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Perreando to New Lyrics: Integrating Feminist Reggaeton in Expressive Art Therapy

a Literature Review

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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Expressive Art Therapy

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Abstract

This paper presents how feminist reggaeton can be used as a creative tool for women's empowerment. The literature review explores the work that has been done with feminism in expressive arts therapies, defines what feminist reggaeton is, and presents different considerations to incorporate the musical genre into a therapeutic intervention. Among these considerations, there is the social stigma that is held about the musical genre and female gender; the community-based work; the importance of cultural identity centered on the Latinx, more specifically Puerto Rican; and recognition of the LGBTQ+ community in the creative spaces. To navigate these issues, the author uses a postfeminist paradigm and the incorporation of embodied arts-based autoethnographic research. This research is in preparation to put the acquired knowledge into practice in a community intervention.

Keywords: reggaeton, feminism, women's empowerment, Latino culture, community intervention

Author Identity Statement: The thesis represents my cultural identity, Puerto Rican, and was originally written in Spanish. It is written for Puerto Ricans with the purpose of taking it to mental health professionals in the island.

Perreando to New Lyrics: Integrating Feminist Reggaeton in Expressive Art Therapies a
Literature Review

Introduction

The issue of gender violence and gender injustices is not new to the Latinx community. In the last decade, there has been an increase in cases of gender violence and femicides, instigating a call for a state of emergency in Puerto Rico. One of my favorite singers, Ileana Mercedes Cabra Joglar, better known as iLe, carries an activist message in her songs with feminist stances and emphasizes the importance of continuing to talk about this social issue. In December 2021, I attended a concert by iLe in which she provided a space for the families of women who were victims of femicides as part of her concert. One of the mothers on stage passionately spoke about how the denunciation of injustice should lead to action, instead of the information just circulating on social media, as often happens in this generation of youth. The combination of the experiences of these grieving families and the empathy I have developed around femicide cases, largely because I am a woman, sparked my interest in exploring the therapeutic space as an activist space. Or rather, as an "activist" space. Creative artistic processes help tell stories, make visible how this violence affect people in our environment within a community, and how they are part of community formation (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018; Streater, 2022; Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022; Zalman & McHenry-Sober, 2023). Although that concert took place in 2021, as recently as 2024 the pattern of femicides continues, to the extent that there were four cases before January ended (Upegui-Hernández, 2024). Thus, it is seen the artistically expressive side of Puerto Rico with its innumerable creative responses to the issue (Valdez, 2023). Amidst tragedies, injustice, and the work of artists in Puerto Rico, I have found

inspiration to seek ways to empower women and create a community where we feel safe within a social environment.

I have perceived how empowerment in women has a domino effect. I have had the privilege of having women in my life who have inspired me to empower myself as a woman in the goals I set for myself. Likewise, many articles speak of the inspiration that singer Martha Ivelisse Pesante Rodríguez, known as Ivy Queen, has sparked in reggaeton artists, even artists from other musical genres, as a feminist icon (Alarcón, et al., 2023; Araüna, et al., 2019). In a study analyzing the lyrics of female reggaeton artists, it is highlighted that empowerment is not limited to body expression or the rejection of objectifying patterns, but that the empowerment of these artists has been defined as a rupture of representation within oneself (Araüna, et al., 2019). The authors examine how these artists promote feminist reggaeton empowerment and its repercussions. For these artists, it is important to reveal independence, the importance of self-esteem, and self-assertion as necessary qualities in women. Additionally, these are qualities that help women increase their courage and recognize or leave a harmful relationship in time (Araüna, et al., 2019). Empowerment goes beyond the cosmetic and how women present themselves to the world; it can also be seen as an acquisition of a political role where the fight for gender equality continues, especially when it comes to human rights (Araüna, et al., 2019).

Reggaeton has created an opening for women to feel empowered within themselves. Similarly, this musical genre has had an extraordinary cultural impact, especially among Latinos in the continents of South and North America, and Europe (Araüna, et al., 2019). Reggaeton began as a way for the people in the lower class to express themselves about active gangs with violent lyrics, which were banned by authorities in Puerto Rico at the time (Araüna, et al., 2019). The catchy rhythms, hip movements accompanying the music, or *perreo*, and the lyrics create an

environment that could be used to develop self-confidence. The style of reggaeton has been described as a blend of reggae and rap (Miller, 2021). The rhythm of reggae traveled from Jamaica to Panama, where Puerto Ricans, like Ivy Queen, Daddy Yankee, and Nicky Jam, fused it with American rap. It quickly gained popularity, especially among young people and adolescents. However, it sparked controversy due to its misogynistic content, explicit ideas about sexuality, and at times, themes about violence (Araña, et al., 2019; Berdecía Figueroa, et al., 2022; Escobar Fuentes & Montalbán Peregrín, 2021; García Quevedo, et al., 2022; Miller, 2021). Reggaeton is not the first musical genre to raise concerns about what young people listen to and its impact on their development, such as rap (Serrano Romero, 2023; Travis, 2012), and hip hop (García-Carpintero Muñoz, et al., 2014). A study conducted with young people on the repercussions of hip hop (García-Carpintero Muñoz, et. al, 2014) highlights the same controversies raised by reggaeton. It emphasizes the risky behaviors in this population due to the message popularized by this type of music about drug use, sexuality, and violence. Returning to reggaeton, among its misogynistic ideas in its lyrics, it examines how women are verbally discriminated against; how women are portrayed as objects to highlight masculinity; women are projected as willing to participate in violent sexual acts; and the representation of femininity is contaminated (Araña, et al., 2019). Despite the debates against reggaeton, in Puerto Rico, it became a way to communicate social situations and government corruption in the country (Miller, 2021). Even in the 2019 revolution on the island, the concept of "Perreo Combativo" was popularized and circulated in the news, referring to using *perreo*, the dance that accompanies reggaeton, to draw the people's attention to government corruption (Valdes, 2023). As a Puerto Rican, born and raised on the island, I recognize the power and potential that this genre has within a therapeutic environment and as a means of activism.

The women in reggaeton have combated negative ideas about the genre by creating a feminist counterpart. Recently, women's voices have been opening doors to a new perspective on gender rights and roles (Araüna, et al., 2019). This movement has been conceptualized as feminist reggaeton (Araüna, et al., 2019; Escobar Fuentes & Montalbán Peregrín, 2021). An article on feminist reggaeton in Spain summarizes its impact on women; it sparks a renaissance of feminism and a reflection on the impact of popular music on young people (Araüna, et al., 2019). With this said, feminist reggaeton has also created a movement of empowerment for women and the LGBTQ+ community. It has given voice to women's sexuality while opening dialogue to different perspectives on gender identity and sexual orientation. This style of reggaeton provides young people with a critical lens on oppressive systems and raises awareness of their impact on collective existence (Araüna, et al., 2019). To support these ideas, a study using dance/movement as therapy to treat trauma establishes how it impacts the prevalence of rights related to a woman's body, the right to express them, the right to equality in human bodies, the right to freedom from torture, violence, oppression, and patriarchy; and the right to freedom to access states of pleasure and joy, learning, empowerment, creativity, and resources (Streater, 2022, p.43). Although there have been many advances for women, artists in the reggaeton genre go through their careers in a way that, through their stories, shows the power of women and the importance of continuing to support each other. It is women like Ivy Queen, Young Miko, Villano Antillano, Karol G, among many others, who create an opening to integrate feminist reggaeton when it comes to women's empowerment.

The purpose of this thesis is to collect information and eventually carry out a community intervention with women, or people who identify as women. This intervention aims to integrate expressive arts therapies and feminist reggaeton for women's empowerment in Puerto Rico. To

this end, studies highlighting the benefits of using reggaeton, or music in general, as a therapeutic tool in adolescent development have been considered (García Quevedo, et al., 2022; Miller, 2021; Ostashewshi, et al., 2018; Travis, 2012; Zalman & McHenry-Sober, 2023).

Another qualitative study, conducted with focus groups, reached a consensus distinguishing feminist reggaeton as something that has gained importance and popularity in the music genre (Escobar Fuentes & Montalbán Peregrín, 2021). Furthermore, through literature, the aim is to understand and apply the empowerment that female artists in the genre give themselves and how they strategically promote feminist ideas through music and advertising (Araña, et al., 2019). With this said, considering the female artists who have excelled in the genre, which includes diversity in female identity and sexual orientation, the importance of integrating inclusivity when discussing gender has been established, as proposed in a study conducted with music therapists (Besse, 2021).

In summary, the aim of this thesis is to consider different perspectives on feminist reggaeton as a therapeutic tool for an intervention that promotes women's empowerment. With the information I have collected, I seek to connect ideas and perspectives to have a broader view of the potential of feminist reggaeton. This information will be organized into categories, starting with defining the concept of feminism and ending with discussing the implications of integrating feminist reggaeton into an expressive arts therapy intervention. It is important to highlight that, for this work, I will be focusing on Latin culture, especially Puerto Rican culture, with the community intervention for adolescents or young people who identify as women in mind. Due to the limited information on integrating the musical genre into a therapeutic space, my research method has opted for an interdisciplinary approach. By this, I mean that I bring to attention

secular literature such as interviews with artists and consultations with artistic-creative therapists in Puerto Rico, among others.

Literature Review

Feminism in Expressive Arts Therapies

Feminism has become a continuous phenomenon, so much so that the term post-feminism has been conceptualized (Araúna, et al., 2019, p.39). Post-feminism establishes a theoretical framework of complex analysis based on the importance of using the feminist repertoire and the notions that arise from it, leaving aside the political content. Under this paradigm, women's empowerment is connected and encompassed by the consumption of culture and is seen rather as a lifestyle. For this reason, postfeminist representations are part of conventional culture, which includes the production of popular music (Araúna, et al., 2019), of which reggaeton is a part. This paradigm reveals that feminism is something complex that is managed between culture and the individual's environment.

The arts, by incorporating feminist expression, promote the understanding of women's experiences in this regard. Not only that, but the arts are used to facilitate the process of understanding mental health from a creative and safe environment (Garcia-Carpintero Muñoz, et al., 2014). This is known as creative arts therapies, used to manage complex traumas, allowing the senses to define the individual's reality, considering the sensory expression that trauma entails (Streater, 2022, p.36). Based on the premise that every human being has the capacity to be creative, a study was conducted where women shared the stories of their lives through artistic expressions (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022). Among the participants, different groups were formed where each had the opportunity to reflect and create art about their own experiences and those of their groupmates. It was not only about sharing among the participants and those

conducting the research, but the participants also had the opportunity to exhibit their artistic works for others to witness the creative process. This study also revealed that artistic-creative interventions go beyond the aesthetic and the therapeutic making of art. Expressive arts therapies relax the mind and body; recognize the body as an essential tool in therapy; intensify and recognize nonverbal communication; encourage self-efficacy, mastery, and control of the individual; and help rewrite the traumatic history (Streater, 2022, p.36). It is a way of seeing oneself with a certain distance to intertwine with connections within the social environment, which in turn opens to multiple possibilities of imagination (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018). Expressive arts provide the creative space for women to connect and relate to different realities.

Community-Centered Approach

The importance of establishing a sense of community in therapeutic work with women has been emphasized. The community-centered approach provides access to connect with other people while providing an equitable, collaborative, culturally affirming, and empowering space (Streater, 2022). Building on the study conducted with female participants, the authors found the benefit of the creative process, using the A/R/Tography method, for participants to share their everyday stories and create connections among them (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022). In the same study, the importance of the participants being women was highlighted. The authors argued that history has been written by men with men in leading roles. They stated, "this is how history was spun, reducing women to tasks that did not require active social and cultural participation" (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022, p. 199). Historically, women's narratives and the different roles they could occupy have been restricted. This justifies the authors' strategy of involving participants in the creative process. With this, they aim to "stimulate their own perceptions regarding the development of creativity, with everyday life being the first step in this search for

creative experiences and transmissions" (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022, p. 200). When presenting the creative arts intervention, the authors encourage participants to continue applying the creative process in their communities by sharing their experience of the study. It is even understood as creations between spaces where there is a crossing of different communities, groups, and national barriers (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018). Michaela Miller (2021) supports this idea when she establishes that therapists help clients change the contexts in which they are situated, both at a personal and collective level, but they can also help empower clients to advocate for themselves and their community (p. 3). Additionally, the connection of the body, physical and emotional, provides self-knowledge to create deeper connections with other people (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023). Generally, community-based interventions are directed towards that community and to create a sense of community as something continuous. Another study using the same A/R/Tography method, points out of the importance of integrating different generations to make connections between their stories (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018). From a cultural perspective, the authors mentioned how integrating different generations opens up dialogue to face different ways of knowing, different people, and different stories (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018, p. 108). Although an intervention with young people is being considered, it would be interesting to apply this intergenerational lens in some way. This way, one learns from the progress of feminism and the new discourse with the younger generation. It also expands the study to something more socially significant.

Feminist Reggaeton

If you've heard terms like *bichota*, *caballota*, *potra*, among others, you probably have an idea of what feminist reggaetón is. Reggaetón artists like Karol G and Ivy Queen have coined these terms to refer to themselves as empowered women. I was aware of the impact of women in

reggaetón, but I had never thought about the concept of feminist reggaetón. Then, I read about a study conducted in Spain, where researchers investigated the perception of adolescents and gender discourse in reggaetón (Escobar, et al., 2021). After offering a seminar on equality and gender violence among teenagers, the authors prepared questions to further investigate the impact of reggaetón in feminist and macho terms with eleven focus groups. The study emphasizes the controversial ideas and themes that appear in reggaetón lyrics, which poses a challenge when designing an intervention for women's empowerment. The amount of *machismo*, or the belief of superiority of men over women, that can be found in the lyrics of the musical genre is evident. For this reason, recognition is given to the artists who have managed to challenge these aspects of the musical genre. In the 2010s, this *machismo*, interpreted as emblematic of reggaetón, began to be challenged. Not only did more women get involved in creating music about their experiences, but men also changed the way they addressed their sexuality or gender norms. Although Ivy Queen incorporated feminist themes in her lyrics during the development of reggaetón, Benito Martínez Ocasio, better known as Bad Bunny, became the first male artist in the genre to challenge the image of manhood by transitioning to a more feminine one (Miller, 2021). Making a bigger impact with the song "Yo Perreo Sola" (2020), Bad Bunny influenced other artists by challenging and sparking dialogue on gender standards as something non-binary that can fluctuate (Miller, 2021; Valdez, 2023). The same artist released a song, "Solo de Mi," which carries a message about sexual harassment or physical abuse against women and how they suffer from being seen as objects (Valdes, 2023). This dialogue that Bad Bunny provokes with these songs also presents female sexuality as a pleasure through *perreo* and opened doors to the recognition of women in reggaetón (Araüna, et al., 2019; Miller, 2021; Valdez, 2023).

Progress in gender discourse throughout history is recognized; however, feminist reggaetón goes far beyond a change in aesthetics. Women in the musical genre resist the prevalence of stereotypes or expectations about what it means to be feminine (Araüna, et al., 2019). The typical gender expressions in the culture of these singers and the beauty standards are noted; however, it is rejected that they serve to please the gaze of men or that a man is even needed for the artist's presentation: "do not need to stare at attractive men on stage" (Araüna, et al., 2019, p.36). In an interview, Colombian singer Carolina Giraldo Navarro, known as Karol G, explains how she ensures that her work team and the musicians on stage are all women (Sayre, 2023). She expresses how she feels more empowered as a woman knowing that she can rely on other women and have such a solid team. Similarly, one can observe how Ivy Queen represents feminist ideas in her songs and appears confident in front of the public; however, she sexualizes her image to comply with hegemonic female beauty standards (Araüna, et al., 2019). Women take authority over what is said about them and how they express themselves. In the mentioned interview, Karol G mentions how the album where she was most vulnerable was the most listened to (Sayre, 2023). Thus, the versatility of a woman in being vulnerable and moving forward is evident. This is where words that were once used derogatorily towards women (b***h, in English; *bichota*, the title of a song by Karol G; *perra*, diva, *caballota*, *potra*, by pioneer Ivy Queen; among others) are now accepted and redefined to break gender norms and to highlight an empowered woman (Araüna, et al., 2019). I have even used these words to motivate women in my work environment, for example, and sometimes myself. The literature highlights that most of the literary review of women in popular music is in relation to activist movements where women are seen as a radical change (Araüna, et al., 2019). This also supports the idea of how music is efficient in disseminating messages and creating dialogue about social issues.

Continuing the thought on feminism in the arts, the importance of continuing to incorporate the female voice in the arts has been established in the same way that the dominance of men is evident in history (Araña, et al., 2019; Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022). Feminist reggaetón artists, with their own lifestyle, demonstrate the power of independence and self-sufficiency that we have as women.

Integration with Expressive Arts Therapies

This section reiterates and underscores that creative-arts therapies can be a crucial tool for creating a "temporary home" or a "safe haven" (Miller, 2021; Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023, p. 25). In a study conducted with transgender individuals, one of the participants stated:

I think art forces us to be critical about the kinds of aesthetic and behavioral choices that we make because it's never random when we're doing it in a piece of art, so it should never be random when we're doing it for ourselves (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023, p. 1).

Art, besides providing a safe space, reveals intimate parts of the person and allows us to explore the critical side within a social structure. Considering the thesis topic, I find it important for women to feel safe within a group to share and communicate their needs or feelings about the injustices they face due to their gender. Similarly, they should connect with their feminine identity individually, presenting the diversity of the female gender. Feminist reggaeton provides familiarity for Latin women, based on the genre's popularity, and offers a positive way to process a theme that can be uncomfortable depending on the woman.

Feminist reggaeton has a powerful message based on the confidence perceived in the lyrics, the rhythms in the music, and the movement of *perreo*, the dancing style associated with reggaeton. Even just listening to the stories of women in the reggaeton industry and the idea

behind their music inspires one to dream big. They lead the listener to think and they help promote the message they express. Among these artists, the effort to rewrite lyrics of songs that were originally misogynistic is recognized, as done by the Spanish singer Brisa Fenoy (Araña, et al., 2019). This exercise could easily be transferred to a music therapy intervention, as it carries the purpose of female empowerment through autonomy and a focus on changing the discourse. In a study conducted with hip hop, the authors recommend, as a musical intervention, upgrading the notion of the "self" to a collective notion with "us" (Travis, 2012). This way creates awareness of how the violent themes associated with reggaeton affect the group.

In addition to musical interventions, *perreo* dancing lends itself to joy and a sense of redemption in women. Bad Bunny has advocated for *perreo*, conveying the message that "it is not a degrading dance for women [...], but a liberating practice and an expression of joy and freedom" (Valdes, 2023, p. 238). So much so that *perreo* is the only, if not from the few, dance in which, considering heteronormativity, the woman leads the man. This perspective has been fought for in favor of women mostly due to the stigma attached to this type of dance. Mayra Lucio (2023) explained how *perreo* alludes "to forms of sexual coupling inspired by the instinctive movements of dogs in their reproductive instance," referring to heteronormative cisgender penetration (p. 98). In the same article, the author explained how the hypersexualized concept of *perreo* has been reconstructed into a more inclusive one regarding gender and sexual orientation. Thus, here the idea returns that *perreo* becomes feminist in the way that the woman takes control of her body and reveals herself as an empowered and resistant being (Lucio, 2023; Valdéz, 2023).

Although dance/movement and music are the prominent modalities in reggaeton, the rest of the modalities, visual arts and drama, could be incorporated as part of a therapeutic

intervention. In the autoethnography, a section found later, I explore feminist reggaeton in all modalities in a way that reflects on the topic of the thesis.

LGBTQ+ Community

When it comes to feminist reggaeton, different ways of understanding the identity of women come into play. Artists of the genre have been role models and key instruments for reconstructing what culture has defined as gender identity (Araüna et al., 2019). In a qualitative study conducted with transgender and queer individuals, participants discuss how the arts were parallel to their exploration of gender identity, especially music, visual arts, and theater (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023). Although participants relate more to their passion for music, many describe their experiences using theatrical language. By this, I mean they explain how the arts provide the opportunity to be critical about gender and how they have internalized it as a role, or a character. They further explain how they adjust this role until feeling comfortable with themselves. One of the study's participants narrates how theater allows her to enter different roles and how she can internalize different versions of herself. She also adds how this technique makes it easier for her to discuss the concept of gender as a binary normative experimental. Reciprocally, in the same study, they explain the process of entering a character, identifying characteristics that the character shares with the person's identity, and then having a dialogue about how the "self" is defined. Therefore, for this population the arts become a tool for expression and exploration of identity.

Once we understand how the arts provide the exploration of gender and its importance, we can begin to explore the implications of feminist reggaeton within the LGBTQ+ community. Although the article on feminist reggaeton (Araüna et al., 2019) recognizes the pioneering role of Ivy Queen in relation to feminist reggaeton, two other major artists of the musical genre in

Puerto Rico are recognized for their impact on this reconstruction of identity. Starting with María Victoria Ramírez de Arellano Cardona, known as Young Miko, the first Puerto Rican lesbian to sing and openly talk about her sexuality (Ydrach, 2022). It's not just what she expresses in her music, but the way she expresses her sexuality, with confidence and sincerity, that has made her fan base continue to grow, opening more artistic expressions to the LGBTQ+ community. On the other hand, we have Reinaldo Santiago Pacheco, a Puerto Rican transgender woman who started her artistic career as Villano Antillano. She became known for a track with Bizarrap, an Argentine music producer, which became one of the most listened to worldwide when it was released (Yale University, 2022). Even iLe made a song with her. The impact she has had on the queer, trans, and Latino community in general is recognized. In an interview, iLe reveals that she appreciates radical singers who present social issues, unfiltered, through creative means, as Villano Antillano does (Alarcón et al., 2023). Returning to the topic of the benefits of roles for the LGBTQ+ community (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023), having figures like Villano Antillano and Young Miko can mean a lot. They can be used as a tool to explore the diversity of gender and sexual identity as icons of the musical genre in Puerto Rico. I focus only on these two artists due to limitations of required pages of thesis, but I am aware of many other Latin women who could be integrated to further elaborate on how feminist reggaeton artists are important for the LGBTQ+ community.

Cultured-Centered Approach

It is important to recognize the culture represented in reggaeton and why people feel represented by it. We have already discussed the benefits of community interventions when it comes to women, but it is important to include the cultural competence expected with this musical genre, reggaeton. In this approach, the therapist can delve into the intergenerational

transmissions immersed in artistic expressions and the assumptions that exist in the culture surrounding the therapies (Streater, 2022). Along these lines, in a study conducted in Cape Breton, Canada, the authors emphasize the importance of identifying the nationality of the participants and their relationship with colonial status, depending on the country they identify with and where they are currently living (Ostaszewski et al., 2018). The study was conducted with immigrants in Canada, and the study's elaboration demonstrates "the historical and contemporary trajectories that intersect people, goods, and practices that shape their experiences and social spaces, and on which they are based, are evident in their expressions, performances, and discourses" (Ostaszewski et al., 2018, p. 102). The authors idealized music as a symbol of culture, which in turn serves as a tool to understand different cultures. As a result, the researchers manage to capture the curiosity and a sense of cultural identity of the participants of that community. Tying these ideas to Latin culture, author Michaela Miller (2021) expressed the importance and power of conducting music therapy tailored to the client's culture. She expresses the unique challenges that must be taken into consideration when creating an artistic intervention. Even within the Latin community, people encounter diverse perspectives on how they celebrate their culture and identify with it according to their country of origin (Hoyes, 2004; Miller, 2021).

In the United States, when speaking of Latin identity, it should be noted that this concept encompasses the different Spanish-speaking countries (Hoyes, 2004). This is also why I present the topic by clarifying my Puerto Rican nationality. With that said, it is also important to note the social stigma that reggaeton carries in Puerto Rico (Berdecía Figueroa et al., 2022; Miller, 2021). On the island, the image of the empowered woman, the *bichota* or the *caballota*, was not always the one conveyed when talking about women in reggaeton. First, there was the image of a *yal*, or

cuponera, which is important to recognize as part of the history of feminist reggaeton in Puerto Rico (Ellis, 2020). The term "yal" represents low-income women who depended on government-provided coupons, which became an emblem based on reggaeton discourses. After multiple satires with the concept of the *yal*, people recognized that the woman represented in this stereotype is part of a subculture, in which the roots of reggaeton were formed (Ellis, 2020). This image of the *yal* is still present in colloquial language, similar to the word "ratchet" in the United States. In fact, I have experienced strange looks when I talk about my thesis topic, as if reggaeton was not part of Puerto Rican culture. When it comes to Puerto Rican culture, the social impact of the image of a *yal* and gender discourses in reggaeton must also be recognized to break social stigmas in Puerto Rico.

As part of the cultural competencies, is important to recognize as well how each Latin country recognizes and values the arts, not only their relation to reggaeton. This perception may turn into modifications in the expressive art therapy intervention to match the social standards of the country. The auto-ethnography I carry is based on my knowledge of the Puerto Rican culture and my personal exploration on the creative interventions' potential with feminist reggaeton.

Auto-ethnography

For this research process, it is important for me to understand what an expressive art therapeutic intervention incorporating feminist reggaetón would look like. For this reason, I decided to merge the knowledge I was acquiring for the thesis with interventions that came to mind for each artistic modality. Initially, I found interesting the approach outlined by Olivia K. Nermin Streater (2022). She explained a paradigm used in art-based research, known as embodied art-based research. This paradigm recognizes the entity and subjectivity of the person conducting the study as someone who shapes the data, engages in self-monitoring, values

remaining open to curiosity, has systematic critical thinking, and, finally, can execute the elements (Streater, 2022). Similarly, I seek to explore the potential of the intervention, considering the sensations and challenges they provoke according to my knowledge as a therapist and the knowledge I have acquired from the literature.

I began this reflective-creative process with music. I created a playlist with reggaetón songs that make women in my environment and myself feel empowered. I collected them with a small survey on social media, during conversations about my thesis, or when I listened to them on my own. Once I had a reasonable number of songs, between 15 and 20, I started dancing alone, considering the movements I made and how they made me feel. One distinctive aspect of *perreo*, which was evident as I danced, was the hip movement and how this movement has sexual connotations (Miller, 2021). This was one of the reasons that led me to consider the lens of sexual education that is uncovered with this musical genre. Another thing I noticed is how I imitated the singers, or "put on a concert," lip-syncing, similar to the work done in "Drag Shows" (O'Meara, 2021). It was no longer just singing the song and knowing the lyrics, but also immersing myself, like a drag artist, in how I present the song and how I move in space. These two modalities, music and dance/movement, were the easiest to incorporate given their nature with reggaetón. Consequently, I challenged myself to explore other modalities with the question "what would the role of a reggaetón singer be like?" From there, I wrote a small verse and created my own musical track to immerse myself in the creative process of a singer. Additionally, continuing with the role of *bichota*, I had a photoshoot to capture this version of myself. With that photograph, I recreated a magazine cover included in the thesis (image 1). I understand that this is just the beginning of the potential of feminist reggaetón as an integrative therapeutic approach with expressive arts.

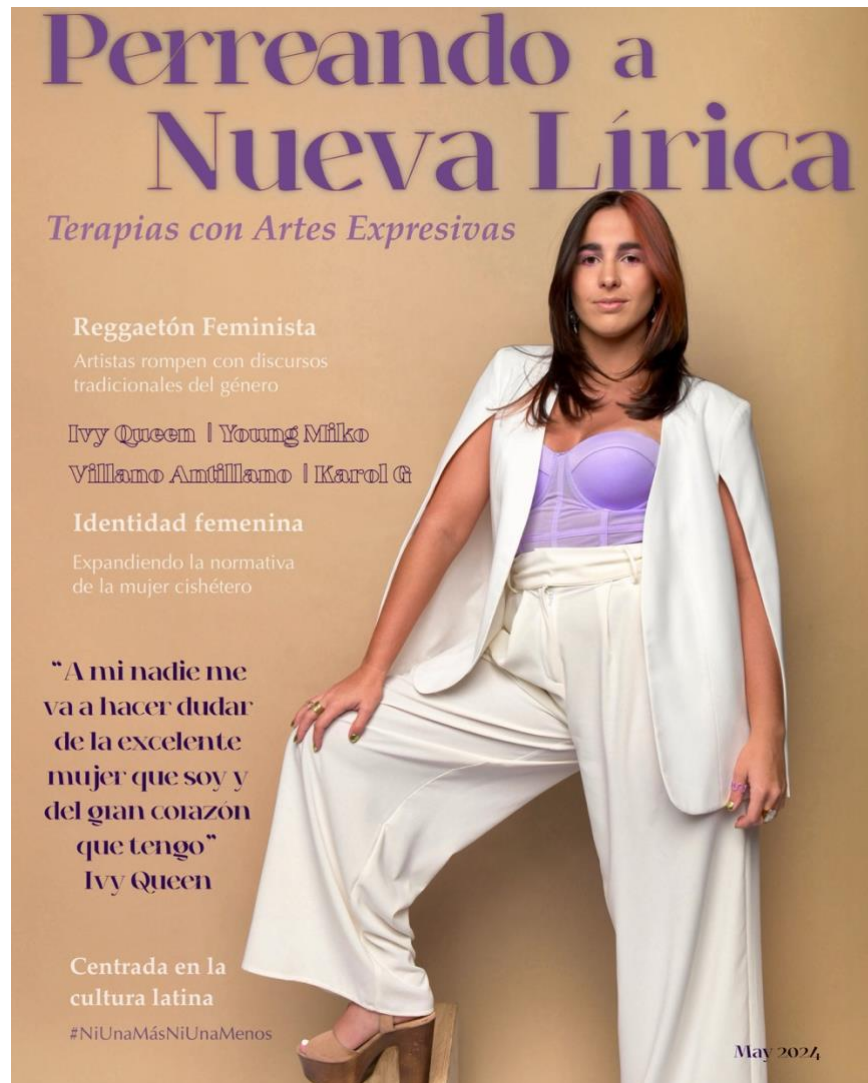


Image 1

Discussion

My expectations with this literature review are to eventually use the information to conduct a community intervention in Puerto Rico. In a study led in Canada, they managed to integrate different generations and different perspectives on the research topic with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of a sense of community (Ostaszewski, et al., 2018). Similarly, I hope to create a community of women where they themselves have a group and create connections to rely on. Furthermore, the A/R/Tography method used in the study with female

participants also served as inspiration for the community intervention (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022). I found the idea of creating and providing a creative space that reflected on the work of others to be captivating and powerful. The fact that they managed to exhibit the works for others to witness the artistic process made it even more impactful. These two studies present many ideas for the structure of the future community intervention.

The population of interest, and the focus of the literature search, is young women, minors, or teenagers who connect with the musical genre of reggaeton and identify as women. The transcendental role that music plays in the development of the identity of young people and their political participation through composing, playing, rehearsing, recording, sharing, and consuming music is recognized (Araña, et al., 2019). At the same time, the derogatory or discriminatory impact that reggaeton has on women and, in turn, how women of the genre have created a wave of empowered women, is also recognized (Araña, et al., 2019; Escobar Fuentes & Montalbán Peregrín, 2021). From a more activist perspective, using the same format of community intervention, I would love to be a part of ensuring that participants feel heard and have a safe space to feel understood. Consequently, I hope to expand knowledge and education about sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender inclusion within the community created by the participants as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. By this, I mean creating a positive and creative environment where women do not feel ashamed to want to learn more about their sexuality. Similarly, the format of community intervention allows women to connect with others who are going through similar situations and/or need a different perspective from what they are used to hearing (Valdés Bascuñan, et al., 2022). If feminist reggaeton has caused a sensation in Latin culture, it can also be taken into consideration to delve into the symbolism and impact it has on women who listen to it.

Although integrating different ways of internalizing and expressing the female gender may seem beautiful and very positive in writing, one must recognize the challenges that may arise and considerations to be made, especially when it comes to transgender women.

Transgender women are more susceptible to microaggressions and harassment than individuals with different sexual identities, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, queer, among others, and end up being marginalized by teachers or peers in the school environment (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023).

For this reason, it is important for therapists to be prepared to recognize and work around the cisgender normative standards that have been normalized in the social environment (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023). The needs for gender inclusion are recognized, including the need for "positive, supportive mentors; the facilitation of kinship network development; ally development for cisgender faculty, staff, and students; the provision of gender-inclusive residence halls and restrooms; and the implementation of processes for name and gender changes on campus records and paperwork" (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023, p. 2). There is a need for resources for individuals in the LGBTQ+ community, especially for transgender individuals. With this said, I clarify that there will be a recognition of the subjective expression of the female gender considering a binary social context.

Among the challenges of gender, sensitivity must be shown to cases of sexual harassment, femicides, and violence against women, including transgender women (Upegui-Hernández, 2024). As a woman, empathizing with the victims or their families and having experienced some level of sexual harassment has led me to understand how overwhelming the repetition of these stories can be, not only as a therapist but also as a human being. With this, I emphasize the importance of being sensitive to these issues and being prepared to address any crisis that may arise in an intervention. I acknowledge that in the content of the thesis, I do not

include important factors in a person's identity to be considered, beyond gender or sexuality, that may have a more severe and delicate impact on the issue of violence, such as race or economic status (Hoyes, 2004). There are identity factors in a person that, regardless of gender, place them at a disadvantage in receiving resources or being vulnerable to traumatic events. Consequently, I acknowledge my privilege as a white cisgender heterosexual woman. The intervention is made in a positive way, based on personal experiences or shared experiences, with the aim of educating women to empower themselves or each other and to recognize behaviors that are not appropriate for the treatment of any human being.

In Puerto Rico, we are known for our artistic expressions for any significant event. Not only that, we come together as a community to create art, denounce injustices, and feel patriotic. So, this future community intervention also seeks to be a call to action, through the arts, for human rights for women and LGBTQ+ community members. In the study conducted with transgender individuals (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023), it explains how resilience is worked on, but it does not stop at individual work. Participants are dedicated to making their experiences known in a way that exposes the injustices they have borne throughout history. They are convinced that: "Creative spaces provide complicated contexts for practicing resiliency, presenting students with difficult choices in navigating microaggressions and academic relationships while also providing opportunities for developing kinship networks and, in some cases, providing opportunities for identity exploration, expression, and trans advocacy through performance and research" (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023, p. 10). The arts provide a means to understand ourselves, understand ourselves as a community, and navigate the microaggressions we may face. They also provide a source of understanding to be able to open up to inclusive resources and expand the potential of humanity. When activism is discussed in

the writings, the concept of resilience is also integrated. The theme of resilience seemed to go hand in hand with women's empowerment and gender exploration (Zalman & McHenry-Sorber, 2023). In the study on queer space and the arts, the expression of resilience in transgender individuals is highlighted through academic relationships, representation, and activism. It is through resilience and overcoming that one can advocate for their experience and have a critique of the system. Further, Elena Valdez (2023) stated that activism must go far beyond resilience and introduces the theme of courage. She presents it as "an essential component of decolonial praxis, because it articulates society's intolerance and can initiate necessary structural transformations" (Valdez, 2023, p. 231). In one way or another, the call for change is evident when it comes to gender rights.

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THESIS APPROVAL FORM

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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

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