please say why not and why you think it is so.
3) Do you think that the different races of Puerto Rican social make-up are equally represented in the curricula across all the courses you have been taking so far? Y/N
    - If not, please say why not and why you think it is so.
4) Do you think that the different races of Puerto Rican social make-up are equally represented in the curricula in the curricula of this course? Y/N
    - If not, please say why not and why you think it is so.
5) Do you think the race/ethnicity you identify with is represented fairly across university curricula?
    - Please respond Y/N and elaborate.
6) Do you think the race/ethnicity you identify with is represented fairly in the curricula of this course?
    - Please respond Y/N and elaborate.
7) Is there any other social category you feel is not equally represented across school and/or class curricula you would like to mention?
    - In case, please specify and elaborate