LIMING AND OLE TALK: FOUNDATIONS FOR AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A CULTURALLY RELEVANT CARIBBEAN METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

In this paper, the authors argue that Caribbean practices used in research more accurately enable a process of knowledge construction that is consistent with how we think, live and feel as Caribbean subjects about issues that concern us. This allows for participants and researchers to draw on their cultural and communicative strengths to reflect about topics of relevance to their community. Caribbean diversity in terms of population, culture, ethnicities and language needs to be considered in the articulation of culturally relevant methodologies in the region. Through an examination of empirical data, we have endeavoured to show that Liming and Ole Talk can be utilised widely across the region for research purposes.

Keywords: Caribbean methodologies, participatory research, decolonizing methodologies, coloniality of knowledge, Liming, lyming, ole talk

Resumen

En este artículo, las autoras argumentan que la utilización de prácticas culturales caribeñas para la articulación de investigación académica permite el desarrollo de un proceso de conocimiento consistente con la forma en que pensamos, vivimos y sentimos como sujetos caribeños sobre temas que nos son relevantes. Esto permite que los participantes e investigadoras/investigadores hagan uso de sus habilidades culturales y comunicativas para reflexionar sobre temas de importancia para su comunidad. La diversidad caribeña en términos de población, cultura, etnias e idioma debe ser considerada en la articulación de metodologías culturalmente relevantes en la región. A través de un examen de datos empíricos, el artículo argumenta que las prácticas de Liming y Ole Talk (en el Caribe hispano denominadas como compartir, dar muela, janguear y otros) pueden usarse ampliamente en toda la región con fines de investigación.

Palabras clave: Investigación caribeña, investigación participativa, metodologías descolonizadoras, colonialidad del conocimiento, compartir, bemberria, janguear, dar muela

RÉSUMÉ

Les auteures de cet article montrent que l'application de pratiques culturelles caribéennes à nos modalités de recherche permet une construction du savoir en adéquation avec notre manière de penser, de vivre et de ressentir en tant que Caribéens sur des thèmes qui nous touchent tout particulièrement. Cette approche permet aux participants et aux chercheurs de partir de leurs propres apports culturels et langagiers pour réfléchir à des thèmes importants pour leur communauté. La diversité caribéenne, en particulier en ce qui concerne la population, la culture, les ethnicités et la langue, doit en effet s'articuler autour de méthodologies culturelles appropriées pour la région. A travers l'étude de données empiriques, notre article s'attache ainsi à montrer que les pratiques de « Liming y Ole Talk » (expression qui, dans la Caraïbe hispanophone, désigne, entre autres, l'idée de partager, de tenir palabres ou de passer du temps ensemble) peuvent être utilisées de manière plus répandue dans toute la région à des fins de recherche.

Mots-clés : Recherche caribéenne, recherche participative, méthodologies de décolonisation, colonialité de la connaissance, Liming, lyming, ole talk

The Caribbean is a diverse region in which a range of settlement and migratory experiences gave rise to creole, hybrid cultures. In this paper we argue that Caribbean scholarship would benefit from using the region's wealth of cultural practices to inform research strategies, and from exploring and embracing Caribbean ways of constructing knowledge. Specifically, we discuss the potential of Liming and Ole Talk, traditionally regarded as a form of leisure and interaction characteristic of the Caribbean, to serve as the foundation for developing a culturally relevant, qualitative research methodology. Similar practices to Liming and Ole Talk can be found throughout the Caribbean region cutting across gender, class, social, ethnic, religious and regional boundaries. These practices have travelled with the diaspora, moving around the world (Clarke & Charles 2012) as central daily life habits, networking strategies and spaces for collective identity construction and negotiation among Caribbean people.

The articulation and use of Liming and Ole Talk as a Caribbean research methodology is based on four premises: first, that Eurocentric methods of research, which inform most academic studies in and about

the Caribbean, are limited due to their disconnection with Caribbean people's lived experiences, values and worldviews. Second, that Caribbean cultural practices which have organically emerged from our contexts, realities and lived experiences have the potential to guide processes of knowledge construction that are relevant and safe for Caribbean people. Third, that Eurocentric epistemologies and methods are embedded in Caribbean academic institutions and structures as remnants of colonisation and obstruct the use of local knowledge to inform research tools and strategies. Fourth, that these structures need to be challenged because they function as *othering systems* that devalue the potential of our own cultural practices in the region's academia.

In the first section of this paper we discuss how Eurocentric methodologies have been imposed in the Caribbean as the universal standard to the detriment of other knowledge systems, as part of what Maldonado Torres (2019) calls *coloniality of knowledge*. We also reflect on the global call for decolonial research methodologies in general and the Caribbean context in particular, drawing on the work of authors like Aníbal Quijano, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Nelson Maldonado. In the second section we describe the practices of Liming and Ole Talk across the Caribbean region and discuss how its features have the potential to inform research in the region. We also present preliminary experiences from the use of this methodology in empirical research.

The Eurocentric knowledge system as an othering construct: historic roots of present-day coloniality of knowledge in the Caribbean

The term *othering* is used by Spivak (1985) to denote the process through which an empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes, through imperial narratives and discourses of power (Spivak 1985). A manifestation of this othering process is the universalisation of Eurocentric ways of conceiving knowledge and conducting research as best practice in academic contexts worldwide, while those of non-Western peoples are often deemed inadequate and thus silenced or marginalised. The imposition of Eurocentric Science as a universal knowledge system was enabled by centuries of domination, colonisation and violence. Often referred to as Western Science, Eurocentric epistemologies originated in developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern societies (Hall 1992:277) and were imposed on the "new" worlds that Europe "encountered" throughout its imperialistic expansion. In this process, as Hall (1992) points out, Europe began to describe and represent the difference between itself and these encountered "others" using stereotypes, degradation, and distorted accounts

of their ways of existence and, significantly, their systems of knowledge.

Arguably, the most harmful component of this process was the concept of racism that promoted the now widely refuted ideology of the biological and intellectual superiority of Europeans. This ideology emerged in response to the need of the colonisers to morally validate both the occupation of territories they deemed *terra nullius* and the barbarity of slavery. It was introduced in such a systematic way into structures and worldviews of metropolises and colonies that the mechanisms that generated them became invisible. Quijano (2000) has argued that this Eurocentrism naturalised the reduction of colonized-colonialized peoples to beings that were inferior in their flesh and in their practices through the manufacturing of a cognitive framework that hid the production of the idea itself and made it appear as given, non-made, and non-artificial. De Sousa Santos (2014) added to this notion, defining colonialism as a system of enculturating differences in such a way that the hierarchies that justify domination and oppression appear as a consequence of the inferiority of certain peoples (de Sousa Santos 2014:68).

The shared aim of decolonial research is that "the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their own frames of reference" (Chilisa 2012:14). This implies resisting further appropriation of knowledge (Chilisa 2012), legitimising "oppositional or alternative histories, theories and ways of writing" (Smith 1999:40), and finding strategies for empowerment (Banks-Wallace 2002). This argument is based on the ongoing marginalisation, discrimination and systematic exclusion of non-Western voices from academia worldwide. Scholars and activists engaged with decolonial research often encounter negative and sceptic responses within their institutions for presenting the legacies of colonialism as still inherent in contemporary academic thinking. These responses are based on perceiving colonialism as referring to specific empirical events that represent past realities and historical episodes that have been superseded by other kinds of socio-political and economical regimes (Maldonado-Torres 2019).

Quijano (2013) and Maldonado-Torres (2019:9) suggest that we utilise the concept of coloniality to denote "the logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonization" which have current, multilevel consequences in post-colonial societies. As Maldonado-Torres points out, the long-time and profound investment of Europe or Western civilization in the advent of conquest and colonialism is intrinsically tied to the logic, metaphysics, ontology and matrix of power. Accordingly, coloniality does not refer to a specific historical period, but to a long-standing pattern of power that emerged as a result of colonisation, and continue to define culture, labour, intersubjectivity

relations, and knowledge production beyond the limits of colonial administrations. It is kept alive in literature, criteria for academic performance, cultural patterns, common sense, the self-image of peoples, aspirations of self, and many other aspects of contemporary experience (Maldonado-Torres 2007). For the purposes of this paper, framing coloniality as the ongoing consequence of colonialism is strategic for two reasons: on the one hand, for understanding the shared grounds of a worldwide challenge to Eurocentric knowledge systems, and on the other, for highlighting the need to articulate alternatives that are adjusted to the diverse experiences and contexts in a present-day postcolonial world. Within the Caribbean context, if we think about present day Martinique, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Jamaica, it would be appropriate to talk about diverse colonialities and decolonial strategies, however much that is repeated and connected among the different islands.

Cultural Studies and indigenous methodologies: connections with Caribbean decolonial research

The articulation of decolonial research methodologies in the Caribbean has important precedents in the critical thought of the region and also in several voices of dissent that have emerged within Western scholarship, contributing to the identification of key limitations in Eurocentric mainstream academia. Several authors within the tradition of British Cultural Studies, for example, have consistently challenged mainstream academia in the social sciences, both theoretically and methodologically (Harewood 2009). Cultural studies have disrupted the disciplinary compartmentalisation existing in mainstream Western social science by combining social theory, cultural analysis and critique, and politics in a project aimed at a comprehensive criticism of the present configuration of culture and society (Kellner 2001). Later generations of Cultural Studies scholars incorporated important postcolonial approaches to focus on "the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, especially concentrating on media culture" (Kellner 2001:1). Authors from the Caribbean or of Caribbean heritage, like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy made major contributions in this direction, addressing germane topics for the region such as cultural identity and hybridity. Cultural Studies have also questioned the validity of dividing research practice in methodological siloes and have boldly combined various approaches according to what the researcher deems necessary for understanding reality (Farred 2009; (Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler 1991). Despite these new approaches, Cultural Studies' unstructured approach to methodology and theory has not involved a questioning of the underlying principles and assumptions on which the

various methodologies are based (Harewood 2009), and this is a concern for studies positioned outside Western contexts:

> Without a careful, though creative, consideration of the processes of research and the politics and philosophy of research – i.e. methodology – it is very easy to fall into the habits of traditional social scientific research, which, after all, have attained the type of taken-for-grantedness in much Euro-American scholarship that results in them returning, unbidden, to research practices. (Harewood 2009:162)

Relevant precedents for Caribbean decolonial research can be found in the epistemological and methodological challenge that is being posed by indigenous scholars who call for research that is based on local practices, experiences and interactions. African storytelling, Pasifika *Talanoa* and *Kava* sessions and Kaupapa Māori research approaches provide examples of how indigenous and local ways of constructing knowledge can successfully be used as research strategies (Nakhid-Chatoor, Nakhid, Wilson, & Fernandez Santana 2018). These methodologies draw on practices that emerge from the historical, social and cultural setting of the communities where the study is positioned, instead of defaulting to practices that are foreign and external. They also provide an enabling environment for the co-construction of knowledge and empower participants to use their cultural practices in a research context.

> Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. (Smith 1999:52)

An example of this can be found in the talking circles of the Crow people in North America, as described by Simonds and Christopher (2013). This knowledge construction strategy is based on the design and structure of the Crow tipi (tent), using the four poles that sustain the tipi structure as a metaphor to represent pivot points in the research process (context, expectations, history and time), and to collect and organise the information accordingly. Similarly, the Kakala Research Framework rooted in Tongan epistemology (Vatuvei 2017) utilises the steps involved in the process of making a Kakala (Tongan woven garland) to provide a blueprint for recruitment, input, fieldwork and analysis in social research.

Indigenous methodologies respond to the research needs of people who have inhabited their own land for many centuries and generations, accumulating specialised knowledge about their environment and deep

spiritual connections with the land. Consequently, these methodologies emerge from specific conditions in response to demarcated cultural positionings, creatively using localised customs, practices and artefacts to embrace alternative ways of constructing academic knowledge. Although there are powerful solidarities to be drawn, indigenous cultures are specific stances for articulating research that cannot be taken out of context and generalised to other more hybrid postcolonial spaces, like the Caribbean. The next section focuses on colonisation and coloniality in the Caribbean region to argue for the development of Liming and Ole Talk as a research methodology.

Articulating Caribbean decolonial, culturally responsive research

Caribbean qualitative studies have consistently taken for granted the epistemic and methodological adequacy of research traditions based on western social norms which often differ from Caribbean ways (Wilson, Nakhid, Fernandez Santana, & Nakhid-Chatoor 2018). The concepts of coloniality of knowledge outlined above are key to understanding how, in a region so proliferous in critical intellectuality, the modes of conducting research consistently default to Western approaches. Prominent Caribbean intellectuals have repeatedly called for the transformation of educational and research institutions in the region as adverse and systemic remnants of a colonial period remain embedded in them. Scholars like Beckford (1971) and Best (1977) highlighted the importance of developing a Caribbean independent thought, grounded in our own experiences and contexts. More than three decades later, their argument remains valid:

> In this post-colonial era, universities have an important part to play in helping the shift towards more indigenous modes, but they themselves can become part of the problem, where their primary activity becomes knowledge transmission, with such knowledge and its epistemic frames inclusive of cultural assumptions all having been imported. (Lewis & Simmons 2010:38)

Research frameworks that employ Western modes while working with Caribbean populations leave out culturally specific interactions which are an organic part of Caribbean life experiences as well as important strategies to express, negotiate and crystalize perspectives and knowledge. The potential and value of our own practices to conduct research and explore topics relevant to our societies remain largely untapped and underappreciated in the Caribbean region.

There is a myriad of cultural resources and practices with the potential to inform culturally responsive Caribbean research. The immense diversity of ancestral history in the Caribbean provides an

incredible wealth of material artefacts appropriate for informing research strategies within specific groups inside Caribbean societies. To articulate research methodologies that can be used across diverse groups, however, it is necessary to draw on the lived experiences of Caribbean people that have clear connections with our ancestral heritage, but which meaning is anchored in our shared experience as Caribbean islanders. The transforming power of the experiences shared by our ancestors has been explained through concepts like creolisation (Brathwaite 1975), and later, hybridisation (Hall 1990, 1992). Defining the Caribbean as a hybrid space does not negate the violence of colonisation and its current consequences, but acknowledges that "the reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the 'Indians' they slaughtered and the Asians they indentured were not, even in the most extreme situations of brutality, sealed off hermetically from each other" (Gilroy 1993).

Hall aptly describes the paradox: the uprooting of slavery and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world unified these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to the past (Hall 1992:223). Languages were creolised, religions were syncretised, Catholic gospels were mixed with patakies,[1] the beat of African drums altered the cadence of the colonisers' music, and food was enriched by unsuspected flavours. The resulting cultural practices and representations are central to Caribbean people's lived experience. Their interconnectedness cannot be explained through the celebrant/dissident archetypes of the events of 1492 which Wynter (1996) deems insufficient to explain Caribbean reality. As Sharma points out

> This is the world we have collectively inherited, a world organized by social relations that are, to say the least, grossly uneven. There is no doubt, of course, that this coming together was asymmetrical, but it was a process that led to the creation of a world where the lives of its human inhabitants came to be (and remain) intimately connected. (Sharma 2015:164)

By embracing diversity, Caribbean methodologies have the power to challenge the system of the coloniser not by erasing it, but by containing it, transforming it, mocking it and dismantling it to generate a new way of framing knowledge that is capable of empowering diverse modes of being Caribbean, and thus becoming relevant to Caribbean people's lived experiences today. Hopefully, emerging research strategies will be as varied as the region itself. It is from this position that we articulate Liming and Ole Talk as a Caribbean research methodology.

Centrality of Liming and Ole Talk in present-day Caribbean

Liming is a specifically Caribbean practice of gathering and sharing. Liming (the act of participating in a lime) is a core activity in Caribbean peoples' daily lives, not only as a space for relaxation and leisure, but also as an ambit where meaning is negotiated, social and political discourses are elucidated and debated, and cultural products and spaces are collectively used. Significantly, it is also a critical space for community building and networking. In a study carried out by Maharajh and Ali (2006), respondents in Trinidad and Tobago defined a lime as a scheduled or non-scheduled event where a group of people takes time to 'hang out'. As the authors note, Ole Talk transcends differences in ethnicity, class and religion as in the Caribbean, people from diverse origins lime to relax and relief stress through the means of talking, eating and drinking or just doing nothing.

Limes can take place in public spaces such as the street, a restaurant, the beach, a rum shop, or anywhere there is a group activity. The Caribbean concept of Liming has seemingly spread across the region in the last sixty years.

> Almost everywhere you go today, people seem to understand the term and it immediately conjures pictures of people socializing or gathering informally, the exchange of stories, jokes, anecdotes, politics etc. while sharing drinks and food in a laid-back, relaxed atmosphere. (Corbin, Punnett, & Onifa 2012:272)

In other areas of the Caribbean, liming is repeated albeit with different terminologies (e.g. *bemberria*[2] in Dominican Republic, *jangueo*[3] in Puerto Rico, *par* in Jamaica). It is interesting to observe that, in many cases, the practices are named with neologisms or adaptations of the original words from English/Spanish, suggesting the inadequacy of the metropolitan languages to define these specifically Caribbean practices. In Cuba, the names appear to reflect the main theme for the *lime,* whether it is sharing food (*comidita*), getting together and singing around a guitar (*descarga*), or just coming together to share and relax (*compartir*).

Although it may seem that this type of interaction is a common occurrence in any society, in the Caribbean, liming is "acknowledged as a kind of performing art" (Winer 2009:533). The Caribbean practice of liming can be said to be distinctive in several ways. First, it entails a specific use of language, requiring certain communicative competencies to establish common ground for improvisation and creativity. Second, liming is a spontaneous, informal and open practice which lacks hierarchies, pre-set topics or timeframes. Participants are free to join or leave a lime and, oftentimes, a common acquaintance functions as a link, or

grants access to the lime. Third, humour is often present in a lime and frequently takes the form of "teasing or good-natured insults" (Dalzell & Victor 2014:2008). This is referred to as *fatigue* in Trinidad and Tobago, and *dar chucho*/*cuero*[4] in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Caribbean humour is seen as a way to address difficult topics or situations, an important coping mechanism, and a means of collective negotiation of meaning in the Caribbean.

Within the specificities of each country and culture, humour is a pervasive presence in Caribbean interactions. As Glover (2013) points out, practitioners "regard it not as the momentary, jocular interruption of an otherwise levelheaded apprehension of life's grave seriousness, but instead as an attitude, a habit, even a worldview" (21). During a lime, humour and wit frequently become a way to challenge imposed discourses and meanings. In Cuba, the role of humour in these and other interactions has been encapsulated by the concept of *choteo*, coined by Jorge Mañach in the early twentieth century. The author uses it to describe the Cuban aptitude for humour in the face of challenging, embarrassing or confrontational situations. "*Si le pedimos, pues, al cubano medio, al cubano de la calle, que nos diga lo que entiende por choteo (…) nos dirá consiste en tirarlo todo a relajo*"[5] (Mañach 1955:50). For Mañach, *choteo* is a psychic attitude, a trait of character and a "habit of disrespect" that is expressed through mockery and aims to oppose any order, hierarchy, authority or power (Mañach 1955:51).

The conversational practice called Ole Talk in Trinidad and Tobago, or *dar muela* in Cuba and Dominican Republic is an important component of liming, although it can occur outside of it.

> Ole Talk transcends idle conversations, exaggeration, or plain shooting from the mouth. It can involve talk on current events, politics, culture and school days, as well as trends in behavior and fashion. Ole Talk is any talk and can take place in any setting. (…) Ole Talk follows no rules of engagement. Talkers move with ease back and forth between topics of great importance and less so and of great importance again. One aspect of Ole Talk is humour. This speaks volumes of the ability of West Indians to juxtapose adversity and hardship with hilarity. One can Ole Talk about a hurricane and the death and destruction it brings whilst extolling the humorous nature of everyday behaviour. (Wendell DeRiggs 2009)

Although very little academic writing has dealt with Liming and Ole Talk, the practice has been represented in the region's art, popular culture, film and literature as a central component of subjects' lived experiences. The Cuban animation film *Vampiros en la Habana* (Padrón 1985), for example, explicitly portrays how the liming culture and omnipresent *choteo* is deeply embedded in the Cuban way of being, and represents an

explicit contradiction between Cuban workers and the expectations of seriousness of the Spanish employer. Literary representations of Liming and Ole talk also shed light on its meaning and significance as part of the almost daily interactions of the Caribbean people. Rahul Bhattacharya's novel, *The Sly Company of People Who Care* (Bhattacharya 2011), portrays the liming culture in Guyana, which is used as the underlying structure of the story.

> The narrator's open-ended agenda and the innocence with which he puts himself in the way of life going on about him in this new place makes him a great candidate for inclusion in the lime, whose boundaries, in any case, are always indeterminate. People come and go from the lime and move easily from one to the next. Its fluid, open-ended structure welcomes strangers, especially those with a word to contribute, a tale to tell, a special quirkiness to stir into the mix. (…) The lime transforms dead time into something pleasurably wiled away in the delicious enjoyment of others' company. (Carnegie 2016)

Two novels by the Trinidadian writer Sam Selvon (1923-1994) offer an interesting perspective about Ole Talk in a migrant context. "The Lonely Londoners" (Selvon, 2004), published in 1956 and "The Housing Lark" (Selvon 1990), published in 1965, both reflect Caribbean experiences in the United Kingdom. As Chamberlain (2008) argues, Selvon uses Ole Talk as a narrative structure in which the narrator and the reader seem to be eavesdropping on the characters' lives and conversations, and the stories are shared in sessions of old-talk with multiple narrators (Chamberlain 2008:12). In both novels, Selvon's narrative refers to three important features of Ole Talk as a communicative practice. First, he uses Ole Talk's unplanned, open structure both explicitly and implicitly throughout his narrative: "you couldn't, or shouldn't, differentiate between the voices, because men only talking, throwing in a few words here, butting in there, making a comment, arguing a point, stating a view. Nobody care who listen or who talk" (Selvon 1990:123). Second, he refers to the multiplicity of voices and perspectives shared in Ole Talk, with "different narrators contributing their words, comments, views, and stories to a composite audience" (Chamberlain 2008:13). Third, he makes it very clear that Ole Talk is a specifically Caribbean practice, and he often does that in contraposition with the European perspective:

> It like a game, all of them throwing words in the air like a ball, now and then some scandalous laugh making sedate Englishers wonder what the arse them black people talking about. (Selvon, The Housing Lark 1990:126-127)

Articulating Liming and Ole Talk methodology: preliminary experiences from the field

Thus far, we have described the practices of Liming and Ole Talk as culturally specific practices that subsume complex dynamics of meaning construction and negotiation, frequently through informal interactions and humour. In the process of writing this paper, we empirically explored the process of gathering qualitative data through Liming and Ole Talk as a methodology.

Liming is a composite of cultural practices of great importance for Caribbean people. It exists outside research as it has organically emerged in the region in conjunction with other important Caribbean cultural practices including music, dancing, ole talk/dar muela, food sharing and involves sharing in a non-structured, non-prescriptive environment. The articulation of Liming and Ole Talk as a Caribbean methodology, as described in this section, is based on the authors' own experience with liming as Caribbean islanders, the experiences shared by other limers that embarked with us in this journey, and the data drawn from 16 limes that we organised/ attended/ were invited to in the process of writing this paper **(Figure 1)**.

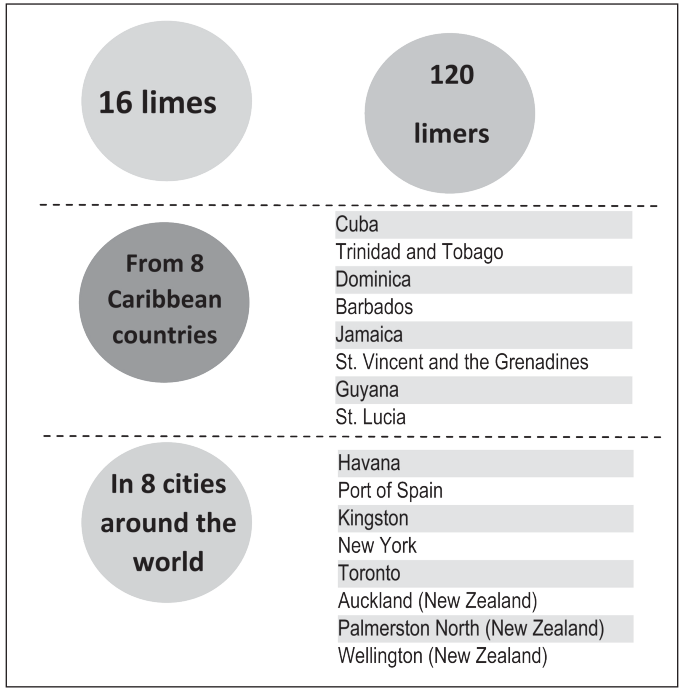

Figure 1: Limes, limers and countries of origin.

The articulation of Liming and Ole Talk as a research methodology is based on two separate but linked research projects. The first one is the research project entitled "Liming and ole talk - Developing a Caribbean research methodology" conducted by the authors. As part of this research project, we facilitated eight limes in Havana, Port of Spain, Kingston, New York and Toronto, on what we called "liming about liming". We shared our perspectives on what liming entails, the particularities and similarities across different countries in the region, as well as its potential to inform research. In this initial project, we sought to determine the characteristics and processes of Liming and Ole talk from the perspectives of limers and to gauge the potential of Liming and Ole talk as a research methodology and its benefits, limitations and challenges. The second research project was a PhD thesis entitled "Understanding the articulation of Caribbean cultural identity in Aotearoa New Zealand through a culturally relevant Caribbean methodology" carried out by one of the authors of this paper. The focus of this research was to understand the articulation of cultural identity in a small Caribbean community living in Aotearoa New Zealand through eight more limes which helped to further develop Liming and Ole Talk as the research methodology for the study. The process of employing Liming and Ole Talk in postgraduate research revealed the potential of this form of engagement for the framing, design, and analysis of research, while enabling a reflection on the purpose, value and necessity of validating Caribbean ways of constructing and sharing knowledge. It also allowed for questions and challenges to arise. The objective of this section is to share what we learnt in organizing, participating in and analysing Liming and Ole Talk for research in both migrant and local Caribbean environments. We then outline key aspects of these practices with a reflective account of how we have used them in research.

Intersection of data collection and cultural practice in Liming and Ole Talk methodology

In Liming and Ole Talk methodology there is a synergy between the cultural practice of liming and the collection of data for research purposes (**Figure 2**), though the two are not necessarily interchangeable. The research process (e.g. gathering of data, recording) occurs within liming while the practice of liming extends beyond research. The Liming and Ole Talk methodology accommodates the evidence-based interpretation of the interactional practices that occur organically during a lime, and enables the conferring of meaning to the topics that emerge in response to the research questions. The Liming and Ole Talk methodology does not purport to represent the full complexity of the

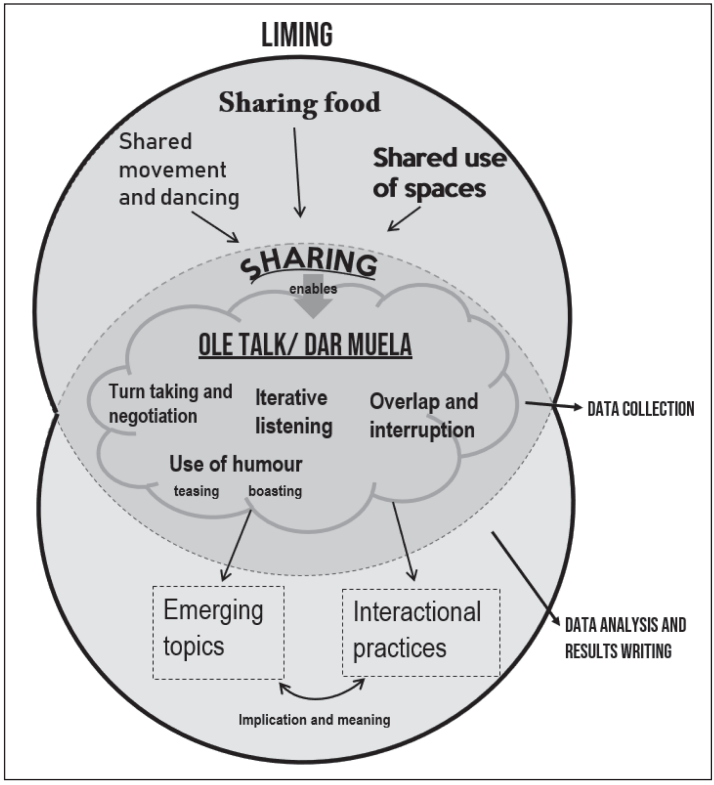

Figure 2: Intersection of the practice of liming and research in LOT methodology

cultural practice of liming. Liming is not subordinated to the purpose of research, nor is it manipulated, flattened or "tidied up" to serve pre-established research directions, questions or objectives. On the contrary, the spontaneous dynamics of the lime are the vehicle for knowledge building alongside the other limers. As shown in **Figure 2**, liming includes other practices connected with the act of sharing - the sharing of food, of spaces, and of movements. This sharing enables the interpersonal connections that make Ole Talk possible as Ole Talk thrives on the kind of intimate, unstructured, flexible interaction generated in a liming context. The interactional practices inherent in Ole Talk (i.e. turn taking and negotiation, iterative listening, overlap and interruption, humour, etc.) are used in the Liming and Ole Talk methodology to give meaning and understanding to the emerging themes around the research subject.

The researcher in liming and Ole Talk: intersubjectivity and relationships

In Liming and Ole Talk methodology, there are no boundaries between the researcher and the limers. The researcher is positioned alongside and not above the participants in the process of knowledge construction. The fact that we were considered insiders in the communities with whom we were engaging was critical to enabling us to become insiders in the limes. Nevertheless, we had the added responsibility of getting people together to lime, making sure food and drinks were available (although in most cases participants and hosts provided food and drinks as well), setting the scene and often staying until the limers had left.

A key difference with mainstream methodologies is that in Liming and Ole Talk methodology we were not facilitators. We suggested topics of interest as much as any other limer but there was no set agenda during a lime. Our participation was that of a limer without research-imposed hierarchies. We asked and answered questions along with other limers. In the lime, our opinions seemed to be given the same considerations as those of others and were valued according to the relevance they made to the topic at hand and not because of our position as the researchers. The limes were a safe and enabling space to share our experiences and opinions which were challenged and valued just like everyone else's. Similarly, our perspectives were just as likely to be ignored, talked over, listened to, engaged with, continued or diverted to different topics depending on the other limers' interests.

The participants were of the view that the active participation of the researchers in Ole Talk was critical to creating an organic liming environment. They pointed out that the researchers staying silent and "neutral" would have felt like "we were eavesdropping" and peeking into the intimacy of a lime while keeping ourselves removed and disengaged. The way that the limers perceived our role is important when comparing the methodology of Liming and Ole Talk and the assumptions of Western academia regarding the neutrality of the researcher. Nevertheless, there was a prevailing conflict between the cultural competencies and habitus we held as Caribbean islanders and were expected to use in a liming context (openness, sharing, humour, teasing) and our training in Western academia on best research practices. Thus, while conducting the research, we remained aware of the contradictions generated by the internalisation of Western modes of research. This is illustrated below in an excerpt from one of the authors' PhD study notes:

> On the occasions when a complex or conflictual topic was at hand, I explicitly limited my participation, even when the issue was relevant for

me or when the conversation took a turn that conflicted with my values. For example, in one of the limes, there was consensus for the rest of the group about homophobia in the Caribbean being partially justified by experiences related to colonization, and that, to some extent, the importance that evangelic churches had in Caribbean communities made homophobia acceptable to some extent. In this instance, had my participation not been mediated by my role as a researcher, I would have spoken against these arguments in an energetic way, resorting to the full arsenal of my communicative skills. Yet, on that occasion I stayed silent. Observing my silence in retrospect, I understand that it was motivated by my assumption that contradicting the general opinion of the group would make the limers feel judged or uncomfortable, as they were aware that their opinions were being recorded for a study that I was ultimately in charge of writing and publishing. My silence stemmed from a concern that expressing my disagreement could cause the participants say what they thought the researcher expected to hear.

(*Author, Ph.D. research notes, 2018*)

This reflection revealed the difficulty of unlearning fundamental assumptions regarding what constitutes ethical and reliable research. This process of negotiation often involved a collective reflection with the limers who questioned and discussed their own views about our role as researchers, when contrasted with their perception and experience with academic research.

Rosa
I have a question though, about the potential of bias. Because I was surprised that you shared your opinions. Do you think that is going to be a problem?

Mike
I don't think her opinion influenced what we had to say, eh? I felt I could agree with what she said or disagree.

Rosa
I completely agree. It's just not a research method that I am used to, because it's new. But when you learn research methods, that's one of the things that they tell you that you have to be very careful about, especially if you are seen… and I guess that's the difference. We are all equal here, but in an interview, or in a focus group, the interviewer is seen as the expert, and even if they are not experts, they are somebody who is knowledgeable. Educated, and, you know of a certain standard.

Nina
That would have felt weird. I would have been like, oh God. What does she want me to say?

River lime in Palmerston North with Caribbean students living in New Zealand, 2018

When employing Liming and Ole Talk as a research methodology, researchers themselves become participants, interacting and connecting with others in a process where all participants have access to each other's knowledge and experiences and can draw on each other for their critique and reflection. Participatory Action Research (PAR) refers to this as intersubjectivity, where both the researcher and the participants are subjects, allowing for a subjective relationship instead of an objective hierarchy and where the limers are protagonists in a process of teaching-learning (Calderón & López Cardona 2003). This enabled us to deal with important and sensitive issues using familiar and comfortable strategies.

Holding a lime and knowledge sharing

In both research projects, participants were invited to lime by word of mouth and social media. While the Liming and Ole Talk methodology relies on the fluidity and high-trust environment generated within a lime, respecting participants' knowledge and ensuring that they were comfortable with their knowledge being recorded were essential. Participants were informed orally and in writing about the research project and its objective to develop Caribbean research methodologies, in particular, one based on Liming and Ole Talk. However, it was our experience that despite disseminating information about the research, some limers came to lime unsure of the reason for meeting, but keen to lime just the same. In these instances, it was necessary for the researchers to inform participants of the rationale for developing Liming and Ole Talk as a research methodology drawing on the limers' familiarity with the culture of a lime. The researchers also had to obtain the informed consent of the limers. Although we obtained ethics approval for the use of both printed consent forms and recorded oral consent, we soon found that the presence of printed forms and participant information sheets disrupted the dynamics of the lime as it was seen as an expectation of formality and structure and an indication of a lack of trust. Participants suggested that in future limes, the researchers orally present the main points about the research and the participants are allowed to give oral consent. This was the strategy that was followed successfully in the remaining limes.

Organizing and participating in a lime is a natural process for Caribbean Islanders. In some cases, the researchers hosted limes in our homes or in public spaces, or sometimes we asked other people to host them. In all cases, the invitation was extended for participants to include other people in keeping with the open nature of liming. The role of the host proved to be vital for the research process in several ways. First, the host usually invited most of the lime participants and was often the connection between people who did not know each other before the lime. This

connection provided a high level of trust and ease among the group. Second, the hosts introduced the researchers to the group, making them insiders to the lime group in addition to being insiders to the Caribbean community. Third, the hosts opened their homes to provide a comfortable space for the lime and were generous practitioners of Caribbean hospitality in providing food, drinks and on occasion, accommodation for the researcher and out-of-town limers:

> I arrived the day before the lime and spent the afternoon with the host. Incredible showcase of Caribbean hospitality. We spontaneously started talking about the lime programmed for the next day and who was coming. It didn't feel like a research conversation, but a natural way of talking when you are organizing a lime together. We did some shopping that day, although the host had already bought some salt-fish and other lime "essentials". His wife had even prepared callaloo soup, even though dasheen leaves are very hard to find, except in some specialized Indian food shops. We spent the morning of the lime in the market, shopping for more food and ingredients. After the market, we went home and cooked together. We prepared a variety of dishes, with sauces from Cuba and other islands. In total there were at least nine different dishes.
>
> (*Author, PhD research notes, 2018*)

The Ole Talk was recorded in audio and on video. Several recorders had to be used due to the open nature of the lime and because participants moved around and at times went out of range. Video was useful for recording the non-dialogical dynamics of the lime, that is, the ways that people moved around, how participants physically went in and out of the conversation, food sharing, etc, rather than simply to capture the conversation. The researchers also created "recorder free" areas to enable participants to choose when they wanted to engage in the recorded section of the lime or when they wanted to lime "off record". Generally, however, participants comfortably engaged in ole talk, and the presence of recording devices was minimally disruptive. The open nature of ole talk provided the limers with enough flexibility to interact on their own terms, for example, limers stayed silent or began a different conversation if the topic being discussed was not relevant or engaging for them, or walked out of the recoded area when going to the toilet, or getting a drink.

Connections and sharing: the importance of food

On arrival at the lime, participants introduced themselves to each other and began to partake of the food. This allowed participants to relax while catching up or becoming acquainted with each other and

quickly generated a high trust environment in "the Caribbean way". The importance of sharing food in a liming context came up several times when the participants were reflecting on their experience:

> **Renee:** What is the thing that brought we all here? Food!
>
> **Rosa:** We didn't say research. We said food.
>
> **Dani:** Caribbean people are always hungry
>
> **Ana (Researcher):** Sometimes it's not about the food. It's about sharing, like when we share a meal…
>
> **Nina:** So, you didn't really have to go like: "Hi, I'm Ana, duh, duh… I'm doing this…" you were like, "we are here, leh we eat". That's all we need.
>
> *River lime in Palmerston North with Caribbean students living in New Zealand, 2018*

Meaning-making potential of the liming environment

The getting together of Caribbean people in a setting with food and music spontaneously generated a liming environment. Before introducing the research topic, it was important that the limers could spend some time getting to know each other, particularly if they had not met before. Once the topic was introduced, ole talk flowed freely without a prescribed structure, question list, or time constraints. This was essential for creating an environment where liming could take place organically:

> For West Indian people, if you make it too formal, you make them uncomfortable. I think how you did it is the best way to do it. Have food, have drinks, throw the questions get feedback. If you start to make it very formal, you start to make it very uncomfortable. Particularly West Indian who are naturally very easy going.
>
> *Lime with Caribbean community in Wellington, New Zealand, 2018*

As noted earlier, the flexible environment of liming meant that participants could walk in and out of conversations or stay silent when they were not interested in engaging with a certain topic. Since the lime was not time-bound, emerging topics were engaged with for as much or as little time as the limers remained interested. The salience of topics for the group could be inferred, among other things, by the amount of time spent in discussing them. The limers noted how this open flow of ole talk enabled them to share ideas and experiences in a way that was meaningful for them, instead of being imposed externally:

> **Mike**: I think it's better, because if you don't have too much to contribute towards one thing, then somebody else will be doing that. It's not

like an interview… in an interview you feel pressured to speak about something. Forced to say certain things. You ask me a question, I don't know much but I want to give a reply, so I will tell you something right?

Nina: And it will be bullshit.

Mike: So, you can come in when you actually have something to say.

Nina: When you have a contribution to make

Sharky: I felt like I could give honest answers about the actual situations.

River lime in Palmerston North with Caribbean students living in New Zealand, 2018

Ole talk is a highly fluid mode of interaction, requiring specific communicative and cultural competencies from participants. The unstructured nature of Caribbean conversation has been recognised by authors like Reisman (1989) who notes that, in contrast with American English, with Caribbean conversation, two or more voices are not prohibited from speaking at the same time. In addition, the introduction of a new voice is not intended to silence the person speaking or to determine who will hold the floor. In the ole talk, there was remarkable flexibility in the process. There were (a) *interest-based conversation sub-groupings* where participants broke into subgroups within the wider ole talk group, often to explore a side of a topic more deeply or to engage in a different one; (b) *iterative conversations and attention* as participants fluidly engaged as listeners and speakers in two or more conversations at the same time, creating multi-layered conversational structures; and (c) *fluid strategies for turn-taking and keeping the floor.* The flow of the conversation, attention and negotiation of turns was influenced by factors such as group interest in the topic, jokes or anecdotes, performativity, tone and volume, and most importantly, the use of humour. Humorous and highly performative allocutions were likely to receive uninterrupted attention from the limers.

Practicalities of using liming and ole talk in research

Liming and Ole Talk generate knowledge in the form of an unstructured array of ideas, stories, opinions, jokes, highly performative allocutions and profound reflections. The multiplicity of overlapping voices and conversations that emerge in the limes is less determined by the preconceived notions of the researcher, and more by the internal dynamics of the lime and helps us to better understand the perspective of the limers. As a fluid, multi-layered framework for interaction, liming enables ideas, narratives, opinions and reflections to be discussed in a non-linear way.

Our experience in the field indicates some of the challenges to be considered when using Liming and Ole Talk as a research methodology. First, there is the highly spontaneous nature of liming in terms of participants, topics, location, dates and frequency. Although it can be argued that these features are an advantage in qualitative research—e.g. fluid and spontaneous emergence of topics and ideas can reveal new subjects and relationships relevant to the community and unforeseen to the researcher—they can be difficult to manage in research that is very specific in its focus and limited by time. Second, in the Caribbean imaginary, liming is culturally revered as a space for relaxation. Associating liming with research can create some dissonance and requires special attention to ensure that its intersection with research is not seen as disruptive, invasive or alien to the organic occurrence of the limes. This may be more of a concern for non-Caribbean researchers wanting to use Liming and Ole talk for research with Caribbean communities. Third, the limited participation of the limers in the analysis of the results represents, to some extent, an inconsistency with the shared and collectively owned nature of knowledge construction in the limes. This limitation may be unique to this particular study as the methodology was in its initial stage of development. We believe that in other studies, a more participatory framework can be enabled for collectively synthesising and analysing the ideas and knowledge generated within each lime.

Discussion

In this paper, we argue that Caribbean practices used in research more accurately enable a process of knowledge construction that is consistent with how we think, live and feel as Caribbean subjects about issues that concern us. This allows for participants and researchers to draw on their cultural and communicative strengths to reflect about topics of relevance to their community. Caribbean diversity in terms of population, ethnicity and language needs to be considered in the articulation of culturally relevant methodologies in the region. Through an examination of empirical data, we have endeavoured to show that Liming and Ole Talk can be utilised widely across the region for research purposes.

We also note the importance of the specificity and nuances of liming for each country, community of group including the heterogeneous migrant Caribbean communities with multiple nationalities, speaking in Spanish or English while having dinner, or playing dominoes. All of this make for a rich and vast research terrain to be explored further. The purpose of this paper, rather than offering a set of definitive guidelines, has been to share our experience and ideas about the use of practices that are common in Caribbean life and which are argued to be more

appropriate for conducting culturally relevant research. Given the cultural wealth of the Caribbean region, it is unlikely that Liming and Ole talk are the only practices with the potential to inform social enquiry. Rather than establishing a predominant methodology, it is our intention to continue to ole talk on how our own world views, habitus and life experiences can be used as foundations to address the topics that concern us as Caribbean people.

Notes

[1] African oral narratives and religious stories narrating the lives of the gods and conveying morals of learnings.

[2] Deriving from the term *bembé* (shorting for *candomble*), a festive ritual of African origin, characterized by drum playing and dancing.

[3] Transformation of the English "hang out" to Spanish sound and spelling.

[4] *Chucho* (whipping stick) and *Cuero* (literally leather, but also used to refer to the act of whipping) are used as a metaphor to designate the act of "beating down" a person or a topic through mockery. The ability of giving (or taking) it gracefully is a highly regarded social skill in Cuba and other Spanish speaking Caribbean countries.

[5] "If we ask, then, the average Cuban, the Cuban of the street, to tell us what *choteo* means (...) he will tell us is to take everything easy" (Authors' translation).

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