

Seeking Social Justice: A Critical Understanding of Reggaeton Narratives

by

Julio E. Vega Cedeño

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Approved by:

---

José M. Irizarry Rodríguez, Ph.D.  
Member, Graduate Committee

---

Date

---

José Anazagasty Rodríguez, Ph.D.  
Member, Graduate Committee

---

Date

---

Rosa I. Román Pérez, Ph.D.  
President, Graduate Committee

---

Date

---

Rosita L. Rivera, Ph.D.  
Interim Director, Department of English

---

Date

---

Noemi Maldonado Cardenales, Ph.D.  
Representative, Office of Graduate Studies

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Date

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is informed by Freirean pedagogy and studies Reggaeton narratives as a part of the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere. Thus, it establishes an argument which promotes the study of Reggaeton narratives in academia, but more specifically in the Puerto Rican pedagogical setting. This is done by examining and by providing an in depth analysis of four Reggaeton narratives along with the context of the artists within a Freirean conception of education in order to illustrate how Reggaeton narratives can foster a deeper awareness on the injustices and acts of oppression unprivileged communities face and thus, promoting the development of critical consciousness and social justice. Therefore, this thesis takes into perspective studies of ideology and hegemony to not only further the understanding of the ideologies presented in the narratives, but to understand how they can challenge the hegemonic standard of the Puerto Rican society.

## **Resumen**

Esta tesis está informada por la pedagogía freiriana y estudia las narrativas del Reggaeton como parte de la esfera de la cultura popular en Puerto Rico. La misma, establece un argumento el cual promueve el uso de las narrativas del Reggaeton en un ambiente académico pero más específico en el ambiente pedagógico de Puerto Rico. Esta examina y analiza meticulosamente cuatro narrativas del Reggaeton junto al contexto del artista dentro de la concepción freiriana de la educación, para así ilustrar como las narrativas del Reggaeton pueden fomentar un conocimiento profundo de las injusticias y actos opresivos que amenazan las comunidades no privilegiadas y así promoviendo el desarrollo de la conciencia crítica y la justicia social. Por lo tanto, esta tesis toma en perspectiva estudios de ideología y hegemonía para no tan solo expandir el entendimiento de las ideologías presentadas en las narrativas del Reggaeton, pero para entender cómo estas retan el estándar hegemónico de la sociedad Puertorriqueña.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my loving wife, a privileged woman who fell in love with this broke “caco”. Thanks for accepting me with all of my faults, and for being an exceptional human being; your humbleness and kindness brings about the best qualities any human being can have. Thank you for being an example to follow.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere there has not been a more controversial success story than the formation of the Reggaeton music genre. Its raw content in the lyrics and depiction of sexual acts, drug dealing and violence made it a topic worth debating in all the media outlets of the island from the early nineties until the present day. Thus, it is due to the controversial upbringing of the Reggaeton music genre, its raw content, explicit lyrics and social criticism that makes the study of Reggaeton a rich source for discussions of ideology and hegemony. Understanding the concepts of ideology and hegemony within the Puerto Rican popular culture spectrum provides a wider understanding of the power structures which have ruled over both Reggaeton's negative reception and its own themes and narratives. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, I put into perspective these studies along with my own analysis of these narratives with the objective to argue its value within the context of the Puerto Rican educational system as Reggaeton narratives can prove to be tools for the pursuit of social justice.

To better understand how Reggaeton narratives can be tools for the pursuit of social justice, we must first acknowledge "social justice emerges by fostering a deep awareness of social inequality and providing opportunities for young people to change the social and community conditions that prevent a positive, healthy process of development" (Ginwright and Cammarota 93). However, it is important to indicate that for the purpose of this thesis the concept of social justice is directly linked with the idea of critical consciousness, a concept coined by Paulo Freire which Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota described as "an awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote the life opportunities for particular groups" (87). Having said that, when the term social justice is mentioned in this thesis, it specifically refers to how by developing a deeper understanding of

Reggaeton narratives in the context of education, one can attain a critical understanding of the social conditions which limit student's opportunities to have a fruitful development within the Puerto Rican society. More importantly the term social justice also serves to indicate that by gaining this understanding, students can then move towards taking an active role in their development which would essentially allow them to take social action in order to change the limiting conditions which hinder their development as young productive members of the Puerto Rican society. Therefore, we must use Reggaeton narratives as text of empowering nature which must be analyzed with the purpose to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and our society; in other words, Reggaeton narratives would be used to encourage the act of critical thinking.

Critically thinking about Reggaeton narratives in order to promote social justice may sound as one of the most farfetched ideas one might encounter when talking about education, as it is often considered a genre of denigrating nature which to some negatively affects Puerto Rican culture. Some people might consider it a genre which has nothing to contribute towards development of a student becoming a productive member in Puerto Rican society, because in its early stages it was known as *underground* and was described as "...boisterous, vulgar, violent, or otherwise hard edged. It has been identified by its participants with a street-oriented, vernacular, spontaneous and uncensored mode of expression" (Rivera 113). Thus, through depictions like these embedded in the popular opinion of the island enabled a damaging perception within the uncritical consumption of Reggaeton narratives.

However, the idea of using Reggaeton narratives as a tool for social justice is not to blindly promote the genre, but to deconstruct it by taking into account its history and trajectory in order to understand its themes, its relevancy and possibly the reason for its attraction. But

more important, we must acknowledge Reggaeton narratives can detail real accounts and representations of everyday life for certain cultural sectors of the island like government housing projects and other urban areas and possibly many of our own students' lives. Hence, these narratives provide a picture of the real life Puerto Rican society especially the realities of urban neighborhoods throughout the island. In fact, Marién Villanueva Vega in her thesis *Fairy Tales and Reggaeton Narratives: Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes Inherent in Puerto Rican Popular Culture* explains:

Reggaeton is very important in Puerto Rico because it represents the urban street ideologies. It is the ideology of those who are not acknowledged by the power structures. Dwellers of the hood and projects find a way to communicate their reality and life experiences through this musical genre. (16)

Thus, by taking a closer look at these narratives, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these artists are exposing the rough context of the lower class communities. In other words, Reggaeton explores and exposes the experiences which lower income communities of the Puerto Rican population go through every day of their lives, as it exemplifies their worries about money, their pain, suffering, encounters with violence, sex, drugs and socio-economic oppression.

The study of Reggaeton virtually opens a window which allows the public to perceive the different social, political and economic issues lower income communities and even middle class communities face, all of which are presented within the perspective of their context in these narratives. In other words, as explained in the essay *Reggaeton Nation* "Reggaeton spoke directly to the social conditions prevalent in Puerto Rico like outrageous unemployment rates, failing schools, and government corruption" (Negrón-Muntaner and Rivera 36). For example,

songs like *Sácame el guante* and *Censurarme por ser rapero* by Eddie Dee are just a few of the songs which can serve to point out different socio-political issues and political oppression Puerto Rican society encounters to this day.

In the case of the Eddie Dee's song *Sacame el guante* the title itself is a metaphor which embodies the main theme being perpetuated in his song. "sacame el guante" literally refers to removing the glove but when you read the chorus of the song we can understand it refers to a boxing metaphor which refers to when a boxer is punishing his opponent by landing a large amount of blows one would yell "sácale el guante" to essentially indicate stop abusing of your opponent. However, we can see below (followed by my translation) how Eddie Dee uses this metaphor to refer how the blows he is receiving are not from punches but from accusations and attacks he receives for being a Reggaeton artist:

Sácame el guante de la cara papá  
De que me acusan si yo aquí no he hecho na'  
Sácame el guante de la cara papá  
Sacude pal carajo y déjenme en paz  
Remove the glove from my face dude  
What are you accusing me of if I haven't done anything  
Remove the glove from my face dude  
Go to "hell" and leave me in peace

Thus, the accusations Eddie Dee is referring to are based on the stereotypes which render Reggaeton artists as bad influence on Puerto Rican society due to the explicit nature of the lyrics and the realities of the life in the streets exposed in many songs. On the other hand, the song *Censurarme por ser rapero* deals with a similar theme in terms of the attacks perpetuated by the

media and society. More specifically, it deals with the censorship the Reggaeton genre was facing at the time. Here Eddie Dee in order to defend himself and the genre in general from these attacks, he points out how in the Puerto Rican society, people in power have done harsher things than rappers by indicating how his diploma is signed by Victor Fajardo an ex Secretary of Education who was convicted for stealing millions of dollar from the education budget. We can see in the following lines how Eddie Dee does this:

¡Censurarme por ser rapero!  
¡Es como censurar un pueblo entero!  
No me hables de lo justo ni de lo injusto  
Pues, mi diploma esta firmao' por un corrupto  
Censorship for being a rapper!  
Is like censoring an entire town!  
Do not talk to me about what is just or unjust  
Because, my diploma is signed by a corrupt (referring to Victor Fajardo the only Puerto Rican secretary of education ever to be convicted of a felony).

Both these songs emanate a message which in its core challenges the established order by addressing the oppressive nature of the forces in power (the government and the media) and society's judgmental nature towards what they do not understand. Thus, not only breaking the common conception of Reggaeton, but engaging in serious issues which should be addressed in a pedagogical setting.

Even though, most Reggaeton songs do not highlight situations of socio-economic oppression, we must look beneath the explicit nature of Reggaeton narratives that are troublesome and politically incorrect with lyrics which are explicitly reducing women to sexual

objects as it hinders the ability of some listeners to understand the context which fuels such ideologies. In addition, examples where a Reggaeton song details the violent atmosphere of drug culture and sexual encounters contribute to how the genre itself became labeled as a negative influence on the Puerto Rican society. However, these negative connotations cannot represent the genre as a whole, due to the fact that not every narrative is exclusively derogatory towards women, promotes sex, violence or the selling of drugs. In fact, some Reggaeton narratives do exactly the contrary, for example the song *Julito Maraña* by Julio Voltio Ft. Tego Calderón is one of the narratives where the virtue of humility is explored through the story presented. More specifically, we can see this at the end of the song when Julio Voltio delivers the moral of the story:

La cárcel y los cementerios  
Están llenos de gente como Julito Maraña  
Camine derecho jodedor  
Que el abuso no es bueno, y la humildad prevalece  
Jail and cemeteries  
Are full of people like Julito Maraña  
Walk straight player  
That abusing is not good, and humility prevails

As a result, Julio Voltio and Tego Calderón acknowledge how their environment is full of negative aspects all of which essentially contribute to the encouragement of setting a positive example within their grasp of how they perceive their society should be. Though, these lines only show the moral of the story, it essentially highlights the main idea they are trying to perpetuate in this narrative.

Other narratives take it a step further by turning them into arguments of social empowerment which allow artists to voice their discomfort with the Island's government; thus, these narratives became a source of socio-political discrepancies which allow Reggaeton artists to defend themselves against their labeling as negative influences towards Puerto Rican society by the government itself. Examples of these narratives can be found in the songs briefly discussed above by Eddie Dee *Sacame el guante* and *Censurarme por ser rapero*. However, Reggaeton artist Tego Calderón has a song called *Loíza* which explicitly depicts his discomfort with how the inequality and discrimination in the justice system is perpetuated and how it only benefits the privileged. Below are some of the lines in the song which present this theme:

No todos somos iguales en términos legales  
Y eso está probado en los tribunales  
En lo claro la justicia se obtiene con cascajos  
Por eso estamos como estamos (¡Que se joda!)  
Not everybody is equal in legal terms  
And that is proven in the courts  
In the clear, justice is obtained with gravel  
That's why we are like we are (Fuck it!)

As seen above, Reggaeton artists Tego Calderón and Eddie Dee are a couple of the rappers who defended themselves from the attacks higher social classes and the government made against the genre as they blamed it for being immoral towards society and for the promotion of violence, drugs and sex. The attacks Reggaeton faced not only served to stigmatize the genre, but they exponentially escalated when the government attempted to censor the movement in its early stages (Straight outta Puerto Rico). As a result, artists like Tego Calderón and Eddie Dee began

to counter those preconceived notions by acknowledging how the government itself is not setting the “right” example for society thus creating awareness of the social discrimination and corruption found within government officials. But more importantly, Reggaeton artists were being stigmatized and labeled for engaging in their constitutional right of freedom of speech. In other words, it is by the very attempt to censor Reggaeton which motivated Reggaeton artists to speak against the government’s acts of oppression.

There are two major reasons why the pursuit of social justice using Reggaeton narratives in the classroom is important. First, its sociocultural relevancy towards the issues almost half of the Puerto Rican population is facing where Reggaeton voices the realities, problems and concerns of the urban poor sector within the Puerto Rican society which the majority of the Puerto Rican society actively ignores. According to Mark Hugo Lopez and Gabriel Velasco’s *Statistical Profile A Demographic of Puerto Ricans, 2009*, the urban poor sector represents 44% of the population which means almost half the population of Puerto Rico has something to relate to when it comes to themes presented in Reggaeton songs (3). The disregard towards this sector demonstrates how Puerto Rico faces a form of socio-economic oppression where middle and high class continually foment the labeled standard in which Reggaeton has been stigmatized for years. The second reason is acknowledging that by understanding this genre’s struggles will contribute to reshape the preconceived notion people may have regarding the Reggaeton genre and its worth as a tool for social justice. Thus, understanding the use of Reggaeton as a tool to pursue social justice is not meant to celebrate or condemn the genre, but to engage students in dialogue in order to question why the themes presented are acceptable or unacceptable within our society. This would allow students to reflect on the issues, build connections with their world, but more importantly they would engage in the process of critical thinking which would allow

students to develop what Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* refers to “critical consciousness”.

Essentially the controversy which Reggaeton encountered is strictly on how the message is presented (explicitly) rather than the message itself. It is true to say numerous Reggaeton narratives use explicit language which is considered offensive and demoralizing by certain sectors of the population; however, by engaging in a in depth analysis of Reggaeton narratives, we can gain a clear understanding of how these messages can contribute to bigger discussions of hegemony within the Puerto Rican society. Thus, utilizing these narratives to promote social justice can make for great topics of discussion where students can gain a clearer and deeper understanding of who we are as a society.

The main goal behind engaging in a in depth analysis of Reggaeton narratives is to provide a deeper understanding why these themes are so popular with students and by using them one can acknowledge the cultural value behind the empowering nature of the texts. Thus, opening a space where using popular culture helps students move forward as critical thinkers by utilizing relevant texts which are embedded in their everyday lives. Even though, Reggaeton is not a genre accepted among many, it is undeniable in the sphere of popular culture, it has reached a wider range of spectators from different parts of the world which essentially surpasses Puerto Rican audiences (Negron-Muntaner and Rivera 37-38). Moreover, the growth of Reggaeton serves as an example on how the contextual background and themes presented in these songs is not only representative of the Puerto Rican culture, but they are also being promoted through other parts of the world. Thus, making Reggaeton a topic worthy of critical analysis in order to enable students to develop a deeper understanding of these narratives and also to gain awareness of how we are being portrayed outside of Puerto Rico.

There seems to be an established standard and stigmatized ideology towards the Reggaeton music genre regarding its controversial history and rough context. This negative connotation has essentially hindered any possibility to fully take advantage of all the aspects which Reggaeton narratives can contribute to the Puerto Rican urban youth who have continually consumed this product since its imminent growth in the Puerto Rican society. Thus, the ideologies presented in these songs are digested without academic inquiry on the context which fuels the beliefs these artists seem to project through their music.

Given the undeniable expansion the Reggaeton genre has undergone in recent years, it is understandable its success is given to a series of elements which have been able to resonate through the Puerto Rican urban youth. Hence, Reggaeton narratives have the ability to provide useful tools for rich discussions regarding the socio cultural elements which disseminate with its audience. However, the lack of analysis and discourse of such songs have allowed the uncritical consumption of these narratives within Puerto Rican society and its educational system. Keeping this in mind, educators can take advantage of the elements presented in Reggaeton narratives by utilizing them with the specific purpose of pinpointing how this music resonates with its audience but more importantly, how educators can engage students in the process of questioning and critical thinking.

One of the ideas behind utilizing such controversial music as a literary text is to illustrate how anyone who has a preconceive opinion about the genre will be able to provide some input in any type of discussion regarding the Reggaeton music genre. In the media and social networks, Reggaeton is either portrayed in a negative light as it builds certain stereotypes of the people who listen to the music and the people who sing it. These people are usually referred as “cacos” which essentially demonstrates how society has built a label of segregated nature in order to

identify those who actively seek out to model the fashion, style, and appeal of Reggaeton artists. Consequently, this notion of “cacos” also carries with it the negative connotation which the genre itself has been stigmatized with; in other words, “cacos” can be described as a people (normally males) who embody most if not all the negative aspects represented in Reggaeton songs. For example, the definition of “caco” in the urban dictionary would serve as a way to demonstrate how this stereotype is enforced by describing their clothing style, hair style, behavior and even their preferred mode for transportation in a satiric manner.

Caco fashion generally consists of mostly athletic clothes of known brands or anything that makes them look like they're rich (which is hypocritical considering their inverse snob ghetto behavior). Males: brightly colored basketball jerseys wife beaters or long white T-shirts, baggy denim shorts, expensive reebok or nike sneakers (usually white) or wheat colored Timberland or Lugz boots and a white or 2 toned baseball cap. When cacos want to dress fine on a night out, they will wear imitation designer jeans, horizontal striped polo shirts and a pair of pointy tan colored shoes (puerto rican fence hoppers). Preferred hairstyles are usually crew cuts which makes them looks like clones of each other or corn rows. And of course no "self respecting" caco would be complete without a shit-load of gold jewelry mainly thick heavy gold chains with a huge medallion or cross, heavy gold rings and of course an imitation "blinged out" diamond earrings. (El Lobito Triste)

As a result, we can acknowledge the overgeneralization of Reggaeton being a negative and demoralizing music genre has provoked a type of social profiling which exemplifies how we, as a society, divide each other according to social and economic boundaries. The topic of “cacos” is far more complex as different people can develop different interpretations of what being a “caco”

entails. However, the fact it is such a controversial topic can provide a socially relevant discussion among students in order to begin a questioning process of these ideologies which are well embedded into their understanding and perception of the world.

Reggaeton narratives contain rich cultural context of our society which demonstrate how it can be discussed in a classroom setting which consequently, embodies a series of valuable lessons to be had by applying these narratives within the cultural context of our Puerto Rican society. But more importantly, there must be a series of guidelines which emphasize how Reggaeton narratives should be observed and analyzed by educators and how they can apply the strategies which would allow them to provide students with the most appropriate approach to apply these texts. However, in order to achieve this, there must be an understanding of the background and rise of the music genre and within that context we must generate an in depth analysis of key narratives which both reinforce negative connotations of the genre as well as the ones which break those common misconceptions. This process is essential to be able to indicate how to approach the topic and to specify how these narratives have served as a tool of empowerment rather than a convention of negative uncritical criticism.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The relevancy critical pedagogy promotes advocate educators to reform their style of teaching to one where students are empowered using their own personal background. Thus, using Reggaeton narratives as a tool to promote social justice can help students connect their personal experiences to the song given the cultural relevance the genre has for Puerto Rican society as well as the attractiveness this genre holds in the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere. Moreover, the critical approaches presented in this thesis will directly promote the use of critical pedagogy and popular culture with the purpose to promote social justice while at the same time developing critical thinking skills of urban youth students.

In order to understand how popular culture plays an important role within the critical pedagogy framework, we must take a closer look into what critical pedagogy promotes.

As Henry Giroux in his essay *Lessons from Paulo Freire* explains:

According to Freire, critical pedagogy affords students the opportunity to read, write, and learn for themselves--to engage in a culture of questioning that demands far more competence than rote learning and the application of acquired skills. That means personal experience becomes a valuable resource, giving students the opportunity to relate their own narratives, social relations, and histories to what is being taught. (2)

This entails students are being empowered by the culture of questioning while engaging in dialogue and in the process promoting their own voice, making them feel their opinions matter. More importantly, they are able to bring their experiences as resources for their learning, thus making popular culture an intrinsically important aspect of critical pedagogy. In the book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, John Storey describes one of his definitions of popular culture as:

the culture that originates from ‘the people’. It takes issue with any approach that suggests that it is something imposed on ‘the people’ from above. According to this definition, the term should only be used to indicate an ‘authentic’ culture of ‘the people’.

This is popular culture as folk culture: a culture of the people for the people. (9)

Meaning, that popular culture can exemplify relevant cultural ties from a society as the issues or themes presented in them come from the people. Hence, popular culture can be the bridge which can motivate students to develop their own voice as it creates a comfortable environment where students bring their own background information to the class as an essential role to their education. Furthermore, it establishes relevant topics where students can be engaged while feeling more interested in learning about such topics. At the same time, the opportunity to dialogue on relevant topics would expand their way of thinking regarding what students already know.

Developing critical consciousness is one of the major aspects Freire’s critical pedagogy instills in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where he describes it as “being conscious of, not only an intent on objects but as turned in upon itself in a Jasperian ‘split’ – consciousness as consciousness of consciousness” (Freire 79). In other words, being conscious for Freire means students should be aware of how society functions in order to shape their understanding of how “their” world works. By taking this into account, it is understandable how the process of becoming critical should start with what students care about which entails that school systems should take into consideration what students already know or what they already “think” they know. This way students would be able to develop a deeper understanding of the topics they like.

An important aspect of using popular culture within a critical approach of teaching is not only that is relevant for students, but that students would expand their knowledge of what they think they know by gaining awareness of how popular culture functions as part of the culture industry. In the case of Reggaeton, if one were to analyze the content of the lyrics from its beginning in the early nineties through its evolution, we would see how there is a cleaning of the lyrics as an attempt to play on the radio in order to reach a wider audience which would entail selling more albums, having more concerts and so on. Thus, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how popular culture works in the form an industry we must understand there is a business element which influences the messages presented in those texts. In order to expand this idea we have to take into consideration another definition of popular culture, where Storey includes Gramsci's political concepts regarding the "nature and politics of popular culture" and explains that:

Those using this approach see popular culture as a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups. Popular culture in this usage is not the imposed culture of the mass culture theorists, nor is it an emerging from below, spontaneously oppositional culture of 'the people' – it is a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two: a terrain, as already stated, marked by resistance and incorporation. (10)

Not only does this definition provide a deeper and more complex meaning of how popular culture works, but it demonstrates there is a higher power structure at play which intervenes with the process the symbol creator (a Reggaeton artist in this case) goes through. This higher power structure or dominant group can come from many figures of power depending on what specific medium we are talking about. For example, when we talk about the beginnings of Reggaeton (at

the time known as underground) the music arose from the people (or subordinate group) it was a simulated representation of their life experiences, an expression of a subculture found in the housing projects and poor neighborhoods of Puerto Rico. It was not governed by any media entity; which means the message presented in these songs was not influenced by a higher power (government, media outlets, record companies, among others.), but that it was purely an exercise of freedom of speech which was being spread the same way illegal drugs are sold (Straight outta Puerto Rico). However, with the rise of this rebellious type of music the government felt the need to intervene by attempting to censor underground and in the process the voice of a subculture.

An example which helps illustrate how the government utilized the police to censored the underground movement was how in the early nineties the underground music was given a space to be sold in a record store, however the police raided the store and confiscated any and all underground cassettes in the same fashion they would a drug ring with the difference that it was due to the explicit and vulgar language found in the music. In other words, the police was not raiding record stores for any illegal activity, but because the government felt uncomfortable with expressions found in such music. This consequently led to numerous news stories portraying these raids as necessary and thus labeling rappers of the underground genre and their subculture as criminals. In addition, madam senator Velda Gonzalez was exceptionally vocal against the musical expressions found in the underground music and the sexual content of their music videos which led to multiple hearings in which they force to take out of the air such videos due to the fact that some of the young girls who were taking action in some of the videos were minors (Straight outta Puerto Rico). Eventually, due to the rising popularity of Reggaeton there was a rise of talent who were slowly cleansing their language in order to avoid such attacks from the

government and to reach a wider audience in the process. In other words, underground or Reggaeton artists avoided the use of their raw vulgar language which was traded in for double entendre allowing them to perpetuate the same themes in a “cleaner” fashion. By doing this, the door was opened for these artists to become accepted within the mainstream Puerto Rican popular culture sphere.

Some people may argue the negotiation to become accepted by the masses would essentially hinder a pure and authentic representation of their subculture. Hence, it would be perceived as a compromise Reggaeton artists had to endure which works in favor of the dominant groups as these groups were able to achieve their purpose of cutting down the vulgarity presented in the songs. Meanwhile the Reggaeton genre had to sacrifice the rebellious and raw nature of their lyrics and thus an important aspect of their subculture. However, in order to further understand this negotiation or compromise from the Reggaeton genre, we must acknowledge how the aspect of hegemony plays a role in the understanding of popular culture. As explained in *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color* by Victor Villanueva, Jr. the usual definition of the Gramscian conception of hegemony states that:

Hegemony equals ideological domination. Gramsci adds an essential qualifier: domination by consent. Without consent hegemony fails. And consent is granted ideologically. As Gramsci sees it, every culture contains particular worldviews, ideologies; some of these are common to the cultures within a society and are common to the cultures that comprise the dominant groups. (123)

Taking this aspect into consideration we can see how it informs the previous definition of popular culture and at the same time it brings awareness to the point that when we talk about hegemony, we are essentially talking about how dominant groups seek to maintain a form of

control, one not based on coercion but on consent. In the example of underground, according to Raquel Z. Rivera in *Reggaeton*, there are three main reasons for the attacks on underground; the first one being that youth were seen as victims of this music which could persuade them to behave like the songs they were listening and thus, becoming immoral members of Puerto Rican society. Secondly, “the fear that a cultural form developed by ‘marginal’ youth was becoming popularized among the wider population” (112) and lastly, “rap and dancehall reggae have been accused by many of being ‘foreign’ forms of musical expression which threaten the integrity of Puerto Rican national culture” (112). This serves to demonstrate how the dominant groups resisted the growth and appeal of the underground music due to how it provided a voice to a lower subculture they fear threaten the established ideological domination.

Essentially, these attacks did not just antagonize a music genre, but it developed a prejudice towards a subculture which the underground movement represented. In other words, by having a subculture undermine the culture in power the poor sector and any person associated with being underprivileged were fundamentally classified as polluters of Puerto Rican culture. Consequently, this led to attempts of censorship by the government in order to resist a lower subculture which was challenging the domain of the established culture. In this sense, the beginnings of the Reggaeton genre can prove to be an example of a counter hegemony as it challenged the established hegemony to the point where the government had to engage in acts of censorship. However, as the Reggaeton genre continued to grow and expand by popular demand, the government had to accept the genre with the condition to cut down its strong, graphic and vulgar content. This resulted with Reggaeton artists accepting to clean up their vulgar lyrics, thus embracing the hegemony in place and while this is true to the majority of the mainstream Reggaeton artists, there are a couple who still manage to counter the established hegemony in

their songs, though not through a mainstream medium. Thus, understanding the concept of hegemony within the realm of popular culture demonstrates how the relationship between dominant classes and subordinate classes function, which in the realm of education would allow students to engage in critical discussions in order to identify such scenarios within their own context and in the process becoming aware of these power struggles and thus developing critical consciousness.

Moreover, the process of becoming critically aware of our world takes more than the understanding of how hegemony fuels our understanding of popular culture, but that we must comprehend the ideologies perpetuated by the struggle between the dominant class and subordinate classes without ignoring and the context which inhibit such perceptions. In order to further recognize this, we must acknowledge various definitions of ideology and how they connect to our understanding of popular culture and hegemony. Thus, Storey's explanation of ideology

...uses the term to refer to 'ideological forms' (Marx, 1976a: 5). This usage is intended to draw attention to the way in which texts (television fiction, pop songs, novels, feature films, etc.) always present a particular image of the world. This definition depends on a notion of society as conflictual rather than consensual, structured around inequality, exploitation and oppression. Texts are said to take sides, consciously or unconsciously, in this conflict. (4)

By taking this definition into account, we can understand Reggaeton can be considered a text which essentially depicts a particular image of the realities of the poor and unprivileged sector of the Puerto Rican society. Nonetheless, the explicit nature in which these realities have been presented has been the cause for many controversies regarding the influence of Reggaeton

narratives in Puerto Rico. Thus, it is not only important to acknowledge the ideologies present in the Reggaeton narratives but also the ideologies embedded within the context of the Puerto Rican society present during the start of the genre, its trajectory and the attacks made by the media and the government to fully comprehend the ideological struggle surrounding Reggaeton narratives and its perception within the context of the Puerto Rican popular culture. Therefore, the discourse found in Reggaeton narratives can be one of contradictory nature due to the conflicted landscape of different ideologies within the Puerto Rican society and the Reggaeton subculture as Terry Eagleton in his book *Ideology: An Introduction* explains:

Every discursive process is thus inscribed in ideological relations, and will be internally moulded by their pressure. Language itself is a 'relatively autonomous' system, shared by worker and bourgeois, man and woman, idealist and materialist alike; but precisely because it forms the common basis of all discursive formations, it becomes the medium of ideological conflict. (Eagleton 195-196)

Thus, this ideological conflict is product of the clash of a diverse group of people who share different ideological standpoints within the same society, which not only plays an important role into the analysis of a Reggaeton narrative, but into society's interpretation of the narrative as well.

As discussed earlier in the example of underground we were able to see how the government attacks and attempts of censorship towards the underground movement did not just antagonized the rappers who were creating the songs, but the poor and unprivileged social class associated with them. These associations were the result of how the government perpetuated attacks towards the underground movement through the media outlets on the island, which served to cement the idea underground was a harmful agent to the Puerto Rican society. By

doing so, the media and government portrayed a "distorted" view of reality which essentially presented an overgeneralized depiction of the underground subculture based on unsophisticated criticism which claimed underground was "damaging" to the Puerto Rican value system without any proof of it having those effects on society (Gans 41-42). Thus, these ideologies were paved within the popular opinion of the island population and are still present today:

Ideology is used here to indicate how some texts and practices present distorted images of reality. They produce what is sometimes called 'false consciousness'. Such distortions, it is argued, work in the interests of the powerful against the interests of the powerless.

(Storey 3)

Thus, the government's attacks showed how they perpetuated their point of view to serve their ideals in alienating the unprivileged sector without any proof of it working in that manner. In other words, people who believe Reggaeton is a harmful agent towards the Puerto Rican society and its value system may not necessarily be aware the unsophisticated and oppressive nature which developed such prejudice in the first place. Thus, it is highly important to understand the oppressive history the Reggaeton genre holds in order to contextualize it, which will essentially further our understanding of the ideologies that fuel its narratives. In essence, our comprehension of ideology and hegemony are a core part of studying popular culture, but more importantly using Reggaeton as a text will serve as the bridge students will use to gain such understanding which ultimately will serve to develop critical consciousness and promote social justice.

Shawn Ginright and Julio Cammarota in their article *New Terrain in Youth Development: The Promise of Social Justice Approach* "argue that an effective approach for working with urban youth is through a social justice framework, which accounts for the multiple forms of oppression youth encounter and highlights the strategies they use to address inequities plaguing

their communities” (83). This essentially means they take into account freirean practices in order to establish the ground work of what a social justice frame work is, as they promote the development of critical consciousness and social action. Furthermore, they elaborate and explain how

people can only truly “know” that they can exercise control over their existence by directly engaging the conditions that shape their lives. We argue, therefore, that social action and critical consciousness are a necessary couplet; that is, acting upon the conditions influencing one’s social experience leads to an awareness of the contingent quality of life. (87)

Thus, Ginright and Cammarota are establishing the importance for urban youth to engage in the process of becoming aware of their social world in order to partake in an active role in trying to change it. Even though, this premise is a great argument which essentially promotes social change, the main problem it holds is that other than promoting social change through the use of freirean practices it does not propose any concrete means in which urban youth can achieve such claims. Nonetheless, the works of Duncan-Andrade, Morrell and Akom utilize a similar framework in their articles to promote the use of hip hop to achieve diverse goals in the classroom, all of which essentially use freirean practices like developing critical consciousness and praxis. For the purpose of this thesis, all of these serve as examples of why it would be effective to implement these practices within the Puerto Rican context by utilizing Reggaeton narratives.

A concrete example of using popular culture as a way to cultivate critical consciousness applies to the use of hip hop in the English classroom as a way to develop literacy skills. It is by taking into account a series of articles written by Ernest Morrell, Jeffrey MR Duncan-Andrade,

Louie F. Rodríguez and A. A. Akom where we can see their argument towards implementing a critical approach to the use of popular culture (hip hop in this case), as it not only helps students develop better literacy skills, but just like Reggaeton it can make them aware of concepts like hegemony and ideology. More importantly, by identifying these concepts they argue the implementation of Freire's problem posing method of teaching is then essential for their own auto-development. Consequently, they continue by acknowledging it is by creating praxis their strategy to empower students can come full circle. Freire states, "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (79). This then leads to the understanding the biggest idea behind implementing such strategies is to change how the educational system approaches its current problems regarding the education of black minorities in the United States.

In the articles, *Turn up that radio, teacher: Popular cultural pedagogy in new century urban schools* by Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell, *Toward a critical pedagogy of popular culture: Literacy development among urban youth* by Morrell, *Promoting academic literacy with urban youth through engaging hip-hop culture* by Morrell and Jeffrey MR Duncan-Andrade and *Latino school dropout and popular culture: Envisioning solutions to a pervasive problem* by Rodriguez show the reason behind applying critical approaches of the use of popular culture in the classroom comes from the need of establishing a solution the common literacy problems which black minorities deal with in the United States. Thus, at the same time it would be promoting the school system to change their literacy policies, in order to apply the use hip hop as new literacy which would help capture students' interest more effectively. In fact, in the beginning of their articles they acknowledge a common notion: there is a big problem with the current educational system in the United States. For example, Morrell draws upon McCarthy in

his article *Toward a critical pedagogy of popular culture: Literacy development among urban youth* begins explaining:

Finding effective ways to teach today's student population is perhaps the greatest challenge facing literacy educators in the United States. As class-rooms become increasingly diverse, educators struggle to find curricula and pedagogical strategies that are inclusive and affirmative yet facilitate the development of academic and critical literacies. Unfortunately, much of the multicultural education literature -with its limited conception of culture as a racial or ethnic identity- offers little to help teachers attempting to make connections and create learning communities in multi ethnic urban classrooms. (qtd. in Morrell 72)

He addresses the lack of multi-cultural literacies and thus proposes popular culture as a new form of literacy. However, Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell in their article *Turn up that radio, teacher: Popular cultural pedagogy in new century urban schools* starts with:

According to the National Reading Conference on adolescent literacy, there is a growing gap between the levels of literacy learned in schools and the types of literacy skills demanded in an information age (Alvermann, 2001). This literacy gap, seen particularly in urban schools, carries serious social and economic consequences (i.e., incarceration, unemployment, etc.). (284)

In beginning their argument, they have acknowledged the current way the system is approaching literacy does not develop adequate learners to be ready for the information age while also pointing out the consequences they may encounter.

There are different ways in which literacy problems are being addressed in the United States; however these problems reflect themselves not only within the context of black

minorities in the U.S. but in the Latino community as well. In fact, when considering Rodriguez's article *Latino school dropout and popular culture: Envisioning solutions to a pervasive problem* he addresses an issue specifically regarding Puerto Rico "In early 2006, the Governor of Puerto Rico publicly expressed interest in using Don Omar, one of the world's most popular Reggaeton artists, to address the issue of school desertion" (258). Even though Rodriguez is addressing the Latino community in the United States, he contextualizes the problem utilizing the example of Puerto Rico and its school desertion problem. However, this problem is directly related with the issues the Latino community in the U.S. deals with; Rodriguez indicates that "Although the United States is an economic superpower, its school system fails to graduate 50% of its Latina/o students" (259). In addition, it is understandable the problems the Latino community is facing are not so different from those of the urban youth of color, as they both are minorities within the U.S. Nevertheless, Rodriguez's proposition on how to solve the problem is quite similar to the arguments found in the articles discussed above by Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell. It is after acknowledging the many problems which the educational system encounters where Morrell pursues the use of hip hop as form of popular culture. He then justifies the use of it within a critical framework by stating:

Popular culture, they argued, is not an imposed mass culture or a people's culture, it is more a terrain of exchange between the two. The texts and practices of popular culture move within what Gramsci (1971) called a compromise equilibrium. Those who look at popular culture from this perspective see it as a terrain of ideological struggle expressed through music, film, mass media artifacts, language, customs, and values. For the critical educator, then, popular culture provides a logical connection between lived experiences and the school culture for urban youth. (73)

Morrell acknowledges how important is it to draw from the student's context in order to apply a critical approach of using hip hop in the classroom. Furthermore, Morrell recognizes urban youth as a whole which entails not only black minorities, but any other young group which relates to the urban setting. In fact, it is understandable this could relate to the Latino/a community as they too are exposed to the urban setting.

Given the negative connotation which some educators associate with the use of popular culture in the classroom, Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell further argue towards the critical perspective of how popular culture should be addressed in the classroom. In order to extend their argument, they clarify that "It is important to note here that this article is not meant to advocate for the blind and uncritical celebration of popular culture in literacy classrooms, but rather to recognize and draw upon its centrality to the lives of youth" (288). Furthermore, they explore and bring about the argument which Henry Giroux presented in his book *Fugitive cultures: Race, violence, and youth*, regarding how popular culture should be implemented and approached by critical educators, as Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell clarified that "Critical pedagogists, he argues, must consider popular film and music as serious sites for social knowledge to be discussed, interrogated, and critiqued" (288). In other words, popular culture should not be used as a tool of entertainment but as one which is meant to be deconstructed in order to further develop an understanding of what it represents.

In essence, Morrell demonstrates how useful it is to establish the use of popular culture with urban youth as he provides examples of teaching units regarding hip hop culture, film and mass media. Furthermore, he addresses the importance of how these strategies apply critical pedagogy as an essential aspect of each unit. In the case of hip hop, students were able to "move beyond critical reading of literary texts to become cultural producers themselves, creating and

presenting poems which provided critical social commentary and encouraged action for social justice” (74). Given the nature of the activities performed in the teaching unit, it is clear to grasp the concept of praxis as students were able to perform and act upon what they critically read. Not only does this example entail the effective use of critical pedagogy, but at the same time, it moves away from the traditional way of teaching. Following the framework which Morrell established in his article, it allows for the application of not only hip hop, but Reggaeton within the Puerto Rican urban youth as it connects with the context of the Puerto Rican and Latino community. Given the similarity between hip hop and Reggaeton, it is only natural to adapt the unit depending on the given demographics of the classroom. In fact, Rodriguez encourages the use of Reggaeton and hip hop as an approach towards a solution for the school desertion problems which the Latino/a community are facing in the United States.

In the Reggaeton music genre, there have been many associations with the labeling of certain social groups within the urban communities of Puerto Rico through its music. In essence, Reggaeton reflects directly with the lifestyle of the Puerto Rican housing projects, slums and streets and discothèques. This notion is profoundly elaborated in Dinzey-Flores’ article *De la Disco al Caserío; Urban Spatial Aesthetics and Policy to the Beat of Reggaetón* as she explains how the lyrical profile of Reggaeton highlights the realities of a lower class subculture which explicitly presents issues of violence, poverty and masculinity all of which constitute a key aspect of the urban experience in Puerto Rico. Thus, Dinzey-Flores refers to the situation of how the lyrics in the Reggaeton genre are a direct a reflection of the real lifestyle encountered on these urban communities rather than it being the other way around. More importantly, in order to prove how Reggaeton lyrics mirror Puerto Rican lifestyle, Dinzey-Flores carried out a content analysis in which she studied 179 Reggaeton songs and took them through a deductive and

inductive analysis in order to make valid inferences. Even though, the core focus of this article is to look at the urban aesthetics of Reggaeton, it is natural to understand such interpretation arrives from an in depth look at the use of the lyrics which entail that in order to make such claims about Reggaeton, one must interpret and understand the slang and colloquial aspects of Puerto Rican Spanish presented in Reggaeton narratives.

Understanding how Reggaeton narratives exposes a particular image of Puerto Rican lifestyle is essential to the argument where Kim Kattari in his article *Building Pan-Latino unity in the United States through music: An exploration of commonalities between salsa and reggaeton* argued how the genre of Reggaeton is following what the genre of Salsa did in a similar manner in terms of their origins, audience and marketing strategies. Furthermore, the article focused on explaining how Reggaeton is uniting the pan-Latino community just like Salsa did in the past using a wide mixture of beats and rhythms as well as common urban “hood” themes relevant to the pan-Latino audiences.

Reggaeton, as with Salsa before it, has been influential in instilling this sense of pan-Latino pride by identifying, acknowledging, and highlighting the common concerns of various Latin American groups, leading Latinos in the U.S. to understand themselves as part of a pan-Latino group, connected by a common heritage and identity. (Kattari 119-120)

Even though Katarri argues how Reggaeton narratives bring together the Latino American culture with pride and other various relevant concerns to the pan-Latino community, one must not ignore if the issues presented in the genre of Reggaeton are seen as relevant in other Latin American contexts than in Puerto Rico, it should reflect a greater representation of Puerto Rican lifestyle thus referring back to what Dinzey-Flores pointed out in her article about Reggaeton

being a reflection of authentic Puerto Rican lifestyle. More importantly, the topic can be expanded in how it reforms the identity of Puerto Rican Culture through the use of its colloquial slang.

Considering the idea that Reggaeton is following what Salsa did in the past; the documentary *La Clave* attempts to find similarities between Reggaeton and Salsa as both genres have similar backgrounds in terms of its rough context, lyrical expressions, rhythms and even the jewelry they wear (or bling bling). However, it mainly focuses on how both genres have similar roots in terms of rhythm, in this case what they refer to as “La clave” which the documentary defined as “un patrón rítmico o guía de tiempo que tiene sus raíces en la música del occidente de África” (a rhythmic pattern or guide of time that has its roots in the occidental music of Africa; my translation). The roots of la clave comes from “el tambor” (the drums) in Africa thus, making the argument that Salsa and Reggaeton have “el tambor” or la clave as a common denominator which essentially guides the lyrical fluidity of both genres. The question which is not explicitly detailed in the documentary is what does it mean by presenting la clave as a lyrical guide to Reggaeton? Does it mean Reggaeton’s major influence comes from Salsa? Or that Dembow (underlying rhythm which is present in almost every Reggaeton song) is the equivalent to what they refer to as la clave in Salsa. Artist Tego Calderón explains that when he writes his songs he does so using la clave even though it is rap or Reggaeton. Hence, this statement is in a way giving validity to the main argument presented by the documentary.

This notion where Reggaeton has a “clave” just like Salsa and finds its roots within the African heritage of the drums signifies and provides Reggaeton with the same cultural value which Puerto Ricans commonly attribute to other genres like Bomba, Plena and Salsa. Thus, this documentary is not only providing information on how Reggaeton is an important aspect of

Puerto Rican culture, but at the same time it is emanating a historical relationship with the start of Salsa as well. In other words, the documentary is presenting how Reggaeton and Salsa both share similar rhythmic characteristics tracing back to our African heritage and thus through those characteristics expressing its Latin identity and pride. Even though these characteristics are important to understand the cultural value of Reggaeton due to its close relationship with Salsa, we must not ignore a couple of important aspects the documentary *La Clave* fails to explain which is the Jamaican and hip hop influence in Reggaeton.

Taking into consideration Wayne Marshall's analysis of Reggaeton's roots in his essay *From Música Negra to Reggaeton Latino* in the book *Reggaeton* he explains:

Journalists and cultural nationalist (or pan-nationalists) alike have been eager to tie the sound of Reggaeton to other Latin (or "tropical," to use the music industry term), Puerto Rican genres, or a combination of them. The explicit, if exceptional, appearance of Afro – Puerto Rican folk forms such as bomba on recent recordings of Tego Calderón and La Sista has helped to encourage this perception. Similarly, the increasing presence in the last few years of musical figures (and direct digital samples) from salsa, merengue, and *bachata*... serves to fuel fantasies about reggaeton's inherent *latinidad*. (23)

Waynes's explanation essentially challenges the main argument established in the documentary *La Clave* as it points out that the Reggaeton's inherit "latinidad" are in reality blends with other Latin rhythms brought forth by artist like Tego Calderón and La Sista. In fact, Wayne further argues that "...some observers hear reggaeton's musical structures not as "Latin" at all, but as essentially Jamaican or African American in constitution, while others make reference to concepts such as *clave* in order to place the genre firmly in an Afro-Latin-Caribbean tradition"

(23). Thus, essentially acknowledging that there are many ways to interpret the cultural ties Reggaeton has regarding its signature beats.

Even though there is an ongoing debate regarding Reggaeton's influential heritage; there is no ignoring the cultural value it holds to the Latino community especially when referring to youngsters. As the documentary *La Clave* explains "El Reggaeton le ha dado a la juventud hispana, especialmente en Puerto Rico, un género musical que consideran propio" (Reggaeton has given the Hispanic youth, especially in Puerto Rico, a musical genre which they considered their own; my translation). Similarly, referring to Reggaeton, composer and Salsa artist Willie Colón states "La juventud necesita una música que represente toda su rebeldía y sus inquietudes..." (Young people need a music which represents their rebelliousness and their concerns; my translation; *La Clave*). In addition, Jose Gazmey VP A&R of SONY Puerto Rico also explains that Reggaeton is "Representando lo que ellos quieren ser y representando a su tierra donde ellos entienden lo que son sus principios y sus valores..." (Representing what they want to be and representing the land where they understand what their principles and values are; my translation; *La Clave*). Thus, the documentary is consistently presenting the significance and relevance it holds within Puerto Rican youth regarding the unprivileged sectors of Puerto Rico. But more importantly, it explains how these representations are valuable forms of expression which hold their cultural values and their understanding and perceptions of their world.

Closely related to the documentary *La Clave*, another documentary called *Straight Outta Puerto Rico* takes a closer look at the origins of the Reggaeton genre. More specifically, this documentary deals with the influences and blends which made possible the origin of the Reggaeton. Thus, in order to attain a clear explanation of how this genre was born, directors Chanking and Savidge carry out a series of interviews which provide an in depth look at the

early Reggaeton artists, producers and DJs who provided number of stories which contribute towards gaining a deeper understanding of the genre's origin. More importantly, by providing a wider perception of the origins of Reggaeton, it also informs of the struggles, discrimination and acts of oppression which the early Reggaeton artists underwent from the government of Puerto Rico. These are characteristics which are shared among both *La Clave* and *Straight Outta Puerto Rico* as they both shed light on the attacks and attempts of censorship the Reggaeton genre (previously known as underground) underwent in the early nineties.

The exposition of the documentary *Straight outta Puerto Rico* explores central contextual aspects the island is facing as it dictates the differences between the economic backgrounds of Puerto Rican society. Consequently, the documentary divides the economy of Puerto Rico in two factors formal and informal. The formal economy is fueled by corruption and political leaders at their throats. Thus, acknowledging how the economic issue on the island has been a result of the mismanagement of funds and how important decisions are being made for political reasons and not for the benefit of the economy. This brings forth the informal economy which essentially is composed of any form of work which does not report taxation and it is not monitored by the government, consequently this is referred to as working under the table or getting paid in cash, which is money that stays and is spent on the island. This situation is important as it provides the context and brings awareness to the reality which Puerto Rico faces. Furthermore, due to a series of economic realities along with government officials focusing on fulfilling their own political agenda, has not only brought forth a huge economic crisis to the island in recent years, but also the inspiration of a wide range of Reggaeton narratives depicting the corrupted mentality of the government.

Thus, the usage of both *La Clave* and *Straight Outta Puerto Rico* helps gain a wider understanding of how Reggaeton narratives can serve to debunk its denigrating connotation which promote the use of drugs, sex and violence and instead exploit the aspect which makes Reggaeton a genre which works towards promoting social justice (as seen in the brief explanations of the songs *Censurarme por ser rapero*, *Sacame el Guante* and *Julito Maraña* on chapter one). Moreover, we can gain an in depth understanding about Puerto Rican society based on the messages expressed in Reggaeton narratives, its rough origins and how it has become a world renowned music genre.

As Reggaeton identifies, acknowledges, highlights and comments the common concerns of Puerto Rican urban “hood” life through the lyrical content and the use of the slang it also shows how the colloquial Puerto Rican slang represents a major and somewhat exclusive identity marker for the Puerto Rican urban sphere. Thus, taking into account that even though Reggaeton is following a strategy to widen its market, it is not ignoring the context in which it was brought up in the first place. However, when taking into account Philip Samponaro article “*Oye mi canto*” (“*Listen to My Song*”): *The History and Politics of Reggaeton*, one must recognize how the interrelationship between Reggaeton and hip hop is also referring to a call for unity with African-Americans as:

More recently, Daddy Yankee and African-American rappers Young Buck and Lloyd Banks of the group G-Unit scored a spring 2006 hit with the G-Unit remix of El Cangri’s “Rompe.” These emerging bonds symbolize new directions in bridging racial differences between blacks and Latinos, who share not only similar social experiences in the Americas but a common African heritage as well. (502)

This also designates how these two genres are collaborating with each other in order to establish a wider market. However, this collaboration works intrinsically with having two different languages (Spanish and English) and thus opening the situation to a wider and more open relationship between both languages.

In the context of Puerto Rico, Reggaeton proves to be an excellent option to use within a critical pedagogy parting from the framework used by Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell with hip hop. Even though hip hop and Reggaeton differ in terms of language, both genres share many aspects regarding their origins and the themes presented. In the case of Marién Villanueva-Vega's *Fairy Tales and Reggaeton Narratives: Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes Inherent in Puerto Rican Popular Culture*, which is the most recent work regarding a critical interpretation of the gender roles presented in Reggaeton narratives, she discusses how gender stereotypes are being enforced and how the lack of critical interpretation hinder students' attitudes towards their own identity. To illustrate this, Villanueva-Vega explains that:

reggaeton performers create a persona of themselves in each one of the narratives.

Nonetheless, their fans think about them not as the persona created in the narratives.

Their fans believe they are in real life the persona they have created in the narratives.

(69)

Thus, the application of critical approaches, which will allow students to critique and interpret these narratives in a deeper level are essential to the development of the urban youth of Puerto Rico regarding how they perceive Reggaeton artists and how it influences them.

In order to empower and engage students through the use of popular culture one must apply the comments made by Henry Giroux in his essay *Lessons from Paulo Freire* and give:

...students the opportunity to be problem posers and to engage in a culture of questioning puts in the foreground the crucial issues of who has control over the conditions of learning and how specific modes of knowledge, identity, and authority are constructed within particular classroom relations. (2)

It is then by applying these techniques with the use of Reggaeton narratives that students will gain the necessary tools they need not only to improve their literacy skills but to become critically aware of their place in society.

One of the major creative contributions to the use of hip hop for the development of academic literacy is found in the transformative strategies implemented in Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell's article, as their work expands in great detail upon the hip hop teaching unit mentioned in Morrell's work. Furthermore, here Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell argue on how hip hop proves to be a great transition towards canonical based poetry. In addition, we can see actual connections from the poetry and hip hop songs. Some of them are "Kubla Khan" by Coleridge and "If I ruled the World" by Nas, "Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock" by T.S. Elliot and "The Message" by Grand Master Flash and many others. More importantly, this article demonstrates how this strategy of teaching works as their claims are based on their students' results when carrying out the lessons. Hence, contributing towards changing how the schools system approaches education and at the same time encouraging social justice with students. In fact, Rodriguez's article recognizes Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell's examples on how connecting classical poetry with hip hop demonstrates "that transformative learning can occur when creative pedagogies merge traditional academic content and popular culture, particularly in contexts serving Latina/o and other historically marginalized students" (263). Thus, Rodriguez argues in favor of applying the approach Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell article provided,

but within a Latino/a context, which intrinsically drives along the line of using of Reggaeton within the Puerto Rican context.

Understanding hip hop and Reggaeton narratives as part of popular culture provides a connection to the themes of identity and gender roles in the urban youth. However, students must gain awareness of how mass media entities portray these forms of popular culture (hip hop and Reggaeton); as deconstructing media literacy within a critical approach is equally as important as deconstructing the hip hop and Reggaeton narratives themselves. Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade in their article *Popular culture and critical media pedagogy in secondary literacy classrooms* explain how their students created a media literacy project where they had to focus on how the media portray people of color. Moreover, in that project students were able to define cultural media literacy:

To obtain facts from the media text necessary: to examine, ask questions, analyze and critically dissect all the forms of culture, language, issues of power, positionality within a text that may create particular meanings, identities, and to shape and transform the material and social conditions of our culture and society. To question reality vs. perception. To examine who the experts are on the story. To consider what you believe is the most accurate, reliable, and factual source of information from the different types of resources or media. To explore how culture, society, and polity are structured and work (qtd. in Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade).

Here Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade demonstrate how students are engaged in deconstructing the media entities, by questioning and analyzing previous text, thus, exemplifying how students can expand their knowledge upon the analysis of how the people of color are portrayed by the mass media. Furthermore, it has to be recognized that the success of this project

is contributed to the application of Freire's problem posing method of teaching as it empowered students with a situation which was relevant to their own life condition.

Somewhat influenced by Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell and Morrell's articles, A. A. Akom in his article *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy As A Form Of Liberatory Praxis* introduces a new approach to the teaching of hip hop in the classroom which he calls Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP) which essentially connects the problem posing method teaching style posted by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* with the utilization of hip hop as emancipatory texts which would serve as a tool for social justice. This is similar to what Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade did in their article as Akom uses the same approach promote praxis and social justice. However, he further justifies the use of hip hop by indicating that:

I am not suggesting that all forms of hip hop are emancipatory, revolutionary, or even resistive many forms are not—and some are quite the opposite. However, I am suggesting that given the long history of socio-political conscious hip hop as a tool for illuminating problems of poverty, police brutality, patriarchy, misogyny, incarceration, racial discrimination, as well as love, hope, joy—academic institution's under-utilization of hip hop's liberatory potential in the classroom is surprising. (54)

Hence, Akom acknowledges some of the problems one might encounter when using CHHP. In addition, he recognizes how, as well as Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell, Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade, and Morrell's articles address marginalized communities in order to apply this approach. But more importantly, the significance of this statement is that it serves to demonstrate how hip hop sheds light on cultural problems encountered in marginalized communities, which essentially can be applied within the context of Reggaeton narratives in the Puerto Rican culture. In fact, Reggaeton narratives deal with very similar issues discussed in these articles, which

essentially means that the way we can interpret Reggaeton narratives not only allows for the for the development of critical thinking skills but for the promotion of social justice just as Akom argues with the application of CHHP.

There have been a series of scholars who are responsible for the collection of essays which bring into academic context the cultural, social and political controversy which the Reggaeton genre has generated since its beginning. This collection of essays from the book called *Reggaeton* and in one of these essays Raquel Z. Rivera took on the task of analyzing the social and political reactions towards the upbringing of the Reggaeton genre previously known as underground. One of her many arguments exposed in her essay *Policing Morality, Mano Dura Style* is the attempt from the government to censor the underground where she explains:

One of the reasons *underground* was target for censorship was that within the social climate in Puerto Rico, youth from poor communities were seen as the main perpetrators of crime and social disorder. Policing and restricting *underground* could, therefore, be easily portrayed by government authorities as a logical extension of anticrime state policies. (122)

Even though it may seem logical for law enforcement authorities to censor a genre due to its nature, it becomes an unconstitutional action as it violates the right for freedom of speech. Thus, it brings a controversial debate regarding the reaction of government politics towards the Reggaeton genre. More importantly, these actions taken by the government push Reggaeton artists to speak against the government in their music and thus, shedding light on the topics of social discrimination and government oppression through censorship. Tego Calderón, Eddie Dee and Calle 13 are some of the artists who partake on these messages to demonstrate Reggaeton narratives can serve as text for the objective of developing social justice.

In order to challenge the statement on how Reggaeton narratives can prove to be a text which can promote social justice while at the same time serve as tool to empower students' minds by developing critical consciousness, I first have to engage on a in depth analysis of Reggaeton narratives where the analysis has a higher focus on the contextual influences regarding the music genre as a form of popular culture, the experiences of the artist and the environment which fueled the messages and themes presented in Reggaeton narratives. Thus, there should be some emphasis on the analysis of the discursive formations found within Reggaeton narratives and the context surrounding them. More specifically, these discursive formations:

...can be seen as a set of rules which determine what can and must be said from a certain position within social life: and expressions have meaning only by virtue of the discursive formations within which they occur, changing significance as they are transported from one to the other. A discursive formation thus constitutes a 'matrix of meaning' or system of linguistic relations within which actual discursive 'processes are generated. Any particular discursive formation will form part of a structured totality of such phenomena, which Pecheux calls 'interdiscourse'; and each discursive formation is embedded in turn in an ideological formation, which contains non-discursive practices as well as discursive ones (Eagleton 195).

As a result, the idea of understanding discursive formations within the context of the Reggaeton subculture is to seek a deep awareness of the ideologies embedded in the expressions found in many Reggaeton narratives; which would not only allow a further comprehension of such narratives, but how the Puerto Rican society interprets the social practices promoted in them. In other words, by taking a closer look at the social phenomenon which fuels the message of the

narratives, it validates the ideologies and hegemony of the social context which plays a role in the analysis of Reggaeton narratives.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

When it comes to the analysis of Reggaeton narratives we must examine their context, particularly the experiences of the artist which are exposed through the content of the lyrics. In other words, by focusing the analysis on how the experiences of the artists help shape Reggaeton narratives we do not only gain a deeper understanding of Reggaeton narratives but we also capture the authenticity of the realities these artists are expressing through their songs. That way we can have a detailed illustration on how the analysis of these narratives can provide a wider range of options when it comes to the utilization of them in the classroom. Thus, the evaluation of Reggaeton's lyrical text is centered on the message being delivered and while it does not focus entirely on the influence of its beats and rhythms, these hold specific cultural aspects which are important to discuss as they can help understand how they develop a sense of thematic meaning. This allows grasping a deeper understanding of the ideologies presented and thus ultimately serves to develop critical consciousness and more specifically promote social justice. However, in order to have a clear idea of what type of songs are being analyzed we must first define what is Reggaeton and how does it differ from what I refer to as Reggaeton narratives.

Reggaeton could be defined in various ways and perspectives. Musicologist may define a music genre through its beats and rhythm, in order to differentiate one genre from another. This could be said about early Reggaeton or underground as the sole identifying beat of the genre was dembow. Dembow arguably can be considered the underlying beat of any Reggaeton song and thus being the special marker which identifies the Reggaeton music genre (La Clave). However, the definition is far more complex as Reggeton in its core is considered a hybrid genre, one which is

...a relatively new genre (and related set of cultural practices) strongly marked both by a particular approach to musical style (e.g., dancehall's *boom-ch-boom-chick* as reshaped by urban Puerto Rican sensibilities and informed by a fusion with hip-hop) and a relation to the market (i.e., explicitly commercial, courting a wide audience). (Marshall, Rivera, Pacini 8)

As we can see, this definition of Reggaeton exposes the genre as a combination of dancehall (the dembow influence) and hip-hop which essentially informs the musical style of the genre. In other words, Reggaeton is not purely Spanish dancehall or Spanish hip-hop but a blend between the two. In addition, we must not ignore how the genre is “reshaped by urban Puerto Rican sensibilities” which fundamentally entail that the genre is informed by the cultural practices of the urban Puerto Rican subculture. In other words, even though the Reggaeton genre originates from Panama and has been influenced by a wide range of other genres, thus it is through the influence and contributions of the Puerto Rican artists who adopted it which attributes the ability it has of highlighting the social realities which are representative of the Puerto Rican urban subculture. Nonetheless, this is not to say that the expressions and social realities found in Reggaeton narratives are exclusive to the Puerto Rican urban youth, but that these have the ability to highlight key specific aspects of the Puerto Rican urban realities. For example, in the narratives briefly explained in chapter one *Censurarme por ser rapero* by Eddie Dee and *Loíza* by Tego Calderón speak directly to specific issues from the island. In the case of *Censurarme por ser rapero* the song refers to Victor Fajardo a corrupt secretary of education responsible for stealing millions and in *Loíza* it speaks directly to the social conditions which inhibit aspects of inequality in the small town of Loíza, Puerto Rico. Though, these narratives can clearly connect with the conditions in other urban subcultures found in other countries, these are shaped by the

Puerto Rican sensibilities which can be perceived in those specific scenarios. In addition, these sensibilities can be perceived in a linguistic level, while this thesis does not focus on a linguistic analysis of the Reggaeton narratives it is important to point out the intonation and slang found in Reggaeton narratives, is a very distinctive of the Puerto Rican urban subculture in comparison to that of Panama or any other Spanish speaking country who attempts to be part of the Reggaeton genre.

However, defining Reggaeton in terms of beats and rhythm gets complicated as it merges with other genres like merengue, bachata, salsa, bomba, plena, among others. According to Deborah Pacini Hernandez and Wayne Marshall these fusions inherently highlight the “Latin” character of the genre while at the same time overseeing its connection to dancehall and hip-hop (8). As a result, this infusion with other genres sometimes causes the dembow rhythm to be faint and almost nonexistent. In other scenarios, some Reggaeton artists abandon the dembow beat, which would make those songs feel more like rap or hip hop. Thus, making the identification of what makes a pure and authentic Reggaeton song a matter of debate and personal preference due to the wide range of blends and influences of other genres within Reggaeton. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I do not indulge on what makes a true and authentic Reggaeton song; instead, I classify the songs I have selected for the analysis as Reggaeton narratives.

When I say to Reggaeton narratives, I refer to songs which are presented by known Puerto Rican Reggaeton artists and which essentially contain many of the qualities presented in the previous definition of Reggaeton. Moreover, the songs which have been selected for the analysis have a stronger focus on presenting a specific message to their audience. These messages are presented by telling a story, through an argument of social empowerment or a comedic parody of certain cultural aspects of the Puerto Rican society. Even though, these songs

may have different ways to transmit these messages they must be analyzed seriously as they essentially have the power to create awareness of the different social problems found in Puerto Rico. Thus, when we talk about Reggaeton narratives, there is a crucial focus on the content of the lyrics versus the usual party-like music Reggaeton is known for. This is not to say that the term Reggaeton narratives is used by the media, music industry or the artists themselves, but a term used in this thesis to signify that some Reggaeton songs have a stronger focus on specific themes which are presented in the narrative of the song. More specifically, Reggaeton narratives can achieve many goals; while some narratives present themes of violence, drugs and sex, others criticize or create awareness of social problems which resonate with the lower and middle social classes. Some may even glorify a male dominant lifestyle presenting woman as sexual objects while others condemn it. While these characteristics can resonate among other genres, Reggaeton narratives speak directly to the realities of the Puerto Rican urban subculture. Nevertheless, these narratives positive or negative should have a space to be discussed as they present socially and culturally relevant topics which are worthy of serious discussion in terms of how we as a society perceive them and interpret them.

The reason behind the selection of the Reggaeton narratives illustrated in Table 1 for an in depth analysis is to demonstrate how they expose a wide range of topics which need to be carefully analyzed in order to develop a critical understanding of the narratives and the artists' context.

**Table 1: List of the Selected Reggaeton Narratives for an in Depth Analysis**

Song	Artist	Album	Year
1. Loíza	Tego Calderón	El Abayarde	2002
2. Corazones	Daddy Yankee	Barrio Fino	2004
3. Su hija se enamoró de un kako	Jamsha El PutiPuerko	Cafrería Épica	2012
4. Palabras con sentido	Daddy Yankee	Free Download	2014

However, even though, many other narratives could achieve the same outcome through this analysis, the selected songs are able to present the themes listed in Table 2 without an excessive use of profanity. While normally there is no problem with the use profanity, for the purpose of this thesis I wanted to illustrate narratives which not only could bring serious themes worthy of analysis and dialogue, but easier to implement to various grade levels as one of the many arguments against using Reggaeton in the classroom setting is its excessive use of profanity and suggestive themes. Thus, if these narratives were to be presented in a classroom it would open the opportunities to engage students from virtually any grade level in dialogue. This notion of dialogue is not just a method of discussion but as Paulo Freire puts it:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (80)

In other words, dialogue entails that educators surrender their power in order to establish a student center classroom where both the students and the educator can learn from each other. Thus, students can have a participatory role in their own learning experience when utilizing Reggaeton Narratives, as it is due to the sensibilities students may have towards the social stigma

of Reggaeton (given the rough and controversial perception of the genre in Puerto Rico’s public opinion) or their embracement of the genre which permits an active involvement in their learning process.

The Reggaeton narratives selected for this thesis, present a series of socially and culturally relevant themes which are embraced in the selected narratives. These themes illustrated in Table 2 not only allow their discussion in the form of dialogue, but for the purposes of this thesis they will be explored thoroughly in their deep analysis in order to reflect a series of ideologies embedded in their discourse, which would serve to further our efforts as teachers to help our students gain a deeper understanding of not only the themes presented in Table 2 but the ideologies embedded within them along with the context of the artist.

**Table 2: General Themes Presented in the Selected Reggaeton Narratives**

<b>Reggaeton Narratives</b>	<b>General Themes from the Selected Narratives</b>
<i>Loíza</i> By Tego Calderón	racism, social inequality, black pride, public education, socio-economic discrimination, political corruption
<i>Corazones</i> By Daddy Yankee	socio-economic discrimination, public education, Christian morals and values, bible references and allusions, political corruption
<i>Palabras con sentido</i> By Daddy Yankee	socio-economic discrimination, social unity, social inequality, political corruption
<i>Su hija se enamoró de un kako</i> By Jamsha El Putipuerko	socio-economic discrimination, parody

Thus, the purpose of analyzing these songs then becomes to illustrate how Reggaeton narratives can foster a deeper awareness on the injustices unprivileged communities face which fundamentally speaks against ideological dominance that govern issues of social discrimination while at the same time having the ability to break common stereotypes and misconceptions about race and gender, which in essence foment discussions of social justice. Furthermore, the analysis of these selected songs will help educators further understand these narratives in order to effectively replicate the process either in their own analysis of a song or by engaging in dialogue with their students. However, it is understandable that if one were to engage in dialogue using these narratives the process would be different as the development of the conversation would be guided by the different contextual backgrounds of the students, their interpretations, and their connection to the narratives. Thus, making incredibly important how students relate with the narratives and what other connections they can make based on their own context.

Consequently, participating in a dialogue would encourage students to engage in the process of questioning their cultural and social upbringing based on the themes presented in these narratives. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that while this thesis does not specify how exactly one can engage in dialogue with their students, as it is a process which more likely will depend on the context of the students, it does provide a thorough analysis of four Reggaeton narratives which essentially illustrates key aspects which should be discussed when one engages in Freirean dialogue in order to develop critical consciousness and promote social justice. More importantly, in order to perform the analysis of the Reggaeton narratives we must take a series of simple steps which would effectively allow replicating this analysis.

The first step in the analysis of Reggaeton narratives would be to select the songs for the analysis and as I explained earlier these songs were chosen due to the lack of profanity and

ability to illustrate topics which would enable dialogue that promotes social justice. However, as said earlier songs with profanity and suggestive themes can achieve the same goal, as long as they are able to use profanity or suggestive themes creatively to speak about social conditions which inhibit a healthy development of the urban youth. Secondly, one would have to listen and read the lyrics of the narrative and examine them carefully and thoroughly, in order to gain a clear sense of what the message being advocated in the song is and how it reflect the social realities of the Puerto Rican urban subculture. This is seen in songs which highlight problems the urban subculture face as some narratives attack the media, government, poor education, job opportunity, and corruption among other topics. If the songs speak directly to those conditions then one is most likely bound to find the general themes these narratives present allowing to establish an overview of the topics which will be analyzed and discussed in the narratives. In the case of the songs I have selected, the general themes are shown in Table 2 which are essential to the analysis of the narratives in order to promote social justice. It is very important the song reflects realities which relate with the Puerto Rican context due to how we need the narratives to resonate with the context of the students. This would then allow establishing what themes illustrate more effectively topics which would enable discussions of social justice. Furthermore, researching who the artist is and how does the message presented in the song reflects their own social realities are necessary to the analysis in order to illustrate the authenticity of the artist, but more importantly we need to establish if those realities have changed and if so how are they reflected in the narratives in comparison with the context of the artist.

A core aspect of developing an understanding of the context of the artist is due to how in the Reggaeton genre many have a problem differentiating the image of the artist vs. his/her real self. This is a consequence on how many Reggaeton artist rap about how they are killers or how

they can run a drug operation, thus establishing an image or persona which does not necessarily present an authentic representation of who they are in real life. The reason why this is important is due to how the uncritical consumption of Reggaeton narratives can mislead people into a blind fandom of an artist due to the persona or image the artist has established through his/her songs. Thus, as part of the examination of the selected narratives it is important to not only develop a deep and thorough analysis of the Reggaeton songs but to have some comprehension of the artist and how they intertwine in order to have a well-rounded analysis which essentially enhances the critical understanding of Reggaeton narratives.

While the analysis which establishes or attempts to find the authenticity of the artist is not this thesis priority, we must understand that in the Reggaeton genre the involvement of the artist persona within their narratives is far more direct than many other music genres in the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere. Thus, making their life experiences an important aspect to consider when looking for a deeper understanding of the Reggaeton narratives. However, this is not to say that an artist can have a better argument or more valid point based on their authenticity or their social background, but that they can provide another dimension to the understanding of the Reggaeton narratives. In other words, deconstructing the artist image or persona is not a means to dictate one artist is better than the other, but to instill a deeper understanding of the message presented in Reggaeton narratives as well as a means to foster a deep awareness of the uncritical following some people may have towards an artist. Nonetheless, there must be a clarification that a critical following of a Reggaeton artist vs. an uncritical one does not entail a change of taste in the person nor does it mean the person would stop being a fan of the artist, but that they are able to identify key elements which enable them to not only put the narrative and the artist experiences into context but understand how they shape the narratives. The importance of doing

this is to highlight the contradictions found within the narratives and the context of the artist or contradictions between the changes of social realities of the artists. These contradictions serve to illustrate ideological struggles which could resonate with society interpretation of the songs and thus generating a lot of debate. Lastly, in order to perform these steps efficiently following the list of questions bellow would improve the ability to do complete the analysis successfully.

While there is no particular order in which the analysis of Reggaeton narratives must take place, I decided to focus on the artist first due to how it can provide a sense of contextual knowledge when analyzing the selected Reggaeton narratives. However, analyzing the song first rather than the artist could be equally effective as the context and experiences of the artist are only serving the purpose to establish a sense of authenticity of the artist and in doing so developing a deeper understanding of the Reggaeton narratives instead of establishing the core meaning of the analysis which can only be done by thoroughly examining the narratives. In other words, the analysis of the artist experiences enhances the analysis of the song no matter the order in which they are analyzed. Hence, in order to effectively analyze the experiences of the artist a series of discussion questions have been presented. Each question was appropriately applied according the context of the song, the artist and the time in which the song originated. The following questions were taken into consideration in order to help guide or understand the experiences of the artist at various points in their lives:

- Where is the artist from?
- Where did the artist grow up?
- From what social background does the artist come from? How does that influence the narrative?
- What year did the song come out?

These questions bring about general background information which helps understand if the song is detailing life experiences of the artist, as well as gaining an understanding of the time the song was released to perceive how the artist's themes have matured over time or if the message itself remains constant throughout his career, thus allowing to understand how these influence in the shaping of the Reggaeton narratives.

After gaining an understanding of who the artists of the songs are and the main message presented we can move to see how those experiences connect with the narratives, the analysis of the themes can be established. This is achieved by utilizing a more elaborated series of tasks and questions which allow for the discussion of the themes in accordance to how they connect to the Puerto Rican society. More importantly, these songs will demonstrate not only what the message or major themes of the songs are, but how are they being presented and why. The task and questions which have been taken into account for the analysis are:

- Identify the main idea or major theme of the song with supporting details.
- How are the major themes relevant to the Puerto Rican society?
- How do the narratives advocate social justice or social change?
- How do the ideas portrayed in the song connect with the context of the artist?
- Is there a conflict of ideologies presented in the narratives? If so explain how they manifest themselves within the context of the narrative.
- Is the overall message of the song negative or positive?

These are the guiding questions for an effective analysis towards gaining an understanding of the narratives and the experiences of the artist. By answering these questions in each song, several assertions can be identified on how Reggaeton narratives can illustrate topics of social inequality and thus provide the basis to discuss the themes of social justice presented in Table 2. While

these questions do not have to be explicitly answered in the form of a list, the essence of the answer to these questions and task should be present in the analysis of the selected Reggaeton narratives in order to effectively illustrate how these can develop critical consciousness and promote social justice. Also, it is important to understand the questions utilized in the analysis of Reggaeton narratives not only serve the purpose of providing a guiding hand to the analysis of the songs, but they could also be the same questions (with some minor tweaks depending on the context of the students, grade level, etc.) which could help the educator guide the dialogue with the students. Thus, the analysis these narratives have undergone will highlight the key points which should be discussed or at least be touched upon through the Freirean concept of dialogue.

## **Chapter Four: Analysis of Reggaeton Narratives**

The thorough analysis of Reggaeton narratives allows furthering our understanding of how these songs are emancipatory texts which effectively work to open a space where they can serve to be a valuable source of academic study and pedagogical usage. While this may not be the most popular opinion in terms of education due the conservative moral compass of the Puerto Rican society, it is a valuable alternative which would surely engage more effectively urban youth students. The analysis presented in this chapter will effectively highlight how Reggaeton narratives are able to illustrate different oppressive ideologies found within the figures of power within the privileged sectors of the island like the government and the media. In addition, while some of these narratives present their discomfort in with excessive use of vulgarity other focus in establishing a concrete argument against these forces. Nonetheless, they are essentially discursive formations which shed light on topics which resonate with the Puerto Rican subculture of the lower class. Thus, the analysis of these four narratives will enable a deeper understanding of the ideologies presented in the narratives as well as biographic representation of the artist through the ideologies analyzed and how some of them can challenge the hegemonic standard of the Puerto Rican society.

### ***Loíza* by Tego Calderón**

The first song on the list is *Loíza* performed by Tegui Calderón Rosario known by his stage name as Tego Calderón in his album *El Abayarde* released in 2002. Contrary to popular belief Tego Calderón is one of the few artists who grew up in a lower middle class setting as “his mother was a school teacher and his father a government worker” (Ilich). During his teenage years he lived in Miami where he graduated from high school. At that time, Tego’s connection to music leaned towards Heavy Metal as he used to be a drummer in a band where he mostly played

Ozzy Osbourne, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Judas Priest among others (Dante). Even though Tego was of a lower middle class setting his rough experiences and love for music have given him the ability to forge “a revolutionary flow inspired by his authentic street roots, creating a social chronicle that openly addresses such issues as racism, poverty, and class oppression” (Dante). Consequently, this makes Tego Calderón one of the most critical rappers within the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere; throughout his career he continually opens a space to not only celebrate his African heritage, but to create awareness on the social and political injustices and realities the Puerto Rican society endures daily. The ability Tego has to bring his unique musical style shows he understands how the entertainment business works, as he acknowledges that in order to do so one must please the mainstream audience with a couple of formulaic songs in order to create the space where he is able to deliver material which addresses the issues he desires to address in his music (Dante). In contrast, other mainstream Reggaeton artists like Daddy Yankee, Wisin, Zion & Lennox, Tito El Patrón are a few who have changed their style substantially in order to only please the mainstream audience, thus turning themselves into formulaic expressions of a saturated industry. Nonetheless, even those formulaic narratives of mainstream Reggaeton contain valuable cultural expressions which essentially have a strong valuable range of analysis as well.

The song *Loíza* is not one of Tego’s most notable hits from his career however, it could arguably be one of strongest critiques against the social and racial discrimination and the unjust criminal system found on the island; meanwhile at the same time he advocate his black pride through his lyrics along with the bomba and plena inspired beat. Having said that, it is no surprise the name of the song is *Loíza* due to how Tego not only dedicates the song to the people of Loíza but given the fact that Loíza is one of the poorest towns in Puerto Rico and the “center

for African-inspired traditions, retaining one of the highest percentages of African descendants of all island towns” (“Loíza”). In addition, Loíza along with Ponce are considered the place of origin of bomba and plena thus, the cultural connection of the beat, the name of the song along with Tego’s black heritage are key aspects which make the song emanate a strong sense of pride with Loíza’s black culture and traditions which transcends throughout the whole island.

Tego’s ability to express his discomfort against the social inequality Puerto Rico faces is a key and significant idea which transcends as the narrative’s focal aspect. Thus, in the following lines Tego presents (followed by my translation) one of the themes in the song *Loíza* regarding how underprivileged or poor people do not have the same opportunities as the privileged sector, hence pointing one of the many injustices this sector faces:

Que si no hay chavo pa' abogado, te provee uno el estado  
Pero hermano Te llevo quien te trajo  
Te matan y no desenfundan  
La jaula se te inunda  
Sentencia legal es defensa de segunda  
That there is no money for a lawyer, the state will provide you one  
But brother whoever brought you will take you  
They kill you and not uncover you  
The cage is flooding  
Legal sentence is a second rate defense

In the example exposed by Tego, he is arguing on how the unjust criminal system works on the island as he claims a legal sentence entails a second rate defense. Thus, his attack deals with how the justice system works against the poor and black, which fundamentally is one of the

consequence of having a capitalist system where only the rich will have the opportunity to find the best defense in a trial. This notion brings awareness to a reality about the justice system where without a good defense one will most likely end up in jail and thus suggesting the stereotypes which surround black people in jail are a product of inequality between the social classes. In addition, when Tego expresses that “they kill and they do not uncover you/ the cage is flooding”. He is referring to how jail are overcrowded, thus demonstrating how they are not a place of reformation and in reality is more a death sentence; a punishment for being poor.

Another comment Tego makes regarding this issue is:

No todos somos iguales en términos legales  
Y eso está probado en los tribunales  
En lo claro la justicia se obtiene con cascajos  
Not everybody is equal in legal terms  
And that is proven in the courts  
In the clear, justice is obtained with gravel

By specifically highlighting the issue of inequality Tego explains how not everybody is equal in legal terms. Moreover, by mentioning that justice is obtained with gravel is a way of saying the justice system is essentially a joke which works to benefit the higher social classes. Henceforth, he is challenging the pre-established ideologies or perceptions of an unjust justice system by creating awareness of the unfair realities the underprivileged sector must face.

Introspectively, the social commentary reflected in Tego’s *Loíza* embarks on a larger social issue which is not exclusive towards the injustices and class discrimination of found in Puerto Rico, but to a bigger bureaucratic system which hinders the progress of the lower social

classes. This is illustrated in a key fragment of the narrative where Tego advocates equality equals justice:

Nunca va haber justicia sin igualdad  
Maldita maldad que destruye la humanidad  
Porque protesta, va a quitarme la libertad  
Si yo no pertenezco a tu sociedad

There will never be justice without equality  
Damn evil that destroys humanity  
Because protest, going to take away my freedom  
If I don't belong to your society

Tego uses his message to advocate equality as he assures without it there will never be true justice, but more importantly, he claims to not be part of the white man's society acknowledging resistance will be met by oppression and discrimination which will ultimately lead to the removal of his freedom. Thus, not only his comments demonstrate the absolute distrust for the bureaucracy of the island, but at the same time it delivers a small colonial defeatist ideology within it, as it presupposes protest is not worth it as it sacrifices freedom. In essence, this poses an ideological struggle which slightly undermines his attack against the established hegemony as even though the song is rebellious in nature, highlights the broken judicial system of Puerto Rico, and advocates equality, it essentially fears true protest due to the broken judicial system it is criticizing. It is also important to point out the contextual aspects of the song *Loíza* as it celebrates the rich cultural characteristics of the African heritage, thus the equality Tego refers to is not only one of social economic status but of racial difference. Meaning, Tego is not only celebrating his African heritage and culture but making the point the topic of racism is highly

ignored in Puerto Rican society; thus in the context of critical pedagogy this song serves to engage in conversations which would essentially allow us to become aware of how we ignore such issues in our society despite the fact people engage in racism daily. As such it is an excellent pedagogical tool.

Even though, the theme of racial and social inequality is present through most of the song we must not ignore while Tego is challenging the ideologies and preconceptions the Puerto Rican society has towards racism (as Puerto Rican society ignores the topic altogether), he is also celebrating his African heritage. He does so by explicitly saying:

Yo soy niche  
Orgullosa de mis raíces  
De tener mucha bamba y grandes narices  
Ni sufriendo dejamos de ser felices  
Por eso es que Papa Dios nos bendice  
I am a black (niche=derogatory word for black)  
Proud of my roots  
Of having a big lips and big nose  
Even when suffering we don't stop being happy  
That is why God blesses us

By acknowledging he is proud of his African roots and his black features, he is also challenging the established idea of how blacks are perceived in our society. Notoriously, we have the tendency of indicating how common African traits are as something we are not comfortable with. For example, the typical afro found in many black men or women is an example of “pelo malo” or “bad hair” while this is an arbitrary idea placed by society, it is a significant example of how we

as a society perceive African traits as something undesirable which we are normally not proud of. Thus, Tego refutes this idea by utilizing the example of how he is proud of having a big nose and big lips which essentially promotes the idea of accepting oneself by being proud of their black heritage and essentially who we are. This notion could be further expanded in the educational setting as it would not only serve to acknowledge our physical African traits, but also our heritage through the beats of the narrative itself, as the Puerto Rican society consumes black culture through the diverse music genres like salsa, bachata, merengue, Reggaeton and hip hop all of which derive from the utilization of drums either directly or indirectly (La Clave). Another topic which Tego's celebration of his physical African attributes could be expanded upon in the form of a critique to the fashion world and beauty pageants which establish a standard label of beauty and steps far away from these African traits Tego is so proud of. In addition, it is crucial to indicate the word "niche" is a racial slur against black people and instead Tego uses as a form of empowerment towards his black pride. In other words, for Tego it simply means "I am black". However, the use of the word "niche" in a way is very similar to the usage of the word "nigger" which is used differently between blacks and whites. Lastly, in this stanza Tego also ties it up with his Christian values (a characteristic gained by our Spaniard heritage) indicating how black people are blessed by God; even though they had to endure a lot of pain and oppression from the higher social classes, they remain festive and happy. While this comment does not specifically endorse or attack Christianity or any religion, taking into account how Puerto Rico is mostly Christian we can safely infer the blessing God gives his people of Loíza is one of Christian nature which simply highlights the festive nature of black culture.

Tego also takes the time to make a social critique to the blacks who think they are superior to other blacks based on how some think themselves better because they share physical

traits with their oppressor (white Spaniards) and how some blacks have a better profession and thus stand higher in the socio-economic status:

Pa' esos niches  
Que se creen mejores por su profesiones  
O por tener facciones de sus opresores  
Si una buena madre su hijo no daña  
Cabrones, lambones  
Pal carajo España

For those “niches”  
Who think they are better due to their profession  
Or by having traits of their oppressors  
If a good mother does not damages her son  
Scumbag, ass kissers  
Screw Spain

In a way Tego is acknowledging how there are problems among black people as well and in order to achieve equality they have to stand together in every aspect even among blacks themselves. But more importantly, Tego insults Puerto Rican's celebration of Spaniard heritage, while this notion was implied with the celebration of black culture through the song title, the bomba inspired beat and the call to equality, Tego makes explicitly clear his discomfort on how the Puerto Rican society puts heavier importance on Spanish traditions. Thus, in essence Tego recognizes these colonial ideologies which govern the oppressive nature Puerto Rican can have amongst themselves are highlighted by the fact that we try to aspire to be similar to the white oppressor either Spaniard or even American.

*Loíza's* core focus on the ideological resistance against colonial ideologies is not only seen in the oppressive behavior people can have with each other, but in terms of how we do not truly know or understand our history. Consequently, this is seen where Tego refers to how we have swapped our chains with handcuffs:

Es que tu historia es vergonzosa  
Entre otra cosas  
Cambiaste las cadenas por esposas  
Your history is shameful  
Between other things  
You switched the chains for handcuffs

Notice that by referring to “esposas” (handcuffs) it goes back the issue of jails previously discussed, hence illustrating a move from slavery to the criminalization and imprisonment of blacks. These lines also reflect Tego’s embarrassment on how Puerto Ricans can easily forget their history, thus consequently blaming the educational system as it works in benefit of the higher oppressive power being one which imitates and celebrates Spanish and American oppressors. Therefore, Tego also attacks the problem at the source by critiquing how the educational system as one of manipulative nature which is failing students as it works in order to maintain a colonial state of mind within the island:

A quien más  
Se le ocurriría  
Saturar la mente a niños inocentes  
Con educación inconsistente

Manipulada viciosamente

Conveniencia del prominente de los pudientes

Who else

Would think

To saturate the mind of innocent children

With inconsistence education

Tego suggests education received by children is being manipulated as he claims they saturate the mind of children with inconsistent education which works to benefit the people in control. This jab at the educational system is in essence attacking the established hegemony. Through these lyrics, one understands the general set of ideas, morals and values the educational system is responsible for in the education of children is not one which promotes change or equality but rather it hinders society by promoting the same ideals which directly or indirectly have been of the reason why colonial ideologies are still prevailing over the Puerto Rican society.

Nonetheless, it is clear he is challenging the oppressive ideologies which have ruled over the perception of the people of color and the underprivileged sectors not only from Loíza but from Puerto Rico.

The example which acknowledged this issue over all is seen in the following lines:

Todos con Vieques

Mi pueblo negro no padece

Porque tú crees que se lo merece

Everybody with Vieques

My town does not suffer

Why do you think it deserves it

Here Tego criticizes how the island of Puerto Rico stood together in support for the United States Marine to leave the municipal island of Vieques. The reason behind this movement is a historical one which dates back to the 1940's but the aspect Tego refers to in the song *Loíza* is the event which occurred on April 19, 1999 when a miscalculation of a practice bombing took the life of Vieques' civilian David Sanes. His death inspired thousands to join a civil protest against the presence of the U.S. Marine on the island of Vieques which eventually resulted with the Marine leaving the island in May 2003 (Puerto Rico celebra 10 años sin la marina). Thus, Tego's discomfort is not directly based on the protest but the fact that he feels his town of Loíza has suffered more historically than Vieques and the issues there continue to be ignored which is why he questions "why do you think it deserves it" insinuating government or people in power do not really think the people of Loíza deserve the same justice the people of Vieques got when the U.S. Marine left. In essence, Tego is comparing decades of suffering and injustices of the people of one town versus the decades of suffering and injustices of the people of another town and since Loíza is the blacker town, it is still forgotten. In addition, it is important to point out this subject is fueled by the disappointment of feeling forgotten and while Tego might not be right for the most part, his point is clearly understandable.

Being this is Tego Calderón's first album, we can appreciate what made him famous was not only his unique ability to blend other genres like bomba and plena to an urban genre like Reggaeton, but his message challenges the hegemonic dominance of a corrupt system, while at the same time voicing the concerns and realities of a sector on the island which otherwise had no voice. Thus, Tego is able to present a distinctive interest in voicing the injustices faced day to day rather than attempting to make music which pleases the ideological dominance of the government like many other artists. Though, he has performed songs which do not engage in

these types of topics, unlike other artists, he has not abandoned it due to his acquired fame and success. In essence, Tego's idea of promoting equality transcends racial and social discrimination because it fundamentally challenges the ideological dominance over these problems as people either ignore it or are not aware of these problems. Thus, the importance of speaking against these established misconceptions about race and social discrimination in Puerto Rico within the context of critical pedagogy is to significantly promote social change. Having said that, it is through the deep analysis of this narrative we can understand the utilization of how it proves to be a great tool which would foster the creation of critical consciousness, consequently promoting social justice.

### ***Corazones* by Daddy Yankee**

Raymond Ayala, also known as Daddy Yankee by his stage name is one of the most influential and most recognized names in the genre of Reggaeton. His 2004 hit *Gasolina* from the album *Barrio Fino* not only put him at the top of the charts of the music industry but it essentially gave the genre of Reggaeton name recognition throughout the world. This could be considered the pivotal artist and song which moved the genre from underground to Reggaeton. Though this was not his doing alone, as other artists like Tito El Bambino, now known as Tito El Patrón, Wisin & Yandel, Don Omar, Tego Calderón, among others have helped move the genre forward as most of the mainstream media has portrayed it that way. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this thesis, the backstory before *Gasolina* became a worldwide hit is far more engaging and relevant to the topic of social justice as Daddy Yankee grew up in the projects and has been part of the underground movement since the first underground cassettes were sold on the streets. These days, his music was one which was highly fueled by his life experiences growing up in the projects and presenting many situations which are still relatable to the

hardships of living in these places. Though, he is always recognized for his stereotypical flow of fluent lyrics on a fast beat of dembow, he also has presented many songs which similarly to Tego Calderón's *Loíza* create awareness of the injustices faced by being from the projects as well as developed attacks towards the government due to how they have participated in labeling Puerto Rico's public opinion about Reggaeton as a polluting agent towards society.

An example which showcases Daddy Yankee's distress towards the label people have towards Reggaeton's negative perception within the Puerto Rican society, are portrayed is the narrative *Corazones* which debuted in 2004 in the album *Barrio Fino*. This narrative is a filler song in comparison with the other Reggaeton hits from the same album like *Gasolina*, *Lo que paso, paso* and *El empuje*. Nonetheless, it is a narrative which explicitly presents Daddy Yankee's discomfort with the situations in the projects which are still a problem today. Moreover, it differs with Tego Calderón's *Loíza* in many aspects as it has a stronger focus on the lack of morality and values of the human condition rather than expressing issues of racial injustice. This is not to say that Daddy Yankee does not touch upon on the social issues which are also present in *Loíza*. In fact, the beginning of the song starts by presenting the evil in people's eyes by expressing what would happened if the way people look at each other could actually kill someone:

Si las miradas mataran to' el tiempo usara una gavana un cura  
me acompañara siguiéndome en una caravana....  
Si fuera por mis enemigos a la mesa me traerían  
una víbora de carne y vinagre de bebida...  
Me Crucificaran en un acto crudo homicida

If looks could kill every time I would use a "gavana" a priest

would accompany followed by a motorcade  
if it was up to my enemies to the table they would bring  
a snake of meat and vinegar to drink  
they would crucify me in an cold homicidal act

In this stanza, Daddy Yankee touches upon the socio-economic discrimination by comparing his situation to that of the religious figure of Jesus Christ; in the sense of how the Romans looked down upon him as they thought he was a false prophet for being poor ultimately crucifying him. Hence, Daddy Yankee criticizes the discrimination the higher social classes and the government have towards the people from the projects, specifically rappers.

The notion that Daddy Yankee attacks how higher social classes and the government perceive people from the projects and rappers is further explored in the following two lines where Daddy Yankee expresses “Si por el gobierno fuera los raperos no existieran... /Nos lanzaran al calabozo y con la pena de muerte nos dieran”. By directly addressing what would the government do to rappers if they could is strikingly similar to what the Romans did to Jesus Christ by crucifying him as it was the death penalty at the time. Even though it is not directly stated, Daddy Yankee is pushing towards making people understand that the discriminatory ways in which people perceive rappers (essentially Reggaeton artists) and the subculture they represent within the Puerto Rican context at the time was the same way type of attacks Jesus Christ had to endure from the people who supported his crucifixion. As previously stated in the analysis of the song *Loíza*, most of the Puerto Rican population is Christian thus making this comparison one which clearly can resonate with the majority of the Puerto Rican society.

Daddy Yankee also recognizes the negative aspects of his world as he classifies where he comes from as the capitol of crime. Thus, acknowledging the crude reality of the real life

situations which happened not only in the projects but in Puerto Rico in general. An interesting aspect is the crime rate in Puerto Rico ten years ago was slightly lower thus making the relevance of his comments far more significant today as we can see in the lines below:

Soy de la capital del crimen y en el aire se percibe  
un espíritu de muerte que devora lo que vive.  
Si fuera por mi reuniría a todos los caseríos proponiendo  
una tregua en nombre de los que se han ido (SIN MIEDO!)

I am from the capital of crime and is felt in the air  
a spirit of death who devours the living.  
If it was up to me I would gather all the projects proposing  
A truce in the name of those who have left (WITHOUT FEAR!)

Nevertheless, there is an important distinction in the last two lines of the stanza above which essentially break every misconception or stereotypical depiction which indicate Reggaeton artists promote violence by instead proposing a ceasefire between the diverse “caserios” (projects) in honor of the friends who have died due to the outrageous violence product of drug deals. This helps to not only indicate some of these artists understand the world they live in is not an ideal one, but they wish to see it change for the good.

It is important to point out a small but significant contradiction in terms of the hope for change when it comes to the life in the projects. This contradiction is not necessarily in terms of how has Daddy Yankee portrayed songs with totally different themes and advocating different set of values (which he has), but a reflection of a colonial state of mind in a song which criticizes the established perception the government and higher classes have towards Reggaeton artists and the lower social class. This idea can be seen in the following lines where Daddy Yankee refers to

the unity among “caserios” discussed earlier as a lost dream “pero sé que es un sueño perdido como ver a los 3 partidos unidos /luchando por el bien de Puerto Rico”. Indicating unity is a lost dream poses a defeatist or pessimist ideology which is not necessarily the right track of mind in terms of advocating for change. These are colonial ideologies which in this case expect a higher power like the three main political parties of Puerto Rico come up with a solution to the problem found in the projects; however by exemplifying unity among politicians for the greater good as the truly lost dream essentially indicates everybody is out for themselves. In other words, Daddy Yankee is saying that just like there cannot be a ceasefire among “caserios” based on honor, there cannot be unity among the leaders of Puerto Rico for the social good as all sides are essentially corrupted by their own individual ambition. In addition, it fundamentally poses an undeniable aspect of our colonial ideologies in terms of feeling powerless against the oppressors. Clearly, in order to seek social justice, this feeling of hopelessness has to change among students’ mindset which is why the application of these narratives must be implemented within the context of critical pedagogy in order to engage in an emancipatory dialogue which will allow students to analyze and develop an understanding of these ideologies which consequently will lead to discuss, understand and promote social justice.

In contrast, with the defeatist colonial ideology present in the previously discussed lines, Daddy Yankee presents yet another critique which is directed to the government claiming they need to focus on the educational needs of the projects. More specifically, Daddy Yankee indicates in his song:

No ven que es mediocre la educación en los residenciales  
necesitan más maestros necesitan materiales,  
para crear más líderes y menos criminales

Do you see how mediocre the education is in the projects  
they need more teachers they need materials,  
to create more leader and less criminals

This is another aspect which utilizes the example of the mediocre education in the projects to present the social gap in inequality, as people from the projects do not have the same opportunities as people from the suburbs and other privileged sectors. Furthermore, it serves to demonstrate that by doing so, one would essentially solve the recurrent criminal situation in Puerto Rico. This is another concept which pushes through the established discriminatory perception people have towards the criminal problems in Puerto Rico which instead of investing in better education; they militarize the police to fundamentally fight crime, thus failing to address the problem at its core (Rivera 122). More importantly, we can understand that *Corazones* is a narrative which gives voice to the lower class of Puerto Rico as it informs that the poor sectors of Puerto Rico need more opportunities instead of more judgment and prejudice, something which in the last eleven years since this song came out (even with the success of Reggaeton as worldwide recognized genre) has not changed substantially.

In the lyrics of the song *Corazones*, not only does Daddy Yankee use Christian images to illustrate discomfort towards the oppressive powers set by the government; he also uses them to acknowledge how people can be evil due to the lack of Christian values in the Puerto Rican society. This imagery is found throughout the narrative especially in the end when the rhythm lowers its volume and slows down as he provides a message in prose which states:

Y existe aquel corazón maligno que nos atormenta como ángeles  
caídos pero hay un corazón más poderoso que nos protege que jamás y nunca  
será vencido y el que lo busque y lo encuentre para siempre será bendecido.

And the existence of that evil heart that torment us like fallen  
angels but there is a heart more powerful that protect us that will never  
be defeated and those who seek it and find it will forever be blessed.

These last three lines are delivered without the hardcore hip hop beat in order to highlight the content of the lyrics making these lines an important moral lesson Daddy Yankee is trying perpetuate in his song. The essence of the message indicates that even though there are people who do evil, if you have faith in a higher power (God in this case) people will be blessed. This adoration towards a higher power illuminates the Christian set of morals and values of Daddy Yankee and arguably of the urban subculture as it was also present (though not as extensive) in the song *Loíza* by Tego Calderón. The problem with Reggaeton artists using these types of allegories is that in the eyes of the masses, these songs are contradictions as one song can bring a message of social justice reflecting a high set of Christian values while other songs engage in acts of violence and sexual encounters. Thus, highlighting an ideological struggle between a range of ideals these Reggaeton artists exhibit in their narratives and while this type of characteristic is highly criticized among many people, it serves to show the pedagogical value of engaging in dialogue in order to break these ideologies apart and develop a deeper understanding of them and how our society engages in similar ideological struggles.

In general, Daddy Yankee provides a set of conservative ideals while at the same time using them to demonstrate the discriminative behavior of the government. Even though, these attacks are presented utilizing Christian ideologies, these do not lack the illogical fallacies some religious groups have been responsible for. In other words, it is not promoting a specific dogma or is advocating a broken down view of Christianity, but exemplifying the existence of key values which are essential for social change. As a result, Daddy Yankee promotes a positive

message within his ideological understanding of his Christian beliefs which essentially attempts to seek a social wellbeing by following the example of Jesus and not a specific point of view of a religious group in order to not judge others. Thus, making these values key principal aspects which Daddy Yankee understands are important for the improvement of the Puerto Rican society.

### ***Palabras con sentido by Daddy Yankee***

It has been eleven years since the hit of *Gasolina* and the way Daddy Yankee's career has evolved in some sense represents the change of how the Reggaeton genre has changed into a less rebellious and cleaner form of expression due to its travesty in the mainstream popular culture of the United States and Latin America. However, the perceptions some Puerto Ricans have towards the genre is still a negative one in terms of it being a polluting agent against Puerto Rican society. One of the events which caused much controversy was due to an online video which was posted on August 18, 2014 highlighting a situation which happened at the Regional Hospital of Bayamon Puerto Rico where Dr. Gloria Ortiz González was angrily yelling at patients in the emergency room. Her expressions were of prejudiced nature as she refers to them as "ignorantes" (ignorants) while also claiming she pays their government healthcare called "Reforma" with her taxes. In addition, she also blamed the people who listen to Daddy Yankee as the reason why this country [referring to Puerto Rico] is worthless (Conferencia de prensa sobre el caso de la doctora Ortiz). These comments were not only insulting to the patients, but they were misinformed, as even though Puerto Ricans are born U.S. citizens, they do not pay federal taxes (unless they get paid from a federal program, work in the United States or if they belong to the U.S. military). Also by insinuating her patients would listen to the music of Daddy Yankee, she overgeneralized by using a stereotype which essentially labels poor (or in this case

people who depend on the government medical insurance), as listeners of Reggaeton music (Daddy Yankee in this case) thus highlighting the discriminatory stigma which clouds over Reggaeton and underprivileged people. This is a clear example of the prejudice which has been carefully crafted by the government and the media since the early nineties when the genre first arrived.

Although the comments from Dr. Ortiz were insulting and unprofessional, there is a group of people who think she was right to react the way she did. In fact, newspaper Primera Hora in an online article had a small poll regarding this issue which asked their readers if they thought it was correct the way the doctor reacted, the results of the poll (as of February 12, 2015) indicate that from a total of 9,382 people who voted 45% agreed the doctor reacted the correct way while the other 55% disagreed (Falero). Even though, this poll is poorly constructed as it does not allowed to have a mixed reaction like agreeing with the comments but not the way she said them or vice versa, the fact that almost half the people thought it was correct to treat people in such manner poses a great concern in terms of the public opinion regarding discriminatory stereotypes like these. In addition, it is important to illustrate there is no concrete way to specify what exactly caused Dr. Ortiz to react the way she did, as the woman who recorded and posted the video online claims there was no apparent cause for such reaction as she revealed in the comment section of the video other than a patient called the doctor unprofessional (Lollypopcarmel). Thus, the only testimony is from one witness to the context surrounding this situation. Nonetheless, the purpose for utilizing and understanding this situation is due to how it served as inspiration for the next song in the analysis. The name of the song is *Palabras con sentido* by Daddy Yankee which was released as a free download in order to send a message of unity and a calling to stop discrimination.

The song *Palabras con sentido* by Daddy Yankee is different from all the other songs being analyzed in this thesis because it endured some air time in the Puerto Rican radio stations, making it one of the few songs which highlighted an example of the socio-economic prejudice within the Puerto Rican society. Although, the song *Palabras con sentido* is essentially trying to portray a positive message, there are a couple of aspects which must be discussed before engaging in its analysis. It is worth noting the song has been criticized due to the intentions or motive behind it, as some people suspect the only reason Daddy Yankee decided to release this song is to defend himself from the comments of Dr. Ortiz. On the other hand, some people claim it is a publicity stunt which takes advantage of the situation in order to maintain his public image of the humble “boy” from the projects, even though at this point in his career he is far away from that life. As a result, a debate regarding the validity of the comments of Daddy Yankee in this song was established through media outlets and social media.

There is no denying the context surrounding the song *Palabras con sentido* highly influences the song’s core attempt to send a message for social unity; this message is divided in three main arguments which according to Daddy Yankee’s blog about the song these are identifying the victims, the debate and the solution. This website illustrates the lyrics of the songs, but ignores the chorus and adds commentary to the lyrics which in essence makes the blog an expanded version of the song in the form of an essay. However, the analysis is focused on the lyrics of the song and not the expanded message as is not something which one can find in the song and also it makes it feel redundant. The second stanza of the song or as the blog of the song refers to it as the victims states:

Me señala con el deo' del discrimen  
hasta que me den pena de muerte sin cometer un crimen

Se supone que no me defienda? Ah!

Que la injusticia me gane la contienda?

You point at me with the finger of discrimination

Until they give me the death penalty without committing a crime

Am I not supposed to defend myself? Ah!

That injustice would win the argument?

Clearly the victim the lyrics refer to is Daddy Yankee as he is claiming he should be able to defend himself due to how he is being discriminated against. The problem with this is he is referring to how he has been exposed to this type of discrimination in the past due to the history and not the people which were called ignorant in the emergency room, thus making this song feel more personal instead of social as it is supposedly being advertised. This individualistic approach is a classic characteristic of the Reggaeton genre as is seen in many “tiraera” songs which is a style adopted by Reggaeton artists where they engage in dissing matches against one another and while some of these matches in the genre haven been as real as professional wrestling matches, in this case Daddy Yankee utilizes this sub-genre to defend himself from the comments of Dr. Ortiz.

The following stanza adds more to Daddy Yankee’s personal response to comments made by Dr. Ortiz against his persona as he states: “No soy un mantenido, tengo lo mío /Una compañía mundial y salí del caserío”. (I am not a “mantenido”, but I have what is mine/A worldwide company and I came out of the projects). These lines are vital to the interpretation of the song as a whole and the ideological reflections it poses. In the first line, Daddy Yankee essentially separates himself from the prejudice comments that people from the projects are “mantenidos” which brings about the most common act of discrimination in Puerto Rico which is one of socio-

economic status. While the middle class sector does not qualify for welfare, they criticize and attack those who do and thus calling them “mantenidos” referring to people who are dependent of the government, but more specifically to those who can work but decide not to. On the other hand, people from the projects also engage in a similar fashion by calling higher middle class people by names like “guaynabichos” which fundamentally is a slur for highly Americanized white rich people (Garcia). Thus, Daddy Yankee instead of creatively utilizing the term “mantenido” and reprocessing its meaning in order to break those discriminatory concepts (like Tego Calderón does with the word “niche”) he separates himself as a hard worker by stating how he has his own company and he came from the projects. While some might call this an admirable example many others will find it a bit unrealistic as breaking out as a famous rapper is not the easiest goal to apprehend. Thus, this poses the reality that people from the projects who want to step out of that life only have sports or music as their hope (Straight outta Puerto Rico). In other words, Daddy Yankee hit the American Dream lotto and when that is the only example he can provide as to why he is not a “mantenido”, then the song not only fails to communicate to stop discrimination, but it fails to challenge the established system which hinders the progress of the people in the projects.

Furthermore, Daddy Yankee not only separates himself from the “mantenidos” stereotype, but he exemplifies how he considers himself a job creator as the following lines in the stanza Daddy Yankee states “Gracias al perreo sigo creando empleos /Una mala educación es la que crea reos” (thanks to the “perreo” I continue creating jobs/A bad education is what create prisoners). He also acknowledges the idea that there is a dire need for better education in Puerto Rico but at the same time it serves to illustrate Daddy Yankee’s main contradiction, as even though he wants to send a message against discrimination he also highlights his republican ideals

which are not known to be pro-equality, or to benefit the needs of the people. It is no secret in 2008 Daddy Yankee endorsed the republican candidate for the presidency of the United States John McCain, thus one can infer Daddy Yankee's ideals reflect those of the Republican party members which are famous for being fundamentally Christian and for favoring lower taxation to big corporations over wage and job equality for the people of the nation. These ideals are reflected in this song stating that by people dancing Reggaeton (perreo), he continues to create jobs. This could be interpreted in different ways, one would be that the consumption of Reggaeton music creates jobs or that Daddy Yankee's company creates jobs. In this case, Daddy Yankee acknowledges both sides as he is thankful of those who consume his product (the people who dance it in this case) because that way he continues to create jobs, thus he may feel he is fundamentally a "job creator" as in a sense that is how most republicans defend lower taxation on big corporations as they are "job creators". However, in the documentary *Inequality for All* former Labor Secretary Robert Reich argues this is something where there should be no debate as in an economist point of view the only job creator is the consumer and republicans use this as an excuse to favor corporate greed. Thus, in a way Daddy Yankee's comments become associated with these ideals due to the nature of them and by the fact he has publicly endorsed a Republican Party member to run for president which essentially demonstrates his interest lie with his own capital gain by favoring a party which would essentially benefits his big corporate profits.

Understanding Reggaeton artists like Daddy Yankee are millionaire is an important aspect of utilizing mainstream Reggaeton songs like *Palabras con sentido*. The reason behind it is it helps illustrate how Daddy Yankee builds upon his image as an artist who:

as well as other reggaeton performers create a persona of themselves in each one of the narratives. Nonetheless, their fans think about them not as the persona created in the narratives. Their fans believe they are in real life the persona they have created in the narratives. (Villanueva 69)

By acknowledging this important aspect we can understand such characterizations are not necessarily real representations of their persona and in doing so not only can we break misconceptions about people thinking of rappers as delinquents, but it also serves to clarify how Daddy Yankee within the context of this song and based on the lyrics cannot be considered to represent the voice of the oppressed, as his persona is no longer part of his social reality.

Even though Daddy Yankee has presented an individualistic perspective to the song *Palabras con sentido*, there is a call for social change or at least a call to stop discrimination against people from poor neighborhoods as it is seen in the song when children sing the chorus:

En vez de estar pendiente a mí  
Haga su parte usted también  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!  
Instead of you looking at me  
Do your part as well  
The country can get better  
And my hood oh oh oh!

The problem with this call to action is the context surrounding the comments, as it is in fact an attack to Dr. Ortiz camouflaged as a call for social change. Though, the comments stated in the first two lines can be easily applicable to any person who criticizes in a derogatory way it is

undeniably clear that Daddy Yankee is using this song to respond to the doctor. In fact, if one were to use the music video of the song, one would catch a glimpse of an actor dressed as a doctor reenacting the event which inspired this song. If the context surrounding this song was different one could infer Daddy Yankee's intention could be of selfless nature, instead it seems that he is using this song and the children who sing the chorus as a device to capitalize on his humble guy who cares about the projects image.

However, even though Daddy Yankee is responding to the comments made by Dr. Ortiz, more than bringing a message of social unity there is one argument he makes defending the music he produces which is surprisingly well made. His point regarding his music, deals with the constant attack people make against Reggaeton and urban music being a negative influence on the people. This is something which was implied by the comments of the doctor and reaction through social media with people who defended the doctor in her comments. Thus, Daddy Yankee responded with the following lines:

Mi punto es real, si lo que canto está mal  
Clausura la música en general  
¿Qué escuchaban los autores del 911?  
¿Qué escuchaba Timothy Mcveigh en aquel entonces?  
¿Qué escuchaba el asesino del famoso Beatle?  
¿Qué escuchaba Mao Tse Tung, Stalin y Hitler ah?  
My point is real, if what I sing is bad  
Close the music in general  
What did the authors of 911 listened to?  
What did Timothy Mcveigh listen to in those times?

What did the killer of the famous Beatle listen to?

What did Mao Tse Tung, Stalin y Hitler listened to ah?

By questioning the musical taste of historic dictators and known psychopaths, Daddy Yankee is recognizing how ridiculous it is to blame any music genre for the evils of humankind. Thus, suggesting there is no correlation between the music an individual listens to and the actions and behavior of said individual. While once again we see Daddy Yankee defending his own interest this brings a stronger sense of unity because not only it defends his own interest, but at the same time it defends all of the people who either proudly listen to this music and those who are afraid to admit they listen to it due to the social backlash.

In the last three stanzas of the songs before the final chorus, Daddy Yankee essentially provides a list of the many aspects the Puerto Rican society need to fix in order to stop discrimination and bring about unity. In Daddy Yankee's blog, this section is referred as the solution, which even though the suggestions are centric to the idea it would help society, it essentially falls short due to the main contradiction found in Daddy Yankee's message, as he separates himself from the call of unity. Daddy Yankee is not a "mantenido" but then again not everyone in the projects is either and instead of Daddy Yankee becoming the voice of the people he resorted to remorse himself. Nonetheless, the list of problems he acknowledges does point out certain realities the Puerto Rican society needs to recognize in order to move towards social justice. Though, he only touches upon them briefly, we as educators can recognize these problems with more depth in order to expand upon them. Some of these problems deal with the nature of the government as one who seeks out their own political agenda instead of taking more action towards fixing the problems in our society, journalistic truth falling down the rails by focusing on the death tolls, the violence we encounter daily and the lack of empathy we have in

our society in terms of socio-economic discrimination between the rich and the poor. While these are poorly developed in the song, they are some of the realities which need to be discussing within a critical approach to education in order to promote social justice.

By analyzing the songs *Corazones* and *Palabras con sentido* both by Daddy Yankee, we can see the change in the ideologies being presented as *Corazones* being eleven years old reflected a pre *Gasolina* famous Daddy Yankee and *Palabras con sentido* showed a well-established world sensation. While *Corazones* was in its core a positive message towards the social good, *Palabras con sentido* feels way too personal and thus fails to capture the essence of what the message is supposed to present. This is an example which is not exclusive to Daddy Yankee as it can be seen in many artists in the industry who once produced counter hegemonic products against the system and now due to their fame and success have become pacifist. Hence, we must acknowledge there is an important correlation with the context of the artist and how it affects their view on these issues. But more importantly, it helps demonstrate how the capital success of these artists has hindered the ability to substantially present an adequate message for social change as their experiences no longer reflect the injustices and hardships of being underprivileged.

### ***Su hija se enamoró de un kako* by Jamsha El Putipuerko**

Producer, songwriter, director and performer Alexis Caraballo Méndez, better known as Jamsha El Putipuerko is one of the few, if not the only one, to make his career out of a revival of the underground style Reggaeton used to have in its beginnings. Growing up in Ponce, Jamsha came from a middle class setting and contrary to most Reggaeton artists he is independent from any big producing company which is a rarity not only within Reggaeton artists but with any musical performer. In addition, Jamsha is one of the few artists who take the approach of

expanding upon the stories of his songs in his music videos which he directs and edits in a Michael Jackson style where Jamsha essentially provides a preface to his songs. However, Jamsha's twist to the revival old school Reggaeton or underground is the fact Jamsha's music is fundamentally a parody of the Reggaeton persona. Though, he embodies the core appearance of an early nineties Reggaeton/underground rapper along with the vulgar language, themes presented in the old underground songs and the beats which resonate closer to the Jamaican dancehall roots of Reggaeton, he essentially brings humor to his lyrics and thus setting himself apart from the style most Reggaeton artist symbolize today. Jamsha's humor is portrayed by exploiting stereotypical representations of male and female, by switching gender roles or by providing a justification towards why men are sexist while celebrating the underground style. Nonetheless, Jamsha essentially surrenders his male dominance in order to bring a comedic style which the Reggaeton genre has rarely seen especially in the underground days. This mix of underground and comedy not only makes Jamsha's style unique but it makes him push the envelope into understanding the character he portrays presents hyperbolic reality of gender roles in the Puerto Rican society.

Jamsha has stated in many interviews that his "putipuerko" persona is a way of portraying a character and thus his music presents the tales of this Reggaeton artist. In a way some people recognize this so they do not take him seriously; on the other hand, Jamsha has had to clarify even though his character portrays someone who stereotypically would smoke marihuana, in real life he has never tried it (videofactorytv). Thus, the idea he needs to make this clarification entails some people cannot see past his vulgarity and celebration of the underground style and thus make a stereotypical assumption which most Reggaeton artist are associated with based on the content of the lyrics and how they are perceived. One of the most famous songs of

Jamsha comes from his album *Cafrería Épica* called *Su hija se enamoró de un kako* (Your daughter fell in love with a Kako) where he exemplifies how the socio-economic discrimination and prejudice creates a boundary between two young lovers. Though, the synopsis sounds like a serious matter the way Jamsha approaches the subject allows for it to be purely comedic.

In the narrative *Su hija se enamoro de un kako*, Jamsha addresses the song to his fictional girlfriend's mother where he uses a slow guitar mixed with demobow and sings about her daughter falling in love with him, a bad Reggaeton artist; who likes to smoke marihuana. This description Jamsha makes about himself or his character is already making a distinction which entails he is an unsuccessful Reggaeton artist, a characteristic which is unheard of among Reggaeton artists as they are always claiming to be the best in what they do. For example, if a Reggaeton artist has a high selling album it would be common for that artist to be bragging about his achievement thus using his own success as a tool for his own propaganda and a product of his maleness. In the case of Jamsha, he is doing the opposite, even though in reality he has become a famous and successful artist, his character is not. He then follows by exemplifying how unsuccessful his character is by describing how every time he goes out with his girlfriend she has to pay:

Aunque vayamos a comer y ella sea la que pague

Por favor no me juzgue

Aunque vayamos al cine y ella sea la que pague

Por favor no me juzgue

Aunque vayamos al motel y ella sea la que pague

Por favor no me juzgue

Aunque ustedes vayan a pagar la boda

Ay por favor no me juzgue

Even though we go to eat and she is the one who pays

Please do not judge me

Even though we go to the movies and she is the one who pays

Please do not judge me

Even though we go to motel and she is the one who pays

Please do not judge me

Even though you are going to pay for the wedding

Please do not judge me

While Jamsha describes he is broke and unsuccessful, he asks his mother-in-law to please not judge him. The reason behind these lines being humorous is because the mainstream Reggaeton persona is stereotypically perceived as one with money as successful just like Reggaeton artists are constantly pointing it out. However, Jamsha's depiction of an unsuccessful Reggaeton artist is not the only humorous aspect found in these lines but the fact that a woman has to pay is seen as a negative sign as the concept where men have to pay in dates is cemented in the ideology of society something which is seen in other countries in the world as well. This essentially dictates a switch in the gender roles of men and women as a woman pays for a man on a date, thus making Jamsha's comedic style one that questions an archaic way of thinking about our gender roles in society.

Furthermore, the song *Su hija se enamoró de un kako* highlights the prejudice nature and the socio-economic discrimination of the mother-in-law to Jamsha's character when he describes her reaction upon seeing him for the first time:

A usted señora por poco le da un infarto  
Cuando me vio llegar con el FlapTop  
Acicalado por las Reebok Pump  
Y por poco se desmaya cuando saque mi cadenón  
To you ma'am who almost got an heart attack  
When you saw me with the Flap Top  
Well-dressed with the Reebok Pump  
And almost fainted when I pulled out my chain (bling)

It is important to point out the description of a Jamsha's character in these lines is that of a stereotypical kako from the nineties which Jamsha's character is embodying, and thus highlighting another comedic element Jamsha brings to the song. But more importantly, the idea the mother-in-law would almost faint or have a heart attack is upon seeing him is an exaggerated action for the purpose of comedy, however at the same time it brings a set of social comments regarding the prejudice people have towards kakos who dressed similarly to the way Jamsha is described in character. This brings about a reality which is constantly faced in our society and thus dictating how we pass judgment is purely based on appearance.

Jamsha further highlights the discriminatory aspects found in the family of his character's girlfriend by questioning and challenging their actions as seen in the lines bellow:

Dígame porque yo no puedo entrar  
A su círculo social si yo soy bien elegante  
Usted me tiene cara que los tiempos de salsa  
En su juventud era jeva un gangster  
Tell me why I cannot enter

To your social circle if I am very elegant

You look like in the times of salsa

In your youth you were a gangster's girlfriend

By questioning why he is not accepted in his mother-in-law social circle is a way of forcing people who engage in these acts to realize the reason is purely based on an assumption based on the appearance of Jamsha's character. More importantly, it ridicules the situation as it brings it down to the pure absurdity of such assumptions, thus signifying the parody Jamsha is engaging upon is not only on the Reggaeton artist's image but on that of the Puerto Rican society.

However, Jamsha's character also makes an assumption which instigates the mothers-in-law was once engaged in a similar act. Thus, referring to how sometimes parents want to overprotect their children from the very acts they possibly encountered in their youth; while this is not established in the song itself, it is shown in the music video of the song where the late comedian Luis Raúl played the father of Jamsha's girlfriend and a video of his youth was shown being a "gangster". This notion further ridicules the aspect a society becomes blindsided or ashamed of the past instead of using it as a tool of growth and acceptance towards others.

It is noticeable how not only does Jamsha illustrate the existent discriminatory aspects of Puerto Rican society, but he also helps break those concepts by advocating a peaceful solution which is something uncommon among the messages found in Reggaeton songs, as they normally highlight violent scenarios instead of peaceful ones. The following lines below will indicate the peaceful solution to the problem of discrimination:

Vamos a hablar como gente civilizada

¿Por qué no me invita a entrar a su sala?

Yo sé que pa' su hija quiere un ingeniero

Pero esta vez le dio un Reggaetonero

Let us speak like civilized people

Why don't you invite me to your living room?

I know that you want an engineer for your daughter

But this time she got a Reggaeton singer

By urging his mother-in-law to engage in conversation instead of discriminating against each other is demonstrating the solution to the problem lies with understanding each other. In other words, people have to learn to accept one another but they cannot do so if they do not try to get to know each other. Though, it is important to indicate these actions are of humorous nature due to how Jamsha breaks the rigid stereotypes of Reggaeton artists who would normally advocate violent solutions as an extent of their maleness. Consequently, this leads to the understanding that Jamsha is surrendering his male egotism which is so characteristic of Reggaeton artists in the name of comedy; however, in its core this is another example of how he is providing a far more realistic picture than the common mainstream Reggaeton song.

Jamsha is conveying the true nature of our society and exploring how we as an audience understand these situations to be true. In fact, a big focus of Jamsha's music and videos is the verisimilitude with real life situations and being able to represent those stories in the context of comedy which in part are essential to any comedian to bring about topics which his audience can relate with. Furthermore, even though Jamsha is a parody of an underground Reggaeton artist, his music is essentially a parody of our society as a whole as he tries to bring topics which essentially allow for people to become aware of their own discriminatory actions and thus his acceptance among other artist in genre has been welcomed (Jamsha "el Putipuerko" aferrado a la vulgaridad). This unique style of Jamsha brings a refreshing perspective to the genre and it

further establishes our ability to engage in conversations about why these topics resonate so much among our society and why are they so effectively humorous at the same time. In a way, using comedy in the context of education helps to create awareness of the unspoken rules and taboos in society in an enjoyable manner while at the same time opening the door for fruitful discussions on how these topics are important do develop a better understanding of our society and how can we change those antiquated ideals.

The songs which were analyzed portray a series of issues which lie at the bottom of the barrel when discussing the topic of Reggaeton, thus, limiting our understanding of not only genre but of how we as a society interpret these issues. By utilizing these songs in the educational context, we can open discussions which resonate with students in order to raise awareness on how they are part of an oppressive cycle which hinders our growth as a society. Furthermore, by taking into account the context of these songs, we have been able to gain a deeper understating of the purpose behind these songs and the effects mainstream successes can have on the expressions of art.

## **Chapter Five: Pedagogical Implications and Conclusions**

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Fomenting social justice is a call for fostering a profound understanding of the oppressive nature within any given society, thus in the context of education students should be taught emancipatory strategies to become critical of their world and to change how they perceive it. Henceforth, the utilization of Reggaeton narratives in a pedagogical setting is not a visionless application of an entertainment medium, but an elaborate instrument which through the analysis of the songs and the context surrounding it one can attain a deeper understanding of the social conditions of the Puerto Rican urban subculture. Thus, the central focus of using Reggaeton narratives in the context of education is not only to break misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding Reggaeton's subculture, but to effectively engage students in Freirean dialogue in order to foment discussions which would ultimately lead towards seeking social justice. However, the most important aspect of utilizing these narratives is to be able to take advantage of the notion that Puerto Rican students can utilize their knowledge of Reggaeton as form of popular culture and turn it into a useful educational tool to not only foment social justice, but to relate their learning process with their world and expand upon it. Therefore, by enabling students to relate to their world by utilizing their background knowledge of Reggaeton students would be able to measure how Puerto Rican society has classified the genre based on negative stereotypes which have been cemented in the popular opinion of Reggaeton not only through the attacks made by the government and the media, but through the uncritical consumption of Reggaeton narratives. This not only effectively illustrates the pedagogical value in using such narratives, as with the usage of the Freirean concept of dialogue can foment discussions of social justice, but at the same time it demonstrates the uncritical assertions of the established hegemony

Reggaeton provides a particular image of the Puerto Rican subculture; it has proven to be an image of great controversy due to its early vulgar nature and its depiction of the lower class realities. However, it is through Reggaeton's consistent cause for argument which essentially proves its worth as a text of academic study and pedagogical usage, as it highlights a particular set of ideologies which clash with one another causing ideological struggle. This ideological struggle is not only reflected in the depiction of Reggaeton narratives, but in how Puerto Rican society assesses and labels the genre through its trajectory. In other words, the critical consumption of Reggaeton narratives within a critical pedagogical framework allows for students to attain a higher understanding of the contradictory nature of the ideologies which resonate within Puerto Rican society, while at the same time breaking a set of common misconceptions and stereotypes which hinder achieving social equality.

## **Conclusion**

Most of the Reggaeton narratives which deal with realistic issues undoubtedly resonate with the urban subculture it represents, however; narratives like these are not as predominant as other mainstream party like Reggaeton songs within the Puerto Rican popular culture sphere. Thus, establishing that as the genre grew internationally, mainstream Reggaeton artists abandoned presenting themes of social discrimination and inequality and consequently losing a small but essential aspect of what the Reggaeton genre used to represent. This demonstrates the traditional party Reggaeton song is part of a set of formulaic recipes which resonate with the current hegemony as most mainstream Reggaeton songs do not voice the social realities of the lower classes and much less deal with issues of social discrimination and inequality. However, even though many Reggaeton artists have been able to taste the success of rising to the mainstream popular culture sphere, there are few artists who keep an open space to bring about

narratives of the social realities of the lower classes and speak out against social injustice and inequalities. Nonetheless, given this space is small one with a very limited audience it has no space in the Reggaeton mainstream sphere and instead most mainstream Reggaeton artists focus on established hegemonic formulas.

Thus, mainstream Reggaeton no longer serves to represent the views of a subculture as it once did but the artist's personal ego, which while it was a characteristic of many old Reggaeton songs, mainstream Reggaeton narrows itself even further within that scope focusing on the artist's success and wealth as a product of their immeasurable maleness. However, this is not to say mainstream Reggaeton songs should not be analyzed in future research, as even though they have cleaned up their act they still promote many of the same ideologies of maleness, sexual encounters and violence, but less drug usage and with little to no use of explicit language. In a way it can be said that the study of mainstream Reggaeton would serve to further criticize and understand the established hegemony as it is one of shallow nature which serves to care about how the message is said instead of what the message is.

Ultimately, in the eyes of the Puerto Rican society the Reggaeton genre is not setting the best moral example of the Puerto Rican society or is considered the best cultural export as it has many faults. However, it is within those faults in which the analysis of Reggaeton narratives thrives as it allows breaking common misconceptions and stereotypes regarding the Reggaeton culture, it creates awareness on the oppressive colonial ideologies of the Puerto Rican society, while at the same time promoting the critical consumption of this music and other forms of popular culture as well. Thus, the utilization of Reggaeton narratives proves to be a serious field of study especially within the field of pedagogy where it has the opportunity of opening a space for social change instead of promoting the current status quo.

## Further Studies

While this research focused on the in-depth analysis of Reggaeton narratives as an educational tool which would serve to engage students in dialogues that would ultimately lead to promote social justice, there are many different usages of for the analysis of Reggaeton narratives. These analyses could serve to focus on topics of gender stereotypes, sexuality, masculinity, race, violence and identity all of which could be linked directly or indirectly with the topics of social justice. Moreover, there are other aspects of popular culture which could serve to illustrate similar issues presented in this thesis like the utilization of films like *Talento de Barrio*, *Reggaeton The Movie* and *Por amor en el caserío* are just a few Puerto Rican films which depict the realities of the life of the Puerto Rican projects, thus adding an additional scope to narratives which are exposed by the Reggaeton genre. In addition, other studies could dive into the narratives of one specific artist, for example a study of how Jansha El Putipuerko changes the sphere of the Reggaeton persona by questioning issues of gender roles within the Puerto Rican society through the usage of comedic parodies in his narratives and music videos would pose for an indicative rendition of how we can further the studies both academically and pedagogical of Reggaeton narratives.

Another study which would serve to further the pedagogical implications of the usage of Reggaeton narratives in the classroom would be a case study or a focus group where the educator asks students which songs they think should be analyzed and discussed in the class. This not only would serve as a way to further empower students due to the relevancy that the songs they choose have towards their lives, but it provides a way for educators to perceive how the songs reflect students' realities more effectively and thus opening a space for a participatory approach to education. Given the lack of academic studies of the Reggaeton narratives, there are still many

of interrogatives which need to be addressed in future studies thus making the list of possibilities endless. Nonetheless, the study and analysis of Reggaeton narratives in a pedagogical and academic setting should be furthered studied and utilized as educators should take the chance of utilizing these texts in their classrooms due to how its controversial nature and notoriety brings about a set of topics which are misunderstood within the Puerto Rican society and are in dire need of critical studies.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: *Loíza* by Tego Calderón

Oye!  
Esto es pa' mi pueblo!  
Con cariño, del abayarde!  
Con DJ Adam!  
Y Cachete, el majadero de los cueros!  
Pa' mi pueblo, que tanto quiero!  
De Calderón, pa' Loíza entero!  
Oye!

Ando sin prisa  
Pero tu lentitud me coleriza  
Y el que no brega con Loíza  
(No, no llores!)  
Me quiere hacer pensar  
Que soy parte de una trilogía racial  
Donde to' el mundo es igual, sin trato especial  
Se perdonar  
Eres tu quien no sabe disculpar  
So, como justifica tanto mal  
Es que tu historia es vergonzosa  
Entre otra cosas  
Cambiaste las cadenas por esposas  
No todos somos iguales en términos legales  
Y eso está probado en los tribunales  
En lo claro la justicia se obtiene con cascajos  
Por eso estamos como estamos (Que se joda!)  
Que si no hay chavo pa' abogado, te provee uno el estado  
Pero hermano  
Te llevo quien te trajo  
Te matan y no desenfundan  
La jaula se te inunda  
Sentencia legal es defensa de segunda

Nunca va haber justicia sin igualdad  
Maldita maldad que destruye la humanidad  
Porque protesta, va a quitarme la libertad  
Si yo no reconozco su autoridad  
Nunca va haber justicia sin igualdad  
Maldita maldad que destruye la humanidad  
Porque protesta, va a quitarme la libertad  
Si yo no pertenezco a tu sociedad

De hipócritas  
Vanidad, falsedad en cantidad  
Hay mucho de to' sin felicidad  
Yo no tengo na'  
Solo esta letra encabroná  
Y la capacidad de no creer en tu verdad  
A quien más  
Se le ocurriría  
Saturar la mente a niños inocentes  
Con educación inconsistente  
Manipulada viciosamente  
Conveniencia del prominente de los pudientes  
En el pasado se curaron, abusaron y yo  
Me niego a yo darme por enterado  
Se dice que las cosas han cambiado  
No te duermas, lo anormales andan con palo  
Y he oído a Rubén Berrios abogar por lo míos  
Por eso en ninguno confío  
Todos con Vieques  
Mi pueblo negro no padece  
Porque tú crees que se lo merece  
Poco a poco, negrito  
Ponte mañoso  
Vive orgulloso, del To' Poderoso  
Como nosotros  
Pa' esos niches  
Que se creen mejores por su profesiones  
O por tener facciones de sus opresores  
Si una buena madre su hijo no daña  
Cabrones, lambones  
Pal carajo España  
(Ja!)  
Yo soy niche  
Orgulloso de mis raíces  
De tener mucha bamba y grandes narices  
Ni sufriendo dejamos de ser felices  
Por eso es que Papa Dios nos bendice

Nunca va haber justicia sin igualdad  
Maldita maldad que destruye la humanidad  
Porque protesta, va a quitarme la libertad  
Si yo no reconozco su autoridad

Y yo no sé porque...  
(Dime!)  
Y yo por nadie me meto...

(Na', yo soy tranquilo...tu sabes cómo es!)  
Y siempre hay un canto de huey que le falta a uno el respeto...  
Y yo no sé porque...

Boricua!  
Este es el Abayarde!  
Trayéndola como es!  
Metiéndole fuertemente, pa' despertar a mi gente!  
Ja!  
Oye, que bonito es mi Loíza!  
Mira qué bonito es!  
El DJ Adam!  
Nos fuimos!

## **Appendix B: Corazones by Daddy Yankee**

Corazones By Daddy Yankee

Daddy!

Ecko!

Dice...

Aquí hay corazón ah...

De que estas hecho...

Si las miradas mataran to el tiempo usara una gavana un cura  
me acompañara siguiéndome en una caravana....

Si fuera por mis enemigos a la mesa me trairian  
una víbora de carne y vinagre de bebida...

Me Crucificaran en un acto crudo homicida

Pero se equivocan me levanta mi Dios con salud y vida...

Si por el gobierno fuera los raperos no existieran...

Nos lanzaran al calabozo y con la pena de muerte nos dieran.

Esta el que pisotea y el que ayuda al ser humano...

existe el buen amigo que es leal como un hermano.

La sangre pesa más que el agua pero mídela bien...

Existe sangre sucia fíjate Caín y Abel

[Coro]

Porque hay corazones con EN-VI-DIA

Corazones con IRA

Corazones con FURIA

Situaciones de millones corazones

Con MIEDO

Corazones SIN-CEROS

Corazones GUE-RREROS

Corazones TRAI-CIO-NEROS

Soy de la capital del crimen y en el aire se percibe  
un espíritu de muerte que devora lo que vive.

Si fuera por mi reuniría a todos los caseríos proponiendo  
una tregua en nombre de los que se han ido (SIN MIEDO!)

Yo les diría mi gente yo solo aquí soy un valiente  
que les pide que no derramen

ya la sangre inocente arreglen como hombres y no se fallen mutuamente,  
pero sé que es un sueño perdido como ver a los tres partidos unidos  
luchando por el bien de Puerto Rico.

No ven que es mediocre la educación en los residenciales  
necesitan más maestros necesitan materiales,  
para crear más líderes y menos criminales

(Hay corazones allí con problemas personales).

Si por mi fuera le daría para atrás al tiempo sanarías las heridas

que marcaron todo su cuerpo paraba las manos de aquel centurio con su lanza  
También en el acto me tendrían que dar matanza lo bajaría  
de la cruz estando moribundo pero tuvo que morir para salvar al mundo...

[Coro]

Porque hay corazones con EN-VI-DIA

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Es que en el mundo hay corazones que se creen sabios en su propia opinión,  
pero cabe su fin porque andan en caminos de perdición.

Hay corazones que no

perdonan a sus hermanos pero tú sabes que así mismo Dios no los perdonara  
por sus pecados.

Hay corazones que ayudan sin pedir nada a cambio y por su

nobleza encuentran el progreso a diario Hay corazones traicioneros que le gusta  
engañar a los corazones sinceros pero más vale el segundo que el dinero del  
mundo entero.

Y existe aquel corazón maligno que nos atormenta como ángeles

caídos pero hay un corazón más poderoso que nos protege que jamás y nunca  
será vencido y el que lo busque y lo encuentre para siempre será bendecido.

Refugiate en salud y vida.

## **Appendix C: *Palabras con sentido* by Daddy Yankee**

Recuerdo como ayer que tan solo por escuchar  
esta música te trataban como un criminal yeah!!  
Te arrestaban violando tus derechos  
Todavía el prejuicio no está satisfecho

Me señala con el deo' del discrimen  
hasta que me den pena de muerte sin cometer un crimen  
Se supone que no me defienda? Ah!  
Que la injusticia me gane la contienda?

No soy un mantenío, tengo lo mío  
Una compañía mundial y salí del caserío  
Gracias al perreo sigo creando empleos  
Una mala educación es la que crea reos

Te pasas hablando de mí  
Antes de hablar mírate bien  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!  
En vez de estar pendiente a mí  
Haga su parte usted también  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!

La calle te da lo que un libro no te enseña  
y un libro te enseña lo que la calle no te da  
La dignidad por el oro no se empeña  
por eso me mantengo firme ante la sociedad  
Con palabras rebuscadas tejen mentiras elaboradas  
pa' engañarte en su confusión organizada  
Mi punto es real, si lo que canto está mal  
Clausura la música en general

¿Qué escuchaban los autores del 911?  
¿Qué escuchaba Timothy Mcveigh en aquel entonces?  
¿Qué escuchaba el asesino del famoso Beatle?  
¿Qué escuchaba Mao Tse Tung, Stalin y Hitler ah?

Te pasas hablando de mí  
Antes de hablar mírate bien  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!  
En vez de estar pendiente a mí  
Haga su parte usted también

Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!

Necesitamos la verdad del periodista  
Necesitamos más inspiración de los artistas  
Necesitamos el compromiso de la familia  
Necesitamos que la iglesia se mantenga en vigilia

Necesitamos que la muerte no sea la noticia del día  
Más acción menos politiquería  
Necesitamos darle vida al pensamiento estéril  
Vamo' a demostrar que no somos un pueblo débil

Necesitamos que el rico ayude al pobre  
Y que el pobre no juzgue al hombre  
Hay que sanar el problema desde la raíz  
Necesitamos la unión de todo el país

Te pasas hablando de mí  
Antes de hablar mírate bien  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!  
En vez de estar pendiente a mí  
Haga su parte usted también  
Se puede mejorar el país  
Y mi barrio, oh oh oh!

"Y aprovecho la oportunidad para hacer un llamado a la unión. Decirle no al discrimen, al prejuicio y a la marginación que tanto nos divide. La música urbana crea empleos, salva vidas como la de este servidor, y le ha dado las herramientas como a mucho de mis colegas y a mí para superarnos"

## **Appendix D: *Su hija se enamoró de un kako* by Jamsha El Putipuerko**

Óigame doña

Su hija se enamoró de un kako que le gusta la moña  
Pa' colmo canta Reggaeton y malo  
Lo que importa es que la amo...

Y ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo  
Ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo

Aunque vayamos a comer y ella sea la que pague  
Por favor no me juzgue  
Aunque vayamos al cine y ella sea la que pague  
Por favor no me juzgue  
Aunque vayamos al motel y ella sea la que pague  
Por favor no me juzgue  
Aunque ustedes vayan a pagar la boda  
Ay por favor no me juzgue  
Ou!

A usted señora por poco le da un infarto  
Cuando me vio llegar con el FlapTop  
Acicalao por las Reebok Pump  
Y por poco se desmaya cuando saque mi cadenon

Óigame doña

Su hija se enamoró de un kako que le gusta la moña  
Pa' colmo canta Reggaeton y malo  
Lo que importa es que la amo

Y ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo  
Ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo

Dígame porque yo no puedo entrar  
A su círculo social si yo soy bien elegante  
Usted me tiene cara que los tiempos de salsa  
En su juventud era jeva un gangster

Vamos a hablar como gente civilizada  
¿Por qué no me invita a entrar a su sala?  
Yo sé que pa' su hija quiere un ingeniero  
Pero esta vez le dio un Reggaetonero

(El más cafre)

Óigame doña

Su hija se enamoró de un kako  
Que le gusta la moña  
Pa' colmo canta Reggaeton y malo  
Lo que importa es que la amo

Y ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo  
Ese kako pues soy yo, pues soy yo

Ey, El Putifino! Eggi Ruz

Suegra yo te quiero  
Y por eso te dedico esta canción  
Ah! y la luna de miel la quiero en Inglaterra  
Así que ve comprando los pasajes