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"It wasn't just about learning how to speak Spanish": Engaging Histories of Oppression and Enslavement in Spanish Heritage Language Education

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ABSTRACT

We present a curricular intervention in elementary Spanish heritage language in a Hispanic serving institution located in the US Northeast (Bronx, NYC), that aims to contextualize Latinx students' experiences and perceptions of Blackness within broader histories of oppression and enslavement. Our practice brings together critical Latinx pedagogy and critical approaches to Spanish heritage language education to facilitate sociohistorical consciousness for both language instructors and students through the use of open-access Latinx archival resources. We outline a three-week unit designed using the First Blacks in the Americas online collection curated by the City University of New York Dominican Studies Institute. During the unit, the students practice their full linguistic repertoires and develop historical thinking skills. We discursively analyze survey responses, instructor fieldnotes, and students' coursework collected throughout the course to measure the impact of this pilot project. We find that students value learning about Latinx history as a mechanism to practice their Spanish, especially as it relates to the (internalized) racism they experience within their families and communities. We discuss the implications of a critical Latinx language pedagogy to anchor Spanish language education in the experiences and knowledge of Latinx people, histories, and cultures.

Introduction

Over 60 years since the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, where the collective struggle for quality and antiracist bilingual language pedagogy began, heritage language classrooms, what Flores and García (2017) refer to as "racialized basements of bilingual education" (p. 19), continue to act as forms of as racial, social, and linguistic segregation. We embrace the civil rights obligations of heritage language education by advocating for curricula that not only center our students' and our experiences of linguicism and other forms of discrimination, but also contextualize them within the histories of systemic oppression and displacement that create the conditions for such segregation. As immigrant-origin (Mangual Figueroa & Barrales, 2021) educators and researchers – one of us from Chile and the other from Chicago by way of Palestine – we interrogate our own processes of identity work and encourage our students to problematize our/their sociolinguistic practices and ideologies in order to imagine new and empowering forms of language education.

In this article, we present a curricular intervention within a Spanish for heritage speakers course that partners with archival collections housed within Latinx cultural institutions at the City University of New York. The unit presented is designed to increase student awareness of the root causes of anti-

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Black racism within Latinx communities and society at large by contextualizing contemporary manifestations of systemic racism within broader histories of displacement and enslavement. Our goal with this curricular intervention is to enhance pedagogical theory and practice by bridging together critical Latinx pedagogy (Cassavantes Bradford & Morales, 2021), activist archiving (Flinn & Alexander, 2015), and critical heritage language pedagogy (Leeman, 2018) to continue poking holes in the structures of oppression that continue to dominate Spanish-language teaching in higher education. In the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, the most recent call for structural transformation, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated existing oppressive structures, we are reminded of the importance of prioritizing the tools needed to dismantle such systems, including in the language classroom. We argue that curricular interventions that center Blackness are one way to achieve these goals and improve the learning environment for students and educators (see, for example, Uju et al., 2020).

Literature review

Critical Latinx pedagogy

According to Cassavantes Bradford and Morales (2021), a critical Latinx pedagogy "embraces, engages and empowers diverse Latinx students, while providing opportunities for students of all backgrounds to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Latin American-origin people in the United States" (p. 2). This approach is rooted in the legacies of critical pedagogy as understood by scholars like Freire (1970, 2005) and Giroux (2011), as well as in the work of feminist scholars like hooks (1994, 2003) and Anzaldúa (1987). Their scholarship conceptualizes education and the classroom as necessarily and inherently political spaces that are shaped by power structures and hierarchies that rely on the systemic erasure of histories, identities, and practices of racialized students and educators.

Freirean critical pedagogy is a crucial building block of many iterations of educational models that seek to recognize, validate, and legitimize marginalized identities and experiences within education, and one of the main tenets of this thinking is the facilitation of the process of critical consciousness. In her seminal book *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks (1994) discusses the influence Freire's concept of "conscientization" had on her personal and professional critique of educational approaches that prioritized student consumption over critical awareness and engagement through active participation (p. 14). And this engagement needs not only strive "for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (hooks, 1994, p. 15), the latter of which students are understood to already embody, understand, and teach in the context of critical, holistic, and engaged pedagogies. Critical language pedagogies, within which we situate the curricular intervention discussed in this article, have also been influenced by the concept of critical consciousness and its derivatives, which we will outline in the next section.

We engage these calls in our work by grounding Spanish-language learning in the US in the histories and experiences of Latinx people in this country, employing a critical Latinx pedagogy in the Spanish language classroom.

Cassavantes Bradford and Morales (2021) articulate critical Latinx pedagogy as centered around three goals: (1) to achieve that all students, regardless of background feel welcomed in the classroom; (2) to anchor the students' and their communities' experiences "within a broader historical narrative of displacement, oppression, and marginalization" (p. 3); and (3) to empower students by facilitating critical consciousness and honing their skills to analyze and intervene in the intersecting forms of oppression they experience in their daily lives. While Cassavantes and Morales bring this approach to a U.S. Latinx History survey course, in which both Latinx and non-Latinx students are enrolled, we are interested in reflecting on what can be achieved using this approach in a heritage language classroom in which all of the enrolled students claim Latinx identities. We are particularly inspired by the second goal – of situating the learning experience as inseparable from enduring legacies of colonialism – as a way to decenter language skills or metalinguistic awareness as the primary goals of heritage language education.

By incorporating archival materials with a focus on the history of displacement and enslavement of Black people in the Americas, all of which were created by Latinx cultural institutions housed within the same university system the students attend, our goal is to contribute to framing Latinx history as an important component of U.S. history (Ruiz, 2006) and practice a critical Latinx pedagogy in the language classroom through archival materials produced in and about the diasporic communities to which our students belong.

Spanish-language education for Latinx students in US higher education

Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) was established as a distinct subfield of Spanish language education in the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of the struggle for bilingual education in the civil rights era (Flores & García, 2017; Leeman, 2018). Similar to other forms of bilingual education programs, SHL was aligned to antidiscrimination and antiracist social transformation, and was geared toward Latinx communities. In Valdés's (2001) well-known definition, a Latinx student designated as heritage Spanish learner is "a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (p. 2). Although Valdes's definition is the most used for research and educational purposes, scholars have since identified several tensions in determining what constitutes a heritage language and its speakers (Carreira, 2004; Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 182). For Beaudrie and Fairclough (2012), Valdes's definition emphasizes proficiency because it is viewed as a required element in educational contexts and propose a reframed interpretation of the term: "an individual who has a personal or familial connection to a nonmajority language" (p. 7). However, in García's opinion (2005), the use of the term "heritage" signals a losing ground for language minoritized people that was gained during the civil rights era in that the term still signals "foreign" in the US. The latter is especially striking for the Spanish language, which is the most common non-English language spoken in the US (Leeman & Fuller, 2020).

While bilingual education beginnings had focused on more effective teaching of language-minoritized students, the goal of heritage language learning has been to build academic language proficiency in one's "native language" (García, 2019; Rosa & Flores, 2017), which designated Spanish language education for Latinx students as "compensatory programs for linguistically deficient students" (Flores & García, 2017, p. 22). Traditional expansionist-oriented pedagogies (also known as appropriateness-approaches) in SHL have focused on individual students' acquisition of "standard" Spanish for academic registers (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Leeman, 2018; Leeman & Serafini, 2016; Rosa & Flores, 2017). By incorporating sociolinguistic principles on language variation, the goal of these pedagogies is "to help students recognize and produce language that is 'appropriate' in particular settings – and especially professional and academic settings" (Leeman & Serafini, 2016, p. 62). Although expansion-oriented approaches call for educators to recognize the legitimacy of all language varieties and practices, especially those of language-minoritized students, appropriateness-based models reproduce the standard language ideology by organizing linguistic forms as "standard" or "prestige" and appropriate for formal contexts and "nonstandard" linguistic forms as counterparts of informal contexts, stigmatized as incorrect, ignorant, or "uneducated" (Leeman & Serafini, 2016, p. 63).

As a critique of appropriateness-based pedagogies, Critical Language Awareness (CLA) builds on previous research in critical pedagogy and sociolinguistic principles by focusing more specifically on the role of language ideologies (Holguín Mendoza, 2017; Lado & Quijano, 2020; Leeman, 2018; Martínez, 2003), as well as of culture and art (Parra et al., 2018). By incorporating sociolinguistic content to develop Latinx students' critical understanding of how language and linguistic variation work in society, CLA prepares them to interrogate dominant linguistic practices and hierarchies and to explore the ways that language can be used to perform identity work (Leeman, 2005). In the last years, the field of SHL has seen important efforts to incorporate CLA as part of the SHL curriculum in higher education (Beaudrie et al., 2021; Holguín Mendoza, 2017). To further push in the direction of

metalinguistic instruction, Del Valle (2014) prefers "critical knowledge" (p. 370), instead of awareness; in a similar line of thought, Holguín Mendoza and Taylor (2021) recently introduced the "critical sociocultural linguistic literacy" approach, and Leeman and Fuller (2020) have recently introduced the sociopolitics of language approach.

CLA differs from appropriateness-based accounts of language variation "in that the goal is for students to actively engage in questioning dominant language ideologies" (Leeman & Serafini, 2016, p. 63). However, advocates of CLA do not reject the expansion of students' standard/academic linguistic repertoires. What they do reject is the acquisition of prestige varieties as the primary goal of language education (Leeman, 2018, p. 349). Rosa and Flores (2017) also interrogate the discourses of appropriateness that devalue Latinx students' linguistic practices, but instead call to recognize that the racialized positions that Latinx students inhabit in U.S. social structures shape the dominant perception of its linguistic practices as deficient (see also, Flores & Rosa, 2015). Taking this recognition as a starting point, it becomes possible to "move beyond the idea that establishing the legitimacy of all linguistic practices will somehow lead to the eradication of linguistic stigmatization" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 185). According to Rosa and Flores (2017), the goal of Spanish language education should not be raising critical language awareness in order to lessen the marginalization of language minoritized students, but "to engage with, confront, and ultimately dismantle the racialized hierarchy of U.S. society" (p. 186).

Inspired by this literature, we interrogate our own teaching practice and reflect on what pedagogical innovations are possible if "the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and problematize their heritage and community practices" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86). One way to do this, for example, is to reimagine the linguistic practices of Latinx students not simply as starting points from which to learn appropriate academic language, but as legitimate practices in their own right (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 178).

The curricular intervention that we propose advocates for translanguaging among Latinx students in the classroom and promotes its capacity "to add and select different linguistic and semiotic features to their communicative repertoire" (García & Wei, 2018, p. 6). We consider this a crucial "transgression," as hooks (1994) might call it, "to create new ways of knowing, [and] different strategies for the sharing of knowledge" (p. 12). The intervention goes beyond raising critical language awareness to anchor the students' and their communities' experiences "within a broader historical narrative of displacement, oppression, and marginalization" (Cassavantes Bradford & Morales, 2021, p. 3). In doing so, the curricular intervention opens a translingual space where sociohistorical knowledge of the Spanish language is expanded, and the students' experiences are acknowledged and valued in the curriculum through activist archiving, which we explain further in the following section.

Activist archiving

We call out and modestly intervene in racial and linguistic bias within the Spanish language curriculum through an activist archiving approach (Flinn & Alexander, 2015). According to the authors, "*activist archiving* describes the processes in which those who self-identify primarily as activists engage in archival activity, not as a supplement to their activism but as an integral part of their social movement activism" (Flinn & Alexander, 2015, p. 332). As scholars and educators, we embrace archival practice as a form of social, cultural, and political activism within the Spanish classroom to center Latinx linguistic and cultural pluralism (Alim & Paris, 2017). In doing so, we challenge appropriateness-based pedagogies that perpetuate linguistic racialization in SHL, and suggest new directions for more socially responsive pedagogies (Leeman, 2012).

Following public-history making (Dean, 2018; Hoyle, 2017) and critical, participatory action research (Cammarota & Romero, 2009), activist archiving attempts to make historical knowledge more accessible and participatory, inclusive of non-hegemonic voices and experiences. From where we sit as educators, activist archiving is a key ingredient in performing socially responsive pedagogies that

incorporate students' experiences while fostering their agency in enacting their own voices and histories. Activist archiving is a call for scholars and educators working with counter, alternative, and/or bottom-up archives to interrogate not just their content but also the structures of power that make archives possible, especially the so-called national archives and the narratives that they sustain (Zeitlyn, 2012). In doing so, this practice transforms the archive into a site for social justice, making its contents relevant to people's lives and fostering critical knowledge about the foundational inequities constructing the present while seeking to influence the future.

By bridging archives, educators, and students, activist archiving allows people to engage in the historical production of knowledge, integrate history into their own lives, and understand their own social experience through archival materials. We inspire our curricular intervention in the work made by The Schomburg Curriculum Project (2019–2022), which promotes the use of Schomburg archives to supplement the middle school curriculum and push discussions in radical new directions. These curricular interventions make academic conversations legible to students and promote the analysis of primary sources related to topics such as slavery, Black women's stories, and Black resistance and power, which are only superficially covered in traditional middle and high school curricula. We observe similar erasures in Spanish-language curriculum in US higher education, and our collaboration with CUNY Latinx archives has allowed us to engage in this reflection and curricular intervention, which we will describe in more detail below.

Methodology & data

The curricular intervention we present is part of a peer-mentoring project designed and implemented by graduate student adjuncts in Spanish and Language departments at CUNY. The project is funded by The Center for the Humanities and the Gittell Collective through the CUNY Adjunct Incubator Grants and promotes curricular changes in the Spanish classroom through the use of CUNY Latino archives.[1] The project advocates for the use of archives as open educational resources in order to center the histories, experiences and voices of Latinx communities in Spanish language learning. The questions guiding the research component of this project include:

(1) Do archival resources permit educators to center experiences, histories and voices of Latinx communities in Spanish language learning?
(2) Do curricular interventions based on archival resources help students raise or increase their historical knowledge regarding the experiences and issues currently affecting Latinx communities?
(3) Do the Latino archival resources empower students to learn and share their own histories?
(4) How do students perceive archival-based curricular interventions in language education?

The project was executed during the Spring 2021 semester across several CUNY colleges. We partnered with CUNY Latino institutions such as The Dominican Studies Institute (The City University of New York), The Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Hunter College) and The Mexican Studies Institute (Lehman College), in order to design archive-based lessons, modules and final projects to be implemented in Spanish courses, including for heritage and second language acquisition. These institutions have been key agents in fueling a living, activist, communal memory of the Dominican, Puerto Rican and Mexican diasporic communities in NY and the U.S. With this project, we aim to support, promote and create more access to their collections and activist work.

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[1]When referring to CUNY institutes and archives we use the term Latino instead of Latinx to honor how each institution identifies itself officially.

Description of curricular intervention

Institutional context

The study that yielded the results analyzed in this article was conducted in one of the classes that participated in the project, taught by one of the authors. The course was at a public Hispanic-serving institution (i.e., one that includes at least 25% of Hispanic students, as defined by the U.S Department of Education) located in the northwest Bronx area. This four-year college serves the borough and surrounding region providing undergraduate and graduate studies in liberal arts and sciences in a rich multilingual and multiracial environment. As of the fall 2018, the college had 12,639 undergraduate and 2,148 graduate students; as well as 381 full-time and 639 part-time faculty. 56% of undergraduate students are first generation college students and 63% receive grant or scholarship funding. 59.9% of the students reside in the Bronx; 20.1% in Manhattan and other NYC boroughs, and only 10.4% live in Westchester County. In 2018, 53% of undergraduate students at this institution reported being Hispanic/Latinx followed by Black/Non-Hispanic (30.3%); White/Non-Hispanic (6.8%); Asian/Pacific Islander (7%); American Indian/Native Alaskan (<1%).

Based on departamental information, an average of 200 students per semester take one of the four levels offered for heritage learners. The course in which we developed our curricular intervention – Elementary Spanish for Heritage Speakers II – is a three-credit, zero-textbook-cost course for students that have been placed by department examination or that have passed Elementary Spanish for Heritage Speakers I. Both are beginners courses with emphasis on elements of grammatical structures and practice in reading, writing, and oral exposition. Our project builds upon the last learning goal of the course, which states that "students will also gain a greater understanding of Spanish's presence within the United States and increase their understanding of Spanish's significant role in U.S. history and society." We take this goal as the starting point to develop the three-week unit described below, titled: Origins of Afrolatinidad.

Participants

We developed the curricular intervention with an initial pool of 22 students, all of whom replied to a sociolinguistic background survey. Since the intervention was implemented at the end of the Spring semester, two students had already dropped the class. Moreover, to give more consistency to our data, we did not include students with more than two absences during the three-week instructional module, or those who had completed less than 60% of the online assignments. These criteria reduced the pool to 20 students. The average age range from 18 to 22 (mean 19 years), including 7 men and 13 women. The entry survey also revealed that students reported origins in New York (City), Bronx, Yonkers, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. These pieces of information are consistent with the college population as it was described previously. All the students reported speaking or understanding Spanish in addition to English; two of them reported speaking or understanding French and Italian. Moreover, 81.8% reported having studied Spanish in high school. It was also relevant to gather information about the students' interests regarding the Latino/x/a/e or Hispanic culture in order to orient the curricular interventions design to their intellectual curiosities and needs. According to the survey, approximately 70% wanted to learn about history, followed by music (55%), food (50%), and the arts (50%).

Curricular intervention

The curricular intervention consisted of a three-week instructional module including 6 classes of 100 minutes each, meeting twice a week for synchronous online learning. The goal of the *Orígenes de la Afrolatinidad* module was to promote students' critical knowledge on the historical roots of the Afrolatinidad in the Dominican Republic and the Latinx diaspora. The guiding inquiry was about the

extent to which the history of colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean expand students' and educators' understanding of the experiences of discrimination and opresion that continue to affect Latinx communities in the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The unit was mainly developed around the bilingual platform "First Blacks in the Americas: The African Presence in the Dominican Republic" by the Dominican Studies Institute. Multimodal resources in the platform include readings, manuscripts, an image gallery, timelines, maps, a glossary, videos, and a Spanish Paleography Digital Teaching and Learning Tool through which the students can read original manuscripts and transcriptions. Beyond the archival resources, the unit also includes videos from the YouTube channel "Pero Like" and a chapter of the book *Latinx: en busca de las voces que redefinen la identidad latina* (2020) by Paola Ramos. This module guides students through learning about the following topics and concepts, which were introduced in the following order:

(1) Afrolatinidad within the Latinx community: internalized racism and colonialism
(2) Hispaniola and the world slave trade in the XVI Century
(3) Slavery, race and language: ladinos, bozales and cimarrones
    (a) The history of Sebastián Lemba: the Black maroon leader known for its resistance to the Spanish colonizers
(4) Gender roles during slavery: the arrival of Black women to Hispaniola
(5) Current gender and racial issues affecting Afrolatinxs

Procedure

One week before starting the instructional module, the instructor explained the CUNY Adjunct Project. The instructor then obtained verbal consent from the students to take field notes during the unit and to use their survey responses, coursework, and final essays as data for the current article. The day before the module topics were covered in class, the students responded to a set of questions designed to assess preliminary readings completed as part of their independent work. During each session, the students completed the activities following a guide prepared by the instructor. In line with the course's language learning goals, the activities fostered group discussions and collective image analysis, reading in pairs, linguistic analysis of manuscripts, and written assignments. An important note is that the instructor explicitly embraced translanguaging in the classroom, and students were encouraged to call on their full linguistic repertoires to engage with the material. As a final assessment, the students wrote an essay based on two possible topics and questions offered by the instructor. Finally, the students completed an exit questionnaire where they were asked about their perceptions of the curricular intervention and the class experience overall.

Assessment tools

During the instructional intervention, the students had to complete a guide with activities to practice the contents covered that day and a final essay about one of the two topics proposed by the instructor. The guide was a work in progress and, after every class, the students submitted their work at its current stage for feedback. The completion of these activities was graded as part of the student's participation in class. For the final essay, the students could choose one of two topics to write their essays in Spanish. Eighteenth students chose topic A, titled "Black women in Hispaniola and Afrolatinx women in the US," and two students wrote about the sugar business in Hispaniola and contemporary forms of slavery, such as the case of the maquiladoras in the US Mexican border. In this article, we share the results from essays about the most popular topic among students (topic A). The prompts facilitated the integration of the writing conventions that the students had been practicing in class, such as gender and number agreement, capitalization, among others, but the students were advised that the priority for this essay was to express their ideas and analyses of the archives with clarity. The students had to

demonstrate their knowledge and critical understanding of the topic, and to quote at least two different sources from the archive. As our goals were not focused on language form, the assessment criteria and feedback were oriented toward evaluating students' ability to engage with and make meaning out of the archival materials. The assignment was scaffolded into two drafts, the first of which was graded for completion and accompanied by instructor feedback as a way to promote sustained engagement with the materials throughout the unit. In the analysis, we present data coming from both the first and final drafts.

Results

In order to examine the students' reception of the historical archival-based content included in the curricular intervention, we analyzed three sources of qualitative data: 1) students' coursework, 2) answers provided by the students in the exit questionnaire, and 3) instructor's field notes. In order to trace emerging or developing critical knowledge about the historical roots of Afrolatinidad, we use coding (Cohen et al., 2011), and grammar analysis. The present study analyzes qualitative data to provide insights into student's rationalizations of the contents reviewed.

Effectiveness of the curricular intervention in a SHL course

With regard to our second research question about the students' development of or increased critical knowledge, we analyze the guide and final essays.

Our data reveal evidence of a) awareness about *slavery* in the Dominican Republic, b) awareness about the Spanish language as *an instrument of power and domination*, c) critical stances regarding the importance of knowing the *history* of slavery to understand Dominican identity, and d) connections with *contemporary issues* affecting Latinx communities including internalized racism. Here are students' illustrative comments:

a) Awareness about slavery in the Dominican Republic
  (1) This image of slave shackles gives people an idea of how the first Black was treated in Hispaniola.
  (2) This image impacted me [Sebastian Lemba's statue] because of how hard it is to picture his death.
  (3) It amazes me how hard the blacks worked even though enslaved, still helping to defend the city.
  (4) I am honored to have met Sebastián Lemba and his fight against the Spanish authorities.
  (5) when I see an image of one of the works that the slaves did, and I see how hard it was for them, it's sad.

b) Awareness about the Spanish language as an instrument of power and domination
  (6) [The Ladinos] have the capacity to understand cruelty and injustice.
  (7) [The Ladinos] are familiarized with the colonizers' languages.
  (8) It is easier to manipulate the ladinos.

c) Critical stances toward the importance of knowing the history of slavery to understand Dominican identity
  (9) Learning from this history has helped me understand how my country has been influenced and affected by other countries to form what it is now.
  (10) Being a Dominican male myself and knowing about my history and having the knowledge that not everyone from my country knows this makes it an issue for me because I think it's important for people to know who we are.
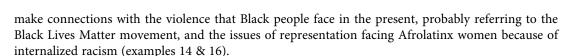
(11) The impact that learning about this story has for me is that I feel closer to my roots as an Afro-Dominican woman. I was born in the Dominican Republic but since I grew up here in NYC, sometimes I don't know so much about my Dominican history.

d) Connections with contemporary issues affecting Latinx and other minoritized communities

(12) Many Dominican are racist when it comes to people of darker shade and many Dominicans are violent toward our neighbor in Haiti and all of this is simply because we are uneducated.

(13) This impacts my understanding of history of La Espanola by showing me how much

[...] the past still affects current Islands because of the White washed history most have been fed, most don't know this truth.

(14) This image also impacted me [Sebastian Lemba's statue] because you still see today that black people are being killed.

(15) An image such as this [slave shackles] should evoke powerful emotions out of anyone who gazes upon it and make us think not only about the past but how we should approach our future.

(16) There is also a lot of colorism in Latinx families and mothers and grandmothers say things like "bad hair" from a young age.

(17) Blackness is often looked down on in the Latina[2] community.

(18) People in older generations reject Blackness because they are not educated in history.

(19) Afrolatinas today experience racism not only from other races, but also from within their own race.

(20) To fight against internalized racism we need to work within the community. We need to educate our families about our history.

As the examples in section (a) illustrate, processes of historical awareness about slavery are expressed through cognitive verbs (i.e. to give an idea, to picture, to see (figurative), and inferential statements based on historical clues that helped students to imagine or presume the type of experiences that the slaves had in Hispaniola. These inferences are related to manual labor as well as the dehumanization and suffering the students reflected on as they learned about the architectural work made by slaves, the use of shackles and the punishment that slaves received because of insurrections. The historical inferences also allowed students to engage with the experience of slavery through subjective and affective expressions such as saddness (example 5) and impression (example 3). Awareness of slavery rebellions made students feel connected to their Dominican identity as is seen in the expression of pride (example 4) for the newly acquired knowledge about the figure of Lemba. The examples in section (b) illustrate the students' critical understanding of how the Spanish language worked as a tool for slave domination and control.

In the examples of section (c), the students recognized the relevance of learning about slavery to understand their Dominican identity and its multicultural origins (example 9). For those who had migrated to the US, this history made them feel close to their "roots," linking histories of oppression to race identity, and belonging (example 11). Moreover, students recognize how critical it is for Dominicans to know how slavery impacts the historical constitution of their identity as well as internalized racism (examples 10, 18 & 20). Example 20 in our data express open calls to educate their families and work as a collective toward racial equity.

Lastly, students made connections between slavery and contemporary issues affecting Black Latinx and non-Latinx communities in the US as well as in the Caribbean. A better understanding of this history might lead Dominicans to critically reflect on their own racist practices as well as their internalized racism due to Whitewashed history (example 13). Moreover, students were able to

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[2]This is the authors' translation; we preserved the use of "latina" to honor the original.

make connections with the violence that Black people face in the present, probably referring to the Black Lives Matter movement, and the issues of representation facing Afrolatinx women because of internalized racism (examples 14 & 16).

With regard to the third research question about the potential of archival resources to empower students to learn and share their own histories, some students expressed motivation to keep learning about the topic. Here are some examples of students' illustrative comments:

(21) As a person who was born in Santo Domingo and has visited there, it has never occurred to me how much history exists between the walls and everything around me. It makes me proud and makes me eager to learn more the next time I visit.

(22) I want to know more about the slave shackle in Hispaniola. Many questions come to mind [...] For example, who came up with the idea for shackles? Who created the shackles? How were these shackles created?

(23) I want to learn more because I'm Dominican and if one day I go to the city of Santo Domingo, I want to know more of what I am looking at.

As the instructor's journal attests, students expressed that they observed a positive change regarding the perception of Blackness within the Latinx community in the younger generations to which they belong. According to them, this generation was more willing to embrace Blackness as part of their identity although older generations still had pervasive ideologies of internalized racism within their families (example 18). One female student shared with the class that she straightened her hair without questioning why until she was seventeen years old, when she started to embrace her identity despite white societal beauty standards. Another male student commented that his mother used to warn him, "no me traigas una negrita de novia" (don't show up with a Black girlfriend) even though he himself identified as Black. Another female student shared how difficult it was for her to explain to her father that his comments and practices against Afrolatinx individuals were racist. During the class, she shared that she showed a video about colorism and internalized racism that we had discussed in class to her father in the hopes that he could reflect on the topic with a better understanding of history. Most students were emphatic about the importance of learning history and being "educated" in this topic in order to recognize Blackness as part of *dominicanidad*.

Student perceptions of curricular intervention

The majority of students who answered the survey conducted at the end of the course mentioned appreciation for the unit on Afrolatinidad, either because it validated their experience as Afrolatinxs or made them more aware of the historical and continued erasure of Blackness within discussions of Latinx identities. For example:

(1) I think Afrolatinidad has been my favorite topic in this class because it relates to me personally and it helped me realize that there is a community for afrolatinos like me. It helped me understand myself better and I really appreciated that. I do feel as though every topic has taught me something invaluable and I will carry the knowledge from this class throughout my entire life.

This student narrates their own process of realization that the isolation they felt within some Latinx spheres was contextualized within broader erasure of AfroLatinxs and that, despite this erasure, Afrolatinxs have a long history of resistance and struggle for recognition. In the comment, we can observe the importance of offering course material that facilitates students' critical understanding of themself and their lived experience throughout the process of identity work. Other students wrote,

(2) My favorite topic of this class was the origin of afrolatindad and the relationship with Spanish because it showed me and many others how important afrolatindad is and how it is part of us Latinx people.

(3) I really liked the topic of Afrolatinidad and erasing blackness amongst latinos, it was super meaningful to me because I have had several experiences within my own family and this idea that they try to change the way they look because they are so ashamed. I always wanted to learn more so I feel like this class helped me a lot.

(4) this topic was meaning ful for me because at the time i was learning it i had a small dispute with a friend on wether or not race wise dominicans were black and this topic helped give me information in regards to it.

Example 2 demonstrates critical awareness of the historical erasure of Blackness within Latinidad and conceptualizes Afrolatinidad and the Spanish language as "part of us Latinx people," articulating a disruption in their (and their peers') ideas about anti-Blackness within the Latinx community. Examples 3 and 4 show that the students were able to use the information they were learning in class to address the effects of anti-Blackness within their communities outside of the classroom. Example 3 connects the historical knowledge acquired through the unit with her experience at home, where their family has perpetuated forms of anti-Blackness. The student says, "I always wanted to learn more" – illustrating the absence of this type of knowledge throughout their educational trajectory – and felt "like this class helped me a lot," presumably to intervene in such instances of anti-Blackness within their family by using what they learned from the archives. Similarly, the student in example 4 felt more prepared to address a common "dispute" among their Dominican friends about whether or not they "were black" by calling on the course content.

Regarding the course evaluation, many of the students described it as distinct from other Spanish language classes because it was concerned with "real life problems." The students confirm the absence of course material that encourages engagement with critical social issues in relation to the Latinx community within their Spanish-language or Spanish heritage language trajectory, and articulate increased interest in learning by focusing on knowledge other than "the rules" of language.

(5) this Spanish class has been different from others because we learn about real world issues and about our Latin history, while in other Spanish classes we learn more about pronunciation and grammar.

(6) In other classes we mainly focused on the rules and didn't incorporate real life problems into our learning so it made students feel bored and disconnected.

The idea that this curricular intervention did not align with what the students have experienced in typical language courses was something almost all of the respondents mentioned not as an impediment to their language-learning, but as a valuable and welcome addition. The following student sums it up quite succinctly:

(7) This class was very different in a very good, and exciting kind of way. Usually with other classes of Spanish that I have taken, usually the main focus is always about the grammar and spelling, but with this class, yes, it included the grammar and spelling, but there was also much more. Discussing topics of the latinx community, talking about Cesar Chavez, talking about the factory workers in Mexico, the first African Americans in the Americas, etc. It was fun to do something else besides just focus on the spelling and grammar of spanish.

(8) I really appreciated this new approach because it talked about the root of some experiences that we have all had.

Based on their responses, our students agree that Spanish as a heritage language course should continue to strive toward creating educational spaces for Latinx students that focus on the "much more" of language learning. Not only do they find it relevant to their lives and experiences as Black and non-Black Latinx people, it also enriches the verbal environment of the classroom both in terms of input and production, as the examples above show. As a result, the students ultimately gain greater fluidity in their ability to navigate complex discourses, such as histories of enslavement, in Spanish.

Discussion & implications for heritage language instruction

We observed that the interdisciplinary dialogue proposed among critical Latinx pedagogy, critical heritage language pedagogy and activist archiving has been successful in multiple aspects. Activist archiving has been a crucial practice to anchor the students' and their communities' experiences within broader histories of oppression, such as slavery in Hispaniola. In doing so, archival resources permit educators to center these experiences in the classroom facilitating critical understandings of history as well as problematizing the students' community practices, such as internalized racism. The latter is visible in the critical understanding that students demonstrate about the historical erasure of Blackness within Latinidad and the need to learn more about its origins to confront and hopefully eradicate racist practices within the community. The curricular intervention helped increase the students' historical knowledge regarding current social issues affecting Latinx communities, such as racial discrimination based on white and western beauty standards, and some of them were willing to share their own experiences of internalized racism regarding their hair, for example, or even their own family's racist practices. Moreover, activist archiving facilitated connections with racism affecting minoritized communities in the US, such as African Americans, and racism exerted by Dominicans to Haitians. Lastly, activist archiving empowered students to keep learning about the topic, discuss it with friends and family members, and to share intimate experiences of racism. One crucial aspect of this process was the explicit value of translanguaging during the curricular intervention, which allowed students to fully engage with the course contents by grounding them in their own linguistic practices and social experiences.

We believe that the main implications of this curricular intervention are expressed by our students' perceptions in that they implicitly interrogate the specific goals being pursued on heritage language education. What students have expressed is that Spanish language learning should not be the exclusive internalization of isolated grammar rules or ideologies of appropriateness, but also the acquisition of a critical understanding of the historical and social dimensions of the language, what they called "real life problems" or "real world issues." In this context, even metalinguistic content, such as critical understandings of the Spanish language as produced by colonialism, makes sense when inscribed in a broader historical narrative of oppression.

CLA approaches have claimed the incorporation of metalanguage content as central to the language curriculum. However, this approach continues to reproduce the language ideology of egalitarian pluralism, as Rosa and Flores (2017) have argued, and is yet to interrogate the racial hierarchies embodied by the students. Building on critical Latinx pedagogy and more aligned with the socio-politics of language approach (Leeman & Fuller, 2020), our goal has been to show that not only metalinguistic research, but also scholarship from a broad range of academic disciplines, such as history and critical race theory, are crucial to understand that the Spanish language is inseparable from the lived experiences of people who speak it. In doing so, linguistic repertoires are a resource to critically understand other social processes, such as the historical roots of contemporary manifestations of oppression affecting Latinx and other minoritized communities in the US and Latin America. Furthermore, we argue that, despite the decentering of the linguistic form in this unit, the activities unequivocally fulfill one of the primary goals of language learning: to expand students' linguistic repertoires as part of an effort to further their capacity to maneuver through the many different, socio-

politically loaded contexts and audiences they will encounter in their lives, and to perform identity work. The latter is manifested in the multiple instances where students could relate with the class contents, and reflect on their own identities.

The above instances of critical understanding of the erasure of Blackness and, what's more, its use to address racism within the students' home communities as a result of the course material demonstrates how curricular interventions can have an impact not only on how much students learn, but also how they can use that knowledge to position themselves within broader social landscapes and make sense of their experiences outside of the classroom. As the data show, the students benefited from and enjoyed this curricular intervention for precisely those reasons. We would like to amplify our students' voices and further push language curricula in the direction of a critical Latinx pedagogy by facilitating historically accurate analysis of Latinidad, promoting awareness of the contemporary inequalities affecting the community, and providing students discursive and rhetorical tools to address and reframe instances of systemic racial oppression on the interactional level.

Limitations & future research

We identify two limitations to our project: its replicability and the real-life challenges of partnering classes with community and cultural organizations. Replicating a language curriculum development project such as the one presented here requires not only institutional resources, but also intensive labor on behalf of full-time and contingent faculty, the latter of whom are already under precarious work conditions. To develop original archival-based lessons implies hours of archival work, onsite as well as online (in the case of digital collections), and enough scaffolding to introduce the students to both primary sources and academic discussions. It is expected that these efforts are compensated accordingly, and in many occasions these initiatives depend on external funding or are impeded by the lack thereof. Despite these limitations, there are multiple archival resources for teachers to discover and to perform activist archiving in Spanish language courses, and we encourage our colleagues to do so. Additional efforts are involved in partnering with community and cultural organizations because it is crucial to develop reciprocal relationships with them in order to coherently claim a social justice oriented pedagogy.[3] Furthermore, while this project centers institutionally-recognized archives, it will also be important in the future to partner with grassroots movements as well. Through this collective effort, we can lovingly critique socially responsive pedagogies and move toward sustainable ones by incorporating "the rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other youth and communities of color" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 2). This is our attempt to imagine systemic solutions to oppressive language pedagogies and participate in advocating for sustainable, anti-racist language pedagogy for all students.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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[3]Our modest effort to work towards such reciprocal relationships was to compile all of the teaching materials developed within the project to be shared with the partner institutions and via an open access Manifold resource, which can be found here: https://cuny. manifoldapp.org/projects/teaching-and-learning-spanish-at-cuny

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