

# If I Giya Soma Dis Ting You Ga Talk It

An Exploration of the Use of Bahamian Creole and Standard English by Young Bahamians

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the use of Bahamian Creole and Standard English among educated young Bahamians. It explores the divide between formal Standard English and informal Bahamian Creole within the historical context of British colonization in The Bahamas. The study analyzes the relationship between these two language variations, tracing their development from childhood influenced by family to experiences abroad for university. It discusses how previous generations were shaped by colonial attitudes that devalued Bahamian Creole and elevated Standard English, leading to the ability to code switch between the two languages.

Furthermore, the thesis explores how the university experience challenges these ingrained linguistic attitudes as students strive to assert their Bahamian identity within institutions that reward Standard English. It highlights the emergence of a double identity in different linguistic situations, revealing the reliance on oppressive structures through code switching. However, the thesis suggests that this is changing and explores how students actively resist these linguistic rules, seeking freedom and alternative ways of expression. Ultimately, this ethnography sheds light on the evolving linguistic landscape of young Bahamians, examining the complex interplay between language, identity, and resistance.

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## Introduction

“And then when they know me they is be like ‘Aww, she just like ona us’”. - Sasha

“‘And in what universe did you think this sentence structure was gonna work?’ Like, in my universe! The one that I was brought up in, this makes sense.” - Neka

“We know it’s colonization but like, it been sooo long.” - Riesha

“It’s a blessing and a curse I think. On the one hand, it’s sumtin’ that make us so unique as a country, on the otha hand, it’s like a burden you is have to carry like ya hafta watch da way ya is speak tuh make sure people understand.” - Sherrea

“If you could understand me, you understand me. If you don’t understand me, das ya problem, das ya wybe. If you don’t wan learn sumn, if ya don’t wan learn why dog don’t bark at park car, den ine da one.” - Ash

“I feel like I tryna hold onto sumtin, but I try not to feel that way” - Destiny

“People always asking me to speak in Bahamian but if I say ‘ise be like’ yall will literally think I’m slow”. - Amelia

“I been grapplin’ wit dis, like the fact that it’s ingrained in me at this point to code switch. And I’m like why am I code switching? Why do I feel like code switching makes me feel more intelligent?” - Paloma

My aim wit dis thesis is tuh undastan the use a languages spoken in The Bahamas and how my generation is view and use dem. As a Bahamian woman, dis da continuation a my desire tuh lifup da Bahamian community, comin’ tuh undastan da double consciousness we gat (Du Bois 1903; Hill Collins 1990), ahn examin’ how we ca express aresef tru language. Dis thesis examines sevrал diffrent temes which my participants showcase tru dose powerful quotes. My participants an me is explore comfort in Bahamianese, da effects a colonization, double identity, hegemonic presha, influence towards British standards, code switching, ahn conscious resistance, tuh name couple. You does see dis in Indigenous communities round da worl, includin’ dat a Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand ahn First Nations’ in Canada (Khawaja 2021; Matika et al. 2021); da loss a language have a critical effec on self-identity an well-being.

However, language reclamation have da potential tuh improve a sensa belongin, community, and cultural connectedness (Khawaja 2021, 5). Webb-Gannon does say “if language, ‘key to worldview and the embodiment of Indigenous culture’, is lost, so, too, is the culture that depended upon and supported it” (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005; Webb-Gannon 2021, 83). Explorin each a dese temes alongside are stories help tuh make sensa how Bahamians is learn Bahamian Creole an Standard English, use Bahamianese in dey eryday, an da ways dey actively resisin’ colonial influence, ultimately contributin’ tuh oda linguistic an anthropological study a Indigenous groups an communities dat speak creoles an pidgins.

I start my thesis in Bahamian Creole because I write within an emerging tradition of decolonial writing and research, aiming to challenge the power imbalances that exist within academia. Who decides what is ‘official knowledge’ and what perspectives are deemed valuable to academic discussion? I take inspiration from scholars like Anzaldúa (1999), de la Cadena (2015), and Tuhiwai Smith (2012) who use language and their cultural identities to challenge the dominance of English and other tools of colonialism, pushing back against assumptions that this is the only acceptable way of constructing and communicating valuable knowledge (Chiblow and Meighan 2022, 209). Anzaldúa states “wild tongues can’t be tamed, they can only be cut out”, highlighting the role of language and identity in knowledge construction and arguing that dominant forms of knowledge production, like within our institutions, often marginalize non-dominant perspectives, thus leaving us to either assimilate or rebel (1999, 76-8). De la Cadena’s (2015) and Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) texts argue for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in academic discussion, encouraging decolonized research approaches that respect Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems, and challenge dominant Western constructions of knowledge. These works helped me gain confidence, as through a Bahamian lens, using autoethnography and liming and ole talk, I aim to explore the use of language by young, tertiary educated Bahamian women abroad, from childhood to adulthood, and examine possible methods of linguistic resistance in their current lives. I examine this by moving through how we learn Bahamian Creole and Standard English from our schools and family, whose generation was impacted by the education systems of their time, then how these ‘rules’ influence how we express ourselves abroad at university, reinforcing our code switching and double identities, and finally, the strategies we use to consciously resist these teachings and express ourselves through Bahamian Creole. Like these scholars, this project actively challenges dominant Western understandings, and highlights the value of diverse perspectives and approaches to knowledge production and academic discussion.

When reading this thesis, it needs to be done so actively, reading with determination and engagement, as I write in Bahamian Creole, without translation, asserting my participants’ and I’s voices politically (see writing by Canagarajah 2022). For my participants and I, writing in

Bahamian Creole allows for a greater range of nuance and meaning compared to Standard English, and my use of collective terms such as ‘we’, ‘us’, and ‘our’, reminds the reader that this is a co-creation of knowledge as a decolonial method and design. Our voices and stories should not be taken for granted, nor understood in a generalized way. This thesis displays my participants’ and I’s distinct discussions of experience and knowledge, showcasing that it is not fixed but rather constantly evolving and changing, thus the reader must actively situate themselves in our positions, as with other non-conforming texts, to truly experience and understand the discussions we have (Anzaldúa 1999; Hurston 2018; Simpson 2014).

Throughout my writing, I code switch between Bahamian Creole and Standard English in order to challenge how we view language, which appears in my participants’ stories as well. Writing in any language outside of Standard English can be seen as less professional or credible, especially when one is not familiar with the language or culture being discussed (Nero 2015). I am intentionally pushing against this assumption, promoting greater, deeper linguistic diversity and inclusivity in academia despite the risk of making some readers uncomfortable. This space will be uncomfortable because it is not the norm, it is not hegemonic. Regardless of the discomfort, my overall goal is to share my language and culture with the academic world, and though my writing style and diction can seem unusual, it is important to me that I highlight and acknowledge my language as a tool for the expression of my ideas and experiences.

Across the Caribbean, many countries speak Standard English alongside their own creole, unique to their region (Hackert 2004, 1; Reinecke 1975, 373). Bahamian Creole, also referred to by Bahamians as Bahamianese, is distinct to The Bahamas, though typically seen as a dialect rather than a creole language (Hackert 2004, 1). It might appear to be a dialect of English, however Bahamian Creole has its own grammar system completely different from Standard English, though it has decreolized over the years enhancing the illusion that the two are similar (Donnelly 1997, 17).

This thesis, its motivations, aims and significance are all equally personal and committed to considering the use of Bahamian Creole over Standard English in different situations and the possibility of decolonizing practices that may arise despite colonial pressures in education. Growing up, I failed to notice that I had an accent until I encountered non-Bahamians who frequently commented on it or asked me to repeat myself when I spoke. Elsing discusses that although we might not be able to recognize our own accents, we all have them, as they tell others who we are and reflect the places we’ve been (1998, 154). In school, I learned to distinguish between the way we, Bahamians, spoke and enunciated words, and the way we should write them. Bahamian Creole English was used with family and friends, and deemed as ‘bad’, ‘broken’, and unprofessional (Oenbring and Fielding 2014, 31; see extensive work by

Rickford 1985). In important, professional, and formal settings, however, we were to use Standard English, being told to speak ‘properly’. This standard was derived from the conventions of grammar and expression controlled by those in power, in this case previously the British, that establish governments, educational institutions, and more, to regulate language but ensure the power dynamic is maintained in their favor (see Bex and Watts 1999 on the intricacies of the Standard English debate).

Before long, I learned to code switch between the two languages creating a double identity<sup>1</sup> for myself that manifested depending on who I was speaking to or where I was (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998, 29; Du Bois 1903, 2; Layne and Miles 2022, 5). Due to these colonial teachings, Bahamian citizens show negative attitudes towards the use of Bahamian Creole, and refrain from using it when interacting with non-Bahamians, as Standard English is taught to be superior to the local creole (Hackert 2013, 127; Oenbring and Fielding 2014, 47). As of now, I use Standard English with my fellow colleagues and others from around the world and save my natural speech for those closest to me, mainly from The Bahamas, perpetuating these colonial understandings. In spite of this, I try to speak Bahamianese with a few non-Bahamian friends who have stuck around long enough to gain access to this double identity, though it is personally difficult and they do not always understand it. I continue to use code switching to conform to hegemonic pressures, though I do practice some active resistance and am aware of my language switching (Boztepe 2003, 14).

The aim of colonization, in regard to language, is to control and create a dependency on the structures of oppression put in place, which help erode the culture of that land (Reid et al. 2017, 21). However, as Oenbring and Fielding’s research suggests, some young Bahamians seem to be rebelling against these structural stigmas, exhibiting a resistance to the ongoing superior-inferior rules (2014; see also Hackert 2004). Liberatory knowledge and practice help enable young Bahamians to exercise freedom as they transform their way of thinking about language use (hooks 1994, 147; see also Freire 1970). This project takes note of these foundational feelings of oppression and explores the choices of language use Bahamians make, where this might come from, and how, if at all, do we use conscious resistance to move away from negative connotations around its use.

I use autoethnography and liming and ole talk, decolonial theory, and linguistic studies to present a rich account of the connection between language, education, and identity, and the implications behind the experiences of my participants and I’s use of Bahamian Creole and Standard English. As such, I do not exclusively use anthropological works, as this thesis moves across several social ideas and themes. This thesis also has the potential for further dialogue on

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<sup>1</sup> Double identity is defined and explored in chapter 3.



creoles and standard languages around the world, despite specifically discussing The Bahamas, and the relationship between code switching, studying abroad, and national identities. Although there are strong suggestions to look at other Caribbean countries for historical and linguistic examples in relation to this topic, it is not the same; any Caribbean person will tell you that our range of colonial histories greatly influences the large difference between our cultures today. To fill this gap in discussion about The Bahamas, I use a Bahamian approach and Caribbean methodology, like Nakhid-Chatoor et al. (2018) present, which serves to make space for the Bahamian experience in academia, by and for Bahamians, written to reflect our distinct ways of being and knowledge.

## Theoretical Framework

### Language and Identity

There is a significant amount of work in anthropology on language and identity, specifically under the subdiscipline of linguistic anthropology. This thesis sits within the third field of the discipline that focuses on anthropology through linguistic methods and data (Duranti 2003). I investigate questions of sociocultural identity, like in the work done by Don Kulick on language and identity in Papua New Guinea (1992). Kulik's ethnographic study showcases that language and identity are closely entwined and when there is a shift in language, it can lead to a loss of cultural heritage and a sense of dislocation for individuals and their community (Kulik 1992). By focusing on identity through language, I come to examine colonialism and power between societies as scholars before me have done as well (Bucholtz and Trechter 2001; Harrison 1988; Twine and Warren 2000).

I am particularly interested in linguistic anthropology in regard to the phenomena of code switching that I discuss heavily in this thesis. Code switching has been investigated since early 1900, by scholars like Du Bois (1903), Gumperz (1982), and Weinreich (1953), and was viewed as systemic, skilled and socially meaningful (Woolard 2004, 74). Typically, it was seen as a lapse of linguistic ability and memory, and if occurred, believed to be ordered by a system with correct grammar (Woolard 2004, 75). However, code switching is more complex than this. Rather than asking why people code switch, anthropologists must ask "why people who have multiple 'ways of speaking' would restrict themselves to a subset of them" (Woolard 2004, 75). For Bahamian Creole English speakers, identity is of central importance as the language signifies being a part of a particular history, country, and culture. Code switching changes based on

individual interactions with different people, meaning code switchers embody different identities depending on who they are talking to or the environment they find themselves in.

To look at code switching and different identities, I use Du Bois' discussion on internal struggle as "double consciousness", which provides a framework for understanding how Black people see themselves versus how they are seen through the gaze of racism (1903, 8). Double consciousness arises from the historical and ongoing experiences of oppression and discrimination faced by marginalized groups, especially by African Americans in the United States, of which Du Bois speaks. We are constantly navigating our existence with two conflicting perspectives: one which is our own self perception and awareness, shaped by our personal experiences and thoughts, and the other based on how we are being perceived and judged by the dominant society (8). Double consciousness in racial and linguistic identity can cause internal conflict and confusion, as individuals "ever feels his twoness... two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (8). Within this thesis, the linguistic identities of my participants and I follow the doubling that Du Bois discusses. Speakers moving between Standard English and Bahamian Creole can be understood as navigating different identities that are "both felt and ascribed linguistic[ally]" and are historically and socially constructed (Nero 2015, 344). This is especially so when looking at the perception in The Bahamas, like other Caribbean countries, where the creole is marked as the uneducated vernacular, and that the use of the standardized language is representative of a refined, educated person (Nero 2015). As a framework it allows us to understand the complex mental and social experience of marginalized individuals who are constantly aware of themselves and the eyes of hegemonic society, shedding light on the struggle for identity which results in situational code switching.

Further, Shondel Nero's (2015) proficiency in language and identity in Caribbean Creole English communities offers me a post-structural lens which rejects notions that identity is fixed and is rather a site of constant struggle which shifts based on social understandings and environments. I also engage with the philosophical works of Charles W. Mills, as he contextualizes Black identity in a way that can also be applied to linguistic identity and colonization. Mills theorizes the Racial Contract as an expression of the social contract, and establishes that through the Racial Contract the world is made by and for white people, and thus the system continuously perpetuates ideas of the superior-inferior complex many people of color learn and hold (1997, 3). He also suggests that the spatial subcontract acts as a key mechanism for enforcing and maintaining the Racial Contract (43). In a linguistic sense, this theory suggests that certain dialects and languages are associated with specific social spaces, and when individuals move across different domains, they may code switch to match the linguistic norms of these spaces (45-8). In this context, Bahamianese sits in an informal, intimate space with friends and family, while Standard English is employed in formal or public contexts,

such as professional or educational environments. Thus, the use of Bahamian Creole or Standard English is dependent on the social space and context, as well as the speaker's social identity. The perception that Standard English superior to Bahamian Creole in The Bahamas, continues to be perpetuated by Bahamian society's ongoing colonial influence, affecting the cultural identity of Bahamian people as they switch between two languages and two identities (45-8). The spatial contract highlights the dynamic nature of language variation and the distribution of language varieties. Mills' theory helps to contextualize the racial and historical connotations of our linguistic identities, and better understand the social and cultural dynamics that shape language and its role in society (43).

## Decolonization

One of the driving forces of this thesis is the exploration of decolonization through the practice of language. Decolonization and liberation play a significant role within the discipline of anthropology, as historically, it has been linked to imperialism (Gordon 1991, 150). Though its origins are flawed, the anthropology we practice today is interpretive and reflexive. Harrison argues for a decolonized anthropology, taking into account the legacies of colonialism and their dominance in the discipline (1997). She urges us to develop a critical consciousness that challenges dominant discourses and power structures, and actively work towards the liberation of all people (Harrison 1997). I specifically resonate with scholars like Harrison (1987), who are members of the decolonizing generation in anthropology that found themselves of the African diaspora, within a predominantly white American professoriate (see Baber 1990; Bolles 1989; Gersgenhorn 2004; hooks 1994; Price and Price 2003; Smith 2016; Williams 2018). Decolonized anthropology urges us to partake in fieldwork with the premise of freedom and equality, moving away from the "othering" of hegemonically divergent people (Harrison 1997, 2; Tuck and Yang 2012, 2; Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 2).

After reading bell hooks' work for the first time, I was inspired by her voice and discussions of academia, pedagogy, and resistance. I use bell hooks as a model for my writing, and discuss her work in my final chapter, which outlines synergetic decolonization through action and speech. She draws her inspiration from Paulo Freire, who spoke against traditional pedagogy, the "banking model of education", and laid out processes of liberation through deliberate action and learning (Freire 1970, 12). In hooks' work, she discusses engaged pedagogy and the way that transformation through education can help us engage with identity and social structures of resistance. hooks asks how we can create a postcolonial relationship with ourselves, revitalizing our identity outside the focus of institutional renewal (2003). She

states that “coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategically - to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects” (hooks 1994, 148). Thus, my project looks at how ‘coming to a voice’ is enacted by people who consciously speak and promote Bahamian Creole, including myself. Such conscious promotion of a creole voice supports her argument that “the power of speech is not simply that it enables resistance to white supremacy, but that it also forges a space for alternative cultural production and alternative epistemologies - different ways of thinking and knowing that were crucial to creating a counter-hegemonic worldview” (171). bell hooks’ liberatory approach helps explain and better understand counter-languages, like those from the alteration and transformation of British English by enslaved black people then made into its own separate speech (1994, 170; Freire 1970).

Within this project, I situate engaged pedagogy outside of the classroom setting, discussing it in relation to self-education, which helps my participants and I acknowledge and strive for resistance in our lives. As a form of liberatory practice, engaged pedagogy emphasizes the importance of integrating teaching and learning with activism, recognizing that education is not neutral but rather is embedded in social and political contexts, perpetuating or challenging systems of oppression (hooks 1994). I use engaged pedagogy, deploying the term “teachings” to refer to our previously taught knowledge, to explore how my participants and I decolonize our perspectives of language, and aim to use Bahamian Creole over Standard English. This adheres to hooks’ discussion of using our own languages and vernaculars to challenge Western hegemonic understandings of knowledge, overall fostering our cultural identities (1994, 148). I also situate engaged pedagogy through my writing within this thesis, writing in Bahamian Creole using colloquial terms, thus positioning engaged pedagogy directly in a tertiary academic setting. By doing so, I actively challenge the institutions hooks talks about questioning, to help cultivate a critical sense of social responsibility and action through institutional renewal and speech (171). hooks’ work outlines how the oppressive systems and dominant teachings we as Bahamians learn early in life can affect our linguistic identity, and how then, we might take decolonization into our own hands to guide us towards language resistance.

I use these teachings, as well as those from work by authors like Zora Neale Hurston (2018) and S. R. Toliver (2022), to write in a way that honors alternative methods of data collection, analysis and representation. I utilize Bahamian narrative traditions and language to explore liberation through anthropology. This reclaims and centers my participants and I from a colonial past, and elevates our stories within an institution that historically would not have us. Though we are not Indigenous due to our history, this work does reflect Indigenous postcolonial theory, as it aims to shift the political and social power imbalance between ourselves and the effects of colonization that have taught us to culturally assimilate (Lees 2016, 363; see work by

Vizenor 1996). Further, I write without translation, decentering Anglo-whiteness as the standard, especially in academia, and refocusing on the Bahamian audience this thesis was intended for. Understanding decolonization within this thesis means understanding that this is our push back against oppressive and suppressive forces, and that the use of storytelling in Bahamian Creole connects us with past and future generations within our community, similarly to Indigenous works (King 2011; Tuhiwai Smith 2012).

The theoretical components of this thesis sit heavily within the following chapters, which explore language, identity, and decolonization. I show how colonialist influences shape our understanding of Bahamian Creole and Standard English, and examine how the education system impacted the generations before us, and through generational trauma and memory this knowledge was emphasized and passed on to us. Eyerman (2001) discusses cultural and generational trauma as the loss of identity and meaning, which does not have to affect everyone in a community or experienced directly (2). Modern understandings of this trauma can be seen in discrimination which reproduces the trauma of racism through slavery (Argenti and Schramm 2010, 5). These memories are remembered and passed on to others, despite not being exposed to the traumatic event themselves. The effects of colonization in The Bahamas directly impacted the generations before us, resulting in a cycle of knowledge mobility between generations. These discussions make space for us to understand our use and experience with language and the movement away from these teachings.

## Outline of the Chapters

**Chapter two** provides historical context by examining the colonial Bahamas and the upbringing that shaped our perceptions of Bahamian Creole and Standard English. It delves into the histories of these vernaculars to understand how we use them. This chapter aims to situate the reader closely to our cultural background and knowledge. It also explores how our family and schooling influenced our language learning, connecting it to the discourse surrounding the practice of colonization and generational influence.

**Chapter three** focuses on our university experience and the necessity of code switching instilled in us during our secondary education. It explores the challenges and adaptations we make while navigating migration and transitioning into an international knowledge economy. This chapter has an emotional aspect, exploring the comfort and discomfort we feel when using different voices. It emphasizes the distinction between we-codes and they-codes, setting the stage for the following chapter's exploration of empowerment through resistance.

**Chapter four** identifies and discusses strategies for consciously resisting the prescribed rules associated with each language. It engages with decolonial pedagogy, highlighting the ways we practice liberation in our daily lives to uplift and empower Bahamian Creole. Through reflection and open resistance, this chapter shows how participants gain confidence and a stronger connection to our national identity despite the pressures of hegemonic systems.

## Methodology

This decolonial project aims to challenge colonial ideologies, drawing from Indigenous scholars who approach social issues from alternative cultural perspectives (see Deloria 1988; Davis 1981; Hill Collins 1990; Tuhiwai Smith 2012). In writing this thesis, I sit in an academic space they've curated, aiming to push academia out of its colonial comfort zone by using colloquial language and refusing to translate or over explain cultural elements (Anzaldúa 1999; de la Cadena 2015; Deloris 1988; Simpson 2014). This thesis explores how young, mobile, tertiary education Bahamians use and think about Bahamian Creole, possibly integrating decolonizing strategies in their lives today. I explore this topic epistemically, in a way that actively co-creates knowledge from an emic perspective. The analysis presented in the main chapters is based on immense fieldwork, guided and framed by my autoethnographic work and the liming sessions with my participants, focusing on our experiences of code switching and attitudes towards language use.

At the forefront of this thesis are my participants' stories and my autoethnographic vignettes. I use communal language like 'we' and 'our' as it reflects our collective effort to explore language in The Bahamas. My writing style, weaving stories and textual analyses, mirrors how I learned to formulate arguments and examinations in school, important to the expression of myself which acknowledges and resonates with my participants and other Bahamian readers. I want this thesis to shed light on experiences and feelings many people have, especially the Caribbean diaspora, but might be unable to express. This thesis aims to create a sense of home for my Bahamian audience despite its place within academia. The analysis conducted not only illuminates language discourse for other communities but the relationship between code switching, studying abroad, and national identities. Before discussing these relationships further, it is crucial that I outline the research methods employed in this study.

## Autoethnography

This thesis utilizes two methods: autoethnography and liming and ole talk. My autoethnographic fieldwork was primarily conducted while I resided in The Bahamas. There has always been an autoethnographic element to qualitative research, as early on, students were encouraged to conduct research rooted in personal connections (Anderson 2006, 375). However, this was never self-explored explicitly and reflexively until the 1960s when research began experimenting with self-observation and analysis (Hayano 1979; Sudnow 1978; see Wallace 1965; Zurcher 1983). Autoethnography allows me as a “native anthropologist”, centering my experiences as a Bahamian woman from Nassau, and engaging in self-analysis of my culture (Narayan 1993, 671). Ellis (2004) states that autoethnography explores the personal in relation to culture, and involves writing and research with multiple layers of awareness (38). Through the use of autoethnography, researchers navigate between wide cultural and social aspects of personal experience, looking inward to expose the vulnerable self which moves through or resists cultural interpretations (Chávez 2012, 341; Ellis 2004, 38; Reed-Danahay 1997, 6). Native autoethnography closes the distance between myself and my research, intertwining my stories with those of my community. It engages my readers by presenting my writing as an active, political dialogue that expresses a unique perspective (Narayan 1993, 676). Drawing inspiration from Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000, 744) who encourage storytelling as evocative autoethnography, I aim to create compelling emotional experiences that resonate with my readers. I also draw on analytical autoethnography, which situates the researcher within the study group and displays reflexivity and narrative visibility (Anderson 2006, 378). My vignettes are “situated within [my] personal experiences and sense making”, which I then engaged with alongside my participants (Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont 2003, 62). These shared experiences in conjunction with my participants, contribute to a deeper understanding of Bahamian Creole and Standard English. These scholars guide my writing, teaching the importance of researcher visibility, and the ability to illustrate and openly discuss changes in their beliefs and relationships throughout their fieldwork (Anderson 2006, 385). These aspects of autoethnography inspired my process of writing and coding, allowing me to capture experiences in real-time, both in The Bahamas and New Zealand during the year of this thesis.

Initially, I sought extravagant portrayals of Bahamian Creole and Standard English to document during my fieldwork, however, I soon realized this approach was arbitrary to the project’s goal of understanding the everyday usage of the two. Instead, I became more patient, allowing moments to naturally unfold, waiting until I felt compelled to jot them down. This opened up an honest dialogue within myself, as well as with my participants and readers

(Berger and Ellis 2007, 166). Particularly, being with my family and leaving soon prompted my appreciation and focus towards our conversations, helping to guide my vignettes.

With safety and anonymity in mind, I documented my experiences soon after they occurred, using various devices I had available such as my phone, iPad, or fieldwork journal. Later in a reflective space, I rewrote the stories, focusing on the details and emotions in the moment. When coding the collective data later, I would approach it intuitively exploring the connotations behind each interaction and the themes that unfolded (Anderson 2006, 384). In these moments, I wrote in full Bahamianese without concern if others understood it. It was important to pay attention to my speech, behavior, emotions, and thoughts to truly negotiate these situations and their lingering impact (Bochner 1984, 595; Bochner and Ellis 2001; Ellis and Bochner 2000). As I wrote, I noticed four key aspects of language use which determined how I spoke and which identity I displayed: comfort, discomfort, performativity, and conscious resistance. The length of the vignettes seemed to correspond with the intensity of emotions involved, as I strived to articulate my thoughts and reactions despite the rush of adrenaline. Introspective reflection of my vignettes gave me insight into the liminal space people of color occupy when examining language and the complexities of connection to culture and identity.

Through writing and reflecting, I developed an approach for engagement within the liming sessions for the future, focusing on these four sections and how they shaped their experiences and understandings of language. While most of my vignettes were written in The Bahamas, there were some written in New Zealand - mainly reflections on the liming sessions or identity, capturing my feelings. This process helped me find my voice, which Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend is the “first step on a road to justice that provides a way to communicate the experiences and realities of the oppressed” (58). Likewise, Chávez’s testimonios inspired my writing and development of a voice, as they challenge hegemonic forms of understanding the experience of ‘others’ with their use of testimonios (2012, 343). This empowerment and desire to challenge academia whilst embracing storytelling resonated with me as I too aim to do so with this thesis (344). Using autoethnography alongside liming and ole talk whilst drawing from different scholars means presenting alternative ways of thinking about excluded voices in a way that also honors my culture (Chávez 2012, 344; Elenes 2000, 115; Ellis 2004; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995).



## Liming and Ole Talk

The combination of autoethnography and liming and ole talk allows for a collaborative ethnographic approach, incorporating several data collection methods like interviewing, observing and analyzing (Roy and Uekusa 2020). Collaborative ethnography involves active involvement in a project, with individuals and researchers working through the design, execution, publication and outcome (Flueher-Lobban 2008, 174). This partnership has the potential to bring a production of knowledge that is negotiated to varying degrees (Lassiter 2019, 2). Though my participants did not specify the goals or methodology for this thesis, they contributed to the structure of each chapter by shaping the discussions and their importance. Collaborative work does not always happen through rigid rules, but can emerge within the context of a specific history and framework of moral and ethical commitments which uphold community integrity (Campbell and Lassiter 2010, 373; Campbell and Lassiter 2015). My execution of collaborative ethnography diverges from definitions and elaborations by different scholars (Boyer and Marcus 2020; Hill Collins 2013; Ishizuka 2016; see Lassiter 2008), as my main focus is establishing ethnographic writing with my community and actively incorporating their expectations. By adopting a mixed method approach, I gathered rich data whilst creating a small but strong community for my writing, discussing diverse yet interconnected perspectives. This approach highlights the emotions surrounding Bahamianese and its usage whilst fostering conversation on language revitalization and collective action.

Liming and Ole Talk, a Caribbean method and approach, is a central part of my fieldwork and I refer to them as limes or liming sessions. Limes are “scheduled or non-scheduled event where a group of people (friends, family, and acquaintances) take time” to ‘hangout’ (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 2). I conducted one lime in-person and seven across Zoom, finding adjusting to this new method a small challenge, feeling foreign in academia but familiar to my everyday Bahamian lifestyle. I had to ensure balance between the boundaries of the topic and allowing my participants the freedom to share and speak as they wished. Each lime was unique, influenced in part on our previous relationship with one another and the mood of that day. Limes are very relaxed, and allow for eating, drinking or doing nothing; thus if we were tired, there was no formality, we comfortably lied in front of the camera to talk (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 2). This method embodies being Bahamian and encompasses our knowledge, values, and beliefs, aligning with our regular interactions within the community. I use this method over semi-structured interviews or participant observation because it is by and for Caribbean participants, following the ways of being we know and understand.

Liming is somewhat similar to semi-structured interviewing, as it focuses on ‘how’ questions over ‘why’ questions, encouraging participants to tell their stories, at their own pace, whilst remaining on topic (Pankonein 2017). I began by asking participants to go over where they grew up and how they learned Bahamianese and participants moved through this as I actively listened. Eventually these stories bled into discussing extended family values to their time in school, overall focused on Bahamian Creole and Standard English (Lillrank 2014, 5). During the lime, I had a list of questions to guide me, though they were not directly asked, serving more as a reference for the stories shared. Limes are extensive conversations rather than structured interviews, so it was important for me to also share my experiences and opinions. By the end of each lime, my participants addressed each point, and I concluded by inviting them to share additional stories or thoughts about the future. Towards the end, participants gave detailed accounts of university experiences and spoke hopefully about their future and aspirations for our country.

Liming and Ole talk can be compared to other postcolonial Indigenous research, informed by relational ontologies and epistemologies. Talanoa, a common Pacific Islands practice, is used to describe conversations where people are engaged, allowing for the development of group conversation overtime, focusing on the interest of the participants (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 3). The setting of Talanoa is determined by the participants and the purpose is clearly outlined by those involved (Prescott 2008). As a research method, it is centered around building relationships and trust between the researcher and participants through open, honest communication, emphasizing storytelling and personal narratives for a deeper understanding of one’s experiences and perspectives (Vaiotei 2006, 23). Like liming, Talanoa is without a defined time frame and could conclude without making conclusive decisions (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 3). Further, Talanoa provides a space to reach a greater understanding of Pasifika issues in a way that reflects their cultural values. Liming and ole talk is the same, as it allows Caribbean researchers and participants to express ways of seeing and knowing unique and valuable to us (2). The method resonated with me in some ways, its indigeneity and focus on storytelling, however, I use liming because it originates from the practices of my people, and emphasizes characteristics I value as a Bahamian: social interaction, leisure, and relaxation (2). Overall, Talanoa follows a guideline, whereas liming is more informal and unstructured (Vaiotei 2006, 26).

Another Indigenous research method that can be compared to liming and ole talk is Kaupapa Kōrero which indicates conversing with the foundation for understanding, knowledge, and action (Marsden 2003; Ware, Breheny, and Forster 2018, 48; Williams 1957, 142). This communication method involves a whakapapa framework which can be achieved through kōrero which allows people to locate themselves in the world with their ancestors and

descendants (Royal 1998; Ware, Breheny, and Forster 2018, 49). Similar to liming and other Indigenous narrative approaches, Kaupapa Kōrero is created by and for Māori as the oral tradition expresses the aspirations, values, and perspectives (Ware, Breheny, and Forster 2018, 49). The research method has several layers and engages in formal, structured conversations about a specific topic or issue, and its guidelines ensure that the conversations are respectful, collaborative, and focused on the needs and perspectives of the participants (48-51). Again, I use liming and ole talk as a methodology as it speaks to my Caribbean heritage and culture. As a method, it relies on the fluidity and trusting environment that my participants and I are familiar with, as we run on slow-paced, it ga happen when it happen, “island time”, rather than structured, guided spaces (Fernández Santana et al. 2019, 115).

My fieldwork began after gaining ethics approval with the Victoria University of Wellington’s ethics committee, under the number 0000030309 on May 31st, 2022, based on the Human Ethics Guidelines provided by the university. I started whilst in The Bahamas, due to New Zealand’s COVID-19 Omicron variant lockdown. Over the next five months, before traveling back to New Zealand, I wrote eight vignettes based on my interactions with others throughout my everyday life, and wrote five more in New Zealand. During my time in The Bahamas, I conducted one liming session in person, with Sasha, and the following sessions between October and November 2022 via Zoom, which I audio and video recorded to go through later during my coding period. My participants are either still in university, completing different degrees, or have recently graduated (within 2 years) and are currently working. I must also mention that all my participants identify as women, though this sample was not planned. On my instagram account, I invited people to volunteer for the project and accepted people in chronological order based on the criteria. My interest with this positionality was because it heavily reflected my own, as I study and work. Our experiences then, would sit alongside one another equally for analysis rather than feeling out of place. I refer to this as positionality to help the reader understand our collective place, distinct and unique perspectives as Bahamian women studying/ied at university. This should not be used to generalize any aspect of the experiences we share, as we bring our emotions, experiences, cultural biases, assumptions, and beliefs to the project.

In August, I gathered four participants in Nassau to begin the liming sessions. However, things came up that inhibited us from meeting in-person. The limes then took place across the month of November, with the exception of my session with Sasha in person, each ranging from an hour to two and a half hours long. Many of my participants were abroad in university, while others were working, so I made sure to be flexible for their availability, especially considering time zones.

I began each lime by checking in with my participants, engaging in casual conversation and discussing session housekeeping. I informed them that these were like dropping by a family/friends house just because you were in the area, and that the conversation would flow naturally. This approach embodies Indigenous communication and research practices in a way that connects with my participants and myself as Caribbean citizens (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 1). Liming and ole talk as a methodology acknowledges cultural traditions, embracing both traditional and modern ways of thinking, fostering a respectful, comfortable exchange of information (Nakhid-Chatoor et al. 2018, 7). After thanking my participants for participating and stating my research question, I emphasized that I handled all aspects of the project, especially the recordings. I encouraged them to freely speak Bahamianese, as I personally reviewed each lime. I decided to record on two different media for coding purposes, but also to be fully present during the lime, allowing for organic conversation without distraction. Although only eight people volunteered for the project, the sample felt intimate yet broad enough to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic based on a breadth of experiences.

Liming allowed my participants to express the complexities of their worlds in an open environment. They went from speaking Standard English, as appropriate for an academic setting, to comfortably cackling and rowing in Bahamianese. After each session, I felt a sense of satisfaction alongside exhaustion, due to the time differences. However, I was grateful for such wonderful conversations with Bahamians in Bahamianese, whether related to me, old acquaintances, or new friends. Watching each session was also enjoyable, as each conversation contained so much gapseed and gettin' off amid a clear and complex grasp of our people, history, and identity. My participants played a large part in understanding these relationships and were an incredible source of knowledge, especially when discussing micro resistance (Dush 2016). Their insight helped me navigate the structure of my chapters and our conversations bled into themes important to discuss.

## Ethics and Challenges

After conducting my liming sessions, I allowed myself to breathe and reflect on the process, writing about my experience thus far. I then began coding, going through each recording and quoting or paraphrasing my participants, using the question sheet that helped guide the limes. Originally I thought I would use a denaturalised transcription style to discard terms like 'like' and 'umm', but found these were essential to how we use Bahamian Creole and the goal is to represent ourselves truly (Mero-Jaffe 2011, 232). By organizing the information and experiences shared, I categorized and grouped them into different sections. I included

quotations and phrases that stood out to me, capturing their voices as said in the limes. After categorizing, I took note of key themes I saw across everyone's session. For example, I looked at each comfort story, bringing them together to then be analyzed within that section. This was done chronologically, discussing childhood, high school, then university. Reading and rereading their stories allowed me to gain insight into the major themes and patterns of their experience and this project (Bönisch-Brednich 2018, 154). I intuitively moved through the data, as if I was simply hanging out with the information and narratives. Bönisch-Brednich acknowledges that working this way, messily and vulnerably, means working on intuition over coding, filing and ordering (2018, 155). When writing on my coding sheet, I found that like Taussig, I was successfully listening in on my participants, emphasizing their voices and acknowledging their roles as narrators of their own stories (2006, 62). This engagement is different from traditional academic writing, as this form of writing decolonizes the academic voice, centering new styles of communicating and knowing that relies on intimacy and honesty (Bönisch-Brednich 2018, 156; Sharman 2007, 119). Throughout my coding process I followed a hunch and ensured the texts produced were accurate representations of my participants' worlds (Murphy, McDonald, and Cantarella 2017).

Transcribing Bahamian Creole proved to be tedious using Google Docs. Bahamian Creole is barely written, so I've been writing words phonetically throughout this thesis. Autocorrect continuously altered words to what they thought it meant in US Standard English. I deliberately avoided translation to disrupt the colonial norms within academia, and autocorrect tried to change it every time. hooks writes that it is vital that we celebrate diverse voices, bringing language use to spaces deemed inappropriate by dominant society (1994, 172). While transcribing did not consume as much time as writing verbatim, it still required emotional and mental labor (Mero-Jaffe 2011, 233). Listening to each of my participants' stories, engaging with them everyday made me homesick. Completing the coding process took a month, unfortunately impacting my work ethic afterwards.

Conducting research came with several ethical challenges. The first concerned confidentiality and anonymity. I gave the option of anonymity to my participants, as information shared may affect their personal lives or deem them identifiable to the public. Their comfort with sharing information varied. Some opted for pseudonyms, while others and myself used our real names. For island names everyone was comfortable saying where they came from, however, I made it clear that I would refrain from including delicate information such as addresses, school names, etc. Similarly, in my vignettes I replaced people's names and kept scenes vague, as The Bahamas is a small place and certain things are easily identifiable. Further, limes tend to veer between different topics and beliefs and encourage the sharing of private and nuanced information (Fernández Santana et al. 2019, 107). Between preserving this

confidentiality and obtaining information for the thesis, I had to balance what was shared and what I wrote, as some stories were personal. I intuitively balanced information for my ears as a friend, and that for my ears as a researcher.

Finally, it was difficult to situate my voice alongside my participants' voices as I tend to put others before myself, caring about their thoughts over my own opinions. This could not be collaborative unless our experiences were discussed in tandem. Therefore, I ensured there was equal focus on my vignettes and what my participants shared. To do so, I start each chapter with a vignette, and as I interact with data from my participants, I analyze my own work alongside theirs. I then collectively discuss our experiences entirely. Before I share our stories, here is an introduction of each of my participants.

## Participants

**Sasha**, age 23, grew up in Nassau, New Providence with an American mom, a Bahamian dad and lots of siblings. Currently, she's living in Florida attending university for postgraduate studies in History. She was my first participant and we were actually able to have our liming session in person, as we were both in Nassau at the time. This lime felt a bit more structured on my part, mainly due to my nervousness. Despite this, it was a wonderful environment, as we met at a coffee shop in Sandypoint, drank tea and ate cookies, and ended up talking beyond the recording, as is the nature of liming. Over the course of an hour and a half, we got to know each other and our studies quite well. Sasha discussed being very aware of her code switching as she moved between different universities, and shared stories of her interactions with Bahamians abroad. The most enjoyable part was hearing Sasha talk about her love for reading and coming up with @bahareads as a way to share this love and connection to culture, literature and history.

Once I moved back to New Zealand in October, my first Zoom liming session was with **Destiny**. Destiny, age 24, also grew up in Nassau and graduated from university in the United States. At the moment, she is working in the U.S. which she focused on a lot during our conversation. We had a wonderful time chatting for an hour and twenty minutes, as we laughed and reminisced about our days in high school, catching plenty gapseed about Nassau people and politics. Her outlook on her current life and work ultimately pointed towards navigating speaking a mixture of Bahamian Creole, Jamaican Patois from her mother, and Standard English, and the identities that come with each voice.

**Neka**, age 23, has been a long time friend of mine from primary school and I was so pleased that she volunteered to be a part of this research project, as it meant getting to spend time with a friend known to be deep in academia. Neka grew up in Nassau with her mom and lots of extended family members, but spent some time at a boarding school in Tennessee before moving back home to finish high school. They are currently studying in New York completing their postgraduate degree in contemporary theater performance. While she was very open about her experiences and was okay to share whatever came up, she was clear that she had control over her pronouns. As you read through the chapters, and this introduction, I refer to Neka as both she and they interchangeably, as per their request. The experiences and emotions that came from this two-hour liming session were a lot deeper and darker than the others; Neka gave some very insightful discussions about language, education, and identity loss abroad.

**Amelia**, 23, is also doing postgraduate studies in the United States, and has moved around several universities since undergrad. Amelia is another one of my long time friends from primary school and we spent most of our years together in the same classrooms, with the same teachers. Our liming session was quite long, lasting around two and a half hours, enabling a lot of conversation around language and interacting with others. Amelia also talked about her maternal family from Eleuthera and the different generational dynamics in relation to teaching language.

My next Zoom participant, **Sherrea**, 24, grew up in Nassau as well, and is now doing her PhD at a university in Florida. Our liming session lasted for an hour and a half. She was very intentional with her discussions as we moved through the different topics and she contrasted a lot of things, presenting a duality in identity. Further, out of all the participants Sherrea seemed the most comfortable with code switching, though still expressing animosity towards having to do so for people to understand. Sherrea and I also went to the same high school, though she was a year above me, and we talked a lot about those days and the strictness of our administration towards language and behavior, and the effects this had on us later on.

Out of all my participants, **Riesha** is the one I'm closest to, so it was important that I only mentioned things said from the lime, rather than from what I know. Riesha is 23 years old and grew up in Nassau and Freeport and recently completed her undergraduate degree in Canada. She is now working in Nassau. Riesha and I are cousins and grew up side by side, thus a lot of the experiences she discussed about family and schooling before university we shared and experienced together. Our liming session was extensive, lasting almost three hours, but thanks to the familiarity, it meant that bringing up different topics was easy to put into this thesis.

**Ash**, age 25, is another participant from and currently working in Nassau. She went to the same high school as Destiny, Neka, Amelia, Riesha, Sherrea and I, though a few grades ahead of us. She attended a Canadian university and discussed her experience with other students quite in depth. During our hour and forty-five minute time, I really appreciated her descriptions and passion towards communicating with others and her drive to see to it that younger generations get all that they deserve in relation to our culture.

**Paloma**, 23 years old, was my final participant and unlike my other participants who grew up in Nassau, Paloma grew up in Long Island. She has a Bahamian father and a Canadian mother, though her mother has lived in The Bahamas for 27 years now. For university, she moved around a lot: from Canada for her undergraduate degree to California for her Masters and now in Florida for her PhD. Though this was the first time Paloma and I were speaking, despite knowing of each other, we spoke for two hours. Paloma shared a lot with me about high school and university life, and provided some really thoughtful quotes about colonization and family heritage, which I feature throughout this thesis.

Having established the groundwork of this thesis, my intentions, theoretical frameworks, methodology, and participants, here is the bulk of this thesis. Chapter two presents a colonial Bahamas, exploring how familial and educational institutions influence our language learning. This is a critical starting point which contributes to the overall argument and sets the tone for the subsequent chapters.



## Chapter 2: “Ya hear it and ya adapt it”

[The Split between Generations: The Effects of Colonization in The Bahamas on Language and Identity]

*Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom died September 8th, 2022. Her funeral took place a week later, and thinking nothing of it, that day my mother and I planned to visit my ill grandaunt who had flown in from Freeport and was staying with her sister.*

*We arrive at the house and greet everyone in the living room, yet their eyes and ears are glued to the television. British commentary sounded over footage of thousands of people waiting in line with bouquets of flowers. “Dis da Queen funral aye?” I ask.*

*“Yeah, we been watchin’ it since dis mawnin’.” My grandaunt looks back at the TV and quickly switches. “Isn’t it sad? May God rest her soul. Look at all the beautiful flowers they’re giving her.” This switch felt strange at first but I ignored it, until it became a pattern. They would speak to us relaxed and normal, yet when discussing the Queen they spoke as if she was in the room, judging their etiquette and English. I could feel the confused tension between my mother and I watching them react like this, genuinely tearful. It all felt so unusual.*

*My mom tried cracking a joke about Charles and Camilla, saying Camilla finally gets to be queen, but with that crowd the joke never landed. I giggled and between the two of us whispered whether we would have to change Prince Charles Drive to King Charles Drive now. We laughed to ourselves.*

*As we sat, they continued watching the funeral procession and talking to us about Harry and Meghan, and all of William’s children. They failed to pick up on it, but my mother’s face was full of indifference, nodding and responding with “Mmm, yeah”s, fully out of it. Out of respect and not wanting to start an argument I held my tongue and fixed my face at their adoration for this woman but I was beginning to fill with annoyance and rage. We had come to see how they were doing, how the doctor’s visit went, and yet here they were crying over someone they never knew, performing as if “the Queen’s English” was a way to pay respect to the dead. I know our family has always been dramatic but this was too much for me.*

*As we drove home, I ranted about how ridiculous dey was actin’. The Queen literally oppress us and we supposed to be THANKFUL she grant us Independence? And not even FA TRUE cause we’s still a Commonwealth country! She een do nuttin’ good fa us. Once I finally calmed down, my mother had a simple response ready for me, “Das jus how dem set is go”.  
[September 21st, 2022 - Pasha Fernander]*

Generational perspectives on Queen Elizabeth II and her reign vary significantly, particularly following her death, as worldwide people were torn between mourning her and/or breathing sighs of release (Warsi and Nakiyra 2022). Woodruff stated that “while glowing tributes continue to pour in, her death also sparked painful memories and anger among several former British colonies, many of which fought violent struggles for independence” (Warsi and Nakiyra 2022). Younger generations engaged in memes, jokes, and discussions of her colonial legacy (Jackson 2022). Meanwhile older Bahamians properly mourned her, reminiscing about singing “God save the Queen” in school before independence, and expressing admiration, stating “A true testament to declaring positivity and enjoying a long life that was spoken over her. May her soul rest in peace” (Sweeting 2022). Having such conflicting perspectives irritated me, and this generational shift that influences our views on our identity, language, and culture is reflected through my vignette. This chapter explores the generational gap, posing the question of how we can forge a collective path forward, when the past is seen so differently.

I went into this project with the assumption that as long as my participants identified as Bahamian and were mainly raised in the country, that they would all speak Bahamian Creole. Although this was the case, throughout the fieldwork, my participants described how they learned Bahamian Creole and Standard English from such a young age, and how differently they viewed aspects of the culture from their parents and grandparents. In this chapter, I explore the connections between the colonial Bahamas of the past and each of our experiences. The Bahamas is a fairly young country, so the effects of colonialism still linger between generations, though possibly fading as we move from the Baby Boomer generation to Gen Z and soon Gen Alpha. I want to preface that in writing this chapter, I found that there was a need to examine the history of The Bahamas alongside my participants’ and I’s experience. I want to be able to provide a clear contextual background for my readers about the history of the country, to provide a similar foundation to my participants and I, enabling the reader’s understanding of our emotions as closely as possible. This chapter reads more like a report than an analytical paper for this reason, to give a contextual framework for understanding what is to come in the next few chapters. This information might not be new for my Bahamian readers, however for those outside of my country I must outline how our construction of knowledge has been impacted by those before us and how it affects us afterwards.

In this chapter, I describe how my participants and I learned Bahamian Creole and Standard English. This gives context to the colonization of The Bahamas, our independence, and how different generations understand our perspective as a nation. I then examine how colonialism is perpetuated through learning, both in school and at home. This was a bit difficult to do for the older generation, as they were briefly explored by my participants nor could I find sufficient literature on their exact attitudes towards language, however by considering the

education system in The Bahamas we can navigate the emotions they might have felt during that time. I refer to all of this as generational compliance and influence because the generations before us raised and taught us their belief of obedience to the Crown. Although we ultimately form our own opinions and thoughts, these attitudes lead to unconscious biases and prejudices towards ourselves that today we have to unlearn. I explore the behavior of the older generation as an effect of colonization in The Bahamas, and through generational teachings and the ongoing education system, connect this to my participants' and I's implicit understandings and feelings towards being Bahamian, Bahamian Creole, and Standard English.

## Bahamian Creole

How we view ourselves, our culture, our country, and the world around us is shaped by our environment; who taught us to see the way we do? Our parents and grandparents (or overall those who raised us) greatly influence our perspectives on the Bahamian Creole and culture. Although we ultimately form our own opinions and thoughts, our pre-adolescence is dependent on those around us to teach us how to fit into society.

In the vignette, we speak Bahamian Creole, especially between my mother and I. This is how I learned to speak growing up. Though I can only be reflective now that I am an adult, I understand that I was taught two separate languages, Bahamian Creole and Standard English (though the latter was not introduced until I began attending school). Like other creoles, Bahamian Creole arose from a collision of language and culture under the social conditions of slavery, which reflect slight amounts of African influence alongside British influence from colonial rule (Holm 1983; Shilling 1984). It is historically and linguistically suggested to be heavily related to Gullah, spoken by Loyalists in several areas throughout the United States, that migrated to The Bahamas to remain loyal to Britain (Holm 1983; Shilling 1984; see also Hackert 2010, 42). I prompted my participants, wanting to understand who taught them Bahamian Creole. Though this was a simple response, I wanted to hear how my participants thought and felt about it. Each of them called me out on my question, responding that they hadn't been taught it specifically. Riesha explained to me, "I don't think anybody taught me, i just picked it up from family", "Ya hear it and ya adapt to it". We hear the language all around us, it is the sound of family: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, and even strangers on the street or at the neighborhood playground. Like with any other first language, we absorb what we hear and mimic it, rather than specifically being taught it. "It was our first language" Paloma exclaimed, "like Bahamian Creole feels more like a first language than the Queen's English". Some participants also expressed being distinctly encouraged to speak

Bahamian Creole. Paloma talked with pride about her Canadian mother, who moved to the country and upon having Bahamian children decided that they would speak the language too, rather than Canadian English. Imitating her mother she says, “This is where I want to raise my kids and I want my kids to know this culture as their own because they are Bahamian and that's what I want for them”.

Reflecting today, Bahamian Creole was our first language, prevalent in society yet unique to each island. By teaching English to those enslaved, native African tongues and language systems fused with the newly learned speech to create a creole that continues to transform through time (Hackert and Holm 2009, 14). Growing up in Nassau, Ash understood that her Bahamian Creole was different from her mother's who grew up in Eleuthera. “To this day if she talk in Eleutheran dialect ise can't understand cause das a whole different set of words, a whole different speed at which they talk”. Likewise, being from a Family Island, Paloma talked about the unique way that Long Island people speak. Though examples weren't given, as we spoke to each other during the liming session I could hear the differences in our pronunciations and word choice. The Long Island variation of Bahamian Creole, along with that of the other rural and sparsely populated outer islands appears heavier and thicker than, for instance, Bahamian Creole from Nassau (Cox and Fletcher 2017; Hackert 2004, 1). As I became more comfortable, my Nassuvian Bahamian Creole changed to match hers, as it typically does when I spend time with my maternal family in Long Island, where Paloma grew up. Bahamian Creole is something we hear all around us; this is how we learn to speak. And although there are varieties on each island, we can all typically understand one another.

One of the interesting points about the liming sessions that I discuss in my methodology section is the comfortability that came with talking to my participants. I was very happy to be able to have such wonderful conversations with fellow Bahamians in our own language, some related to me, some old acquaintances and some totally new faces. As we continued talking, the more comfortable and relaxed they became, the more their Bahamian Creole increased. Despite my initial debriefing of the project and its goal however, some participants didn't speak as much Bahamian Creole as they wanted. Going into this project I understood that this might be the case, due to our teachings of Standard English. Growing up, once we absorb our first language and are comfortable with that speech, we quickly learn Standard English, the language my grandaunts speak when discussing the Queen in my vignette, and its social connotations. Overtime we learn to code switch, which is the tendency to switch languages in specific situations depending on the context, ultimately allowing bilingual speakers to switch when deemed appropriate to maintain relationships with the people or environment (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998; Beatty-Martínez, Navarro-Torres, and Dussias 2020, 2; see also Poplack 1993). I discuss code switching more in depth in the next chapter, but for my mother and I in my

vignette, we move between Standard English when talking to our other family members compared to using Bahamian Creole between ourselves.

## Formative Years with Standard English

Before diving into Standard English and colonization in The Bahamas, it is important to acknowledge that the issues I discuss about colonization and its effect on language and identity are universal problems. Colonialism was not just a historical event, but rather a system of power that continues to shape the social, political, and economic structures of the present (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). As language helps to construct identity, colonists try to convey their cultures in different ways to gain cultural sovereignty (Sayedayn 2021, 134). Colonial forces across the world have imposed their languages and cultures on non-Western people, suppressing for many, thousands of years of linguistic diversity and knowledge by forcing assimilation and integration tactics (134). Additionally, I understand as well, that my participants and I are in a space of global privilege upon being able to speak and use English, especially as a tool in higher education, reinforcing the dominance of the language over others (Cavanagh 2020, 4). Language is a symbol of power that can reinforce social hierarchies and dominant order (Bourdieu 1991, 58). This power imbalance should be addressed when analyzing the use of English in a global society, alongside the precedence it takes over other languages universally.

Bahamians often refer to Standard English as “the Queen’s English” or “proper English”, as the Bahamian population was taught to speak English like the British. The ideology of a standard language means exerting a strong influence over anything directed at speakers of non-dominant varieties of English, often imposed by a dominant group (Stevens 1981). Whoever has the power to impose their language as normative appeals as allegedly superior (Wiley and Lukes 1996, 514). Standard English has been constructed historically and remains a potent force in contemporary society (Bex and Watts 1999, 1). For me in particular and within this essay, Standard English refers to the English which originates and is used by the oppressors of the Bahamian people, that being the British and other Western super powers (who also influence us heavily today, eg. the United States of America), as they maintain hegemonic societal influence (Hackert 2013, 128). Unfortunately, when we discuss creoles in relation to standard languages, it is imperative to recognize that these labels only exist because those in power dictate the construction of knowledge (Fanon 1967, 8). Language is a site of power struggle where dominant groups use control over language and discourse to maintain and reinforce their position of power, delegitimizing the speech of subordinate groups as inferior and uneducated (Mills 1997).

In our early years of school we are able to freely speak Bahamian Creole, as we were still learning how to communicate with others effectively. Paloma distinguished that primary school was more about learning the basics of grammar, sentence structure, and syntax, thus there was little policing of whether we spoke Bahamian Creole or Standard English. “You’re so young you talk the way you talk at home because there’s no sense of this is a formal setting” Riesha explained to me. However, it was around this age that parents, grandparents, and school began enforcing Standard English. For reference, my participants and I all have parents that speak Bahamian Creole with the exception of Sasha’s mother. Personally, my parents neither discouraged nor encouraged the speech of either. However, like many other Bahamian students in Oenbring and Fieldings’ study (2014, 46), both my grandparents discouraged me from speaking our language, despite my maternal grandmother having a very heavy Bahamian tongue. My paternal grandmother was a teacher, and always wanted us to speak “properly”, as in her eyes using the Queen’s English was equivalent to being intelligent. My participants shared their experiences with this as well. Destiny’s mother, Sasha’s paternal grandfather, and Amelia’s maternal grandparents all speak Bahamian Creole but advised against it, discouraging them from using it. For Amelia and her cousins it was the same influence, “even tho dey from da island, actually my granddad he’en really play wit us speakin’ Bahamianese”. She also talked about how her maternal grandparents taught her mother to speak Standard English. Though on a Family Island, where the creole is usually heavier, her mother was taught to speak “the Queen’s English” both inside and outside the home. Today, she rarely even adds “bey” to her sentences. This was then passed onto Amelia who, once she knew “right and wrong” was expected to behave and speak Standard English; “you een suppose ta talk bad”.

This attitude towards Bahamian Creole and Standard English might have been vital to how each participant moved through primary and high school, and whether or not they could see the effect of the use of Standard English once it became readily introduced and utilized. I want to note here that Sasha’s experience of primary and high school was significantly different from ours and was not discussed much, as she was homeschooled, though she interacted with other Bahamian students around her neighborhood and through various extra curricular clubs. In primary school, grades one to six, there were inklings of inclusion and discussion around Standard English. Neka found their first few years of education to be very strict, as their school taught Standard English through an extreme system of phonics (see Oenbring and Fielding 2014). Children would stand to the front of the class reciting consonant sounds and reading aloud each day. Once she moved schools and moved to higher grades there was less reading aloud, allowing her to develop her Bahamian Creole through interaction with other students. It felt good for them, their interactions felt inclusive, like “we all from da bottom of da trash can”, “running from goat and toting wata from da pump”. This unfortunately did not last long for

Neka, as her high school displayed a similar philosophy to her first primary school. Amelia and I reminisced about our shared primary school experience, as we were usually in the same class. In fifth grade, our teacher was so meticulous when it came to grammar and sentence structure that to this day Amelia and I find ourselves spelling out “cannot” and “do not”, rather than shortening it to “can’t” and “don’t”. We laughed wholeheartedly, picking out memories of our primary school years together, however it was clear that there was some resentment in reflecting on how our perception of language must have been shaped back then. Furthermore, in her first primary school, Ash acknowledges that she had a very heavy Bahamian accent, however once she moved to a stricter, more diverse school, she experienced a “culture shock”. Other students around her would ask, “Why you talkin’ like dat? Why you sound so ghetto?”. She began feeling pressure to assimilate and speak a mixture of Bahamian Creole and Standard English like the other children. Our experiences are similar to Nero’s study in Jamaica where they observed the difference in language use in schools, describing that students spoke in a language they don’t write in, and wrote in a language they barely spoke in (2015, 352). As we grew up and moved closer and closer to high school, grades seven to twelve, it seemed Standard English was becoming more apparent and desired by our teachers.

High school consisted of very similar experiences for all of us. A major factor to consider in the similarity in experience here is that seven of the nine of us attended the same high school, though at different points in time. Sasha, again, was homeschooled, Paloma went to a high school in Long Island, and for two years Neka went to a boarding school in Tennessee, then was at home for her final two years of high school. Although this narrows the experiences discussed, I believe that the information shared can be considered nationally, especially for students across other private schools due to parental expectations that come with paying for better schooling. High school was where Standard English was enforced. Paloma exclaimed that “high school is when they started putting pressure on how much you speak Bahamianese versus speaking proper English”, to prepare us for external and national examinations, as well as our futures as a part of the rest of the world. It is important to acknowledge as well that many of our teachers were not Bahamian, but rather British, Jamaican, or American, which meant many of them, especially the newer teachers, did not understand Bahamian Creole, thus we could not speak it in class.

When we entered the classroom, Bahamian Creole was to be left at the door. If you were presenting something, or talking in a video for school, you were corrected and made sure to speak Standard English, emphasizing your pronunciation and enunciation of each word and sentence. The only time Bahamian Creole was acceptable was when you were on “your own time”, thus, mornings before school started, break and lunch time, and after school (if you didn’t have after-school classes). Riesha expressed with much frustration that it was very

“restrictive”, having a conversation with friends and once the bell rang signaling to go back to class you had to forget the way you had spoken for the past hour. When she talked about this, I really felt her vexation, and by her expression this might have been a pivotal moment for her, truly coming to understand the differences between her speeches. Paloma also experienced constant correction from her English teacher, shouting “aye aye aye, use proper English nah”, for bringing Bahamian Creole into the classroom. These breaks were the only times you were really able to hang out with friends and it was a time to decompress from the stress of class. I found that this was a time to offload; it was the only point when I felt the most like myself, as moving back and forth between languages became exhausting (Anwar 2020; Hall 1990). I did not have to appear engaged or respectful (especially when I didn’t want to be), and I could just chill and catch gapseed with my friends.

This ‘rule’ was very much enforced in school and I was able to recognize the difference between those who conformed and obeyed this strict rule and those who did not. The students that didn’t leave Bahamian Creole at the door had lower grades in the class and weren’t very liked by the teachers. This is from my own perspective in school, thus it might not have been the case for other students and different grades. However, these students always found the work to be harder, especially in English Language and English Literature, and would either fail to complete the work or group together to complete the assignment (which many of us did for other, less subjective courses like Math). For Destiny, English Language nor English Literature were her best subjects, and she found that this was linked to the difference between the way she spoke and the way she was told to write. Growing up, it was hard for her because of the back and forth between teachings and pronunciations of Bahamian Creole, Standard English, and Jamaican Patois, as well as foreign teachers not understanding common words. “Dey teachin ya one way an den da uda people teaching ya anode way and den ya pronouncin tings a difrent way and ting, da teacher say ya cahn say muddasick in da class cause ‘is your mother sick?’”. For our national exams, the Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSEs), our school allowed us to take them a year early, so that in twelfth grade we could sit the American SAT and ACT exams, and SAT II and AP courses. Destiny took her English BGCSE in grade 12, knowing it would be difficult for her. She explaining that she would have “havta switch from how [she] talkin ta how [she] havta write nah, an it even wuykin”.

With the enforcement of Standard English through a negative approach but with good intention, each of us now express different selves: an informal, true self for speaking Bahamian Creole, and a professional, ‘more educated’ self for speaking Standard English (I explore this duality more in the next chapter) (Creber and Giles 1983, 155; Mills 1997; Parakrama 1995). High school imposed these conditions for language that we use in our everyday lives, influencing how we determine which language to use and to whom. When Neka was at



boarding school they already recognized this contrast in language from their short time in Bahamian schooling - they wanted “to speak proper English because it was just easier than tryna translate all the time”. Our schools taught us how to use language in a way that affected each of us deeply. Sherrea points out that although they taught us valuable lessons and helped us get to where we are now, these lessons are why a lot of us today “mask” our creole and why we constantly code switch without thinking about it, as it has become “second nature” to us (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998; Dykes 2018; Hebblethwaite 2007). Historically this colonialist tactic has been demonstrated internationally. In Canada, settler colonialism alienated Indigenous people from their lands and subjected them to residential schools, where they were disturbingly punished for not speaking French or English (Khawaja 2021, 3). Many languages were victims of this linguistic policing, and though our schools did not inflict corporal punishment for language use, we still felt the intimidation and disapproval from teachers and administration, impacting our perception of Bahamian Creole and Standard English (Barman 2007; No’Eau Warner 2001)

Our parents and grandparents also contributed to how we understand both languages. In my vignette, using Bahamian Creole is meant to be used within the family. My mother and I speak “naturally” with one another and Riesha commented that using Bahamian Creole instead of Standard English is important around family and the older generation because “If you speak proper or the Queen’s English they feel like you being condescending or tryna show off”, that you’re better than them. This is one side of a coin of what we learn from our families. In talking to Neka, she said “I did grow up in a house with 11 people in it” and “my cousins talk like da bottom of da bush”. Her extended family encouraged her to speak Bahamian Creole, yet her mother and school system believed in speaking Standard English. Despite our variations in learning language, from our experiences we can see how though in different spaces each has its own attitude towards Bahamian Creole and Standard English - some correlate and others oppose - however, each learning system began imprinting the importance and superiority of Standard English as a language.

It is worth acknowledging that although I delve into the discussion of language in Bahamian schools, in my research I failed to interview teachers and other members within the education system to examine their ideas around Standard English and Bahamian Creole. However, through looking at Bain’s scholarly work and the Ministry of Education’s policies and curriculums, there is some information that can prove background for the discussion on how my participants and I were taught Standard English and the distance this created with Bahamian Creole. Upon beginning formal schooling, most Bahamian students come in speaking Bahamian Creole, however from first grade one of the Ministry of Education’s goals is for students to be able to “use Standard English” and “use formal and informal language appropriately” (Bain 2005, 6; Bahamas Ministry of Education 2022, 13). This statement clearly acknowledges that

teachers know students are entering school speaking Bahamian Creole (or other languages) and that there is a divide between the uses of these languages. However, this second statement might not have been a part of the curriculum when we were in primary school, as this curriculum is from 2022, which has surely evolved immensely since our time in school. Despite this lack of information, as I was unable to find previous years' curriculums, we can acknowledge that Bahamian Creole and Standard English are seen as separate in the education system, implying a difference between the two. Holm and Shilling establish in their study that "relatively few students ever achieve total mastery of Standard English verbal systems; the mesolect, in fact, is a maze of strategies attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable differences between the verbal systems of the basilect and the acrolect" (1982, x). Such linguistic differences attest a significant effect on English language teaching and learning in The Bahamas (Bain 2005, 6).

Bain, whose study was published around our primary school years, examines that there are language difficulties for both teachers and students, as teachers have must measure students' Standard English proficiency from a young age which can prove struggling, as students attempt to transfer their Bahamian vernacular features and attempt to formulate structures in the new language (2005, 6). She suggests through her study that without proper language planning and curriculum design that acknowledges both languages students would continue to struggle with the interference of Bahamian Creole in Standard English performance. The policies and attitudes that Bain's study assessed in schools around that time could create negative perceptions of Bahamian Creole amongst students, as there would have been a lack in valuing language and culture within the classroom. Coupled with familial teachings on language, by focusing on one language over the other in school, it instills inferior and superior attitudes towards Bahamian Creole and Standard English respectively that are perpetuated over time. Though I did not find any literature on teachers' personal attitude towards teaching language, it is safe to say that those of us who experience the separation of Standard English and Bahamian Creole had teachers that distinctly followed the Ministry of Education's curriculum at that time. To ensure we met the educational standards and benchmarks, they reinforced Standard English's importance as a necessity for academic success. Whether prompted by our elders or the school system, we share this experience of difference between languages, and ultimately a linguistic inferiority complex is instilled in us from the influence of those around us.

## Effect of Colonization

As we see in my vignette and through the experiences discussed from my participants, each generation experiences language uniquely. They examine the attitudes of our elders and teachers towards Bahamian Creole and Standard English, and how these principles were reflected towards us. From the discussion, family members, primary school, and high school nurtured the idea that Bahamian Creole is to be used at home, with family and other Bahamian friends, and that Standard English is to be used in professional and other social settings to appear intelligent and 'proper' (Nero 2015, 344). These ideas today present themselves as a superiority and inferiority complex of language (Creber and Giles 1983, 158). In this section I want to factually explore how the education system in The Bahamas before independence perpetuated colonialist ideologies, ultimately affecting our grandparents and their ideas of language. I believe that exploring this history is important to comprehending how and why my participants and I were taught the way we were in school, and why there is such a difference in the use of language of my grandaunts compared to me.

The standpoint that Standard English is superior to Bahamian Creole is derived from the education system for both my participants and I, and for our grandparents during their time. Before the mid-1800s in the British Caribbean education, schooling was provided solely to white students attending school abroad or locally exclusive schools (Walkine 2009, 20). In the late 1800s, despite emancipation and its attempts for equality for black people, racial and socioeconomic prejudices continued to perpetuate society (20). Many whites found "Africans and their descendants [to be] sub-human, ignorant, and savages, and their culture inferior" (Saunders n.d., 2). This belief therefore deemed it pointless to teach black people, as they were seen as "being incapable of learning and [whites] feared that education may make increase their status in society" (2). When secondary institutions were introduced, such as the Anglican Nassau Grammar School for boys and Queen's College, there were a scarce number of lightly complexioned boys who were allowed to receive an education (Walkine 2009, 22). They were taught the classics, mathematics, different languages, history and geography. The curriculums all prepared students for the Oxford and/or Cambridge Local Examinations. Separate schooling was eventually granted for students of color in 1922 with the help of the church and later was replaced by two secondary schools in 1925 by the Government (Saunders n.d.). The education provided for Bahamians, both white and black demonstrated how education was used to proliferate British and Christian culture regardless of whether it was provided by the church or the state (Walkine 2009, 22). As Walkine discusses, the British colonies throughout the Caribbean were only taught British history and significant figures, although their individual realities were completely different. Glinton-Meicholas (1998) described that:

"Our school system was British. It taught us British geography, giving us a greater familiarity with the Thames than the Gulf Stream, which influence our climate considerably.

Children who grew up before independence, could recite the names of British kings and every Royal House from the time of the Norse conquest to the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, not forgetting to emphasize the regrettable interregnum of Oliver Cromwell's protectorate. In History classes, we mourned the loss of the great seaman such as Sir Francis Drake, and Lord Nelson, and our cheers were so loud at the British victories against the Spanish Armada and at Trafalgar, they probably echoed through the ages and spurred on the men who fought those naval battles" (97).

This would have been The Bahamas our grandparents grew up with. They were only taught the British system and "the Queen's English", thus the reason for their adoration and compliance to the Crown. In demanding only Standard English from their students, schools made no room for the Bahamian identity or Bahamian Creole in the classroom (Glinton-Meicholas 1998). Bahamian Creole, therefore, was not a part of the criteria for academic or career success.

After some time, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) became the first Bahamian political party to win an election, overthrowing the white oligarchy that controlled The Bahamas up until that time (Walkline 2009, 25). The PLP went on to successfully attain independence for The Bahamas from Britain in 1973. By this time, however, the country's national identity had already been tampered with for too long and gravely affected its citizens, both black and white Bahamians (Palmer 1994, 800). Palmer describes that during the colonial occupation:

"the British laid the foundation for much of the island's political, legal, and educational systems that over the years permeated the Bahamian mind in diverse and pervasive ways. Schools and colleges taught British history and geography, and the present-day examination system still reflects that of Great Britain. Thus, for all Bahamians, black and white, their education taught them more about Great Britain than it did about [The] Bahamas: 'I say the British have really done a thing on us...a lot of brainwashing...I was told [The] Bahamas had no history' (personal communication with D. J. Johnson 1992)" (1994, 798).

In 1966, Sir Lynden Pindling, leader of the PLP pointed out that:

"'Bahamian' is not a legal term under the constitution; yet no one can say with any degree of truth that we are British. As a people we are without history, without culture, and without national identity. We study British history, British civilisation, and even British weather; but about ourselves, we have no past - and under colonialism, no future." (Cash, Gordon, and Saunders 1991, 175; Palmer 1994, 799).

The PLP thus chose to make their first step towards independence by reconstructing the education system to showcase the importance of Bahamian culture and heritage presented by Bahamian teachers for Bahamian students (Davis 1992). This would have been around the time our parents were entering primary and/or high school. Though their education would not have been perfectly Bahamian as it still reflected the British education system, they were slowly

being encouraged to invest in their national identity. The inclusion of culturally relevant education promotes one's cultural referents, in this instance the Bahamian cultural identity, and makes learning relevant and effective; without this step there is much that I, along with so many others, would not know about the country today (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 1995; Rosa and Clark Orey 2010, 19). Although there are still remnants of the colonial era in our education system, we can see how the shift in focus would have been made as the PLP began implementing Bahamian history into schooling. This is really important when considering the effects of colonization on language and identity in The Bahamas. The multiplicity of understanding we see between generations is constituted by the struggle of having to move away from this coloniality of knowledge through a decolonial development of social, emotional, and political intellect in line with our cultural referents, yet some continue to hold respect for those in the past (Ladson-Billings 1995; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Rosa and Clark Orey 2010).

The aim of colonization in regards to language here, not just in The Bahamas but universally, conducted by the British Empire alongside other prominent European countries, is to control and create a dependency on the structures of oppression put in place, which help erode the culture of that land (Osman 2020; Sayedayn 2021, 136). One of the most palpable legacies of British colonization in the Caribbean is the prevailing stigmatization around language, specifically of creoles as "'broken English', marked as the vernacular of the lower class and uneducated, to be shunned at all cost, especially in school" (Nero 2015, 344). Our vernacular is often referred to as "bad" or "broken", whilst the standard language is called "proper English" (Hackert 2012, 43). As we see in my vignette, my mother and I strictly speak Bahamian Creole, however my grandaunts switch between the two when addressing us versus the Queen. These differences in generational understanding eventually influence how we comprehend the use of both languages before we begin critically thinking about it for ourselves. Paloma makes a powerful point in discussing colonization during her liming session in relation to the differences of how we learn Bahamian Creole and Standard English. Paloma spoke passionately about this, smiling at the chance to discuss how colonialism and generational colonialism influenced us so heavily as a country and a people. Her English teacher, a part of the generation that still believed in "God save the Queen", the same as my grandaunts, was constantly criticizing her for speaking Bahamianese in class. This is seen through other countries as well, overtime English was introduced in schools, leading parents and schools to gradually abandon or prohibit speaking and teaching Indigenous languages (Sayedayn 2021, 136). Consequently, the succeeding generation gradually embraced the new language, which came to represent 'modernity' and 'democracy', and linked to notions of power and access to authority (136). Paloma explains that we were raised in a country that glorifies colonizers. In my vignette, there's a clear distinction between the anger my generation feels and the sheer contrast of adoration and respect the older generation, those raised under the monarchy, feel in relation to

the Crown. My grandaunts cried when the Queen passed away, as though they knew her, as if she specifically did good for this country or for them. This is what they were taught in their British structured education system, to hold the highest esteem for the monarchy (Creber and Giles 1983, 156; Oenbring and Fielding 2014, 34). Paloma describes her father, who was taught to respect the Crown as well yet has a greater sense of national identity than his parents, and expresses that The Bahamas is such a young country that “the parents that raised us, the people that taught us was born right afta independence, yanno durin it”. Thus “we the first generation that being taught that we are independent. That our parents grew up in an independent nation, but they still left with the remnants of the fact that their parents taught that, that you gata respec da Queen. Iss really interestin’ where you have tree generations for its fully like fuck English, fuck England, fuck the colonizers.”

There is a foundational shift between our generation and our grandparents’ generation, and this is particularly seen after the death of the Queen. Around the world, older generations mourned her death, becoming emotional, including those from previous colonies, such as 78 year old Māori opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa (Wikaire-Lewis 2022). Older generations hold her in high esteem because of the connection they have with her, as she had direct influence over many people and although many countries have gained independence since, this was seen as nicely granted rather than something genuinely deserved. The Bahamas’ former Prime Ministers discussed feeling deeply saddened by the news of her passing, stating that after meeting her in person and knowing her for several years, she was truly a gracious and empathetic person (Cartwright-Carroll 2022). Miss Mortimer, interviewed by Sweeting (2022) stated:

“The Queen had been a monarch for more years than I have been living, so all of my life I have heard about Queen Elizabeth and so on your travels to London of course you always want to go to the Buckingham Palace where the Queen stays and you try to see how close you can get to it, even though you don’t get to her. When I heard the Queen died the song that came to mind was, ‘God save our gracious Queen, long may she ever reign, God save the Queen.’ That’s a song that we grew up in school singing and so that came to mind right away.”

For this generation, they admired and looked up to the Queen for what she ‘helped’ to give us before, during, and after independence. Though she might have been a wonderful individual, her colonial actions across the globe for 70 years on the throne do not reflect that. For the younger generation, the only emotional connection we have towards her is one of animosity, as we learn the history of colonization in The Bahamas in schools and online, rather than our parents’ and grandparents’ lessons on the history of Britain under their ruling (Turner and Kissi 2022, 146). In New Zealand, Duff (2022) interviewed students and some 25 year olds in response to her death, to which many responded with disinterest and indifference. Twenty-five year old Wellington Councillor Tabatha Paul stated:

“You can’t deny the carnage that the royal family have caused all around the world, to Indigenous people, and in her lifetime the Queen didn’t uphold something the entity she represents signed. I’ve seen a lot of mamae and anger around that, and I think this generation brought together by social media are more likely to criticize it and call it out” (Duff 2022).

Similar to the evidence in New Zealand, as a Commonwealth country, the emerging Bahamian generations criticize rather than comply with the Queen and the actions of the royal family, as my participants and I explain. Practices of coloniality directly affected our grandparents, and to an extent our parents as well. Our lack of connection with the Queen indicates a disillusionment of the ‘good’ of colonialism, as over time our social values change and education indicates a rejection of traditional hierarchies (Duff 2022). Further, it suggests a greater ability to feel indifferent, angry, and in some regard disrespectful, compared to our grandparents’ generation who genuinely believed in her positive effect on the country.

## The Practice of Coloniality and Generational Trauma

If we reflect on how earlier generations were educated and how they internalized the beliefs outlined above about Standard English and Bahamian Creole, we can see the practices of coloniality, which Torquato discusses in relation to language, and how they were passed through each generation (2020, 461). There are implications within our discussions of teaching through generational trauma and memory. By exploring these topics with the knowledge of the effects of the colonial education system the older generation grew up in, we can further understand why my participants and I saw language as we did. I will explore in the next chapter how these linguistic teachings manifested during our times at university and in our current lives.

Practices of coloniality exert themselves through different aspects of our being in the world such as “the body, emotions, reason, spirit, alterity, relationships with other beings, experiences of living and the experience of wealth” (Torquato 2020, 461). Language is an agent of this, a part of the dehumanization process enforced on those colonized. Fanon explains that “a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language” (Bhabha 1994; Fanon 1967, 8; see also expansive work by Mbembe 2001). For Bahamians, using Standard English somewhat renounces our national identity in this way. This language symbolizes the culture of the British and their colonial worldview, setting a racial and cultural hierarchy between them and us (Torquato 2020, 463). Although gaining independence was intended to provide freedom from colonialism, hegemonic forces and ideals are already instilled and solidified into the minds of Bahamian citizens (Allens 2020, 20). White cultural

hegemony in the country justifies and confers the dominance of whiteness, enforcing the “‘global cognitive dysfunction’ (Mills 18) that sees non-white actors as intrinsically lesser” (19; Mills 1997). Thus, if those thriving in society are those from Britain, speaking “proper English”, then the best way to achieve success is to follow in their footsteps, learning what they learn, doing what they do. Fanon writes:

“Every colonised people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (Fanon 1967, 9).

Languages are mobilized as elements of coloniality in order to invoke power relations and ultimately dehumanize the colonized group to shape them as lesser imitations (Torquato 2020, 463). The link between written and spoken language and colonial domination is strong, and for those who were taught these attitudes, there is a level of downplay when discussing Bahamian Creole.

Overall survival in the Caribbean meant assimilation to those who colonized us, “dragging a whole society into some imitative relationship with this other culture that one could never quite reach” (Meeks and Lindahl 2001, 29). The complexities of being Caribbean stems from constantly negotiating our identities between the remnants of African influences and the colonizing countries we had to assimilate to (Hall 1990, 225). Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, alongside modern scholars such as Yancy (2008) and Hill Collins (1990, 113), describe this internal conflict or trauma of identity as the consequence of enslavement and colonization (1967, 31). This racialized perception has greatly impacted our construction of knowledge and the self (Shelby 2005). Transgenerational trauma refers to the transference of negative experiences and emotions from one generation to the next, and is mediated through different forms of representation (Awatere 1984; Eyerman 2001, 1; Mundo 2018, 4). This trauma is commonly experienced by Black people due to slavery, Jewish people affected by the Holocaust, Indigenous people around the world, such as Māori in New Zealand and more (Eyerman 2001, 1). This trauma can manifest through the passing down of memory and embeds itself in family stories, cultural practices, and personal beliefs (Eyerman 2001, 2; see also Schmukalla 2022; Wexler 2014). Awatere highlights that the generational trauma experienced by Māori as a result of historical injustices has had devastating effects on Māori identity, including through the use of Te Reo Māori (1984, 25). The transmitting of these memories of experience from generation to generation shapes our identities and personal narratives, thus influencing how we perceive ourselves, our communities, our languages and the world around us (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Mundo 2018, 12). Marianne Hirsch explains that the individual is a part of a social group



with a shared belief system that is then used to frame and shape certain narratives, thus passing on past traumas to a second generation of children through post-memory (Hirsch 2013, 110; Mundo 2018, 13). Hirsch writes that “Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors, among which they grew up” (2013, 106; Mundo 2018, 14).

For my participants’ older Bahamian family members, the link between their colonial experiences and that of their parents and grandparents would have immensely impacted how they choose to move throughout the world, and ultimately what they chose to teach us. Though my vignette does not go into teachings, there is an expectation between my grandaunts and my mother and I to respect what is happening. Their use of Standard English is a sign of respect to the Queen and based on the knowledge they have passed onto us, we too are expected to show respect. When my mother’s joke fails, it is because of their learned experience as well as the expectations they have of our language and behavior. Mundo states, “While the desire to preserve a cultural and national identity is prevalent ..., it ultimately becomes a struggle for all to uncover the traumas or to separate themselves from them” (2018, 19). For some, the transmission of memory and trauma from one generation to another indicates safety and protection, as those who are encouraged to use Standard English are being pushed to find survival through assimilation (2018, 19). On the other hand, for those who encourage more Bahamian Creole, the sharing of experiences and memory might spark the desire to preserve the parts of the Bahamian identity that remain. The relationship between the individual and those past traumas constantly fabricates personal narratives of history and memory, with the intentions of either transmitting these traumas to future generations or moving away from them and rejecting the cycle of struggle and obedience.

For those before us, the English language was not what hurt them, but rather that Standard English became the language of conquest that made masks of their native tongue (Thiong’o 1986, 4). By moving through the history of colonization in The Bahamas as it relates to language and identity, it becomes clear that these practices of coloniality have affected how my participants and I view ourselves and our language. Throughout our school lives we have learned to have distinct opinions about Bahamian Creole and Standard English and when, where, and with whom to use each. This reflects that colonialist notions still linger within society, and that despite efforts to uplift the Bahamian identity and culture, it is still possible for these teachings to be passed down through generational trauma and memory. There is power in what the generations before have learned and eventually taught us, but there are also biases and trauma within these memories as well. The power of speech can forge different paths depending on how we receive it, as is the difference between our grandparents’ generation, our

parents' generation and our own. My participants and I express how we move through the world based on these teachings and considering these factors, using our native tongue alongside Standard English. To move forward in creating and empowering our national identities it was crucial that we began by examining colonial teachings, their historical and cultural origins, and the movement of knowledge between generations.

## Chapter 3: “I cahn speak like dis if I wan be understood at all”

[The Linguistic Split: Studying Abroad and how Code Switching manifests through Two Identities, Affect Our Linguistic and Bahamian Selves]

*It's like you have two versions of yourself. One is 30% of your original self. You tone down your personality and culture, and become more conscious of your actions, voice, word choice, and how you structure the way you speak. You must be respectful and polite in the way you address others. “Yes ma'am. Yes sir.” Your vowels, consonants, syllables, words are annunciated and you know the correct use of who or whom in a sentence. This is what it feels like to speak Standard English, the supposed ‘proper’ way to speak to people. Standard English is the ‘good’ language and using it is how you will be respected, accepted, and successful in all you do, especially in the greater world. People tell you “Oh my gosh, you're from The Bahamas? But you don't sound like it, you don't have an accent.” Politely you nod and say you don't really share that with people who aren't Bahamian. “Oh no, come on! We're friends aren't we? Can you say something for me in Bahamian?” Standard English is a mask used to hide yourself, yet set you apart as being ‘so intellectual’. To move further in the world, to network more and more, you use this voice, though it pains you.*

*The other side of you is the 70%. This feels like it should be 100% of you but you've learned too much and been influenced too deeply by colonial ideologies. This 70% is rid of all the authority, structure, and rules you have to follow. You are your authentic self. You are loud and boisterous and you don't just laugh, you cackle. Here you feel comfortable, safe, and truly Bahamian. You feel correct in your thoughts, in your blood, in your skin, in your voice, in your will. This is what it feels like to speak your true language, the one you learned from birth. You tell someone to gi you da tingum ova dere, or that you taught dey coulda mighta still coulda hear you. When you have no one close to speak to, you search for Bahamian songs on YouTube and sing to the jokey stories bout who put da peppa in da vaseline and why the hell Jack and Jill blame it on da water. The rawness and conservative vulgarity fills your spirit for a while, hearing lines you never even noticed before. Bahamian Creole is there for you, an old friend in sadness, in anger, and most importantly in laughter. Your mouth moves in a flash, no off switch for the radio, yet your brain is at ease, not thinking about how or what to say.*

*These two languages are two worlds straddling different continents. It splits you in two. One comes forward when the time is right, strong and independent, while the other sits*

*in the back with its light slowly dwindling, only to excitedly spring forward when given the chance. If it keeps the spotlight, it continues to shine brighter and brighter overtime, but the other never weakens, it sits and waits patiently, knowing it will always be needed for the outside world. [PF reflections - 15/12/22]*

Growing up, we were taught both Standard English and Bahamian Creole through family, our community, and school systems. The previous chapter examined how colonization in The Bahamas ultimately affected the outlook of language on the Bahamian people, and how this knowledge was passed between generations through education. As my participants and I describe, there are very distinct beliefs regarding which language we should speak at different times. By looking at how language is used through generations as narrated by my participants and I, we can better understand why we were taught this way. Through my vignettes and the experiences discussed by my participants in the previous chapter it is possible to see how these teachings were reinforced by the Bahamian education system and how this has now affected our journeys through university abroad.

In this chapter, I move from our high school experience to studying abroad at university. Between these stages in our lives the distinction between Bahamian Creole and Standard English began splitting our individual identities. To explore this, I provide sections on understanding the concept of code switching and the fields of navigating this phenomena during levels of comfort, discomfort, and performance. Having acquired and learned to live with a linguistic split, as I come to describe, has several effects on the Bahamian individual. I discuss the themes that arise from these experiences such as the duality of identity, and the battle of partial language and identity loss. This chapter aims to explore the emotions and experiences of young tertiary educated Bahamian women abroad, and look at how we use Standard English and Bahamian Creole.

## Double Consciousness

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois identifies the notion of “double consciousness” (1903, 2). Even before writing this thesis, I was enraptured by this concept, as it so closely described something I had always felt but could never describe. I sat with this feeling several times when conducting my autoethnography, hoping for the moment I could write how I felt, until one day I wrote the excerpt I begin this section with. Historically, African Americans and other people of color have been shaped by the social barriers of racial segregation and colonization (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 8-10). For Du Bois, “double consciousness”

establishes the conflicting psychological disposition that comes from the cultural dilemma of understanding white people's comprehension of you versus your own beliefs in the fulfillment of your aims and pursuits. Black people see themselves one way and are simultaneously conscious of how they are seen through the gaze of racism (1903, 8). He describes it as such:

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanise America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face" (8).

Du Bois describes it as being gifted with a second sight, being able to see your own denigration through the eyes of the white hegemonic structures that permeate society (1903, 8). Paulo Freire agrees, stating that the dehumanization of the 'other' through colonization creates a split or double consciousness within the colonized people as they are forced to navigate their cultural identity with that of the dominant colonialist culture (1970, 44). Further, Faye Harrison discusses this idea as well, illuminating the experiences of people of color, specifically Black people, and setting a framework for understanding the position of oppressed people in both their own "insider" communities and the oppressive "outsider" world (2008, 43). This can be used further to describe different splits in identity through language.

Double consciousness in racial and linguistic identity can cause internal conflict and confusion. For my participants and I, we move between Standard English and Bahamian Creole, constantly navigating different identities that are "both felt and ascribed linguistic[ally]" and are historically and socially constructed (Nero 2015, 344). This is a prominent perspective when we look at the perception in The Bahamas, similar to other Caribbean countries, where the creole is marked as the uneducated vernacular of which to be spoken in unprofessional settings, and that the use of the standardized language is representative of a refined, educated person. Adell (1994) highlights that black writers are constantly negotiating their identities through language, as they must navigate both linguistic and cultural norms to appease different communities, which can create the two-ness or duality Du Bois discusses (12). Likewise, Anzaldúa discusses "linguistic terrorism" and loss of cultural identity from the duality imposed from dominant

cultural and linguistic norms, emphasizing the importance of hybridity in language as a strategy for navigating difference (1999, 80). Every day we are consciously displaying and negotiating the duality of identities we prescribe to each language, yet unlike Du Bois' statement, my participants and I long to favor one identity over the other, as we acknowledge the significance of each, rather than merging or getting rid of them.

## University Experience

Language is not merely a means of communication but psychologically is a primary source of cultural identity, as our worlds are structured around it, ever linked to our worldview, identity, self-concept, and self-esteem (Bourdieu 1991; Hilliard 1983, 7; Silbernagel 2015, 4). When we were growing up, our parents, grandparents, and teachers began shaping our worlds similarly to theirs, containing all that they had learned from the experiences and hardships of the generations before. The effects of our schooling began the splitting process of our linguistic identities and when we moved to university, our first home away from home, we had to use our previous knowledge to inform our decisions moving forward. Being away from home can be very challenging for Bahamians and other mobile academics, especially for students moving to university abroad, as we not only face xenophobic discrimination, but for many racial discrimination as well (Arber 2000; Hua 2016, 148; Pherali 2012, 314). My participants' and I's experiences differ, going to universities in New Zealand, across the United States, and Canada, however, there are some patterns that arose when talking about the environments we find ourselves in. As adolescents move through changes in understanding language development, they become more aware of how others perceive them and use language to gain acceptance in peer groups, especially in a new environment (Durkin and Conti-Ramsden 2007; Vizuetta 2022).

All of my participants felt lucky when they were able to speak to someone of a similar cultural background. This typically meant Bahamians and other Caribbean students, however, some felt comfortable using Bahamian Creole with Africans as well. Sadly, I am excluded from this as I have yet to meet a Caribbean person in New Zealand after five years. For my liming partners, this was when they felt culturally free. Sasha stated that at her first university, Bahamians organized several get-togethers to cook Bahamian food and simply hang out as a community, which she felt really helped when she began feeling homesick. Unfortunately, however, the expression of being Bahamian could also be met with negativity, as many, including myself, have experienced disrespect when it comes to the way we speak. Hua discusses how when in a dominant space, cultures and speeches that do not fit within it are questioned to establish social hierarchies (2016, 149). As migrants, we constantly have to

navigate and negotiate different cultural contexts and meanings, leaving us in an ‘in-between’ space with different identities in different social locations (Arber 2000, 53; Bachmann-Medick 2016, 277). I was once on the phone with my parents around a group of acquaintances and when I was finished, another student across the table mimicked what I had said. Not only did he do it in a mocking tone, but he ended each sentence with “man”, a commonly used Jamaican term that people mocking Caribbeans always include, as though each Caribbean nation says it or says it in that way. Sasha nails the feeling in a similar situation she describes, stating it sounds “grating to my ears”. This is not an uncommon occurrence; however each encounter contributes to the inevitable decision to abandon your home tongue (James 1997, 99). It pushes the idea that we need to acculturate, that it is “nonsensical” to use Bahamian Creole abroad at all.

Consequently, this is one of the first things you come to realize when you move abroad, that you cannot use Bahamian Creole. From the way we were taught, we developed a switch for using Bahamian Creole and Standard English. Although this switch changes effortlessly now, there are times where we might be conscious of using it. Trying to speak Bahamian Creole abroad is very difficult, as you want to be understood by others, yet when you open your mouth, they cannot interpret what you’re saying or you are ridiculed for its use. After trying to speak Bahamianese in different settings with a variety of people, it takes a toll on your spirit and can lead to exhaustion. “I cahn speak like dis if I wan be understood at all”, Riesha adds. Through discriminatory institutional policies and practices, language can be felt as a clear indicator of one’s culture and identity to be targeted (Layne and Miles 2022, 7). Hence, to ensure we are understood, we have to mask and monitor our speech and assimilate to those around us in order to gain recognition and acceptance. Riesha continues reflecting on her university experience by sharing, “You hafta assimilate to function at the university”. To survive in this experience, you have to adapt to your surroundings and do as the Romans do. This results in the performance of “double voicing or switching” to improve one’s agency and settle conflicting ideas around social status and positioning (Layne and Miles 2022, 5). The move from switching between the two languages in The Bahamas, to strictly speaking one language abroad takes a serious toll on your mental health as well. Paloma describes her experience doing her Masters degree in California as “really detrimental to my mental health” and “very emotionally taxing” specifically because “it was all over again tryna explain me, who I am as a person, the language difference”. She goes on to state that it was truly the “first time I realize how shitty it could be for international students”. Having to constantly restrict yourself and accept other people’s ignorance and lack of willingness to understand you and the way you speak reduces your sense of self-worth. To ensure that others acknowledge and listen to us, we must speak Standard English.

When we move abroad, it affects our identity, as it challenges us linguistically, culturally, and emotionally. The migration of international students abroad is an individual movement to an already established system, implicitly requiring us to integrate ourselves into an environment unlike our own (Pherali 2012, 318). As we navigate and negotiate these new places we are situated in a liminal space (Bönisch-Brednich 2018, 70), whereby we have our authentic Bahamian identity and an unassuming identity situated with Standard English. My participants and I must be conscious of how we present ourselves, in order to position ourselves in our host countries comfortably. Language proficiency is an essential part of this mobility, and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, communication, and cultural adaptation. Hua recognizes that questions geared towards our differences attempt to establish that we do not fit into the dominant categories of identity, challenging whether or not we conform through the use of Standard English or resist through the use of our native tongue (2016, 156).

The overall experience we went through during university brought about our ability to code switch - the tendency to switch between two languages where one prefers (Wei 1998, 281). When and with whom we do that is dependent on our personal experiences, reactions and emotions. However, there are certain trends that we see across the board as well with other languages, though their reasoning for code switching might be different. Throughout my time on campus in New Zealand, I have heard Pasifika and Māori students code switching, using their native languages. These students use it around the university campus when speaking to one another, and including it in anthropological discussions when reflecting on their cultures. Through the use of their own languages, they resist oppressive colonial practices and institutions, and affirm the culture and prestige of their people (James et al. 2022, 650; Marras Tate and Rapatahana 2022, 6). My participants and I, however, use Standard English when code switching during university (as well as today) for reasons outlined above, though there are some exceptions. It is an important skill each of us possess and utilize, especially in university where our aim is to fit in where we can be fully accepted and understood, differing us from students I witness in New Zealand, who use their language in their own country as a means of connecting and affirming their heritage. Before moving into the stories my participants and I share in regards to code switching, it is important to move through code switching's definition, as later on I will discuss how this contributes to the double identity we often feel.

## Code Switching

Code switching or “situational switching” occurs when there is a change in situation and only one language is deemed appropriate to maintain the relationship between the people or



environment (Wei 1998, 281). The notion of code switching is a rich term, characterized by the “multiplication, fragmentation, and metamorphosis” of experience (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998, 29). First discussed by Poplack (1980), using the terms ‘borrowing’ and ‘nonce borrowing’, they examined that switching in sentences was made up of concatenated fragments of alternating languages, which each had their own grammatical prevalence. Jakobson (1961) adapts the notion of ‘switching code’ as a way to understand the “unambiguous transduction of signals between systems” towards speech communication, and thus for understanding the change of bilingual speakers (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998, 30). This linguistic skill, though originally thought to be psychological, “proceeds from that area of the bilingual’s grammar where the surface structures of L1 and L2 overlap” (Poplack 1980, 581). The tendency to switch at a particular syntactic boundary, allows bilingual speakers to switch between two languages where they prefer to (Beatty-Martínez, Navarro-Torres, and Dussias 2020, 2; see also Poplack 1993). Bilinguals use their language freely in different ways and in different situations, thus not all situations incur the same cognitive linguistic demands (Green and Abutakebi 2013, 522). For some speakers, code switching can be very quick, and might happen within a single utterance of a sentence. On the other hand, some speakers might choose beforehand to speak in one language rather than the other. Alvarez-Cáccamo (1998) demonstrates that the nature of these “code-switching constraints” is more of a tendency rather than a categorical ruling, and is not that different from constraints in monolingual speech (35).

Code switching is typically recognized in relation to two languages, such as Spanish and English, however, it can also be applied to discuss creoles. For many bilingual speakers, code switching is a normal and natural skill to have, and many find no problem shifting between languages. Code switching is a complex linguistic phenomena and skill that can enhance overall communication (Dykes 2018, 73). However, for my participants and I, code switching can be seen as both an accomplishment within the English speaking global economy, and as a hindrance to our linguistic and national identities. Generational, cultural, and linguistic gaps all influence when and where we choose to use our different languages, and when studying abroad these ideologies are used frequently, despite the consequence of a loss of identity. Hebblethwaite’s work (2007) on code switching amongst Haitians in Miami indicates that for students, “English-only” and “English-first” permeate every aspect of their lives, otherwise tensions arise in their interactions outside the home, such as friendships and other relationships (55). Therefore, where and when my participants and I decide to use Bahamian Creole is an indicator of our thoughts on our language. Through parents and schooling we were fed negative attitudes towards Bahamian Creole and understood that our appearance of intelligence would depend on how well we spoke Standard English instead. When conducting my research, I found that there were three core dispositions that determined which language we chose to use - comfort, discomfort, and a need to perform.

The research on code switching I discuss below ranges from our time in university to the present of the liming sessions, and examine specific examples of when we use Bahamian Creole or Standard English, whether consciously or unconsciously, and the attitudes towards decisively performing code switching. I also include excerpts from my autoethnographic research which situates these occurrences in real time and give brief analyses of how I felt and viewed each experience.

## Comfort

### *With whom/when do you feel comfortable speaking Bahamian Creole?*

#### ***Customs Officer***

*Coming back to Nassau on a United Airlines flight from Houston, you must pass through customs. We were given forms to fill out on the flight and needed our Health Visas and COVID-19 tests ready for inspection.*

*I approached the counter very nervously, though it seemed I was the only Bahamian citizen on the flight. The officer asked for my passport and got very comfortable very quickly, asking if it was a packed flight and where it came from.*

*Here, she used Bahamian Creole to speak to me, thus prompting me to move away from my overly polite and cautious Standard English to a more relaxed and warm speech. "Yeah the flight was lil pack but at lease ise da only Bahamian chall...easy line." To which she replied "I see dat hya, have a good night chall" and gave me my passport to go.*

Though this encounter began with anxiety and strictness, I eventually used Bahamian Creole, feeling comfortable in who I was despite the setting. Customs is a very serious place where most Bahamians typically speak 'properly' and clearly in Standard English to move through as quickly as possible. However, this lady recognized that I was Bahamian from my place in the residents line along with my passport and decided to speak to me looking for solidarity in language. This brought my guard down, thankfully taking away lots of my nerves. We switch languages because we are taught which is right and wrong, and we attempt to stick to these in order to uphold societal ideals. However, not everyone conforms, and some would rather feel connected to one another than feel isolated and gaudy.

We all feel comfortable speaking our language around other Bahamians, especially around family members and friends. For those who have non-Bahamian partners, they also

speak to them in Bahamian Creole. My participants, however, greatly expressed that this took time and hard personal work to be able to do. Everyone also stated that they felt comfortable around other Caribbean people - as we understand them, they understand us as well (though to an extent). Finally, six participants express that they have some very close non-Bahamian friends that they speak or try to speak Bahamian Creole to. Amelia said during the liming session that speaking Bahamian Creole feels “a lil easier, like da banter, da gettin off, it’s just difrent”. Because it is a part of our identity, Sherrea added that for her it’s “something I don’t have to think about”. Destiny seemed frustrated during our liming session when it came to discussing her life working abroad. One of the main reasons for this was not being able to use Bahamian Creole during the day. When she went on to describe being able to speak Bahamian Creole at the end of the day, her eyes lit up, saying it’s a great relief and a weight off her shoulders.

“Yes, it feels the best cause it kinda hurts my head when I hafta talk regula, like I - it doesn’t sound like me, it doesn’t show my personality, so when I hafta talk regula I’m just like ‘Okay, cool. Alright so and so. Alright, yeah, awesome. Awesome dude. We’re ready to go. We’re ready to move on with the next task.’ An when I home I’m like ‘Yah bey I tyad. Take me out from heya y’all niggas gat me tyad tyad.’” (Destiny).

The presence of cultural similarities, especially for those who seem Bahamian, provides a key level of comfort. The walls of our personal linguistic rulings come down and we are able to speak Bahamian Creole to those in front of us. Comfort here means no judgment, no misconception, and most importantly that the other person is guaranteed to understand you, rather than asking “What did you say?” Or “I don’t understand what you’re saying.” Paloma says “as long as I tink use a Bahamian I ga speak it”, understanding that this cultural connection is very important to maintaining both a personal and collective identity.

Myers-Scotton suggests that code choices are rights-and-obligation sets that each individual inhabits for a given interaction (1993, 85). These sets or rules are learned and passed between users, uniting a speech community as whole whilst allowing for linguistic variety linked to particular relationships and interactions encountered (Wei 1998, 158). Therefore, speakers of the same community understand that certain linguistic choices are made and will present them as normal, avoiding forms of misunderstanding or conflict. This collective coding is linked to the notion of group or cultural identity. Gumperz explains:

“The tendency is for the ethnically specific, minority language to be regarded as the ‘we-code’ and become associated with in-group and informal activities, and for the majority language to serve as the ‘they-code’ associated with the more formal and less personal out-group relations.” (1982, 66; Sebba and Wootton 1998, 262).

When we look at when my participants and I feel comfortable, it is based on this relationship of cultural connectivity, with Bahamian Creole being the we-code and Standard English being the they-code. The use of the they-code, like when Destiny uses the term “regula”, is indicative of

normativity, still reflecting the colonial hegemonic environment we were taught in. Here, we use a different identity to conform within that hegemonic system. Speaking Bahamian Creole warrants a different yet particular relationship and behavior that encapsulates the Bahamian culture, and as we showcase, it is the time we feel to be our truest selves. The collective style and group identity here is symbolic, and is not directly linked to the actual usage of the language (Sebba and Wootton 1998, 263).

Additionally, if we look at Paugh's research on multilingual play amongst children, she finds that the way children employ language is dependent on the understandings of linguistics taught by their parents as well as the specific presence of adults (2005, 63). These children move between languages for different situations and activities and provide a nuanced look at language shift and maintenance outside of adult-child interaction (64). The children in the study attributed their they-code, English, to the world at large, using it to describe and negotiate play frames with others. However, they used their we-codes, a variety of different languages, to tell stories and use their imagination in other ways. The complex code switching that took place here indicated that their language choices reflected particular and specific social identities, and through further examination, reflected language socialization practices they learned at home and in school (64). The peer group without adults found comfort and safety to use their other languages and move between social identities outside of their usual restriction of solely using English outside the home. For my participants and I, being able to speak Bahamian Creole with other Bahamians is experienced as this safe space. In university, without the guidance of adults we fall back on what we know as we understand and experience rejection, discrimination, and ridicule. By creating positive environments, the children were able to explore and move freely between their linguistic identities (80). However, the prospect of university and the adult world restrict our social spheres and desires for equal duality, and push us towards the more acceptable, widespread language that is Standard English.

## Discomfort

*When do you feel uncomfortable speaking Bahamian Creole? When do you use Standard English?*

### **Work Slip Up**

*I tutor for one of the anthropology courses at my university. This year specifically I am working from The Bahamas so I conduct my classes on Zoom. There was an instance where I began explaining something in relation to the reading and said "How den do da*

*tree tings—” and I immediately stopped myself and apologized to the class before starting the sentence over. I apologized to my students for speaking Bahamianese. It might have happened because I was comfortable in my home or just tired, however I acknowledged it and deemed it wrong in a split second.*

### ***Discomfort to Comfort with another Bahamian***

*This is a conversation between my Bahamian friend and I. We have not spoken in months due to a very petty misunderstanding. M represents my friend, P represents me. // represents spaces in messaging.*

- *M: [replying to a photo I posted on my Instagram] you’re so pretty omg*
- *P: thanks*
- *M: how are you doing*
- *P: I’m fine, how are you?*
- *M: getting better // Hows the zealand?*
- *P: NZ is okay. Nothing special*
- *M: miss back home?*
- *P: yeah, I didn’t really wan come in the first place tbh. // I surprise you message me ine ga lie*
- *M: how come? // whattttt*
- *P: just not that excited bout here no more // cuz you been mad at me for like months*

In the first vignette, I outline my tutoring experience. As it is my job, in such a knowledge economy I wanted to be professional and because I slipped up I felt guilty. In my moment of comfort, my use of Bahamian Creole backfired due to the situational implications, and I felt embarrassed. This incident lingered in my mind, and I scolded myself for speaking “against” the linguistic rules taught to me, thus bringing about notes of shame and guilt for my mistake. In the second vignette, though the conversation did not continue, the tension in the text messages are obvious but slowly began to drift away. Personally, if I am wary, angry, or tense in any way, I default to Standard English (sometimes with a hint of texting slang like kk, brb, idk). Standard English acts as a barrier or wall, protecting me from being too vulnerable when I don’t want to be, and shielding my true feelings and identity. Towards the end you see I took a jab at the other person, saying that I’m surprised, but adding “ine ga lie” to the end. This adds a bit of emotion and emphasis, hinting that it’s their fault that we don’t talk. If the conversation had continued, I wonder whether or not I would have become more or less tense. Would I have spoken more Standard English or moved slowly into using Bahamian Creole by way of texting? The more

distant I am with someone, the more ‘polite’ I become, which according to teachings from my grandparents, parents, and schooling, means I must speak respectfully in Standard English.

Discomfort seemed particularly easy for everyone to comment on, and was one of the most specific. For the most part, people said they felt uncomfortable speaking Bahamian Creole with non-Bahamians (apart from those they said they were comfortable with eg. Caribbeans, specific non-Bahamian friends) or people they don’t know. Amelia puts it perfectly, stating “My brain just won’t let me speak Bahamian to a non-Bahamian”. It is a part of the mental switch we unconsciously have from our schooling. Professional settings and places with authority figures (regardless of whether they are Bahamian or not) was also a common answer, as the ‘rule’ of Standard English we learned engages, and we have to present ourselves as “proper”, respectful and knowledgeable. In the liming session with Riesha, she even expressed her discomfort in trying to speak Bahamian Creole knowing that the session would be used academically.

“Crazy because it’s unnatural at first but you do it so much that even now at university, at work, and even this, like dis suppose ta be informal and because it has that ‘oh this is supposed to be for a university thesis’, still somewhere in my head my brain is like ‘ok you cannot speak in colloquial terms, keep it formal’. But it’s about Bahamian Creole.” (Riesha).

For those of us still in academia, this is where we feel the most uncomfortable, however, we try to find other instances where we can use Bahamian Creole without feeling unintelligent. In university, many participants found that if they ‘slipped up’ or someone overheard them speaking Bahamian Creole, they would be mocked and made fun of for how they sounded. Ash states that she “don’t want them to have to say ‘oh she don’t speak the Queen’s English, she’s not intelligent’, but my dialect does not equate to my level of intelligence.” Even understanding this fact, Amelia admitted that other students continue to “belittle you and make you feel small and not as smart”, further discouraging you from using Bahamian Creole unless completely comfortable or necessary. In her first two universities, Paloma rarely used her Bahamian Creole, choosing to use Standard English rather than be judged and/or misunderstood. In predominantly white spaces, participants and I felt that speaking Bahamian Creole felt physically impossible and as Riesha put it, “nonsensical” altogether. Apart from mimicking and mocking, we are occasionally asked by someone to use our ‘accent’. The interest behind this question, however, is typically more ignorant than genuine. Sasha’s response encapsulates the idea of our internal switch; we just cannot do it. Unfortunately, others fail to understand that we can’t help it because of the way we were trained, and continue to ask anyway.

This distinction between the we-code and they-code used in comfort and discomfort acknowledges the notions associated with each language, giving meaning to their placement in the three categories I outline. The complexity of relationships within bilingual minority

communities and mainstream society means that languages are thus prescribed meaning on top of their own situational ascriptions (Sebba and Wootton 1998, 263). When we talk about Bahamian Creole, though we love it, it is seen to signify being less educated, uncivilized, improper, and only to be used informally. The they-code however, is more accepted by global and mainstream society, deeming it a more appropriate way of speech. As we move between these languages our change in linguistic behavior involves “‘shifts of identity’ on the part of the speaker, through which she or he ‘proclaims’ her identity” (Sebba and Wootton 1998, 276). This shift in identity ultimately means affiliation or disaffiliation with a particular community. In university, then, as we continue to speak Standard English rather than Bahamian Creole we are disaffiliating ourselves with our country and the collective linguistic identity of our people. Antaki, Condor, and Levine (1996) explain that identities never just appear; they are constantly used and evolving. They make sense only as a part of an interactional structure, therefore when we use a particular language we are deploying our identities to meet the conversational demands at that time. Language use and notions of social identity are intrinsically linked, and their construction can be marked by relations of power (Norton 1997, 419).

## Performativity

*When do you feel that it's necessary for you to 'put on a performance' and actively speak Standard English?*

### ***Comfort and Performativity with Friend and National Insurance***

*We spent the week trying to get a new ID; my friends drove to the government office on Friday, and were told to come back on Tuesday. They drove back on Tuesday and got “Who tell yinna to come back?” then “Aww no no no, it ga take a minimum a two werking days and Mondee was a holidee so yanno dat doh mean nuttin. Don’t worry we ga give yall a call by Wensdee.” Wednesday comes, no call. So now it’s the following Tuesday, we’re all getting upset but especially me, cause govment offices always wasting people time like ween gat tings ta do and it taking time away from my friend day. I done wait a whole week nah, so instead a wassing time and gas I say lemme try go call dem. There are three rules to know when dealing with govment office in The Bahamas, especially Nassau:*

- 1. Dey open 9am but nuttin happnin til bout 9:30/10 cuz dey gata eat dey breakfast firste (usually grits and sauches, tuna and grits, or fire engine)*
- 2. If ya can’t reach dem by 12, fuhget it cuz a) dey on lunch break and b) een nuttin happnin afta lunch, even if dey is close like 5:30.*

3. *More than likely dey een ga ansa no calls and emails anyway so dis a big chance ya taking, but calling betta dan emailin.*

*At about 9:40 I give them a call. The operator says I'm number 5 in line and it'll take 5 minutes and if that doesn't work, I can try emailing them and they will answer as soon as possible. As my friend completes their work with me lingering around I shout "hahaii lies fa daysss!" They too burst into laughter, "see why yas can do nuttin here. Govment is pure foolishness. Dis why ya always is guiy know somebody else ya bog". We continue this slew of Bahamian ranting until I hear "Hello, National Insurance Office, how may I help?".*

*I immediately switch not only to Standard English, but I put on a 'white voice' to appear easier to help. "Hi, good morning, I wanted to check on a card being processed from last week?". The lady responds, "Aww sorry chall da system down, so you ga hafta call back lata when it up again." "Ok, thank you, have a great day."*

*I take a deep breath, and yell "SEE?!? Dis why yas can get nuttin done ran heya. Nex ting ya know this child ga be flickin 20 wit no drivers license cause dees people cant get it tageda. Da govment always doing foolishness man, fulla garbage." In a similar vain, my friend says "Chall, I know how it go, is a good ting ween gone no where dis morning."*

*A few weeks later we call back, wait for 30 minutes, only for this woman to tell me "MMMM yeah, ine seein nuttin heya unda dat name so yo gern hafta put in dat requess again cuz ine know wachuis doin and why u taught it only take two weeks ta finish". Not only did this woman yuck up my vexation, but she wasn't giving solutions! I hang up da phone cause I was gettin ready ta cuss ha out, but I stop myself. A few days later, we simply drove down to the office to figure out what we was ga need ta do.*

I experience comfort in my speech with my friend and perform very clearly and calmly with the telephone representative. My comfort level is dependent on our years of friendship and mutual trust, as well as the notion that we both speak this creole so there's no reason to hide our truest, vulnerable selves. Thus, I feel comfortable ranting/vexing as I did and vice versa. In contrast, in order to avoid miscommunication and aim for maximum efficiency I use Standard English in a clear, moderate tempoed voice. I describe this as my "white voice" which hints to the connotations behind our perceptions of each language as well as its origins. To speak in this way, I exhibit pressure to speak in a way that conforms with white linguistic norms, understanding that without it I might not make progress with the representative on the phone (Hull 2020, 53). hooks reflects on this concept of speaking in a white voice as well, discussing voice as a performance that can enable and reinforce white supremacy and the habit of repression (1994, 147 and 171). Though the representative used Bahamianese, to show respect and attempt to avoid any attitude I chose to switch to Standard English, deeming it a 'safer'



option. This concept reflects a universal stereotype that a well-educated, well-spoken person of color is less “threatening” than one that speaks with African American Vernacular English (AAVE), creoles, slangs or any other unidentifiable foreign language (Boulton 2016, 132; Maurice 2022).

There were lots of different answers for this situational question. For Destiny and I, it’s typically when we are talking to someone from a government office, both foreign and Bahamian, making a deliberate effort to speak Standard English as clearly as possible. You can also see this in my comfort vignette with the customs officer, as I begin with Standard English. The logic here is that if you sound clearer and more “proper” you will sound more respectful, ensuring that they hear everything you say, that your request will be taken seriously, and that it will actually be completed. If you were to use Bahamian Creole, the inflections in the speech can be taken as having an attitude, upsetting the employee, and ultimately getting you nowhere. Some participants said they perform in all academic settings, such as during lectures, giving presentations or during interviews, in order to appear intelligent and avoid being misunderstood. Riesha recognized that she performs most in her work life today, annoyed by it she states:

“If your customer base 90% Bahamian, I Bahamian, you Bahamian, why we cahn speak in our creole? Like obviously there’s not swearing at all, that make sense but why do I hafta sound completely different to anotha Bahamian just because it’s a different setting? From the same country, same culcha, you understand me if I speak that way, but it’s unacceptable.”

This performance is rooted in the fear of rejection and scorn, and plays into the discomfort we feel with speaking to others in Bahamian Creole. There was less discussion on this particular feeling as participants felt that discomfort and performativity were connected. Though here they deliberately speak Standard English, they are also so invested in the ‘rules’ of our languages that they cannot speak any other way. The situations described here are simply more dramatic performances of the use of Standard English in their lives.

Within a multilingual community, each language is associated with particular social roles, and by speaking a particular language the speakers are signaling a specific understanding of the current situation (Nilep 2006, 11). The social meanings of language choice amongst my participants and I are determined entirely by our terms of personal rights and obligation sets (11). Code switching is based, then, on the speaker’s internal states (feelings of fear, judgment etc.) rather than on the consequences it might have on the current conversation. As stated, all my participants understood what I meant when asking if they code switched, in university and currently. Everyone code switches, both at home and overseas, however, when overseas there is more pressure to do so on a constant basis. For those that went into detail about their feelings,

they found it to be both a necessary and baffling skill, and expressed disappointment and irritation with themselves knowing that they were taught this way yet wishing that they weren't. This is not reflective of all bilinguals who code switch, rather it is a key element in understanding my participants' and I's experiences. Paloma had been grappling with this idea on her own, "the fact that it's ingrained in me at this point to code switch. And I'm like why am I code switching? Why do I feel like code switching makes me feel more intelligent?", "Like why do I think immediately as soon as I reach in da States I have to code switch when I'm really proud of my Bahamian accent and who I am as a person, but somehow some point in my life it was beat into me that Bahamian English is less than in some ways." Code switching contributes to the split in our identities. James examines that adolescents, growing up as foreign children with accents, may feel stigmatized, thus becoming more fluent in English and moving further into the hegemonic culture they are placed within (1997, 100). Standard English is aligned with whiteness, and the discrimination received when speaking Bahamian Creole complicates how we view ourselves, despite the fact that we deeply love being from our country and speaking our language. Through the exploration of these experiences of code switching, comfort, discomfort, and performativity, alongside performing different identities, we find the result in the double identities we express. Our shared experiences suggest a battle between our linguistic identities, as well as between our national identity and being global citizens. Though we are Bahamian and embody our Bahamianness as much as we can individually, the colonialist values and beliefs taught by the British Empire still includes us in the global dominance of the English language since we are educated in a way that gives us this skill of global citizenship (Cavanagh 2020, 5; Huddart 2014, 55).

## Implications

Being Bahamian fuels our identity and although many of us tried to integrate Bahamian Creole into our university lives, it seemed impossible. Bönisch-Brednich argues that being mobile academics can put constraints on one's identity (2018, 87). Similarly, our mobility as international students and migrants are intertwined with our sense of belonging and puts constraints on our Bahamian identity. With a constant critical eye around us, our mindset falters to 'English is the best to use', confirmed through the difficult experiences we each have, and adding to the constraint on our self image. Silbernagel (2015) found amongst their participants that university was a large culture shock for students and that they too felt isolated (18). Neka commented solemnly that "I have discovered being Bahamian is extremely isolating when living by yourself". Feeling alone individually and culturally in another country makes you feel as though time will never end. And although you have good days, it's the bad days that make you

miss how you were back home. These barriers in language usage change who you are and your desires to be yourself. We express ourselves typically only using Standard English at university, excluding our Bahamian identities as our peers and lecturers have created an unwelcoming environment for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Speaking Standard English during class, to other students, and during all academic and professional settings are subjections to “instances when the words and actions of many of the adults entrusted with the responsibility to educate [us] in reality marginalized, silenced, and alienated [us]” (Irizarry 2011, 4). Bhabha describes that:

“The liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the ‘survival’ of migrant life” (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 278; Bhabha 1994, 224).

We operate on systems run by the hegemonic culture who hold linguistic power and decide what is acceptable and unacceptable (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 244). This academic delivery impacts the way we see ourselves and our Bahamianness, as the institution fails to encourage a truly diverse environment or an engaged pedagogy. By excluding Bahamian Creole and our Bahamian identity, we give power to our original and current oppressors, and integrate ourselves to their culture, taking in and conforming to their values, behaviors, and beliefs. If this continues, extreme results can include the loss of our identities.

Although we have two identities for the two languages we speak, it is our we-code, Bahamian Creole, that will reap the challenges and changes brought about by our experiences with code switching and globalization. By trying out new experiences and navigating what works best for our acceptance and comfort in new environments, we neglect one identity while maintaining and perfecting the other. Burton asks, does globalization give us the opportunity to advance past black and white to human? (2009, 14). This is a challenging question, as we have to consider at what cost is this possible. My participants and I have expressed tremendous frustration and confusion in regard to our double identities and speeches. Despite recognizing that it is not a skill we want to have, we are unable to oppose what we have been taught, which could result in partial linguistic and cultural identity loss.

It was not forbidden for us to speak Bahamian Creole at university, however not using the language can be discussed through an exploration of ‘partial linguistic genocide’, as I believe there are elements that speak to code switching and identity loss. Rovira (2008), looking to the United Nations’ definition, examines linguistic genocide, the prohibiting of specific language use in daily interactions, in schools, and in publications (72; Terralingua n.d). This can be seen today as forcing a group to assimilate to a dominant group linguistically and culturally, adopting the dominant group’s values, behaviors and beliefs over their own. Linguistic genocide ultimately is

a strategic method that maintains and reproduced unequal power relations between one group and another. Educational systems are particularly cruel, as many completely disregard the importance of other languages and identities, giving unequal treatment and opportunities to those in the minority (Rovira 2008, 72). Speaking Bahamian Creole in spaces that are predominantly white and English-speaking means going against the norm, threatening the social and educational institutions we reside in. Thus, to survive we assimilate, as not doing so invites discrimination and goes against our understanding of how to achieve success. As Rovira sees it, when students are forced to shift to another language, their native language is not forgotten, but is instead killed off (2008, 73). For my participants and I, Bahamian Creole has not been killed off, merely silenced yet ready to reappear at a moment's notice. For many immigrants in the United States, their mother tongue is lost, despite attempts to keep it (2008, 73). This is particularly true as we describe the relief in being able to speak Bahamian Creole after not doing so for long periods; it is as if we are relearning how to speak. When homesick, we turn to YouTube for Bahamian music or talk to family and friends in order to maintain that speech level. Rovira states that “languages do not kill each other, but rather people with xenophobic attitudes do”; linguistic diversity only seems to be accepted by those of similar cultural backgrounds and experiences, otherwise you are viewed as lacking an education at the expense of speaking your home language (2008, 73).

Our country intentionally imposes educational policies that use Standard English as the only medium of education, thus pushing negative attitudes towards Bahamian Creole. The cost of code switching, Anwar (2020) states, “‘is immense as it causes minorities to spend time worrying about cultural compatibility, rather than dwelling on things that do matter’ she said. For people of color, this can often be frustrating, and it can have a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing”. Although it acts as protection from harm, it strips away at our ability to think outside of survival. Cultural and linguistic assimilation feeds directly into the white gaze that Du Bois discusses. Unganer (2014) describes their experience and explains that upon confronting the stages of language extinction, the speaker shifts their position of fluency until they can only remember their first language rather than speak it (353). This is especially affected by location and being away from others speaking that language. In the case of my participants and I, due to my location and lack of access to other Caribbean people or people I feel comfortable talking to, I would be the most afflicted. Language loss can first be seen in communication but evidently observed in identity. When languages lose their viability, it is difficult to reincorporate and regenerate their functionality (353).

In high school, we were taught to separate our use of Bahamian Creole and Standard English to adhere to certain colonial and societal rules. Going back and forth via code switching created two split identities within my participants and I. Once we moved to university abroad,

our idea of code switching became more complex, as we developed as adolescents, we became more aware of how others perceived us and used language to gain acceptance (Durkin and Conti-Ramsden 2007). Our use of language abroad is determined by several factors, and each experience informs our behavior for the next. We are constantly navigating and negotiating these new spaces through differing levels of comfort, discomfort, and performance, which can negatively impact our identity and sense of being. With enough negative experiences, our use of Bahamian Creole is rejected, and we opt for Standard English, which Bourdieu discusses underlines the symbolic power it has, further reinforcing social hierarchy and maintains dominant order (1991). Even as global citizens we perpetuate the dominance of the English language, using it to further ourselves in education and work. The liminal space we find ourselves in, wanting to express ourselves, in this case as truly Bahamian, and wanting to fit in, assimilating for emotional, mental and educational survival, can lead to partial or full linguistic and identity loss (Arber 2000, 57). Language and identity loss can be observed from several angles, however in this case through educational influence and assimilation abroad. Although my participants and I still have our creole and use it in small portions of our overseas lives, there is a clear effect on our mental wellbeing and identity when we are not being able to speak as we want. If our cultural identities had been nourished, possibly through engaged pedagogy, it might have been possible to maintain both Standard English and Bahamian Creole without neglecting the other, however, this also involves tackling the institutional aversion to critical diversity. After examining these relations of power, to move forward without identity loss we must transform our “consciousness from dependence to one of self-consciousness and independence” (Meer 2019, 56). This process does not happen overnight; however, it disrupts established patterns and globally, can challenge people’s attitudes towards diverse languages and cultures (Rovira 2008, 75). In the next chapter, my participants and I share if and how we are attempting to change these negative attitudes towards Bahamian Creole within ourselves, and our desires for the country’s future at large through decolonizing actions.

## Chapter 4: Sometimes ya brain is can't keep up wit whatcha heart sayin'

[Conscious Resistance: Challenging Colonialist Knowledge through Individual Acts of Resistance and Imagining the Future]

### **Exuma**

*Being home while New Zealand had the borders closed had its perks. I got the chance to explore more islands in my country, especially one's I hadn't been to before. On one of my trips to Exuma, I went on a boat tour for the day, led by my friends who worked for the company. Though I went alone, I felt a little special knowing the crew and sitting with them.*

*When we stopped at the sandbar, I swam out a bit and eventually a couple came and joined me. They introduced themselves and said they were from Nebraska. They then asked me where I was from, had I been to Exuma before, and how I knew the captain. At this point I had already been speaking Standard English to them, but there was a bit of a pause in the conversation and I considered this. These people were so lovely, respectful, and genuine in wanting to know about me that I thought maybe I should give them the experience they had come for. They specifically chose a Family Island for their vacation because they had never been to The Bahamas and thought it the best way to get a more intimate and genuine experience with the people and the environment.*

*I decided very quickly that I would try and speak some Bahamianese and if I couldn't, I could at least speak it to one of my friends whilst in their company. Although it wasn't a deep speech like I use with family and friends, I think I did well because they asked "Why do you sound different now and with the captain than before? He sounds totally different when he talks to you". I really appreciated how respectfully curious they were, because you can get some tourists that act absolutely ignorant, asking if you sleep in huts or ride dolphins to school. I answered, "Bahamians speak their own language but it sounds close ta English, it just really fass and have soma iss own words. We'se try ta talk a lil bit better for tourists so dey could understan us." The couple looked at each other and laughed, "Well it sounds beautiful like a song, even if we can't understand it." She then gave me a little nudge and said "And thanks to you we get to come to all these cool spots, he clearly likes you." I laughed and we continued talking, not just at the sandbar but later on with the nurse sharks as well. We took pictures together and they kept me company when my friends couldn't. I really cherished this experience. I took the first step towards coming out of my shell, my teachings, and just being as much of myself as I could.*

### **Tennis Court**

*On Sundays, my dad plays tennis with about 20 other Bahamian men, ranging from ages 25-70 years old. I had never been to one of these get-togethers and I thought it would be fun to watch him play tennis. I was one of the only girls there, apart from some other women playing tennis on a different court, and I already knew my presence would be a bit weird. Especially considering the crowd of older men, my presence disrupted their flow of vulgarity and arguments as they were taught to be respectable when around ladies. I was sitting next to one of the older members, and observing everyone. I watched them play tennis and watched those around me as they talked, drank, and made jokes about one another. One of the men, Alfred (65) doesn't see me, comes over to grab a drink and sees liquor in the cooler in front of me. He asks for a cup and Julius (70) says "Bey Alfred whachu dern early as dis so, gern ga drink hard liqa?". It was about 9:30 am. Alfred's response was clearly going to be "you een know aye, dis how yas put hair on ya balls", and I could see him going to grab his balls for emphasis. However, before he can say 'hair' he looks up, locks eyes with me and pauses completely. He smiles and says "Aww sorry ine see you", then turns to Julius "Why yune tell me lady was roun, I wudn'ta been so nasty dred".*

*Although I'm comfortable around them at this point, and I know I don't have to perform, I very much felt the need to assert myself. They are older and I wanted to impress them while seeming as mature as I could despite my baby face and good manners. I replied swiftly, "ay ay ay don't worry bout me. Ine here fa yall to go hollin ya tongue and ting, you straight." Julius chimes in, "Yahh bey she may be a lady but looka her, she fulla badness, look how she hollin dat beer, who raise you?". We laugh, Alfred nods an understanding look in my direction and carries on with getting his drink. Everyone hears the end of this interaction, and as I looked around at each of their faces, I thought to myself that maybe I did a good job in getting them to respect me and feel comfortable around me, despite being their friend's daughter.*

From my research project during my Honors degree to writing this thesis, not only did I want to create a space in academia for my people to be heard, but I wanted to know if and how we could challenge the stigmas that permeated through society about our language. These stigmas were created and defined by those in charge, constructing and controlling knowledge creation in society (van Aalst 2009, 261). In my vignettes, I already had a sense of resistance in me, as I was working on my autoethnographic writing at the time and wanted to see how I could implement it in my everyday life. Throughout this thesis, I have talked about the history of colonization in The Bahamas and the way university students use Bahamian Creole and Standard English in their daily lives based on their existing knowledge and the experiences that help further formulate these understandings. In this chapter I want to focus on the final aspect

of my liming sessions where my participants and I were able to give our opinions and experiences with conscious resistance in our lives and the future of our people and our country.

Resistance is a critical framework for decolonial work. Its emphasis is on its relationship with domination, specifically its position of “opposition to power institutionalized” (Ortner 1995, 174). Resistance comes in many forms and can move along a spectrum of revolutionary uprisings and everyday hidden acts (Lilja 2022, 202). In this chapter, resistance is both collective, as it pertains to our language and Bahamian identity, and individual through shifting forms of everyday acts. By defying the systems in charge, we are shifting the close relationship that power and resistance have, to one where power is not authoritative but rather supportive (204). The concept of liberation and resistance constitutes the eviction of foreign rule alongside a transformation of structures that's narrative and values legitimize colonial power (Jefferess 2008, 3). I discuss the pedagogy of resistance further in this chapter, but it is important to outline how the individual acts my participants and I describe are incorporated into our daily lives. Lilja describes that everyday resistance acts as an undercover, hidden from disciplinary punishment yet still a part of the fight (2022, 208). Through mundane acts we can circumvent, negotiate, and manipulate hegemonic influences within different aspects of our lives, in this thesis we do so within language. We practice unlearning how we see Bahamian Creole and are finding ways to reframe and put into action these new beliefs. Colonialism is embedded in our structures of education and has greatly impacted how we see our national identity and language. Thus, these small acts of resistance are becoming “embedded and sustained, and have the desired impact” of resetting our minds and spirits (Lopez 2021, 38). Though it is one of the smaller scaled, subtle forms of resistance, everyday resistance still holds power as we heal ourselves and can slowly influence others (209). These practices of everyday resistance are what precede riots and social movements, but they are also what gets left behind. We have to take accountability individually for change within ourselves to match our desires for change in hegemonic institutions. In this chapter, I observe and analyze resistance amongst myself and my participants, and how these everyday acts towards liberation are helping us shift our perspective on Bahamian Creole.

I am guided in my analysis by Riesha's remark that, “I cahn tell anymore if we're actually being told not to use it or if we're telling ourselves we can't use it.” How often in our current lives are we being told to use Standard English or Bahamian Creole in various situations, and is there someone holding us accountable if we don't? After years of being taught the same things over and over, we have internalized these rules, and are now at a point where conscious unlearning is a set task (Davis et al. 2022, 635; Hiller 2016). As independent, critically thinking adults we have all come to a cross road about how we think we should use language. I really appreciate my participants for their insightful comments here, as it not only opened my eyes to



things I too could be doing, but showcases their own contributions to change in their lives. When we consciously resist we are choosing to bypass the teachings of our elders and schooling, to actively decolonize our language in a way that is meaningful to us individually, but also collectively a part of an international project that others in their own countries with their own histories are involved in as well. In this chapter, I outline the different strategies used to consciously resist, using experiences shared by my participants, and vignettes from my own research. In doing so, it will explore how we decolonize ourselves on a personal level through language, as a form of micro resistance. Further, I talk about my participants' desires for the future. This was where each participant was able to talk at length about what they hope for the generations after us and for our country as a whole. These great ideas reflect hooks' discussions on decolonizing pedagogy and teaching language as a political act (1994).

## Strategies of Conscious Resistance

Before discussing my participants' and I's strategies for resistance, it is crucial that I call attention to why Bahamian youth might have begun rebelling in the first place. As with other major shifts, I am not sure that there was a particular catalyst that began the rebellion of young Bahamians against language, nor did we discuss it in our liming sessions, however, I suspect that social media plays a big role influencing attitudes and critical awareness. Social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in recent years have become deeply embedded in the everyday lives of Indigenous people (Frazer, Carlson, and Farrelly 2022, 1). Though social media can be negative, as people of color are targeted with high levels of discriminatory speech, it can also be a space for "immense Indigenous creativity, imagination and agency - the production of ideas, practices, and relations that work against, below and outside settler power relations" (Frazer, Carlson, and Farrelly 2022, 1; Carlson and Dreher 2018). With movements like #BlackLivesMatter originating on social media, there has been a significant influx of opportunities for people to learn more about settler colonialism and how one can powerfully resist and reject this "logic of elimination" (Carlson and Frazer 2020, 1). Though I could not find literature on the topic, it is possible that this era of social media might have influenced young Bahamians to look inward at the way we understand and perceive our colonial history. Social media allows for the telling of stories, giving Indigenous people a platform through which multiple expressions of the self can be made, encouraging others to do the same (3). An example of this influence in The Bahamas can be seen through Kaché Knowles' IISABAHAMIANBEY Instagram and website. This platform aims to create a sense of community, showcasing Bahamian culture, people, and Bahamian Creole (Knowles 2023). IISABAHAMIANBEY acts as a digital community where the founder pushes for the validation and

appreciation of Bahamian culture and language, challenging the negative stigmas around Bahamian Creole by allowing Bahamians to express themselves wholly (Knowles 2023). Social media does not exist in a politically neutral space; thus movements and culturally expressive accounts work to not only reveal colonial practices, but urge us to take power over our own representation through decolonial action (Carlson and Frazer 2020, 4). Though I cannot prove that this is why Bahamian students rebel, we can insinuate that social media played a possible role in the acknowledgement of ongoing effects of colonization within The Bahamas individually and systematically, and in the encouragement of resistant action which uplifts the Bahamian identity and allows for cultural expression and representation.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the way we envision Bahamian Creole, despite our love for it, has socially negative connotations. Bahamians use phrases such as “come from da bush” or “ghetto” to describe it, indicating that it is of a lower class, less sophisticated and unrefined. After our many experiences in high school and at university, my participants and I acknowledge these patterns between the use of our different languages and have decided to rebel against them. This is a difficult task to accomplish, as the teachings we received as children have become beliefs. They are embodied knowledge; internalized and thus normalized (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 252). Additionally, our experiences as international students and workers is difficult as we constantly navigate and negotiate different cultural contexts and meanings. This linguistic and cultural displacement can be very isolating and affects our identities through pressure to integrate us into the dominant categories of identity within our host countries (Hua 2016, 157; Pherali 2012, 326; Souza 2008, 41). This experience with otherness abroad develops our skill to negotiate our identities, perpetuating hegemonic ideals around diverse identities, cultures, and languages (Hua 2016, 158; Souza 2008, 41). Before beginning this thesis, I thought that in order to break away from these ideas you had to do so in a grand way. I myself had not considered my actions, and thought writing about it academically would be my grand exposition of resisting hegemonic ideas. I asked my participants if they challenged their use of Bahamian Creole at all in their daily lives. Each participant showed me that despite my previous belief of grandiose actions, that resisting can be done on an individual and personal level first, to achieve small but significant victories in decolonizing language (Cornish et al. 2016, 117; King 2022, 39).

During my liming session with Sherrea, she seemed a lot more comfortable with her code switching compared to the rest of us. For her, challenging these stigmas was “more so about not trying”. When her Bahamian Creole would come into effect, she tended to be in an emotional, angry or overly excited state. In public settings she does not necessarily try to resist her teachings in this way. However, at home with her non-Bahamian partner she has been making a conscious effort to teach him different words and phrases. She uses phrases like

“mussci”, “misewell”, “ine” and “ine runnin on wichu” to name a few. She stated in our liming sessions that this was really hard to get used to, and took a lot of her energy to do so. She chose to consciously change her use of language after masking it for the first few months of their relationship, and now finds that by becoming completely comfortable with one another, he too uses Bahamian phrases like telling her she has no “broughtupcy”.

Bilingual or multilingual speakers can use code switching as a form of emotional regulation. Pavlenko’s (2005) work acknowledges the use of language to express intense emotion, which Sherrea showcases through her use of Bahamian Creole and Standard English. Similar to our experiences in early primary school, we felt comfortable expressing our emotions openly at home or with friends, and this was emotionally tied to the language associated with those particular spaces. In public, we evoke a different set of emotions and forms of expression that align with the dominant language and societal rules of that secondary space. Bahamian Creole and Standard English “become differentially associated with emotion through the process of learning and habitually using each language in distinct emotional contexts” (Williams et al. 2020, 3). Through this point, then, Sherrea might be in a public setting but upon expressing anger, she might use Bahamian Creole rather than Standard English to express herself fully, before switching back to the ‘accommodating’ language. Sherrea, thus, practices conscious resistance by listening to how she is feeling and using the language that aligns with these emotions.

On the other hand, Destiny is working abroad and talked about using Bahamian Creole whilst presenting. She pointed out that although we were taught to use Standard English when presenting, regardless of the content, she consciously uses Bahamian Creole in order to calm her nerves. The combination of public speaking and trying to speak ‘properly’ only makes her more nervous and conscious of her anxiety, making her stutter. Instead, she learned that by speaking in the language she is comfortable in, she can quickly get through the presentations and away from public speaking altogether. One of her peeves, she told me, was that “people don’t hafta really adjust like we hafta adjust”, we hafta do “alla da work fa dem ta understand us”. This stance encouraged her in certain situations to refuse the standard and use Bahamian Creole to ensure her own comfort regardless of whether others could understand her or not. Another fun addition to her conscious acts of resistance came from her time in high school. She had completed the gold level for the Governor General Youth Award (GGYA), and was to receive the medal from The Duke of Edinburgh, at the time. During the ceremony, she proudly expressed that she did not change her speech nor did she bow. In doing so, her actions showed conscious and openly political resistance against British influence through language and behavior.

Destiny uses Bahamian Creole as a coping mechanism for her anxiety around public speaking and presenting. She resists through both political action and as an act of self care. Audre Lorde once stated that “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (1988, 131). By focusing on what is best for her own physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, she is intentionally choosing to cast aside societal rules and expectations. This indicates that the use of Bahamian Creole instead of Standard English can still be a politically charged act filled with intention, without feeling difficult or selfish. Breaking resistance, as a strategic practice, challenges the order and laws in place and refuses to obey their hegemonic values (Lilja 2022, 210). This does not specifically fit into everyday practiced resistance, however it can still be contextualized within the broadened spectrum of hidden resistance, as this does not seem to happen often for Destiny.

In the liming sessions I listen closely to my participants’ experiences, and analyze them in conjunction with literature, so that the reader may further understand the discourse around language and resistance, and view my participants’ constructions of themselves through storytelling. Ash described to me her struggle after being asked if she ever deliberately tried to challenge her use of language. In her senior year of university, she felt so tired in regards to keeping up the facade of speaking Standard English that it was becoming unbearable. She decided that it was unnecessarily unhealthy to lose her sense of self and culture in exchange for a small amount of respect. Eventually she decided to give it up, and speak Bahamian Creole. For those who did not understand her, she simply did not care. As a result her “accent get stronga”, especially when she returned from Canada to The Bahamas. She described it as not just a weight lifted from her shoulders but that she felt more secure in her identity and her language by doing so. To transform society, we must struggle; if there is no struggle then we cannot truly embrace change (Canagarajah 2022, 207). Despite having been taught and instructed in a hegemonic system that one language is better than the other, Ash dismissed this hierarchical thinking in order to practice her own cultural healing, pulling “resistance and resurgence” from within (King 2022, 39). Ash’s resistance displays aspects of performativity, which we discussed in the previous chapter, alongside active resistance as she deliberately chooses to contravene.

By discussing such individual acts of resistance, we can see the role that decolonization has in clarifying and strengthening one’s linguistic identity. By changing small aspects of their lives, my participants take control of their agency and begin acting for themselves rather than continuing to conform to societal pressures. Pavlenko and Blackledge’s work on agency and choice helps shape our conceptualisation of linguistic identity by stating “many individuals find themselves in a perpetual tension between self-chosen identities and others’ attempts to position them differently” (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, 20). Our identities are multiple and fluid, and by providing students with dominant discourse, teachers shape our identities to

please the hegemonic system. In spite of this, Sherrea, Destiny, and Ash are showcasing their development of a resistant voice, which Canagarajah (2006) acknowledges creates tension between the two identities, our Standard English identity and our Bahamian Creole identity. How we use language positions us agentively; by reconstructing how we use our language, Bahamian Creole, and asserting this linguistic agency we are enabling a process of becoming through language on our own terms (Stroud 2018, 7). As we see as well, the desire to challenge one's notion of language can be motivated by strong emotions, a need for comfort, and a desire to feel complete. Each of these motivations influences us to move away from the colonial standard, aiming to "disrupt the binaries of them/us, developed/developing" that we see and learn through the older generation and the Bahamian education system (Mendelowitz, Ferreira, and Dixon 2022, 98).

For Neka, conscious resistance means writing differently. Neka is currently completing their post graduate degree in New York in contemporary theater performance. They decided to embrace their Bahamian Creole by beginning to write their scripts in the language. Additionally, after COVID-19, she began to use it in class as well, switching between Bahamianese and Standard English, especially when she got passionate. "Sometimes ya brain is can't keep up wit whatcha heart sayin". Once they realized their classmates still understood them, or at least the gist of what they had to say, they felt validated enough to continue, adding Bahamian inflections and phrases to otherwise heavily academic sentences. As I spoke to Neka, she applauded me as much as I did her, for conducting this research project and bringing our language, deemed 'unintelligent' to post graduate academia.

Sasha, like Neka and I, uses Bahamian Creole in her academic work and through her own personal projects. In graduate school, she discussed feeling uncomfortable speaking Bahamian Creole in the classroom, however, has dedicated her work to exploring the history of The Bahamas in relation to enslaved people. I could tell that she felt proud and happy to be able to showcase and investigate her country in ways that many of us never got to in primary or high school. Further, Sasha runs a book Instagram account, @bahareads, where she documents books she has read, wants to read, books she's bought, and recently, engaging with other Caribbean bookstagramers via Instagram lives. For this project, she spoke passionately about making sure that Bahamians have a platform for their language. "I try and use it more online, whether it's typing, or if I do videos and stuff like for my book page, cause that's something I do wanna promote, cause I don't wanna be talking in Standard English all the time. We have a nice language, it's nice to read, it's nice to hear, it's nice to look at, so that's something that I do wanna promote. And like I also think the more people that don't shun it the more that it'll be accepted." By reading Bahamian books and speaking to her audience in a way that highlights literature, Sasha not only challenges linguistic stigmas throughout the community, but also

uplifts the Bahamian narrative. I recall reading one Bahamian play in the entirety of my high school career. Thus, when I look at Sasha's bookstagram, I learn so much more about our history and the variety of authors we have that are nowhere near discussed enough.

Sasha, Neka, and Ash strategise Bahamian Creole through active and open resistance. Each of them bring defiance into public spaces, whether in academia or on social media. Decolonizing internally means disrupting the belief system you have come to know (Lopez 2021, 40). Thus, each of them brings Bahamian Creole out of its position of informality and into tertiary education, where Standard English is expected due to its colonialist institution. Resistance and liberation cannot happen without education, making it imperative that the space of education is decolonized in order for the mind to be as well (40). Sasha engages with resistance through outreach, aiming to educate others. Ash displays resistance of the spirit, taking a stand for herself and language outside of others' expectations. Neka is constantly creating academic work embedded with the Bahamian identity to make a space for our people. Franz Fanon argues that in order to resist and find liberation, the task must include decolonizing the elements around us, our education, the land, and the mind (1963, 36). My participants actively and publicly resist hegemonic expectations by developing their thinking processes, pursuing transformative change, and paving a path for others to join in resisting subordination of all forms (Lopez 2021, 44).

Moving through each of my participants' practices means visibly seeing each one tell their own stories. The practices people employ to reconnect with their own language must be understood through a decolonial lens (de Bruin and Mane 2016, 784). Amelia indicated that she too was moving towards decolonizing her beliefs around speech. Not only does she try to use Bahamianese around her track coach, and certain friends from university, but she actively aims to speak fully Bahamian whilst in the country. As she iterated, her mother taught her very strictly to use Standard English, though there were moments she spoke Bahamian Creole freely, typically around friends at school during breaks or with her father's side of the family. After noticing that there are still some Bahamians that don't switch their voices to Standard English when talking to non-Bahamians, she felt envious. "I wish I was them", talking to everyone in one language. Amelia feels that using Bahamian Creole is becoming more acceptable, especially amongst our generation, thus she is consciously making efforts to change the way she uses language.

At Riesha's university, there was a girl from Nassau that whenever she spoke, she spoke solely in Bahamian Creole. She never spoke without it. "I remember thinking one, why she doing that, and two catching myself like why I questioning that? That's how she speaks, and how we speak." Riesha realized in university that she could speak however she wanted, despite

professors constantly asking “Hmmm?” or “What did you say?”. The girl she refers to answered each question by repeating exactly what she had said before, unapologetically. Riesha came to really admire her, indicating that she too “strive[d] to be like this, maybe one day”. Today, she makes conscious decisions to be like the girl from her university, even whilst working in The Bahamas. Overall, she described making an effort to use slang words in her sentences and texts when speaking to non-Bahamian friends. Despite the difficulty of this, Riesha explained that she’s gotten a lot better at it, and is now trying to use Bahamian Creole as much as possible. Since coming back to The Bahamas from university, she has felt more pride in her language and identity rather than being shameful about it. “Das my culcha”, she expressed, “cause when you go abroad and you stop speakin like dat nobody else is be doing dat. Americans does say what dey want, people using other culture’s slang, so I misewell do the same”. By changing the way she thought about Bahamian Creole and gaining confidence in her identity, Riesha was able to take actions to unlearn the colonial lessons that permeate our society.

Ocean Ripeka Mercier talks about achieving decolonization by using the metaphor of a house renovation (2020, 42). To restore the house that was colonized, we have to work together but we must think about how we plan to renovate it, and not all jobs can be completed at once nor with the same tools (42). My participants Amelia and Riesha share their resistance narratives through the way they envision change, planning Mercier’s decolonial house renovation. Decolonization requires “critical self-reflection and outward observation” that seeks to embody pre-colonial paradigms (42). Each of them recognize their desire to be able to put Bahamian Creole into effect with ease, but understand that they might not fully be there yet. They envision change by looking to inspirational role models already paving the way for linguistic defiance everyday. At Riesha’s university in particular, but for Amelia abroad as well, the university experience showcases the power of educated habitus. Their university experience helps them perceive and respond to the social world accordingly, allowing them to reflect on the hegemonic systems they academically thrive in and change their use of language as an act of resistance and defiance. If our minds are contaminated with the belief that we are inferior to our colonizers then we will believe in the virtue of our own colonization (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005, 2). Amelia and Riesha acknowledge this, and envision change for themselves in both language and national identity.

My final participant, Paloma, had a lot to share with me. She was very reflective and seemed to be doing a tremendous amount of mental work towards decolonizing her language and beliefs. When asked if she ever challenged the way she used language and consciously resisted, Paloma’s answers were insightful yet she articulated them with such a disappointed and furious tone. “I’m very frustrated with myself like do better! Do better as a Bahamian abroad”! Paloma explained that although she doesn’t practice a lot of conscious resistance she

wants to and tries her best to. After working through the liming session and reflecting on her thought process and stories, I realized that Paloma does a lot more than she gives herself credit for. She practices conscious resistance with her friends, trying hard to speak to them with at least a little Bahamian Creole, rather than switching back and forth. One of the accomplishments she spoke of was being completely comfortable around her best friend, and having her fully understand when she speaks Bahamian Creole. Now a days, she says, “I’ve been trying to make a conscious effort to these days to like speak in my Bahamian accent whenever possible, wherever possible, whether that’s a Bahamian setting, in a setting that’s academic or not, just because it feels like a lot of the time like it’s engraved in me that like ‘oh my Bahamian accent equates to lesser intelligence or lesser than as a person’. I think a lot of that comes from it being ingrained in us in school, like that you can’t use this like this isn’t the right way to talk you gata use da Queen’s english”. Further, she says “if I make more of an effort maybe it’ll undo the years of learning that your Bahamian accent is less than the Queen’s English. Because I wanna undo that, I wanna feel like I can use both interchangeably and I don’t have to be ashamed of either because why am I ashamed of the language I grew up speaking in my country, in my culture? Like no don’t try clown me I know i wan speak Bahamian, so yeah that’s where i am currently”. Paloma’s experience highlights an important point here, that although it’s hard, it is important that we still try to unlearn the colonial teachings from our childhood. This is necessary in the decolonization of knowledge and the larger project of dismantling colonialist structures, as through epistemic disobedience we can reject dominant Western knowledge systems and move towards the creation of alternative forms of knowledge based on our experiences (Mignolo 2009, 161-2). To move forward and really engage with our identity, this is a step we must begin taking, as it will allow us to better share being Bahamian with others (162).

As stated, Paloma did a lot of reflective work on herself and how she views and uses Bahamian Creole and Standard English. She actively resists through reflection and consciously undoing and unlearning what she knows. Decolonial theory suggests creating alternative knowledge from what is already being produced (Lilja 2022, 205). Before taking action, it is imperative that we think about how we want our decolonized world to look, what it means for us and for others. Paloma practices this thinking as she reflects on how she interacts with others, knowing that she wants to decolonize her previous understanding of Bahamian Creole. Paloma resists through active self-reflection and considers different ways of changing her use of language so that she may feel comfortable in both identities. However, decolonization is complex and highly political work, and this means taking action for each of us looks different, but it does not dispute the work we do (Mercier 2020, 68). Malcolm X’s famous speech asks “Who taught you to hate the color of your skin?” (1962). Personal resistance is a key act of decolonizing ourselves and our minds, and when we reflect inward and ask ourselves questions



like Malcolm X's, it affirms that not only were we taught this, but that what was taught can always be unlearned (1962).

The conscious resistance I myself portray is active and open, which can be seen through the two vignettes at the beginning of this chapter. In the first vignette, I decided to speak Bahamian Creole to tourists because I began feeling comfortable and wanted them to experience The Bahamas and our language to the fullest extent. Though I wasn't able to speak it fully, I did my best. Thinking about resistance might not seem like a lot, however, it felt like the world to me - recognizing the stigma and trying to push what I knew out of practice. This was a very embodied experience and a deliberate decision overall. I felt that it took me longer to respond, just so that the automatic Standard English didn't come out, and I think they could tell, but smiled anyway. I'm not sure if I could have made this decision without the presence of the captain and crew nearby, as I tried to model my speech as if I was talking to them. Though the captain spoke to the guests in Standard English, to ensure that they understood important instructions, he remained comfortable with me the whole day, gettin' off, drinkin', swimmin' and speaking Bahamianese. Looking back, if I hadn't considered these things, what would that have looked like? It is so etched into my brain that I probably wouldn't have noticed it at all, wouldn't have thought twice about speaking Standard English, and I most likely wouldn't have spoken to them for the rest of the trip because of the lack of connection on my end. In the second vignette I show conscious resistance, performance, and comfort in one interaction. Although this is a comfortable environment around fellow Bahamians, which warrants approval to speak Bahamianese, I was 'supposed' to speak to them politely as they are my elders and should be shown respect. Not only did I not speak to them in Standard English, I spoke in Bahamianese in a tone that's used for people 'in set witchu' (people in your age group or similar positions). After I realized I had won over the group, my face lit up. It's already a difficult thing to be the youngest around 'ole folk' but especially being a woman around older men. I chose to respond the way I did, in Bahamian Creole with a little bit of sass, in order to fit in. I knew that this could have gone terribly as well, but it didn't. I threw my previous knowledge out the window and made a deliberate, conscious decision to change the way I spoke to help me further the connections I wanted that day. After this interaction, I really felt a part of the group. We continued laughing together, I had about four beers and at the end of the day they declared me "Professor Fernander". I had never felt so much joy and honor being in an unfamiliar space and resisting my colonialist knowledge to replace it with collective connection.

Navigating two languages and two identities across different spaces entails constructing and reconstructing beliefs around the two. Throughout our journey, we show language in motion, which potentially gains or loses value to our identities as we move forward (Horner and Dailey-O'Cain 2019, 3). At this stage, we are reshaping not only how we use language, but how

we receive other people's perceptions of us and broader structures of power and ideology. When individuals disrupt and denaturalise the use of Standard English, whether in schools, in professional settings, or with family, they are positively impacting the identity that's language has negative connotations (Mendelowitz, Ferreira, and Dixon 2022, 99). When we receive positive responses after embracing the cultural and linguistic diversity of our formative years, it encourages us to continue these practices (107). Not only do we become more aware of the performative aspect of consciously choosing to speak Bahamian Creole, which in itself is a strategy of resistance, but overtime decolonizing our language will feel more and more natural. This is not to say that there is no struggle, as struggle is at the heart of decolonial action. By reconnecting with one's language, it directly impacts the history of colonization passed down through generational trauma and memory (de Bruin and Mane 2016, 784). It rips apart the foundation that we were raised with, and ultimately is a life-changing experience to move forward with (784). My participants and I were in positions to overcome barriers and empower ourselves, and showcased that in doing so we are purposefully taking control and claiming a stronger sense of self through language, bringing awareness to our visible identities (Alcoff 2006; Arashiro, Demuro, and Barahona 2015, xi). As our voices and experiences have historically been silenced, our deliberate efforts to decolonize our minds in the spaces we inhabit delinks us from the colonality of knowledge (Arashiro, Demuro, and Barahona 2015, xi-xiv).

My participants and I share different levels of small-scale activism in our stories which can be understood in relation to the larger project of decolonial activism. To preface, our actions should not be ranked from worst to best or least to most, as these experiences are personal and each one takes an immense amount of effort for each individual. Activism should not pit us against one another, it is not a competition especially as activism can look different for all of us (Mercier 2020, 68). With that said, we can look at everyday activism and its powerful effects (Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine 2007, 79). This category which considers personal actions and activities can be seen as insignificant towards activism, however they create progressive change in our lives, our friends' and families' lives, and our communities (79). For Paloma, Amelia, and Riesha resistance is constituted by the decolonization of the mind, as they recognize the effects of their upbringing and aim to change. This is one of the most important stages of decolonization in my opinion, as looking inward allows us to question what we were taught and how we can unlearn (Mercier 2020, 68). Next, Destiny, Ash, and Sherrea begin practicing their use of Bahamian Creole in public spaces, more so in the name of self-care than activism (Lorde 1988, 131). Each of them challenge hegemonic systems they find themselves in and use Bahamian Creole as an expression of emotion between themselves and their audience, whether this be boyfriends, friends, or a presentation group. By opening their resistance beyond themselves to small-scale spaces, such as homes and workplaces, they politically involve those around them as well (Martin, Hanson and Fontaine 2007, 81). This inclusion builds relationships

with others in those spaces, and fosters change within the community, possibly reworking social networks and existing power relations (81). Finally, Sasha, Neka and I challenge colonialist viewpoints within and in relation to academic institutions. Our use of Bahamian Creole within academia aligns us with decolonial scholars in our respective disciplines that worked to enact change and diversify institutional discussions. Like Arashiro, Demuro, and Barahona, our use of language in an academic space actively presents our voices against the one-sidedness of colonial education (2015, vii). Our work reconstructs how institutions view and treat diverse identities, and situates us amongst international projects of ‘otherness’ that unlearn colonial knowledge and relearn culturally specific ways of being and knowing through academic writing (x). Our range of small actions help to transform our minds, behaviors, and social relations, and fosters potential social change by challenging power dynamics within ourselves and with those around us (Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine 2007, 80). Despite the placement of activism within our everyday lives, these resistant acts can be potential precursors to formal activist and political movements (80).

By sharing these experiences and stories, we bring our narratives to an “act of knowing/being/becoming, within the limitations of our positioning” (Ndhlovu 2016, 37). Paloma acknowledges her disposition towards switching to Standard English, yet describes actively moving away from it. This can be experienced as inconsistent resistance but as she says, it’s better to try than to not at all. By telling their stories through the acknowledgement of linguistic prejudices, and turning it around, each participant adopts a stronger voice to tell their counter-story (Mendelowitz, Ferreira, and Dixon 2022, 113). These resistance narratives illustrate an interweaving of multiple determinant actions that overall constitute our linguistic identities and express empowerment theory, where we take initiatives to take control of our lives (de Bruin and Mane 2016, 778). This demonstrates that decolonizing language does not have to happen through macro engagements and rebellion, but rather, that micro forms of decolonizing language still allow us to critically think and challenge how we perceive language and construct identity (Mendelowitz, Ferreira, and Dixon 2022, 99). The use of Bahamian Creole gives access to individual and collective feelings of moving towards a more distinct and clear cultural identity.

## Desires for the Future

The aim of conscious resistance is to feel free within yourself and your identity, to have the freedom to choose and dictate how you want to speak and how you want to be perceived. At the end of each liming session I gave my participants the opportunity to share any other

stories they had relevant to language or anything they hoped for the future. I did not expect this part to be filled with so much information, however, my participants had a lot to share in response to their futures. Such active voicing of hope(s) could be about themselves or about the future of The Bahamas and its people. This became my favorite part of the sessions, as it gave me further insight into what people described as being true from their experiences and how they wanted that to change. Some of the responses were similar to their discussions on conscious resistance, however, these are things they desired both for themselves and for the community at large, so it is plausible that they would overlap or already be in practice. One of their main focuses was on the Bahamian education system, which could be directly related to the content of the liming sessions as a whole.

As Sasha illustrated, a part of her personal act of conscious resistance is by using Bahamian Creole on her bookstagram page. In doing so, she hopes to promote Bahamian Creole to her followers, both Bahamian and non-Bahamian, and create a space for its acceptance. By frequently using the creole in her videos, live streams, and posts, she is normalizing it online, framing it, as Meighan suggests, in a positive light alongside literacy and thus societal notions of perceived 'intelligence' (Meighan 2021, 79). With this in mind, Sasha's work shifts the perception that the 'other' is inferior and is enabling "cognitive and linguistic decolonization" (79). Riesha is using Bahamian Creole a lot more now that she is working in The Bahamas. She is reclaiming her sense of culture and identity from the years of restriction during university. For the future, she wants Bahamian Creole to be embraced: "I think it's a beautiful language. I think it needs to be embraced more and we need to lose the stigma that it's unintelligent because that's not true". By accepting and using Bahamian Creole it raises it to an equal status with Standard English, therefore making it possible to effectively teach future children both languages with confidence. For Destiny, she simply wants to maintain her sense of identity by keeping in touch with Bahamian friends and family as much as possible. Ash, like Riesha, wants to utilize the language more for the younger generations, as she fears they are becoming influenced by television and popular media. She argues that we must be able to embrace it fully in order to pass it on. Sherrea did not have anything to say on her future or that of the country, but did comment that "If I could speak in Bahamian dialect and have everyone understand me, be the best day of my life, but that's not reality". Not only did this hurt when she said it but it resonated with me, because I think for a lot of us this statement encapsulates all that we want for the future - to be respected and understood.

Furthermore, Amelia described to me wishing that she could be someone who doesn't code switch with people outside the language. She acknowledged that she is trying, though it doesn't always go well, but she is trying her best. Her desire for the future is for The Bahamas to be less influenced by outside factors; "we need to carve our own path in this world, make a

lasting impression". In a similar vein, Neka shared wanting the country to create spaces for its history, culture, and language, in order to celebrate our individuality. Too often are we mistaken for Jamaica, Barbados, or Bermuda. By creating deliberate spaces for ourselves we are pushing away our colonial history and making our country our own again. Identity and language are inherently linked, thus when we strengthen one, the other is strengthened as well.

Finally Paloma, like Amelia and Neka, wants The Bahamas to be acknowledged for its culture, language and people, rather than mistaken for other places. "There's value in all the different variations of Bahamian culture in a way that like a lot of people outside of The Bahamas just don't recognize, they don't see. The Bahamas is not just Nassau. The Bahamas is not Jamaica! If we being dead real!". She also talked about the effect that the Bahamian education system and the generational aspect of language has had on us. She says, "I think my dream for The Bahamas is to get rid of the adamant ideologies that the Queen's English is the 'proper' English. Like, my desire for Bahamian school children is to feel confident that they could speak Bahamian Creole and not be ashamed of it. That they could write essays that they could put quotations in Bahamian Creole. Like I remember writing essays in high school and like why? Why aren't dey speakin Bahamian cause ine writing no stories bout no Americans. My stories bout Bahamians, so like what is the disconnect? So I think that's my dream for Bahamian students that like, they feel confident in their language and that their language is valid and that their wants and desires for themselves, their futures. And like to be recognized as a country with a language that matters yanno?". Paloma completes her point with hope, stating:

"I want more people at home to recognize one, that it is a language. I want it to be better documented yanno? Better written, spoken, written in books, essays, written in whatever like... Figure out a way to incorporate it in school in whatever way that may be. One lesson on a Friday about Bahamian Creole yanno? Figure out ways for our culture to not die as generations continue to progress because The Bahamas is a very young country but The Bahamas has many years of culture, traditions and language, and whatever, and like there should be ways for that to be preserved and I think that our language is mainly one of them. My daddy is switch his vs and ws, I don't and I recognize that I don't and I probably never will cause I know the difference between wessin and vessin and like erl and oil yanno? But like that's the reality that's what they spoke and that's what they did and so I think my wish for The Bahamas is for them to find better ways for them to protect our culture to ensure that like, there's longevity, to make sure that Bahamian students, young people whatever, feel safe and okay with using our language home and abroad, and not just feeling embarrassed about our language."

She argues strongly for a collective sense that we must ensure that those after us receive better care and knowledge than we did. We have to give them the tools to think critically, independently, and thoughtfully about our language and culture.

For people of color, language and culture are viewed as one and the same. We display different identities depending on the language we use, and are constantly navigating the appropriateness of each other's usage. Similarly to the authors of *Imagining Decolonisation*, I explore our desires for the future because it allows us to imagine what a decolonized Bahamas might look like, how we can contribute to it and why we might want to (Elkington and Smeaton 2020, 16). The hopes and dreams shared by my participants all promote visions of change that can realistically be enacted in our society. They are positioning themselves through these narratives of future desires on the political spectrum of resistance, whereby they move beyond hidden resistance to constructive resistance. Constructive resistance particularly emphasizes that there "needs to be more than just a mere refusal or a binary opposition to power that just affirms its negation. Resistance requires a creative or imaginative practice that furnishes other modes of being known, seen and conducted" (Malmvig 2016, 263). The contributors of *Imagining Decolonisation* explore activism through imagination as they discuss what a decolonized Aotearoa would look like for both Māori and Pakeha citizens (2020). In order to decolonize we must rethink the dominant narratives and knowledge systems that we have been taught that uphold colonialism (Mercier 2020, 42). It is then we can act through the centering of our own marginalized voices and experiences which consider how our needs and desires can be best incorporated into a new future that passes on traditions and knowledge that were previously suppressed or erased during the colonial era (56). Colonialism is complex and multifaceted, and maintains its values and beliefs within society, thus to undo these effects we must start in the mind. Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird write:

"[D]ecolonizing actions must begin in the mind, and that creative, consistent, decolonized thinking shapes and empowers the brain, which in turn provides a major prime for position change. Undoing the effects of colonialism and working toward decolonization requires each of us to consciously consider to what degree we have been affected by not only the physical aspects of colonization, but also the psychological, mental and spiritual aspects" (2005, 2).

Each of my participants recognize their colonialist upbringings and experiences, and now partake in small-scale acts of decolonization, but it is still possible for them to sketch out other ways of taking up space, many of which indicate larger assistance from the community or government (Mercier 2020, 42).

My participants showcase their ability to imagine, as their hopes create, build and experiment with challenging language in a hegemonic system based on their own negative experiences and the desire to protect others from the same. The resistance expressed here moves beyond "'oppositional' forms of dissent in order to construct institutions, subject positions and norms" (Lilja 2022, 211). Our desires and imaginings are tools for activism and

decolonial work, and by expression allows us to build relationships with others in our community from which activist movements can emerge for a collective future that leads to the revitalisation of our culture and language (Wiebe 2023, 3). We imagine a collective future for us and the future of The Bahamas, but this too reflects and can inform other communities that experience the same thing linguistically or that resonate with the experiences we describe overall, cultivating solidarity through collective strength over uniformity (12).

Throughout this chapter, there has been a recurring theme of wanting to be able to share the knowledge learnt, whether with fellow Bahamians or within controlled public spaces. As my participants and I challenge our own beliefs and consciously try to change them, there is also a fundamental reflection towards how we were educated and what is to come in the future. Education is a realm in which language is determined and regulated, where language can be governed or reclaimed (Pennycook and Makoni 2019, 87). Thus, when examining their desires for the future, there was a lot of longing for a change in the education system; how can we teach our younger brothers and sisters to embrace their language, rather than having to find it out the hard way?

By consciously resisting, we are reclaiming the ways we think and act based on hegemonic values taught to us between generations and the education system. In order to decolonize ourselves and be able to enact these desires for the future, we must no longer nurture ideas of inferiority, we must decolonize our thoughts. How we view language (how we describe it, experience it and treat it) determine our thought process and logic. Meighan (2021) explains that although changing our “Eurocentric logic” can seem negative by definition, in decolonizing the way we view something, we begin to “‘unlearn’ while learning” (80). When we change something we mourn that understanding, but change is a natural and even normal process, in this case it is through effort that we enact this event. The paradigm shift from one worldview to another can be difficult but education is the place to start, as it is “the place or moment where minds are formed, sculpted, and made” (80). Once we begin to shift our perspective from that of Standard English superiority and learn to listen to Bahamian Creole, there is a better chance of stability within the national identity. Bahamian Creole is not intrinsically too colloquial or inappropriate, we were taught to view it as such. By encouraging decolonizing thinking processes, it gives a genuine opportunity for Bahamian Creole speakers to grow outside of British influence and develop a worldview that is decolonial, reflective, and transformative (81). By altering our ways of knowing and thinking, we can hope to see change in our way of being as well, creating a sustainable future for our cultural identity.

Paulo Freire writes, education has never been neutral, “it does not matter where or when it has taken place, whether it is more or less complex, education has always been a

political act” (1996, 127). To decolonize through language, we must endure the struggle to introduce the importance of Indigenous education (88). From what we are taught about education, “the first language of the student are fundamental elements that can have a profound effect on educational achievement” (Nakata 2007, 172). It would be difficult then, to encourage the introduction of Bahamian Creole into the education system because of the already stigmatized notion around its lack of adaptability and acceptance in the larger world. However, it is vital that Bahamian Creole be recognized and taught at the same level as Standard English, otherwise, as in Riesha’s university experience, there will be a loss of cultural identity. During this thesis, we have outlined that the Bahamian education system still follows hegemonic understandings of knowledge, modeled after the British system of colonial education. These dominant views are normalized and naturalized, enacting colonial worldviews we do not come to recognize until later in life. Education can colonize or decolonize, and is dependent on the intentions of pedagogical leadership and how we are taught to practice language (Darder 2015, 49). How then, are we able to ensure that younger generations have a strong sense of culture and identity, and are able to use their Bahamian Creole without shame? As I describe, many of us want there to be representation for Bahamians, as well as a change in the education system. These desires must be led and shaped by a critical decolonizing epistemology, in order to discard social orders and understandings (49). By using Bahamian Creole more frequently, through curricula, activities, texts, and other classroom relations, it conditions empowerment within students. The more prevalent something is, the more accepted it will be over time. This too is not to say that we must only change the education system, but these are steps one can take within the home as well. My participants display the importance of decolonizing the self first then enacting bigger change; by sharing these lessons with the younger generation, it will cultivate a critical understanding of their everyday lives and the role that language plays in it (49).

Language disrupts. By using Bahamian Creole in spaces we ‘aren’t supposed to’, we are engaging in “theory as a healing place”, “linked to processes of self-recovery” (hooks 1994, 61). Not only are we making a culture of resistance, we are creating speech communities where alternative cultural production and epistemologies can be forged (171). Language has power, and these experiences represent more than the rupture of Standard English. hooks often spoke about challenging the use of Standard English, encouraging her students to use vernacular speech in academia. Through this critical decolonial pedagogy, hooks focuses on experience, meaning students can use the knowledge bases they have to speak with (148). By using Bahamian Creole purposefully, we each are coming into our own voices, not just acting. Through language we express our culture, its values, beliefs, and meanings through the virtue of socialization. It fosters our cultural identity in a liberatory way. By writing this thesis, like Sasha and Neka in their work, I am deliberately choosing to not translate my or my participants’



words, I am making Standard English do what I want it to. hooks writes “to recognize that we touch one another in language seems particularly difficult in a society that would have us believe that there is no dignity in the experience of passion, that to feel deeply is to be inferior, for within the dualism of Western metaphysical thought, ideas are always more important than language” (175). Integrating my creole into my writing for academia challenges these conventional ways of thinking about language and creates a distinct space for my own diverse voice.

Our current lives and desires for the future are constituted by our persistence for resistance. My participants and I have shared our experiences with language from childhood to adulthood, and how we engage with our cultural identities. Standard English has been our crutch for so long that through decolonizing our thoughts we have been able to decolonize our actions as well. This is not to say that we are fully ‘healed’ of dominant influences, especially abroad, however it is important to acknowledge that we recognize the harm it’s enacting on our identities and sense of selves, and are challenging it through small, individual acts of resistance. In our everyday lives we each try to use Bahamian Creole in spaces we’re ‘not supposed to’, and although uncomfortable, it can offer a sense of victory. As I coded my research, there was a great mixture between feelings of frustration and disappointment for speaking Standard English, alongside pride and happiness for speaking Bahamian Creole. These emotions inhabit struggle and strength upon reflection, and I appreciate my participants so much for being as vulnerable as they have been. This is especially true when discussing their thoughts on the future of our country, many of which involve wanting to be able to pass down traditional knowledge and language to those that come after us, hoping that they will grow up in spaces different from our own. Our generation “makin’ moves” towards clearly navigating their two languages and identities, and through conscious resistance and imaginings of a collective future, are sharing and manifesting counter-hegemonic ways of being and understanding that hopefully will eventually reach others within the community. The shared experiences we have described, alongside our critical thoughts and reflexivity, indicate that language, culture and identity will always be intertwined; it is simply our ability to unlearn and relearn that determines our navigation of the three.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this year and throughout this thesis I have attempted to work, think, and write in accordance with my own cultural perspective, paying homage to The Bahamas, as well as the extended Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora. Authors like Fernández Santana et al. (2019) acknowledge the necessity for Caribbean practices being accepted and utilized more accurately in research and academia. The result of this inclusion is a construction of knowledge that is consistent with the way Caribbean people think, live, and feel about affairs that concern us (Ahmed 2004; Anzaldúa 1999, 78). My participants and I were able to draw on our cultural and communicative strengths which reflect through the topics we discuss that impact our community and ourselves. It is through the reflection of the transformations we have undergone throughout our lives and during the construction of this thesis, that our connection and appreciation for our language, culture, and people has grown stronger and more confident. This experience was facilitated through autoethnographic fieldwork and liming and ole talk. With these methods, I was able to develop a rich illustration of language use amongst tertiary educated Bahamians abroad from younger years with family, to adulthood, working and/or studying. Employing liming and ole talk alongside Shondel Nero's (2015) post-colonial and post structural lens allowed me to explore language and identity as fluid, rather than two separate and fixed concepts.

My inspiration for this thesis came after completing my Honors degree research project where I interviewed two Bahamian women, discussing being Bahamian and the experience of studying abroad. These discussions did not solely focus on language, but as we moved through the interviews, they became a large part of the final project. This intrigued me, and I began looking at myself and my own behavior and perspective around Bahamian Creole and Standard English. Traveling home only solidified this, as it took two weeks for me to fully speak the way I 'normally' would in The Bahamas. It was only after conducting research on myself and with my participants that I understood the deep meaning this thesis had established for our relationships with each other and ourselves. Conducting limes with everyone was just as much informative on this topic, as it was hilarious. Wendell DeRiggs (2009) states:

"Ole Talk transcends idle conversations, exaggeration, or plain shooting from the mouth. It can involve talk on current events, politics, culture and school days, as well as trends in behaviour and fashion. Ole Talk is any talk and can take place in any setting. (...) Ole Talk follows no rules of engagement. Talkers move with ease back and forth between topics of great importance and less so and of great importance again. One aspect of Ole Talk is humour. This speaks volumes of the ability of West Indians to juxtapose adversity and

hardship with hilarity. One can Ole Talk about a hurricane and the death and destruction it brings whilst extolling the humorous nature of everyday behaviour.” (Fernández Santana et al. 2019).

In my acknowledgements I give thanks to my participants immensely, as the experiential knowledge passed down through ole talk with them has shaped this journey and analysis, and made it worth the blood, sweat, and many tears. These women articulated to me their perceptions of Bahamian Creole and Standard English, and took the time to dive into their childhoods, which could be difficult, yet we still had fun, talking about pop culture, friendship drama, and our feelings. The conversations about their experiences helped me argue that our ideas around language are rooted in colonial teachings, and that overtime and abroad this can have negative effects on one’s cultural identity.

One of the first things I talked about with my participants and documented in my autoethnographic work was our relationship with language and family. Looking back, everyone examined their childhood, their feelings towards family, whether good or bad, and how they grew up with Bahamian Creole and were taught Standard English later. To understand the teachings of the previous generations I had to move through colonization in The Bahamas, as many of our grandparents and parents would have been born before or around independence. The knowledge and rules they learned were based on British understandings of civilisation and intelligence (Ginton-Meicholas 1998). These rules became instructions, passed down intergenerationally, along with the worries, possible trauma, and memories of its enforcement, in order to make us successful in a hegemonic world. Everytime I think about this section of the limes, or what this passing of stigmas means, I always consider how my participants were feeling in those moments. Many including myself were out of the country, so these limes might have heightened any homesick feelings or eased them, as we were able to cackle and talk fool freely, despite the frustration towards colonialist viewpoints. I am grateful for the times we shared and the support they showed, as the sessions and overall thesis writing process made me want to go home every day.

We were taught that Bahamian Creole is informal and inferior, whilst Standard English is formal and superior for effective communication, intrinsically encouraging code switching. I contribute to the literature on code switching through this thesis, which argues the duality of use of languages. There is a significant amount of linguistic anthropological work on code switching for bilinguals and for those that speak English and a non-English creole, but not necessarily English and an English-based creole (Poplack 1980; Wei 1998; Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998). Throughout my analysis I argue that not only do we use these languages for different situations, but that this has created two distinct identities within us, one associated with our home land and the other in line with the hegemonic structures of the outside world. Du Bois

(1903) talks about the notion of double consciousness which I use to examine code switching, as the separation of identities means choosing when to use which, and in a society that favors Standard English, we lose sight of our own cultural identity through lack of use of Bahamian Creole (see also Hill Collins 1990, on controlling images and self-definition). I describe this loss as partial linguistic genocide (Toivanen and Saarikivi 2016), as overtime we become out of practice with Bahamian Creole, especially being abroad, and thus our culture. By exploring comfort, discomfort, and performativity, these experiences institutionalize the idea that feelings of inadequacy and lack in identity are caused by constantly code switching, particularly using Standard English over Bahamian Creole in order to fit in and successfully communicate with non-Bahamians.

There has been extensive dialogue, especially by black and Indigenous scholars, that different ways of knowing and learning should be introduced to education and tertiary research (Nakata 2007; Pennycook and Makoni 2019). The stance acknowledges that dominant institutions' views are seen as normal and natural. My participants and I deliberately choose to resist, changing our minds and actions away from assimilating for hegemonic ideals, introducing our own engaged ways of being. It is through micro strategies that we decolonize our use of Bahamian Creole, making efforts to speak in situations our linguistic rules tell us not to, for comfort, representation, self-care, and to influence others to do the same. By shifting our perspective from that of Standard English superiority to learning to listen to Bahamian Creole as more than an accent or dialect, there becomes a better chance of stability within the national identity. The shared experiences discussed by my participants and I have aimed to highlight how we navigate Bahamian Creole and Standard English, alongside our Bahamian identity, and how we are currently making progress towards critically engaging with decolonial pedagogy and ways of living.

Although I have discussed several topics, the themes explored interconnect, all aiming to look at the relationship between Bahamian Creole and Standard English, and language and identity. For us, this is a vital part of our true selves, and being able to explore this and share our stories has allowed for both empowerment in ourselves and culture, and hope for the future of The Bahamas. This process was one of the hardest things I've ever gone through, as I felt very alone and homesick the whole time, especially towards the end. Though I wanted to give up, I didn't, solely because of my participants and wanting to make them proud, as they all looked to me with inspiration and commended me on moving forward, despite my rough start and regrets. I finish here with lyrics from a well-known Bahamian song that's sound is full of Bahamian culture, and despite the lyrics, the spirit of the song reminds us no one does do it like us, no one is talk fool like us, and when ya feel out of touch with ya Bahamian self, ya done know what song ya startin wit.

“Woman pull up to Miami airport door  
Wit de bigges box I eva saw  
She say ‘take dis down to Bahamasair,  
You’ll get a big big tip once you get it dere’  
Nah, you know I does work fa tips  
But is it wuyt me bruikin’ up my hip  
I een boughtu I gat a ting tuh prove  
But dis di bigges box dat I eva tried to move

She had di bigges box in de worl I eva saw  
Wit all she gat, who could ax fa more  
Da mean she buyin’ Miami, musbe spoil  
She gat di bigges box in a de worl”

(K.B. 2010).

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