

The Tales of a Modern Colony

A Discourse Analysis of the Puerto Rican Free Associated State



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List of Abbreviations

ELA *Estado Libre Asociado*, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

PIP *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* – The Puerto Rican Independence Party.

PNP *Partido Nuevo Progresista* – The New Progressive Party.

PPD *Partido Popular Democratico* – The Popular Democratic Party

*Not quite Latin America, not quite America,
Puerto Rico lies somewhere in between north and south,
rich people and poor people, rock and roll and salsa, heaven and hell,
and a little bit of all of them at same time – Francine Pelletier*

Maps



Map of the Caribbean basin. Puerto Rico is in the upper north east. (Map from Michigan State University web page: <https://www.msu.edu/~carib/Images/caribbeanmap.gif>)



The island of Puerto Rico (Map from Smart-Traveler: http://www.smart-traveler.info/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/map_of_puerto_rico.gif)

1. Introduction and Background

“Commonwealth, with all its faults, has served Puerto Rico well, but attempting to hide its shortcomings, and pretending that all is well in the oldest colony of the world does a disservice to both the people of Puerto Rico and to the Government of the United States” (Trías Monge 1997:107).

There has been a lot of focus on the nation and the nation-state within political geography in recent years. Within modernist, as well as postmodernist theories, nations have been understood as collectively constructed identities, where a group of people subjectively consider itself a nation, and are perceived in this same way also by others (Stokke 1999). This thesis will be about such a group, who considers itself a nation but also define itself against another and much bigger nation state.

Most of us take the nation-state for granted, because we live in one. Some do not take it for granted because they feel deprived of their rights to take part in a nation-state they can call their own. Some are willing to fight to get a nation-state to call their own, and a few are even willing to take violent actions in order to achieve a nation-state for themselves and their loved ones; examples of this are manifold. Yet others does not have a nation-state, and does not seem to want one either. In fact, upon receiving the possibility to have one, there are people who decline.

Something makes Puerto Rico stand as different from the other Latin American countries. They were all former colonies of Spain or other European powers, and gained their independence one by one, principally in the 19th century (Chevalier 1999). Puerto Rico is not independent, and has never been. Instead the island belongs to the United States, without being part of the Union. The island is US-territory, but has the title Commonwealth in English, and *Estado Libre Asociado* (ELA) in Spanish. Through 3 plebiscites the population of Puerto Rico has had the opportunity to change the island's political status. Each time, they have chosen to remain a territory (Smith 2007). The population do not wish to convert into a nation state; neither to integrate to the United States. Several social factors seem to be the reason why the Puerto Ricans have grown

comfortable with being a territory to the United States, despite the fact that they do not hold the same democratic rights as the rest of the world's US-Citizens. Many of the islanders do not identify themselves as US-Americans and cannot manage to keep a conversation in English. Whether Puerto Rico should remain a territory to the United States as an ELA/Commonwealth, become the 51st state of the United States or for the very first time become independent is the biggest political question on the island today.

This was the fact that first caught my attention with the Puerto Rican situation. How come four million people in the Caribbean Island of Puerto Rico declined the chance to become an independent nation, when repeatedly given the chance? Being a US territory for more than a hundred years, and before that a Spanish Colony since Columbus himself set foot on the island, they decline both independence and integration into the Union through annexation. Is it not natural for a nation to wish to be independent? What makes people say “*no, thanks!*” to something so many of us take for granted as a part of the modern world and the 21st Century? And is that what a colony looks like in our modern world?

I choose to shed light upon this subject through the use of discourse analysis. This approach allows a more profound and in depth description of the political situation, and uses as its basis the voices of the people, as the discourses are constructed through these voices. The thought of discourses as a certain way of seeing and understanding the surrounding world is a useful start in analyzing a complex matter like the Puerto Rican status debate. It soon became very clear that the different perspectives on the status debate are founded upon very different political points of view of what is the best solution for the island. The attempt to identify and understand these discourses and their uses in the political daily life, discourse analysis seemed to be the adequate tool.

1.1 Research Objective and Research Question

This thesis will focus on the discourse of the *Estado Libre Asociado* (ELA) and try to identify some of the narratives that this discourse consists of today. Why has the temporary solution become a permanent arrangement? What arguments are used to

justify what is considered a colony by so many of the islands inhabitants? I look to identify some of the underlying structures that make Puerto Ricans not seek to obtain neither an independent nation state, nor annexation to the United States, as they have on several occasions been offered. What are the discourses, and how are they used by the different parties in the search to make their own point of view hegemonic and thereby affect the political destiny of the nation? The assumption on which this thesis rest is that the present Puerto Rican political status divides the country into three groups: those who favor continued ELA, those who favor statehood and annexation into the United States, and those who favor independence. My two research questions are the following:

What are the main components of the ELA-discourse according to the different parties?

How are these discourses involved in making up the parties' stand on Puerto Rico's sovereignty to the United States?

Through these research questions I hope to unravel the discourses involved in the decision making and how these are used to construct political opinions and justifications.

1.2 Description of the Case: Puerto Rico

1.2.1 Historical Background

Christopher Columbus discovered Puerto Rico on his second journey to the “New World” in 1493 and the island remained a Spanish colony until the late 19th century. During this time the indigenous population of the island, the *taínos*, became extinct, and the island was populated by Europeans and Africans brought as slaves from Africa. In 1898 Puerto Rico, along with the Philippines, were ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Paris in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. In 1900 a civil government was established on the island, and 17 years later the Puerto Ricans received an American passport and most of the rights a US-American¹ citizenship includes. Puerto

¹ I will throughout this thesis use the term US-American for a citizen of the United States. The term American is commonly used, but refers to the population of an entire continent, and not a single country.

Rico eventually established a constitution of its own, and the population could elect their own governor for the very first time in 1947. The establishment of Puerto Rico, not as independent nation, neither as a state of the union, resulted in the agreement of “Estado Libre Asociado” in 1952. This was meant to be a temporary arrangement. Don Luis Muñoz Marín was the architect behind the political agreement that was, and still is, unlike the agreements of any other country (Trías Monge 1997). This status was never intended to be permanent when it was imposed, but as the problem with the status showed to be difficult to solve, this status still holds today. Despite the fact that Puerto Ricans indeed are US-American citizens and enjoy most the rights and privileges this include, the island has temporary status, and the population suffers from lack of full democratic rights to self-government (Thornburgh 2007).

The Puerto Ricans hold US-American passports, and have the rights of all other US-citizens, except of the right to vote for a president, and their representative in Washington DC has no right neither to speak nor vote. The island is US-territory, the currency used is US-dollars and the United States has full control over all the island’s resources and border control. Puerto Ricans can freely enter and exit the US-mainland as they please, without restrictions of any kind (Thornburgh 2007).

In 1967 a plebiscite was held to let Puerto Ricans themselves decide if they preferred ELA, statehood or independence for their island. According to Trías Monge, more than 60% voted in favor of continued ELA. November 14, 1993 a new plebiscite was held, after requests from all the political parties of the island. Once again the ELA alternative was preferred, but by a smaller margin than in 1967 and the third plebiscite held in 1998 showed the same tendency (1997).

1.2.2 Puerto Rico Today

The so-called status-question is still the most important political dispute of the island, and has been the basis on which the political system of today is funded. It remains as the number-one unsolved issue, and has affected political, social, cultural and academic life in Puerto Rico since long before the ELA was a political fact.

Since the ELA gives Puerto Ricans the right to enter mainland United States as they please, it has resulted in that 4 million Puerto Ricans reside on the island, and another 4 millions live in the United States, mainly in the large Diasporas of New York and Chicago. “Everybody” has one or several family members in the United States, and back and forth-migration is a very famous characteristic for this group of migrants (Duany 2000) It is jokingly being said that the biggest city in Puerto Rico is “*Nueva York*”, and this migration has also affected literature, music and arts both in New York and Puerto Rico. The fact that so many have family and dear-ones in the United States has also, to a very large degree, strengthened the ties (cultural, social, political and economic) between the two very different nations, and many people argue that it is impossible to solve the status issue without also including the “*nuyoricans*” -Puerto Ricans living in, and around New York City.

The importance of the status issue to the Puerto Ricans is reflected in the island party system. The three main parties on the island each have a different stand on the status:

Partido Popular Democrático – “The Popular Democratic Party” (PPD) is the party responsible for the creation of the ELA, and works to defend and keep the current political situation. This party had the Governor during the time of my fieldwork. They call themselves “*populares*” or “*estadolibristas*”.

Partido Nuevo Progresista – “New Progressive Party” (PNP) favors the integration of Puerto Rico as the 51st state of the union. They won the governor’s position after the 2008 election, and the lawyer Luis Fortuño is the current Governor of Puerto Rico. They go by the names “*penepés*” or annexationists.

“*Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* – “Puerto Rican Independence Party” (PIP) is the smallest of the traditional parties with approximately 2% of the votes in the 2008 election. This means that once again they came in below the election barrier, and signed petitions have later been submitted for the party to regain legal status². Their primary

² Latin American Herald Tribune <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=334663&CategoryId=14092> Consulted August 1st, 2009.

political goal is to absolve the political ties that Puerto Rico holds with the United States, as the party claims them to be colonial³. The followers of this political ideology will be referred to as *independentistas*.

The population identify themselves with the party they support, and the stand they take. They are either “*anexionistas*”, “*estadolibristas*” or “*independentistas*”. Often entire families vote for the same party, and the political stand is inherited from one generation to the other. According to my informants the voters are also usually very faithful to their party.

During the time of my fieldwork a new party made its way into local politics. *Puertorriqueños por Puerto Rico* – “Puerto Ricans for Puerto Rico” is a brand new party that is tired of the everlasting status discussions. The party has not taken any stand to the question at all, but chose instead to put emphasis on the fact that Puerto Ricans should focus on improving their current situation, with all the problems the society face. Many suggested the party would not survive the November ’08 election, but it received a 4% of the votes, and seems to keep going for the 2012 election, according to the party’s web-site⁴.

Despite the status issue being the single most important political matter on the island since the ELA was created in the 1950s, there are other political matters that stand out as more urgent and pressing. The island has a considerable crime problem, especially connected to drug trade, and face challenges when it comes to poverty, education and health services. These are the political topics that receive most publicity in the media, and the attention of both politicians and the rest of the population on a daily basis. These problems affect the daily life of many Puerto Ricans to such a degree that the status issue is of minor importance.

³ Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, <http://www.independencia.net/>, consulted Jan. 21st 2009.

⁴ “From today till 2012” Puertorriqueños por Puerto Rico - <http://porpuertorico.com/>, consulted Jan 21st 2009

1.2.3 The United States - Puerto Rican Relationship - and the Bigger Picture

A series of questions may be brought to mind concerning the United States - Puerto Rican relationship and the historical antecedents that have contributed to the current situation.

Why have the United States kept Puerto Rico for so long? - Puerto Rico holds a geopolitically very strategic position in the Caribbean basin. The United States has throughout history had several attempts at annexing Cuba into the union, but was never successful (Chevalier 1999). Puerto Rico, despite being a smaller island, turned out to be a useful substitute, as it could be used to control the traffic of the Caribbean, and thereby also the traffic of the Panama Canal which was under United States' control until 1999. During the Cold War the strategic importance of the island grew even stronger. Several military bases were placed on the island, and many troops were placed there permanently. Puerto Rico's geographical vicinity to Cuba was crucial; having a communistic Cuba on the United States door step was not a favorable situation. This made the keeping of US-military posts on Puerto Rico of great importance to the United States (Méndez 1977).

After the Cold War ended, the importance of the island is reduced, and the chances of the island getting its independence, if it should want it, should be thought to have increased. For now, the reasons for keeping Puerto Rico seem to be a slightly different. Puerto Rico is an Export Processing Zone within the United States, in which private companies have placed labor intensive industry, like the production of pharmaceuticals⁵ (Dicken 2003, Bosworth et al 2007). Most military bases are now withdrawn from the island, some after severe protest and demonstrations on behalf of the Puerto Ricans, and today only the administrative unit Fort Buchanan is left on the island⁶.

⁵ CIA World Fact Book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rq.html> Consulted April 19th 2009

⁶ Fort Buchanan PR History <http://www.buchanan.army.mil/sites/about/history.asp> Consulted April 19th 2009

1.2.4 What is in it for the United States?

President Clinton put down a Task Force to review the Puerto Rican status issue in 2000. During the Bush administration the Task Force continued its work, and in 2005 they concluded their report by stating that the ELA status can continue as long as the Congress decides to, and that the only other two options for Puerto Rico are statehood or independence. Yet the Task Force makes it clear that “*The democratic will of the Puerto Rican people is paramount for the future status of the territory*”. They recommend the Congress to allow the Puerto Ricans to have a plebiscite to decide on the status, and if the ELA is once again preferred by the population, new plebiscites should be held regularly in the future, so that the Congress is “*always informed of the people’s wishes*”⁷. Congress has not yet followed the Task Force’s recommendation. But why is this? Theories go along the following lines: Incorporation of four million people whose first language is not English, and that would require enormous amounts of federal economic transfers to raise economically to the main land standards are not considered favorable by all. An independent Puerto Rico would mean the loss of unitary rights to merchandise with 4 million consumers, and the loss of tax advantages for several large US-corporations.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis will be structured in six chapters. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the theme, research objective, research question and forms the foundation for the thesis. It also explains the historical and political background for Puerto Rico and context for the research. In the second chapter the theoretical perspectives of which thesis has been based will be presented, in terms of literary review and presentation of relevant terms and concepts, like the use of discourse analysis and the post-colonial theory of Homi Bhabha. Chapter three deals with the methodology, the process of the fieldwork in Puerto Rico and the analytical tools I have used in this thesis. This includes

⁷ Report by the President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s Status
http://charma.uprm.edu/~angel/Puerto_Rico/reporte_status.pdf, consulted March 5th, 2009

a presentation of experiences and challenges of doing fieldwork in a foreign culture. The fourth chapter will present the empirical findings, and point to examples of how the Puerto Rican society on different levels is dependent upon the United States, the discourses in which this dependency is revealed will then be discussed and put into a context of post-colonial theory. In chapter five I show how the Puerto Rican society has developed a fear of becoming independent, and discuss which discourses are significant, and how this complicate the job of the Puerto Rican Independence Party. Chapter six brings it all together and concludes.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

Identifying the different perceptions that surround the Puerto Rican *Estado Libre Asociado* will be the main objective of this thesis. In doing this, I will look into how meaning is created, reproduced and changed. Discourse analysis is a suitable tool for this purpose. As discourse analysis is both a method of analysis and a theory (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) and is based upon the understanding that we all strive to fill the world with meaning. We attach meaning to signs, and different signs have different meaning to different people. This will make up the basic presumption for the exploration of the Puerto Rican discourses. I will begin by setting the basis of the theoretical and methodological analysis, explaining what a discourse analysis is, generally, and the focus of discourse psychology specifically. Subsequently I will discuss the characteristics of post-colonial theory with a particular focus on Homi K. Bhabha's theories on colonial discourse and hybridity.

2.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is the premise of which the analysis of discourses is based. It is a social constructivist approach to social phenomena, and is also known as an include-all expression for newer forms of theory on both culture and societies as a whole (Burr 1995). The different social constructionist theories all take a critical approach to taken-for granted knowledge and state that the knowledge about the world never is objective. How we understand the world around us depend on the way we categorize the world – it is a product of *discourse*. Our way of understanding is dependent on historical and cultural specificity, the way we understand the world is culturally and historically contingent. This implies that they could have been different, and they can also change over time. Furthermore;

“Discourse is a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world – including knowledge, identities and social relations – and thereby in maintaining specific social patterns. This view is anti-essentialist: that the social world is constructed socially and discursively implies that its character is not pre-given or determined by external conditions, and that people not possess a set of fixed and authentic characteristics or essences” (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:5).

Social constructionism is considered to be a link between knowledge and social processes “*knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false*” (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:5), and knowledge and social action: the ways we understand the world, and consider the “truth” also determine the way we choose to act upon it. This makes us more likely to react in one way than the other, because reactions are also socially constructed (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). In one way, all practices may be understood as discursive (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) as our reasons for acting the way we do are based on earlier experiences and made-up references. This makes discourses vary on many levels: from country to country, culture to culture and of course also from individual to individual – how discourses are created and what discourses people have in common will be explored in the following.

2.2 Post-Colonialism

This goes well with the nature of post-colonial theory, as Slater (2004) characterize it: The post-colonial theorists question the discourses previously constructed from a Western/European world view, and bring in a focus on the discourses that the formerly colonized present. The post-colonial also “*...highlight the mutually constitutive role played by colonizer and colonized...*” (Slater 2004:20) leading us to critically review, for example, the power relations that make up the familiar discourses. Slater continues to say that it “*carries with it an ethico-political positionality that seeks to oppose to the coloniality and imperialism of power and re-assert the salience of autonomy and popular resistance to Western penetrations*” (2004:20-21). This tells us that even a modern-colonial situation, like the Puerto Rican, may be shed light upon from a post-colonial point of view. Many post-colonialist theorists and analytics place the post-colonialism within a Marxist tradition, and traces of Marxist thinking may be found in the works of, amongst others, Edward Said, the author of the groundbreaking book *Orientalism*, published in 1978.

2.2.1 Edward Said's Orientalism

Through influence from both Foucault and Gramsci, Said argued that a stereotyped image of the Orient had been created by the West, and the West has used this image in the process of

identifying itself – “we”, in a contrast to them- “the other” – the Orient. This was done in developing a discourse where the white man of the West was superior to the Oriental, more educated, intelligent and it was therefore the duty of the white man to rule over the Orient, in order to bring modernity and development to this part of the world. Through talking of “the white man’s burden” the Oriental, also known as “the noble savage”- not only tolerated but also expected the white man to civilize society and rule it as he thought best. This justified the European imperialism that expanded to the point that 85% of the world was once under European imperial rule. The West assumed this was what the colonized peoples wanted. Through hegemony, the *Orientalism* grew powerful and strong, further enhancing the idea of European Identity being superior to all non-European peoples and cultures (Said 2001). Said refers here principally to the Middle East and Asia, which are also the areas the Palestinian born author knew best, but the principles of his argument can easily be transferred also to the European colonial rule in Latin-America, and, as we shall see in the proceeding chapters, the neo-imperialism of the United States, including also it’s relationship with the island of Puerto Rico. Said’s Orientalism makes up what I find to be a classical colonial discourse, independent of what part of the colonized world one refer to.

How does the post-colonialism differ from the post-modernism? The post-colonial approach focus on the colonial and imperialistic perspectives in the understanding of global politics. The importance of the imperialist West, and the results this practice has left on the societies of the world, need to be critically explored if the modernity and the global is to be understood, Slater (2004) states. The post-colonial emphasize problems of difference, agency and subjectivity in a way that challenge the well known Western discourses that previously have had the sole focus. It also explores the “*mutually constitutive role played by colonizer and the colonized...*” (Slater 2004:164). In order to put this all into a comprehensible sequence for the purpose of this thesis, I will now continue by bringing the attention to discourses, and how we understand them.

2.3 Discourses and How They May Be Understood

The word “discourse” has been used, and may be used, in a variety of different settings. There is no agreement on the understanding what a discourse is and how it works, this all

depends on the use and setting of the term. Despite this, one common way of regarding the term is the fact that a discourse is an *“idea of that language is structured according to patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life”* (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:1).

Discourse then become a certain way of talking about and understanding the world that surround us, and a discourse analysis will be the intent to unravel the patterns and ways of understanding our society that are taken for granted. Discourses are reveled, expressed and developed through language, which makes language important to our perception of the reality, and of the truth. *“Our access to reality is always through language”* Phillips and Jørgensen (2002:8) wrote. Language is how we construct the reality in which we live, which makes a change in discourse also a change of the social.

Discourses have been understood and employed in many different ways. Still, what all these understandings have in common is the idea that discourse analysis is both a set of theory and a method, and the two can not be separated from each other. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) emphasize the fact that discourse analysis must be seen as a “package” consisting of both a theoretical and a methodological approach to the discourse field in which one wishes to operate. This does not impede the use of approaches and ideas from the different perceptions of discourse to be used together, to best fit the purpose of each and every analysis. Elements from the different approaches to discourse as both theory and method may be used.

Discourse analysis understand that both the social and language consist of signs. These signs in themselves have no meaning before we give them meaning and significance by placing them in specific positions with other signs. The process of giving meaning to these signs are never completed, and there is always a struggle to be the one who gets to decide what is the meaning of the signs. The intention of the analysis are to map out the processes in society in which these meanings are fixed, and how some of them become so fixed that we understand them as practically naturally given (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

2.3.1 Different Approaches to Discourse Analysis

The content of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis and Potter and Wetherell's discourse psychology approach will now be briefly explained. These approaches are the main tools used in this thesis. The approaches have different objectives and I will explain what characterize them and what separate them from each other. They may not necessarily be mutually exclusive. It is possible to collect elements from one approach and use them in combination with other approaches to get the most appropriate tool for the analysis at hand.

Laclau and Mouffe's (in Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) approach is called discourse theory, and their point of departure is that everything that is social is a discursive construction. In fact, they claim that there is no "*distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices*" (Laclau & Mouffe 2001:107). This tells us that discourse and social practice can be analyzed the same way. Laclau and Mouffe also find that we approach the social world through discourses, but that the meaning is never fixed because the language we use to express it is unstable and always changing. This is understood by Laclau and Mouffe as a fight over discourses: different discourses exist out there and each of them represent one way to understand and talk about the world that surround us, they are never complete, but continuously changing and reconstructing themselves, which in the end may have social consequences.

In discourse theory, discourses that are so established and taken for granted that their contingency are considered "objective" often are forgotten. A discourse that has reached the position of being "objective", stands more firmly in society than other discourses. Power relations are often the reason why some discourses reach to such a position, and subsequently the power that constituted it, disappear or is difficult to spot. But that still does not mean that these discourses may not be challenged and revised as new articulations, and competing discourses appear (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). The discourses, being social constructions, "fight" amongst each other to become the hegemonic discourse, that is, the dominating discourse. The inspiration for this term Laclau and Mouffe have collected from the Marxist Antonio Gramsci. A hegemonic discourse has reached its position because the power it contains is perceived as natural and stands undisputed in society. How can a

discourse achieve this position? For example, by the repeated and reproduction of itself as it gains momentum in society (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

I will now present some of the analytical techniques that appear in Laclau and Mouffes discourse theory that will be utilized in the analytical part of this thesis: *Chains of equivalence* refer to the fact that one term or specific word within a discourse automatically is linked to another word or term. For example, later in this thesis, we shall see how the word socialism is being linked to communism in such a chain of equivalence. Also *nodal points* become important. A nodal point is a sign around which other signs are centred and, the nodal point is the sign that gives the other signs their particular meaning within a certain discourse. Laclau and Mouffe consider a discourse a reduction of possibilities and the discourse looks to stop the changing meanings of the signs, by corresponding them to a certain system of meaning. This is referred to as the *field of discursivity*. Also, references to *floating signifiers* will be made. This also refers to certain signs, that different discourses all strive to give a specific meaning. This means that the sign may have different meanings within different discourses, and that a struggle goes on between them to dominate the meaning of the sign (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002)

Jontahan Potter and Margaret Wetherell understand the discourses differently. They put them in connection with social psychology in order to get a new and alternative way to understand discourses and their use. Along with critical discourse analysis it focuses on the empirical function of specific use of language in a certain social setting. But in this case the goal is rather to “investigate how people use the available discourses flexibly in creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities in talk-in-interaction and to analyze the social consequence of this” (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002:6). In this approach the relationship between individuals and how groups of people create meaning from existing structures and processes in the society is the main focus. Also, how people use already existing discourses strategically when they interact socially (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). Within this understanding of discourse analysis, texts and spoken language are thought to be constituted by the social and the setting in which it has emerged, and the social actions they are oriented against. Each individual, being an individual, has its own personal set of characteristics, that must be analyzed as separate from the society of which the individual forms a part. The

individual register the changes that occur in the social it is surrounded by, and make up its mind and form their own opinions based on the “input” they receive (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). Phenomena only have meaning through discourse. Discourses are normally constituted through language, but may also be constituted through actions, for example act of violence or other expressions of power. Though, it is important to point out that an action like this only makes sense, and only can be understood through a discourse; the discourse is constituting. Within discourse psychology people are not only carriers of discourses, but also use them to their own advantages – as resources. Different discourses may be used and referred to in various settings, to support the argument an individual wants to make. At the same time, this will reflect the identity of the person who is talking (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

2.3.2 Order and Content of Discourses

The discourse psychology approach to discourse analysis is very attentive to the fact that the relations between the different discourses are unstable and that people may use different discourses, and use the discourses differently, in different settings. It is understood to be a certain order between the different discourses. *Order of discourse* comes from Fairclough’s critical discourse theory, and refers to two, or more, discourses which competed between themselves to get established within a certain domain and consequently, within this notion lies also the potential for discursive conflict. The word *antagonism* is used for the conflict between the discourses in a specific order, but through hegemonic interventions, *hegemony* can be achieved if the conflict ends with changed boundaries between the discourses (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). Even though some discourses appear to be taken for granted and undisputed at some times, a discourse can still be challenged, and changed. In the following chapters we will see both that there is an order between the discourses in the Puerto Rican case, but also that some discourses have become hegemonic. Some analysts using Potter and Wetherell’s approach have been criticized for not keeping record of the discourse order in their analyses. This makes it difficult to show and/or explain how the conclusions have been found, and that this order is more or less just implicit in the analysis. This can in the worst case scenario make the analysts overlook the fact that discourses not only empower the interviewees, but also limits them and their points of view. Also, the critique of discourse

psychology is that it does not consider the fact that not all people in a specific society have access to the same discourses, and cannot use them to construct their own identities.

What do the discourses contain? This, of course, is different from every single discourse. But the way they are constructed creates the difference between what is true and what is not; and makes some types of action probable - or unthinkable. The contents of the discourses have practical importance, and make social consequences (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

2.3.3 Discourses Creating Political Identities

Creating identities is a complex process; self-perceptions are created by both individuals and groups with a reference to things like gender, skin color, religion, socio-political background and also political orientation (Rivera Ramos 2001). Political identities are, like other subgroups of identities, constructed. They are built up of the discourses that surround us. Widdicome and Wooffitt (in Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) are two theorists who have put special emphasis on the importance of identities. Seeing the production of identities from a social constructionist' point of view, they consider identities the direct result of social interaction. Also Laclau & Mouffe consider identities, that being individual or collective identities, to be the result of competition between the discourses (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). Political identities may show themselves in participation in groups with people of a similar political position – participations in political parties are the first and most familiar example that comes to mind. Through the belonging to a group like a political party the political idea and opinion can easily be nourished and further constructed, as the input you get from your surroundings draw upon the same discourses and uses the same narratives as the ones one are already familiar with. But the construction of a political identity may also take place outside such a setting. Through the rhetorical and discursive “game” the politicians play when they present to us (or maybe “try to sell us” is a more fitting term) their political agenda. They do so by referring to discourses that both the listener and the politician have in common. Through the use of one or several discourses the politicians can win us over with their presentation of the “truth” and arguing what is a right stand to take on a particular political case. Discourse psychology considers all identities to be discursive; they do not have one established identity, but rather several at once and they are all changing (Phillips &

Jørgensen 2002). In order to assess the power discourses have of appealing to feelings and constructing identities, there are several terms that can help us understand. *Iteration* refers to a sense of repetition or recognition. It is the way an idea, a mark or a statement needs to be repeated if to be meaningful. Iteration is situated in the context of the statement that is uttered, and meaning appears and is recreated from this. Marks and ideas must come from different settings, as they have the power to change what the statements include and mean. This also implies that the meaning of a statement can change as the context surrounding it varies or are changed with time (Hubbard 2006).

2.4 Hybridity

Homi K Bhabha became an important voice within the post-colonial theoretical tradition. In this section I will present some of his theories, with a special focus on post-colonialism and hybridity. Ever since the colonization and imperialization of the European countries started, the colonized peoples have invented ways to resist the suppressing power of the colonizers. Resistance can be expressed on many levels, and it was the anxiety of the dominant part which enabled the subdued to take advantage of this weakness and use it to their advantage as a rigid separation of the two cultures proved difficult to maintain (Bhabha 2004, Hubbard 2006).

Hybridity theory draws upon an already acknowledged assumption of a significant difference between “us” and “the other”. The creation of such a dichotomous distinction is what helps us recognize, and create, our own identity, based on the culture which we belong to. This dichotomous otherness is also what forms the basis for Bhabha’s theories (Bhabha 2004; Hubbard 2006). The fact that there is a distinct difference between “us” and “them” is what creates both problematic difference and possibilities of change. In the Puerto Rican case we can see that there is a quite strict definition and separation between the “*americanos*” and the “Puerto Ricans”. Despite the Puerto Ricans technically being US-citizens, they have a very clear distinction saying that they are Puerto Ricans first and US-citizens second. Some only regard themselves Puerto Rican, this depending to a large degree upon political and discursive differences (Morris 1995).

Further Bhabha (2006) stress the importance of *ambivalence*. He claims this to be one of the most important forces within the colonial discourse. Along with *anxiety*, the destabilizing element of a colonial (Huddart 2006, Bhabha 2004) and un-natural situation is expressed. The misuse of power that a colonial situation represent make for the unstable political situation, and the possibility for the colonized to rebel the oppressor and take control of its own territory.

It is in the prolonging of this dichotomous separation that we find other central element that can help explain the nature of the colonial situation; *Stereotypes*. These are a fixed form of representation, and fixity, Bhabha says, “*Connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and demonic repetition*” (2004:94). Due to the stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory actions are allowed to flourish, creating discriminatory practices of governance. Such a simplification adds complexity and additional cloudiness to the colonial situation, as the taken-for-grantedness inherent in the interplay between the colonizer and the colonized, thus creating instability and an inherit weakness in the colonial situation. The stereotypes the colonizer makes of the colonized do not contribute to a feeling of security in his own power, but rather works to enhance the feeling of anxiety. What does this tell us? The notorious incorrectness ever present in stereotypes and stereotyping helps maintain the anxiety that makes up the weak spot of colonial regimes, thus giving the colonized his chance to rebel against the regime.

This anxiety is then further elaborated through the colonized’s use of *mimicry*. The colonized copy, or take after, the colonizer in its culture. Bhabha stresses that copying is not total, and that the colonized is not absorbed in the colonizers culture, it is rather a “*repetition of a difference*” (Bhabha 2004:122) and a mockery of the colonizers ways and habits. It is important that the colonized adopt some of the colonizers habits, but not all of them, as that would make the suppressed and the suppressors too much alike and complicate the process of keeping the two separated. If the two parties become too similar, this threatens the hegemonic power of the colonizer and the entire basis of the colonial discourse would fall apart (Huddart 2006). Mimicry is a challenge to the power of the colonizer, but at the same time a condition without which it cannot exist.

The *uncanny* is another expression that draws on the already mentioned stereotypes and mimicry, and Bhabha derived the idea from Freud's psychoanalysis. The characteristics Freud used on individuals during his psychoanalysis Bhabha recognized in the nations as a whole. His notion of colonialization can represent something similar to the Freudian image of childhood, and what happened in the childhood of the nation can be brought back up and affect the adult self in a post-modern view. Though, the uncanny represent a blurring of the distinction of the self and the other, making the two difficult to differentiate. This may be considered a disadvantage, or it may be used as yet another tool in the void that the colonizer's anxiety and nervousness have left open. All these features together make up a feeling of anxiety and fear in the colonizer, which are the weak spot, or a space of powerlessness, that the colonized can exploit and turn to its own advantage (Bhabha 2004, Huddart 2006).

“Hybridity is of singular importance in postcolonial studies, because it is what allows postcolonial critics to maintain focus on ‘the other’ without its becoming weighed down by the historical baggage of this concept” (Drichel 2008:589).

Among Bhabha's postcolonial theories, the hybridity theory has seen the most attention in recent years. Hybridity has been used to understand cultural discourses and practices, but is also considered to have an area of use outside these limits. Harris (2005) argued that there are theorists who claim that hybridity may help understand *“social, economic and political dimensions of change”* (16:2005) because cultures never exist individually and uninfluenced from each other and particularly not under the conditions of globalization as we see today. Cultures, as well as nations, are considered to be social and discursive constructions; they only exist in relation to each other and are created relationally.

Hybridity is a process that occurs as two (or several) cultures meet, and in the intersection; - a new culture, new discourses and new practices are created (Bhabha 2004, Harris 2005, Huddart 2006).

This means that all cultures today are hybrid, not only the colonial ones. Cultures are always retrospective, meaning that they look back at what has happened, and construct themselves on that basis. However, this is not something that is absolutely general, because even though they appear in all cultures, the hybridity does not appear the same in the different cultures.

There are different kinds of hybridity in the different cultures, depending on the retrospective elements the hybridity reflect (Huddart 2006). Bhabha stresses that the hybridity is not a *problem* for the culture involved, rather the contrary. The hybridity's character can reverse the effect the dominating colonialist have upon the colonized, by getting on top of them and "*estrangle the basis of it's authority*" (Bhabha 2004:162) so that the rules of recognition are changed – making it to be of the benefit of the colonized (Bhabha 2004).

Discrimination takes place between the original culture of the colony, and the externally applied culture. The traces of the discriminated culture are viewed as something different, a mutation or a hybrid. This can make the identification and recognition of the authoritative culture difficult to spot:

"To be authoritative, its rules of recognition must reflect consensual knowledge of opinion; to be powerful, these rules of recognition must be reached in order to represent the exorbitant objects of discrimination that lie beyond its purview (Bhabha 2004: 159)".

Hybridization described by Bhabha as an ongoing process where cultures are mixed together and create an in-between culture. These in-between cultures get a chance to emerge in what is called *Third Spaces*. This is a borderline culture that exist and is created in space, but also in time (Huddart 2006). Culture can be changed by hybridity, because the hybridity, and the Third Space that it creates, is unstable and always changing. This leads to a situation where the knowledge of cultural authority is not always completely and fully present and creating new knowledges will be unavoidable. Further, the authority of the authorities will be easier to question, and less recognizable to the colonized (Bhabha 2004). This is the third space of hybridity: "*which displaces the histories that constitute it*" (Bhabha in Huddart 2006:126). Hybridization creates new narratives - new narratives that previously did not exist, instead of destroying and replacing the old ones.

Can the Puerto Rican culture be considered to be such an in-between culture? Is the ELA a socio-political example of Bhabha's third space? A process of hybridization may take place in the discourses themselves, but also in the familiar paradigm of power, Bhabha (2004) stated. This means that we cannot regard politics independent of the society or the culture of

which it has emerged, and that the discourses and narratives also must be seen as legitimate offspring of the socio-political-cultural environment they inhabit. And if power relations are also hybrids, how does this in return affect the society and the discourses? In Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean area in general, this hybridization process is nothing new. The colonizers named the phenomena “creolization”.

America is a continent that has seen a lot of cultural mixing and hybridization, and the US-American culture is in particular famous for its “melting pot” approach to culture, ethnicity and society. In the Caribbean area the term used is Creole. The use of the term dates back to just after the Europeans arrived to the New World in the 15th century, and the term has both developed and remained in the region. Today the term Creole is applied to music, food, language and ethnography (Chevalier 1999). The common denominator is that the mixture, the hybridization that occurred when traditional pre-Colombian culture, met African impulses brought across the Atlantic by the slaves, and European demands and regulations, a third space, an in-between culture appeared: the Creolization. The presence of Creole heritage can tell us that hybridization not is a new, modern process, and since the Creole background is something the Caribbean are both proud of and cherish, hybrid cultures are not necessarily something negative. Hybrid cultures sometimes have been considered as un-pure, and as an un-legitimate mixture of several cultures, resulting in it being neither the one, nor the other. To some degree one can argue that all cultures today are hybrid, as they have not existed independently of migrational habits, or the influences of other cultures. Today, the Creolization is not considered a hybrid, but rather the natural and obvious cultural heritage of a region with characteristics like the Caribbean. Seen within a discursive setting, creolization has become an integrated part – taken for granted as something natural, and is now a discursively natural point. It becomes yet an example of how an element can become integrated in the discourse – and becomes an element loose from its origin.

2.4.1 The Political Significance of Hybridity

Harris (2008) have argued that we have to understand hybridity within a field of power for it to be useful at all, and especially when operating within the political dimensions of change. Whether or not the term hybridity should also include a political aspect has been disputed

(2008), yet I find it useful to see it also in a context of politics, and political change exactly, because the power relations are not irrelevant to the topic:

“The exercise of colonialist authority, however, requires the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power” (Bhabha 2004:158).

How can hybridity make a political impact? The hybridization, and the hybrid itself can become a challenge to the dominant power in society. Hybridity must necessarily imply a certain degree of inequality and tension, Harris (2008) said. This may result in dissatisfaction and a will to change within the individuals. It is not an impossible fight for them to take on: Harris focused on the British colonies in his text, but still mentions that the hybridity after 1929 was not only tolerated by the colonizers, they *“but even endorsed hybridity. Usually, it was accepted as a step towards modernity; occasionally, it was viewed as a local adaptation that embodied local practices that had intrinsic merit”* (2008: 15). This confirms that also the colonizer has an interest in the hybridization that is taking place, as stated by Bhabha (2004). It gives the colonizer the power grip needed to maintain the colony within strict regime – mimicry will make the colonizer and the colonized more similar, which the colonizer do not mind - as long as they do not get *too* similar. This similarity becomes an advantage for both parties involved in the colonized situation, the similarity makes it easier for the colonizer to keep control over the colonized, because they are more homogenous, but it may also become a weak spot, as the colonized can apply the new knowledge and situation its advantage and oppose to the colonizer, and politically take advantage of the hybridized situation.

Harris (2008) made it very clear that the meaning of cultural exchange follows the distribution of power. Yes, hybridization may threaten the position of the most powerful by questioning their world view and legitimacy. This actually makes hybridity a powerful and progressive political force that may be used for the purpose of political change. Whether this happen will, of course depend on the sociological, historical and geographical context.

Bhabha (2004) argued that one can understand the colonial discourse as a production of hybridization, rather than as a result of the authority of the colonialist or the suppression of the traditional costumes of the colonized. Harris (2008) pointed to the fact that in most

colonial situations it was never in the interest of the colonizer to have cultural exchange with the colonized. The Puerto Rican situation in the 21st Century one must say that it has indeed been of interest for the United States to have a large degree of cultural exchange. If we accept the notion of Puerto Rico being a part of the United States under the same presumptions as a colony, but modified to fit into our time of globalization and modernity, the United States have a geopolitical interest in affecting the culture of the island and making the population similar to the rest of the US-population. This fits in the picture of how to create a dependency situation, and maintaining it over time. Hybridization, in this setting, is then something positive, as it ties the colonized closer to the colonizer, and makes the ties strong, and thereby more difficult and more painful to break.

2.4.2 The Ambivalence of Hybridity

“It is crucial to remember that the colonial construction of the cultural (the site of the civilizing mission) through the disavowal is authoritative to the extent which it is structured around the ambivalence of splitting, denial, repetition – strategies of defense that mobilize culture as an open-textured, warlike strategy whose aim is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture” (Bhabha 2004:163).

The trick is to see culture not as the reason conflict surged, but rather as the effect of discriminatory practices, and thereby take a new stand on the recognition of culture. The differentiation of culture can then be regarded as a sign of authority. Within this setting, the hybridity can play a role as an unpredictabilizing element. Hybridity has been criticized of *“re-othering the other in the service of deconstructing the metaphysics of the West”* (Drichel 2008:603), and of taking on normative tendencies, falling as a victim of its own success, involuntarily creating an ideal against the local articulations of identity are measured.

Drichel (2008) argued that Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is widely misunderstood, and taken to be another type of syncretism – an intent to bring together “different or opposing principles and practices”⁸ of two different cultures. This is not correct, according to Drichel. The postcolonial studies that Bhabha represents are very focused on, and maybe even

⁸ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/syncretism> Consulted March 18 2009.

obsessed by, the notion of the “other”. The ongoing critique is that the postcolonial studies have never managed to get *post* “the other”, instead it has been turned into an object that is implicit in postcolonial studies – “the other as constructed by colonialism’ as an object for study for post-colonialism” (Dutta in Drichel 2008). The obsession for “the other” makes it difficult to go beyond and deconstruct the stereotypes and then move on away from them:

“...if hybridity is a partial assumption of stereotypes, then this partiality must, in most fundamental ways lie in hybridity’s complex relationship with temporality. I suggest that this relationship is not given the credit it deserves often enough, resulting in skewed discussions of hybridity as simply (and mistakenly) another form of syncretism” (Drichel 2008:589).

2.5 Summing Up

This chapter starts with establishing the social constructive and post-colonial background upon which the theory of the thesis rests. Edward Said is located within the post-colonial point of view, and the colonial discourse established through his famous book “Orientalism”. Further in this chapter I have shown how discourses can be understood in different ways, with most emphasize on Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis, as this will be most relevant for the analysis of this thesis. I have emphasized that the identity can help create and maintain discourses, and that discourses constitute identities, particularly political identities. Further, the focus was put on the post-colonialist theorist Homi Bhabha and his theories on discourses, anxiety, mimicry and the uncanny, in addition to hybridity. At the end of this chapter I have discussed how hybridity may become important for politics, and alternative interpretations, and criticisms of the hybridity term.

3. Methodological Approach

I chose to use qualitative method in this thesis because I consider it the best method to discover and explore the unpredictable and always evolving nature of discourses. Qualitative method also allows one to go more into depth on the issue at hand and emphasize what the results mean (Thagaard 2003). Discourses are contextually embedded, and through fieldwork in Puerto Rico, the discourses that surround the political regime of the ELA can easily be explored. I found that interviews were a good way to explore which discourses existed, and I used semi-structured interviews. The topics of the interview were decided before the interview started, but the order of them depended on the course of the interview and the conversation with the informant, and I could also allow myself to ask follow-up questions when the interviewee said something interesting which I wanted to have elaborated more thoroughly. Semi-structured interviews make room for flexibility in the interview process.

3.1 Field Work

The fieldwork took place in the metropolitan area of San Juan, Puerto Rico during the months of August, September and October 2008. I left the island only a week before the November 2008 election in which the PPD Governor of the past four years, Aníbal Acevedo Vila had to leave the spot for his politician opponent Luis Fortuño, representative of the statehood party. It was both an advantage and disadvantage to do the fieldwork in these months. I found it to be positive that there was a lot of attention on politics in this period, debates in television and newspapers made it an up-to-date subject. The status issue was not a main topic, but indeed a part of the discussions. The status issue has been an ongoing topic within the political life on the island during decades and the lack of an easy solution brings the attention over to other more relevant political issues. The drawback was the fact that the politicians I wanted to interview were all busy preparing their personal re-elections, the election of their party's candidate for governor, and at the same time do their jobs. This made many of them quite busy, but most of them still found time to see me. The newspapers also wrote more about politics than they normally do, due to the election, which was of great advantage for me. I read several local newspapers every day, and this helped me better

understand the dynamics of the island's politics, and keep me up to date on the background of the day-to-day development ahead of the election. It also helped me relate to many of the examples my informants used and referred to in the interviews.

Several people commented on the fact that I did fieldwork on politics in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans are known to be interested in politics, and they have an electoral turn out which is higher than most other industrialized countries. The saying "politics is the national sport of Puerto Rico" is well known to all. Most people I talked to agreed upon this, but some also found it necessary to separate politics from what they call *politiquería*. This is the part of politics that has less to do with actual politics, but is rather the gossip, down putting of one's political opponents, and all other intrigues that emerge around the politicians and the political institutions. The daily press excitedly prints articles about *politiquería* and it is criticized for taking the attention off the real politics.

In addition to the interviews, I daily read at least two newspapers, and collected several relative articles from the three main newspapers on the island, *El Nuevo Día*, *El Vocero* and *La Primera Hora*, with the intention of also using them as a basis for the discourse analysis. This idea was later abandoned as I chose rather to concentrate on the interviews to supply me with the perspectives needed for the analysis. Yet, the close reading of these articles did help me get an overview of the political life on the island, identify main characters and events, and being up to date on the topics of the day to day news agenda.

3.2 Interviews

Qualitative research allows for the use of many different methods to gather the needed information. I decided to use one of the most common methods; interview. The interviews were semi-structured. I had prepared questions in an interview guide, but this guide also allowed me to follow up on interesting themes that came up during the conversation. Questions that became irrelevant could then also be left out as we went along. In total I did 11 recorded interviews, in addition to 3 "loose" and unstructured interviews where I, with the help of a competent academic, got help to reflect upon the answers I had already gotten. I found these talks to be very helpful.

3.2.1 Choice of, and Recruitment of Informants.

In this thesis I analyze the discourses subscribed to by three different groups of people. My informants all identified with the status option they preferred. Puerto Rican group identities are created on the basis of the point of view on the status issue, and then these identities are presented by the three biggest and most important political parties. I have therefore used this organization into parties as a basis for recruitment of informants representing points of view.

I started by contacting the HQs of the four major parties of the island, asking them to suggest politicians that could be suitable informants for my thesis. I then received names and contact information of two or more politicians from each party, and contacted their offices, making an arrangement for the interview with one of their staff members/ press secretaries. Two politicians from each of the three most important parties were willing to talk with me. I was also looking for informants in the fourth party - PPR, the newest party, whose policy is to have no policy on the status-issue. Despite efforts here, I was not able to get an arrangement with any of their representatives. This means that PPR's point of view is not represented in my thesis.

The six politicians I interviewed all met me at their workplaces and/or in their offices in the San Juan Congressional Building. The intention of starting off by interviewing politicians was to get a chance to understand how the political parties consider the ELA situation, and how they through their elected representatives, chose to communicate this message to me, and of course to the Puerto Rican population. I consider the politicians some of the most important and powerful elements in the construction of political and social discourses like the ELA discourse. They are the ones who communicate how the different parties perceive the status and the question of sovereignty to the population, and because they hold inherent power by being elected by the people. It is their voices that are presented in the media, thereby setting the standard of how the politics is both presented and perceived.

Then I tried to look for "ordinary people" and ask them many of the same questions. They are important because this is where the discourse are absorbed, processed, maintained or changed, independently of the politicians. I wanted to see if the people and the elected

politicians in fact agreed on what the discourse consisted of, and if the message sent by the politicians were indeed received by the population. I recruited my informants through the network of friends and acquaintances I had on the island, and I also asked one of my neighbors in the building where I lived. I was looking for a spread in age, gender and educational background. Among the “ordinary people”, my youngest informant was a 22 year old female student, and the oldest a man in his sixties.

3.2.2 The Interviewing Process

I had different experiences along the way of the interview period. The informants had very different attitudes towards me. Mostly they were very attentive and answered all my questions very thoroughly, but one informant “took over the show” completely, didn’t let me ask a single question, but instead just started talking about the subject of ELA and status, and kept on talking according to her own agenda. By the time it was finally my time to ask my pre-written questions, the informant got an important telephone call, and we had to cancel the rest of the interview and re-schedule. This was the only time I felt that I was not the one who was setting the agenda; that she was not there to help me with answers to my questions, but rather that I was there to listen to, and represent her points of view. In the second part of our interview, which was done a few weeks later, she did answer my questions, and I was the one in control of the situation once again.

I soon discovered that my informants took one of two stands on presenting the politics to me while answering my questions. Some answered them in a very “diplomatic” way, trying first to explain to me a political issue in “neutral” terms, and then giving me his or hers party’s point of view on the case. Others told me their, and/or their party’s view on a certain issue, and did not even try to achieve a more “objective” explanation. Some asked if I was familiar with this-and-that incident, terminology or person, while others just went on talking as if I knew, or should have known. This difference in the presentation of politics and of the discourses was important for me to keep in mind when analyzing the results, as the representation of the “truth” reflects the discourses on which the informant has constructed his or hers arguments.

A recording device was used for all interviews. Informants were asked up front if they accepted that the interview was recorded, and all informants did. This has clear advantages. The note taking process was made a lot easier for me, and I could focus on keywords, rather than writing down all details. I could also add my own observations along the interview and have my focus more on the informant, ask follow up questions, and adjust my interview guide as we went along. On the other hand, the recorder only record voices, and not all the other actions, facial expressions and gesticulations, amongst others, that makes up face-to-face conversation. My Puerto Rican informants gesticulated a lot, and this was not registered by my recorder. Being aware of this weakness, I took notes of gesticulation in the interview guide. One informant illustrated everything she said with the use of a pen and some sheets of white paper – she wrote initials, flags, arrows, stick figures, exclamation points and other symbols to illustrate her points. Another informant tapped his finger on the table (on which the recorder was placed, so the recorder actually recorded all the tapping) all the time during the conversation, to illustrate his points and strengthen his arguments. By taking notes of this during the interview it made up a more complete image of how the interviews really were than the recorder itself. The interviews were later transcribed, and the texts made the basis for the analysis in this thesis.

3.2.3 Interpretation and the Language Situation

The language spoken in Puerto Rico is Spanish. Some do also master English as a second language, but not all, and an interpreter or knowledge to Spanish is needed to get around. I do speak Spanish, and had therefore no difficulties communicating or finding my way. I did not use an interpreter at any time during my interviews. All communication between me and the interviewees took place in Spanish. I was considering hiring an interpreter as I went along with my fieldwork, but after few weeks, I understood the local accent and decided that it was not necessary. Concerning the politicians, I always made the arrangements for the interviews with their press secretary/staff member and not with the informant directly. Due to this, most informants, but not all, expected me to address them in Spanish and not English. The pros of not having an interpreter are that you eliminate a third party in the conversation. Nothing gets lost in the translation to a second language. On the other hand, an interpreter would probably have known the language better than I did (as he/she would probably be a

native speaker), and could have picked up on double meanings and cultural references that otherwise would have passed me by. However, one can not always be sure that all the layers of meaning that are involved in the passing of information through oral communication are received by the receiver in the way that the information sender intended. This goes also for people who have the same native language. I always made sure to ask the informant if there was something he or she said that I did not understand, and I also knew a lot of native speakers who could help me understand for example the cultural references included by the informant.

The language issue was not only related to my understanding of the informants answers, but also how my questions were asked. My limited vocabulary (even though I had help from native speakers going over my questions before the interviews) have affected, and probably limited the questions asked. I had to specify what kind of information I was looking for, other than what was already included in the pre-written interview guide. Sometimes my vocabulary forced me to explain myself with examples rather than using technical and abstract terms a native speaker would have had available. I understand that in some cases this might have been perceived as leading. Especially the informants with less education sometimes did not understand what I meant with some of my general, open questions, and had to be given examples in order to get started reflecting upon some of the issues. This is not necessarily a disadvantage to the research process, as the interviewing process is something that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewed, and it is in the interviewer's interest to lead the informant in a certain direction to unravel the discourses that surround a certain topic (Jonas 2002).

3.3 Confirmability, Credibility and Transferability

My position as an outsider to the Puerto Rican society was both an advantage and a disadvantage to me. I considered it an advantage in the recruitment of informants. It was fairly easy for me to recruit the informants who were involved in politics, and just by calling the politicians' offices and introducing myself with an impossible-to-pronounce-difficult-to-write name, and my national belonging I soon got appointments with most of the people I wanted to see. This was despite the fact that they were politicians, some of them high-

profile, that were busy with their jobs and the ongoing election campaign. Many of them commented positively that I had come all the way from Europe to write my thesis about them and their situation, because “*no one’s ever heard of us outside the United States. They’ve hardly heard of us either*” (Informant 5). As I was happy that they all took me seriously, despite me being a student with a foreign name from a country far away, most of them did not know any more about my country than the fact that it was situated somewhere in Europe. I assume it must have been an advantage that I was able to contact them in their own language. Since not all Puerto Ricans speak English, and that I mastered sufficient Spanish to communicate with them may have caused good-will. A Puerto Rican student, to whom I told about my success rate in getting appointments for interviews, suggested that getting the same type of appointment with the same people would maybe be more difficult for one of them, than it was for me.

Rather than being just an outsider, there might also have been other factors. The fact that I am a woman may also have affected the way male informants responded to me in the interview situation. I never felt the fact that I am a woman affected the way I was received or what information I was given. This is probably also because the subject of my interest is a “gender neutral” theme, of equal interest to both men and women. The answers I got from female informants corresponded sufficiently with the answers from the male informants, so I do not think the gender issue has affected the results of my interviews much. Being Caucasian white I represent the same ethnic group to which the Hispanics in the United States are a minority. People who just looked at me usually assumed I was US-American, but those who took the time to actually speak to me soon discovered I had little in common with the US-Americans, aside from physical appearance. I never considered the skin color to be a problem either, as most Puerto Ricans in fact consider themselves to be white too. Racism is considered to be a smaller problem in Puerto Rico than in mainland United States, since most Puerto Ricans are both Spanish and African descendants. This is not to say that a racism problem does not exist, but to me it seemed that the “daily” racism was rather pointed at the many Dominican migrant workers. Several times, my informants criticized the United States system of welfare and the fact that it allowed individuals to exploit the system of benefits. Born and raised in a Scandinavian social democracy, social welfare for all is an

important basis on which society is built and it is mostly undisputed. The repeated critique of what I have learned to take for granted caught me by surprise. The first time it happened I was left rather perplex, but later on I rather just switched over to the next question I had prepared when it happened. Instead of being something the informant and I had in common and which we could use to relate to each other, it became something that enhanced the differences between me and the interviewee.

The status issue is not considered to be a sensitive political subject to the Puerto Ricans. It is the single most important political issue on the island, the parties are organized around it, and people are openly identifying themselves with the stand they take on the status. One's stand on the status issue is hardly a secret, despite occasional negative attention around the *independentistas*. Even though I never asked anybody directly what their point of view was, they never hid it from me either. The way they spoke around the questions I asked, usually gave their opinion away anyhow. I was never afraid to ask for people's opinion on the subject – most people seemed more than happy that outsiders took an interest, and shared their points of view. I was a bit anxious to ask the *independentistas* of the political persecution they still suffer from, but this turned out to be no problem at all. They brought the subject up themselves, and seemed just happy to get the chance to shed some light on their side of the story.

I have now explained the thoughts and ideas that made up the basis of how my research for this thesis was done, thereby increasing the *confirmability* and *credibility* of my work. This makes it possible for others to do similar fieldwork, and get similar results as I will present in this thesis. When it comes to *transferability*, what has been shown in this thesis can of course serve as inspiration for other similar cases of colonial-like and dependency situations, even though the Puerto Rican case is, as far as I am aware of, the only one of its kind in the world today. I would assume that some of the challenges in the Puerto Rican situation also apply to other countries facing similar territorial situations.

3.4 Interpretation and Analysis

The basis for my analysis is the interviews I did during my stay in Puerto Rico. The nodal points of interest stood out to me early on in the fieldwork-process, which had made me particularly aware of them, and I could rewrite and direct the questions for my informants to these themes in particular. This, of course, also implies that other discourses and views may have slipped out of the conversation we had, and have not been exposed during the interview. This is one of the weaknesses of interviewing, but is substituted by the advantage of getting more precise, relevant and comparable answers from the informants.

The discursive field of interest to this thesis is the socio-political construction of the Free Associated State – the “ELA”. The sign “ELA” is covering an enormous field of meanings and discourses. In order to find out what the Puerto Rican ELA discourse consist of, I have identified two particular directions which both stood out to me as central and important very early on in the fieldwork process. These are signs of dependency towards the United States, and fear surrounding the idea of a possible independence. ‘Dependency’ and ‘fear’ thus become nodal points around which my analysis will be based. I identify the signs and sub-discourses that surround these nodal points in two separate chapters, identifying the discourses drawn upon and used by the different political groups, using terms and ideas taken from Lacalu and Mouffe’s discourse theory (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

Potter and Wetherell’s discourse psychology (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002) consider discourses ‘available recourses’; they exist and may be used by who ever need them for a purpose. Based on this idea I will also show how the different parties use the discourses differently to make their points and promote their political agendas. In the following chapters we will see that the ELA-supporters and the *Independentistas* to a large degree base their meanings on different and separate sets of discourses, while the statehooders draw their discourses partially from the same source as the ELA-supporters, and in some cases from the same origin as the *Independentistas*. During the thesis I will discuss discourses on different levels, including sub-discourses and “larger”, more general discourses at the same time.

3.4.1 The Analytical Process

Once the interviewing process was finished, I transcribed all the interviews in their totality, in the same language that the conversation took place. I then categorized them according to the political view the interviewee defended, and started reading them thoroughly using pens in different colors to underline quotes that shed light on important discourses and ideas surrounding the status issue. It soon became clear to me that some discourses were reoccurring in several interviews. I had an idea that some of these might exist, and when planning the interviews I added questions to detect if they really existed, and others emerged during the interviews. Through the use of colored pens I could “code” the different discourses and their corresponding utterances by underlining them. This made it easy to group the relevant information, and the colors also made direct comparison fairly easy. The same groups as was indicated by my colored pens can be detected in the two chapters of analysis that are to be presented next. I used quotes selected from the interviews, and grouped them according to theme, in order to shed light upon the difference in perception and use of discourse in the different Puerto Rican parties. By putting them next to each other on one page, a good starting point for comparison and analytical thought was created. All quotes are translated from Spanish to English before being presented in this thesis.

3.5 Summing Up

During the course of collecting information for a project like this, a lot of choices have to be done. Some of them are well reasoned, some choices were taken subconsciously, and yet others just became like they did due to coincidences and practicality during the collection of information. My thesis has been limited, yet come to be as it is today, due to all of these choices. Explaining my choices, in order to unravel and explain the inevitable shortcomings have been the purpose of this chapter.

The necessity of ascribing different levels to the discourses makes up an analytic limitation to my thesis, as the levels have been defined by the person doing the analysis. With this explanation I hope to make it clear to the reader that the analysis takes place on different levels, thereby making the reading and understanding easier.

I have reasoned for the choice and recruitment of informants, and the situation in which the interviews took place. Also, thoughts surrounding conformability, creditability and transferability have been reasoned for and discussed. Towards the end of the chapter I have described the process from interview to analysis and the finished text.

4. The Dependency Discourses

“ELA represent what is metaphorically called the best of two worlds: ELA guarantees the US-American citizenship, it guarantees you your nationality, your culture, your idiosyncrasy, your language, the way you feel, think, act, your own personality. The statehooders say: “to be a state in the United States you have to give up your nationality to be assured an equal citizenship”, and the independentistas say: “you have to give up your US-American citizenship to preserve your identity, your nationality”. The ELA, in its ambiguity, against its conditions, with all its limitations, offers the best of two worlds: the American citizenship, the development and confirmation of your culture and identity, the nationality and the way you feel, think and act...” (Informant 11)

The status option triad - continued ELA, annexation or independence - has made the basis for, and dominated the Puerto Rican political life ever since the ELA was established. It has also made the basis for the discourses and narratives that exists and to a large degree still thrives in the Puerto Rican society. The narratives vary to a large degree, and there is disagreement amongst the population on a series of matters. All together we can see that the interviewees' points of view on the status matter were revealed by the narratives they represented, and which discourses they subscribed to. I actually never asked my informants what their stand on the status was, because it always became very clear to me during the interview. Usually it was the opening question: *“How does the ELA affect Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans on a daily basis?”* that gave it all away, and that made me aware of the informant's political preferences on the status-debate.

In this first of two chapters of analysis I will present five different sub-discourses surrounding the relationship of dependency that exist between Puerto Rico and the United States. Early on, the dependency discourse stood out as it became clear to me during the

interviews I did with many Puerto Ricans that they and their country in general, depend upon the hegemonic United States in a wide range of ways.

There are 5 sub-discourses that will be presented and discussed; the colonial discourse, the ELA discourse, a cultural dependency discourse, an economic dependency discourse and a democracy discourse. At the end of the chapter I will sum up my findings so far.

4.1 The Colonial Discourse: Is Puerto Rico Really a Colony?

Most articles and books (critically) written about the status of Puerto Rico the term colony is used, without being clear on how they define the term (ex. Trías Monge 1997). There is no mention of a colony in the island's official name: *Estado Libre Asociado* in Spanish (Free Associated State) or the English "Commonwealth". The fact that Free Associated State is not a translation of the English term "Commonwealth" has on several occasions caused confusion and it is also used by the *independentistas* to exemplify that there is something "fishy" in the whole ELA arrangement. Also, Puerto Rico is said to be a *territory* to the United States. This makes up three very different names that separately mean completely different things, but at the same time refer solely to the island of Puerto Rico. There is no other "free associated state" in the world, and the word "Commonwealth" is often related to the 19th century British Empire. Yet many of the inhabitants of the island, especially intellectuals and academics, find Puerto Rico to be nothing but a colony. All but two of my informants considered Puerto Rico to be a colony, "*sort of colony*" or "*a colony in the process of decolonialization*". I did not bring a definition of the word to my informants, but I let them themselves consider Puerto Rico and its status up against their own vision of the term.

At this point I realized how different the perceptions of Puerto Rico's political reality were between the different political groups. The reason why the term "colony", in the case of Puerto Rico, never has been, or will be used, by the US-government seems obvious. The United Nations has a clear stand on colonialism⁹, and has a committee continuously working

⁹ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/history.htm> Consulted March 24th, 2009

on relieving “non-self-governing territories” from their strands to obtain a better political solution. Puerto Rico is not even on the United Nation’s list of 16 remaining colonies¹⁰, even though the neighboring island, US Virgin Island is. Using the term colony would bring reprimands from the United Nations, and thereby also from the rest of the international society. Being a Free Associated State/Commonwealth/Territory like today, the political details of the island of Puerto Rico does not stand out to the international society.

Quite a lot of power lies in the ability to give something its name. The language we use holds power as it constitutes how we both perceive and think about the social environment around us. By naming in certain ways, or not naming at all, attention can be found and discourses can be constituted. Through chains of equivalence the discourses develops and evolves. In this case, it is the self-naming within the colonial discourse that can either empower, or depower, depending on how one reads and understands the discourse. Seeing past the “Free Associated State” and “Commonwealth” labels and names given by others, and acknowledging the colony for what it is may help facing the situation and give the power needed to address the situation politically. Giving it an appropriate name makes the situation easier to handle, and appropriate means can be put into effect.

When asked if they considered Puerto Rico to be a colony, the ELA-supporting informants responded either with a loud and clear “no!”, or with explanations like:

“It is, and it isn’t, at the same time. From a dialectic point of view it is, but if you look the term up in a dictionary, it is one country dominated by another country, to benefit the dominating country, in a slave-like relationship, involuntarily from the dominated country’s behalf. This is not the case in Puerto Rico.” (Informant 11)

This informant has a nuanced point of view on the term colony. She can see it be so from a “dialectic” point of view, but still refer to the historical textbook definition of the term on

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/trust3.htm> Consulted March 24th 2009.

which she draws her ultimate conclusion. Many use the rhetoric “*We’re free, and we’re a state, associated with the United States*” as a simple, matter-of-factly way of understanding the situation. One informant mentioned this phrase several times during the interview. The ELA-supporters see the ‘ELA’ to be an antagonism to the ‘colony’, these are opposing elements, and being one of the two, automatically excludes being part of the other. Why is this so? The informants use of the signs ‘free’ and ‘state’ would indicate something quite contrary to the ‘colony’, because ‘colony’ is ‘slave-like’, ‘involuntarily’ and being ‘dominated’. This is not what the ELA-supporters see in their everyday life.

They would undoubtedly also consider a colony an undesired situation, but since their country is not one, they do not see the problem. One informant summed it up like this: “*If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it*”. By denying the existence of a colony those who are in favor of the current status fight the two other groups argument.

Statehooders commented on the discourse like this:

“The fathers of the Puerto Rican constitution had different visions for the future of Puerto Rico (...) it was a way of giving the colony Puerto Rico a few more benefits (...) but now is the time to change it, some things have come to stay, others to change and develop.” (Informant 7)

“I can not continue to defend democracy when there is discrimination in a colony called Puerto Rico.” (Informant 7)

“We are not a state and we are not free, we are a colony! (...) I think more people have come to see that we have to evolve towards new non-territorial formulas, otherwise we’ll be stuck with all the same problems.” (Informant 6)

The statehooders also consider their country a colony. The quotes collected from statehood politicians show us that they acknowledge the “colony” as a basis, as a starting point that has now outplayed its role and from with one have to evolve to something better, more

democratic, more up-to-date; statehood. Here, we see the chain of equivalence to be different from the *estadolibristas*: the sign ‘colony’ here is an opposite of ‘change’ and ‘development’. ‘Colony’ means to be ‘discriminated’ against, to be ‘un-free’ and stuck with ‘problems’ that become difficult to solve. The *independentistas* subscribe understands the chain of equivalence to work in the same way, and I found that the understanding of the sign ‘colony’ was similar within the two groups. They agree on the diagnosis, but disagree on what is the appropriate medicine.

The *independentistas* were the ones who most actively drew upon the colony discourse in their arguments, using the word to identify the problem, thus to make it easier to defeat:

“It’s a colony in all meanings of the word... and it affects us (...) it affects our collective self-esteem (...) they put “make-up” on it, and called it a Free Associated State. But it continues to be a colony.” (Informant 5)

Both politicians representing the Independence Party interviewed affirmed that the country was a colony:

“ELA is nothing but a colonial condition that was created during the cold war so that the United States, facing the international pressure, specially from the Soviet block, could claim that Puerto Rico was of so-called “free determination”, while in reality the United States possessed the total political control over Puerto Rico.” (Informant 4)

In the *independentista* case the use of the word colony seemed to fall very natural. They also constantly used the word “decolonialization” (Berríos Martínez 1997) of the political process they wished to implement. ‘Colony’ is the ‘lack of self control’ Puerto Rico is now experiencing.

‘Free’ is a sign used by all groups, but has been assigned very different meaning as it is put into different contexts. The signs ‘colony’ and ‘free’ in this case become floating signifiers. We see that the different parties fight over the right to define what lies in ‘colony’ and ‘free’

that the right to give meaning to this sign becomes important because the word touches upon the complexity and inherited difficultness of the Puerto Rican status debate. Discourses fight amongst themselves to achieve hegemony over the other discourses, and fixate the meaning of the signs ‘colony’ and ‘free’ within a single discourse. Laclau and Mouffe call this *closure* (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). It seems like the ELA-supporters to a larger degree support their ‘colony’ on the *classical* colonial discourse as it historically has been known. In doing this, they quickly find that they do not fit the description, and thereby discard of the colony discourse. The Statehooders and *Independentistas* have adopted their ‘colony’ to the modern Puerto Rico, with its particular characters, and find it to fit a *Puerto Rican* colony discourse. The name of the colony, and the way this is perceived leads us to the second of the discourses identified – the perception of the ELA as something uniquely Puerto Rican, and therefore worth maintaining.

4.2 The ELA as a Unique Puerto Rican Construction

The percentage of the population supporting independence in Puerto Rico is low, numbers from the 1998 plebiscite indicates a 2,5%. The percentage supporting statehood is much more higher (1998 plebiscite indicated 46,5%), yet such a decision is still questioned by a large percentage that fear the consequences an implementation will have on the local culture and idiosyncrasy (Smith 2007). Somehow the ELA represent an in between-solution, a solution for when ones do not want to, or is not able to take a stand. It is a temporary solution that has become permanent. Everybody I spoke with agreed that the ELA had served Puerto Rico well. Included in this discourse is also the notion of the ELA as something unique, something very Puerto Rican, and almost something embedded in the souls and minds of its inhabitants. The clearly special position of the ELA makes the Puerto Ricans feel lucky and special, and many argue that the legal deal the ELA constitutes should be developed and improved, not rejected as outdated. Parts of managing this discourse politically is also to focus on the possibilities and rights that the ELA brings with it, but at the same time expecting more of them. The ELA discourse has affected the local idiosyncrasy. This is clear especially in the local identity, as many Puerto Ricans have no problem seeing themselves as Puerto Ricans and US-Americans at the same time, without

these two facts being mutually exclusive (Morris 1995). The ELA has made up the Puerto Rican's idiosyncrasy, a very special mix of implementing what has come from "the other", introduced through the ELA, and melted into the familiar, well known and safe "us".

The ELA as unique discourse seems to have created a collective identity where the "us" is united under the rule of the ELA, representing something "ours" and made "by and for Puerto Ricans". Being a non-independent country, the ELA turns out to be a national mark and symbol, of what makes Puerto Rico Puerto Rico, and the Puerto Ricans into just what they are. A collective identity is formed, and its regulating element is the unique political arrangement of the 'ELA' - the Free Associated State.

"Statehood and independence are not possible. So why change it? To what? And how? The ELA is a Puerto Rican product. The United States participated, but the Puerto Ricans created it and we have to preserve it with all its defects and virtues."
(Informant 11)

Unsurprisingly, the 'ELA' as unique discourse was widely defended by the ELA-supporters. By categorically denying both statehood and independence as viable options to Puerto Rico by referring to their most commonly known counter-arguments (Independence: "we will no longer receive financial funding from the United States"; "we will suffer from a large degree of poverty" and Statehood: "we will have to give up our national and ethical identity; maybe even our native language!") They use the rhetorical technique of concluding that there is no other option, and that the problems they see concerning the two other options are beyond solution. Further on, in the quote I previously referred to, the interviewee brings focus to "it's not perfect, but it's *ours*". It is a Puerto Rican product; something unique; created for and by the Puerto Ricans. A politician said it like this:

"The ELA came to be, and have been, a tool the Puerto Ricans have used to achieve development." (Informant 3)

The ELA was created to the maximum benefit of the Puerto Rican, on Puerto Rican premises and by Puerto Rican demand, claim the ELA-supporters. We see the classic colony discourse appearing in the line of arguments, but with a slight twist: Within the Puerto Rican national discourse is the development and converting of the Puerto Rican agrarian society a direct cause of the ELA-agreement with the United States. The United States have helped Puerto Rico advance and develop, as is the “white man’s burden” within the classic colonial discourse. Though, the ELA-supporters consider it just as much a Puerto Rican achievement, as a US-American one. The counter discourse this rests upon but as a basis the fact that the Puerto Ricans have initiated and been in control of their own destiny all along. The views advocated in this discourse are: Because it is unique and Puerto Rican, it must be preserved. The ELA-supporters with whom I spoke all agreed that the ELA has serious flaws, especially when it comes to the democratic aspects of the United States - Puerto Rican deal. This tells us that the notion of the ELA as an imperfect arrangement exist within the discourses of all three parties. Despite the flaws, the ELA-supporters all felt that the other two possibilities were worse options for Puerto Rico, and that improvement of the current arrangement would be a more suitable solution:

“But today, The Popular Party clearly states that if one is to develop the ELA, the United States needs to recognize the Puerto Ricans sovereignty.” (Informant 2)

“The important thing with our relationship with the United States is that we (The Puerto Ricans) have the maximum power possible, within the current relationship with the United States to govern ourselves.” (Informant 2)

Statehooders and *Independentistas* agree that when the ELA was initiated, in the 1950s, it was a sensible and correct decision and strategy. The critics on their behalf, is rather that it has expired by date:

“The ELA was an invention that in the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s was a necessity at this particular time in history.” (Informant 5)

As the context has changed and the cold war no longer is determinant for the politics world, the basis on which the ELA was constructed no longer exist. They see that the ELA has outplayed its role.

According to the post-colonial tradition the colonizer and the colonized play a mutually constructive role (Slater 2004). One does not exist without the other. In this particular case there is no slave-like enforcing of the power on behalf of the United States over Puerto Rico. Several plebiscites have made it very clear to us that the current ELA situation is voluntary and even chosen by the Puerto Ricans. The reasons why Puerto Rico has chosen to put itself in a modern colonial situation are at least partly to find in the surrounding discourses. This makes for an auto-imposing of the colonial situation as it is today, and the discourses that have created the political situation are also maintaining it. When applying Bhabha's theories to the discursive material that has been presented here, they can be interpreted in two different ways: Firstly, there is the US-American dominance over the island of Puerto Rico, seen as the Bhabhaian colonizer-colonized dichotomy. Yet, in my opinion, I find the two parties not to completely fulfill the roles as Bhabha have them depicted, as the somewhat peculiar political situation of Puerto Rico is not being enforced, but also contains to quite a large degree of voluntariness on behalf of the Puerto Ricans. Secondly, one should regard the internal dynamic of the Puerto Rican society, namely how the Puerto Ricans affect each other, and their own political situation. With the domestic power relations, here depicted through the political dominance of the ELA- and Statehood parties, also an internal point of view must be applied to Bhabha's post-colonial theories. The definition of "us" and "them", so central to the post colonial thinking, can in this particular case mean "us- the Puerto Ricans" and "them-the US-Americans" or "us-the ELA-supporters/statehooders" and "them-the *independentistas*". This separation was seen amongst my informants, for example as some criticized the tilted power relation in the Puerto Rican - United States concerning democratic rights and citizenship, while the other part of the conflict also can be identified to be internal. A conflict going on between the Puerto Ricans themselves over which alternative is the best, and what those defending a different solution may or may not be capable of doing to society. The use of discourses reflects this anti-essentialist point of view, as they are not

based on something pre-given or inherently natural (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The subjective notions and information we are left with are used to make up our minds, in this case our political minds, as reflected in our political points of view. The difference between “us” and “them” – or the difficulty of separating the two, becomes important when reviewing that dependency can also be cultural.

4.3 The Cultural Dependency: Representing “The Better of Two Worlds”?

The 111 years of United State’s control over Puerto Rico has also brought to the Puerto Ricans a taste of the United States’ way of consuming. The biggest mall known to the Caribbean area, *Plaza de las Americas*, is located in the San Juan metropolitan area, and a large amount of fast food restaurants have become a natural part of the daily life. Public transportation is poor, at least compared to European standards, highways and large car parking areas encourage the US-American costume of driving cars. There are 4 million Puerto Ricans on the island, but an additional 4 million Puerto Ricans live at the mainland United States and the large Diasporas of US-American states like New York and Florida. The connection between the two communities are enforced by the particular Puerto Rican habit of back and forth migration, which have made the ties between the two countries solid and impossible to ignore (Duany 2002).

A reoccurring expression used several times to explain the ELA situation was “the better of two worlds”. The Puerto Rican ‘better of two worlds’ discourse rest on the premise of the ELA as a “salvation package” that has been given to the Puerto Ricans. This way they will be allowed to be part of the United States, and reap all the benefits that are associated with being a part of the United States of America. The never ending and difficult to control migration flow of Hispanics to the United States over the Mexican border is well known. This confirms that participation and belonging to the United States’ society is considered so good that all who have the opportunity should seek to achieve it. The Puerto Ricans are the only Hispanics/Latinos that have been given the right to participation and affiliation, and the right is theirs to keep. It is this participation and affiliation that have given Puerto Rico the highest standard of living in the entire Latin America. They participate in what is by many

considered the greatest nation and the greatest democracy on earth, and they have become consumers, just like the population of the mainland United States. They also receive economic funding regularly. At the same time they have the right to express their Puerto Rican culture, and keep Spanish as their first language, thus making them very different from mainstream US-culture. The United States do no longer try to interfere with the traditional Puerto Rican way of life, even the traditional cock fighting may take place within the limitations of US-law (even though illegal fights are said to be very common). All in all, this makes many Puerto Ricans subscribe to the idea that they live “the better of two worlds”, with cultural benefits from the United States, without having to live the actual US-American culture. The US-Americans are considered to be “the other” in this case, making it preferable to maintain the Puerto Rican culture and way of life, and thereby maintaining the familiar “us” part of the dichotomy.

“If you look, you’ll see that we have the habits of the Americans, we have a lot of cars, we have a lot of barbecues, we are a consuming society, we have shopping malls, a lot of fast food, we’re Americans if we like it or not, in many ways we are even more extreme than they are!(...) “Let me give you an example from my line of work: Right now, Puerto Rico is the place within the United States where there are most Burger Kings. There are 250 Burger Kings, we’re number one with the 10 Sam’s Clubs that we have here, seven are the ones that sell the most in the entire United States. The Sears that sell the most, is in Puerto Rico, the store within the JC Penney-system is in Puerto Rico, the store within Western Out (with highest turn over) is in Puerto Rico... so, we are more American than the Americans themselves when it comes to many things. We’re the number ones in all these things!” (Informant 10)¹¹

He explains the similarities between the Puerto Ricans and the rest of the US-Americans through their consumption, and consumption habits. Not only are they similar, but he also said that the Puerto Ricans have received so much of this influence that they exceed the US-Americans in many ways. He describes the “Americanism”, in this case exemplified as

¹¹ I have not verified the numbers in this quote, I find that whether they are accurate or not really does not affect the point the informant wants to make, and the use of discourse on which the informants point is based.

consumerist behavior, and how it has affected the Puerto Rican way of life, turning itself into an important part of who the Puerto Ricans are. Who someone is can be described through by the way he or she consumes. The reference to similarities, like in this quote, can also be an indication of a process of hybridity that has taken place.

“Because they teach that everything that comes from the United States is extraordinarily good, while what comes from our culture is not that good (...) Everything the United States touches is gold.” (Informant 5)

The *independentistas* argue that the economic wellbeing the United States - Puerto Rican relationship so far has brought to the island has not come without a cost. We see that the *independentistas* do not refer to a narrative that is not uncommon, in Puerto Rico or in other countries worldwide that feel that the US-American culture has taken up a position in their society. This narrative tells the tale of an imperialist culture that has spread throughout the world by the help of high-budget Hollywood productions, TV-series and multinational corporations. They are spreading the word of the excellence of the US-American culture with reference to the epic “American Dream”. The “accusations” of the *independentistas* are that the Puerto Rican people have been spellbound by this vision, and do not maintain a critical eye to the influence from the United States, nor appreciating and maintaining the Puerto Rican culture.

It is the ELA party who sees to enhance and nurture ‘the better of two world’s’ narrative. This consist of the notion that the ELA has created a situation that is *unique*, as previously discussed, and that offer the Puerto Ricans the better of the local cultures, with the better of what the United States have to offer when it comes to citizenship, economic transfers and cultural benefits. The discourse argues that this situation gives enormous benefits, and that the weak parts of the ELA just need to be improved and fixed, rather than rejecting the entire model that “*has served us well*”. We here enter the thematic field of Bhabha’s hybridity (Bhabha 2004). The US-American culture present in Puerto Rico has met the original Puerto Rican culture in a different way than what has been the case for most other Latin-American countries. The imperialism of the US-American culture has both been welcomed and loathed

by different countries on the American continent (Chevalier 1999). The Puerto Ricans have through their political connection with the United States have been very much influenced by the US-American culture. That fact that hybridity can be of the benefit to the colonized, like Bhabha argues, is of no doubt in the Puerto Rican case. 'The better of two worlds' discourse is considered positive, and makes up the platform upon which the entire idea of the ELA rest. If the discourse had not existed, and the population instead had a negative connotation, the ELA as an institution would have been in serious trouble. This is why we see the ELA-supporters subscribing to this view, and actively keeping the discourse alive by constantly referring to it and "molding" it. This is also the party that most actively is interested in maintaining the discourse in a positive light. Their political opponents also challenge the discourse by pointing to the shortcomings of the discourse. The 'better of two world's' narrative is new, and has emerged within the context of the hybrid, third space, to which Bhabha refer.

Here we see that the ELA-supporters consider the ELA not just as fought for, and won, but that the discourse also includes it to be considered to be somewhat of a "gift" – namely the access to the US-American culture and way of life. The PPD politicians and voters refer to this constantly in their defense of the political situation. Once again, we can identify this from the classical colonial discourse where the imperialist country wish to bring their culture and way of life into the colonized culture in order to "improve and develop" it, according to the imperialist's own preferences. In the ELA-supporters' point of view, this has been a blessing for the Puerto Rican community, as they have indeed maintained their own language and culture during the process. The sign 'ELA' has within the 'better of two world's' discourse been put in connection with having 'options', 'upgrading', 'consuming' and 'alternatives', and all seen in a positive light.

The *independentistas* reads into the 'better of two world's' discourse a downgrading of their own culture, even though they also admit the fact that the ELA seen in a historical context, has been favorable to Puerto Rico. Still they now find it to include a threat to the local idiosyncrasy and that the continued ELA is a symptom of continued abuse of hegemonic powers in an imperialistic way. Instead of being 'the better of two world's', one informant turned the saying around and called it "the worse of two world's", referring directly to, and

criticizing the classical discourse of the ELA-supporters in her expression “*everything the United States touches is gold*”.

The adoptions of US-American culture features can be considered a Bhabhaian form of mimicry, this implying taking over some of the colonizer’s cultural ways and habits. This makes the colonized and the colonizer more alike, thus blurring the differences between the two groups and thereby strengthening the colonial relations and ties. Undoubtedly, this has been the intentions of the United States, especially during the era of the Cold War (Morris 1995), yet also for the Puerto Ricans opposing to the political situations, the adoptions of everything “American” may be read to be a mimicry, fitting smoothly into their opposing discourse.

Cultural dependency goes on to be just a part of the picture in trying to understand the nature of the dependency relation between the United States and Puerto Rico, as the interaction between the island and mainland United States has been quite extensive since the 1950s. Also the economic situation has been undergoing a process of dependency.

4.4 The Economic Dependency – a Population Maintained

Puerto Rico has the highest standard of living in Latin-America (Smith 2007). The government is the biggest employer in Puerto Rico, and also most of the island’s industry is placed there by the United States (Whalen 2002). An extraction of US-industry from the island would have fatal consequences for the island’s employment. The United States early made Puerto Rico an Export Processing Zone to make the environment there favorable for their own investments, as the salaries were low and there were plenty of available work force (Dicken 2003, Knox et al 2003). Puerto Rico also received 11 000 million dollars in federal transfers in 2006¹²

Within the modern nation-state system, Puerto Rico has never been “on its own”. First several hundred years as a Spanish colony, and later as a part of the United States, the island

¹² US Bureau of Census <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2008/tables/08s1293.pdf> Consulted April 25th 2009

has never had a try at being independent (Trías Monge 1997). The transfers of money have become very important, and a look to the neighboring island in the west, La Hispaniola, containing both the Dominican Republic and Haiti, shows how life without the United States *might* look like.

Another identifiable point in this discourse is the lack of faith the Puerto Rican people have in their own elected politicians. Several big corruption scandals have been topics in the media the last years. This gives an impression of the Puerto Ricans elected as not capable, or willing, to administer the recourses of the island's economy, which again nurtures the feeling of dependency of the seemingly never ending stream of money from the north. At the same time this gives the impression of an immature and unreliable government, in whose hands no one wants to put the future destiny of a population of 4 million.

When asked to identify the biggest problem caused by the current status, the economic limitations it implied for the island was mentioned by all my informants. Especially the so called *Law of Cabotage*, which prohibit the island's commerce with anyone but US-companies and US-ports. This puts, of course, big limitations upon the development of trade (Guitérrez undated), and many of my informants considered it to be the biggest obstacle to the development of an independent economy on the island. Another aspect of the economic dependency is poverty. Poverty is of course a relative term. During the 3 months of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico I was told everything ranging from: "*We have no poor people in Puerto Rico*" to "*more than 25% of our population live in poverty*". Poverty is a word that is used a lot, but has no established meaning. This makes the term easy to manipulate, and easy to use for one's own advantage, whatever that may be. This makes the word at the same time useless and powerful. The power that lies within "poverty" is important, because regardless of definition, poverty indicates that someone (the country) is failing in its responsibility to care for its inhabitants – often considered to be the main task of the government. But still, the word is largely used, in all its inherent unspecificity. One may even say that it keeps being used to such a large extent exactly because of this unspecificity. Those who claim it does not exist, are accused of doing so to make it fit into their own political agenda, while others may

find it in their interest to even make the problem appear bigger, and then blame it in the incapability of the ELA-system.

A dependent economy like the Puerto Rican does not provide the best environment for fresh thinking and entrepreneurial spirit. Economic dependency turns into a vicious circle, from which it is difficult to exit. Within the economic dependency discourse lies also the foreign debt that a country has accumulated over the years, making it difficult to start from scratch as an independent country.

The ELA-supporters did not see it necessary to mention the economic dependency part of the Puerto Rican-United States' relationship. There is no need to problematize such a fact, when one does not want to change the fact that this dependency exists. Within their discourse, the maintaining is only a natural fact, accepted, taken for granted and wanted. This position indicates that the colonized has accepted his position. According to Bhabha, a stereotyping has taken place, as the Puerto Ricans have found, and accepted their place within a system, as the maintained party. This makes the entire colonial process hazier and more difficult to spot, as there are no obvious colonized "victim" and "hegemon", but rather a mutual understanding and toleration. This is one of the situations that Bhabha explains as part of his post colonial theories in which the stereotypes become blurry and difficult to spot, thereby contributing to the colonialism. Here, the statehooders here subscribe to the same discourse as the ELA-supporters, as they consider the maintaining to be an example of what life as a state should and would be like for the Puerto Ricans.

The *independentistas* see it differently:

"Since the 1970s the level of dependency has only increased, but it is expressed in direct economic transfers, not through governmental programs. So if you are in your house, calm, not doing anything, they bring you the check from the United States as a reward for doing nothing. (...) They don't have to participate to build a productive fatherland, make an effort..." (Informant 4)

The economic dependency discourse was of interest for the *independentistas* to bring up and into the light. The impression given of the current situation is that Puerto Rico is a country that is maintained, and that really does not have to give back to the person maintaining it in return. I would assume, based on the interviews with representatives of other status points of view, that this is a fact that many can agree upon. The difference first appears as the *independentista* criticize just this fact. The interviewee seems to want to appeal to the population's consciousness as he says that "*they don't have to participate to build a productive fatherland, make an effort*". It seems though, that the criticism he represents goes two ways, both to the United States for maintaining the Puerto Ricans to such a large degree, but also to the Puerto Ricans for not participating, or taking an effort in building the *fatherland*. The use of this word – 'fatherland' – would be directed especially to Puerto Ricans, and at the same time indicate a sense of 'pride', of 'responsibility' and 'maintenance of national heritage'. Within the *independentista* discourse lies also a reference to the population of being comfortable with the current situation, where they are cared for, "*not doing anything*" and "*don't have to participate*". A dependency narrative also refers to the auto-inforced "evil circle" of the maintained subjects. Involved in such a discourse is also a visible relation of hegemonic power in favor of the maintaining party. This is the party that holds the power to end the dependency relationship, keeping the dependent party on its toes to please the maintainer.

For the *independentistas* the level of economic dependency and the maintaining of the island experience are more problematic. They find that being maintained is problematic because it may lead of 'lack of initiative', 'unwillingness to take responsibility' and downright to affecting 'laziness', as we see in the *independentistas* expressions above. Here we see that the stereotyping Bhabha refers to is once again restored in the fact that the situation is not considered normal and taken for granted, but rather unnatural and questioned. According to Bhabha (2006), this can be a basis upon which rebellion against the colonizer can take place, and the regime can be fought against.

All economic decisions concerning Puerto Rico goes through the United States congress in Washington DC, as does many other important decisions that affect the island's citizens on a

daily basis, but in which they do not have the possibility to take part. This will be the topic of the following sub-chapter.

4.5 Puerto Rican Democracy: the Right To a “Second Class” Citizenship?

Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States and hold US-passports, but they do not have the right to participate in the presidential election, and their representative in Washington DC only have the right to speak, not to vote. Despite there being a local legislative branch in Puerto Rico, designed in the same manner as in the United States, with a Chamber of Representatives and Senate, the right of local legislation is limited, and all decisions made on the island has to go through Washington DC before being put into effect (Thornburgh 2007) . This has led many Puerto Ricans to consider themselves the holders of a “second class citizenship”. The United States also controls and decides who enters (and exits) the island, and the majority of the laws that apply to Puerto Ricans. The Puerto Ricans democratically elect their representation locally, and also their own Governor, in addition they do have a vote in the US-Democrats primary election. This means that in 2008, the Puerto Ricans were allowed to choose between Hillary Clinton and Barrack Obama, but not between Democrat Barrack Obama and his Republican opponent John McCain.

Those of my informants, who defended the ELA, and even one of those who criticized it, did not consider it a problem that they could not vote for president. Yes, they were deprived of basic rights, but did not really mind at all. The arguments presented to support this were that the Puerto Ricans simply did not care, because they after all did not consider mainland United States “their” country, neither the president of the United States “their” president. They have the right to vote in the primaries of the Democratic Party and elections are held.

“Interviewer: Puerto Ricans do not have the right to vote in the presidential elections, what do you think of that?”

Informant 2: I think that the Puerto Ricans do not want to vote in the presidential elections....

Interviewer: Why not?

Informant 2: Because that's a way of integration. Because that is a political process of a nation in which we do not feel part."

In this excerpt of an interview with a PPD-politician we see that the interviewee first states that the Puerto Rican people do not wish to participate in the presidential elections (at the time of the interview the presidential election was less than two months away), but rather that they are happy in their democratically marginal position. He then states that the right to vote would be a way to integrate and assimilate the Puerto Ricans to a society of which they do not belong. The continuous assimilation and "Americanization" of the Puerto Rican society by making this statement considered to be the same as having the full rights of a US-American:

"We are obliged to consume the products made in the United States. We're their main market. We have lost a lot in the way we prepare the local gastronomy." (Informant 11)

A statehooder said:

"We do not vote for president, the most important right within a democracy, the vertebral column of a democracy (...) If we can't vote for president, we mean nothing!" (Informant 7)

Unlike the *populares*, the statehooders do not intend to downplay the democracy discourse. On the contrary; in their discourse the importance of democracy is vital, through statements emphasizing the importance of a democracy in 'the modern world', and how it makes one an 'illegitimate child' by being deprived of the right to participate in the democracy, here illustrated principally by the 'right to vote' – 'the vertebral column of the democracy' for the republic's principal leader. This discourse is referred to as it is seen as essential for the party's process of reaching its political goal: to implement the island to the union as the 51st state. I would assume that the discursive right to assign meaning to the sign "democracy" is important for the Statehood Party. The democracy discourse in general is strong today in the

world in general and hegemonic in many areas, particularly in the Western hemisphere. Any modern, advanced and ‘developed’ country would like to say that they apply only the best democratic rights to their inhabitants. The lack of this democratic right, as basic as many consider it to be, also just contribute to the perception of having a “second-class citizenship”.

“Interviewer: I spoke to a popular who said that the Puerto Ricans don’t care that they can’t vote for president?”

Informant 6: That’s not correct. Just right now we had the process of the primaries here, for the Democrats, and the participation was quite extensive. (...) There IS interest (...)

Interviewer: So what he said is not true?

Informant 6: This is all part of the myths and the paradigm of perceptions that exist here, but facts show the contrary (...) I would say more than 50% would like the right to presidential vote”.

Emphasizing the lack of right to vote, and the discourse of second-class citizenship would very much be of interest to the statehood party, as annexation into the United States would bring a rapid end to it.

Along with the statehooders, it suits the PIPs political visions to attack the ELA by what it represents democratically, as it appeals to something that should have been an obvious right to every Puerto Rican, but that is not. The arguments are very much the same as we saw with the statehooders:

“Puerto Rico lives an anti-democratic regime. Democratic by definition, it’s the government of the people, and with its virtues, from this people, it’s a show of collective willingness which direct the political collectivity (...)The decisions most fundamental to the destiny of Puerto Rico is taken in another country. For example, the US- congress approve the laws that apply in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico does not

participate in this process, because it has a representative that is a decorative figure in the process of American politics. Second: the laws are signed by the president elected by the Americans, not the Puerto Ricans.” (Informant 4)

The ELA-supporters claim that Puerto Ricans are not interested in extending their democratic rights, and that they are satisfied with the current situation. Read into the classical colonial discourse, this can be seen as a sign of dependency towards the colonialist, in this case the United States. ‘Not interested’ is put in connection with the notion that the United States is ‘not our country’, and that voting for president would be a ‘way of integration’ into the United States. This, to the ELA-supporters, is not wanted.

The statehooders and *independentistas* subscribe to a different view. In this discourse, full democracy and the right to vote are vital to make Puerto Rico a fully developed country. Despite the two parties having different opinions of the best way to achieve full democracy and a “first class citizenship”, the foundational discourse is the same. The dependency described so far can also cause a different implication, the fear of political change, and especially the fear of independence:

“Interviewer: Are the Puerto Ricans afraid of independence?”

Informant 11: Well. Yes. And with good reason, with a good reason. In a country where it’s consumed without producing, where clothes, shoes, and food are something you have thanks to federal funding (...) where education, the scholarships, federal funding to the department of education, department of health, where the jobs are dependent on these funds. Of course they are afraid of independence. Because they are dependent. ”

This fear of change in general, and independence in particular will be the topic of the next chapter.

4.6 Summing Up

Having ‘dependency’ as a nodal point, I have shown how the island’s dependency towards the United States is considered differently within the political platforms of the three main political parties. The ELA-supporting party mostly denies that Puerto Rico is indeed a colony, but defends their points of view through use of arguments well known from this ‘classical’ colony discourse, as it was expressed by Said in his ground breaking work “*Orientalism*”. Also the statehood party do to a certain degree subscribe to the same use of discourses as the ELA-supporters, while their political opponents, the *independentistas*, do indeed consider Puerto Rico a colony, and have their politics based on an opposing discourse, where the dependency is both challenged and questioned. The statehooders also consider the island to be a colony, and largely, but not always, oppose to the classical colonial discourse of the ELA-supporters. The Statehooders make up an example of how available discourses may be subscribed to and used according to how it fits ones needs, as expressed by discourse psychology’s approach to discourses.

5. The Fear of Independence

“I remember once, I was at a school, and we were talking about the economic side of a possible independency, and this girl looked at me and said: “Look, it’s just that I’m not ready to cut sugar canes” (Informant laughing) She said this to me! With a serious face. And I asked her, she was young, if she had ever seen a single sugar cane in her entire life. She said no. The sugar cane belongs to the agrarian period of the Puerto Rican history. The sugar cane, along with the coffee, belong to an era that is long gone: It’s been radically transformed, and there will not be sugar plantations either.” (Informant 4)

This quote is an excerpt from an interview with an *independentista*, showing us that the political option of independence to some also includes insecurities and fear. Later, as the interviews went on, it soon became clear that hand in hand with the many faceted dependency the Puerto Ricans experience came fright of independence, a conscious and out spoken fright, which also worked on a sub-conscious level. In this chapter I will show some of the sub-discourses that emerged when talking about a possible independence for Puerto Rico. The fear shown by the Puerto Ricans in my interviews, in daily conversations and as it is expressed in the media has many facets, but the common denominator seems to be “fright of the unknown”, and “knowing what you have, but not what you are going to get”. The sign “fear” is a nodal point around which the discourse analysis of this chapter will take place. I will show how this fear takes place in a marginalization of the *independentistas* and independence as a political option, how independence is linked to socialism and communism, and how not knowing what life without association to the United States will make difficult for the *independentistas* to reach out with their political message.

5.1 The Marginalization of Independence

The profound discourses that constitute the fright of independence have existed for quite some time, and are made up of several elements. The common denominator is that a fear of independence has been created, making the political job that the Puerto Rican Independence Party tries to do, more difficult. A left wing political group fighting for the same political objective as the Independence Party has received attention during many decades. Despite the

goals being the same, the left wing group has taken to violent measures to try to achieve their goal. Most famous is their attempt to assassinate the United States' President Truman in 1959 (Berríos Martínez 1997, Trías Monge 1997). The group is regarded a terrorist organization by the FBI¹³, and the group's extensive activities have contributed to giving the fight for independence a bad name.

The following harassment and the general rendering suspect of *independentistas* made life more difficult for those who subscribe to the same political view, although distance themselves from violent methods to achieve the goal. The extensive incarceration has painted a picture of *independentistas* being criminals and suspicious people. During my fieldwork, asking only general questions about the *independentistas*, I saw that this is indeed a very much established discourse adopted by many Puerto Ricans. In the aftermath of the persecution and black listing a period of time started when the Puerto Rican and the US-government in cooperation made "files" containing information on the whereabouts of suspected *independentistas*, their political activity and acquaintances, which further incriminated and suspicioned the *independentistas*.

I also experienced first hand that the *independentistas* were not always spoken well of. During my fieldwork I was living in a rather large building consisting of thirty-something apartments. An elderly gentleman spent most of his days standing in the building's front door small talking to everyone who came and went. He soon got to know me, and I also told him about the fieldwork and the topic of my thesis. One time we were briefly discussing the subject, and he said, as if to reassure me this was a "good" building and a "good" neighborhood: "Don't worry, he said, there are only *estadolibristas* (*ELA-supporters*) and *penepés* (*statehooders*) living in this building". By this he indicated that the last political group, those favoring independence, was not represented among the residents, making it a safe and good place to stay. The skepticism towards the *independentistas* could also make life difficult for those who had actively and publicly taken a political stand.

¹³ The FBI Congressional Testimony "The Terrorist Threat Confronting the United States"
<http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress02/watson020602.htm> Consulted April 7th 2009

During these actions, by incriminating the simple act of having a political opinion, a discourse is created and fear is sowed within the rest of the population. The signal sent is that these people need to be locked up for the good of society, as their opinions make them dangerous to their surroundings.

The fact that the persecution took place is undisputed, but this does not mean that everybody wants to admit that it also affected how people view the *independentistas* and their political work today. José Trias Monge was originally a member of the ELA-party, he was a well known judge and also one of the architects behind the ELA agreement with the United States. It came as quite a surprise when he 5 years before his death published a book on Puerto Rico containing the following quote: “*Both the Commonwealth and statehood parties¹⁴ have instilled in Puerto Ricans a deep-seated fear of independence*” (1997:183). All my informants were asked if they agreed on this quote or not. Among the politicians I interviewed, both PIPs agreed, but only one out of two PPDs and PNPs. I also found that many of them tried to avoid having to answer just this question, and talked about the author in general, or something similar, instead of answering the questions. Some then reluctantly answered when asked the question for the second time, while yet others were unwilling to take a stand, despite being asked several times. In these cases I just had to let it go, and get on with the next question I had planned. I assume that the interviewees were uncomfortable with the question, and considered it to be a sensitive issue. The ELA critics (even though not *independentistas*) criticized the parties for deliberately inflicting fright among the Puerto Ricans. Was this a deliberate strategy on their behalf? Some of my informants certainly seemed to think so.

“First is the discourse of horror, in which to support independence is to support economic ruin, starving to death, being invaded by malaria and dengue. It’s all at this level (laughing). Second, more than a discourse of horror, are the acts of terror. With people put to jail, and the files.” (Informant 4)

“ ‘We can not be independent, because we will die of hunger, they will take away all our roads, there will be no electricity’... this is what they say. They also say it nowadays.” (Informant 5)

¹⁴ Several statehood parties have existed during the time of the ELA, but only the PNP still exists today (Trias Monge 1997)

This is how the *independentistas* themselves sum up how people perceive independence. Both *independentistas* mention the fright of economical consequences as a major cause of concern among the population, along with evidence of that the fear also brings with it certain irrational elements (“*being invaded by malaria and dengue*”, “*we will die of hunger, they will take away all our roads, there will be no electricity*”). Here we see how the different positions are constructed, the *independentistas* are answering back, putting emphasis on the irrational part of the marginalization discourse. By doing this they disempower the discourse that the political opponent refer to.

The *independentistas* find themselves stigmatized because of their political stand. One informant grew up in a ELA friendly home, and got this response from his mother as he took a job within the Independence Party:

“My mother worried about me, she still does, she says: “What are you doing? You could have been a lawyer, you graduated from Harvard, you could have earned a life and lots of money, vote for whom ever you want, but don’t get involved in this”. And she said it as an act of love!” (Informant 4)

It is a recognized fact that the *independentistas* have suffered from political persecution. One informant, a ELA-party politician said this:

“The United States persecuted the independentistas. This is a historic fact, and both the statehood party and my own party collaborated to this. It’s a stain in our history; I see it clearly as a stain...” (Informant 2)

This informant, who describes himself to be “*left of centre within the party*”, clearly saw, and acknowledged, that the persecution of *independentistas* took place, and he could also see that his own party had been a part of that process. He was asked to take a stand on the quote of Trías Monge stating that the dominant parties had participated in inflicting fear of independence in the people, he answered the following:

“I’d say that’s true. I’d say that’s fair. It’s fair to say that. I don’t think we have done it on our own, I think the United States have helped a lot, but we have a problem, particularly during the Cold War on installing the people of Puerto Rico with a fuller sense of self-sufficiency. I think that has changed a lot in my party, and I’m glad it has” (Informant 2)

The other politician representing the same party, had the following comment to the same quote: “*José Trías Monge was an important man in our party (...) I respect his point of view, but I do not share it*” (Informant 3). He had to be asked several times, and did not wish to elaborate his answer any more than this. One PPD-voter answered this: “*They haven’t done that (...) José Trías Monge deceived his own people, why wasn’t his book written in Spanish?*”¹⁵ (Informant 9)”.

My statehood informant were not very willing to comment on the quote about inflicting fear in the Puerto Rican population. One simply commented that José Trías Monge had died “*a disappointed man*”, while the other, after being asked the question twice answered that “*it’s a reality, and we have to be responsible about it*”, but then changed the subject, and were not willing to comment any further. It seems that Trías Monge’s accusations have not been well received, and there is little willingness to take any responsibility for the marginalization of the *independentistas* and independence in the Puerto Rican society.

One visible consequence of the marginalization discourse is the lack of *independentista* media coverage. The *independentistas* feel underrepresented in the Puerto Rican media. There are few, if any, journalists who show up to the party’s press conferences and the party has much smaller economic funds to do advertising in the newspapers or mass media compared to the opponents. This makes their dependence upon the “free” publicity of the media even more important to them.

“When we have a conference, we invite 30 reporters. Only one shows up. Or none. This is the reality of our country. The people who control the media want things to continue like they are now (...) or they belong to the Ferré Rangel Group¹⁶ (...) and this happens to us all the time. It’s a discrimination of the independency, and it is part of our problem to reach out to people. The media does not permit us to do that!”
(Informant 5)

The informant then explained how the party’s candidate for Governor is not invited to participate in debates with the other parties’ candidates, due to lack of “space” or “time”.

¹⁵ The book was originally written in English, but has later been translated into Spanish.

¹⁶ Ferré Rangel Group is the company that owns and controls the majority of the Puerto Ricans newspapers. The company founder and current owner is closely related to the PNP-party founder Don Luis A. Ferré (Trias Monge 1997)

“This is part of the anti-independence culture on this island (...) what else is to be expected from the media of communication which are owned by the economic elite of this country, who dislike the message of the independentistas.” (Informant 4)

A statehooder had this comment on the lack of media coverage:

“ Informant 6: Maybe because they are of no interest to the people, they don’t debate the subjects that are really of interest to the people (...)

Interviewer: The independentistas themselves answered that it was because the owners of the newspapers are statehooders...?

Informant 6: I think it is an invented story (...) but if it was true, I would say that it is part of the idiosyncrasy that reflect on us, the people. If the owners control it , they do it to reflect us, because we are the ones who buy them, the products that these newspapers make up. Besides, they have their own newspaper, Claridad... “

The political opponents agree that *independentistas* do not get much media coverage. Some blame it on the fact that the owners of the media are PNP-friendly, while others just think the media coverage reflects that the *independentistas* are of little interest to the population reading the newspapers.

The argument that the *independentistas* are of no interest to the people becomes a part of the marginalization discourse, and does not serve to the *independentistas*’ advantage. It has grown to be a hegemonic discourse. Also, it is a discourse that will grow stronger, in the disfavor of the *independentistas*, as long as it keeps going. The media coverage situation is a consequence of this discourse position in the society, and serves as a good example of how the discourses stop being abstract phenomena and start to turn into real actions – with the following consequences.

Bhabha’s “*anxiety*” is to a large degree present in Puerto Rico. The fear of what might happen to the economic situation, and thereby also the Puerto Rican society as the population know it today, if the economic security guaranteed through the ELA is discontinued is very much present. Several of my informants mentioned this fact. There are still people alive today who remember what a pre-ELA Puerto Rico was, and one of my informants had several

times heard elderly people say things like “*My first shoes were given to me by Luis Muñoz Marín*”¹⁷ (Informant 1). The memories of an agricultural society are still present, and maintain a certain amount of anxiety, thus keeping the discourse vibrant. Anxiety is also present on the intra-Puerto Rican level. Harassment and criminalization of a political group both by the United States and Puerto Rican Governments, has also contributed to keeping the anxiety alive in the society. Bhabha argues that the political situation makes for this kind of instability in the political setting, but this is at the same time the chance the colonized has to rebel.

Also, *stereotypes* can be identified within such a setting as the one we see here. The stereotypes are what allow the prejudices and discriminatory actions to exist and persist. Stereotyping can be identified on both international (here understood as United States-Puerto Rican) level, and on intranational level. Once again the discourses show to stereotype the Puerto Ricans by being subjects of the United States; citizens, but not quite as true citizens as the mainland population. The dependency discourse, for example economic or cultural dependency, which some regards as going on expense of the Puerto Rican self esteem and national culture, maintains this difference between “us-the Puerto Ricans” and “them-the US-Americans”. Also, stereotyping exist between the Puerto Ricans themselves. A gross stereotyping takes place of the *independentistas* which make the political job they do, increasingly difficult, and their political message is not even understood as a serious political alternative by many Puerto Ricans. According to Bhabha’s theories, this should be an inherent aspect in society that create a basis for rebellion to the oppressive power – the colonizer. In the Puerto Rican case the rebellion towards the colonizer has not yet been seen, quite the contrary. Despite all the problems and the seemingly never ending debate concerning the status issue, no solution appears to be in sight.

The lack of rebellion can be explained by the rather favorable conditions the ELA agreement makes up. Puerto Rico may be considered a colony by many, or most, but cannot be said to be one in the traditional way colonies are normally understood. The Puerto Rican’s

¹⁷Luis Muñoz Marín Known to be the founding father and first Governor of the ELA (Trias Monge 1997)

acceptance of the situation cannot be understood as a result of the Stockholm Syndrome either, as one of my *independentista*-informants suggested (Informant 5). There seem to be an inherent criticism and awareness over the difference between “us- Puerto Ricans” and “them- US Americans” and the willingness to join the union, which should also be considered a natural next step here, as the offer has indeed been made. The criticism of the US-cultural influence is present, yet by some considered to be unavoidable:

“Informant 11: The ELA, in its ambiguity, and with its conditions and limitations offers the better of two worlds. The US-American citizenship and the development, affirm our culture and identity, nationality and the way to feel, think and act....”

Interviewer: But the two cultures affect each other, no? The Americanism affects the Puerto Rican identity?

Informant 11: Well, yes, but that’s just the way it is.”

5.2 Socialism - Radicalism - Communism

The Puerto Rican Independence Party identify itself as a social democratic party, with the principal political goal to achieve full independence from the United States for Puerto Rico. The party is still considered to be the most radical party participating in the contemporary political debate, and currently the only party which has the political status they fight for as a part of the party’s name. The party is a full member party in the organization “Socialist International”¹⁸, and has on several occasions participated in gatherings with other social democratic parties.

Socialism and socialists have, within the United States, and Puerto Rico, been associated with communism, revolutionary and violent behavior. During history we have seen that the term socialism has been mixed up with both radicalism and communism, making them in some cases bordering terms, and at other occasions practically the same thing. Socialism belongs to the political left wing, and the politics of the United States, to which Puerto Rico is a part, is known to be more right-oriented than for example the political parties of Europe. Of course,

¹⁸ Socialist International <http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticlePageID=931> Consulted April 7th 2009

a social democratic party exist¹⁹ also in the United States, but the party has never been given the possibility to really participate and politically act in the bi-partial political system of the United States where two parties are hegemonic and leave little attention for the rest of the political actors.

The discourse presented here is familiar both within the United States and Puerto Rico. A political image has been created within the US-context, especially during the time of the Cold War, to make a clear front and a binary separation between the “us” of the United States and the West, defending the right of the individual and capitalism, and “them” to the political left. “They” fought against the United States and the West, and they went by the name of either socialists or communists. Regardless of their name, they represented the “other”, and the political enemy in a politically binary world, and were an enemy of the American way of life, of the liberty of the individual, imperialism and capitalism. This discourse is for example evident in how FBI describes their domestic terrorism:

“The second category of domestic terrorists, left-wing groups, generally professes a revolutionary socialist doctrine and view themselves as protectors of the people against the "dehumanizing effects" of capitalism and imperialism. They aim to bring about change in the United States and believe that this change can be realized through revolution rather than through the established political process”²⁰.

Only the first sentence here include the words “terrorist”, “left-wing”, “socialist doctrine” and “capitalism and imperialism”. And, they “aim to bring about change” through revolution. Revolution is here in direct association with terrorism, and indirectly with violence and undemocratic measures, which is known to be how terrorists behave. This quote, being the official opinion of the United States, expressed through their Federal Bureau of Investigation, shows how an enemy image may be constructed and maintained. The connection between the political left, socialism and communism, once well established, reaches the position of a hegemonic discourse, and the notion becomes almost self-maintaining. The United States established discourse here identified, lives also in the Puerto Rican society. The dependency

¹⁹ Democratic Socialists of America <http://www.dsausa.org/dsa.html> consulted April 7th

²⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Congressional Testimony <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress02/watson020602.htm> Consulted April 7th 2009

relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has brought ideologies, ideas and discourses to the Caribbean Island. Even though most Puerto Ricans, and US-citizens will agree that the two groups do not make up a combined “us”, at least they agree on the fact that the socialists/communists constitute the “other”.

Being the party that plea independence it is considered to be the most radical, and most left oriented political option which easily bring thoughts over to socialism - which easily is associated with radicalism and communism, following the chain of equivalence then further on to revolution, violence, instability and societal disorder. To a large degree this seems to be a chain of equivalence, the words become intertwined within the discourse, and the different ideologies suddenly becomes difficult to tell apart.

“...because here, the word socialism equals panic, right?” (Informant 5)

Before the 2008 election, the Independence Party promoted itself as the “radical option”. Considering the political landscape in the United States and Puerto Rico today it would be the most radical option available to the Puerto Rican voters, yet it can be seen as a rather risky strategy, since “radical” is a word that sounds somewhat frightening both on the average US-American and the average Puerto Rican. I asked a PIP-politician about this:

“Interviewer: Don’t you worry that the word “radical” might sound a bit scary to many voters?”

PIP-politician: In Puerto Rico? It isn’t just a bit scary, it’s very scary!” (Informant 4)

The slogan seems to have served the Independence Party neither positively nor negatively, as the party achieved approximately the same percentage of the votes as it also has in previous elections²¹ . Puerto Rican voters are assumed to be true to “their” party from election to election. Representatives of all the three parties confirmed this, so one can assume that the voters would have voted for the Independence Party regardlessly.

²¹ Latin American Herald Tribune: <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=334663&CategoryId=14092> Consulted July 31st, 2009.

The ELA-politicians I interviewed clearly were very careful not to say anything negative about their colleagues in the Independence Party, and they assured me that they all were on a very friendly basis. The *independentistas* themselves agreed to this, saying that most of their political opponents were friendly and respectful. The PPD and PNP were also very careful not using the words socialism and/or communism when asked questions about the independence-movement. They are probably aware that this sort of naming can be risky, and found it wiser to avoid the terms. Another informant, an elderly man and faithful voter for the PPD, summed up his lack of support to the Independence Party: “*It’s because they’re revolutionaries!*” (Informant 9)

The PNP politicians I interviewed were also careful in bringing up the socialist/communist discourse in the interviews. This does not necessarily mean that they don’t subscribe to the discourse at all, but I would rather think that they are more careful as they spoke to me, knowing which discourses the words constitute. In contrast, the PNP voters were not afraid of the terms socialism and communism, and used them to express their point of views on the *independentistas*:

“*Why people are afraid of independence? Because all the independentistas have signs of a socialism which is not like the kind of socialism that exist in Denmark, or Norway or Sweden, it’s a leninist socialism, Russian style, the worst of them all...*” (Informant 10)

Later on in the interview he said:

“*...but what we are dealing with here, those who want us to be independent are the same kind of people as [Venezuelan President Hugo] Chávez. They are socialists. They are communists. I don’t say that socialism is bad, because there are many kinds of socialism...*” (Informant 10)

Despite the informant admitting to the fact that there are many kinds of socialism, he still seems to feel that the Independence Party represents the same kind of socialism that is seen in Venezuela. This socialism is then equaled with communism. This is confirmed by the first quote, where he calls the political ideology “Leninist socialism” which refers to the Leninism known from the Soviet Union.

“*No, they [PPD and PNP] have not inflicted fright of independency. On the contrary. I would say that people here are seeking their information. It’s not the PPD and PNP that has inflicted this fear, it’s just that here the level of education is so high, most*

people go to university, the universities are full. People are not stupid! They read, they use the internet, they know what's going on in Cuba, what happened in Russia, what happened in East-Germany. They know what has happened to other countries[...] The people know, and they are scared of losing their Puerto Rican way of life.” (Informant 10)

In this excerpt we see that the informant frees the dominating parties of the charges of inflicting fear, but rather refers to the fear as something obvious, something common sense that everyone is aware of and can understand. The informant draws heavily upon the discourse of socialism equaling communism, and that independence means becoming like Cuba, Russia and East-Germany.

In the case of this discourse we see that “socialism/socialist” is a nodal point upon which a chain of equivalence easily follows. As shown before, the connection and connotations between “socialism” and “communism” are strong, leading further on to “revolution”, which equals “violence” and “big changes in society”. This discourse existing both within the United States and Puerto Rico as such, brings an enormous amount of fright. The discourse leads to a formation of collective identity among the population, first and foremost as an identity united by having the same enemy and a common threat to society.

5.3 “One Knows What One Has, But Not What One Will Get” - Representations of Cuba and Haiti

“That’s what everybody thinks: that independence does not work, that we’re going to die of hunger, that all the McDonald’s are going to disappear! (Laughing) Really, that we are going to have to suffer a period of poverty, and they are quick to compare it with The Dominican Republic and other countries that are independent.” (Informant 1)

The fear of independence in Puerto Rico is not only connected to skepticism to what *individuals* might do to the society in which they live, but also a fright of what a life as an independent country will be like. The economic dependency, as mentioned in the previous chapter, makes it difficult to imagine what Puerto Rico would look like without the United States. The economic situation in Puerto Rico is not known to be particularly good. In 2006 the Puerto Rican government had a two week paralysis, schools were shut down and salaries

of more than 100.000 employees were not paid²². After a two week period the United States had to step in to solve the situation. The same year the Puerto Rican Government had a 406 million dollar deficit (El País May 10th 2006). Since then, the government has continued to run more smoothly, even though corruption still is a major problem on the island, and the island's official dept is continuously increasing, being at 52,9 billion dollars per June 30th 2008²³.

Today Puerto Rico enjoys one of the highest Gross National Products *per capita* (GNP) in the entire Latin America²⁴. Well aware of the fact that the island is quite small, and does not have a lot of natural recourses, it is commonly accepted that the wealth the population benefit from, comes from the United States. The Hispanic culture makes comparison with other Latino countries natural, and the Puerto Ricans do not even have to look far for striking examples of how life could have been if the political situation had been different. Puerto Rico and the island *La Hispaniola*, situating both The Dominican Republic and The Republic of Haiti, are separated only by the Mona Passage. These countries have a history heavily affected by poverty, anti-democratic governments, *coup d'états*, unstable political conditions and civil wars (Chevalier 1999). Haiti still suffers from political instability and civil war. In addition Haiti has the lowest GNP in all Latin America. Many of my informants found it natural to refer to the difficult circumstances the Haitians have to deal with when Puerto Rican independence become an issue of discussion. Dominican immigrants are well known to the Puerto Ricans as large numbers of them arrive in Puerto Rico, legally or illegally, hoping to make a better living for themselves. Like many of these illegal immigrants I had no car during my stay in Puerto Rico, and I met and spoke to some of them while we endlessly waited for the bus. Not being able to keep a car, these Dominicans have made up the new lower class, and suffer the daily frustration of depending on the island's rather

²² El País: "La parálisis financier de Puerto Rico deja sin paga a casi 100.000 funcionarios" May 10th 2006

²³ Banco Gubernamental de Fomento para Puerto Rico "Public dept outstanding June 30, 2008" http://www.gdb-pur.com/investors_resources/public_debt/02.03.01.PublicDebtOutJune2008.pdf Consulted April 24th 2009

²⁴ CIA World Fact Book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html?countryName=Puerto%20Rico&countryCode=rq®ionCode=ca&rank=68#rq> Consulted August 1st 2009

malfunctioning system of buses. The car has come to be a symbol of the American freedom. Both owning a car and the right to drive, is as highly regarded by Puerto Ricans as by the US-Americans in general. For a people so heavily dependent on their cars to get around, the Puerto Ricans fear having to lower their standards and consumption to the level of the Dominicans. The car, in this case, becomes a sign within the discursive analysis (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002).

Also, the not too distant Cuba offers a scenario of horror for the Puerto Ricans. The islands are both geographically and culturally very close. The Cuban revolution brought a non-democratic reign that has lasted from 1959 up to this day. Whether this actually represent the communism known from the Soviet times or not is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it sure has affected the public's opinion and made it easy to compare ones own situation up against. The continued US-embargo and alienation of the Cuban political regime along with the stories told by exile-Cubans, of which there are quite a few on the island, keep the fright and horror alive. If Puerto Rico should become independent, and the left-wing *independentistas* should get their way, many are afraid that Puerto Rico will end up being the new Cuba. Logically, what seems to be the best way of avoiding this, is to stick with the country that represent the exact opposite of Cuba, that gives the impression of represent freedom and liberty, defends capitalism and has clearly condemned the Cuban regime for the last 50 years. It seems the saying "one knows what one have, but not what one might get" is suitable to explain this discourse.

"Interviewer: Some people to whom I have spoken say that the people of Puerto Rico understand independence to equal poverty.

Informant 5: Yes. I was taught that at school.

Interviewer: Really?

Informant 5: Yes, yes. Independence is to be like Haiti. This has been taught to everybody.

Interviewer: They teach this in schools?

Informant 5: Of course! We are all a product of this."

Also this *Independentista* grew up in a ELA-friendly home, and claims to have been the subject of the same arguments and discourses as the population as a whole while growing up.

Also the second informant who belonged to the Independence Party mentioned the island's geographical neighbors:

“Puerto Rico is, as you know, the smallest of the Large Antilles, and it has had to be the neighbor of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba”
(Informant 4)

Outside of these single quotes, my *independentista* informants chose not to put too much emphasize on the comparison with Haiti and Cuba. Instead they chose to focus more on the fact that even though Puerto Rico is a geographically small country, there are many other small countries that have managed quite well on their own. This discourse is thus something the *independentistas* do not respond back on, but rather a discourse that lives among their political opponents. This tells us that it is the other parties who have had the power to create this discourse, and this is where it has emerged in the first place. The non-responsive attitudes of the *independentistas* are rather a sign of them trying to create their own counter-discourses by focusing on the fact that even though being a small country, the nation could indeed have a future as a politically and economically stabile state.

Also, the Cuba/Haiti discourse was not detectible in the PNP politicians. But the PNP voters showed that they subscribed to the discourse. For example, a statehooder sums up the different status options available: *“...or we can be a part of the union, we already know the benefits it will bring, or we will be an independent country, and risk to end up like Cuba”* (Informant 10)..

The fright of what might happen if Puerto Rico gained independence is not limited to economic and political measures. One informant, a man in his fifties, originally from Colombia, but who has lived more than 30 years on Puerto Rico and holds a US-American citizenship said:

“I’m telling you, sincerely, that if Puerto Rico becomes independent, I’m out of here! That’s in my plans. Here I cannot stay, because something terrible is going to happen, first and foremost a repression, against people like myself, foreigners. Because I’m telling you, I have been living here for 33 years, and a lot of people think I’m Puerto Rican, and I have never felt discriminated against, but in the moment that a change like that occurs we’re going to see nationalism and we’re going to suffer – all of us

who are not from here, because the system will discriminate against those who were not born here” (Informant 10)

This informant, despite being Latin-American and socially and economically well off in the Puerto Rican society clearly fears that independence will cause riot-like conditions in the society. He seems to have a vision of independence creating anarchistic and violent conditions under the excuse of nationalism. He mentions nationalism explicitly, but as the public opinion is today it seems unlikely riots that like this should appear as a sign of joy and happiness due to a new political situation, but rather as a symptom of fear or as the result of a power vacuum that might appear in association with changing governments. It is clear that the informant does not trust the *independentistas* and what they stand for, neither their ability to control the society should they ever get the opportunity.

In the prolonging of the “socialist/socialism” discourse, the chain of equivalence bring attention out of the relatively small island, and on to the neighboring islands where “violence” and “revolution” are familiar phenomena. This gives legitimacy and confirmation to the socialism/socialist discourse, and easily gives it a position as a hegemonic discourse.

The fright of turning into a new Cuba, Haiti or Dominican Republic also has its basis in the dependency discussed in the previous chapter. This fits into the classical colonial discourse of “the white man’s burden”, where it is the white man’s (in this case the United States’) job first to bring, and now also to maintain the political and economic stability in Puerto Rico, with Cuba and Haiti representing the extreme cases of how one can risk to end up when an imperial power does not take charge. Puerto Rico, being the “noble savage” is to allow this process of improvement to take place.

5.4 Summing Up

The Independence Party find its political agenda difficult to bring out to the people of Puerto Rico, and its politics difficult to put into action because it is standing up against two different discourses: First and foremost the classical colonial discourse represented by the dominating parties, are saying that the island will be better off in a political relationship, of some sort, with the United States. Also, a general discourse of fear is constructed both as a

result of the classical discourse, and a constructed image of the “other” – the political and strategic enemy through the Cold War era. It is on the basis of this discourse that the chain of equivalence have appeared between the signs ‘socialism’- ‘radicalism’- ‘communism’- ‘undemocratic regimes’ and ‘dictatorship’.

Discourse psychology considers discourses to be like recourses, available to each and everyone who wishes to make use of them. Collective identities have been created around each political status option, and they are based in different sets of discourses. The Independence Party is representing a discourse in opposition to the dominating discourses, as represented by the Popular Party. Their political opponent, the Statehood Party, use different discourses as the basis of arguing different cases; sometimes resting on the classical colonial discourse along with the Popular Party, other times subscribing to the challenger discourse like the Independence Party.

6. Conclusions

The starting point of this thesis was the notion and taken-for-granted notion that a nation state is something wished for and desired by all self-named ethnic groups. Many are surprised to hear that a lot of Puerto Ricans do not see it as a goal for its nation to achieve a nation state, but are rather satisfied and happy with being a territory, a Commonwealth and Free Associated State. The main objective has been to identify the discourses that make up the particular political arrangement of the *Estado Libre Asociado* – the Free Associated State – “the Commonwealth” between Puerto Rico and the United States. I have analyzed how the three dominating parties, the Statehooders, the *Independentistas* and the ELA-defenders create and reproduce the discourse in which the politics is based, and how they use them to defend their political stand concerning the Puerto Rico’s sovereignty to the United States.

This thesis is a discourse analysis based on theory from the social constructionist and post modernistic theory. It is based on the interviews I collected during my field work in the San Juan Metropolitan Area in Puerto Rico, fall 2008. The tools for my analysis are mainly taken from Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory focusing on perceptions and understandings of the ELA. I have used post colonial theory, principally from Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha to supplement the analysis.

The following research questions were the basis of this thesis:

What are the main components of the ELA-discourse according to the different parties?

How are these discourses involved in making up the parties’ stand on Puerto Rico’s sovereignty to the United States?

I found that at least two sub-discourses were identified within the ELA-discourse. Most prominent were the dependency-discourses and the fear of independence. Also, the three parties identify differently towards the ELA and the discourses identified. Within the dependency discourses I identify five sub-discourses: a colony discourse, an ELA-discourse, a cultural dependency discourse, an economic dependency discourse and a

democracy discourse. One should think that these elements of dependency help strengthen the ties between Puerto Rico and the United States, enforcing the ELA, but it turns out that some signs are floating signifiers that also can be used to help take the opposite position. All informants were asked if they considered Puerto Rico a colony, because I found the sign 'colony' to be a floating signifier. The majority did consider it a colony, and those who didn't were found amongst the ELA-supporters. They saw the sign 'colony' as antagonism to the sign 'ELA'. For them, the sign 'colony' is related to signs like 'slave-like', 'involuntarily' and 'being dominated'. Statehooders consider their island a colony. In this case 'colony' is opposite to 'development' and 'change'. It is 'discrimination' and 'un-free'. The *Independentistas* relate the sign 'colony' to 'lack of self control' and constantly refer to the colony of Puerto Rico, and the need for 'decolonialization'. The informants portrayed the ELA as an institution that is very Puerto Rican, something "ours". Everybody I talked to agreed upon the fact that the ELA had indeed served Puerto Rico well at the beginning, also those who found it to be time for changing the political status, found the ELA to be positive for Puerto Rico in the historical time and context in which it was created. 'ELA' brought thoughts to the well known and safe 'us', 'by and for Puerto Ricans'. The ELA -supporters see the ELA as a necessity for the continued development of the Puerto Rican society. There is a certain parallel to the "white mans burden" discourse, known from Said's *Orientalism*, to be found here, as they see this type of connection with the United States necessary for their country to develop. Many consider the particular political relationship to have brought with it "the better of two worlds"- the best of the American way of life, while at the same time maintaining the Caribbean and Latin essence. The economic dependency discourse Puerto Rico is heavily dependent upon funding from the United States, and the employment the relationship with the United States brings with it. Some parties problematize this notion to a large degree, while the ELA- supporting party sees no reason to question it, and consider it an "natural" part of the Puerto Rican-United States relationship. For the *independentistas*, the economic dependency discourse comes in opposition to signs as 'pride', 'fatherland' and 'responsibility'. The ELA then brings on a situation where there is no need to be loyal to the 'fatherland' and to make an effort to bring the country forward. Instead they find it to bring 'lack of initiative' and downright 'laziness'. The lack of complete democracy within the ELA is a problem both for Statehooders and *Independentistas*. Statehooders consider themselves

to be ‘illegitimate children’ within their homeland, the United States, and they consider themselves ‘second class citizens’. The ELA-supporting party claims that Puerto Ricans are not interested in taking more part in democracy than they already are, because the population is satisfied with the current situation. Also here we can find traces of the classical colonial discourse of “the white man’s burden” as the Puerto Ricans leave it upon the US-Americans to take the most important democratic decision – who is to be country’s President – and maybe even expecting the colonizer to rule. It is the ELA-friendly party that to the largest degree base its arguments upon a classical colonial discourse, despite being the party that continues to claim that the island is not a colony – or at the best on the way towards decolonialization. Through defending the “Free Associated State”, the ELA-party at the same time defends and enhances the country’s colonial discourses. The Statehooders only use some of the same discourses within their line of arguments; they sometimes use the same discourses as the PPD and other times as PIP, all depending on what suits the argument they are trying to make.

Throughout the decades, the Puerto Rican *Independentistas* have suffered from marginalization. The Independence Party has been, and sometimes still is, associated with terrorism. They are by many considered not trustworthy, as the political solution they present is radically different from the current situation. *Independentistas* suffered from political persecution, and this has also contributed to the marginalization, as this criminalized an entire group of people. They struggle to reach the population with their political message due to low campaigning budgets and lack of attention from the island’s mainstream media, which is known to be statehood-friendly. The political situation has led to a certain degree of anxiety in the Puerto Rican society, and the insecurity and instability surrounding for example the economic situation, and the economic development from a poor agrarian based society to the modern society a process that has taken place in a reasonably short time. A chain of equivalence exists between socialism, radicalism and communism. The independence party is a socialist party, and used the word “radical” as a part of their campaigning before the 2008 election. Many of my informants automatically then drew a connection to communism and associated the *independentistas* and Independence Party with communism. Communism has been considered an enemy of the US-American way of life ever since the era

of the Cold War, and is then also a threat also to the Puerto Rican society, as this was the model upon which the ELA was initiated. This makes it easy for the population of the island to identify themselves against a small and marginalized group. Within the Puerto Rican discourse unfavorable representations of the neighboring islands of Cuba and Haiti exists, which stands as an example of how one *might* end up if the connection with the hegemonic United States is broken. Independence is by many equalized with poverty, and they find it hard to believe that an independent Puerto Rico can keep up the standard of living that it currently enjoys without the help of the United States. At this point the Puerto Ricans draw on a “white man’s burden” discourse. A close connection with the United States is considered to be the only way for development and progress to take place. Iteration has taken place creating political identities within the Puerto Rican society, with the result that most of the population now identifies with one of the three parties concerning the status.

The dependency towards the United States is supported by the inherit fear of independence that exists within the Puerto Rican society, and the fear keeps increasing the dependency the island has towards the United States. The one is dependent on the other, each enhancing the other, thereby making the circle difficult to break. The discursive basis for both dependency and fear is to be recognized from a classical colonial relationship – even though the name and “wrapping” in the Puerto Rican case is not colonial – and has been put into practice and enhanced through more than 50 years of ELA government of the island. I would say that the Puerto Rican Commonwealth – Free Associated State is indeed what a modern colony looks like in the 21st century. There is no military force present, but the situation surrounding the political arrangement is based on discourses creating a situation that instead leaves the population to feel that there are no other real options than maintaining close ties to the United States, either as a territory, like it is today, or annexed as the 51st state of the Union. The ELA has been a natural part of the Puerto Rican society for more than 50 years, and most agree that it has served the island well most of this time. What a change will be like for the society is for many very difficult to picture and imagine, and the uncertainty surrounding which changes will occur are many and varied. Either way, enormous discursive changes should take place for independence to become a real political option - and as for today this seems very unlikely to happen.

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Appendix 1 - List of informants

Informant 1: Female student, 22 years old. Claims not to have taken a stand on the status issue, and planned to vote for PPR.

Informant 2: PPD politician, male

Informant 3: PPD politician, male

Informant 4: Independence politician, male

Informant 5: Independence politician, female

Informant 6: PNP Politician, female

Informant 7: PNP politician, female

Informant 8: Male student, 24 years old, *independentista*.

Informant 9: Elderly man, ELA-supporter

Informant 10: Statehood - supporter, male

Informant 11: ELA-supporter, Independence party converttee, female

Appendix 2 – Example of interview guide

This is the example of an interview guide for a representative of the Statehood Party:

1. How does the ELA affect the daily life of Puerto Ricans?
2. How does the ELA affect the political life in Puerto Rico? And your work as a politician?
3. What does it mean, in your opinion, to be “Estado Libre Asociado”?
4. Could you explain to me the point of view your party has on the status issue?
5. Since the 1950s the dominating parties have been PPD and PNP. Why is this? Have the parties used some sort of strategy to obtain this position?
6. The party “Puertorriqueños por Puerto Rico” claims that the dominating parties use the status debate to “distract attention from more important matters”. What is your comment to this?
7. What is most important for the Puerto Ricans when they decide for whom they should vote? Is the party’s point of view on the status important? Are the voters faithful to their parties because of the status, or is the internal politics more important? Is status an important topic before the 2008 election?
8. How is the relationship between the parties and politicians in the different parties?
9. PNP was founded on the basis of the fight to achieve statehood for Puerto Rico. Is this still the most important goal? How can Statehood be achieved?
10. As a part of my fieldwork, I every day read at least two of the island’s newspapers, and it has occurred to me that they write a whole lot about PPD and PNP, but hardly anything about the two remaining parties that also participate in this year’s election. Why is this?
11. Do you think Puerto Ricans feel gratitude and thankfulness towards the United States?

12. Do you consider Puerto Rico to be a colony?

13. José Trías Monge wrote, in his book “Puerto Rico, The trails of the Oldest Colony in The World”: “Both the Commonwealth and statehood parties have instilled in Puerto Ricans a deep-seated fear of independence”. Do you agree with the author? Why/why not?

14. Some of my previous informants have mentioned, and criticized, “la politiquería”. How does “la politiquería” affect political life, and your job as Senator/representative?

15. Many of my previous informants have complained about there being too many federal interventions on the island. Do you agree that this is the case? What do you see to be the most important interventions? Why do the federals intervene?

16. Why do the Puerto Ricans say, in three following plebiscites, that they don’t want independence or annexation to the United States, when people in many other countries in the world are willing to fight to achieve one of these rights?