

## CREOLIZING GLOBALIZATION: PAN-CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND LANGUAGE IN SAINT LUCIA

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### ABSTRACT

Saint Lucia, like much of the rest of the Caribbean, is a Creole society. Due to unique historical circumstances, Antillean Creole cultural identity is fluid, fragmentary and multiple. Saint Lucians perceive cultural commonalities between their island, on the one hand, and the Francophone, French Creole-speaking and Anglophone Caribbean and wider world, on the other, and value the different languages of their colonial legacy—French, Kwéyòl and English—both for intangible reasons related to local and pan-cultural identities and for the access these languages open up for practical economic and life-chance opportunities. Under the influence of globalization, there is a definite hierarchy in the value-based ordering of these tongues. Saint Lucians hold English in highest esteem; it gives the greatest pay back in terms of socioeconomic mobility on and off the island. Islanders also value French, as a complementary, secondary global language and for communicative versatility in neighboring, affluent Martinique and in their island's tourist sector. Although most Saint Lucians profess the importance of their French-based Creole, Kwéyòl, as a unique symbol of Saint Lucian nationhood, this vernacular is the biggest loser in the postcolonial, global-era competition of languages. As a society in a globally-induced state of flux, the traditional cultural orientation of Saint Lucia is changing; English is supplanting the waning Kwéyòl. However, new cultural and linguistic forms are emerging. Vernacular English of Saint Lucia, itself a creolized English strongly influenced by Kwéyòl, has become the nation's new *lingua franca*, particularly among the urban working class and youth island-wide.

**Keywords:** Saint Lucia, creolization, globalization, language, culture, identity

### RESUMEN

Santa Lucía, al igual que la mayoría del resto del Caribe, es una sociedad criolla. Debido a circunstancias específicas de la región, la identidad cultural criolla antillana es fluida, fragmentaria y múltiple. Los residentes de la isla perciben elementos culturales comunes entre su isla, de un lado, y el Caribe francófono, de habla criolla francesa y anglófono, de otro. Valorizan los diferentes idiomas de su herencia colonial —el francés, el kwéyòl, y el inglés— tanto por razones

intangibles relacionadas con identidades locales y pan-culturales como por las oportunidades económicas y sociales que estos idiomas facilitan. Bajo la influencia de la globalización, hay una jerarquía definida en el orden de la valorización de estas lenguas. Los isleños valorizan el inglés porque les representa el mayor beneficio en términos de movilidad socioeconómica en y fuera de Santa Lucía. El pueblo también valoriza el francés como un idioma secundario y complementario, y por la versatilidad comunicativa que puede tener con la vecina y afluente Martinica, al igual que en su propio sector turístico. A pesar de que la mayoría de los residentes de la isla profesan la importancia de su criollo de base francesa, kwéyòl, este símbolo excepcional de la nacionalidad de Santa Lucía, es el gran perdedor en la competencia de idiomas en la era postcolonial y global. Como sociedad en estado de cambio inducido por la globalización, la orientación cultural tradicional de Santa Lucía está cambiando; el inglés está reemplazando el kwéyòl. Sin embargo, nuevas formas culturales y lingüísticas están surgiendo. El inglés vernáculo de Santa Lucía, un inglés criollizado influenciado fuertemente por el kwéyòl, se ha convertido en la nueva *lingua franca* de la nación, particularmente entre la clase trabajadora urbana y los jóvenes.

**Palabras clave:** Santa Lucía, criollización, globalización, lenguaje, cultura, identidad

#### RÉSUMÉ

Saint Lucie, le comme la plupart du reste de la Caraïbes, est une société créole. Vue les circonstances spécifiques de la région, l'identité culturelle antillaise créole est fluide. Les résidents de l'île connaissent des réalités culturelles communes entre leur île et les Caraïbes francophones utilisant le créole à base lexicale française, et d'autre part, celle des anglophones. Ils valorisent les différentes langues de son héritage colonial- le français, le kwéyòl et l'anglais- tant pour des raisons intangibles relatives aux valeurs de l'identité locale et pan-culturelles, que pour certaine opportunité économique et sociale que ces langues favorisent. Sous l'influence de la globalisation, une hiérarchie a été définie dans le cadre de la valorisation de ces langues. Les habitants de l'île valorisent l'anglais parce qu'il représente un plus grand bénéfice sur le plan socio-économique tant qu'à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de Sainte Lucie. Ils considèrent le français comme une langue secondaire et complémentaire et, à cause de sa versatilité communicative avec les voisins, l'affluence de la Martinique et son secteur touristique. Même si la majeure partie des résidents confesse l'importance de leur créole à base lexicale française, kwéyòl, ce symbole exceptionnel de la nationalité de Sainte Lucie, il reste toujours un grand perdant au point de vue de la compétence l'ère postcoloniale et de façon globale. Vue l'influence de la globalisation et comme une société en état de changement, l'orientation de la tradition culturelle de Saint Lucie est

entraînent train de changer, car le kwéyòl se fait supplanter par l'anglais. Cependant, de nouvelles formes culturelles et linguistiques sont entraînées à surgir. L'anglais vernaculaire, un anglais créolisé kwéyòl traversé par une forte influence du kwéyòl, est transformé en une nouvelle forme de *langue franche* de la nation, utilisée spécialement parmi les travailleurs urbains et les jeunes.

**Mots-clés :** Sainte Lucie, créolisation, globalisation, langage, culture, identité

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**S**aint Lucia, achieving independence in 1979, changed hands between France and England 14 times before the British gained control over the island in 1814. On no other Antillean island that passed from French to British tutelage has the French legacy persisted so tenaciously, with the notable exception of Dominica. Most island place names are French in origin, as are many family names; most Saint Lucians are Roman Catholic; and the island's legal system is based on the *Code Napoléon*, with many laws issued in French only; and, importantly, about ninety percent of Saint Lucians still have at least some passing knowledge of French Creole—historically referred to as patois, but now increasingly called Kwéyòl—a result of successful eighteenth-century French efforts to establish a plantation economy on the island from neighboring Martinique. During the colonial period, even with British sovereignty over the island, informal ties between Saint Lucians and Martinicans, as in the inter-island contact and movement of people, were strong, reinforcing the French cultural character of Saint Lucia.

In the postcolonial era, the Saint Lucian elite, who value the French language as a means of social status enhancement, have sought to capitalize on their island's French legacy (St-Hilaire 2007). In 1981, Saint Lucia joined the Francophonie, a global organization dedicated to economic, political and cultural cooperation among member nations; the preservation and promotion of linguistic, cultural and religious diversity; and, of course, the invigorated use of French both internationally and locally. France, highly receptive of Saint Lucian overtures toward increased cooperation, opened a *Mission de coopération et d'action culturelle*, which included the establishment of a local Alliance Française, in 1985 in Castries, the capital. Importantly, Saint Lucian and French education officials worked together and extended French language instruction, which had been exclusively taught only at the secondary level, to lower grades into primary schools throughout the island.

The Francophonie and France tend to treat French Creole as a form of French (Allen 1992; St-Hilaire 2011). Indeed, historically, Saint

Lucians themselves considered their patois as 'broken French,' a clearly substandard form of the 'parent' language (Dalphinis 1985). However, in the years leading up to and following the attainment of national independence, a loosely banded cultural nationalist movement arose rallying around Kwéyòl as an autonomous symbol of Saint Lucian cultural identity. This movement is rooted within Saint Lucia and has operated largely independent of the Francophonie and France. Nevertheless, intellectual leaders of the movement joined forces with the *Comité international des études creoles* (CIEC) and the later-to-form pan-cultural, international activist organization, *Bannzil Kréyòl*—made up of members from and designed to promote the French Creoles of the wider Caribbean and Indian Ocean. Although the work of CIEC and *Bannzil Kréyòl* was short-lived, pan-French Creole exchange, especially at the informal, intra-Caribbean level through travel, family ties and music, both predated and outlived these pan-cultural organizations.

In spite of the enduring French and ubiquitous French Creole legacies, nevertheless, the island's British colonial heritage is strong. This heritage comes through by the language well-educated Saint Lucians use—i.e., the high-register Standard English, with its British spelling and grammatical conventions, but distinctly West Indian intonations and lilt. It is also evident in the parliamentary form of government, contemporary economic relations with the United Kingdom, continued migration between the island and the former 'motherland,' and postcolonial integration with the other territories of the former British West Indies (BWI) through the common markets and quasi-political unions of the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. While many Saint Lucians value their French cultural heritage and contemporary ties with French-speaking Martinique and most identify with Kwéyòl as what makes their island unique among the world's nations, nearly all Saint Lucians place very high esteem on their Anglophone linguistic and cultural heritage, even to the exclusion of the others. English provides them opportunities for socioeconomic advancement on the island and enables them to participate in modern technological and consumptive global exchange on and off the island.

After the Second World War, the U.S. emerged as the leader of global economic and political integration, supporting trade liberalization and the establishment of the United Nations. Historically, U.S. influence has been greatest in the Americas. This influence intensified in the post-WW II era, with U.S. ascendancy as global hegemon. As a result, Saint Lucians have increasingly turned to the U.S. as a desired migratory destination. Conversely, American citizens now represent the largest contingent of foreign tourists visiting Saint Lucia each year. With this growing American presence among tourists, American investment in

Saint Lucia's hotel and tourist industry has become a significant motor in the island's economic growth and overall economic dynamism. However, the greatest U.S. influence has been on culture through the broadcasting of American television channels through cable and of American programming content on local television. In the culturally open, economically dependent Caribbean, U.S. economic, political and cultural influence is great, undermining traditional Antillean culture.

Not surprisingly, the cultural bearing of Saint Lucia has been in a state of flux since the attainment of national sovereignty. While Saint Lucians hold feelings of cultural affinity with the other French Creole-speaking islands of the Eastern Caribbean (Martinique, Dominica and Guadeloupe) and the island's French Creole heritage lives on, the place of Kwéyòl as a living language is waning. At the same time, islanders have somewhat of a local Francophone identity. However, English and an evolving, increasingly dominant, island-grounded Anglophone cultural orientation have been the clearest post-independence winners in the competition among languages and in Saint Lucians' views of themselves as global citizens and their relationship to the larger world.

This article examines Saint Lucian cultural affinities vis-à-vis other places where French, French Creole and English are spoken and with which Saint Lucians' have some historical or contemporary connections and how globalization is affecting islander cultural self-identification and use of language. It draws on concepts of Creole identity and creolization to contextualize Saint Lucians' pan- and local cultural identities and globally influenced, changing patterns of language use. Qualitative data collected from interviews with Saint Lucians involved in some aspect of language planning on the island and from open-ended survey questions administered to 100 randomly selected residents of Castries, Saint Lucia's historically English-speaking primal city and portal to the wider Caribbean and world, and Monchy, a small, historically Kwéyòl-speaking village situated in the mountainous interior of north central Saint Lucia, inform the research.

### **Creole Cultural Identity in the Caribbean**

In the Caribbean, the term 'Creole' originally applied to children of French or Spanish parents born and raised locally. In Brazil, the cognate term *crioulo* also came to distinguish Brazilian-born blacks from those born in Africa. Later in the French Caribbean it additionally came to designate locally born and raised children of mixed African and European parentage. Moreover, as cultural nationalism in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s gained momentum in the British, French and Dutch West Indies, nationalists and supporters of their goals began to refer to the

cultural property of African-descended people—both ‘pure blooded’ and those of mixed Afro-European ancestry—as Creole. During this period, some educated and nationalist-minded West Indians also began to question the historic denigration of the non-standard vernaculars of the masses as ‘broken English’ or ‘broken French’ and to treat the vernaculars as autonomous Creole languages, independent of Standard English or Standard French (Dalphinis 1985; Devonish 1986).

Also during the decolonization period, race became somewhat central in shaping nationalist ideology and discourse (Lewis 2001; Thomas 2007; Ferguson 2008). As such, many Antilleans began to extol the virtues of African contributions to island culture (Welch 2003). However, in the late postcolonial period, the influence of race-conscious cultural nationalism has declined significantly and, as during the colonial era, members of local middle and upper classes commonly reject what is perceived to be of African origin, including in language (Paul 2009). Nevertheless, Caribbean Creole cultural identities enjoy widespread and popular currency. But they have lost much of their earlier racially tinged character, except in places with large non-African-origin populations like Belize, Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname—in Trinidad, for example, many islanders self-identify as Afro-Trinidadian in opposition to their Indo-Trinidadian compatriots (MacDonald 1986; de Albuquerque and McElroy 1999; Alleyne 2002; Khan 2004; Allahar 2005). This has become so partially because traditional conceptualizations of racial stratification, which characterized the BWI in the colonial period, are no longer applicable to independent majority Afro-Creole Caribbean nations, where blacks have both consolidated political power and control and penetrated the local economy (Alleyne 2002; Campbell 2010). The changing salience of race notwithstanding, in some instances African-based cultures endure. For instance, in Suriname distinct maroon groups continue to live tribally in the interior, independent of coastal society (Price 1993).

Hintzen (2002) argues that very little of West Indian socioculture is indigenous and did not originate from abroad and that identity in the Caribbean has to be understood based on this fact. Safa (1987) further states that the, “idea that the cultural identity of Caribbean peoples is somehow problematic has been around for so long and been upheld by such a variety of writers that it has become almost an axiom (115).” Most of the former BWI has a bicultural, bilingual heritage with the ‘high’ culture as Anglo-European-based, whose mode of expression is Standard English, and the ‘low’ culture as Afro-Creole, whose mode of expression has historically been a basilect English Creole (Barnes 2006). However, the lines demarcating Anglo-European-based from Afro-Creole culture and language have morphed to such an extent in day-to-day life in the postcolonial era that a Creole identity, combining elements from both

‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, has come to fulfill a unique role by allowing for integration of the Caribbean peoples’ disjointed and disparate cultural influences (Badiane 2010; Deuber 2011). In Saint Lucia, where Standard English coexists with Kwéyòl, Vernacular English of Saint Lucia (VESL)—which is itself a creolized, Kwéyòl-influenced English—and, to a lesser degree, French, the situation is more complex.

Vaunted aspects of postcolonial Antillean Creole identity include its openness to other cultures as well as its fluidity and instability (Wardle 2007; Badiane 2010). This openness to other cultures is grounded in the West Indian colonial experience, especially in the early pre-emancipation period. Knepper (2006:70) affirms that in the West Indies “identities, linguistic transformations, religious beliefs, music, cuisine, and aesthetic practices have been shaped by fragmentation and intermixture of various traditions.” The Martinican writer, Raphaël Confiant (n.d.), who has written and published in Martinican French Creole, not only hints at the fluidity of Creole cultural identity, but also highlights its multiplicity:

In the Antilles, the mixing was done by way of diffraction ... and far from erasing the evidence of their origins, the cultural contributions of the four continents were incorporated here and juxtaposed there without ever ... disappearing as such ... The Creole does not possess a new identity ... but new identities. The phenomenon of creolization invented from all the pieces a multiple identity (author’s translation).

The Caribbean Creole languages represent perhaps the most visible contemporary manifestation of African-European fusion or amalgamation. While their lexicons are primarily European in origin, their phonology, morphology and syntax contain many features characteristic of vernaculars spoken in West Africa (Dalphinis 1985; Chaudenson 1992; Lefebvre 2011). However, where English- and French-lexicon Creoles exist with Standard English and French, respectively, speakers have a tendency to use and mix different registers of language and language varieties. Because of this and the very close lexical similarity between Standard English and English Creole, most Anglo-Antilleans cannot conceive of their English Creole as a real language (Deuber 2009). Moreover, where the local Creole is lexically based on a language other than the official—as in the case of the French-based Kwéyòl in officially English-speaking Saint Lucia and Dominica, the Spanish-based Papiamentu in the Dutch-official Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (ABC), and the early English Creole, Sranantongo, in Dutch-speaking Suriname—speakers tend to adopt into their Creole elements from the official, high status European language, resulting in further linguistic mixing.

However, the lexical bases of the Creoles orient speakers’ pan-cultural affinities in the Caribbean basin. As such, even while Saint Lucians and Dominicans use greater amounts of English in their

Kwéyòl, they maintain strong feelings of cultural likeness with each other and with neighboring Guadeloupe and Martinique; ABC islanders have incorporated many Dutch words and, through the influence of globalization, English into Papiamentu, but still feel culturally close to Spanish-speaking Latin Americans and continue to adopt Spanish words into their language; and, in Suriname, there has been a partial relexification of Sranantongo to Dutch, although modern English terms are also entering the Creole. In spite of the mixing of language between registers and varieties and in source borrowing and continued feelings of pan-cultural affinity, throughout the region the Creoles are strong markers of island-based and national identities (Young 1993; Bryan 2004; Boufoy-Bastick 2009). Globally influenced patterns of language use, as well as sociolinguistic change, reinforce the fluidity and multiplicity of Antillean Creole cultural identity.

### **Globalization and Creolization**

In treatments of globalization and cultural change across academic disciplines, there is a high degree of theoretical impurity (Strong 2006; Khan 2007). However, social science literature increasingly applies the term ‘creolization’ to describe the linguistic and cultural syncretization, mixing and hybridization associated with globally induced sociolinguistic and cultural change (Eriksen 2003; Jacquemet 2005; Knörr 2010). Thus, the Caribbean Creole cultural experience has become a reference point in the theoretical and intellectual debate on cultural change elsewhere in the world (Palmie 2006). While the mixing that gave life to contemporary Antillean Creole culture was abrupt, bringing together Europeans and Africans of different tribes speaking distinct languages, it resulted in Caribbean peoples who were culturally neither European nor African, but whose cultures expressed elements of both, as well as entirely novel forms non-existent in Europe or Africa.

The mixing of cultures in the current global era also leaves in its wake new forms of cultural expression. Some observers of cultural exchange recognize a trend of cultural homogenization in countries deeply embedded in the global economy, while others see hybridization or distinguish between trends of convergence, divergence and hybridization (Berger 2002; Erez & Gati 2004; Papastergiadis 2005; Consalvo 2006; Schwinn 2006; Goodman & Jinks 2008; Epstein 2009; Levitt 2009; Ryoo 2010). However, in many countries, the hybridization—or creolization—of global and local cultures does not necessarily lead to the weakening of national cultural identities (Uimonen 2003; Grixti 2006). These identities have proven themselves quite durable (Pikturniene 2005; Speck & Roy 2008). Although national identities profit from some



stability, country integration into global networks of exchange does lead to reconfigurations of national values and culture, rendering these identities somewhat fluid in nature (Schulz 2011).

As a result of globally-induced cultural change, elements of a global culture have begun to emerge. This culture is heavily American in origin (Berger 2002; Alim 2009; Pritchard 2009; Brooks & Conroy 2011). Not surprisingly, English is the driving force of globalization (Berger 2002; Coates 2007; Holborow 2007; Ives 2010). In non-Anglophone countries, the ability to speak English confers high status (Tsai 2010). In the non-English-speaking world, second-language English speakers also tend to have identities that differ from their non-English-speaking fellow citizens. They tend to embrace elements of emergent global culture transmitted through the medium of English to a greater extent than those who do not have (linguistic) access to this culture (Gu 2010).

With the emergence of a global culture and the concomitant rise of English as the global lingua franca, linguistic mixing has come to increasingly mark language practice as well as the structure of language itself where non-English vernaculars share social space with the globally (and locally) prestigious English. In urban Zimbabwe and as more people have access to global information and telecommunications networks, young people have begun using large amounts of English when speaking Shona, code-switching between the two. Popular musicians there incorporate English into their Shona lyrics, reflecting the changing sociolinguistics (Veit Wild 2009). Even with the promotion of non-English national, official languages, English is usurping social space from its local competitors through linguistic hybridization. For example, while Hindi nationalists vigorously promote Hindi as a pan-Indian language, it is English that confers social status, affluent parents send their children to English-medium schools, and Hinglish—a non-standardized blending of Hindi and English vocabulary and syntax—has developed as a kind of national cross-class lingua franca (Relph 2011). In the Philippines, Taglish, a hybridized mix of Tagalog and English, originated in metropolitan Manila, but has now become a lingua franca across the country, even outside the original Tagalog-speaking area.

### **Francophone Pan-Cultural Identities and the Status of French**

Although English has become the binding force of globalization, cultural similarities between regions and nations provide impetus for cross-national interaction beyond global economic relations (Bonikowski 2010). Shared historical or contemporary experiences with the French language and culture have come to connect more than 50 countries under the auspices of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*.

France has historically been a strong backer of the organization in order to counter the global hegemony of Anglo-American cultural and linguistic norms. Historically, too, the French saw the French language as their cultural property. However, now that most French speakers live in countries other than France and speakers in North America, Africa and the Caribbean have begun propagating distinct varieties of French, culturally appropriating the language, identification with French has become more fluid and malleable. As a result, French is now less the language of France as it is another global language, complementary to English. In Saint Lucia, French is also complementary to English. About half of all islanders can speak at least a little French and approximately two-thirds understand some of the language (St-Hilaire 2007).

Historically, Saint Lucians have had a strong Francophone cultural identity. Using language of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lowenthal (1961) observed of late colonial Saint Lucia:

... in Saint Lucia and Dominica ... people like to consider themselves French in temperament – volatile, imaginative, fun-loving, artistic, generous – by contrast with the more decorous, phlegmatic, dowdy English islanders. There is some truth in the stereotype; perhaps the image has created its own reality. Certainly the English West Indians find the French islanders lacking in those sterling qualities – responsibility, honesty, seriousness of purpose – that they admire in themselves. The proximity of the French West Indies helps to keep alive the sense of national difference. People and goods move back and forth continually among St. Lucia, Dominica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe (88).

Although the worldviews of Saint Lucians, other Caribbean peoples, and outsider observers of the Antilles have changed significantly since the colonial era, Saint Lucian feelings of cultural likeness with the French-speaking world persist. However, Saint Lucians perceive much greater cultural affinity with the local, Caribbean Francophonie than with France. Nevertheless, although the English ousted the French from the island two centuries ago, Saint Lucians continue to view the French colonial legacy as strong—nearly as much so as their British cultural heritage. The French administered Saint Lucia primarily from Martinique, while the conquering British used Barbados, and Saint Lucians have a history of extensive contact with (people from) both islands. However, in terms of perceived cultural sameness, the great majority of islanders hold the view that Saint Lucia is closer to Martinique than Barbados. Postcolonial patterns of travel among Saint Lucians reinforce notions of shared cultural traditions. Of all the world's nations and territories, Saint Lucians have by far the most travel experience in Martinique. Moreover, Saint Lucia is a popular destination for Martinican tourists. In addition, on the north of Saint Lucia, islanders can and do tune into

radio broadcasts originating in Martinique, only 25 miles away, and French West Indian music enjoys popularity throughout Saint Lucia.

Although Spanish speakers greatly outnumber Francophones on the Caribbean islands, Saint Lucia is geographically closer to the populous Latin American mainland than to the greater Antilles, including French- and French Creole-speaking Haiti, Venezuela offers free Spanish language instruction to Saint Lucian teachers and other professionals on the island, and most island high schools offer Spanish as an elective, very few Saint Lucians speak or understand Spanish and Saint Lucians greatly prefer French over Spanish for their children to learn in school. Indeed, for *Jounen Kwéyòl* (Creole Day), which was conceptualized as a way to popularize and promote Kwéyòl and Saint Lucia's Afro-French, Creole culture and is now the island's most popular holiday, Prime Minister Stephenson King also stressed the importance of Saint Lucians to learn French:

When we look back and we examine history, the fact that Saint Lucia changed hands seven times to the British and seven times to the French shows there's a need for us to continue to maintain that relevance of our French history and of our British history. For us being able to speak Kwéyòl is an advantage; being able to speak French is a requirement. I do hope that Kwéyòl Heritage Month will not only allow us to reflect on our history, but enable us to cherish the very unique history that we share with the French territories (Saint Lucia Government Information Service 2009).

However, teachers of French face particular challenges with their students who already know Kwéyòl. Anthea Cadette-Blasse, a French lecturer at the island's Sir Arthur Lewis Community College and president of the Saint Lucian Association of Teachers of Modern Languages, tellingly indicated: "... very often students consider French as being totally tied to Creole and there is the perception that if I speak Creole, then maybe speaking French may not be necessary. I think we need to market the subject more at school so students can see it for what its worth (Saint Lucia Government Information Service 2003)."

The difficulties of teaching French to French Creole-speaking students notwithstanding, Saint Lucians tend to value French precisely because it is related to Kwéyòl, for reasons related to pan-cultural identification, and for opportunities in Martinique. In speaking of Kwéyòl, a 42-year-old fluent speaker of Kwéyòl from Monchy who worked as a painter, joiner, and carpenter said: "This is our native tongue. Because of the French influence in our country, our first language is French. That's why we have the patois. Some people say it's broken French, but I say it's almost like the French ... Since I've been mingling with my French friend and since the patois is close to the French ... is a broken French ...

sometimes when you speak it, you find that certain words that they use ... the real French ... we use too.” In support of teaching French to children at school, a 35-year-old civil servant in Castries added: “French may be more important because of the Kwéyòl. If you have a basic knowledge of the Kwéyòl, you might just be able to get into the French. And we have that very close relationship with Martinique. So, they would be able to speak the French, you know? ... use it better ... more than the Spanish.”

### ***Créolophone* Pan-Cultural Identities and the Role of Kwéyòl in the Nation**

Common attitudes toward French and Kwéyòl are a factor undermining the status of Kwéyòl as an independent language in Saint Lucia (St-Hilaire 2011). Nevertheless, as Saint Lucia gained independence and pro-Kwéyòl cultural nationalism was beginning to gain traction, Saint Lucian educators, linguists and Kwéyòl advocates teamed up with counterparts from the other French Creole-speaking territories in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean by way of CIEC and *Bannzil Kréyòl*. Saint Lucians participated in a 1979 CIEC meeting in the Seychelles, which coincided with that nation’s celebrations of national independence (Hookoomsing 1993). In 1981, CIEC members from Dominica, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Haiti met in Saint Lucia in support of Saint Lucian attempts to instrumentalize Kwéyòl as a language of adult literacy, school instruction and government use. *Bannzil Kréyòl* later split off from CIEC and adopted a more vigorous approach in advocating for the promotion of French Creole. Members of the nascent pan-cultural organization coordinated the first International Creole Day to be observed across the French Creole-speaking world.

As a result of Saint Lucia’s participation in pan-French Creole cultural cooperation, island pro-Kwéyòl advocates successfully created an orthography for the historically unwritten vernacular, changed the name of the language from patois to Kwéyòl, and established the annually celebrated *Jounen Kwéyòl*. The Kwéyòl orthography was a continuation of work to create a writing system for Haitian Creole in the 1970s and later successful efforts by Martinican and Guadeloupean linguists and educators, using the Haitian system, to establish an orthography for the Creoles of their islands. On the English islands of Saint Lucia and Dominica, people have called the Creole, patois, reflective of its low status. In collaboration with CIEC and *Bannzil Kréyòl* members, Saint Lucian Creole activists decided to change the name of the language from patois to Kwéyòl, in the hope of being able to better promote the language. Saint Lucian activists also implemented and further developed the *Bannzil Kréyòl* idea to annually celebrate International Creole Day,

which is today recognized in October and popularly known as *Jounen Kwéyòl*. *Jounen Kwéyòl*, with its focus on the Kwéyòl language and traditional Saint Lucian culture, has done much to promote a distinct Saint Lucian national identity. In addition, through joint radio hook-ups and radio broadcasting for the holiday, *Jounen Kwéyòl* has also exposed the average Saint Lucian to the vernaculars and music of the other French Creole-speaking territories.

Music from Dominica, the French West Indies and Haiti and sung in Creole gives rise to feelings of pan-cultural affinities among Saint Lucians (Guilbault 1993). As such, Saint Lucians are well aware of the existence of French Creole spoken elsewhere. Many Saint Lucians have heard and understand without any problem Dominica's Creole, also called Kwéyòl. Those Saint Lucians who have had the opportunity to communicate abroad with Haitians also understand most of what they hear and are able to make themselves understood in Kwéyòl. However, because the process of de-creolization is advanced in Martinique and most Martinicans now speak French, Saint Lucians profess some difficulty in understanding their neighbors to the north. In spite of efforts by *Bannzil Kréyòl* and Saint Lucian Kwéyòl activists to promote French Creole as an international language and Saint Lucian awareness of French Creole as a language of the wider Caribbean though, for the most part Saint Lucians perceive Kwéyòl as quintessentially a *Saint Lucian* language, which has become the most potent symbol of Saint Lucian cultural identity in the postcolonial era.

The majority of Saint Lucians believe it is important for island youth to learn Kwéyòl for reasons of Saint Lucian cultural identity. A 49-year-old fluent Kwéyòl speaker from Castries of working class origins expressed support for his view vis-à-vis young people's acquisition of Kwéyòl: "It's a gift given by the All-mighty. This is what you've been created of ... and if you have to neglect that language or leave it completely to adopt another language, you become an adopted child ... but not a legitimate child. So, you see patois is very important ... in the development of our society." A younger, 19-year-old fluent Kwéyòl speaker from Castries further highlighted the cultural importance of the language to Saint Lucia:

Creole is our culture. Creole we learn from Africa ... not just come from St Lucia. I feel that patois should be practiced. It should be practiced generally. That's our native language. That's our culture. Before English started it was patois. In ancient times it was patois your mother and your grandmother used to talk to you. And when you come Castries and live or when you come Castries or go to school Castries, they don't want you to speak patois at all.

However, with the influence of globalization increasingly felt in

Saint Lucian, many young people no longer have an active command of Kwéyòl. In relation to the trend away from Kwéyòl among Saint Lucian youth, one Kwéyòl advocate expressed:

I ... I have a problem with it (the trend). I understand that language is not static and that there's gonna be movement and that people move and the world now is becoming a global village and so communication and other (*inaudible*) ... is probably going to affect the language a lot. But I still believe that for our own ... in our situation here, being a young, independent nation, we have to find our identity. And I believe that with direction it can happen. And the direction has to be given to the young people so that we can find our own identity. So I definitely feel that young people should be taught Kwéyòl ... because Kwéyòl really makes St Lucia what it is. We have about 90 percent of St Lucians who speak Kwéyòl.

However, another advocate referred specifically to globalized young professionals in Saint Lucia as a factor working against the promotion of Kwéyòl: "It's perhaps a group of yuppies ... upcoming professionals who have this distinct notion that we have to be part of a global society and that everything which prevents us from getting in should be dropped ... which to some extent to them includes the language. That is the ... the kind of ... distinctive groups that have been resisting the language promotion." Yet another Kwéyòl advocate added in reference to the defeatism among many Saint Lucians regarding Kwéyòl: "Locally, people are arguing that putting all this time and effort into developing materials and so forth in Kwéyòl ... Saint Lucia has only 150,000 people ... 'Think of the cost of making Kwéyòl ... putting it on the same status as English. The cost of making Saint Lucia bilingual is not worth it because everything you have to do in Kwéyòl and English ... signs, books, the laws, everything ... It's not worth it.'"

### **Anglophone Pan-Cultural Identities and Universal English**

While the French colonial legacy is marked in contemporary Saint Lucia and cultural nationalist-minded islanders have worked for the promotion of Kwéyòl as a national language, island society maintains an undeniable British cultural imprint. An older, upper middle class man living in Castries explained: "I believe our colonial past has left us many legacies ... you may have noticed in me a bit of the English arrogance ... many who have gone to secondary school or the university tend to have a bit of this arrogance. We might like the French for their way of life ... but when it comes to ... because of our education ... This English thing is in us." Moreover, although many Saint Lucians identify with French and most value Kwéyòl as a symbol of Saint Lucian nationhood—even

though the vernacular is fading—the great majority consider English a Saint Lucian language and deeply cherish it for the access it gives them to the wider English-speaking world.

Indeed, many Saint Lucians have spent some time living outside of Saint Lucia, either in the United Kingdom, another island of the Anglophone Caribbean, the United States or Canada. A 37-year-old artist in Monchy who spent his early childhood in New York indicated the importance of English because, "... the major countries in the world like the United States and England ... English is the number one language in the world. It's very important to speak English." A middle-aged construction worker living on the outskirts of Castries stressed the universality of English: "... the English system ... it's a universal system. When you speak English, you'll be recognized into the world. And English is very important to be speaking in any nation because once you speak English, therefore you broaden yourself into the world ... English language is presently dominating the world."

Relative to the older generations, Saint Lucian youth are quite oriented toward English. For this segment of Saint Lucian society, English has become indispensable for domestic and international mobility. A 19-year-old graduate of secondary school and resident of Monchy who was looking for work explained the preeminence of English among young people due to opportunities on the island:

The children nowadays learn ... are more interested in English. And when it comes to um... like, if they ... For example, when they go for employment, they more... Nowadays, when you go to job interviews, they will not ask you questions in patois. And they are not looking for any kind of English. They are looking for Standard English. So, I think they should raise their level of English and leave the patois how it is. They should leave the patois out of it...

Another Monchy resident, a 40-year-old Kwéyòl speaker, valued Kwéyòl herself, but affirmed that younger people did not feel the same way because of opportunities off the island:

Well, I like the Kwéyòl because it's my country as I tell you. I won't say I don't like it and like another. I born in it. I like the way it going. Although I say again, you still have to learn ... I right now, I don't learn it ... but the children that coming, they are the children of tomorrow. They can know what's going back outside the world. Let's say they have to leave the country and go. They already know how to talk, how to meet with people.

The extension of public education has certainly helped to Anglicize young people on the island. However, many Saint Lucians dedicated to promoting Saint Lucian culture point to American cultural influence.

One long-time Kwéyòl advocate, for example, explicitly recognized Saint Lucia's vulnerability to cultural norms emanating, primarily through television, from the United States as a challenge of globalization:

I don't know what to call it ... a new colonialism or what not, but the coming in of North America. Right now we are faced with a ... an entrance into our society, into our culture of North America in forms that we are not even prepared in any way to resist or to stand up against. So when we talk about the technological capabilities of companies who are coming in with North American images, North American lifestyles ... one that is just bombarded at us. It's all we see on our TV's. It's all we hear. It's a struggle to combat. You have artificial demand that development has created ... and ... society has not naturally grown to satisfy the hunger for things that are on the television. Young people are not interested in a lot of the national culture. They want to learn ... basketball, they want to learn rap, they want to dress in a tropical country with layers and layers of clothes. Because that's what they see on TV ... They want to speak English. Once upon a time the challenge looked like, How do we resist? How do we combat that? ... That was almost futile because the world has changed so much. And now the challenge seems to be, How do we develop our own skills and talents? These seem to be some of the challenges we face now.

As a result of American cultural influence, this advocate added: "Young people have a lot of what I call de-creolization. A lot of English words are coming in ... any little word. For example, 'mwen sav dat,' 'I know that.' People do not make a deliberate effort to speak the language properly. Any time it becomes a little difficult, English will just come to them, you know? And I am afraid that that's the way it is going." When speaking Kwéyòl, many Saint Lucians turn to English to express concepts unknown to them in Kwéyòl (Allen 1994; Garrett 2003; Garrett 2007). There is, therefore, a partial relexification of Kwéyòl away from its original French base to an English one.

However, the linguistic influence is two-way. Most Saint Lucians who claim to speak English do not speak Standard English, but the non-standardized VESL. VESL is in a social position inferior to Standard English, but superior to Kwéyòl. The influence of Kwéyòl on VESL is strong (Carrington 1984). Many Saint Lucians speak English with French Creole accents and use grammatical structures more similar to Kwéyòl than Standard English. VESL has become the predominant language of Castries and of young people across the island. A Castries-based school teacher originally from the Kwéyòl-speaking town of Micoud on the Atlantic coast highlighted the problem of Kwéyòl interference in young people's English:

In schools I find ... when I say using more English ... I mean they use



English ... but proper English. I think we need to allow our children to speak proper English, to express themselves. They tend to use a lot of slang and ordinary language ... and not speaking formal. I mean, you either speak formal English or patois ... but you don't mix the two. You find there are a lot of problems with children and their writing. Because they speak so badly, they write badly. And the level of composition writing is appalling ... when you look at the results from examinations and so forth. When speaking English, speak English. When you speaking patois, speak patois. And don't mix the two.

## Conclusions

Saint Lucians readily identify with larger linguistic and cultural groupings: the English-speaking Caribbean and wider world; the Francophonie, especially Martinique; and the other French Creole-speaking Caribbean islands. However, the impact of globalization in the postcolonial era, primarily by way of American cultural influence, coupled with advances in access to schooling, have resulted in a diminution in the vitality of Kwéyòl as a spoken familial and community vernacular and the heightened Anglicization of the Saint Lucian population. Living on a small, resource strapped island, Saint Lucians tend to be outward looking in cultural orientation. As such, they very much value their British linguistic and cultural heritage, which ties them to the globalized, Anglophone world. Knowledge of French also provides increased opportunities for Saint Lucians, primarily when traveling or working in Martinique or in the island's tourist sector. Saint Lucians value French as both part of their cultural heritage and as an auxiliary international language. Nevertheless and although the vernacular is on the decline, Kwéyòl has become the most visible symbol of Saint Lucian national cultural identity and of what distinguishes Saint Lucia from the rest of the world and public support for the language is strong. For Saint Lucians, Kwéyòl has no value internationally or even regionally—English and French are the languages of wider opportunity. But it does play a strong emotive role among islanders.

In the Saint Lucian, Caribbean and global context, creolization is an ongoing process. While Kwéyòl and traditional Afro-French, Creole culture are fading, new linguistic and cultural forms unique to the island are emerging. Young Saint Lucians have a propensity for things American and they speak more English than earlier generations. However, cultural and linguistic assimilation is incomplete. While formally organized cooperation with the French Creole-speaking territories is defunct, regional music, Kwéyòl-language radio broadcasting, *Jounen Kwéyòl*, and annual folk festivals help to keep the French Creole fact alive on the

island. Educators across the island now organize activities to promote Kwéyòl and Creole culture among their students for *Jounen Kwéyòl* and the associated Creole Heritage Month. Many young people also profess to listen and enjoy Kwéyòl radio. Moreover, Saint Lucia's increased involvement in the Francophonie, growing informal postcolonial ties with Martinique, cultural cooperation with France, and formal French language instruction in the schools have served to shore up Saint Lucians' historically strong Francophone cultural orientation.

It is with language that ongoing hybridization is most evident. Relatively few Saint Lucians speak Standard English, the official language, and fewer Saint Lucians now claim fluency in Kwéyòl, with proficiency in the vernacular and its everyday use decreasing with youthfulness. Approximately a quarter of all children entering school in Castries are now monolingual English speakers. Of those Saint Lucians who speak Kwéyòl, moreover, the use of English loanwords is growing, especially among the young and educated. Linguistically, VESL perhaps attests best to globally induced change on the island. Young people, urbanites and the middle and upper classes prefer English over Kwéyòl. However, most islanders, even those who attended school—many teachers speak non-standard English themselves—speak this hybridized language variety. While a speaker of Standard English may have difficulty understanding VESL, non-Standard English-using VESL speakers consider the language English and value it for the communicative access it gives them to off-island destinations. Unlike Kwéyòl, VESL does not have emotive appeal as being especially Saint Lucian. For its speakers, it simply meets daily needs and gives rise, significantly, to feelings of belonging in a larger, more prosperous global community.

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