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# Understanding the pendejo phenomenon in Puerto Rico: An example of culture -specific therapy

Miriam Biascoechea-Pereda  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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2008

ABSTRACT

Understanding the *Pendejo* Phenomenon in Puerto Rico:  
An Example of Culture-Specific Therapy

by

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M.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1981  
B.B.A., University of Puerto Rico, 1965

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Psychology

Walden University  
November 2008

## ABSTRACT

Although the current literature calls for generally increased attention to culture-specific influences in therapeutic settings, much more needs to be known regarding specific groups. Accordingly, this exploratory phenomenological study addressed the lack of awareness of the *pendejo* construct and its perceived threat as a stigmatizing attribute among indigenous Puerto Ricans. Since this phenomenon is believed to jeopardize self-other relationships including therapeutic relationships, the purpose of the study was to describe the *pendejo* concept as a cultural dimension of Puerto Rican psychology. The research focus included participants' personal and collective experiences of the *pendejo* construct, with attention directed to how this phenomenon was represented as a cognitive distortion, a self-referent in discourse, and manifested behaviorally. The study employed data collected via in-depth interviews with 8 successful, college-educated native Puerto Ricans. Transcribed data was organized by categories, coded by significant statements and distilled into structural and textural descriptions that revealed a marked similarity of participants' descriptions of the *pendejo* experience in terms of definitions, assumptions, emotional and behavioral responses, propensity and consequences. Psychological manifestations included escapist behaviors, cognitive distortions (people are out to "take me for *pendejo*"), and negative self-referents ("I am a *pendejo*") that translate into nonclinical paranoid tendencies and introjected hurt feelings. Awareness of this phenomenon can help culturally oriented therapists assist Puerto Rican clients toward becoming more assertive and proactive persons. This can lead to positive social change by enhancing mental health and interpersonal behavior within this population at the individual and the collective levels, as well as adding new insight to the literature.



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## DEDICATION

To my Mother, Emilia Pereda-Biascoechea, my inspiration and my guiding light  
as a woman and as a scholar.

To my Father, Eduardo Biascoechea, my guardian angel in heaven.



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CHAPTER 1:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Demographic data from the 2000 U.S. Census revealed consequential changes in the population configuration of the United States. Since the census of 1990 demographic trends indicated the fast, radical, demographic shift taking place and suggested that in the near future, racial and ethnic minorities will become a numerical majority (Hoare, 1991; Hodgkinson, 1995; La Roche, 2005; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burke, & Vásquez, 1999) with Hispanics leading in number (Sue et al., 1992). Census 2000 confirmed that people from multiethnic and multiracial heritage represented a sizable percentage of the population in the United States (American Psychological Association [APA], 2003). APA's 2003 *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* addressed this trend.

In the past 10 years, percentage-wise, the greatest increases have been reported for Asian American/Pacific Islanders and Latinos/Hispanic, and in some parts of the country, White European Americans are no longer a clear majority of the population. C. A. Brewer and Suchnan (2001) found that diversity increased in all states in the country and, in parts of some states, increased as much as 34%. (p. 378)

Changes in the population profile of this Nation forced many Americans to think of cultural diversity in a different way. Yu and Gregg (1993) warned that “in many parts of the country multiculturalism is already the rule rather than the exception, and



counselors must be well prepared to meet the challenges that come about as a result of a changing population demographics” (p. 86). Sue et al. (1999; see also Hall, 2003) called upon the need for the diversification of psychology to keep abreast of the multicultural revolution taking place in this country. APA’s new guidelines acknowledged that “certainly, the United States is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, increasing the urgency for culturally responsive practices and services” (Hall, p. 379).

Multicultural advocates maintained that in order to ensure the well-being of its constituents it was imperative for pluralistic societies, such as the United States, to address diversity in an appropriate, culturally-relevant manner. They also agreed that to understand human behavior it was crucial for American psychologists to learn about the differential make up of communities around the world and to become aware of their own Western based assumptions and biases (APA, 2003; Arnett, 2008; Cross & Markus, 1999; Hoare, 1991; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Strickland, 2000; Sue, 2004).

Cultural diversity is a reality that psychologists were urged to address by APA (2003) to keep abreast of the needs of the clientele they serve. To develop a multicultural psychology, it was important to build upon theory and research on cross-cultural themes (APA, 2003; Carter, 1991; Hoare, 1991; Hall, G., 2003; Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1999; Yu, & Gregg, 1993), and to acknowledge the importance of indigenous psychologies (Adair, 1999; Adair & Díaz-Loving, 1999; Díaz-Guerrero & Pacheco, 1994; Kim, 2000; Rodríguez, Bravo, & Moreno, 1999; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000).

Puerto Rico represents a unique indigenous cultural entity within the political structure of the United States. The island is a Spanish-speaking Commonwealth under the

American flag. Its people are American citizens but have their own distinct Hispanic culture. At present, approximately half of the Puerto Rican population lives in the island of Puerto Rico while the other half—about 4 million people—live in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Rodríguez et al. (1999) surveyed the opinions and perceptions of Puerto Rican psychologists on the status of psychological research in Puerto Rico. The study demonstrated that psychological research in Puerto Rico is moving from a state of underdevelopment to a state of development. Most respondents called for an indigenous approach to research where developing a culturally appropriate psychology should be a priority.

#### The *Pendejo* Phenomenon

Kelly (as cited in Burger, 1997) underscored the importance of culture-specific approaches in therapeutic settings. Each culture makes use of certain words and personal constructs—such as the *pendejo* word in Puerto Rico—that, when taken in context, manifest meaning-making processes characteristic to that particular group. Personal constructs can have cultural components that impact the personal as well as the collective worldview of a society (Mischel & Shoda, 1999) and perform as *memes*, or ideas and behaviors “that spread from person to person within a culture” (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 774), that help perpetuate this impact (Cacioppo, 2002; Dawkins, 1989; De St. Aubin, 2004; Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000). The *pendejo* phenomenon might well be such a case.

*Pendejo* is a term widely used among Spanish-speaking people with different meanings across the various Hispanic countries. The initial reference of the word *pendejo* to a person's pubic hair could account for the fact that its use among high class and well educated people is considered to be vulgar, injurious, obscene, and improper in countries like Cuba, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico (Celdrán, 1995; Espina-Pérez, 1972; García-Pelayo & Gross, 1984; Santamaría, 1942,1978; Velázquez, 1961). In Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Canary Islands the term is used as a pejorative expression for childish behavior from a pretentious lad, youth, or adolescent (Abad de Santillán, 1976; Caplan et al., 1997; Collin-Smith, 1971; Morínigo, 1996; O'Shanahan, 1995; Sopena, 1982). In most other countries, however, the word alludes to a person considered to be silly, dumb, ignorant, stupid, clumsy, irresponsible, pusillanimous, coward, shameful, and contemptible (Collin-Smith, 1971; Galván, 1995, Mejía-Prieto, 1987; Moliner, 1983; Morínigo, 1996). In Spanish slang the term is also used in reference to a whore (Celdrán, 1995; León, 1996). Celdrán indicates that in this context, *pendejo* also means “*desperdicio, cosa residual, sin valor* [trash, residue, without value]” (p. 249).

In Puerto Rico the word *pendejo* takes a self-relevant, personal connotation with distinct psychological repercussions. I see the use of the word *pendejo* as a cultural construct that interferes in the healthy interaction with Puerto Ricans. People can easily connect with the ascribed demeaning innuendo conferred to this expression. Many Puerto Ricans from diverse social strata tend to believe that they are easy prey to be “taken advantage of,” and “to be taken for a ride” by unscrupulous others. There seems to be an ingrained fear of “being taken” for dumb, ignorant, stupid, and/or shameful. This fear

responds to a perceived susceptibility to be considered as somebody who has no value, someone liable to be trampled upon, or to be easily discarded and disposed of, in other words, a person who merits no respect. I define this out of awareness, self-deprecating tendency, *the pendejo phenomenon*. The phenomenon reflects a confounding dimension of a Puerto Rican thought pattern that is important for psychologists to take into consideration when dealing with their Puerto Rican clientele. The fact is that little or no attention is given to this occurrence among mental health practitioners in Puerto Rico, much less among their colleagues in the United States.

The phenomenon underlies the Puerto Rican personality makeup with corresponding inadequate cognitive-emotional responses that might jeopardize the therapeutic relationship. It is difficult for practitioners, notably for non-Puerto Rican therapists, to understand—much less identify with—the inner dynamics of a Puerto Rican client, more so when the *pendejo* is involved. I saw a need to explore the existence of this phenomenon within a Puerto Rican personality framework to be able to address the issue in therapy. To help bring the problem into the client's awareness will likely upset its potential derisive effects.

After a thorough literature search on the *pendejo* theme—including consultations with well-known scholars versed in Puerto Rican affairs—no information was found on this topic, much less any research data on the personality-related components of the *pendejo* construct as a cultural phenomenon with plausible psychological repercussions in Puerto Rico. The lack of referents encouraged the description of the *pendejo* construct as

an unexplored Puerto Rican cultural phenomenon with significant psychological underpinnings to determine how strongly it is ingrained in the population.

### Statement of the Problem

My intention with this study was to explore the *pendejo* as an indigenous cultural phenomenon of distorted belief patterns and consequent emotional and behavioral connotations configured within the Puerto Rican personality structure. I observed a minimal awareness among professionals of the breadth and scope of the phenomenon which may account for the lack of data and research addressing this topic. Knowledge about the nature of the *pendejo* phenomenon can help psychologists understand underlying survival strategies and emotional responses that might jeopardize self-other relationships—including the therapeutic relationship. The need was to explore the existence and the scope of this phenomenon to be able to adequately address the issue in therapy. Clients' awareness will help upset its often derisive effects, including a tendency to morbidly direct normal aggressive impulses toward the self (Marqués, 1977). .

### Purpose of the Study

The collective worldview of any particular society responds to the experiential reality of its constituents and influences how its members construe their world (Crotty, 1998). It also encompasses distinct coping and adapting strategies that help maintain the integrity of that cultural group. Puerile coping strategies can prompt the conception of personal and cultural constructs that perform as *memes*, or social genes (Dawkins, 1989;

Cacioppo, 2002). Personal and cultural constructs that operate out of awareness can provide fertile ground for misunderstandings that often lead to alienation among intra and inter-group members. Identifying and bringing into awareness such deficient mind-sets, can nullify probable derisive effects. The *pendejo* phenomenon can be an example of cultural manifestations of memetic proportions.

To become effective cross-cultural therapists, psychologists benefit from research studies that help uncover precise cultural ideologies that underlie emotional and behavioral responses typical to a group or society (Gold, 1999; Kowalski & Leary, 1999; Lewin, 1948-51/1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Mezquita, 2001; Posner, Rothbart, & Harman, 1994; Tangney & Salovey, 1999; White, 1994; Wierzbicka, 1994). These particularities may trigger differential responses among people from otherwise similar backgrounds. Latin societies, for example, share many common traits, but people in each Latin country experience reality in qualitative different ways. Puerto Rico's unique circumstances—its ethnic composition, its Latin-Caribbean extraction, and its on going colonial reality—mark the formation of the Puerto Rican personality. The inception of the *pendejo* construct as a survival strategy is indicative of one such particularity that differentiates similar Latin cultures one from the other.

Perceived differences in behavioral responses in multicultural settings need to be considered within the therapeutic environment. Diversity-oriented research in cross-cultural arenas is crucial for uncovering the subtle cultural icons (e.g., *pendejo* phenomenon) that trigger specific thought patterns and behavioral reactions to perceived

threats (Menon & Shweder, 1994). Through immersion in the experience of the cultural “other” these thinking patterns and behavioral subtleties are better understood.

### Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that Puerto Ricans construct the *pendejo* in a particular way which can be defined as a cognitive distortion or an irrational belief. It was also assumed that the meaning ascribed to this construct is contextual and historical. Another assumption was that the phenomenon is an expression of Puerto Rican personality that operates out of awareness with consequent behavioral manifestations.

### Research Questions

Work with adults within a personal development workshop setting evinced the impact and the scope of the *pendejo* concept among participants. This population is comprised by upper and middle class, high school and college graduate males and females. The repeated, almost unconscious allusion to the word *pendejo* revealed scant awareness of the psychological repercussions of this affect-laden everyday expression. The workshop experience suggested the need for further study which encompassed questions related specifically to the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico. Questions for this research study follow:

1. How do middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants describe their experience of the *pendejo* construct?

2. Taking into account their collective experiences, how are these conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon?
3. How is this phenomenon represented de facto in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the daily life of the participants as a cognitive distortion or irrational belief and a negative self-referent?
4. How and in what ways is the *pendejo* phenomenon reflected in the psychological make-up of those who experience it?

### Background of the Problem

Puerto Rico is an example of contrasting cultural orientations within the American pluralistic population makeup. In 1898, after 400 years under Spanish colonial rule, the island became a territory of the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War. The change of hegemony ensued in the encounter of two diametrically opposed cultures: Puerto Rican and Anglo-American. The cultural makeup of the people in the acquired territory was distinctly Hispanic with a Caribbean verve. For more than a century under American hegemony, in spite of overt and covert efforts to “Americanize” the population and the granting of American citizenship in 1917, Puerto Ricans maintain their distinct Spanish-Caribbean heritage including their language and the collectivistic orientation of their culture (Garcia-Passalacqua & Collado-Schwarz, 2002; Guerra, 1998; Perez-Viera, 2002; Trías-Monje, 1999). Quero-Chiesa (as cited in Golding, 1973) provided a succinct explanation of this event.

What evolves from a reflective study of Puerto Rican history is the human saga of a small island, seemingly doomed to insignificance by history and geography,



which has struggled heroically to develop its own personality under the successive influence of two great, absorbent, diametrically opposed cultures. That it has succeeded is evidenced by the fact that Puerto Rican culture *is* different from the Hispanic culture whence it originated and by the stubborn resistance to change which it has shown to the pressure of American culture. Spanish is still the language of the island after...a century of American domination, and the physiognomy of its people remains fiercely Puerto Rican. (p. xiii)

At present, Puerto Ricans constitute a revolving population of more than 7 million people with almost half currently living in the United States (Duany, 2002). Mainland Puerto Ricans form an integral part of the Hispanic population which at present is considered the largest ethnic category among American minority groups. Even though there are contextual differences between islanders and mainland Puerto Ricans (also known as *Newyoricans*), the latter consistently manifest pride in their Puerto Rican heritage while at the same time they acknowledge their stateside bonds (Cruz, 1997; Curet, 1986; Guerra, 1998; Nine-Curt, 1976; Rodriguez, 1995). Esmeralda Santiago (1995), a well known Newyorican writer expressed this fact: “we are born American citizens but harbor an intense Latin American identity” (p. 23).

Colon (1995), in *How to know the Puerto Ricans*, revealed relevant deep-rooted historical wounds with lasting culture-specific repercussions.

After the Spanish grandees, the French and English pirates and many others came to deprive us of whatever of value we have in our Puerto Rican land. Many came with the iron fist often hidden in the velvet gloves. Many approach with the unctuous “love” and missionary ways of the do-gooders who come to “help” us. And we always had to listen to the chant that what was being done was “for our own good.” Then came the imperialists: the pirates of the “American Century.”

So when you come to knock at the door of a Puerto Rican home you will be encountered by *this feeling in the Puerto Rican—sometimes unconscious in himself—of having been taken for a ride for centuries* [italics added]. He senses that 99 persons out of 100 knock at his door because they want something from him and not because they desire to be his friend—a friend solving mutual problems that affect them both.

That is why you must come many times to that door. You must prove yourself a friend, a worker who is also being oppressed by the same forces that keep the Puerto Rican down. Only then will the Puerto Rican open his heart to you. Only then will he ask you to have a cup of black coffee with him in his own kitchen. (p. 21)

Colon's argument is consistent with the historical and sociological path of the Puerto Rican people. Across the centuries, Puerto Ricans have struggled for recognition and for respect. An ample body of literature exists that revealed this ongoing struggle to survive as a distinct society and to ascertain their worth as a people (Babín, 1971, 1986; Bender, 1998; Blanco, 1981; Calem, 1998; Coll y Toste, 1985; Cruz, 1997; Curet, 1986; Di Núbila & Rodríguez, 1997; Díaz-Soler, 1998; Dietz, 1986; Fernández-Méndez, 1981; García-Passalacqua, 1993; García-Passalacqua & Collado-Schwarz, 2002; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; González-Vales, 1988; Guerra, 1998; Gutiérrez, 1989, 1993; Hernández-Colón, 1999; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Morán-Arce, 1985; Nine-Curt, 1976; Pérez-Fernández, 1999; Pérez-Viera, 2002; Picó, 1987, 1998, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 1988, 2003; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997; Rosario-Natal, 1987, 1998; Steward et al., 1966; Sued-Badillo, 1979; Trías-Monje, 1999).

Puerto Rico's unique geographic location, its ethnic composition, and its overall political and cultural context earmarked the psychological underpinnings of this population. The Puerto Rican personality evolved under the domination of two culturally opposed colonial powers: Spain and the United States.

Early interpretations of Puerto Rican society were done by people foreign to this land (Abbad, 1788/1979; Las Casas, 1552/1999; O'Reilly, 1765/1995). Their depictions of the islanders' personality tended to be warped and biased because it did not take into

account the colonial context of the island nor the heroic struggle for survival of the inhabitants due to grim living conditions under Spanish colonial rule. Unfortunately, renowned native-born historians like Marqués (1977) and Pedreira (1934/1979), followed along the same lines when defining their country people. Derisive remarks, from without and from within, marked the Puerto Rican soul. Descriptions like docile, lazy, indolent, naive, servile, submissive, weak, and ignorant were some of the epithets used to describe the people of Puerto Rico (Abbad, 1788/1979; Kazin, 1960a, 1960b; Las Casas, 1552/1999; Marqués, 1977; O'Reilly, 1765/1995; Pedreira, 1934/1979). Puerto Ricans have struggled against these stereotypes and against many odds to establish their identity and their worthiness as a people, not an easy task to accomplish under the tutelage of the United States and its diametrically opposing cultural worldview (Biascoechea, 1981; Nine-Curt, 1976).

### *Personal Perspective*

As a Puerto Rican graduate student working towards a master's degree in counseling at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the early 1980s, I observed that students of Puerto Rican descent were reluctant to seek help at the University Counseling Services office. When asked, they stated several alibis for their refusal to take advantage of the services which were free of charge: lack of trust in American therapists' capability to understand their predicament; and the firm determination that they would not grant Americans what they felt was an opportunity to *see them as pendejos*, or to *take them for pendejos*. This contention stayed with me for a long time. My own experience with my

fellow American classmates at graduate school was positive and rewarding. It was difficult for me to identify with the *pendejo* allegations expressed by my Puerto Rican friends, but at the same time I understood their fears. It became evident to me that the *pendejo* issue resided in their minds maybe as a personal construct used to interpret and predict events perceived as hostile in some way.

Since my return to Puerto Rico I've been attentive to the use of the *pendejo* word among my people. I could see that *pendejo* is a highly charged emotional word, and perceive a generalized tendency in Puerto Rico to use the *pendejo* word in a self-deprecating manner. During my graduate school years in the United States I did not observe a similar attitude among Americans. My experience with Latin American friends—among whom the word *pendejo* is also of common use—suggests marked differences in the allusions ascribed to this word in other Latin countries.

As a therapist, the strong cognitive-affective connotation and behavioral repercussions of what I now call the *pendejo* phenomenon are more and more evident. Colon's (1995) argument about this “feeling in the Puerto Rican—sometimes unconscious in himself [*sic*]—of having been taken for a ride for centuries” (p. 21) matched my observations about the poignancy of the *pendejo* word in Puerto Rican nomenclature.

To Burger (1997; see also Lonner & Adamopoulos; 1997; Mezquita, 2001), the individualistic versus collectivistic orientation among cultures is an important distinction cultural researchers make. Divergent cultural orientations provide an obstacle to effective communication among people (Biascoechea, 1981; Hall, 1981; Nine-Curt, 1976;

Ornstein, 1972, 1973). If we add unexplored culture-specific conundrums, like the *pendejo* phenomenon, rapport building in therapeutic relations is in jeopardy.

### *Description of the Phenomenon*

In a rough translation from Spanish to English, the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico could be understood as “pervasive naiveness,” “an ingrained sense of being taken advantage of,” and a susceptibility to “be taken for a ride.” There seems to be no literal English translation for this Spanish word but words like “dupe,” “numbskull,” and “tomfool” (Guerra, 1998) provide a cue to its meaning in Puerto Rican popular lexicon. This not-too-flattering interpretation of the word *pendejo* supposes that a person needs to be always on the alert so as not to “be taken” for one. Negative emotional responses that trigger passive-aggressive reactions to this interpretation are common, as this seems to be a habitual phenomenon that usually operates out of a person’s awareness. The reason that this happening has eluded conscientious study may be due to the fact that the word *pendejo* used to be considered a vulgar—as well as a bad word—in Puerto Rico.

Many Puerto Ricans are likely to react to what they perceive as the *pendejo* threat on an automatic, almost constant basis, without engaging in in-depth analyses of this phenomenon. My contention was that the *pendejo* effect is widespread in Puerto Rican society. There was reason to believe that it cuts across gender, generational, social and economic lines among the population.

The *pendejo* mentality seemed to clash with deep-rooted Puerto Rican cultural values like *dignidad and respeto* [dignity and respect] (Díaz-Royo, 1974, 1983; Lauria,

1964) which underscores a positive dimension of Puerto Rican personality. In doing so, the phenomenon may well elicit a pejorative dimension of personality and negatively influences behavior, not only in decision-making processes, but also in terms of relational styles.

In dealing with a Puerto Rican clientele on a constant basis, it became evident that the *pendejo* discourse had distinct emotional responses and behavioral manifestations that seemed to be connected to this specific word and to the meaning or meanings ascribed to it. It is quite common to hear comments that signify that someone is out to “take hold of you”, or is “out to catch you” in a dumb or *pendejo* act. The impression was that people interpreted the *pendejo* at a preconscious level as a threat to one’s personal dignity and sense of respect—like a psychological ‘boogeyman’—that works out of a person’s control and that is capable of much harm if the potential victim is not always on the alert. In this sense the *pendejo* phenomenon serves as a warning mechanism to help safeguard against a perceived threat to Puerto Ricans’ sense of dignity. The perception of a potential character flaw may predispose this population to the possibility of being *pendejos* in the first place. In other words, the presupposition of a *pendejo* mentality is conceivable in a Puerto Rican psychological framework.

The *pendejo* phenomenon as a perceived threat is reflected in Puerto Ricans’ everyday discourse. Comments like: “*Me quiere coger de pendeja*” (He-she wants to take me for a *pendeja*); “*Se cree que soy pendejo*” (She believes that I am a *pendejo*); “*Es que soy tan pendeja...*” (It’s just that I am so *pendeja!*); “*¡Qué pendejo eres!*”(What a *pendejo* you are!) are not unusual in Puerto Rican informal tete-a-tete. It is important to mention

that the word *coger* in Spanish means “to grab,” “to seize something,” “to take somebody by surprise.” Phrases like “*Que no te vayan a coger de pendejo...*” (Beware that nobody takes you for a *pendejo*); “*¡Qué cogida de pendejo me han dado!*” or “*la cogí de pendeja*” (I have been taken for a *pendejo*, or I took her for a *pendeja*) are but examples of this “you caught me, I caught you” psychological game.

There are many hues comprised within the *pendejo* construct as it affects Puerto Ricans. In Puerto Rico the *pendejo* word carries profound emotional, value-laden connotations that suggests that this phenomenon is not experienced as a mere attitude or mind set—it goes way beyond that explanation. An attitude or mind set of suspicion may be present among individual members in every culture, especially among people who for some reason feel threatened in some way or another. But it is the strong impact that this mere word has upon Puerto Ricans in general that merited an in-depth study of its psychological repercussions.

Culture-free incidences of suspicion underscore issues of trust that may affect some individuals more than others due mainly to each individual’s specific circumstances, but it is difficult to assume that it is characteristic to a wide population including upper and middle class, high school and college educated people to the degree that the *pendejo* effect is manifested among Puerto Ricans. These are “normal” everyday-people who otherwise function very well in society and who represent the bulwark of Puerto Rico’s intellectual and economic structures.

It is important to stress that *pendejo* is a Spanish word commonly used in other Hispanic cultures. In some Latin countries it may have similar connotations as in Puerto

Rico, but in other Spanish-speaking countries the word is probably ascribed with different, less negative emotional meanings. In countries like Mexico, Argentina, and Cuba the word is used more explicitly and it is likely to carry more positive emotional connotations than in Puerto Rico. In many Latin countries the word *pendejo* is commonly used to depreciate the “other” when compared to the self, while in Puerto Rico there is a tendency to use the word *pendejo* in a self-deprecating, self-punishing manner. An interesting topic for further research is the impact of the word *pendejo* among other Spanish-speaking populations to better assess the depth and breadth of this construct.

### Theoretical Framework

The conception of a multicultural psychology as an area of inquiry fosters the development of a theoretical framework based upon solid research. Investigative studies allow psychologists and practitioners to augment their knowledge base and be in a better position to serve a diverse clientele.

Differing worldviews among social groups compelled the APA to establish guidelines for culture-centered approaches in the practice of psychology. APA recognized the significance of cultural, ethnic, and racial heritage at the individual level, and the influence of historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group. Its *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* describe *culture* as “the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions”



(2003, p.380). Multicultural scholars like Bruner (1990), Conyne, (1998), Trenholm and Jensen (1992), and Triandis (1994) described culture in similar terms.

### *Indigenous Psychologies*

Indigenous theory guided the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico. APA (2003) encouraged research that applies indigenous theories in studies that involve cultural themes. Social groups elaborate their own set of values, beliefs, skills, and goals that are relevant to members of that specific culture. Advocates for indigenous psychologies, or ethnopsychologies, placed particular emphasis on culture-specific factors in human functioning (Adair, 1999; Diaz-Guerrero & Pacheco; 1994; Kim, 2000; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000).

Theorists define indigenous psychology in various ways, but “all express the same basic goal of developing a scientific knowledge system that effectively reflects, describes, explains, or understands the psychological and behavioral activities in their native contexts in terms of culturally relevant frames of reference and culturally derived categories and theories” (Yang, 2000, p. 246). Researchers learn about people by examining cultural products and psychological constructs of the specific cultural group (Kim, 2000). The indigenization movement strives for a culturally appropriate psychology to counter the effects of the indiscriminate application of dominating Western mainstream psychology to non Western societies (Yang, 2000). Rodriguez, et al. (1999) espoused the need to develop an indigenous psychology in Puerto Rico. They viewed the role of culture as integral to the explanations for cognition, emotions, intentions, and

behaviors and challenged the predominant tendency in traditional psychology to overlook, ignore, or diminish the role of culture in these psychological processes. The authors stressed the need for production and dissemination of high-quality research and the development of psychological theories and empirical models to move from a state of underdevelopment to a state of development of the discipline in Puerto Rico. They considered the development of an indigenous psychology to be a very complex process where historical, political, economic and socio-cultural factors interact.

The literature review presents the historical, sociological, and ethnical roots of Puerto Rican culture in order to establish the basis and the rationale for the emergence of the *pendejo* phenomenon. Research on the *pendejo* phenomenon heeded the call of Rodríguez et al.'s study for the development of a Puerto Rican psychology.

### *Culture and Personality*

Psychologists are aware of the mutual influence of sociocultural factors and personality in determining attitudes and behavior both at individual and collective levels (Adams, 2005; Arnett, 2008; Bruner, 1990, 1997; Bandura, 1999; Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998; Conyne, 1998; Cross & Markus, 1999; Crotty, 1998; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; Singer, 2005; Wang, 2004). In the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (2007) *culture* is defined as “the distinctive customs, values, beliefs, knowledge, art, and language of a society or a community,” and as “the characteristic attitudes and behaviors of a particular group within society” (p. 250). *Personality*, on the other hand, is defined as:

The configuration of characteristics and behavior that comprises an individual's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns. Personality is generally viewed as a complex, dynamic integration or totality, shaped by many forces, including: hereditary and constitutional tendencies; physical maturation; early training; identification with significant individuals and groups; culturally conditioned values and roles; and critical experiences and relationships. Various theories explain the structure and development of personality in different ways but all agree that personality helps determine behavior. (p. 689)

Both definitions underscore the significance of both culture and personality in determining behavior. The literature review elaborates on both personality and sociocultural factors in the configuration of a Puerto Rican personality and in the manifestation of the *pendejo* mentality.

#### Significance of the Study

This study heeded APA's (2003) call for the development of theory and research on cross-cultural themes. In particular, it can help to build up a culturally appropriate psychology for the Puerto Rican population and can serve to advance scientific research in Puerto Rico.

Indigenous research on the *pendejo* phenomenon seeks to contribute to social changes in Puerto Rico through the identification of a deep-rooted belief that seems to operate out of awareness with possible negative consequences both at the individual and the collective level. Awareness of the phenomenon can help therapists, both in Puerto Rico and in the United States, to pay attention to particular mindsets that can hinder the therapeutic process. It will also allow Puerto Ricans become cognizant of limiting cognitive distortions and irrational beliefs that have an effect on their self-worth.

### Scope of the Study

Due to the indigenous nature of the topic selected, a qualitative, descriptive, exploratory, case study was conducted in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Although the dissertation is written in English, the interventions with identified research subjects were conducted in the Spanish language.

The population for this study consisted of 8 participants—the number necessary to reach saturation. The following criteria guided the selection of study contributors: middle to upper class, college graduate, native Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans of both sexes covering an age span between 30 to 45 years. Since there was a predetermined criterion for inclusion and/or exclusion of participants, the *criterion sampling* strategy was used to select subjects for this investigative work. This sampling method allowed for the identification of information-rich cases for an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the phenomenon (Patton, 1987).

The scope of this study was the description of the *pendejo* phenomenon and the exploration of common themes. To follow the phenomenological case study tradition, data was extracted from the detailed narratives of native Puerto Ricans who admitted to have personally experienced the phenomenon. This researcher approached the study in a systematic manner with the intention of eliciting meaningful and useful information.

### Limitations of the Study

The design of this study does not allow for generalizability or transferability. Some of the limitations of the study were the method for subject selection, the small

sample size, and the choice of a high-level population. There was only one interviewer, so the process of information gathering without biasing the participant's responses was a concern. Also, due to the indigenous nature of the phenomenon under study, Spanish was used in the instruments as well as the in-depth interview. Efforts were made to convey the meanings extracted from these interventions to English speaking readers. The study opened the door to future research. Comprehensive analyses of the phenomenon explored and described in this investigative work can provide for added opportunities to validate study findings and to expand knowledge on the Puerto Rican indigenous psychological fabric.

#### Definition of Terms

Due to the indigenous nature of this study some definitions may not be clearly understood by English speaking readers. The study made significant use of essential Spanish words that cannot be literarily translated into English. An effort was made to acquaint the reader with the meaning of the concepts or constructs presented.

#### *Study-Specific Terminology*

*Autochthonous Psychology:* A psychology of the country that is independent of its imported origins, and which stands on its own in addressing local problems and providing its own local training (Adair, 1999).

*Construct:* Something constructed by the mind; a product of ideology, history, or social circumstances (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

*Culture:* Cultures are groups of people who construe their experiences in basically the same way (Burger, 1997). Culture is the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religions and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group (APA, 2003, p.380).

Indigenous psychologies approaches, according to Kim (2000), view culture as an *emergent property* of individuals and groups interacting with their natural and human environment. Culture is an emergent construct that provides meaning, coherence, and direction to its members (p. 270).

*Culture-Centered:* Term used to encourage psychologists to use a “cultural lens” as a central focus of professional behavior. Psychologists recognize that all individuals, including themselves, are influenced by different contexts, including the historical, ecological, sociopolitical, and disciplinary. Culture-centered counseling is responsive to all culturally learned patterns (APA, 2003, p. 380).

*Diversity:* The condition of being diverse, the inclusion of diverse people (as people of different races and cultures) in a group or organization (Merriam-Webster, 2003). APA (2003) recognizes that the population of the United States includes individuals and groups of varying cultural backgrounds, referring to individual’s social identities, including age, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity.

*Ethnicity:* A particular ethnic affiliation or group. (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 429). The acceptance of the group mores and practices of one’s culture of origin and the concomitant sense of belonging (APA, 2003, p. 380).

*Ethnocentric*: Characterized by or based on the attitude that one's own group is superior (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 429).

*Hegemony*: Preponderant influence or authority over others: Domination; the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 577).

*Indigenization*: The process by which an indigenous psychology develops, and evolves through a characteristic series of stages (Adair, 1999). According to Adair, the goal of indigenization of psychology is to alter the content of psychology to make it "culturally sensitive". Two subgoals are: making the research more culturally sensitive and appropriate, and making the discipline autochthonous.

*Indigenous*: Originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 634).

*Indigenous Psychologies*: A psychological discipline that is "culturally appropriate" because it addresses the daily, mundane activities of people. It acknowledges the need to capture the thinking and expressions of the people. Kim (2000) affirmed that indigenous psychologies examine knowledge, skills, and beliefs which people have about themselves, and study these aspects in their natural contexts.

*Meme*: An idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p.774). For Dawkins (1989), a meme is the social equivalent of a gene making an analogy between cultural and genetic evolution, and likening the survival value and the capacity of genes to propagate themselves, to the way memes act as cultural replicators with comparable survival value. Cacioppo (2002)

gave further details about how memes are transmitted verbally from one mind to another and can alter the course of a culture and those who live in it.

*Monocultural*: Related to a culture dominated by a single element: A prevailing culture marked by homogeneity...that we all embrace whether we like it or not (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 803).

*Multicultural*: Refers to interactions between individuals from ethnic and racial groups in the United States—including its commonwealths or territories such as Puerto Rico and Guam—and the dominant European-American culture (APA, 2003).

*Multiculturalism*: Interactions between racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It recognizes the broad scope of dimensions like race, ethnicity, and language, which are critical aspects of an individual's ethnic/racial and personal identity. Psychologists are encouraged to be cognizant of issues related to all of these dimensions

*Worldview*: A comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world from a specific standpoint (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

### *Spanish Terminology*

*Coger*: To *grab*, to take or seize by or as if by a sudden motion or grasp. To obtain unscrupulously (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

*Coger de pendejo*: To take advantage of; to take for a ride; to take for dumb, ignorant, stupid, and /or shameful.

*Dignidad*: According to Díaz-Royo (1974), it is the highest expression of a positive social identity made possible to the extent to which actors acknowledge each



other's unique individuality. All persons have *dignidad* or at least a potential for it. People possess *dignidad* if they have within themselves the strict rules of interpersonal relations.

*Pendejo*: Pubic hair. Also, a person considered to be one or more of the following: silly, dumb, ignorant, stupid, clumsy, irresponsible, pusillanimous, coward, shameful, and contemptible. In Spanish slang it is used in reference to a whore (Celdrán, 1995; León, 1996) in this context *pendejo* also means: trash, residue, without value (Celdrán, 1995).

*Pendejo phenomenon*: In Puerto Rico, a self-deprecating tendency or perceived susceptibility to be considered as somebody who has no value, someone liable to be trampled upon, or to be easily discarded and disposed of, in other words, a person who merits little or no respect. It may also include a fear of being naïve, and at risk to be *cogido/a de pendejo*.

*Respeto*: Possessing and demonstrating proper demeanor toward self and others. Diaz-Royo (1983) defines *respeto* as “prescribed role-playing which emphasizes the deferential acknowledgement of the other's worth or status” (p. 6). For Lauria (1964), “it signifies proper attention to the requisites of the ceremonial model of behavior and to the moral aspects of human activities. This quality is an obligatory self-presentation; no Puerto Rican is considered properly socialized unless he can comport himself with *respeto*” (p. 55).

## Chapter Summary

Demographic data indicated dramatic changes in the population configuration of the United States. Multiculturalism is challenging professional psychologists to become more culturally responsive to ensure the well-being of their clientele. There is a need to develop a multicultural psychology built upon theory and research on cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous themes.

Puerto Ricans are American citizens by birthright but maintained their own Hispanic culture, including the Spanish language, and the Spanish modes and mores. At present, half of the Puerto Rican population lives in the United States. The *pendejo* phenomenon can be a significant barrier to healthy interaction with Puerto Ricans. This phenomenon had never been identified, much less studied, though it seems to be pervasive among the Puerto Rican population. The present study on the *pendejo* phenomenon explored and described the *pendejo* construct as experienced by a group of 8 Puerto Rican participants. By becoming aware of this construct, psychologists will be better prepared to identify its occurrence in their Puerto Rican clientele. Also, research of this phenomenon will help to develop a Puerto Rican psychology. Chapters 2 and 3 review pertinent literature that provided the groundwork for the study of this phenomenon and present the research methodology that guided the study. Chapter 4 describes the steps taken in collecting the data, and presents the data analysis results. Chapter 5 includes conclusions and recommendations based on the interpretation of the results.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

A well-designed study involves a highly interactive, integrative process where the researcher carries on a dialogue with previous studies. A review of the literature provides a foundation on which to build knowledge and expand on what is already known (Merriam, 1998). According to Creswell (2003) literature reviews “convey the importance of studying a topic to readers” (p. 27). Maxwell (1996) indicated that the task of the qualitative researcher is not only descriptive but it is also critical. One needs to understand the problems in previous research and theory, contradictions or holes in existing views, and how the study can make a significant contribution to our understanding.

A problem arises when the study focuses on a research topic where there is little or no significant literature available. Some experts (Behling, 1984; Merriam, 1998) argued that claims about lack of literature regarding a specific topic are not true nine out of ten times. Merriam stated that lack of significant literature could be a result of the research topic not being worth studying, that there is no way to study it, or that the search is too narrow.

Contrary to Behling (1984) and Merriam (1998), Creswell (2003) considered the exploratory nature of qualitative studies and presented the possibility of a lack of available literature directly related to emergent, unexplored phenomena.

One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas. (p. 30)

Maxwell (1996) presented a similar argument when he stated that “the conceptual context for your research study is something that is *constructed*, not found” (p.27). In other words, according to this author, one takes pieces from different sources, but it is something that the researcher builds, it is not ready-made. Both Maxwell (1996) and Creswell’s (2003) points of view provided veritable arguments for the lack of literature on the *pendejo* phenomenon.

#### Research Strategy

Search for the word *pendejo*, and for the phrases *pendejo phenomenon*, and *pendejo phenomenon in Puerto Rico* produced a “no hits” prompt in a diversity of scientific data bases like Academic Search Premier, ProQuest, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX. The use of online libraries like Questia and Ingenta concluded in “0 articles with title/keywords/abstract containing *pendejo*.” Personal visits to, and Web site searches of, diverse libraries at leading Puerto Rican universities including the University of Puerto Rico, the Interamerican University, and the Catholic University turned up no information related to the *pendejo* topic.

Personal interviews with well known authorities in Puerto Rican affairs, within the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, and law—Lic. Federico Cedó Alzamora, Dr. Antonio Díaz-Royo, Dr. Nydia Lucca-Irizarry, Dr. Angel Quintero-

Rivera, and Dr. José H. Rodríguez—confirmed the lack of literature and research on the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico. They all manifested a willingness to help in the advancement of this research effort.

The lack of information on the *pendejo* phenomenon presupposed a review of related literature to better grasp the contextual intricacies of this phenomenon. To develop a comprehensive knowledge base for a research study, a query of the influences that underlie the formation of the Puerto Rican character provided a suitable framework to conduct this investigative work. For this purpose, three main topics were developed in the ensuing literature review: the Theoretical Framework section presents multicultural perspectives and approaches to study cultural phenomena and validates the choice of the indigenous approach to conduct a suitable investigative work. The Socio-Historical Path section includes an overview of Puerto Rico socio-historical events to establish a contextual basis for the study and to underscore important ethnic, historical, sociological, and political elements influencing the emergence of the phenomenon. The Puerto Rican Personality section identifies various dispositions relevant to this population and explores the *Jibaro* element as the Puerto Rican prototype.

### Theoretical Framework

This study was an exploration of the constructed meaning of the *pendejo* word in Puerto Rico. It describes how middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Ricans experienced this construct and determines that their collective experiences can be conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon. Relevant to this research, was how this

phenomenon is represented *de facto* in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of everyday life as an irrational belief and a negative self-referent. The *how* in this study was defined by the themes extracted from the experiences of the research participants that helped uncover meaning-making processes (patterns) as lived and reported by the selected research population. The study also delved into how and in what ways the *pendejo* phenomenon was reflected in the psychological make up of those who experienced it.

Because of the culture orientation of this research, the literature review focused on studies that provided a basis for the combined cultural and personality backdrop of the *pendejo*. The literature review contextualized the *pendejo* within a Puerto Rican cultural personality framework.

### *Multicultural Perspectives and Terminology*

Traditional psychologists endorsed universalism and hold that multicultural counseling should not be considered a unique and specialized form of counseling (Patterson, 1996; Weinrach & Thomas, 1998). They understand that the basic traditional counseling techniques used for the majority populations were sufficient and beneficial for all multicultural clients. These traditional therapists emphasized similarities irrespective of cultural differences and considered counseling to be multicultural and generic in nature (Patterson, 1996). Weinrach and Thomas (1998) sustained that the focus of psychology is on the development of the individual. They saw little need for change to culture specific strategies.

A growing number of scholars, worried about the widespread use of mainstream traditional counseling approaches and techniques, validated more culture-specific interventions (Adair, 1999; Adair, Pandey, Begum, Puhon. & Vohra, 1995; APA, 2003; Arnett, 2008; Arredondo & D'Andrea, 2000; Brown, 1997; Carter, 1991; Christopher, 1999; Coleman, 1998; Dana, 2000; Das, 1995; Enriquez, 1993; Greenfield, 2000; Hanna, Bemak, & Chung, 1999; Ho, Peng, Lai, & Chan, 2001; Hoare, 1991; Kim, 2000; Kim & Berry, 1993; LaRoche, 2005; McFadden, 1996; Pedersen, 1976, 1990, 1996; Ramsey, 2000; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Santrock, 1994; Shams, 2002; Shweder, 2000; Sue, 2004; Strickland, 2000; Sue et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1999). They were aware of how the Euro-American White middle-class value system permeated psychological research and counseling activities with possible harmful consequences for minorities and other underserved populations. Santrock (1994) contended that “when people’s cultural values are violated or when cultural expectations are ignored, people react emotionally” (p. 318).

APA (2003) issued its *Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice and organizational change for psychologists*, to offset possible harm to the dignity and worth of all persons. This organization recognized the need for psychologists to become more knowledgeable, proficient, and multicultural responsive to their clientele. APA called for psychologists to heed emerging data “about the different needs of particular individuals and groups historically marginalized or disenfranchised within and by psychology based on their ethnic/racial heritage and social group identity or membership” (p. 377).

Dana (2000) indicated that mental health services imposed mainstream diagnoses and interventions on culturally different clients, “based on the mistaken belief that these services had universal applications” (p. 67). Carter (1991; see also Kim, 2000; Pedersen, 1976) disputed universalism assumptions in traditional psychology and depicted traditional universal exponents as *culturally encapsulated* psychologists who were prone to use stereotypes to understand culturally different clients.

They may believe in a universal truth and have an implicit disregard for cultural diversity and, thus, may approach education or counseling from a technique orientation rather than a culturally aware perspective....It is usually not readily apparent to most people how cultural values or worldviews are related to human interactions or how they influence behavior, thoughts, perceptions, and assumptions. (p.170)

The trend in multicultural psychology, however, is toward integration.

Norenzayan and Heine (2005) exposed points of convergence in the seemingly opposing views of the universal-diversity controversy. In their search for human psychological universals, they uncovered complementary elements in humans’ dual inheritance of biological evolution and transmitted culture through the expression of universal mechanisms in cultural specific ways. They figured that “at some level, cultural contexts are implicated in psychological processes” (p. 770). To Norenzayan and Heine (see also Das, 1995; Sue et al., 1992), both cultural diversity *and* universals were integral to much psychological reasoning.

Human minds develop in and draw from richly structured cultural contexts, and collectively distributed beliefs and practices in turn are invariably shaped by individual psychological processes and their social and material effects. Thus, cultures and psyches make each other up in a mutually reinforcing fashion and can best be understood in terms of each other. (p. 778)



Multicultural advocates called for the advancement of an integrated psychology of culture that includes both culture-specific, contextual realities as well as those universal, pan-human qualities that unite us as human beings. Poortinga (1997) shared this point of view and expressed that “from a perspective of convergence, a culture-inclusive psychology should not restrict itself to the analysis of context, but also incorporate a view of culture as a biological property of the human species” (p. 368). Pedersen (1996) warned that “although there may indeed be a problem of overemphasizing cultural diversity and differences in some of the multicultural literature, it is equally serious to ignore diversity and thereby deprive cultural groups of their identity” (p. 236).

### *The Role of Context*

Even though up-to-date research underscores the biological basis of personality traits (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005; Poortinga, 1997), psychologists remain aware that “people and their personalities exist within a cultural context” (Burger, 1997, p.12). The relevance of context in the study and treatment of diverse populations is well documented in psychological research (APA, 2003; Arnett, 2008; Das, 1995; Ghadirian & Lehman, 1993; Hall, 1981; Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005; Pedersen, 1997; Poortinga, 1997; Sue et al., 1992; Triandis, 1995).

APA’s (2003) guidelines recognized that “all individuals exist in social, political, historical, and economic contexts, and psychologists are increasingly called upon to understand the influence of these contexts on individuals’ behavior” (p. 377). The official

document encouraged culture-centered practices where “psychologists recognize that all individuals, including themselves, are influenced by different contexts, including the historical, ecological, sociopolitical, and disciplinary” (p. 380).

Multicultural scholars agreed to the unvarying interaction between sociocultural factors, environment, and the human mind and emotions (Arnett, 2008; Ghadirian & Lehman, 1993). Differential worldviews as well as historical, social, and material conditions impact social knowledge and collective human activity (Thomas, 1996). Thomas recognized how the history of collective human activity played an important role in the organization of subjective worldviews and how context played an essential role in the study of distinct cultural phenomena.

A truly social contextualism takes historical social knowledge seriously. It considers subjectivity important but recognizes that the history of collective human activity has played an important role in organizing one’s subjectivity. It pays attention to the real and sensuous world. A critical contextualist must always ask himself or herself: Under what historical, social, and material conditions do these “irrational” or “maladaptive” feelings, thoughts, and behaviors arise? (p. 534).

The analysis of subjective cultures—the unique and characteristic ways people view their respective social world—lead to the identification of both universals and cultural specifics in the differential meanings humans ascribe to their world (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997). The collective history of the Puerto Rican people played an important role in organizing personal subjectivity. This study uncovered the historical and social conditions conducive to the conceptualization and the behavioral manifestations of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

*Etic and Emic Approaches*

“The concept of culture may be differentially conceptualized depending upon the goal of the inquiry,” according to Munroe and Munroe (1997, p. 173). Multicultural psychologists adhere to a psychology of culture and study it from different perspectives. They differentiate between culture-universal or *etic* approaches and culture-specific or *emic* approaches (Kim & Berry, 1993; Santrock, 1994; Triandis, 1995). The *etic* or culture-universal approach attempts to derive a universal understanding of a phenomenon and describes behavior that can be generalized across cultures (Kim & Berry, 1993; Santrock, 1994). The *emic* or culture-specific approach, on the other hand, examines the worldview of a specific cultural system including behaviors significant to the people of that culture or ethnic group (Kim & Berry, 1993).

Three distinct culture-related psychologies emerged from the cultural science tradition: cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous (Greenfield, 2000; Kim & Berry, 1993; Yang, 2000). These psychological points of view consider the contextual reality of cultural phenomena; recognize that personality and culture are interconnected; and study human culture “as the paramount factor that shapes and influences thought and behavior” (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997, p. 48). Even though each approach keeps its own distinctive delineation, there is substantial interconnection within domains. Poortinga (1997; see also Greenfield, 2000; Shweder, 2000; Triandis, 1995; Yang, 2000) looked for convergence among the three approaches given that “in many instances different approaches, if not actually compatible, are complementary to each other; they are largely

dealing with different aspects of a phenomenon, emphasizing different concerns” (p. 349).

Triandis (1995) viewed the possible use of both emic and etic perspectives in conducting good research. He maintained that it is important to study phenomena from both the etic of social identity and the emic of social identity. Kim and Berry (1993) proposed a framework for pursuing a universal psychology that “involves a shift in perspective from indigenous psychologies to cross-indigenous psychology and an integration with cross-cultural psychology” (p. 278) in a process guided by the notions of emic and etic.

*Cross-cultural psychology: an etic approach.* Triandis (1995) explained that etics operate outside the system and apply to more than one culture or point of view, as is the case of traditional cross-cultural approaches. He elaborated on how, in etic inquiries, variables are imposed on the problem: “The variables used by etic researchers are theoretic, assumed rather than extracted from data, and checked with constructs that are presumed to be appropriate in all cultures” (p. 227). In this manner a criterion used in etic research studies generalizes to all cultures. McCrae and Terracciano (2005), for example, produced data from 50 cultures that “support the hypothesis that features of personality traits are common to all human groups” (p. 547).

Yang (2000, p. 242) elaborated on Kim and Berry’s (1993) three related goals for cross-cultural psychology:

1. *The transport and test goal.* Testing the generality of existing psychological knowledge and theories (most originating in Western cultures) in other (usually non-Western) cultures.
2. *The exploration and discovery goal.* Exploring other cultures in order to discover psychological variations that are not covered in existing knowledge and theories (the exploration and discovery goal).
3. *The integration goal.* Generating a universal psychology by assembling and integrating the results obtained from the first two goals.

Since cross-cultural psychology looks for universals across cultures and then compares human behavior amid populations defined in cultural terms (Poortinga, 1997), problems and procedures derive from conventional psychological methodology (Greenfield, 2000). In this sense, cross-cultural psychology has much in common with mainstream psychology and uses natural science methodologies, guided by some current theory (Greenfield, 2000; Kim, 2000; Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997; Poortinga, 1997; Schweder, 2000; Yang, 2000).

Critics of the traditional cross-cultural approach (Greenfield, 2000; Ho et al., 2001; Kim, 2000; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000) maintained that it is precisely this connection to mainstream Westernized psychology and the use of natural science methodologies what makes cross-cultural psychology deficient to assess non-Western, indigenous phenomena. There is concern with the imposition of the natural science model to study human beings. Kim (2000) asserted that the natural science paradigm distorts psychological phenomena.

A second imposition of the cross-cultural approach, according to Kim (2000), is the assumption of universality of psychological theories, more so, when most theories are developed and tested among college students in the United States. Kim questioned how theories “tested on less than 1 percent of the total population have been assumed to be universal” (p.284). Norenzayan and Heine (2005) also addressed this issue and acknowledged an uneven geographical representation in research even today.

Many psychologists have not been studying human nature—they have been investigating the nature of educated, middle-class, young adult Westerners (or children of such people). This sampling issue is especially problematic given that Western middle-class populations from which most psychology samples are derived, far from being typical of the world, happens to represent a cultural anomaly in that they are unusually individualistic, affluent, secular, low context, analytic, and self-enhancing with respect to the rest of the world. (p. 765)

Finally, Kim (2000) was concerned about the manner in which expert or professional knowledge has been imposed on the lay public. The author regretted that “psychologists may have been premature in developing theories, concepts, and methods without understanding the phenomena itself” (p. 285). To Kim (see also, Ng & Liu, 2000; Ho et al., 2001), a psychological phenomenon is best understood from the inside, from the experiencing person. Ho et al. (2001) explained that “an insider’s knowledge of the target culture—which may, nonetheless, be acquired by foreign investigators—is essential to the conduct of investigations,” and added that “without the requisite sensitivity to these behavioral patterns, indigenous psychologists argue, research would result in distortions of social reality” (p. 928).

Yang (2000) summarized five problems confronting procedures used by cross-cultural psychologists.

First, they emphasize the measuring instrument used predominantly over the cultures involved; that is, they are much more tool-oriented than culture-oriented. Second, domination by a Western psychologist as the principal investigator in the application of these procedures has made the influence of Euro-American ethnocentrism highly likely. Third, these procedures were mainly designed and used to construct instruments for the measurement of *decontextualized* psychological or behavioral characteristics. Fourth, they were designed and used to construct instruments for the measurement of quantitative psychological constructs or variables rather than for the assessment of qualitative psychological or behavioral patterns and constellations. Fifth, to some degree they have all suffered from the potential effects of the imposed-etic or pseudo-etic elements contained in the measuring instrument. (p. 253)

Because of the problems broached by Ho et al. (2001), Kim (2000), and Yang (2000), Shweder (2000; see also Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997) insisted upon the need to develop the cross-cultural approach. Shweder claimed that cross-cultural psychologists aim “to make sure that the hoped-for universal psychology is truly universal and to throw out any claim that only holds in the Anglo-American world” (p. 212). The author understood that “this is a useful corrective for the tendency of Western psychologists to over generalize their findings, but it is not the same as undertaking a project in indigenous or cultural psychology” (p. 212).

Sinha (1997) advocated a cross-indigenous approach to discover universal regularities and to amplify the range of the phenomenon investigated while minimizing the perils of the traditional cross-cultural approach. Kim and Berry (1993) regarded cross-cultural psychology and indigenous psychologies as complementary approaches. The integration of these two approaches is necessary to discover universals. Berry, Poortinga, and Pandey (1997) admitted that cross-cultural psychology is still dominated by Western psychologists, but they also asserted that “what started as a Western-based

attempt to understand the ‘others’ is now a field well-populated by these ‘others’” (p. xiii).

### *The Emic Approach*

The current study used an emic approach to identify a phenomenon that is culturally relevant in Puerto Rico. Emic researchers are interested in how people construe their world (Arnett, 2008; C.G.N. Hall, 2003; Greenfield, 2000; Kim & Berry, 1993). The criteria used to evaluate emic studies are internal to the culture under study and do not necessarily generalize to other contexts. To Berry et al. (1997), “cultural orientations tend to be holistic and idiographic, emphasizing the necessity to make unique culture-characteristic patterns of behavior accessible to scientific analysis and leaning toward various forms of phenomenology in methodology” (p.xxiii). Scholars use “thick description” to produce relevant data for their study (Triandis, 1995).

Psychologists identify *cultural psychology* and *indigenous psychologies* as two approaches that study phenomena from the emic perspective. The study of the *pendejo* phenomenon draws from these two cultural disciplines to investigate an unexplored culture-specific event.

*Cultural psychology.* Cultural psychology represents the meeting of two related disciplines: psychology and anthropology (Greenfield, 2000; Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997; Yang, 2000). It reflects the dissatisfaction of a group of psychologists with the “universalism and decontextualized methodology of psychology in general and cross-cultural psychology in particular” (Greenfield, 2000, p. 228). Greenfield (2000) indicated



that cultural psychologists modeled anthropologists' desire to deal directly with the people and not merely with their cultural wrapping.

The cultural approach contemplates one culture at a time and is interested in how psychological phenomena are modified by the culture under consideration. This approach avows a “more interactive and creative relationship between individuals and their sociocultural surroundings” (Berry et al., 1997, p. xi). Culture is seen as inside the individual in important ways (Greenfield, 2000).

Shweder (2000) saw the study of *mentalities*, instead of the study of the *mind*, as the proper unit of analysis for cultural and indigenous psychology. The author viewed cultural psychology as a type of interpretive analysis of social practice which asks, “What are the ‘goals, values and pictures of the world with reference to which this behavior might be seen as rational?’” (p.207). This lead psychologists to focus on themes like folk psychology and related issues like shared meanings in each culture (Bruner, 1990; Greenfield, 2000), subjective worldviews (Thomas, 1996), relativistic positions (Triandis, 2000), and the study of mentalities—or “the actual cognitive functioning of a particular person or people” (Shweder, 2000, p. 210). Greenfield (2000) underscored the importance of cultural construals and shared meanings which render concepts like culture, behavior, and mind barely undistinguishable one from the other.

Culture is “a way of knowing, of construing the world and others” (Bruner, 1993, p. 516). Through processes of interaction and communication, these construals acquire a certain degree of intersubjectivity or shared meaning. Shared knowledge and shared meanings generate a set of everyday practices that also define culture (e.g., Scribner & Cole, 1981). Thus, culture and behavior, culture and mind are viewed as undistinguishable (Jahoda, 1992). (p. 224)

Shweder (2000) sees little difference between cultural psychology and indigenous psychology, “except perhaps in their somewhat different estimations of the global relevance and significance of local knowledge” (p. 208). Greenfield (2000) acknowledged that both cultural and indigenous psychologies placed emphasis on the symbolic quality of culture. The two disciplines recognize the importance of shared cultural meaning.

Although indigenous psychology and cultural psychology clearly have independent origins..., they share the notion that the prime subject of study is the subject’s creation of meaning systems, particularly systems that are shared or normative within a defined cultural group. *In different ways, both traditions have recognized that psychological theories are important aspects of shared cultural meaning.* (p. 225)

On the other hand, Greenfield (2000) made a distinction between the empirical research traditions of the two perspectives. While the empirical research tradition of cultural psychology is not based on formal psychological theories, “the goal of indigenous psychology is to take informal folk theories of psychological functioning and formalize them into psychological theories” (p. 225). Indigenous psychologists translated these informal ethno-theories into formal psychological formulations to conduct appropriate empirical investigations.

This research work had to do with Puerto Rican folk psychology and with the people’s construal of the *pendejo* idiom. The investigation served the purpose of indigenous inquiries to conduct formal, appropriate qualitative research that help uncover and describe indigenous psychological phenomena. Cultural psychology substantiated the anthropological elements that influenced the constitution of the phenomenon under study.

*Indigenous psychologies.* The indigenization movement reflects a worldwide initiative to develop culturally appropriate interventions to help offset the indiscriminate application of Western psychology to non-Western societies (Sinha, 1993, 1997).

Exponents of indigenous psychologies agree that the basic goal is to provide a scientific knowledge base about the particular native contexts of psychological and behavioral activities (Adair, 1995; Greenfield, 2000; Kim, 2000; Sinha, 1997; Triandis, 2000; Yang, 2000). By examining cultural products and psychological constructs researchers have a better understanding of the meaning-making processes and the behavioral expressions of the culture under study (Kim, 2000).

Sinha (1997) pointed out four underlying threads in the various definitions of indigenous psychology (p. 132) that served to frame the *pendejo* study:

1. Psychological knowledge is not to be externally imposed; rather the cultural tradition should give rise to it.
  2. True psychology lies not in artificially (experimentally contrived) induced behavior, but in daily, mundane activities of people.
  3. Behavior is to be understood and interpreted not in terms of imported categories and foreign theories (i.e., imposed etics), but in terms of indigenous and local frames of reference and culturally derived categories.
  4. Indigenous psychology embodies psychological knowledge that is relevant and is designed for its people. In other words, it reflects the sociocultural reality of its society.
- Indigenous psychology...is a route to “appropriate” psychology.

Psychologists with an indigenous orientation consider the fact that people maintain, share, and create particular sets of values, beliefs, skills, and goals that have special meaning and relevance to participants of their own particular culture (Kim, 2000). Choi, Kim, and Choi (1993) underscored the importance of *common sense* and *naïve psychology* in the formation of an indigenous conceptual framework. They explained how concepts used in everyday language are lay versions of people's understanding of their human world. Psychologists need to tap into *collective representations* as a source of knowledge stored in the minds of people. These collective representations contain affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements. Choi et al.'s contention that "a word has functional utility and communicative value for its users, [because] it represents a version of a shared, social reality" (p. 194), availed the study of the collective representation of the *pendejo* word in Puerto Rico.

This gives credence to Kim's (2000) suggestion that to access indigenous information as a primary source of knowledge, theories and methods should develop internally to correspond with psychological phenomena. Investigators with an inside perspective, as is the case with this study, bring insight and first hand knowledge to their research work. For insiders, culture is basic and natural and can ascertain phenomenological knowledge that only insiders possess. Outsiders, on the other hand, may misconstrue reality and even affect the way people think and behave. Kim elaborated this point of view:

To learn about our own culture or another culture, we typically examine cultural products (e.g., art, music, dance, dress, food, and customs), and psychological constructs (e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms). In order to gain a deeper

understanding of a culture, we can study organized bodies of knowledge such as history, philosophy, language, customs, and folkways. However, even if we acquire this information, our understanding of the culture will still be limited. If we are outsiders looking in, the understanding would be qualitatively different from insiders who are capable of thinking, feeling, and identifying as members of the culture.

This study accessed indigenous information related to the *pendejo* phenomenon as a contribution to the development of an appropriate Puerto Rican psychology. Since the indigenous perspective calls attention to the relevance of native lore and natural contexts in the conception of a veritable psychological knowledge base, the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon as a Puerto Rican concern validated the choice of the indigenous approach to conduct a suitable investigation. More so, if we consider Sinha's (1997) emphasis on the study of culture-specific phenomena, as a response to non-Western psychologists' need to *decolonize* knowledge in countries subjected to former [in the case of Puerto Rico, to current] colonial rule. For Sinha, transplanting of modern psychology to the developing countries as a "ready-made intellectual package," (p. 136) swept away indigenous knowledge.

A study on the status of psychological research in Puerto Rico (Rodríguez et al., 1999) explored the opinions and perception of Puerto Rican researchers to determine the status and level of development of psychology in Puerto Rico. The authors heeded the call for a culturally rooted psychology that seems to be as strong on the island as in other countries (Adair & Díaz-Loving, 1999; Díaz-Guerrero & Pacheco, 1994). Results indicated that psychological research in Puerto Rico is moving from a state of underdevelopment to a state of development. There is an urgent need for projects that

respond to local interests and needs in compliance with culturally appropriate psychological theories and methods.

The search for a global or universal psychology remains a main concern for indigenous supporters (Enriquez, 1993; Kim & Berry, 1993; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000). Yang (2000) contended that all psychologies should be indigenous and suggested that they be organized into a pyramid “with the most specific indigenous psychologies at the bottom and the indigenously derived global psychology at the top” (p. 249). The author emphasized upon the derivation of a global psychology from multiple indigenous psychologies.

Indigenous psychologies developed specifically for particular cultures have two major functions. Individually, each provides indigenous knowledge for native psychologists to understand, explain, and predict their people’s behavior better and to prevent and vitiate their society’s social problems more efficiently. Collectively, they serve the higher purpose of developing a balanced, genuine global psychology. (p. 257)

Sinha (1997) also asserted the dual benefit of the indigenous standpoint and concluded that “the indigenous approach has two concerns: that of embedding psychology in specific cultural context, and of establishing the universality of its empirical base and principles” (p. 131). Many psychologists agreed on the ultimate goal of developing a universal psychology by incorporating all indigenous (including Western) psychologies (Berry, 2000; Enriquez, 1993; Greenfield, 2000; Kim, 2000; Kim & Berry, 1993; Shweder, 2000; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000). In other words, it is through the proliferation of the indigenous psychologies (e.g., a Puerto Rican psychology), that

the field of psychology will cease to be culture-bound to Western standards and become truly universal. Kim and Berry (1993) avowed this argument:

In themselves, indigenous psychologies do not reduce the culture-bound nature of general psychology. It is only when a number of indigenous psychologies are considered simultaneously, as a comprehensive body of knowledge, that psychology can become a more generalized discipline, one that can understand and explain human behavior at large. (p. 277)

In Yang's (2000) words, "lower-order indigenous psychologies are special cases of the highest indigenous psychology on earth—a balanced, genuine global psychology." (p. 246).

### *Culture and Personality*

Psychologists are increasingly aware that people and their personalities exist within a cultural context. They are also aware that sociocultural and environmental factors are in constant interaction with the human mind and emotions, and that behaviors take different forms and meanings depending on the culture (Adams, 2005; APA, 2003; Arnett, 2008; Bruner, 1990; Bandura, 1999; C. G. N. Hall, 2003; Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998; Conyne, 1998; Cross & Markus, 1999; Crotty, 1998; Dana, 2000; Das, 1995; Ghadirian & Lehmann, 1993; Hanna et al., 1999; Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; Lazarus, 1961; McFadden, 1996; Pedersen, 1996, 1997; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996; Singer, 2005; Swartz-Kulstad & Martin, 1999; Thomas, 1996; Varas-Díaz & Serrano-García, 2003; Wang, 2004).

Four decades ago, Lazarus (1961) manifested that "man's [sic] actions are continually attuned to the internal as well as external conditions to which he is exposed"

(p. 25). Lazarus argued that what we call personality is the pattern or organization of characteristics within the person, or dispositions to act in certain ways, but cautioned that addressing personality without reference to the circumstances in which a person behaves provides limited understanding. At the time the Positivistic paradigm permeated psychological discourse, but Lazarus understood that “the actual future behavior of a person is determined by the interaction of both his personality structure and the social and physical circumstances in which he acts” (p.25).

Along similar lines, Bruner (1990) emphasized on “the nature and cultural shaping of meaning-making, and the central place it plays in human action” (p. xii). Bruner also criticized those who reduce meaning and culture to a material base and those who insist upon explanations in terms of “causes.” To Bruner, the human mind is very complex and difficult to understand and “cannot be limited by the conventional aims of positivistic science with its ideals of reductionism, causal explanations, and prediction” (p. xiii).

The study of human mind is so difficult, so caught in the dilemma of being both the object and the agent of its own study, that it cannot limit its inquiries to ways of thinking that grew out of yesterday’s physics. Rather, the task is so compellingly important that it deserves all the rich variety of insight that we can bring to the understanding of what man makes of his world. (p. xii)

A significant number of scholars agreed on the influence of genetics and on the interaction of person and situation to determine behavior in the conception of personality (Baumeister, 1999; Burger, 1997; Caspi & Roberts, 1999; C.G.N. Hall, 2003; Cross & Markus, 1999; Ewen, 2003; Mayer, 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1999; McCrae & Terracciano, 2005; Singer, 2005; Tomkins, 1992). Caspi and Roberts (1999) urged



psychologists to take into account macrohistorical developments in the study of personality and stipulated that “ample evidence shows that social contexts, role experiences, and changing historical and cultural norms affect personality development” (p. 319).

Burger (1997) concluded that no one approach to understanding personality provided a complete picture of the person. The author indicated, however, several areas of agreement among theorists of all perspectives. One area of agreement, which few psychologists deny, is the acknowledgement of *genetic influence on personality*. Another area of agreement concerns *the interaction of person and situation to determine behavior*. Burger explained that “most trait theorists acknowledge the limits of using traits to predict behavior, and critics of the trait approach no longer seem to argue that situational variables affect all people the same” (p. 525). A third area of agreement among personality theorists is the acknowledgement that *thoughts outside of our awareness play an important role in determining behavior*. The interaction of person and situation to determine behavior where emotional and behavioral proclivities with our social environment yield characteristic patterns of responding to the world, is congruent with the assumption that the meaning ascribed to the *pendejo* construct is contextual and historical.

Burger’s (1997) third area of agreement about how thoughts outside of our awareness play an important role in determining behavior was validated by notable psychologists and psychotherapists (See also, Beck, 1993; Beck & Weishaar, 1995; Conner & Barrett, 2005; Douglas & Sutton, 2003; Ellis 1999, 2001; Kihlstrom, 1999;

Lazarus, 1961; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; Robin, Norem, & Cheek, 1999; Westen & Gabbard, 1999; Zerbe-Enns, 1994) and played an important role in the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon. Research involving unconscious, out of awareness material like implicit self-attitude (Conner & Barrett, 2005), implicit perceptions and dissociated automation (Kihlstrom, 1999), implicit self-theories and cognitive distortions (Robins et al., 1999), internal feedback and processing self-systems (Mischel & Shoda, 1999), irrational thoughts (Ellis, 1999, 2001) and other automatic processing tendencies (Douglas & Sutton, 2003; Westen & Gabbard, 1999; Zerbe-Enns, 1994) gave credence to the assumption that the phenomenon is an expression of Puerto Rican personality which operates out of awareness with consequent behavioral manifestations. The following topic, Conditioning Variables, emphasizes on significant ethnic, historical, political, and sociological elements that molded Puerto Rican society and influenced the manifestation of the *pendejo* phenomenon among its members.

### Conditioning Variables

For the purpose of this study it was important to determine how the *pendejo* phenomenon took hold. The interaction of particular biopsychosocial and political elements influenced the emergence of the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico. A comprehensive literature review uncovered significant ethnic, historical, political, and sociological interacting variables which revealed unique cultural patterns that provided a blueprint to explore the intricacies of the Puerto Rican personality.

### *Ethnic Origins*

“Any attempt to communicate with the Puerto Ricans...requires understanding of their heritage,” commented Babín (1971, p. viii). A review of the ethnic origins of the Puerto Rican people provided relevant information about genetic influences in the formation of their personality.

Puerto Rican ancestry can be traced back to three distinct racial and ethnical groups—Spanish, African, and native aborigines named *Táinos*—who, together with a small influx of people from other nationalities, paved the way for the consolidation of a Puerto Rican identity. Each heritage left its distinct imprint in the formation of its cultural, racial, and psychosocial make-up (Blanco, 1981; Fernández-Méndez, 1981; García-Passalacqua, 2001; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; González-Muñiz, 2001; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Rosario-Natal, 1987; Steward et al., 1966; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996).

#### *The Taíno Indians*

In 1508 Ponce de León, the Island’s first governor, sought permission from the Spanish Crown to explore and to colonize the island of *Boriquén* after he heard the *Táinos*’ allusions to the existence of vast resources of gold and to the Island’s fertile lands (Golding, 1973; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996). Like most *Conquistadores*, his main goal was to gain wealth and prestige. This was true for the early settlers of the colony and explains why the initial friendly relations with the aboriginal population were soon thwarted. As more Spanish settlers arrived, the native

Indians were stripped of their own land, they were enslaved and were forced to work in the gold mines and in the sugar cane fields (Abbad, 1788/1979; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; Morán-Arce, 1985; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996).

Early historians like Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1552/1999) and Fray Iñigo Abbad (1788/1979) chronicled life at the island-colony of Puerto Rico in the early years of the Spanish conquest. Their work allowed for a fairly comprehensive, though somewhat biased, understanding of the aborigines who inhabited the island of Puerto Rico at the time Columbus arrived at the new world.

Boriquén, the island's aboriginal name, was inhabited by the *Arawak* people, members of a large family of West Indian and South American Indians. Columbus called these Arawak Indians "Taínos," meaning *peace* (Santiago, 1995), or *good* (Babín, 1974; González-Muñiz, 2001; Morán-Arce, 1985), "the first word with which they had greeted Columbus and his men as they stepped ashore on their island" (Santiago, p. xviii). María Teresa Babín (1974) alluded to the "gentle and loving" people that came to greet Columbus when he set foot on these shores.

"They exhibit great love toward others in preference to themselves," said the astounded Columbus. Seeing his ships, these Indians yelled in greeting, "Taíno! Taíno!" it meant "Good! Good!" And so, the Spaniards called them the Taínos, as the Indians of Puerto Rico are called to this day." (p. 2)

Several authors—including Abbad (1788/1979), Babín (1971), Golding (1973), González-Muñiz (2001), Morán-Arce (1985), Pedreira (1934/1979), and Rosario-Natal (1987)—described life at the island of Boriquén in pre-Columbian time as simple and

bountiful. Golding (1973) provided a sketch of the character and way of life of this aboriginal society.

The gentle Taínos lived an almost paradisiacal existence on their bountiful island of Boriquén. Under the political rule of their supreme chief, or *cacique*, and spiritually guided by their medicine man, or *bujiti*, they created a life for themselves in which they had to work a mere five hours a day. (p. 21)

On the other hand, the Taínos fought with bravery in self-defense, against the *Caribe* Indians depicted as ferocious cannibals that inhabited the chain of islands to the East of Puerto Rico (Abbad, 1788/1979; Morán-Arce, 1985; Ribes-Tovar, 1973).

According to Ribes-Tovar (1973) Puerto Rico was a frontier zone between two warring people, the Taínos in the Greater Antilles, and the Caribe who occupied the Lesser Antilles. Due to its strategic spot bordering the Caribbean Sea, Puerto Rico served as a *tambo*—the Indian word for link (Blanco, 1981). From this vantage point, the Taínos in Puerto Rico prevented the Caribe Indians from invading the Greater Antilles.

The characteristic trusting, hospitable, nature of the Taínos facilitated the Spanish enslavement of the indigenous population. The Spaniard's power over the Taínos was practically unlimited. According to Golding (1973), “their relationship to them was that of masters to serfs” (p. 32). Gutierrez (1993) presented a dismal picture of the Spaniards' regard for the people who inhabited the land just conquered.

Beside the right to evangelize, to which we have already alluded, another reason is adduced to justify the European dominion in the Indies: the human inferiority of their inhabitants. These persons, in the Aristotelian text in question, are relegated to the category of slaves by nature. For their own good, consequently, they should be subjected to the Europeans born to be lords. (p. 291)

The trust, goodwill, and friendly overtures that characterized initial encounters between native Taínos and the Spanish conquerors gave way—under a self-proclaimed superiority, and the *encomiendas* system—to the massive, brutal, exploitation of the indigenous inhabitants which decimated the Taíno population almost to oblivion during the first century of Spanish occupation (Blanco, 1981; Golding, 1973; González-Muñiz, 2001; Gutiérrez, 1989, 1993; Morán-Arce, 1985; Pedreira, 1934/1979; Rosario-Natal, 1987). Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1552/1999; see also Gutiérrez, 1993) provided a vivid, first-hand account of life early in the colonization of the West Indies and depicted a grim picture of the destruction of the aboriginal society. Gutiérrez (1993) elaborated on Las Casas' epic account of this tragedy.

The causes were many, but the reality was one, and very harsh. In the years following the arrival of Columbus, the inhabitants of the islands that had just been named the Antilles saw their world fall to pieces. Types of labor were imposed that they had never known. Military expeditions were undertaken to obtain their total submission. There were lethal food shortages. The natives were abused and harassed. New diseases were pandemic. Depopulation, social disorder, violent protests, and frequently even the disappearance of any desire to go on living increased dramatically. Here was a totally new state for the people of the islands. (p.21)

Common tenets suggest that the Indian population in Puerto Rico became extinct sometime during the first century of colonization. But there is considerable evidence that numbers of aborigines escaped to neighboring islands only to return unnoticed to their beloved Boriquén. Others escaped deep into the mountains protected by the lush tropical vegetation in the area (Blanco, 1981; Cruz, 1997; González-Muñiz, 2001; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Steward et al., 1966). An on-going study of the DNA genetic configuration of Puerto Ricans (García-Passalacqua, 2001) gives credence to this contention.

In all probability, remnants of the Taíno ancestry remained deeply ingrained in the personal blueprint of the Puerto Rican people. Even though the Taínos faded as a differentiated group from Puerto Rican history in the dawning centuries of the colonization era, the interracial ties through marriage and cohabitation of the Spanish, African, and Indian element were early and frequent (González, 1998). Babín (1971; see also, Nine-Curt, 1976) wrote about the Taíno influence in the emergent Puerto Rican society.

The Indian influence is met not only in the language, folklore, and melancholia of Puerto Rico. It underlies the physical being of the Puerto Rican and binds him affectionately to America. Interwoven with this thread are new strands that emerge from the newcomers from Europe and Africa who conceal the profound persistence of the primary bond. (p. 41)

Descriptive traits for the Taíno Indians portray this population as trusting, hospitable (but brave when fighting in self-defense), trustworthy and noble. Logic tells us that the initial trusting nature of these people was soon thwarted by the deceitful, inhuman behavior of the conquering Spaniards. In order to survive many Indians escaped to the mountains and to neighboring islands. They learned to distrust the Europeans who obliterated them as a constituted society.

The Taínos on this island were poorly served by early historians like Abbad (1788/1979) who, being foreigners, did not understand the ways and the tragedy of the newly discovered cultures in the New World. Unbecoming character traits interpreted as flaws or “vices”—from a Spanish perspective like Abbad’s—were the “indolent nature” and “aversion to hard work” ascribed to these Indians. The historian insisted that due to the influence of a benign climate and the bounty of the land, the aborigines led a lazy,

laid-back existence with a passion for dances, ball games, and other leisure activities. Abbad's interpretation of the Taínos of Boriquén as "lazy and indolent" did not take into account the extreme conditions of hard work under forced slavery that the Indians were submitted to. It seems important to note that it was the Spaniards who disdained any kind of menial work because it was "ignoble" (Gelpí, 2000). Unfortunately, the indolent label still haunts Puerto Ricans as a people (Rosario-Natal, 1987; Marqués, 1977; Kazin, 1960).

### *The Black-Africans*

An analysis of the literature revealed a similar fate of oppression and abuse endured by the Black-African population in Puerto Rico. Due to the scarcity of an indigenous work force, and to the Spaniards' contempt for performing manual labor, the settlers began looking for an alternative work force and compelled the Spanish Crown to authorize the utilization of Black-African slaves to work in the colonies. The African element, introduced into the island during the first century of colonization, proved to be a sturdy and resistant race that, unlike the native Indians, survived the inhuman adverse conditions to which they were subjected (Díaz-Soler, 1981; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Nine-Curt, 1976; Pedreira, 1934/1979; Picó, 2000; Santiago, 1995; Steward et al., 1966; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996).

Due to Puerto Rico's precarious economic condition, Black-African slaves were valued as costly instruments of production (Gelpí, 2000) and as necessary tools for hard labor (Díaz-Soler, 1981). Even though there were incidences of harsh punishment,



torture, and even death, to instill obedience and fear, such incidences were not the norm in Puerto Rico asserted Díaz-Soler (1981). The author evidenced that on the island most slaves were treated well compared to the harsh treatment received by slaves in other countries and in other Spanish colonies. The limited availability of slaves—a situation that was peculiar to Puerto Rico—compelled owners to treat their slaves well to maintain their “piece of property” in optimum condition to safeguard their investment (Díaz-Soler, 1981).

Also, racial discrimination on the island—evident among the White elite—was almost nonexistent, particularly among the masses. Census statistics (Díaz-Soler, 1981; Gelpí, 2000; Picó, 2000) revealed an impressive number of interracial relationships across the centuries providing for the emergence of the *mulatto* as a numerically important element in the population.

Still another motive developed from an ingrained sense of warmth and well-being toward Black people imprinted early in Puerto Rican psyche by both Taíno and Black slaves, who served in White households performing domestic chores (Brau, S., as cited in Quintero-Rivera, 1988; Nine-Curt, 1976). Many attributes and character traits descriptive of these races were passed on to the children in these households. Loving relationships developed between White offspring and their Black caretakers—and between White children and their Black peers—permitting many of these children to acquire a tolerant, even caring attitude toward racially-different people.

Racial boundaries in Puerto Rico seemed less rigid than in other slave countries. Fairly amicable relationships developed between Whites and Blacks across time

(Fernández-Méndez, 1995). Though racial and class boundaries remained rigid between elite and mass in social, political, and economic settings, it was not uncommon to witness White landlords and their families share in the revelry of their Black servants' festivities. Díaz-Soler (1981) mentioned two French naturalists, Ledru and Baudin, who were greatly impressed to see White landlords, during a baptism celebration in the countryside, share in amicable fashion with peasants and slaves. The Frenchmen were amazed at how Black, Mulattoes, and White people intermingled in Puerto Rico to enjoy a convivial moment in cordial camaraderie (Fernández-Méndez, 1995).

Contrary to what happened in other countries (e.g. Dominican Republic, Haiti); there is no evidence of a significant slave uprising in Puerto Rico (Díaz-Soler, 1981; Gonzalez, 1998; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Picó, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 1988). Although Dietz (1986) mentioned about fourteen slave rebellions that actually took place, he also observed that, "the greatest number of rebellions ....generally involved recently arrived African slaves (*bozales*) rather than native born Puerto Rican slaves" (p. 70). Díaz-Soler (1981) indicated that most plots involving rebellious slaves were uncovered by fellow slaves who remained loyal to their masters. This was typical to Puerto Rico because of the tendency to relate with the slaves as if they were family. Even free Blacks sided with the White people against black slaves during the rebellious years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the dramatic population explosion due mainly to the influx of Spanish *unconditionals* from rebellious colonies, and the permission for foreigners to settle in Puerto Rico under the *Cédula de Gracias* of 1815, the new alien elite became fearful of a slave uprising similar to the one in Haiti (Gelpí, 2000; González,

1998; Díaz-Soler, 1981). At the time, many in this ruling class took strict measures to minimize the threat of revolt. Slaves as well as free Blacks saw their life affected by disproportionate punishments and strict regulations imposed by some White rulers where freedom of movement and freedom to socialize among themselves was drastically curtailed.

In Puerto Rico, resistance to the slavish Regime was mostly individual and passive, according to Gelpí (2000). Fugitive Indian and Black slaves escaped to Haiti and other neighbor islands, while others, called *Cimarrones*, fled to the mountains as the only recourse to escape their fate (Díaz-Soler, 1981; Dietz, 1986; Gelpí, 2000; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 1988, 2003). Picó (2000) mentioned passive-aggressive postures and suicides as additional outlets to the Africans' travail. Gelpí (2000) alluded to specific behaviors like passivity, rebellion, and a chronic state of melancholy (mistaken for laziness) as manifestations of helplessness endured under slavery.

Many elements of Black-African culture were knitted into the cultural fabric of Puerto Rican society. González (1998) insisted that Puerto Rican popular culture is essentially *Afroantillean*. The literature research evidenced this strong influence of African culture in the formation of the Puerto Rican character (Babín, 1971, 1986; Díaz-Soler, 1981; González, 1998; Picó, 2000; Nine-Curt, 1976; Quintero-Rivera, 2003; Santiago, 1995; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996). African slaves brought with them their rich cultural heritage full of exotic rhythms, tasty flavors, alien beliefs, and magic lore.

The literature also revealed Black-Africans' legacy of basic character traits still evident in Puerto Rico. The characteristic resistant nature of this sturdy race is noticeable in their tendency to assume passive-aggressive postures where resistance is individual and passive. A pervading sense of helplessness was manifested by a chronic state of melancholy often mistaken for laziness.

### *The Spaniards*

Steward et al. (1966) provided a comprehensive account of the early settlers of Puerto Rico:

They were primarily Spaniards, although a few foreigners were permitted to enter and settle.... The early settlers were soldiers, priests, and farmers, some of noble background but nearly all in quest of gold and rapid wealth. Some of these were accompanied by their families. The Crown, however, encouraged permanent settlement, and to this end it encouraged the immigration of families, required planting of certain specific trees, and ordered the building of brick houses that could not be destroyed by attacking Indians. Later, the population was augmented by the addition of escaped sailors, stowaways, and former prisoners. In addition, many officials remained as settlers after their terms expired. (pp. 34-35).

The Spaniards, predominantly Andalusians, brought to the West Indies not only their language and their customs, but the configuration of colonial society as well.

Spanish society was composed of the aristocracy (*estado hidalgo*), the clerics, and the masses (*estado llano*). Gelpí (2000) explained that at the bottom of the aristocrats' scaffold were the *hidalgos* or noblemen of scant economic means. Regardless of their lack of wealth, these nobles possessed great privileges over the rest of the plebeian population.

*Hidalgos* could be elected to government posts and were exempt from paying taxes which was considered an offense and a sign of social disqualification. An *hidalgo* enjoyed preferential treatment and expected courtesies from those in the inferior class—the masses who belonged to the *estado llano*. This lower-class category included merchants, artisans, farmers, professionals (e.g., doctors and jurists) and plebeians. Gelpí (2000) explained that the people in the *estado llano* were the ones who performed what the elite considered to be “vile occupations” or occupations which required manual labor (i.e., farm labor, mechanical or manual tasks, and commercial activities).

Seville was a booming city at the time of the Spanish colonization of America. The discovery of a new world opened the door for unprecedented commercial opportunities and for the possibility of amassing formidable amounts of wealth. Trade flourished and merchants thrived amidst the sudden riches that befell Spain. Even though *hidalgos* (because of their noble distinction) were otherwise wary about the “lowly ways” of the merchant class, it became common for them to intermingle with the merchants and to actively participate in activities that were related to the booming commercial trade. Gelpí (2000) called this event “the commercialization of nobility” or “the ennoblement of the merchant class” (p. 160).

Seville paved the way for *hidalgos* to accumulate wealth, while merchants jumped at the opportunity to rise up in society by imitating the ostentatious way of life distinctive of the noble class. The fine line separating nobility and masses was all but erased among the trading frenzy unleashed in Seville and this reality marked the path for the configuration of societal structures that took hold in the Antilles.

All these social characteristics crossed the Atlantic along with the peninsular emigrants. In America the characteristic structure of society was upheld thanks to the massive presence of Indians and Black slaves, that made the Spaniards—even the poorest ones—feel superior to them, and thus, belonging all to a social elite. In contrast to the legal order, and parallel to it, a new social order emerged spontaneously, which situated the “decent people” (White Peninsulars and Creoles) above, and underneath, the “vile people” (Mestizos, Mulattoes, free Blacks, and slaves). (Gelpí, 2000, p. 161)

The Spanish legacy is predominant in Puerto Rican culture. Puerto Ricans acquired most of their perceptible expressions from the motherland: the Spanish flair, the Spanish language, together with many of their mores and values, their looks, their food, their Catholic religion, and their traditions (Belaval, 1977; Morales-Carrión, 1983; Quintero-Rivera, 2003). Gelpí (2000, see also Picó, 1986) cited several studies that affirm how everyday life in Puerto Rico, including the customs and language, was modeled after the southernmost region of Spain, Andalucía. It is from these people that Puerto Ricans receive the salient components of their culture.

The Spaniards, together with the Black-Africans and the native Taíno Indians, provided the foundations for a new breed of people—the Puerto Ricans (Golding, 1973). Santiago (1995) summarized this historic blending of ethnic proportions.

Faced with this enormous loss of manpower, Spain’s Queen Isabella was forced to ship West African slaves to the Caribbean island Columbus had seized. Ponce de León needed them to harvest the rich crops of his “rich port”—sugar cane, coffee, ginger, and tobacco. Over time, the remnants of the Arawak people intermarried with the Africans, who had themselves intermarried with the Spaniards. And thus, a blending of Indian, black, and white bloodlines was forged to create a new race—the Puerto Ricans. (p. xviii)

The intertwining of the historical, political, and sociological progression of Puerto Rican society—discussed below—together with the ethnic extraction of Puerto Rican society,

detailed above, provides the framework for the conception of a Puerto Rican personality. Such framework is crucial to comprehend the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico.

### *Historical and Political Path*

Trías-Monje (1999), an author of many books on legal and historical matters and Chief Justice of Puerto Rico, referred to the Island as the oldest colony of the world. “Puerto Rico is a historical product of a unique set of colonial relationships,” (Anderson R., 1998. p. 31) and a, “fascinating case study in the history of imperialism” (p. 30). The historic path of Puerto Rico reveals the saga of a society plagued with the consequences of more than five centuries of colonial status under two culturally-opposite imperious powers: Spain and the United States of America.

Most scholars agreed that this colonial reality had a direct effect on the formation of a Puerto Rican personality (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Duany, 2002; Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Trías-Monje, 1999; Varas-Díaz & Serrano-García, 2003). “This experience has direct negative effects on Puerto Ricans’ national identities and their emotions,” asserted Varas-Díaz and Serrano-García (p. 301). Across the centuries, Puerto Ricans experienced overt and covert, cruel and benevolent forms of oppression from both Spain and the United States.

A review of related literature (Abbad, 1788/1979; Babín, 1971, 1986; Blanco, 1981; Díaz-Quñones, 2003; Duany, 2002; García-Passalacqua, 1993, 2001; Gelpí, 2000; Morales-Carrión, 1983; Picó, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 2003; Trías-Monje, 1997, 1999) provided ample evidence of the struggle of the Puerto Rican people in their quest to

survive as a distinct cultural entity on its own right despite concerted efforts to the contrary by both ruling metropolises. This review uncovered circumstances unique to Puerto Rico that were significant to this study.

The main goal of the literature review was to feature the human side of these historical happenings. An analysis of socio-cultural data highlighted ethnical, historical, sociological, and political elements that influenced the development of the *pendejo* phenomenon. It also revealed habitual instances of lack of control, deceit, neglect, helplessness, and hopelessness that underscored potential threats to Puerto Ricans' sense of security and stability as well as threats to their values and way of life. The consequential impact on trust and on self-worth provided a veritable backdrop for the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico.

### *The Spanish Occupation*

The colonization of Puerto Rico by Spain took place at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The Spaniards coveted the island for its prime military location at the entrance to the Caribbean Sea (Blanco, 1981; Calem, 1998; Díaz-Soler, 1981; García-Passalacqua, 1993; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; Morán-Arce, 1985; Morales-Carrión, 1983; Picó, 2000).

Initially, the island served as a stop-over for Spanish galleons traveling to and from the colonies. It was a transit point of acclimatization for soldiers, public servants, slaves, and foreigners destined to other areas of discovery and colonization in the Americas (Blanco, 1981; Golding, 1973). But due to the flux pattern of the trade winds,



and to widespread piracy in the Caribbean Sea, Spanish ships were compelled to travel in fleets to specific ports of call, like Mexico and Havana, leaving Puerto Rico outside of the main shipping routes. As a result, Puerto Rico experienced extended periods of isolation from Spain, and from the rest of the world, for almost three centuries (Gelpí, 2000; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000). Puerto Rico's military importance in the defense of the Spanish empire's shipping routes in the Caribbean Sea, however, remained intact.

Calem (1998) underscored Spain's callous attitude and maintained that even though "Puerto Rico gave Spain an important commercial and military edge over the other European powers through the domination of the sea lanes to the new world... Spain's concern for Puerto Rico's economic growth or social development was minimal" (p. 72). Steward et al. (1966) agreed with Calem and explained Spain's indifference toward Puerto Rico.

Owing to the Crown's emphasis on other richer areas, Puerto Rico remained peripheral to the mainstream of colonial development. Communication with the homeland was sporadic and inadequate. Lapses of several years between ships were common, and there is record of one period of eleven years when no ship visited the island (Brau, 1904). Royal decree limited trade to the port of Seville until 1711, and prohibited the island from trading with any foreign country or any other port of the homeland. Small-scale smuggling of a few products to and from other islands in the Antilles, however, was carried on. (p. 37)

There was consensus among historians (Alonso, 1849/1996; Blanco, 1981; Calem, 1998; Cruz, 1997; Gelpí, 2000; García-Passalacqua, 1997; Golding, 1973; López-Cantos, 1997, 1998, 2000; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Steward et al., 1966) that negligence, abandonment, and an almost total disregard for the people's concerns and needs, characterized the relationship

between Puerto Rico and the Crown during much of the Spanish reign. Islanders had to bear the commercial monopoly imposed by Spain; the marginal trading opportunities with Spanish merchant fleets; and the threat of pirates and corsairs looming nearby.

The population also suffered from Spain's insensitivity to the needs of its island-colony. The people remained at the mercy and the whims of Kings and Queens who governed Puerto Rico from afar as a military fortress under military generals with unlimited power. Most of these Crown-appointed military governors had scant knowledge of Puerto Rican reality, and showed little regard for the necessities of the nascent society. A good number of these governors ruled as self-serving, opportunistic zealots who were actually driven by their own personal greed and by their avid thirst for power.

Under such abusive conditions, most of the inhabitants lived in misery. A collective sense of helplessness permeated throughout numerous historical accounts about life in Puerto Rico under Spaniard tutelage (Blanco, 1981; Gelpí, 2000; Golding, 1973; López-Cantos, 1997, 1998, 2000; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000; Rosario-Natal, 1987; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Steward et al., 1966; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996).

Subjugated to conditions of extreme poverty, at the margin of Spain's thriving commercial interaction with other colonies, islanders were forced to lead a life of subsistence. They survived by planting their own crops, by bartering, and by engaging mostly in illicit trade. The budding population learned early-on to tend for themselves. They also learned to be wary of rhetorical discourses, and of empty promises coming from the ruling clique.

The emergence of Puerto Rican distinct cultural traits and of a growing sense of national pride was first noticed among Islanders early in the third century of colonization. To Blanco (1981), García-Passalacqua (1997, 2001), López-Canto (2000), Maldonado-Denis (1972), and Picó (2000), it was during the 18<sup>th</sup> century that a sense of Puerto Rican identity was first detected. García-Passalacqua and López-Canto argued that this cognizance of a cultural self-identity developed beyond the walled city of San Juan among the plebeian population.

It is the figure of Miguel Enríquez, a Puerto Rican corsair of mulatto derivation, who provided the first clues of an incipient national identity. Despite his African heritage, at an epoch when slavery and marked racism were the norm, Enríquez became the most powerful and influential personality at the time and was made *Knight of the Royal Effigy* by the King of Spain. He was feared by all, even by the Spanish Monarch, for his bravery and might in defending Puerto Rico's coastal waters against anyone he considered an enemy of his beloved island. This Puerto Rican *natural* (as native born people were called) was first and foremost a Puerto Rican. He proudly manifested that he fought in the name of his native land, not necessarily in the name of Spain. Enríquez abetted illicit trade as a survival strategy. He was convinced that this was the only way that his people could survive in lieu of Spain's blatant neglect of this forlorn colony. Under the advocacy of Enríquez, according to García-Passalacqua (1997, 2001) and López-Canto (2000), the Puerto Rican nation was born with a Mulatto and Caribbean flair.

Picó (2000; see also Morán-Arce, 1985) reported that it was late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the heroic defense of the island against the feared British Armada in 1797,

what possibly marked the crystallization of a sense of nationality among insulars. An improvised and outnumbered Puerto Rican militia composed of common citizens armed only with their ingenuity and their *machetes*, heeded the call of danger and helped repel the invasion of their island. The King was impressed by the bravery, capacity, and loyalty of the islanders. This event happened at a time of serious unrest in other Spanish colonies that were fighting for their independence from the Metropolis.

The Crown rewarded the city of San Juan with the title of “Most Noble and Most Loyal.” But the heroic acts of the Puerto Rican militia in 97’, Picó (2000) added, were later used by the colonial government to manipulate the goodwill of the people. The brave effort of the Puerto Rican militia was distinctly disregarded and distorted by the opportunistic diatribes of the powerful Spanish elite. They became afraid of a Creole revolt and used cunning adulation that not only belittled the native militias’ acts of bravery but should have left a sense of confusion, of apprehension, and of deceit among the citizenry. Such consequent, oppressive, manipulative acts, systematically perpetrated against the Creole population, could have influenced the induction of the *pendejo* phenomenon within an emerging Puerto Rican mentality.

*Consolidation of a Puerto Rican identity.* Ribes -Tovar (1973) distinguished the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the epoch when the consolidation of a Puerto Rican personality became evident.

The people of Puerto Rico entered the XIX Century with a character of their own, with their own peculiar customs and traditions, and a way of life formed over the generations by the action of environment and through mixture with other races and peoples.... Since the end of the previous century, the characteristics of Puerto Rican society had begun to take shape, after a century of conquest and

colonization, another of cultural adaptation, and a third of purely Creole development. By then, the Puerto Rican could be distinguished physically from his relatives in Spain, even when his ancestry was free of racial mixture. (p.201)

Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Colony also witnessed the emergence of a new breed of Puerto Rican intellectuals among its elite class (Cruz, 1997; Ribes-Tovar, 1973; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997). Dietz (1986) explained that “tension within the Creole elite and between these elite and new Spanish immigrants intensified and began to be manifested as an increasing national identity and pride and a growing nationalist sentiment” (p. 16). The struggle to attain self-government, to secure a better way of life, and to elevate Puerto Rican standards took firm hold among the people. The colonial governors were concerned about separatist activities even though a widespread movement for independence did not materialize. This made the struggle arduous, and many were the patriots who suffered exile, prison, and torture in their quest to validate what was theirs: their land and their culture (Cruz, 1997; Dietz, 1986; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000).

The brief occupation of Spain by Napoleon in 1808 provided the Latin-American colonies with the opportunity to declare their independence from the motherland (Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 2000). By 1826 Spain had lost all its possessions in the New World, except Cuba and Puerto Rico. Picó explained that the latter prevailed as the more loyal of the two remaining colonies due in part to the apologists’ grandiloquence on the virtues of the Mother country and to the manipulation of Puerto Rican opinion. These apologists influenced public opinion through admonishments based on fear and doom. They alluded to “the peace enjoyed by the islanders” in contrast to “the chaotic conditions” prevalent in

the incipient Latin-American republics. By manipulating public opinion apologists instilled fear among the population and succeeded in maintaining loyalty to Spain. But crafty, opportunistic, manipulation of public opinion was precisely what lead Puerto Ricans to distrust the intention of others and could have influenced in the evolution of the *pendejo* phenomenon in this society.

*The struggle for autonomy.* Picó (2000) implied that upon the loss of most of its possessions, “suddenly, Puerto Rico turned to be important to Spain” (p. 135). Nevertheless, the Island economic status remained precarious with a large percentage of the population living in extreme poverty (Coll y Toste, 1985). Calem (1998), Díaz-Soler, (1998); Dietz (1986), and Morán-Arce (1985) mentioned that Spain’s merchant policy did not provide Puerto Ricans with the opportunity to develop institutions and the infrastructure necessary for the production of goods that allowed for competition in the world markets. The Island was kept at the margin of modern economic trends and “as a consequence, primitive agricultural production remained the basis of Puerto Rico’s economy” (Dietz, p.16).

Spain adhered to a merchant policy that equated a nation’s wealth with a positive trade balance. Thus, Spain designed measures to prevent Puerto Rico from producing manufactured goods for its own consumption, since that would reduce the need for imports. Because of the huge influx of wealth which flowed from its colonies, Spain never made the transition to manufacturing and production that was occurring all over Europe. Consequently, the agricultural production remained the basis of Puerto Rico’s economy. Technological development and manufacturing were impeded by Spain’s own inability and unwillingness to enter into the capitalist age. (Calem, p.73)

Although Puerto Ricans remained loyal to the Metropolis, during all these years a transformation occurred (Picó, 2000). The Creole elite now actively pursued long-due

recognition and commitment from Spain to establish a more autonomous form of government.

It wasn't until the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1897, that Spain—in a desperate move to hold on to its last possessions in the New World—finally granted autonomy to the Puerto Rican people, and with it, the right to govern themselves while still maintaining close ties with the Motherland. Puerto Ricans were apprehensive about the reliability of their newly-acquired autonomy due to the metropolis' long history of concocting deceitful, self-serving policies; of making false promises; and of granting privileges only to take them away (Trías, 1997, 1999). The islanders accepted the decree with great joy, but with dubious hope (Coll y Toste, 1985).

At last, Blanco (1981) asserted, the people of Puerto Rico could establish themselves as a distinct society among the nations of the world with the potential to consolidate their own sense of nationhood with unity of purpose, fiscal independence, and the right to establish commercial relationships with other countries. “But it had come too late,” lamented Golding (1973), “there were, already, ominous rumblings from the north. A new force was about to enter the scene” (p.90).

### *The American Contrast*

As a result of the Spanish-American War, in 1898, Puerto Rico “was ‘obtained’ from Spain” as war booty, or as a “spoil of war for damages suffered” by the United States (Dietz, 1986, p. 82). To the invading country, the Puerto Rican operation “was a minor episode,” (González-Vales, 1998, p.336), overshadowed by the events in Cuba and

in the Philippine Islands. To Spain, who reluctantly ceded Puerto Rico, it was a major loss.

Almost overnight the Puerto Rican citizenry was left with no other choice but to interact—from a disadvantageous position—with a totally alien culture. Golding (1973) commented on this shifting instance of drastic change for the island.

In July, 1898, the American army landed in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican life was profoundly affected by the arrival of the United States Forces. A new culture had suddenly descended upon us. Its values were alien to our Hispanic way of life, and by the same token, the new power could not understand some of our natural postures. (p. xvii)

González-Vales (1998) provided a comprehensive account of the events that propitiated the conquest of Puerto Rico. Under the *Cédula de Gracias* (roughly, Decree of Pardon) in 1815, a decree that permitted free trade with other countries and non-Spanish immigration to the island, Puerto Ricans were allowed for the first time to carry out commercial transactions with the United States (Anderson C., 1998; García-Passalacqua, 1993; González-Vales, 1998; Picó, 2000). This event marked the beginning of American immigration to the island relative to the trade activities between the two countries. Puerto Rico became an important trading partner for the United States.

Anderson, C. (1998; see also Dietz, 1986; García-Passalacqua, 1993) underscored that, “it is important to understand that Puerto Rico was not some mere stopping point in a larger Caribbean or Latin American trade circuit. This was an important market for the Americans” (p. 7).

The opportunity to eliminate Spain’s hegemony in the New World and the fact that the Island provided the convenience of a strategic base from which the United States



could defend its interests in the Caribbean and in the Panama area (Dietz, 1986; González-Vales, 1998; Picó, 2000; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997) prompted General Nelson A. Miles, to propose the invasion of Puerto Rico. Even though the Island—unlike Cuba—did not pursue independence from Spain, Miles successfully argued that “seizing Puerto Rico would show that Spain could no longer hold the Antilles and strengthen U.S. claims to the island at the peace table” (p. 341). Possession of the Island became an important goal to the United States for its strategic location as well as for political, economic, and military purposes (Anderson C., 1998; Díaz-Soler, 1998; Dietz, 1986; Picó, 2000; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997).

Throughout the nineteenth century the United States extended its influence over the Hispanic Caribbean both commercially and politically. Puerto Rico had already become one of the principal markets for American manufactured goods and the United States a principal buyer of the island’s sugar production. This long-standing interest, coupled with the strategic value of Puerto Rico... explains why the McKinley administration included the island in its plans for war with Spain. (González-Vales, 1998, p. 338)

*The American invasion.* The American offensive ran smoothly. The strategic landing of General Miles’ troops in the Southern port of Guánica in July 25, 1898 took the Spaniards by surprise. Picó (1987) asserted that the success of the American invasion was not due to the pugnacity of the United States military corps but, more so, to the facilitating attitude displayed by the Creole population and to the weak defense presented by the Spanish forces. The Puerto Ricans’ atypical friendly response to the American invasion amazed both the invading troops and the defense forces. González-Vales (1998; see also Picó, 2000) provided his explanation to this puzzling phenomenon.

It is evident from the various sources quoted that the general attitude exhibited by the Puerto Rican population in the south and southwestern portion of the island was friendly. As Spanish resistance collapsed, the local authorities came forward to greet the Americans and pledge their loyalty to the new regime. It may be worth nothing [sic.] that Ponce had been the birthplace of the Autonomist Party and that the region was the one that suffered most from the repressive regime of Romualdo Palacios and the *compontes* [henchmen hired as torturers]. The same is true for much of the southwest, so resentment there against Spain ran high. Indeed, the decision to land in the southwestern town of Guánica was based on Miles' prior knowledge that separatist movements had traditionally originated in this region of the island. (p. 347)

Coll y Toste (1985), a distinguished historian and an eyewitness to the change of command ceremony, blamed Spain and the Peninsulars (Spanish people living on the island who represented the ruling class) for the indifference that Insulars, or native Puerto Ricans, felt toward the Motherland at the time of the American assault. To Coll y Toste, the poverty-stricken populace had “divorced” itself from the Spanish aristocracy long before the Americans arrived. The common people grew tired of remaining loyal to a “Mother country” with a long history of neglect, deceit, and mistreatment. The Spanish-appointed governors' traditional disdain and lack of consideration for the welfare of their subjects led Puerto Ricans to respond in kind with indifference and aversion. Besides, Coll y Toste added, since 1815 the Puerto Rican militias were substituted by peninsular forces known as the *Compontes* and *Cuerpo de Voluntarios* (volunteer corps). Insulars were prohibited to possess arms for fear of insurgency. When the Americans arrived, the population had no means to defend the island from the invaders. The people felt compelled to greet the assailants in a friendly manner with the hope that the alien country, with its promise of a new era of prosperity and freedom, would deliver them from miserable conditions and would also spare them from harm.

Golding (1973) presented his own impressions on how Puerto Ricans felt about the American invasion of their land.

How did the Puerto Ricans feel about the American take-over? It is always hard to generalize about an entire people, but a number of facts appear to be clear enough. The entire war on the island lasted less than one month, and almost everywhere the Americans went they were greeted with flowers and hurrahs. Most of the common citizens appeared to believe that the conquering army was bringing a Golden Age in its wake, and that eternal peace, liberty, and prosperity would follow the American flag. If there were any doubters on the island—and there probably were among members of the Autonomist Party, for example—they kept a discreet silence. (p.94)

Puerto Ricans were joyous about American “deliverance,” but, did they feel joyous about American domination? Blanco (1981), Díaz-Soler, (1998), Golding (1973), González-Vales (1998), and Picó (2000) expounded on how Puerto Ricans were deceived by false promises of justice, prosperity, and liberty made by General Nelson A. Miles as he took possession of the island. Golding wrote that at the same time that Miles issued his historic proclamation, in Spanish (see Appendix A), to the people of Puerto Rico in an attempt to justify the American invasion, he confided to a fellow general that the power of the United States military was absolute and supreme in Puerto Rico. “The initial enthusiasm was to undergo a very quick shift, however, as U.S. intentions became evident,” noted Golding (p. 95). González-Vales (1998) added that “it was obvious that this was not to be a transitory military occupation: it was more akin to outright conquest” (p. 350). The author contrasted the rhetoric of freedom with the realities of war.

The truth is that the proclamation was, at best, an astute example of psychological warfare [*sic*]. The U.S. Government was not bound by its terms, since it was not within Miles’ power to make such representations in the name of the McKinley administration....The distance between promise and fact was insurmountable. A

second proclamation on July 29 told a different story. Military commanders were to insure that the inhabitants obeyed the authority of the United States. (P.351)

Soon after the American foray, it was evident that Puerto Rico was not going to be independent like Cuba and the Philippines, nor was it going to become a state (Díaz-Soler, 1998; Picó, 2000; Rivera-Ramos, 2001). Blanco (1981) stated that official U. S. Government circles demonstrated a gross lack of sensibility and knowledge about the people and the island that they insisted on seizing from Spain. The island was prized for its military and its commercial advantage, but not for the people involved. Many Americans looked down on Puerto Ricans as a lesser, although picturesque, backward race who needed to be “protected.” (Blanco, 1981; Golding, 1973; González-Vales, 1998; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 1998; Rivera-Ramos, 2001). For Golding (1973), events following the invasion demonstrated the Metropolis’ uncouth oblivion of the human saga in its new possession.

Washington considered the island too small and too poor to be able to handle independence. Nor was it going to keep the 1897 constitution which the Autonomist Party had worked out so painstakingly with Spain. It was a permanent possession of the United States by now, and the United States would decide what was best for it.... Nor would the new American colony qualify for protection under the U.S. Constitution. It was too Spanish—too “non-American”—to achieve statehood; too torn apart and disrupted by war for even a small measure of self-government....As the Puerto Ricans saw so much of what they had struggled for go down the drain, it is easy to understand why so many of them looked longingly back to a romanticized image of Spain. (p. 95)

With some exceptions (Díaz-Soler, 1998), the new colonial power perceived Puerto Ricans as “childish” and “ignorant” (Blanco, 1981; Golding, 1973; González-Vales, 1998; Picó, 1998). To Golding (1973), “this indicated something about how the

Americans felt about the Puerto Ricans. The islanders needed guidance; they were too poor, too ignorant, perhaps even too 'foreign' to look after themselves" (p. 90). Golding explained how the Puerto Ricans felt.

The brisk, self-confident Anglo-Saxons with their strange way of looking at things, their odd customs, and even (to the Spanish, at least) their half-pagan religion, were trying to force a whole new way of life on the islanders. The Puerto Ricans—being human—were not taking this well. (p. 100)

The sudden, dramatic, and unsuspected, shift in sovereignty left the Puerto Rican elite bewildered and consternated (Blanco, 1981). Everything that Puerto Rico had so painfully accomplished in terms of the right to self-government and of cultural identity dissipated almost overnight. The long struggle for self-determination began all over again and is still ongoing after more than a century (Díaz-Soler, 1998, Picó, 2000).

For the occupying country the islanders were not ready for self-government. But, according to Golding (1973; see also Díaz-Soler, 1998), the fact is that as far as Puerto Ricans were concerned, “they were ready—and had been ready for generations. It was first Spain and now the United States that was not ready” (p. 109). Whether Puerto Rico liked it or not, from then on it was the United States who dictated the law of their land. At the time, Coll y Toste (as cited in Golding, 1973) wrote his prophetic conclusion: “Our autonomous constitution is abolished and the Puerto Rican people changed—in fact, but without right—into a political orphan that is at the mercy of the American Congress” (p. 96).

In the morning of October 18, 1898, Cayetano Coll y Toste (1985) witnessed the radical change of command in the capital city of San Juan. From that moment on, the

American flag reigned supreme in this land. Conflicting emotions assailed many islanders at that epic moment in Puerto Rican history. In spite of a generally festive mood, Coll y Toste perceived a deep sadness in his people's hearts. The author chronicled the emotional dimension of this historical event as he, along with family and friends witnessed the change of flags ceremony from the balcony of his home.

We had to force ourselves to smile so as not to communicate to our guests the sentiments in our Latin heart, which rebelled against our Anglo-Saxon head.... It was the final farewell to the dear flag of our parents and our grandparents. It [the Spanish flag] was cruel to us; senselessly they lashed our face with her, many times unjustly, and even so we loved her.... Today, as we are able to write without constraints, we can assert this: we never hated Spain, but yes, to death, its colonial and metropolitan governments, for being despotic, cruel, and unjust with the colonial rights of the scions of the Antilles. (p. 82)

### *American Hegemony*

Duany (2002) presented an abbreviated account of Puerto Rico's atypical, ongoing, colonial state of affairs.

Puerto Rico has a peculiar status among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. As one of Spain's last two colonies in the New World (along with Cuba), Puerto Rico experienced the longest period of Hispanic influence in the region. On July 25, 1898, however, U. S. troops invaded the island during the Spanish-Cuban-American War. In 1901 the U. S. Supreme Court defined Puerto Rico as "foreign to the United States in a domestic sense" because it was neither a state of the union nor a sovereign republic (Burnett and Marshall, 2001). In 1917 Congress granted U. S. citizenship to all persons born in Puerto Rico but did not incorporate the Island as a territory. Until now, Puerto Rico has remained a colonial dependency, even though it attained a limited form of self-government as a commonwealth in 1952. (p. 1)

Robert W. Anderson (1998) saw Puerto Rico as a major bulwark in the imperial scheme for the United States and emphasized on the military importance of the island

(see also Calem, 1998; Picó, 2000; Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Rodríguez-Beruff, 2002). “The military dimension has always been a central factor of the U.S. presence” the author stated (p. 32).

Calem (1998), Díaz-Soler (1998), and Blanco (1981) underscored the United States’ initial inexpediency as an imperial power. Díaz-Soler insisted that Puerto Rico served as guinea pig for the legislative power of the United States (p.7). Calem asserted that “unfortunately, the United States had little idea of how to manage Puerto Rico” (p. 74). Blanco expressed that the American metropolis had no concrete plans to provide Puerto Rico with a dignified form of government, aside from its submission to ordinary colonial rule. The people of Puerto Rico became aware very soon that they could not even dream of incorporation as a State of the Union.

From October 1898 to April 1900, the island remained under the War Department and was subjected to the rules of U.S. military governors who, albeit the promotion of much needed educational, health, and economical reforms, seemed prone to clash with the native pride of the people. Historians expose a tendency to underestimate the Islanders’ intellectual capacity and to offend the people’s sense of dignity (Picó, 1998; Golding, 1973, Rivera-Ramos, 2001). As an example, Golding (1973) mentioned how the name of the island was changed to *Porto Rico* “in a gratuitous gesture which must have offended every native Puerto Rican” (p. 99).

Since the end of military rule, in 1900, Congress has enacted several laws to regulate the relationship between the island and the metropolis. U.S. Congress’ sovereignty over insular affairs prevails as the common denominator (Rivera-Ramos,

2001). Anderson, R. (1998) contended that U.S. colonial policies and institutions “reflected a basic contradiction: the incompatibility of the ideals of popular representative government and political freedoms, which were the presumed moral bases of the American constitutional system, and the exercise of control over foreign peoples and cultures” (p. 30). Anderson, R. also alluded to the ongoing colonial status of the island.

Legal redefinitions of the relations between the U.S. and Puerto Rico began with the end of direct military rule in 1900 and the enactment by Congress of the unabashedly colonial statute known as the “Foraker Act” of that year, and by the granting of U.S. citizenship and a modified governmental structure via the “Jones Act” of 1917. As is well known by all students of Puerto Rican history, there are provisions of the Jones Act still in effect, even though the reforms of 1948-1952, which culminated in the popular election of the governor and the establishment of “Commonwealth,” afforded a significantly widened degree of self-government to the Puerto Rican polity. The sovereignty of the U.S. Congress (and the centrality, to be sure, of the federal court decisions) is still paramount and a source of continuous contention and disputation. (p. 32)

American presence in Puerto Rico can be described as a “mixed blessing” for the islanders (Golding, 1973). Quintero-Rivera (1988) mentioned that the American invasion was not merely a change of imperial metropolis; it was a transformation in the type of colonialism. Unlike Spain, the U.S. metropolis placed emphasis on raising the standard of living of the population (Golding, 1973; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 1998). Under American initiative and the promotion of economic incentives technology improved, schools and roads were built, financial structures were established, and a massive health and sanitation program helped lower the death rate among Puerto Ricans. United States banks started to come to Puerto Rico allowing for expansion of production. As a consequence, a working class emerged and grew (Calem, 1998).



On the other hand, there was a concerted effort to “Americanize” the island and for the islanders to become English-speaking people. For this purpose, the educational system was to be based on American norms and public school instruction was to be conducted entirely in English (Mohr, 1998; Maldonado-Denis, 1972, 1979; Morán-Arce, 1985; Ostolaza, 1997; Picó, 1998; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997). Like immigrants from other countries, Puerto Ricans were expected to “embrace Americanization as the key to happiness and progress” (Mohr, p. 138). Mohr provides more information about this sensitive issue.

Victor S. Clark, member of a presidential commission to “establish an educational system based on American norms,” saw no good reason to try to perpetuate Spanish among Puerto Ricans, since the Spanish they spoke was “a patois almost incomprehensible to a native of Barcelona or Madrid.” Patronizing, uninformed statements of this sort sparked a defensiveness among Puerto Rican intellectuals which has permeated their attitudes toward all official manifestations of English throughout the century....In the words of Rosendo Matienzo-Cintrón, “the new men from the North...wanted to eradicate, from one day to the next, our language, our customs, our laws, even our names.”(p. 138)

Although the first five decades of American presence brought about decisive changes in Puerto Rican economy, living conditions for the populace remained very poor (Benítez, 1997; Blanco, 1981; Calem, 1998; Curet, 1986; Dietz, 1986; Golding, 1973; Maldonado-Denis, 1972, 1979; Ostolaza, 1997; Picó, 2000). Blanco (1981) blamed American economic interests, not the American people directly, for the prevalent conditions of extreme misery that plagued islanders.

The United States policy of expansionism responded to military and economic interests promoted by a democratic ideology within a capitalistic framework (Calem, 1998; Dietz, 1986; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997). Large American corporations became

interested in the production of sugar and tobacco which demanded a substantial increase in land concentration. The sugar industry flourished under the influx of large American investments, but the island economy went steadily downhill due to the way these investments were made. Up to that time, the Puerto Rican plebeians were self-sufficient. Their livelihood derived from the produce of their own land. Even though country people confronted conditions of extreme poverty during Spanish rule, they were able to survive on their own. Golding (1973) remarked that “soon the very richest of Puerto Rico’s farm land would be owned from afar and run, naturally enough, in a way most beneficial to the American owners” (p. 114).

The massive buy-out of agricultural land, where Puerto Rican farmers were lured to sell their property—unaware of the dire consequences of their decision—led to what historians (García-Passalacqua, 1993; Guerra, 1998; Maldonado-Denis, 1979) referred to as the *pauperization of poverty*. Due to the dramatic shift in economic activity brought about by American emphasis on production, Puerto Rican peasants suddenly found themselves displaced from their lands with no viable way to provide for their own needs. From self-sufficiency, most destitute farmers were left with little choice but to work for hire under foreign landlords. They paid exorbitant rent and taxes, and lived and worked under detrimental, feudal conditions (Curet, 1986). Dietz (1986) exposed the landless people saga and blames American lust for “white gold”—sugar—which made U.S. colonization so profitable and determined so much in the first decades of U.S. control” (p. 124).

Many of these wage workers...were former independent or semi-independent producers....Sugar-cane production, the sector of most active U.S. interest and investment, both created these landless people and drew them to the plantations, where they became members of a growing rural proletariat....This strengthens the conclusion that it was a forced and socially disruptive migration. The necessary labor for production, which the Spanish colonial administration had attempted to obtain via the *libreta* system and the destruction of the *agregado*, was created by the United States via the concentration of land, the expansion of the sugar economy at the expense of other sectors, and the increasing monetization of the entire fabric of society. (p. 125)

Numbers of displaced farmers felt compelled to leave country life and move to the big cities, especially San Juan, with the hope to find jobs and earn a living. The massive rural migration to the urban spheres promoted overpopulation, mass unemployment, and an indiscriminate rise of squalid slums. Other poverty-stricken Puerto Ricans immigrated to the United States in search for a better way of life. Many of these Puerto Ricans lived in ghettos where they suffered from language, culture, and racial discrimination and found themselves subjugated to the “minority” stigma (Picó, 2000).

United State Presidents were prone to appoint mainland governors for reasons that were far away from a conscious, consistent colonial policy (Anderson, R., 1998). As a result, most of these governors proved to be unqualified for the job. Anderson, R. indicated that “familiarity with Puerto Rico, or with the Spanish language, or with Latin American culture, were certainly not prerequisites” (p. 40). The author elaborates further:

Cultural sensitivity or responsiveness to the desires and claims of the “native” population were hardly priorities for colonial proconsuls, and much less were they interested in—or politically capable of—responding to the petitions and demands of the local political elite.... Not surprisingly, the history of the relations between

the American governors and the party and legislative leaders of Puerto Rico is one of almost constant tension....There was a constant jockeying between the party elites and the American governor and his team over appointments and budgetary allotments. In a colonial atmosphere—where, after all, Puerto Rico was seen by the imperial power as under the state of tutelage and unprepared for self-government, let alone national independence—political leaders on the island were mightily restricted in what they could effectively do, other than submit supinely to the condition of powerlessness. (pp. 41-42)

Under American hegemony life for many islanders remained grim during the first half of the twentieth century. Powerlessness and helplessness describe reality for Puerto Ricans after more than half a century under the American flag (Golding, 1973; Picó, 2000). The people were still subjected to the whims of a metropolis in ways reminiscent of Spain. The population remained so poor that the island was dubbed *the poorhouse of the Caribbean* (Ribes-Tovar, 1973, p. 392; see also Calem, 1998). The capacity for self-government was not recognized, and the aspirations of the Puerto Ricans were systematically ignored by a governing power with little knowledge about Puerto Rican idiosyncrasy (Picó, 2000, Rivera-Ramos, 2001). Calem (1998) indicated that “as recently as 1943, *Life* magazine reported that ‘there are few places in the world with slimier slums and acute poverty’ than Puerto Rico, and laid the blame on U.S. neglect by calling it, ‘a shocking disgrace to the United States’” (p. 89). A 1930 report based on a Brookings Institution study of the Puerto Rican economy, states that “the condition of the masses of the Island people remain deplorable” (Dietz, 1986, p. 127; see also Golding, 1973; Picó, 2000).

Eventually, the almost constant tension between elected island leaders and the colonial governors gave way to important reforms during the decade of 1940 (Anderson

R., 1998; Calem, 1998; Curet, 1986; Golding, 1973; Ostolaza, 1997; Picó, 2000). Luis Muñoz-Marín—who became Puerto Rico’s first elected governor and the founder of the Popular Democratic Party—together with Governor Guy Tugwell, described by Anderson, R. (1998) as “the most important and of the most lasting influence of all the Americans named to the post,” played a principal role in moving forward these reforms. As a result, continued Anderson, R., “the process of Puerto Rico’s emergence from classical colonial status was initiated, capped by the constitutional reforms of the elected governorship in 1948 and the Commonwealth Constitution of 1952” (p. 43).

Golding (1973) summarized Muñoz-Marín’s uphill struggle to “break through the shell of hopelessness” (p. 139) that overshadowed Puerto Ricans.

The most difficult task of all was to fight the built-in apathy and cynicism of the Puerto Rican people. The islanders had been led down too many garden paths to give their trust to anyone easily. They had listened for too many years to too many empty promises: promises from Spain, promises from the United States, promises from their own island leaders. How could they now be expected to take seriously another set of promises from another set of politicians?

A good many observers, during that era, remarked on the apathy and docility of the Puerto Rican people. While a number of outsiders thought of this as “quaint” and “charming,” others were both puzzled and worried by it. The 1930 report of the Brookings Institution, for example, stated that “there is a degree of submissiveness and a lack of class feeling that to an outside observer is difficult to understand.” (p. 139)

Golding’s (1973) words provided a clue about how centuries of oppression, neglect, and use of deceitful tactics molded the Puerto Rican character. Apathy, cynicism, lack of trust, docility, submissiveness and lack of class feeling are words he used to describe what others consider (Kazin, 1960a; Marqués, 1977; Rivera-Ramos, 1984) as a

negative dimension of the Puerto Rican personality. Golding's descriptions are indicative of a scenario propitious to the possible emergence of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Muñoz-Marín undertook the task to empower his people, and made them aware of their rights by sending them a simple message of social and economic justice (Córdova, 2004; Curet, 1986; Golding, 1973). This leader based his strategy on an informal, face to face, interaction with rich and poor alike. In Golding's own words, the end result of this approach was that, "Muñoz's campaign made a good deal of sense to the Puerto Rican people. For once they were being treated like adults instead of like little children. The islanders responded by allowing Muñoz to pull one of the political miracles of modern times" (p. 141). Díaz-Soler (1998; see also Ostolaza, 1997; Picó, 2000) provided comprehensive data about the "peaceful revolution" (p. 282) that took place in Puerto Rico.

### *The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico*

Since 1952 Puerto Rico is a *Commonwealth* of the United States, a novel political status that allowed Puerto Ricans an expanded local and fiscal autonomy. The innovative status provides a limited degree of internal sovereignty and upholds American hegemony in national and international affairs. Common citizenship, common currency, common market, and common defense form the basis of Puerto Rican-U.S. political relationship (Curet, 1986; Dietz, 1986; Hernández-Colón, 1999; Ostolaza, 1997). Dietz (1986) mentioned the antecedents to this historical phenomenon.

With Muñoz impressive ability to command support and allegiance from his followers, this status option began to take shape as a genuine possibility. Tugwell [the last American governor], early in his tenure, had thought a “commonwealth, Dominion—call it anything indicating a half-way relationship” might be the best solution for the island’s status problem, since it could be designed to reconcile the need for the dignity of self-rule with the aid from the United States that he believed essential to the island’s progress. (p. 234)

During the first two decades under Commonwealth status, Puerto Rico became a worldwide model of political and economic development. Progress was so evident that the United Nations [UN] accepted the United States request to withdraw Puerto Rico from the list of countries registered as colonies (Ostolaza, 1997; Toro-Sugrañes, 1996). Washington convinced the UN that Puerto Rico had exercised its right to self-determination under the UN charter. But Dietz (1986; see also Ostolaza, 1997) remained skeptical about the so-called changes.

Puerto Rico had a new name for its status, but little had changed. The island remained a colony, though now the United States could and did claim that the association of Puerto Rico with the United States was voluntary and had been approved by Puerto Rican voters, who had also written their own constitution. Thus, in 1953, the United States argued before the UN that it was no longer obliged to submit reports, since, by virtue of its voluntary association, Puerto Rico was no longer a colonial possession, and the UN accepted this explanation. (P. 237)

Puerto Ricans assumed that after the signing of Congress Law 600, the approval of the Puerto Rican Constitution, and the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the island was no longer considered a colony. The novel political status authenticated a form of self-government in the form of a compact with the United States (Hernández-Colón, 1999). Puerto Rican matters were to be given special treatment by United States governmental institutions. All decisions affecting Puerto Rico directly were to be

consulted with the Puerto Rican government. This was the argument presented by the U.S. Government before the UN in 1953. In consequence, Puerto Rico was eliminated from the UN list of colonial territories.

Ostolaza (1997) affirmed that the American government's true motives behind Law 600 were evidenced in a letter sent by the Secretary of State, Jack K. McFall and addressed to the congressional committees that studied project S 3336, approved later on as Public Law 600. McFall maintained that the project's intent was to grant Puerto Rico formal approval and *symbolic value* to its bid for self-government within the United States framework. The Secretary of State purported that the measure was devised to comply with the *Organization Charter of the United Nations* to marshal against imperialistic accusations from nations belonging to the socialist block.

The fact remains that restrictive cabotage laws are in effect. Puerto Rico depends on American investment and unilateral decisions made by the U.S. Government have an impact in the island economy. In many ways the United States, through its diverse institutions, still rules supreme—many times with little regard to Puerto Rico's unique needs (Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Trías-Monje, 1997, 1999). Congress' recurrent arbitrary decisions are taken by many Puerto Ricans as "benevolent," albeit conspicuous, acts of deceit which set up the conditions for induction of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

At present, Puerto Rico is a booming, highly technologic and information enclave. Modernization and consumerism permeates Puerto Rican life, and the American Western "task-oriented" mentality influenced many of these changes. But, the Puerto Rican



cultural fiber is still woven within the traditional characteristics of its collective heritage (Biascochea, 1981; Chiriboga, 1994; Nine-Curt, 1976; Toro Sugrañes, 1996).

Up to present times, the Puerto Rican people have proudly and stubbornly upheld what is theirs—their own language and their own culture (Frambes-Buxeda, 1997; Hernández-Colón, 1999; Santiago, 1995). Many conflicts and misunderstandings among Puerto Ricans and Americans probably stem from marked differences in the contextual orientation of the two cultures (Biascochea, 1981; Nine-Curt, 1976, 1993). Close economic and political ties require the continuous interaction between Puerto Rico and the United States and this need to interact makes the differences more evident (Nine-Curt, 1976). Also, American hegemony, and the disadvantageous position of Puerto Rico as a country under veiled colonial rule provide the key to the *de facto* lack of control that besets this society.

Americans analyze the Puerto Ricans from within their own contextual, individualistic perspective. The way an American perceives a Puerto Rican is not the way a Puerto Rican perceives itself and its culture (Biascochea, 1981; Nine-Curt, 1976; Ostolaza, 1997). Both see the same Puerto Rican person from within their own frame of reference, the American worldview of reality being very different from that of Puerto Rico. The brunt of these differences is carried on by Puerto Rican immigrants who move to the United States looking for better economic opportunities. Many come as American citizens with their Puerto Rican ways, only to find themselves amidst a "strange" culture which regards them as inferior and even calls them "minorities" (Ostolaza, 1997; Santiago, 1995).

### *Sociological Profile*

The previous section portrays the historical and political saga of the Puerto Rican people and their ongoing struggle for recognition and validation through the governance of two opposing colonial regimes. The dynamics between the metropolis and the colony and the marked differences between elite and masses present two important issues in the configuration of Puerto Rican society. Both topics of interest intersperse one with the other with inherent self-serving and exploitative overtones and provide fertile ground for the conception of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Scholars interested in the psycho-sociological development of Puerto Rican society (Campos & Flores, 1979; Gelpí, 2000; García-Passalacqua, 1993, 2001; Guerra, 1998; González, 1979, 1998; López-Cantos, 1997, 1998, 2000; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Pedreira, 1934/1970; Quintero-Rivera, 1979, 1988, 2003; Rosario-Natal, 1998; Steward et al., 1966), considered the colonial reality of the island and its impact upon the life and destiny of this population. They also emphasized upon the opportunistic and oppressive ways by which social stratification among islanders contributed to marginalize the masses and upon how colonial status leads to detrimental power play positions.

García-Passalacqua (1993) referred to this occurrence as the “the metropolis-elite-masses tripod” (p. 90) and elaborated on the power play that this triad promoted. To García-Passalacqua, master-servant schemas of pyramidal and hierarchical nature supplanted participatory structures which were communal in character. This scholar argued that social inequalities and a sense of inferiority derived from such power relationships and is characteristic to colonized societies. García-Passalacqua’s

metropolis-elite-masses tripod provided a clue to understand Puerto Rico's social imbroglio as well as its relevance in the manifestation of the *pendejo* phenomenon. To better understand the sociological aspects of this phenomenon, a brief review of social stratification in Puerto Rico and the interplay in García-Passalacqua's tripod follows.

### *Social Stratification*

Gelpí's (2000) comprehensive research closed gaps in the annals of Puerto Rican history and allowed for a better understanding of the island's economic foundations and its implications in the present social configuration. This investigative work took into account the human element believed to be instrumental in the island's overall development. Gelpí (2000) provided a capacious account of the nascent colonial society during the first century of Spanish occupation. The author recognized that little is known about the economic and social development of the island-colony in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the first century of colonization. One of Gelpí's goals was to provide a comprehensive overview of the island's socio-economic legacy and to accommodate the perspectives of all sectors of society especially that of the marginal sectors. Gelpí was concerned about the lack of information available on Puerto Rican social origins. She insisted in the need to study the island's social formation at par with the economic reality of that era.

This new approach evidences a need to rescue a forlorn past to understand the aspirations, the frustrations, and the successes of a people unaware of its immanent roots. Congruent with this mode of thought, it is understood that in the formative process of Puerto Rican life the wealth of those who brandished social and economic power is not alien to the human travails of the many, the slaves. (p. 1)

Societal stratification derived from economic and racial considerations in a vertical, mostly rigid, manner. Gelpí (2000; see also Pedreira, 1934/1979; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997) established that the colonial order, configured in a pyramidal structure, had the sugar oligarchy occupying the top strata with the African slaves at its base. The author placed poor White people together with free Blacks and Mulattos in between either extreme.

Carmagnani and Cardoso (as cited in Gelpí, 2000) alluded to the decades between 1540 and 1570 as the moment when Spanish colonization took firm hold in the island. These decades marked the era when colonists settled down and began to cultivate the land. Gelpí distinguished between conquistadors and colonists. The former were interested in the mining of precious metals, which encouraged a fluid social context composed of semi-nomad males. The latter settled in the island and many brought their wives and children with them. These early Spanish colonists set the pace in the entwining of the colonial social fiber. Gelpí explained how social stratification was determined.

In the Antilles the hierarchical society accommodated to the existent ethnic diversity, conveying the European, at the same time, with a prominent role above the lower sectors. This system, characterized by layers or stratum separated by law and tradition, allowed for a perceptible vertical social mobility, but, in most cases, the position of an individual person was habitually determined by origin and color. Also, in specific instances, it was determined by access to certain posts, or as a result of economic deeds carried on by the person. (2000, p. 156)

Gelpí's (2000) research confirmed how during the colonization of Puerto Rico the accumulation of wealth provided a viable opportunity for the upscale mobility into the coveted elite class. She explained that "even though lineage was important to establish social quality, the importance of wealth as a leveling factor was undeniable" (p. 158).

However, Gelpí and López-Cantos (1997, 1998, 2000) mentioned that while it was evident that White people in the lower class had the opportunity for upscale mobility, it was almost impossible for people of African descent to do so.

Distinguished scholars, from diverse forums, documented this economic and racial separation between the dominating White elite and the numerically superior, predominately Mulatto, marginal classes in Puerto Rico. (García-Passalacqua, 1993; Gelpí, 2000; González, 1998; Guerra, 1998; López-Cantos, 1997, 1998, 2000; Maldonado-Denis, 1972;; Pedreira, 1934/1979; Picó, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 1979, 1988, 2003; Rodríguez-Cortés, 1997; Steward et al., 1966). To these authors, class schisms based on political, economic, and racial concerns, contributed to the social admixture for which substantial conflicts of interests and profound ideological contradictions were the end result. Pedreira (1934/1979) believed that social inequality was responsible for some of the difficulties encountered when trying to understand the Puerto Rican people. Selfless, concerted action toward a common goal is many times difficult due to the fact that, in Pedreira's own terms, "when the White protests, the Negro strikes back and vice-versa" (p. 39).

### *The Marginal Groups*

The marginal groups were composed of predominantly Black and Mulatto people of scant economic means. Although racial discrimination was prevalent among the White elite, it was almost non-existent among the masses (Díaz-Soler, 1981; Gelpí, 2000; Pedreira, 1934/1979). During her research Gelpí (2000) found innumerable indications

about derisive comments involving persons with African blood, evident of the deep aversion that high-class Whites displayed toward them. The author mentioned that prejudice and discrimination impelled the physical segregation of marginal groups who were confined to live under despicable conditions, beyond the boundaries of the cities, in rural areas in the coast and deep in the mountains along the countryside.

The alienation of diverse sectors of Puerto Rican society is compounded by the geographical segregation and isolation of a sizeable portion of the population during the island's formative years. García-Passalacqua (1993) explains the impact of geographical segregation.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...Puerto Rico was a seedbed of various ethnic-historic groups competing among themselves: Spanish, Creoles, refugees, Mulattos and slave descendants, *jibaros* and European immigrants. At the same time, these ethnic groups redistributed geographically according to their locality either in the highlands or in the lowlands; the virtual absence of transportation and communication means between these two worlds, isolated them in a dramatic way, eventually, with important proverbial consequences. This was the chronological point of crystallization of social behavioral patterns and of historical progression still evident today. (p.29)

Divergent social, economic, and political goals evidenced marked differences in the aspirations of the elite minority and of the masses. Until recently, opportunistic and oppressive behaviors displayed by the White elite, and exclusive voting rights reserved for this privileged caste, kept the lower social groups at the margin of the socio-economic development of Puerto Rican society. In 1936, suffrage rights were extended to all people regardless of their economic status for the first time in island history (Díaz-Soler, 1998; García-Passalacqua, 1993). This occurrence empowered the marginal population and provided them with political clout to participate in the decision making processes. Nevertheless, García-Passalacqua (1993) explained that the political aristocracy incurred

in many electoral violations and vitiated the electoral system to guarantee their political hegemony.

Under the cry of “*Pan, tierra, y libertad*” [bread, land, and liberty] and the leadership of Luis Muñoz-Marín and his Popular Democratic Party, the marginal classes finally had a say in island politics (Córdova, 2004; Díaz-Soler, 1998; Dietz, 1986; Golding, 1973). The economic boom enjoyed under Commonwealth status and the *Operation Bootstrap* program, together with a strong emphasis on public health programs and education, allowed for the emergence of a strong, well educated, middle class comprised by people of diverse racial configurations, most of them Mulattos.

#### *The White Elite*

During Spanish hegemony proprietors and landowners, especially those who owned sugar mills, constituted the nuclei of insular society (Gelpí, 2000). White people—mostly Spaniards, but also Creoles or island-born offspring of Spanish descent, and foreigners—held positions of power and placed themselves above the rest of the population (Gelpí, 2000; Pedreira, 1934/1979; Picó, 2000). This White elite claimed internal hegemony and the authority to determine colonial policy concerning all aspects of society (Quintero-Rivera, 1979). They controlled economic operations, assumed political clout, and established social distinctions. The means of production were consolidated in the hands of a few “powerful families” who brandished economic and political domination through the possession of land and the control of government institutions. But, the power of this elite class was subjected, and is still subjected, to the

dictums of two consecutive hegemonic powers: Spain and the United States (González, 1998).

The wars for independence from Spain in Latin America propitiated an exodus of White emigrants who remained unconditionally loyal to Spain. García-Passalacqua (1993; see also Blanco, 1981) indicated that many of these expatriates settled in Puerto Rico and made their ingress into the elite class. To Scarano (1996), White immigrants who came between 1812 and 1820 displaced and diluted the power of the liberal Creole elite. They displayed an unabashed fervor toward Spain and blended with the conservative Creole and Spanish White elite in condemning anything that suggested independence from the Motherland. The mass immigration of White foreigners made a lasting impact in the structural configuration of Puerto Rican society. García-Passalacqua explained that the formative process of a cultural conscience that was taking hold among the liberal Creole elite and among the common people up to that moment was blanketed by the shower of refugees whose interests were hostile to that of the popular classes.

This event in Puerto Rican history furthered existent social schisms in the island. The conservative White elite's point of view prevailed due to the fact that they possessed local political hegemony. Dietz (1986) related the role of the conservative elite class to Puerto Rico's unwillingness to join the various independence movements that proliferated in other Latin colonies.

Puerto Rico did not develop an independence struggle at the same time as the rest of Latin America because it lacked a strong or large enough economic class (or classes) whose interest were in fundamental conflict with the colonial structure or who were being ruined by economic changes. On the contrary, the *hacendados* [landowners, italics added], the native and immigrant alike, had depended upon



colonial power to consolidate their position; the colonial government had responded to their needs by, for example, attempting to expand the supply of labor and by liberalizing trade and other regulations. Spain also provided the repressive force that landowners could not individually muster to control labor and mobilize productive forces. For a long period, then, the local economic elite needed the colonial power to be able to build its own power base. (p. 73)

During Spanish hegemony the landowners' productive power rested upon an economy based on the exportation of agricultural products. After the American invasion in 1898, things changed radically for this elite class. The change of metropolis forced the dramatic transformation from a mercantile economy to a capitalist economy. This drastic change was devastating for the elite class. Quintero-Rivera (1979) explained the social and economic impact of this drastic change.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the landowners maintained internal hegemony as they faced a debilitated [Spanish] metropolis which followed a defensive policy to safeguard its commercial interests; at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they came face to face with a very different colonial metropolis: one of the most powerful capitalist nations, with a policy of economic expansion and a need to export capital, whose main interest lay in the domination, not only of commercial trade, but also of production means. In this sense, the nature of social conflicts at the time of the invasion suffered a radical transformation with unanticipated repercussions for the landowner class. The landowners, as holders of the means of production, constituted a class that proved antagonist to the imperial interest for production investment. Thus, colonial policy during the first years of occupation was geared toward the breakup of the landowners' hegemony. (p.22)

The effect of the breakup of the landowners' hegemony is discussed in the following section.

### *Metropolis vs. Colony*

To Quintero-Rivera (1979) the unremitting colonial heritage, and the consequent dependent nature of the island's economic development, paved the way for categorical

class configurations which allowed for the emergence of problems in terms of national integration and in antagonism among classes. Conflicting ideologies promoted profound divisions among the population with consequent obstacles to the consolidation of a sense of national identity. López-Cantos (2000) suggested that it was racial bias more than economic considerations what provoked the breach among social classes.

Since early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a sense of national identity flourished almost unnoticed among the popular masses (González, 1998; López-Cantos, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 2003). Commoners did not identify with Spain but with their beloved island. Oppression and persecution forced the rural population outside the walled city of San Juan to turn inside themselves and to develop a strong sense of national identity that ran counter to the loyalist aspirations of the Spanish and Creole White elite (García-Passalacqua, 2001; López-Cantos, 1997, 2000). Rural people considered themselves Puerto Rican first and foremost while, typically, the San Juan elite remained loyal to the imperial power in a futile quest for recognition and for annexation to the reigning metropolis. In many ways, this proclivity endured after the end of Spanish hegemony as the elite looked toward the new metropolitan government for economic and political respite. But, the aspirations and the power of these elite still remained subjected to the dictums of the Metropolitan authority. Hegemony is still out of reach for Puerto Ricans, even though Commonwealth status was crafted with the expressed purpose of attaining local sovereignty within permanent union with the United States (Duprey, 2002; Trias, 1997, 1999).

Picó (2000) and García-Passalacqua (1993) described the Puerto Rican elite as basically conservative and prone to maintain close ties with the metropolitan governments to ensure continued economic progress and stability. Nationalistic sentiments among some sectors of the population tend to be interpreted as attempts to offset the system of colonial balances, according to Picó. A lifetime experience of chronic poverty and economic instability, suffered in one way or another under both foreign occupations, kindled an immanent fear that without the ruling regime's financial backup the island is doomed to fall into economic and political chaos. This dependency issue was funneled by colonial rhetoric stressing Puerto Rico's small size, lack of natural resources, and the people's supposed lack of capacity to take care of themselves. Maldonado-Denis (1972) confirmed the effect of a lifetime under colonial rule in terms of social class configuration.

The social structure of a colonial society is a reflection of the dependence of that society on the colonial power.... I prefer to use the term *colonial elite* or *Creole elite* to designate that group of people in Puerto Rican society who have more access to the material and spiritual goods of our society than other Puerto Ricans. With an economy dominated by a handful of corporations responsible to stockholders in the United States, the principal task of the Creole elite has been to serve as intermediary between the hegemony of the colonial power and Puerto Rican society. These elite adjust to the new order of things because its economic interests require it. Pressured from below by the mass of workers demanding their social rights, the colonial elite receives from the colonial power the protection necessary to continue its economic activity in the shadow of the great interests which threaten to devour it. (p. 79)

The colonial vestiges still evident in Puerto Rico—together with the privileged position often enjoyed by the elite minority—facilitated the compounded onerous conditions endured, in one way or another, by most islanders. The masses-elite-

metropolis interplay advanced by García-Passalacqua (1993) promoted a subjugated scenario particular to Puerto Rico. Traditionally, the elite exploit or ignore the urban and the rural populace. At the same time, the aspirations of these same elite are bridled by the Metropolitan power in a self-serving, often manipulative manner (García-Passalacqua, 1993; González; 1998). García-Passalacqua's tripod broaches a power play situation where many times Puerto Ricans find themselves in the losing end—providing a fertile ground for the *pendejo* phenomenon to take root.

Commonwealth status and Law 600 can be considered a clever hoax promoted by the United States to perpetuate absolute dominion over Puerto Rico and its people (Rivera-Ramos, 2001). Efforts to achieve internal sovereignty through autonomy, the preferred status formula for the majority of Puerto Ricans, are systematically swatted by the powers that be in Congress and in the White House.

The recent release of classified documents on Puerto Rico, evidenced a concerted effort by the United States Armed Forces to interfere and to offset Puerto Rican political affairs. The military importance of the island was all too evident—sometimes to the detriment of the well being of the people. It is now known as a fact what many Puerto Ricans intuited: The United States Government, together with the United States Armed Forces, has used diverse conventional and unconventional means to thwart local attempts to achieve sovereignty as a people (García-Passalacqua, 2001; Villegas-Pagán, 2001; Torres-Rivera, 1999; Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Trías-Monje, 1997).

Since the 1960s, American Presidents have insisted on the right for Puerto Rican people to choose their political status from among three alternatives: Commonwealth,

statehood, and independence. Nonetheless, all efforts by Puerto Rican governments, as well as the political and civil organizations to exert that right led nowhere. To most Puerto Ricans they are still in a political limbo. Despite the United States pronouncement in the UN about Puerto Rico and its novel noncolonial Commonwealth status—which allowed for limited sovereignty in the nature of a compact with the United States metropolis—little has changed for Puerto Rico. The Island remains, de facto, a colony of the most democratic country in the world (Trías, 1997, 1999). After more than one hundred years under the American flag, the island is beset with a string of shelved promises and dubious intentions.

Puerto Rican society developed amidst a scenario conducive to the proliferation of a *pendejo* mindset influencing personal attitudes and behaviors. The masses-elite-metropolis tripod facilitated the understanding of the particular adverse ambience of the island's social development. The cultural backdrop of Puerto Rican society provided valuable information for the sociological roots of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

This socio-historical sketch has acquainted the reader with the particular scenarios that propitiated the conditions conducive to the *pendejo* phenomenon as experienced in Puerto Rico and grounded the study to its theoretical baseline. The Island's unique circumstances after five centuries of both overt and covert colonial rule provided the backdrop for understanding how the phenomenon took hold. The following topic, *The Puerto Rican personality*, acquaints the reader with descriptions of Puerto Rican character dispositions that have endured across the centuries and presents the *Jibaro* as the archetype of Puerto Rican personality.

## The Puerto Rican Personality

### *The Jíbaro as the Icon of the Puerto Rican Identity*

Antonio S. Pedreira (1934/1979)—one of the most influential writers of his time—who “lauded all things Spanish, European, and white” (Barreto, 2001, p. 25) provided his depiction of the *Jíbaro* element in Puerto Rican society.

From the cross-mixture of pure Spaniards who fought from a disadvantageous position against the illnesses and the climate, a pale and agile Creole was born, who spanning several generations was able to assimilate the rigors of the tropics. It is from here that most of our vast peasant mass originated, men of the highlands, who in their struggle against inclement natural forces developed an admirable physical resistance, almost immune to the same illnesses that have caused havoc among Europeans. It is surprising to see this type of Creole, bent from sunrise to sundown over his hoe, with a mostly outdoor existence, marked by material deprivation and uncinariasis and always resisting, notwithstanding his deficient food intake. He is a person who lives in the present, who works out of necessity, who recurs to gambling seeking for the moment when he can seize the worldly goods that he feels incapable of obtaining through hard work. Generous and cordial, hospitable and festive, he takes refuge in his shrewdness to protect himself from being run over by urban dwellers and by the Black competition from the coastal areas. *Our jíbaro is distrustful and evasive by nature, though benevolent with what is his, he is generally suspicious and astute. Fed-up with unfulfilled offerings and promises he has had to recur to his skillful ingeniousness to put limits to fraudulent postures and misdemeanors coming from outsiders* [italics added]. (p. 12)

Pedreira (1934/1979) explained how this sense of forsakenness and distrust was captured by our Creole poet, Luis Llorens-Torres, when in a “precise psychological exposition” (p. 13), he wrote a *décima* [folk song] about a *Jíbaro* who went to San Juan where he met people who tried to convince him about the grandeur of Uncle Sam, of American Presidents, and of big cities like New York. He also listened to diatribes about liberty and freedom, about the vote, and the about the value of the dollar bill. To all this barrage of propaganda extolling the virtues of the American way of life, the *Jíbaro*

answered with the proverbial shrug and expression of “*Njú*” meaning an innate attitude of suspicion and distrust similar to the attitude of “*you are not going to take me for a pendejo,*” in other words, “*You might believe that you can take me for dumb, but you are not fooling me.*”

“For many critics and for Puerto Ricans in general, the *Jibaro* figure represents the essence of the Puerto Rican nationality,” according to Torres-Robles (1999, p. 241). Barreto (2001) indicated that a “pre-twentieth century collective consciousness developed largely as a result of the discriminatory policies and deprecatory social attitudes of Spanish officials toward Puerto Ricans” (p. 22). He added that “the denigrating attitude of those born on the Iberian peninsula towards *criollos* was responsible for the genesis of a distinct Puerto Rican national consciousness and that the articulation of this new cultural identity found form with the *Jibaro*” (p. 25).

The literature review revealed that the constitution of distinct Puerto Rican personality traits, contained in the *Jibaro* figure, was conditioned by the colonial environment prevalent on the Island. Until the last fifty years, most Puerto Ricans lived in the rural areas beyond the walled city of San Juan. The great majority of the population that constituted the Puerto Rican popular masses lived on the coastal areas and deep in the mountains sufficiently far away from the colonial government that reigned in San Juan and other main cities and towns.

Lewis (1963) expressed that “the *campesino* [country peasants] of the mountain and country districts, developed into a unique pre-industrial character type....It is important to notice,” Lewis added, “the unique style of his social development.” (p. 57).

Puerto Rican country peasants, called *Jibaros*, are direct descendants of the *Cimarrón* community which was composed of early escapees from Spanish authorities who fled to the mountains in their quest for freedom from oppressive colonist forces. The resultant mixed-race, impoverished, derelict population was molded by the land, the climate, and by their characteristic isolation from populated areas. To Quintero-Rivera (2003) the Puerto Rican *Jibaro*, is a direct descendant of a mixture of people from diverse cultural backgrounds whose common denominator was that they all felt threatened by the military enclave in San Juan that colonial Spain represented for them. The end result was a concoction of fugitive Indians and Black slaves, of deserting Spanish soldiers, relegated Spaniards of Moorish descent, run-away sailors, and foreigners who chose to remain in the Island despite Spanish laws prohibiting non-Spaniards from entering the Colony before the institution of the *Cédula de Gracias* in the year 1815 (Quintero-Rivera, 2003). Life in a threatened environment facilitated the encounter of diverse ethnicities. Quintero-Rivera revealed that this “heterogeneous ethnic amalgam of *Cimarrones* began configuring a rural social structure marked by a sense of worthlessness” (p. 41).

Because of their escapee origins, the *Jibaros* learned to subsist on their own, led a reclusive life, and developed their own characteristic traits. These country people resisted any kind of colonialism—whether Spanish or North American—(Guerra, 1998; Quintero-Rivera, 2003). They escaped domestication and lived at the margin of official colonial policies, manifesting passive opposition to imposed colonial rules. Contrary to the inhabitants of San Juan—most of who remained loyal to the Spanish Crown and looked toward Spain as their *Motherland*—these people considered Puerto Rico as their country



for they were first and foremost Puerto Rican. Notwithstanding, according to Quintero-Rivera (2003), the *Jibaros* took on the Spanish language and adhered to Spanish traditions, including their Catholic religion, and their modes and mores. In 1765 Marshal Alexander O'Reylly wrote about the inhabitants of Puerto Rico: "I have to say that the *inhabitants* are very fond of the King, and they manifest a natural innocence and candor that I have not seen, nor have heard of in any other part of America" (1765/1995, p. 242). O'Reylly noted a preference for smuggling over agriculture but alleged that this was propitiated by the lack of tools and knowledge of agriculture. He also called the country people "lazy and unsuitable men" and blamed the "sweet climate for their habits of indolence" (Lewis, 1963, p. 57).

Lewis (1963) cited a medical report, written by two prominent doctors, about the moral and social degradation of the *Jibaro*.

The *Jibaro* mountain bred, wrote Drs. Bailey Ashford and Gutiérrez Igaravidez in their outstanding medical report of 1900, avoids the genteel life of a civilization higher than that of his own. He instinctively tucks his little hut away in the most inaccessible spots; he shrinks from the stranger and lapses into stolid silence when brought face to face with things that are foreign to his life. He does this because he had been made to feel that he must do all that he is told by established authority, and he knows that this authority never takes the trouble to look for him unless it expects to get something out of him; because he is suspicious of outsiders, having been too often led astray by false prophets and disappointed by broken promises; because he realizes that he is not a free agent anywhere save in the mountain fastness. Added to this there was the fear bred of the social and mental gulf between him and his "betters," who regarded him with condescending and half-affectionate contempt. (p. 96)

Due to their long lasting marginalization from the rest of the Island and from the outside world, the *Jibaro* displayed diffident, self-effacing behaviors among strangers, especially among authority figures. To Quintero-Rivera (2003) this rural peasantry

searched for freedom through isolation, but this isolation derived from an inferiority complex. The author regarded the *Cimarrones*' reclusive tendencies as acts of rebellion and defiance manifested by a tendency to flee instead of fighting back.

In spite of their primitive rebelliousness, in their quest to elude domination by the State, the Cimarrón world of those first country people—the first Puerto Rican *jibaros*—was extremely vulnerable and contradictory. Their defiance was one of flight, not of fight. They sought to live at the margin of the State, not in opposition to colonialism, but because of their subordinate position to it; manifested through individual flight and through a parcel economy. (p. 41).

Lewis (1963) considered as tragic the fact that this rural Puerto Rican was not only neglected by both of the historic regimes, but was also “the object of a romantic idealization on the part of the more vocal and more prosperous groups in the island and the victim of a persistent exploitation, often on the part of the same groups” (p. 96).

#### *The Elite's Appropriation of the Jibaro*

Barreto (2001) understood that “*criollo* elites began constructing a new identity that glorified local customs and accentuated the *Jibaros*—the island's mountain peasant—as the paradigmatic Puerto Rican” (p. 22). This tendency began to take shape under Spanish domination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the massive influx of Spanish-loyal immigrants from former Spanish colonies and other foreigners threatened the Creole elite's economic and political stability (Guerra, 1998; Quintero-Rivera, 2003; Scarano, 1996; Torres-Robles, 1999).

Guerra (1998; see also Sacarano, 1996) points to the Creole elite's resentment of North American colonialism as the main reason for the “centralization of the jíbaro as the

primary representative of the elite intellectual's sense of Self" (p. 47). The new imperial conditions implied the political and economic domination of the island by foreigners. The Puerto Rican elite were caught between their class interests and their nationalistic sentiments.

The island elite found that their interests as a class increasingly depended upon the continued imperial presence of the United States; but at the same time, they sensed that their values, customs, and sense of identity were inevitably being compromised by their collaboration. In response to this situation, certain intellectuals turned to the margins of their society, where they symbolically sought to locate a portion of themselves in the persons, habits, and historical experiences of those Puerto Ricans who had never actively fomented colonialism of any kind—either Spanish or North American—but had resisted it. (p. 46)

The *Jibaro* myth was engendered by elite intellectuals like Pedreira (1934/1979) during the first decades of North American colonialism (Guerra, 1998; Picó, 1999; Scarano, 1996; Torres-Robles, 1999). Contrary to the 19<sup>th</sup> century elite's perception of the real-life *Jibaro* figure which was vilified as "lazy, degenerate vagrants who impeded the economic progress of the island by refusing to contribute to their labor to large-scale agricultural pursuits (that is, by refusing to be exploited)...," the elite appropriation of the *Jibaro* came to represent "the 'real' Puerto Rican, pure and simple," according to Guerra (1998, p. 54). Guerra provides her explanation about how the *Jibaro* became a refuge of the Puerto Rican soul.

The rapidity of historical change brought on by the material and social effects of Americanization conditioned elite intellectuals' attachment to the image of the jíbaro as an icon of identity and a principal discursive defense against colonial critiques. As they had in the Spanish colonial era, elite appropriations of the jíbaro represented a striving to define the Self that relied, first, on its connection to the Other for its resistance and, second, on a willingness to incorporate the Other as part of the Self for its legitimacy. (p. 67)

The *Jibaro* represented all that was both Spanish and Puerto Rican. The *Jibaro* also represented freedom and a differentiation from other people (Scarano, 1996). There was a degree of nostalgia and romanticism “about the former ideal, bucolic lifestyle that the jíbaro supposedly represented” (Guerra, 1998, p. 77). By reinventing and presenting the *Jibaro* as the White, hard-working, resilient, Puerto Rican peasant who lived an almost idyllic country life in spite of its bleak existence, the elite class found common ground with the Puerto Rican masses which, according to Guerra, led Pedreira to declare that “in each Puerto Rican there is a hidden jíbaro” (p. 98).

#### *Character Dispositions*

Early descriptions of the inhabitants of the island of Puerto Rico, pointed to the landscape and to the hot tropical climate as key to the conception of their personality (Abbad, 1788/1979; Babín, 1971, 1986; Belaval, 1935/1977; Pedreira, 1934/1979). Babín explained that “the landscape has always stood out in the letters of the island, not just as a simple external element of beauty but as a transcendental element for understanding and explaining the Creole and the Indian” (1971, p. 13). The author translated into English Abbad’s (1788/1979) archetypical depiction of what he considered to be character dispositions of an incipient Puerto Rican personality. Abbad referred to the heat of the tropics and to the fertility of the land as the source of these dispositions.

From the variety and mixture of peoples results an equivocal character difficult to explain; but to all are suited some characteristics which we can consider traits of the inhabitants of Puerto Rico: the heat of the climate makes them indolent and lazy; the fertility of the land that provides them with the means of sustenance makes them disinterested and hospitable with strangers; the solitude in which they

live in their country homes accustoms them to silence and meditation; the delicate organization of their bodies helps the liveliness of their imagination which drives them to extremes; the same delicateness of the organs which makes them timid, makes them look scornfully at all dangers, and even death; the varying classes that exist among them infuse vanity and pride in some, dejection in others. (Babín, 1971, p. 29)

To an outsider like Abbad (1788/1979), Puerto Ricans were difficult to understand, as they were molded by the climate and the topography of the land. This historian chronicled his impressions of an incipient Puerto Rican personality and described what he understood to be salient character traits of this population. Abbad perceived Puerto Ricans as indolent, lazy, timid, imaginative, reticent, proud, suspicious and distrustful, but at the same time, disinterested and hospitable with strangers. Abbad's impressions persisted across the centuries and were perpetuated in Puerto Rican literature up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Belaval (1935/1977) echoed his contemporaries when he stated that "the culture is the product of a land and of a people....As a social creation, its vitality depends on the people's vigor and on the outline of the land" (p. 23). The author compared the Indian element in the Latin American continent with the Indian community in Puerto Rico and classified the former as *ariscos* [hostile] and the latter as *submissive*. Contrary to the rebellious Indians in other colonized countries, the Indian element in Puerto Rico remained passive and obedient to the Spaniard while its race was exterminated as a significant, influential force in the first decades of colonization. To Belaval and Pedreira (1934/1979) the absence of a solid indigenous core permitted the incursion of alien influences in the molding of a Puerto Rican personality. But the submissive trait is

ascribed to Puerto Ricans throughout the writings of historians, sociologists, and psychologists even up to present times. Puerto Ricans were consistently portrayed as obedient, passive, compliant, acquiescent, subservient, docile, dutiful, and meek across the literature review (Abbad, 1788/1979; Belaval, 1977; Golding, 1973; Kazin, 1960; Marqués, 1977; Pedreira, 1934/1979).

Pedreira (1934/1979) also blamed the geography and the tropical climate of the island both of which conspire to “blur the people’s will” (p.22). The heat provokes in people what Pedreira referred to as a “national characteristic” (p. 23) which he calls *aplatanamiento*—described as a sort of inhibition, of mental laziness, and of absence of forceful, assertive behavior. The author also referred to Puerto Ricans as peaceful and docile, like their landscape.

In his writings, Pedreira (1934/1979) blamed “our mixed and equivocal character” to the “variety of reactions that respond to secret biological stimuli” (p. 15). He adduced to the racial mixture that produced the Puerto Rican person. To Pedreira, this “biological scuffle of disaggregative and contrary forces have retarded the definite formation of our essence as a people.” This is why “our rebelliousness is momentary; our docility permanent” (p.15). Pedreira assumed that the end result of this mixture of races and of the intrusion of foreign influences was the submissive, humble, conformist, belittling, and docile traits attributed to Puerto Ricans.

In 1960 *The San Juan Star*—the only English daily newspaper in Puerto Rico—published a polemic two-part article about Puerto Ricans written by Alfred Kazin, in its front page (Kazin, 1960a, 1960b). Kazin was introduced as “a renowned U. S. literary

critic and author” who “recently returned to the U. S. after a semester of teaching American Literature at the University of Puerto Rico.” The author began by complaining about the “late summer heat of Puerto Rico that clamps you around the back and chest,” “the nothingness of the long days,” and “the stillness that always seems inertness in the presence of the ‘continental’, the ‘American,’ the stillness that in my students at the University I can no longer tell from a deeply resistant shyness” (p. 1). Kazin continued his strident judgment of the Puerto Rican people.

There is a lamb in the official seal of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and in truth these people are lamblike. We laugh when an outbreak of rapings in Santurce calls out headlines in the *Island Times*: “New York-Type Gangs”; but as they say, there was no such violence here until Puerto Ricans came back to the Island. I believe them, for their famous docility (which can also be interpreted as the apathy of tropical countries and the Step’n Fetchit sloth in the presence of Americans barking questions in the language they do not know) shows itself all day long and every day in a variety of silences and withdrawals. (1960, p. 1)

Kazin (1960) faulted Puerto Ricans with being docile and nonaggressive. This visiting scholar tried to figure out *why* and provided his own explanations: “Are they “docile” because someone has always taken them over—or are they just docile? To me they are the waifs and wards of big power politics, the submerged colonial mass incarnate...” (p. 25). Kazin observed that “Puerto Ricans are always being reformed, educated, studied, analyzed, worked on, ‘developed’ by others,” and also commented that “they are used to waiting on life, waiting on other people; they are used to taking orders; they are ‘sensitive’ beyond endurance, but not stormy.” The author took notice that Puerto Ricans “are very quick to suspect, to be hurt” (p. 25). Kazin’s observations and

conclusions validate the assumption of the existence of the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico.

René Marqués (1977) affirmed Kazin's (1960a) contention about the docile disposition of Puerto Ricans. Marqués defined the word *docile* as “servile”, “subordinate”, “meek”, and “submissive”, and explained the meaning of this word.

Docility is to lack power and will to resist other people's demands or insinuations; a propensity to obey, to follow the example, the opinion, and the counsel of others, born out of a characteristic weakness, due to ignorance, lack of trust in one's own intelligence, know-how, or power to resist” (p. 153).

Following the former definition, one can deduct that the submissive, meek, or docile man is necessarily weak (“lack of power and will”) or ignorant (“born out of...ignorance”) or victim of a pathetic inferiority complex (“lack of trust in one's own intelligence, know-how, or power to resist”). (p. 154)

Marqués (1977) insisted that Puerto Rican's inferiority complex is fueled by their colonial status and by an educational system that promotes the Colonial power's rhetoric and convenient manipulation of reality to maintain students ignorant of their cultural background and of their history. To Marqués, “Puerto Ricans are nurtured and educated to be docile” (p. 126), for this author, islander's docility is an acquired trait, not a genetic disposition.

Puerto Rican passivity and escapist nature signal other psychosocial problems, according to Marqués (1977). He elaborated on how Puerto Ricans remain inert “accepting their fate in a characteristically fatalistic manner while observing, with cynical awareness, all the absurd details of the process that crushes them, [and seem] incapable, meanwhile, of any act of volition that may contribute to change the course of their destiny” (p. 161).



Rosario-Natal (1987) censured Kazin (1960a, 1960b) and Marqués (1977) as well as other historians and literary exponents for promoting the docile myth which he saw embedded in the Puerto Rican mindset since the early years of colonization. To this author, it was Christopher Columbus who originated a myth that was conveniently fostered by colonial envoys like Abbad, López de Haro and O'Reilly centuries later.

His diary on the discovery, according to the version of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, is plagued with references of “those domesticated people” “without ill [intentions] or belligerence”, “very meek and credulous”, “docile”, and in a last instance, “possessing no ingenuity in terms of arms, very coward, such that a thousand will not tend to three, and they are liable to be given orders and to be forced to work.” (p. 21)

According to Rosario-Natal (1987), this false and unjust representation of Puerto Ricans does not hold up against the historical evidence. The author criticized political and literary exponents like Alonso (1849/1996), Pedreira (1934/1979) and Marqués (1977) who helped promote this downgrading, negative conception of Puerto Ricans. To Rosario-Natal these writers were mere “copy-cats” of early foreign historians such as Abbad, López de Haro, and O'Reilly, whose biased descriptions and conjectures about the inhabitants of this island were based on their subjective interpretations of the Puerto Rican people denoting a lack of in-depth analyses based on reliable data.

Rosario-Natal (1987; see also Comas-Díaz et al., 1998) put emphasis on the need to do away with the docile fabrication and provided viable arguments based on historical facts that do away with this centuries old injustice done to Puerto Ricans. He was adamant in his assertion that “the supposedly lazy and indolent Puerto Rican never existed” (p. 112). Nevertheless, Rosario-Natal admitted that the idea or myth that Puerto

Ricans are docile, submissive, and passive has done much harm to the people's self-image and to their self-esteem. However, this should change now that Puerto Ricans are investigating and writing their own story, by discovering their own history. The time has come to do away with the docility legend. Rosario-Natal was confident that research studies done by contemporary human scientists—especially philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists—will help discard these detrimental legends for the sake “of our own self-esteem” (p. 129).

Babín (1971; 1986) established that:

The predominant note in the judgments and testimony of our thinkers on the characteristics of the Puerto Rican is not flattery, as one would imagine but, rather, self-criticism, irony, and the will to affirm the existence of a very particular autonomous character. (p. 30)

This self-criticism, or self-flagellation when taken to extremes, was evident throughout the literary search for this study. Many Puerto Rican writers gave credence and seemed to echo the assumptions about the Puerto Rican personality structure made by foreigners who provide a possibly biased outsiders' view of Puerto Rico and its inhabitants.

Marqués (1977) also pointed to self-destructive tendencies in Puerto Ricans and questioned why psychologists have not investigated these occurrences. The author saw a tendency to repress or inhibit the normal aggressive impulse toward others, to morbidly direct it toward the self. Marqués contended that “as long as an authority in psychology does not provide proof to the contrary; we can accept the fact as characteristic within the psychological framework of docility” (p. 161).

Scarano (1996) mentioned that the use of the term *Jibaro* came “to signify a person who, while appearing dumb, docile, and self-deprecating, actually possesses a higher wisdom, one that is potentially morally superior—though not necessarily so.” (p. 1424). This is evident in the *Juan Bobo* [Dumb Juan] folktales “whose name is undoubtedly the most frequently associated with Puerto Rican folkloric traditions” (Guerra, 1998, p. 137; see also, Babín, 1971, 1986; Marqués, 1977; Scarano, 1996). “Juan is such a veritable numbskull that his own mother thinks him incapable of carrying out a simple task,” Guerra explains (1998, p. 141), but “although the conspiring of Juan against the interests of the rich is usually blamed on his (supposedly) below-average intelligence, Juan consistently emerges as the most intellectually capable of all the characters in the stories” (p. 138). *Juan Bobo* may be an aspect of the Puerto Rican mindframe represented in caricature form.

In the *pendejo* phenomenon there is a preoccupation about someone “taking me for dumb.” It is important to be on guard because anyone can try to “catch me for a *pendejo* and have it in mind to make me look as a fool, because deep inside he or she believes I can be easily fooled”. This projected intention in the Other immerses Puerto Ricans in a *Jibaro* mental framework. There seems to be a consistent need to prove that “I am not dumb, docile, and self-deprecating even though you might try to catch me in a foolish act.” There are many positive traits ascribed to the *Jibaros*—festive, generous, hospitable, resilient, patient, noble, shrewd, compassionate, respectful, empathic—but it is those traits consistently depicted in the literature as negative, like passive, docile, lazy, self-deprecating, suspicious and distrustful what captured my interest in the study of the

*pendejo* phenomenon. It was important to explore these negative character dispositions in present day Puerto Rico to determine *if* and *how* they were manifested in this phenomenon. Chapter 3 elaborates on the choice of the case study design and describes the methodology chosen to conduct the *pendejo* phenomenon research. The study made use of a qualitative, indigenous, phenomenological approach.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

### Introduction

The study of the *pendejo* as an indigenous, unexplored, psychological phenomenon set the groundwork to approach this occurrence from a qualitative, phenomenological, descriptive, exploratory perspective. This investigation raised a variety of questions pertaining to paradigm choice, utilization of the case study research design, selection of participants, data collection procedures, and analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the intervention part of the study. All of the above issues were addressed in this chapter. An examination of the methodology follows.

### *Phenomenological Research*

The qualitative approach to research emerged from the growing interest among researchers to study phenomena in a natural setting in a manner consistent to the subjective nature of humankind. From the qualitative point of view, the mind is an active agent in the construction of the meaning it finds in the world (Creswell, 1994, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Cyrulnik, 1993; DeCarvalho, 1991; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1991; Rosenzweig, Leiman, & Breedlove, 1996; Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) indicated that the key philosophical assumption “upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world,” and added that “qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*” (p. 6).

“Phenomenology is a school of philosophical thought that underpins all of qualitative research,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 15). Phenomenology in psychological research begins with the research and writings of Husserl (Cerbone, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Zahavi, 2003). This orientation considers the essence or structure of a phenomenon and uses descriptive methods to look for meaning. Moustakas (1994) maintained that “the challenge is to explicate the phenomenon in terms of its constituents and possible meanings, thus discerning the features of consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essences of the experience” (p. 49). This scholar warned about “the growing discontent with a philosophy of science based exclusively on studies of material things, a science that failed to take into account the experiencing person” (p. 43).

Adair (1999; see also Arnett, 2008) was concerned about the way that contemporary psychology, which developed in the United States, is imported to other countries. The author objected to the indiscriminate use of American positivistic methodologies in the study of foreign psychologies and endorsed a more appropriate qualitative approach to research for accessing diverse worldviews.

This imported discipline [psychology] is acultural in content and positivistic in methodology. Research findings are assumed to apply universally, and a quantitative, hypothesis-testing research approach predominates. By contrast, researchers in developing countries feel there is an ill fit of method and the need for a science that is culture–or context–specific. Methods that are holistic, qualitative, and phenomenological, are felt to be more appropriate and compatible to their cultures. (p. 1 of 11)

This study investigated the *pendejo* phenomenon as a context-bound, unexplored, socially constructed experience centered on the collective meaning that Puerto Ricans ascribe to the *pendejo* construct. For this reason research on the *pendejo* phenomenon benefited from the use of the qualitative phenomenological approach that examined unexplored indigenous phenomena. Access to the subjective experiences of research

participants allowed uncovering underlying perceptual patterns with palpable historical and social connotations.

The call is for a qualitative, autochthonous approach to research and for the indigenization of the discipline to make psychology more culturally sensitive (Adair, 1999; Adair & Díaz-Loving, 1999; Greenfield, 1997, 2000; Kim, 2000; Sinha, 1997). Indigenous phenomena—like the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico—are best approached from this qualitative, phenomenological, autochthonous, perspective (Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Rodríguez et al., 1999; Díaz-Guerrero & Pacheco, 1994).

#### *Research Strategy*

The paradigm choice is reflected in the design upon which the research is based. The design or method presents a plan for carrying out the study, it demonstrates the researcher's efficacy in guiding the project, and it upholds the design flexibility peculiar to qualitative methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Creswell (1994) suggested that “the rationale for the paradigm choice be based on worldviews or assumptions of each paradigm, training and experience, psychological attributes, the nature of the problem, and the audience for the study” (p. 15). This research study offers psychologists information on particular mindsets or ‘meanings’ that can hinder the therapeutic process. My contention is that one of these mindsets is the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico. The uncovering of this phenomenon is an important social impact feature for Puerto Ricans, especially for those who live in the United States.

Adair (1999) believed that “psychology can be of use in solving social problems within each country and in promoting understanding of local thought and behavior” (p.

403). In conducting indigenous research Adair stood for methods deemed appropriate and compatible to the culture under study. In other words, Adair promoted the use of research strategies that are culture or context-specific, strategies that are holistic, qualitative, and phenomenological. For Stake (1995) understanding the uniqueness and commonality of people constitute the case of interest in social research.

#### *Rationale for the Use of the Case Study Design*

The choice of the phenomenological case study design for this research project is consistent with the study the *pendejo* as an indigenous, contemporary, unfamiliar phenomenon, to gain insight and to understand the phenomenon from an autochthonous perspective. In this research study the investigator captured the essence of a person's experience through participants' perception of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

For Patton (1987) "The important challenge is to match appropriate methods to evaluation questions and issues" (p. 169). Yin (2003) affirmed that "how" and "why" questions—the kind of questions formulated in this study—are congruous with qualitative designs like exploratory and descriptive case studies. Yin also established that "such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (p. 6).

Case studies are used when the researcher wants to explore a single entity or phenomenon. It is the study of one individual, or a group considered as an entity, and it is bound by time and by the activity under study. The researcher proceeds to collect detailed information through various collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Creswell, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Tesch, 1990).



Advocates of qualitative case study methods (Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) contended that case studies allow “for an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). In phenomenological case studies human experiences are examined through detailed descriptions by the people studied. The study involves assessing a small number of subjects to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In other words, case studies help understand particular problems and situations in great depth because they provide unique opportunities to collect rich information from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question (Patton, 1987). Researchers consciously contain their own experiences in order to understand those of the informant (Creswell, 1994; Tesch, 1990).

Yin (2003) argued for the case study as a viable strategy for doing social science research. The author recognized the importance of methodology in the social sciences and depicted a basic theme of the case study method: “Empirical research advances only when it is accompanied by logical thinking, and not when treated as a mechanistic endeavor” (p. xv). In the *Foreword* of Yin’s book Donald T. Campbell argued for a humanistic validity-seeking case study methodology that attempts to make valid inferences from events outside the laboratory. Campbell noted that qualitative case studies make no use of quantification or tests of significance but still work on the same questions and share the same goals of knowledge found in the quantitative and quasi-experimental approaches of laboratory science.

The case study is an appropriate strategy for the study of unfamiliar topics (Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003), and is expedient when the researcher is interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation in context (Merriam, 1998). The criteria established by qualitative advocates for case study methods was consonant with

the *pendejo* phenomenon study and justified the selection of the strategy for this investigative work.

*Contextual Considerations.* Researchers who utilize case study methods consider contextual conditions to be highly pertinent to the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003) this strategy takes precedence in investigations focused on phenomena that occur within contemporary real-life contexts and over which the investigator has little or no control. Yin recommended case study designs when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13) and when the researcher wants to address contextual conditions because it is pertinent to the phenomenon under study.

Merriam (1998) took into account contextual circumstances to differentiate case study strategies from other research designs.

Case study has in fact been differentiated from other research designs by what Cronbach (1975) calls “interpretation in context” (p. 123). By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation. As Yin (1994) observes, case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context. (p. 29)

The *pendejo* phenomenon is context-bound and contemporary; therefore it was best approached from a holistic point of view. Yin’s (2003) context-based comparison of experimental, historical, and surveys strategies explained why they are non-applicable to this study.

1. An experiment deliberately divorces a phenomenon from its context, so that attention can be focused on only a few variables.

2. A history, by comparison, does deal with the entangled situation between phenomenon and context, but usually with *noncontemporary* events.
3. Surveys can try to deal with phenomenon and context, but their ability to investigate context is extremely limited. (p. 13)

The relation between phenomenon and context set the basis for the selection of the case study design. Context is intrinsic to the *pendejo* phenomenon. To understand the phenomenon, contextual realities were taken into account.

*Case studies as bounded systems.* The *pendejo* phenomenon is bounded by Puerto Rican demographics and by particular social and historical antecedents. Merriam (1998) identified the case as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of an integrated or *bounded system* that can be a single entity, a phenomenon, or a social unit around which there are boundaries. To Merriam, “if the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (p.13).

The *pendejo* phenomenon is bounded to Puerto Rican idiosyncrasy. The use of a phenomenological case study research design is congruent with the study of this phenomenon for, as Merriam (1998) indicated, it allows for a holistic view of the situation as it concentrates on the way a particular group of people confronts a specific problem.

#### *Limitations of Case Study Strategies*

Limitations of case study strategies are consistent with limitations attributed to the qualitative paradigm. Many investigators still consider case studies to be a less

desirable form of inquiry and tend to favor either experiment or survey methods to do research.

To Yin (2003) the case study is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry.

Qualitative exponents (Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1987; Yin, 2003) insisted that quantitative and qualitative are but two distinct methods each with their own definitions, their own set of rules, and their own way to do research. There is nonetheless concern for lack of rigor, little basis for scientific generalization, validity and reliability issues, and time-consuming processes that may end in redundant lengthy expositions (Crotty, 1998; Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Yin, 2003).

Merriam (1998, p. 42) summarized some limitations particular to case study designs:

1. A researcher may not have the time or money to devote to such undertaking.
2. The product may be too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policy makers and educators to read and use.
3. Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs.
4. Qualitative case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The investigator is left to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of this research effort.
5. Both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product.

Maxwell (1996) mentioned two specific validity threats that were a concern for this researcher due to the necessary ingrained cultural imprinting: researcher bias and reactivity. Researcher bias occurs when the researcher selects data that fit his or her existing theory or preconceptions because this data readily “stands out” to the researcher. Researcher bias can be countered by explaining any possible biases and detailing the way these biases will be manipulated.

Reactivity refers to the way the researcher influences the setting or individuals studied. Researchers need to be aware about how they influence what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences that will be drawn from the interview. It is plausible for the researcher to make reference to the possibility of reactivity bias in her report. Maxwell’s (1996) concern for validity in qualitative studies was expressed through Fred Hess words: “Validity in qualitative research is not the result of indifference, but of integrity” (as cited in Maxwell, p. 91).

In order to offset these limitations I engaged in a process of description, understanding, and in-depth explication of phenomena to set the standard for rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis in case study investigations. A qualitative investigator assumes the responsibility to work diligently to collect, analyze, and report all evidence fairly and in an exemplary, scholarly manner.

In addition, the research strategies selected for this study were of proven quality after years of habitual use and an ongoing process of continual refinement. The in-depth interviews were audio taped and transcribed *ad verbatim*. Research participants verified their transcribed information. Moreover, there was a continuous revision of the

information gathered made by two expert Reviewers who also validated the categories that emerged from the analysis of the data. They authenticated emerging ideas and reached consensus about the resulting categories and consequent analysis.

### *Validation of Data*

To Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera (2003) insistence on validity and reliability indicates the strong influence that quantitative research still exerts in social scientific forums. Qualitative-oriented scholars (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1987; Wolcott, 1994; Yin, 2003), agree that conventional criteria are inappropriate to the naturalistic paradigm. For Maxwell (1996) this is the real world and in terms of validity, the possibility of testing our conclusions against the world is the best appraisal of validity in qualitative studies.

Wolcott (1994) argued about “the absurdity of validity”, and preferred to pursue understanding instead of “becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth” (p. 366-367). Merriam (1998) sided with Wolcott:

Different types of research are based on different assumptions about what is being investigated, however, and different designs seek to answer different questions. If, as in the case of qualitative research, *understanding* is the primary rationale for the investigation, the criteria for trusting the study are going to be different than if discovery of law or testing a hypothesis is the study’s objective. (p. 200)

Nevertheless, there was agreement among qualitative researchers about concerns in terms of trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and data dependability to establish the quality of empirical social research. Merriam (1998) confirmed this preoccupation and stated that “qualitative researchers need to respond to the concerns of outsiders, many

of who may be unfamiliar with or blatantly challenging of the credibility of qualitative research” (p. 201). Burke-Johnson (1997) believed that it is important to think about validity in qualitative research and to take into account strategies developed to maximize validity. Patton (1987) proposed alternatives to obtaining objectivity and truth.

The practical solution may be to replace the traditional search for truth with a search for useful and balanced information, and to replace the mandate to be objective with a mandate to be fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple possibilities. (p. 167)

There remains a concern about the internal validity, external validity and reliability of qualitative studies. Maxwell (1996) affirmed that validity in research designs consists of strategies used to rule out threats. This makes “validity threat”—ways you may be wrong—the key concept for validity. It is important for researchers to be meticulous about ruling out particular plausible alternatives to their interpretations and explanations by “providing a clear argument that the approaches described will adequately deal with the particular threats in question, in the context of the study being proposed” (p. 89). To Burke-Johnson (1997) “when qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and, therefore, defensible” (p. 282).

### *Internal Validity*

In scientific research, internal validity centers on the meaning of reality. For Merriam (1998) “reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research” (p. 202).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined “reality” as a multiple set of mental constructions. To them, “those constructions are made by humans; their constructions are in their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them” (p. 295). What is being observed, then, is how people understand the world, how they construct reality (Merriam, 1998). This study was designed to explore Puerto Rican constructions of the *pendejo*, in other words, to understand the meaning of “*pendejo*” in Puerto Rico.

Merriam (1998) saw internal validity as a definite strength of qualitative research and concluded that since reality lies in a person’s mind it should be accessed through adequate methods.

Because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. We are thus “closer” to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants. Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research. In this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. (p. 203)

To demonstrate “truth value” multiple constructions need to be represented accurately and in a credible manner (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The credibility criterion substitutes for the traditional reference to internal validity. Lincoln and Guba named *prolonged engagement*, *persistent observation*, and *triangulation*, as “activities that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced” (p. 301).

In doing research on this topic, I spent years of prolonged immersion and persistent observation of Puerto Rican cultural reality both by birthright and through formal schooling (see Biascoechea, 1981). Triangulation was achieved through production of experiential accounts, use of the *Pendejo* Questionnaire, in-depth



interviewing, and an explorative review of material collected at the *pendejo* session in 13 Personal Development Workshops during the past 10 years.

### *External Validity*

How to generalize from a single case remains a concern for some researchers (Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera affirmed that generalization is a term irrelevant to qualitative case study investigations because, different from other methods, case studies are bound by particular circumstances. This is why Merriam (1998) expressed that “in qualitative research, a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely *because* the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (p. 208).

Yin (2003) provided a convincing explanation for scholars who are uneasy about the issue of generalization in qualitative case study research.

The short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a “sample,” and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic Generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (p. 10)

Yin clarified that a case is not a “sampling unit.” In case studies multiple cases should be considered like multiple experiments. The author referred to replication, instead of generalization if two or more cases support the same theory, and also expressed that generalization was not automatic. Only after replicating the findings in a second or third investigative event can results be accepted as providing strong support for the theory. Yin made clear that “This *replication logic* is the same that underlies the use of experiments

(and allows scientists to cumulate knowledge across experiments)” (p. 37). He recommended the use of replication logic for multiple case studies such as the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Marshall and Rossman (1995), on the other hand, contended that “qualitative research does not pretend to be replicable,” and affirmed that the researchers’ goal of discovering “the complexity of situational contexts and interrelations as they occur....cannot be replicated by future researchers, nor should it be attempted” (p. 146). To respond to traditional concerns for replicability the authors recommended the following: Assert that qualitative studies by their nature (and, really, all research) cannot be replicated because the real world changes.

1. Keep thorough notes and a journal or log to record each design decision and the rationale behind it, to allow others to inspect the procedures, protocols, and decisions.
2. Keep all collected data in well-organized, retrievable form to make them easily available if the findings are challenged or if another researcher wants to reanalyze the data.

Even though a number of scholars (Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1994; Yin, 2003) agreed that external validity is irrelevant to qualitative studies, Yin’s intent to placate those scholars uneasy about the issue of generalization in qualitative case study research makes replication logic a feasible built-in strategy for multiple case studies. The use of this strategy, in conjunction with Marshall and Rossman’s (1995) advice to respond to traditional concerns about replicability, provided the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon with sufficient safeguards against external validity threats and to ascertain the confirmability element of this investigation.

### *Reliability*

One concern in quantitative research is the extent to which research findings can be replicated. For Yin (2003), the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. The author distinguished between reliability and replicability. In reliability “the emphasis is on doing the same case over again, not on “replicating” the results of one case by doing another case study” (p. 37). This presents a problem in the social sciences because human behavior is not static and cannot be quantified nor isolated (Merriam, 1998). What qualitative researchers seek is to understand and to present subjective perceptions of truth.

Merriam (1998) affirmed that “achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible” (p. 206). Tesch (1990) stated that “one of the most persistent themes in qualitative methodology literature is the emphasis on the person of the researcher, and the recognition of each scholar’s individuality as a research instrument” (p. 304). For this reason, even when faced with the same task, no two scholars produce the same results. Tesch equated a qualitative study with a piece of art.

No two artists will produce exactly the same drawing of someone’s features. If they are skillful and competent, we will nevertheless recognize the same person in their renditions. ‘Pictures’ of an experience, social phenomenon, or culture don’t have to look exactly alike to be valid, either. If the research is conducted competently, each individual exploration will give us a different perspective on the phenomenon studied. One study alone will not provide the whole picture (just as no single quantitative study does). As qualitative descriptions accumulate, they will make it possible for us to gradually ‘recognize’ the phenomenon in the sense of a second, fuller knowing. That is the goal of qualitative research. (p. 305)

*The Role of the Researcher*

In qualitative studies the researcher is the primary data collection instrument contributing to the research setting (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The researcher is aware that the meaning of human expression is context-bound and cannot be divorced from historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. What a researcher considers as a fact is contingent upon the ways that people have been socialized to see the world (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). For Creswell, the goal of research "is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation being studied" (p. 8). Creswell puts emphasis on the cultural imprinting of subjective meanings and expounds on the role of the researcher.

The researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. Thus constructivist researchers often address the "processes" of interaction among individuals. They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants.... The researcher's intent, then, is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. (p. 8)

As a native Puerto Rican, I held a participant's role and an "insider" or *emic* perspective to the *pendejo* phenomenon. Awareness of Puerto Rican reality provided for an immanent understanding of the cultural imprinting of subjective meanings of this population. In other words, this study benefited from my own personal, first hand knowledge about contextual, cultural, and historical subtleties that underlie the Puerto Rican mentality.

I also held an observer's role with its consequent "outsider" or *etic* perspective of the phenomenon under study after 30 years of systematic observation and informal chronicling through diverse activities—such as workshops, therapeutic interventions,

informal conversations, interviews, focus groups, documents, and questionnaires. This insider-outsider or emic-etic approach allowed me an extended, on-going, *participant-observer* role. As a participant-observer (Patton, 1987) I brought to this investigation my own in-context, personal knowledge about the *pendejo* experience as well as the capacity to observe how the phenomenon revealed itself through the shared experiences of participants in this study. This insider-outsider position permitted the access to informed knowledge about the phenomenon in a way consistent with established guidelines for qualitative case study research (APA, 2003).

From an insider's perspective, on the other hand, researcher bias was a concern for me. Merriam (1998) recommended qualitative researchers to systematically reflect on who they are in the inquiry and to be sensitive to their personal history and how it shapes the study. I considered it my responsibility as investigator to assure purity and impartiality by taking necessary measures to prevent possible biases from contaminating the process. I was very much aware of the fine line that exists between relevant personal experiences that help build up the study and material contaminated with personal biases that can harm and influence study results.

Wolcott's (1994, 2001) guidelines for the collection, organization, and use of data provided a good framework to conduct this study. To insure quality and purity of qualitative investigative processes Wolcott recommended researchers to stay close to the data as initially recorded and to allow for these data to "speak for themselves." The data was analyzed in a manner that allowed the voice of research participants to be heard.

*The External Reviewers*

As an additional measure to eliminate possible researcher bias, two external reviewers examined investigative accounts on an on-going basis.

*Reviewer #1.* The first reviewer is a PhD in Theology, completely bilingual, and a second-generation Puerto Rican with a Danish and Irish ancestry. She is an avid reader and investigator in the field of theology and had specialized in the linguistic and pedagogical aspects of Parables. Having extensive experience in translation from Spanish-English-Spanish, she has reviewed various dissertations in both languages and has knowledge in the nuances and expressions of both English and Spanish. A special trait of this reviewer is that she was reared within the “sugar cane culture,” therefore she has incorporated its particularities which in terms of language are very rich in expressions.

With a background in counseling psychology this reviewer has a broad scope of knowledge in this field, which enabled her to understand literature of this nature and in particular to be an adequate reviewer for this dissertation. She has traveled extensively and participated regularly, during 10 years, as representative of the organization she is involved in, at various conferences and meetings of the United Nations (UN).

*Reviewer #2.* The second reviewer is a Catholic priest and a licensed clinical psychologist. He is a native of Menorca, Spain but has lived and practiced in Puerto Rico for the past 30 years. As area coordinator for North Latin America he travels extensively to the following countries: Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Ecuador

and Puerto Rico. He was a representative for Movement for a Better World (MBW), at the United Nations for 10 years and participated in various committees as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) representative.

In addition to his expertise as a clinical psychologist, he is a PhD candidate in Theology and has extensive studies in history and philosophy. In Puerto Rico, he has worked with couples and youth and has led numerous workshops including: team building, parenting schools, transactional analysis, couples, single persons, and communications. This reviewer masters six languages, has published two books, and co-authored various additional publications. At present he is involved in a formation program for community leaders with attendance of over three hundred persons in three levels.

The external reviewers assisted the researcher in the process of analysis of the data. Both reviewers possessed first hand knowledge of the intricacies of the *pendejo* phenomenon. Nonetheless, they underwent training on how to identify and code categories from the transcription of research instruments. The researcher developed and coded the necessary categories that were analyzed. This material was then presented to both reviewers. They verified the preidentified categories and suggested other possible categories that the researcher had overlooked. As the researcher I made the final decision on the categories that were included for analysis. This allowed for analytical triangulation that ascertained the inclusion and the thorough scrutiny of all pertinent data.

### *Participants*

The population sample consisted of 8 middle to upper class, college graduate, native Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans of both sexes, between 30 and 45 years old, which was the number of participants necessary to reach saturation. Selection of a basically homogeneous group of participants took into account the indigenous nature of the *pendejo* phenomenon but it also took into consideration the observed widespread incidence of *pendejo*-influenced expressions and behaviors traversing sex, and age components.

The purpose of this research project was to explore and to describe the widespread incidence of the phenomenon in Puerto Rico that prevails among Puerto Ricans including proficient, intelligent, well-to-do, successful people. Sample selection from this highly educated, fully functional group helped to offset variables, which could include poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, incapacity, or pathology to explain the phenomenon.

### *Sampling Strategy*

The *criterion sampling strategy* was used to conduct this research due to the predetermined criteria established for inclusion and/or exclusion of participants. Criterion sampling allowed for the identification of information-rich cases that permitted an in-depth, qualitative analysis of emergent patterns. The goal was to capture the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of the phenomenon (Patton, 1987). Persons with access to information pertaining to the *pendejo* phenomenon, including



people who participated in the personal development workshops at MBW, were not included in this study.

In addition to the inclusion criteria mentioned above, potential candidates had to admit having been taken for *pendejos* sometime in their life. Eleven potential Participants were identified from referrals through diverse sources and were asked if they were willing to be considered as potential candidates to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the *pendejo* research project. A preliminary interview by telephone or by personal contact was conducted following the Spanish version of the *Invitation to Participate in Research Phone Script* (Appendix D) to make sure that they conformed with the predetermined selection criteria and to discard participants with overt pathological manifestations. Eight participants, four men and four women, were selected and were notified by telephone. Preliminary details and instructions were provided and questions were answered accordingly. At that time, the date and place for the in-depth interview was negotiated with each participant.

#### *Approvals and Ethical Considerations*

Approval for conducting live human research was granted by the Walden University Institutional Review Board prior to conducting data collection (approval #05-23-07-0008495). To ensure the ethical protection of participants a preliminary interview screened candidates to eliminate those with overt pathological manifestations. Measures to ensure confidentiality were explained in detail and written permission to tape was obtained from selected participants, previous to the in-depth interview sessions. Experience from previous workshops, both during and after the *pendejo* session, revealed minimal risk of potential psychological harm. Nevertheless, in the event of harm,

participants were to be referred immediately to identified available psychological resources—free of charge—at MBW, the setting where most of the interviews were conducted. Eventual participation in the personal development workshop offered at MBW, which includes a session on the *pendejo*, remains available to all research subjects free of charge.

#### *Locations for Conducting Interviews*

Most of the interviews took place at MBW offices at San Juan, Puerto Rico. This setting provided the ideal conditions to conduct initial in-depth interviews and for follow-up contacts. The place was easy to access by car or mass transportation and provided excellent parking accommodations. MBW facilities allowed for a flexible time schedule and offered a secure, comfortable, quiet, working environment where privacy was guaranteed. To further accommodate participants' specific needs, two of the interviews took place at my home office. Confidentiality and privacy were assured at all times.

#### *Data Collection Strategies*

To understand the social world, the investigator becomes involved in a process of description, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered by means of primary data collection methods including: participation, observation, interviewing, and the review of documents (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Smith & Heshusius, 1986; Wolcott, 1994). Patton (1987) affirmed that the researcher needs to be open to more than one way of looking at a phenomenon because “purity of method is less important than dedication to relevant and useful information” (p. 61). To procure relevant and useful information in the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon, data collection strategies included personal

experiential accounts, The *Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Schedule, and individual in-depth interviews.

Data collection was done in Spanish with a focus on the comprehensive research questions that guided this case study:

1. How do middle and upper class college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants describe their experience of the *pendejo* construct?
2. Taking into account their collective experiences, how are these conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon?
3. How is this phenomenon represented *de facto* in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the daily life of the participants as an irrational belief and a negative self-referent?
4. How and in what ways is the *pendejo* phenomenon reflected in the psychological make up of those who experience it?

#### *An Explorative Review*

A review of material collected from 13 *Personal Development Workshop* groups for the last 10 years —specifically during the *pendejo* session of the workshop— substantiated the study of this topic. The explorative review entailed the revision of the original *The Pendejo Questionnaire* which met the parameters set by the research questions that guided this investigation.

Following a focus group format, workshop participants answer *The Pendejo Questionnaire*. Group members then share their answers and provide valuable input that served the purpose of this study. Participants answer questions and share their *pendejo* experiences, together with their personal points of view about the topic, on a voluntary

basis. At the end of the session participants voluntarily hand back the completed questionnaires identified only by their first names.

Information extracted from the review of workshop material was potent and revealing. Data from both the revised *Pendejo Questionnaire* and the subsequent focus group discussions adequately covered significant areas related to the *pendejo* issue and provided sufficient information about this topic in a way that motivated me to explore the phenomenon further. Data collection strategies selected to conduct this study helped to explore and describe the phenomenon in a formal, more comprehensive manner.

#### *Autobiographical Anecdotes*

Prior to answering The *Pendejo* questionnaire, and before the in-depth interview, study participants were asked to write in detail about an incident in which they felt that they were “taken for *pendejo/a*” (see Appendix B). Their individual accounts set the basis to establish the existence of the phenomenon and provided first hand narrative information about the dynamics involved in the *pendejo* process.

#### *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule*

Immediately after writing the Auto-biographical Anecdotes, participants answered an adapted version of original The *Pendejo* Questionnaire used in the Personal Development Workshop. The adapted version, called *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule* (Appendix C), consists of 13 questions directly related to the research questions that guided this study. The previously compiled information gathered

from workshop material provided significant data about personal reflections on the *pendejo* topic. Answers to the questions were consistent and revealing.

The revised questionnaire and interview schedule expanded on the research questions that guided this investigation. Several changes resulted from the revision of the original questionnaire:

1. Two items (Items 4 and 5 in the original questionnaire) were eliminated because they provided information now compiled by the Auto-biographical Anecdote.
2. The revised questionnaire included three new items (items 4, 12, and 13) to help gather more comprehensive data consistent with the research questions that guided this study.
3. Other items (Items 3 and 9) underwent changes to expand on information relevant to the *pendejo* phenomenon.
4. Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11 were deemed essential to the purpose of this study and remained almost intact in the new questionnaire.

Table 1 relates the research questions with selected items in the questionnaire:

Table 1

*Techniques for Data Gathering: The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule*

Research questions	Questionnaire items
1. How do middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants describe their experience of the <i>pendejo</i> construct?	Items 1; 2
2. Taking into account their collective experiences, how are these conceptualized as the <i>pendejo</i> phenomenon?	All items.
3. How is this phenomenon represented de facto in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the daily life of the participants as an irrational belief and a negative self-referent?	Items 3; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13
4. How and in what ways is the <i>pendejo</i> phenomenon reflected in the psychological make-up of those who experience it?	Items 4; 5; 8; 12

### *The In-depth Interview*

The most significant data collection strategy was the taped in-depth interview. This third step followed immediately during the interview session, right after interviewees wrote their Auto-biographical Anecdote and filled out The *Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Schedule. By then I, as the researcher-interviewer, had sufficient information collected through both instruments and used them to guide the interview.

The purpose of the in-depth interview was to gather more significant data through meaningful, personal interviewer and interviewee interaction that provided rich, thick

descriptions of the phenomenon. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), the researcher needs to “get beyond ordinary listening and hear meanings” (p. 8) to obtain more depth and detail than one would obtain from ordinary conversation. For this reason interview questions were adapted as necessary. I followed Rubin and Rubin’s directives for the in-depth interviews.

You encourage people to elaborate, provide incidents and clarifications, and discuss events at length. The depth, detail, and richness we seek in interviews is what Clifford Geertz (1973) has called *thick description*. Thick description, rooted in the interviewees’ firsthand experience, forms the material that researchers gather up, synthesize, and analyze as part of hearing the meaning of data. (p. 8)

#### *Data Analysis*

Few writers agreed on a predetermined procedure for data collection, analysis, and reporting in qualitative research (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research means different things to different people. In analyzing qualitative data, “we are not dealing with a monolithic concept like ‘statistics’”, explained Tesch (1990), “the notion of qualitative analysis is fluid and defies definition” (p. 4). In fact, qualitative researchers rejected standardization as this goes against the basic tenets ingrained in the qualitative mindset. Analysis, to qualitative researchers, is the process of making sense of narrative data (Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Tesch, 1990; Wolcott, 1994). They recognized patterns and themes from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2003).

Wolcott (1994) understood that a careful, systematic, analysis helps to identify key factors and to recognize relationships among them. Analytical procedures “impose order on the management of data, no matter how unruly the data themselves,” (p. 27). For Wolcott, analysis had to do with “how things work.” He interpreted analysis as the process of *transforming data*.

Because qualitative data gathering is conducted through such everyday techniques as participant observation and interviewing, it is comforting to employ a term like *analysis* to suggest that in what we do with data we are able to wrest them from their humble origins and transform them into something grand enough to pass for science. To avoid confusion, I have taken the phrase *transforming data* to refer to *analysis* in this broad everyday sense. (p. 24)

To Wolcott (1994, p. 24) “the truly analytical moments” occur during “brief burst of insight or pattern recognition” at the moment of processing the data. Analysis for Wolcott (see also, Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera, 2003) is both a science and an art. As an art, it relates and connects the different parts and their elements like a centrifugal force which permits the researcher to sew together the themes or threads that build up the story. This is important when the goal of the investigator is to frame the study within the cultural, social, historical, and personal perspective of the participants.

To underscore the scientific stance of analysis, Wolcott (1994) stated that “analysis rests, ultimately, on agreed-upon knowledge, the recognition of mutually recognized properties or standards,” and continued to explain that “analysis always suggests something of the scientific mind at work: inherently conservative, careful, systematic. Analysis does more than merely hint at fact, however: it presumes to be fact” (p. 25).

Wolcott (1994) admitted that qualitative data can be marred with uncertainty because of its often contradictory, subjective, partial and unruly nature. It is through rigorous analysis that this data can achieve credibility. In the name of rightness, a qualitative researcher’s responsibility lies in collecting the right kind of data required by qualitative procedures and in rigorously following the right kind of rules for applying them. In Wolcott’s words, analysis is “the more orderly, less speculative side of data transformation” (p. 26).



Rigorous analysis of the data in this study considered qualitative scholars' (Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Wolcott, 1994) contention that data collection and data analysis is a simultaneous, overlapping process in qualitative research. During the data collection stage I identified and described patterns and themes as they were revealed by the participants. The data was continually organized by categories, reviewed, and coded. Audio taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. The two reviewers verified the data collected and reviewed the analysis of that data which helped minimize researcher's bias and assured quality in the data transformation process.

#### *NVivo Software Analysis*

The data analysis process included the use of the NVivo computer software program designed to help qualitative researchers in the process of coding, linking, shaping, and modeling the data collected. This software supports fluid interpretation and theory emergence. NVivo breaks down the raw data into smaller meaning units and themes; links data and ideas within a project; and allows for immediate access to interpretations and insights. Cox (2004) shares his experience with this software program:

The NVivo software allowed the researcher to input transcribed text and specific themes by identifying keywords. Once all the transcribed interviews were input, the software could then be programmed to identify keywords common to all the interviews. Themes within the transcribed text were identified as a node. The software allows the researcher to specify nodes via attributes specified by the researcher. Once nodes were identified, the NVivo software was able to rapidly link nodes between individual transcribed texts. (p. 92)

The NVivo software was highly recommended to this researcher for use in the analysis stage of the *pendejo* phenomenon dissertation. I took part in a workshop prepared by

University of Puerto Rico professors to acquaint students with the software program. The use of NVivo in this investigation is detailed in Chapter 4.

#### *Data Validation Measures*

*Explorative review* - The explorative review confirmed that the questionnaire-interview questions elicited the information that they were designed for.

*Triangulation* - Triangulation is recognized as an acceptable form of validating qualitative results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yin indicated that “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (p. 97). Triangulation builds checks and balances into a research design by using multiple sources of evidence to increase the strength and rigor of an evaluation and to shed light on the meaning and interpretation of results (Patton, 1987; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

This study used three types of triangulation to produce credible results (Patton, 1987; Yin, 2003):

*Data triangulation* (the use of a variety of data sources in the study) was accomplished utilizing various sources to collect data.

1. Pre-intervention approaches.
2. Explorative review.
3. Auto-biographical Anecdote.
4. The *Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Guide.
5. The direct audio recorded In-depth Interview.
6. Verbatim transcriptions of audio recorded interviews.
7. Follow-up personal or telephone communications.

*Investigator triangulation* (the use of several different evaluators) consisted of three evaluating sources:

1. The primary researcher.
2. The first reviewer.
3. The second reviewer.

*Analytical triangulation* (the use of multiple sources to study a single phenomenon) relied on four data interpretation methods:

1. Primary researcher direct review and interpretation.
2. First reviewer's verification.
3. Second reviewer's verification.
4. NVivo computer qualitative analysis software program.

The data validation methods used in this study allowed for the development of converging lines of inquiry making any finding or conclusion in this case study more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2003). This investigator is committed to the integrity, strength and rigor befitting indigenous phenomena research.

#### Looking Ahead to Analysis

It was anticipated that questions would arise during the analysis process related to how this phenomenon affects people. The assumption was that the *pendejo* phenomenon permeates all kind of relationships, including: family relationships; personal and professional relationships; as well as political interaction with other cultural orientations, more specifically with the Anglo-American culture. The questions would be *how* and *to what extent*.

Even though the study included a sample population of college graduate, upper class men and women, there are indicators that suggest that the phenomenon might be widespread among Puerto Ricans; this is so even in successful, academically advantaged, well-to-do people. In other words, one can fathom that the phenomenon exists across the board for all strata of population. Consequently, results from the study are anticipated to have implications for psychologists working with both economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged people.

The purpose of this research study was to explore and describe the phenomenon to bring to light its existence. Further research projects will expand knowledge about the *pendejo* phenomenon and ensure that all dimensions of the phenomenon are explored. Chapter 4 focuses on the steps taken in the actual process of collecting data and organizes, presents and analyzes the information gathered from study participants following Wolcott's suggestions to stay close to the data and to work with emerging patterns.

## CHAPTER 4:

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter consists of three parts: Introduction, Data Collection, and Data Analysis. The first part, Introduction, acquaints the reader with the specifics of the chapter. The second part, Data Collection, presents the steps taken in the actual process of collecting pertinent in-depth, first-hand information on which the study is based, as well as the manipulation of the data and the procedures for analysis undertaken. The Data Collection section also includes the use of research tools, interview procedures, data review and thematic identification by primary researcher, data and thematic review by external reviewers and the use of NVivo software for qualitative data analysis.

The third part of this chapter, Data Analysis consists of the Presentation and Discussion of Main Categories and Themes, which focuses on organizing, presenting and analyzing the data following Wolcott's (1994) suggestion that "one way of doing something with the data in rendering an account is to stay close to the data as originally recorded" (p. 10). To allow for pattern recognition, this part includes the presentation and discussion of identified main categories, subcategories and related themes gathered from the verbatim transcriptions of the collection of eight in-depth interviews, which were based on participants' transcribed audio taped narratives. These narratives were first gathered from the Autobiographical Anecdotes and in The *Pendejo* Questionnaire.

The second part of Data Analysis involves *Findings Related to the Research Questions* and follows Wolcott's strategy of "exploring relationships among the

categories or discerning critical elements from casual ones,” (1994, p. 24) to allow true analytical instances to occur. Through a conscientious analysis of the data the research questions that guided this study are addressed within an adequate qualitative framework

## Data Collection

### *Use of Research Tools*

Two research tools, the *Autobiographical Anecdote* and *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule* were used at the onset of the interview session to help participants focus on the topic under investigation. In writing the *Autobiographical Anecdote* participants had the opportunity to not only relive one or more of their own *pendejo* experiences but also to bring together contextual details of those experiences. Immediately after writing their *Autobiographical Anecdote*, participants answered *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule* with their relived *pendejo* experiences still fresh in their minds. These two research tools were then used to guide the in-depth, audiotape interview that immediately followed.

### *Interview Procedure*

Eleven people were initially approached by telephone and invited to participate in the *pendejo* study. The pool of 11 candidates was selected through referrals from diverse sources. The telephone conversation followed closely the Spanish version of the *Invitation to Participate in Research* phone script (Appendix D) that includes details about the selection criteria and about interview and permission processes. All of the

candidates expressed that they had been subjected to *pendejo* experiences and all agreed to participate in this study. Eight people were finally selected as participants because they met the selection criteria for this research study as established in chapter 3. Four men and 4 women between the ages of 32 to 45 yrs. were selected. All were middle-to upper-class college graduate Puerto Ricans (Appendix E). The other 3 candidates were excluded due to the fact that even though 2 of them, one male and one female, had completed most of their college courses, they withdrew from the university without receiving their undergraduate diplomas. The other person excluded was a male candidate who met the specifications for selection but due to personal problems regretted not being able to participate. All candidates approached demonstrated an eagerness to be part of this study and were curious about the topic chosen.

The interviews were conducted between June 8 and June 18, 2007. They were handled in a semistructured manner in order to establish a flow of conversation between interviewer and interviewee that, according to Lucca-Irizarry and Berríos-Rivera (2003), helps to better grasp the subjective experiences and the personal impressions of the participants.

All but two interviews were conducted at the researcher's office. The remaining two interviews took place at the researcher's home within a private, quiet environment with no outside interruptions. One of these two interviews was a follow-up from a previous session—originally conducted at the researcher's office—that was cut short in the original audiotape. The interviewee agreed to participate in a second session to recapture the material lost in the first audiotape.

At the beginning of the session and prior to initiating the interview, the researcher provided preliminary details and instructions in Spanish using the phone script as a guide and answered questions as necessary. All participants filled out and returned a signed *Consent Form* (Appendix F), and the *Demographic Inventory Form* (Appendix G). Interviewees were immediately assigned an identification code to ensure confidentiality. The code is a combination of gender-interview number-age and was used to identify all material related to a specific person. Following these formalities, the interview proceeded in an informal, casual way. Participants were encouraged to narrate their *pendejo* anecdotes and the interviewer-researcher asked pertinent, unstructured questions along the way to assure inclusion of all relevant information. After the interviewee finished recounting his-her anecdote, the interviewer utilized a copy of The *Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Guide and began asking the questions outlined allowing for variations as required when answers indicated a need for further elaboration or clarification.

At the end of the interview participants were reminded that a follow-up telephone or e-mail communication might be needed to clarify or complement the information contained in this first interview. They all agreed to cooperate further if needed. As a compensation for their participation in this study interviewees were invited to assist, free of charge, to the Personal Development Workshop where the *pendejo* issue is addressed.



*Data Review and Thematic Identification by Primary Researcher*

To eliminate duplication of information, only the transcribed audio taped interviews were selected for thematic identification and coding processes. It was determined that the written format of both the Autobiographical Anecdote and The *Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Guide provided rudimentary data that was amplified and explained in detail during the in-depth interviews.

To further distinguish among the individual interviews, a fictitious name of Spanish extract was randomly assigned to each of the transcribed documents. The purpose of assigning fictitious names was to provide a more personal way of presenting the participant's stories rather than using the more impersonal gender-interview number-age code originally assigned. Both the fictitious name and the initial code were used for internal identification purposes and to further assure confidentiality.

Since the study pertains to an indigenous issue within a Spanish speaking population, data recollection tools as well as the interviews were conducted in Spanish language. This presented a dilemma in terms of translation due to the fact that the dissertation is written in English for an English speaking audience. To address this problem there was consensus among the dissertation committee members that two of the Spanish audio-taped interviews were to be translated and coded in the English language to allow English speaking committee members to understand and review first hand the investigative work involved (Appendix H). It was agreed that the only Spanish speaking member of the Committee, Dr. Nydia Lucca—who was approved by Walden University as an external committee member from Puerto Rico—was to supervise, review and

approve all of the Spanish written and audio-taped material which forms the bulk of the data collected for this study.

Once the data was collected, all the audio taped interviews were transcribed in Spanish. Two of these transcriptions were then translated into English for the purpose mentioned above. Once the transcription-translation process was completed, I reviewed the material and made annotations to seek similarities and patterns that help to make sense of the collected data. The identification of main categories and themes followed this preliminary review which in turn allowed for the coding of relevant text. The coding process is a necessary step for pattern recognition. An outline of categories and codes (Appendix I), together with the definitions of these categories and themes, both in English and in Spanish (Appendix J) provided a working document that helped identify these categories and themes in the actual transcribed interviews. As working documents, the outlines were modified as needed during the identification of categories and themes process. This preliminary coding system was integrated into the transcribed interviews through the Insert/Comment feature of the Microsoft Word software program.

#### *Data and Thematic Review by External Reviewers*

To allow for analytical triangulation to ascertain the inclusion and the thorough scrutiny of all pertinent data and as a measure to eliminate possible researcher's bias, two identified external reviewers (see chapter 3) provided feedback, made applicable suggestions related to the transcription, translation and subsequent identification and coding of categories and themes and also assisted me, the primary researcher, in the

process of analysis of the data. The reviewers were chosen for this task because of their personal and professional qualifications, their dominion of both the English and the Spanish languages and their first-hand knowledge of the intricacies of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

I developed and coded the necessary categories to be analyzed. This material was then presented to both reviewers to verify the pre-identified categories and suggest other possible categories or make changes that I might have overlooked. Nevertheless, I made the final decision on the categories to be included for analysis.

Prior to receiving study documents, both reviewers underwent training on how to identify and code categories from the transcription of research instruments. They both reviewed all the material presented and made annotations on the pertinent documents which we discussed together afterwards. There was general agreement on the themes and coding that I first identified. Both reviewers suggested elevating *Underlying Emotions* to a main category. Originally Emotions was a subcategory or theme under *Behaviors*. The rationale for this change was that underlying emotions are not observable behavior and can only be inferred through the participant's own accounts.

#### *NVivo Software for Qualitative Data Analysis*

Analysis of qualitative data requires the management of vast amounts of information where the researcher expects to explore and sensitively interpret complex data that builds up from observation, interviewing, review of the literature and other research events. The NVivo software program provides the tools for managing all sorts of

qualitative data to assist researchers in their quest to gain new understanding of a situation or a phenomenon. The use of this research tool provides a third form of qualitative validation.

A project named *The Pendejo Phenomenon* was created in NVivo to hold the information, data, observations and ideas relevant to this research task. The eight interviews that framed this study were imported into the software program as *sources*. These eight sources were then scrutinized and coded closely following the coding exercise done previously under the Insert/Comment prompt in the Microsoft Word documents. These codes were entered as *nodes* in NVivo and texts marked under each node constituted the node *references*. The categories and themes identified by the primary researcher and validated by the two reviewers were entered as *free nodes*.

NVivo offers the option of cataloguing free nodes in trees of categories and subcategories. *Tree nodes* allow for a quick access of a category and allow organizing the data in a logical manner permitting the clarification of concepts, easy recognition within the whole system and the benefit of seeing relationships between the main categories, or *parent nodes* and their subcategories or *child nodes*. This is the reasons behind the selection of six tree nodes representing each one of the main six categories under which all the data was organized. Below is the detailed discussion of the six named tree nodes, or main categories and under each, the subcategories or child nodes.

## Data Analysis

### *Presentation and Discussion of Main Categories and Themes*

A thorough review of the eight transcribed interviews revealed a sizeable amount of important themes that could be grouped together under the following six main categories: Definitions, Assumptions, Underlying Emotions, Behaviors, Propensity, and Consequences. Fifty-two themes or descriptions, out of a total of 98, were selected as relevant or as main themes. This gave way for proper management of substantial amounts of pertinent data extracted from the interviews and follows a strategy recommended by Wolcott (1994) in pursuing analysis.

The traditional ethnographic concern for context, with attention to how things are and how they got that way, must now bow here to a focus on only certain facets and certain relationships among them. The specificity associated with analysis also suggests how to get the process started if it seems too overwhelming: keep breaking down the elements until there are small enough units to invite rudimentary analysis, then begin to build the analysis from there. (p. 30)

The minimum selection criteria for choosing the main categories and themes were those descriptions cited by 5 or more participants (sources), with at least five quotations (references) each. Regarding the first of the research questions, analysis of these main themes provided a more comprehensive understanding of how middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants described their experience of the *pendejo* construct.

All of the participants in this investigation expressed curiosity about the *pendejo* study and manifested that they had never given serious thought to the issue nor had they

approached the subject in a critical manner. This suggests a lack of awareness among actors of the intricacies of the *pendejo* mentality.

The participants offered extensive accounts of their autobiographical anecdotal experiences regarding the *pendejo* phenomenon and were very eloquent when answering the questions of *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Guide* during their respective interviews. They seemed convinced that the *pendejo* exists and all asserted that they have been victims of this happening. Most of them elaborated on one or more instances where they are certain that they were *taken for pendejos*. The demonstrated expressiveness and interest in the topic under investigation made a rich amount of data available which was indicative of a widespread occurrence and allowed for a comprehensive study of the phenomenon under scrutiny. For an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, a detailed description of categories, subcategories and subthemes follows.

#### *Category 1: Definitions*

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003) explains the word *definition* as "the action or the power of describing, explaining or making definite and clear" (p. 327). The purpose of this first category is to describe, explain and make clear the meaning that Puerto Ricans ascribe to the *pendejo* construct. Participants presented their perception of the *pendejo* and elaborated on how this phenomenon impacted their lives. The voices of a selected group of college graduate, native Puerto Ricans provided access to personal vivid accounts that imparted insight about how this group of participants conceptualized, assumed and coped with the *pendejo* phenomenon in their everyday life.

The *Definitions* category consists of three main parts or subcategories: What is it?, Connotative Meaning and Characteristics. Graphically, this main category can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 1. Each part allows for a closer look at the *pendejo* phenomenon through significant personal narratives.

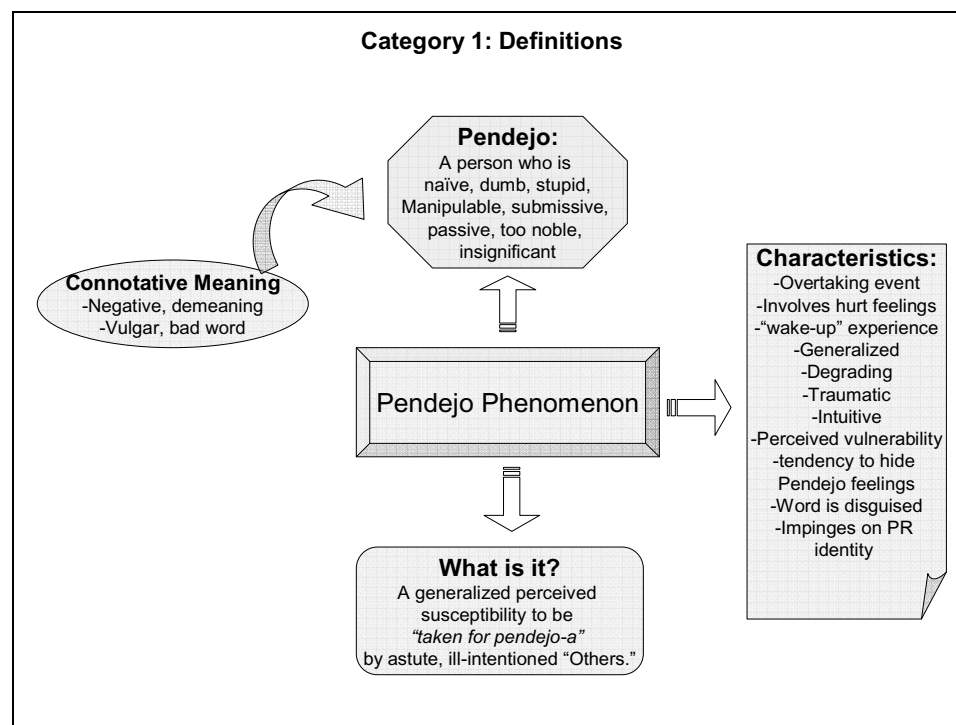


Figure 1. Participants' conceptualization of the *pendejo* phenomenon

### *What is it?*

The first question in The *Pendejo* Questionnaire is: Define the concept "*pendejo*." In other words, participants were asked to elaborate on how they conceptualized the word *pendejo* and what meaning they ascribed to this word or

concept. There is great similarity in the way they defined and described what a *pendejo* person is or more likely, who is a *pendejo*. Interviewees also expressed which type of person is likely to “take” others for *pendejos*. [Sources 8; References 33]

*Who is a peñejo?* To Pedro, a *pendejo* is a naïve person with little or no malice. This person “won’t get far ahead in life, does not meet his-her goals, doesn’t even know what he-she wants, or how to succeed.” [*“No llega lejos, no cumple sus metas, no está claro en lo que quiere o cómo lograrlo.”*]

Ana expressed that, “for me a *pendejo* is someone who allows others to take him-her for dumb.” [*“Para mí un peñejo es alguien que permite que lo cojan de bobo.”*] Enid agreed with Ana but added that a *pendejo* is also a person who demeans him-herself before others, someone who is also brutish [deficient intellectual capacity], passive, submissive, stupid, ignorant, and *zángano* [drone, sluggard]. When asked to explain further, Enid indicated the following:

*Enid:* A *zángano*... someone who has no self-identity, someone who cannot think for him-herself, someone who can’t make his-her own decisions because others make the decisions for him-her, hmm...does what...all the time he-she does what others say...and...and does not stand up for him-herself, hmm...others manipulate him-her all the time.

*[Un zángano... alguien que no tiene identidad propia, alguien que no puede razonar por sí propio, alguien que no toma decisiones por sí mismo porque los demás toman decisiones sobre él, este...hace lo...todo el tiempo lo que los demás dicen...y...y no se defiende a sí mismo, este...en todo momento los demás lo manipulan].*

José addressed the issue in similar terms but added that a *pendejo* is a person who can be easily manipulated by others and who can be easily exploited. He manifested that other people with whom he interacts define the *pendejo* the same way.



*José:* Correct, yes, correct. I can tell you that, maybe humm...practically almost everyone or...by everyone I mean those persons, see...with whom...

*[Correcto, sí, correcto. Yo te pueda decir, quizás ehh...prácticamente casi todo el mundo o...todo el mundo me refiero a las personas, verdad...con las que yo...]*

*Re:* Yes, with whom you get together, with whom you interact.

*[Sí, con las que te juntas, con las que interactúas.]*

*José:* Well, look...they, they define the word *pendejo* the same way that I define it, with the same feeling, that is, “they are trying to take me for a ride”, “they are taking me for, humm...for dumb”, I mean, there are so many things that...

*[Pues, mira...me, me definen la palabra pendejo con la misma definición que lo tengo yo, en la misma sensación, o sea, “me están queriendo tomar el pelo”, “me están queriendo, ehh...tomar de tonto”, o sea, son muchas cosas que...]*

Luis agreed with his coparticipants when he interpreted the *pendejo* as a brutish (in terms of lack of intelligence) person who submits to manipulation and who allows others to take advantage of him-her. Nora felt the same way too, but added the words inexperience, innocent, noble and humble to the various descriptions presented so far. For Omar, the *pendejo* is a person that has no value nor is respected by others. To the long list of descriptors mentioned above, Rita saw a *pendejo* as a puppet or marionette and added: easygoing, lack of self-control, low self-esteem, lack of analyzing skills and/or thinking capacity, and the inability to say NO.

In general terms, participants described a *pendejo* as someone who is naïve, with little or no malice; a person who amounts to little, and who doesn't know what he-she wants. It refers to a person who is dumb, stupid, *zángano*, brutish, ignorant, submissive and compliant, demeaned, conformist, passive, and easygoing. A *pendejo* is also seen as someone who is easily manipulated—a puppet-like figure—who allows others to make

decisions and to take advantage of him-her. In addition, a *pendejo* is also described as a person who is noble or too good, with little or no capacity for self-criterion, with a low self-esteem, and with little sense of self-respect and self-worth. This kind of person has little or no sense of self-identity, and is not capable of standing up for his-her rights.

Considering the summary of descriptions mentioned above, taken from the participants' own words, a *pendejo* is the portrayal of a nonentity, an insignificant human being.

*Who is a person capable of taking others for pendejo?* Participants envisioned a person who is out to take others for *pendejo* in their own particular ways. Following are excerpts of their descriptions.

*Pedro*: “Humm... I wrote here: Witty, toady, nondedicated or ambitious people.”

*[“Ehh...yo puse aquí: Listos, vividores, personas poco dedicadas, o personas ambiciosas.”]*

*Enid*: “A person who lies, who is not clear in what he-she is saying and tries to take me for a ride, well...this is the way I determine when someone is trying to take me for a *pendejo*.”

“I say that they are insensible people, who are out to do you harm.”

*[“Una persona que miente, que no es clara en lo que está diciendo, y trata de pasarse de listo, pues...es como yo determino que me está tratando de coger de pendejo.”]*

*“Yo digo que son personas inconscientes, que te quieren hacer daño realmente.”]*

*Luis*: “[People] who elaborate too much.” *[“[Personas] que elaboran mucho.”]*

Omar: “The *pendejos*...including the connotation that I give to a *pendejo*. Well, it’s a person who does not value others, nor values him-herself, who does not respect others nor has any self-respect...humm, what for me is, well, as I told you a while ago was the connotation of a *pendejo*.”

[“*Los peñejos...con la connotación que yo le doy a un peñejo. Pues, una persona que ni valore, si se valore a sí mismo, ni respete ni se tenga respeto a sí misma...ehh, lo que para mí, pues como ahorita mencioné que era lo que para mí era la connotación de...de...de un peñejo.*”]

In sum, people who are capable of “taking others for *pendejos*” were depicted as insensible, ambitious, witty, toady, wicked nontransparent liars, who are out to do you harm and to “take you for a ride”. This is a person who does not value and shows no respect for others.

*How do people “caen de peñejo” [fall for peñejos]?* In this subcategory participants provided their personal definitions of very common *pendejo*-related phrases in Puerto Rican lexicon: *Coger de peñejo* [take for *pendejo*], *caer de peñejo* [fall as a *pendejo*], *me quiere coger de peñejo* [he-she wants to take me for *pendejo*], and *se cree que soy un peñejo* [he-she believes that I am a *pendejo*] (these phrases are included in question # 3 of The *Pendejo* Questionnaire). Their answers provided information on the subtleties of the phenomenon and provided clues about the dynamics underlying this happening.

Pedro expressed that a person *cae de peñejo* when he-she “accepts arguments and decides—with only very limited information—to do something that is detrimental to...to him-her.” [*acepta argumentos y decide—con la información limitada que tiene, ante sí—hacer algo detrimental para...para él.*”] Pedro also explained the meaning of

the phrases *coger de pendejo* and *caer de pendejo*. To Pedro a person becomes a *pendejo* when he-she allows others to take him for a fool.

*Pedro*: To *take for pendejo* is like... fooling someone. And to *fall as a pendejo*, I was fooled.

*[En coger de pendejo es como engañar a alguien...engañar. Y caer de pendejo, me engañaron.]*

The phrase *me quieren coger de pendejo* [someone is trying to take me for a *pendejo*], in Pedro's own words, refers to "a person... any person who is proposing something that makes no sense or that is not reasonable at all." [*“una persona...Alguna persona que está ofreciéndome algo que no tiene sentido o que no es razonable.”*] Likewise, Pedro interpreted the phrase "*se cree que soy pendejo*" ["he-she believes that I am *pendejo*"] the following way:

*Pedro*: "It is a person who thinks that I am naïve, because he-she is suggesting something that is absurd. In this case, well...one already suspects, right, that someone is out to take you for a *pendejo*."

*[“Esa persona que piensa que soy ingenuo, porque me está proponiendo algo absurdo. En ese caso pues...ya uno sospecha, verdad, que alguien lo quiere coger de pendejo.”]*

Ana believed that people are taken for *pendejos* because they permit it.

*Ana*: The clue here is that the person allows...the person allows something like this to happen.

*[Es el que la persona permita, es la clave ahí...la persona permite que ocurra la situación.]*

*Re*: In other words, you are the one who facilitates things...

*[O sea, que tú eres la que facilitas que eso pase...]*

Ana: Exactly, yes.

[*Exacto, sí.*]

Enid understood that people are taken for *pendejos* when they act stupid or dumb. This allows for others to be disrespectful. She expressed this in the following way: “Hey, I don’t have to show you any respect...I can dupe you whenever I want to, because, well, you do not deserve any respect...” [*Ándale, no tengo que respetarte...te puedo tomar el pelo cuando me dé la gana, porque, pues, tú no te mereces respeto...*]. Enid also identified when someone is trying to take her for *pendejo* “when they lie to me, when they are not clear” [*cuando me mienten, cuando no son claros.*].

Asked to elaborate on the phrases “*coger de pendejo,*” “*caer de pendejo,*” and “*soy un pendejo,*” José answered:

José: Ok, to *take for a pendejo*, is to take advantage of... of someone, to be disrespectful to someone. To *fall for a pendejo*, someone is disrespectful to me, someone puts me down. That was the definition that... truly...matches the... what I thought.

[*OK, en “coger de pendejo”, aprovecharme de...de alguien, faltarle el respeto a alguien. “Caer de pendejo”, alguien me falta el respeto a mí, alguien me falla a mí. Esa fue la definición que...verdad...de acuerdo a la...a lo que pensé.*]

Re: Well and [what about]...the phrase... *I am a pendejo?*

[*Bien, ¿y...la frase... “soy un pendejo”...?*]

José: When I allow that they do with me whatever they want (laughs).

[*Cuando permito que hagan de mí lo que otros quieren (ríe).*]

To Rita, a person is *taken for pendejo* “when someone close or a stranger, tries to do things to you that you do not consent to, or are able to make you yield or direct you to

what they want from you.” [*“Cuando alguien cercano a ti intenta hacerte hacer cosas que no quieres, o logran hacerte caer o dirigirte hacia lo que ellos quieren de ti.”*].

When asked what is a *pendejo* to you? Rita offered the following explanation:

*Rita:* Ay...a *pendejo* to me is “like this person” that doesn’t have his-her own criteria...

*[Ay...un pendejo para mí es ésta única persona que no tiene criterio propio...]*

*Re:* That doesn’t have his-her own criteria...

*[Que no tiene criterio propio...]*

*Rita:* That does not have much...who is not immersed in knowledge, in other words, who does not search to be in touch with what is surrounding him-her...who is blind on many occasions. Who doesn’t look to analyze things further. Simply, well because you say so, I believe it...

*[Que no tiene mucho...no se empapa de conocimiento o sea, no busca crecer no busca estar al tanto de lo que pueda estar rodeada, o rodeado...es simplemente ciego en muchas ocasiones. No...no busca analizar más allá las cosas. Simplemente, pues porque como tú se lo dices, te lo creo.]*

### *Connotative Meaning*

*Negative connotation.* Participants agreed on the negative connotation of a *pendejo* experience. Five out of 8 subjects mentioned that they see the experience as an attempt against their sense of capacity, respect and/or dignity. Seven out of 8 participants manifested one or more of the following sentiments: feeling ignorant, degraded, manipulated, ignored and/or insignificant. Their responses allowed for a glimpse of deep wounds resulting from a *pendejo* experience.

*An attempt against capacity, respect and/or dignity.* Pedro, Enid, José, Omar and Rita all expressed indignation because they felt demeaned by people who they ascertained were taking them or took them for *pendejos*. The following narratives are excerpts that represent their complaints. When asked about, *what connotation does the word pendejo have for you?* Enid answered: “Well, it is a lack of respect, it is humiliating, it is of bad taste. [*Pues, es una falta de respeto, es humillante, de mal gusto.*] In fact, Enid placed at the root of this manifestly degrading experience, a lack of respect and the insinuation that one is ignorant.

*Enid:* This happens when there is a lack of respect, humm... towards the... the person. And at that moment we are tricking him-her, we are trying to deceive or to stifle him-her.

That is, to me this is what *to take someone for pendejo* means. Because a respectable person does not treat you as...a stupid, as an ignorant when [you know] you are not.

*[Es cuando no se respeta este...a...a la persona. Y en ese momento lo estamos como engañando, lo tratamos de engañar o fastidiarlo. Más que nada, par mí es como una falta de respeto.*

*O sea, para mí eso es coger a alguien de pendejo. Porque una persona respetable no te está tratando de...como un estúpido, como un ignorante cuando tú no lo eres.]*

Rita interpreted a *pendejo* act as an attempt against her personhood. She admitted that, at a moment when she was sure she had been taken for *pendejo*, Rita saw herself as “a girl without a sense of self... like blind.” As Enid, Rita reflected the sentiments of a majority of those participating in this study. This is evident in the following excerpts taken from her interview.

Re: You don't like the *pendeja*.

*[A ti no te gusta la pendeja.]*

Rita: NOOOOO! [laughter]... No way! Honestly no way, no way.

*[¡NOOOOO...!... [risas]... ¡Para nada! Honestamente para nada, para nada.]*

Re: Do you believe that the fact that someone takes you for a *pendejo*, is an assault on your dignity, on your sense of self-respect, on your capacity as a person?

*[¿Crees que el que te cojan de pendeja, es un atentado a tu dignidad, a tu sentido de respeto, a tu capacidad como persona?]*

Rita: Yes totally. Because it's denigrating... it's ... to try to put... I visualize it as though someone tried to crush my face on the ground.

*[Sí, totalmente. Porque es denigrante... es... es tratar de poner... Yo lo visualizo como si me trataran de poner la cara en el piso.]*

Re: In other words, that...you don't have... they see you... or you feel that...

*[O sea, que... no tienes... te ven... o tú misma te sientes que...]*

Rita: They see me as weak...

*[Me ven débil...]*

Re: Is it like assault?

*[¿Es cómo un atentado?]*

Rita: It makes me weak...

*[Me hacen débil.]*

Re: That it is why it is an assault on you feeling of dignity.

*[Por eso, es un atentado a tú dignidad...]*

Rita: Yes, yes... yes.

*[Sí, sí...sí.]*



Re: To your sense of self-respect...

*[¿A tú sentido de respeto?]*

Rita: Yes, yes.

*[Sí, sí.]*

Re: Your self-respect, right, your capacities as a person.

*[¿A tú respeto propio...y a tus capacidades como persona?]*

Rita: Yes, yes... they are underestimating you, totally... totally. It's denigrating.

*[Sí, sí... me están menospreciando, por completo... por completo. Es denigrarme.]*

The perceived assault on one's sense of dignity, capacity and self-respect is an attempt against these deep-rooted values ingrained in the Puerto Rican culture (Díaz-Royo, 1974). The expressions of the participants purport the indignation they felt in what they interpreted as a *pendejo* experience. In a metaphoric way Rita summed this happening as "though someone tried to crush my face on the ground".

*Feeling ignorant, degraded, manipulated, used, ignored and/or insignificant.*

Participants in this study mentioned that to *take a person for pendejo* implies that the victim is regarded as ignorant, insignificant and can be degraded, manipulated, used, and ignored. Results make the consequential negative impact on the *pendejo* victim's sensibility evident. The significant number of participants that mentioned these feelings evidenced how a *pendejo* incident is seen as an affront to the victim of such an act. The participants own narratives speak for themselves. Below are some typical examples of these narratives.

When asked what a *pendejo* act implies, Nora indicated that it implies an underrating of the person.

Re: In other words, that... that a person who is a *pendejo*, or who feels *pendeja* at any time, is something that is...

*[O sea, que... que una persona que es pendeja, o que se siente pendeja en un momento dado, es algo que es...]*

Nora: Not good... negative... and...it is like underrating the person.

*[No bueno... negativo... y... es como menospreciar a la persona.]*

Re: Underrating?

*[¿Menospreciante?]*

Nora: Uhum.

*[Ujú].*

Omar used the word *insignificant* to describe how he feels when people *take you for a peñejo*.

Re: A person who amounts to little?

*[¿Una persona que es poca cosa?]*

Omar: That amounts to little, yes. Insignificant... a *pendejo*, it is like they say, “a *pendejito*” [a minuscule *pendejo*].

*[Que es poca cosa, sí. Insignificante...un peñejo, como dicen, “un peñejito...”.]*

Re: Uhummm...

*[Ajá...]*

*Omar:* That amounts to nothing, who is... who is like a nobody.

*[Que no significa nada, que no...que no es nadie.]*

Rita mentioned that for her the word *pendejo* has a very negative connotation because it means underrating and degrading another person. She admitted that “yes, yes, it is denigrating. That... that... a person tells you ‘you are a *pendejo*’ is to try to push you to the floor [put you down].” [*“Sí, sí es denigrante. Al... al... que una persona te diga ‘tú eres un pendejo’ es tratar de ponerte a ti por el piso.”*]. Rita added that she felt manipulated when asked about her feelings following the *pendejo* incident she described in the Autobiographical Anecdote.

*Re:* In other words, a person who was... who had been manipulated and who allowed herself to be manipulated?

*[¿Una persona que estaba... que había sido manipulada y se dejó manipular... en otras palabras?]*

*Rita:* Yes, yes, yes, yes... I saw myself that way. I saw myself as a puppet.

*[Sí, sí, sí, sí...me vi así. Me vi como a un títere.]*

*Re:* A marionette?

*[¿Una marioneta?]*

*Rita:* Yes, yes, yes, honestly, yes.

*[Sí, sí, sí, honestamente, sí.]*

These excerpts are but examples of the very negative connotations that participants ascribed to the *pendejo* word, based on their own *pendejo* experiences. The participant’s patent descriptions show the likely detrimental effect on the self-perception of people who see themselves as victims of this phenomenon.

*Vulgar connotation.* In Puerto Rico the word *pendejo* is considered to be a bad or vulgar word, more so among the older generations and among the more educated, upper class population. It is common among Puerto Ricans to camouflage or substitute the *pendejo* word with more acceptable utterances like *tonto* [dumb], *zángano*, and *pendango*. This happening was validated by the majority of the participants in the study. José, Luis and Pedro's expressions mentioned below, are representative of those participants who expressed themselves on this topic.

José indicated that he has never heard the word on television, while Luis admitted that he usually camouflages the *pendejo* word and stated that, “due to the fact that this word is classified as ‘bad’, then you don’t hear people say... I mean, when talking among fellow employees, well, especially if you are among women or something like that.”

[“Como es una palabra clasificada ‘mala’, pues no oyes decir... o sea, estás hablando entre empleados, pues, especialmente si estás con mujeres o algo así.”]. Pedro’s argument was consistent with the vulgar connotation attributed to the *pendejo* word.

Re: Even when the word *pendejo* is a word that traditionally has been considered...

[Aún cuando la palabra *pendejo* es una palabra que tradicionalmente ha sido considerada...]

Pedro: A bad word.

[Mala palabra.]

Re: A bad, vulgar word?

[¿Una mala palabra, vulgar?]

*Pedro:* Yes.

[*Sí.*]

*Re:* Is it usually camouflaged?

[*¿Se disfraza muchas veces?*]

*Pedro:* Yes... yes... Yes that is correct, and when I say that... that it is heard frequently, not always the word *pendejo* is the word that is heard.

[*Sí...sí... Sí eso es correcto, y cuando digo que... que se oye frecuentemente, no siempre es la palabra pendejo la que se oye.*]

To reinforce what he expressed above, Pedro added: “Exactly... and... and *pendejo* is what the person wants to say and would be saying, but in an environment where one should not utter vulgar words, well, he-she camouflages it.” [*“Exactamente... y... y pendejo es lo que la persona quiere decir y estaría diciendo, pero al estar en un ámbito en donde no se debe hablar vulgarmente, pues, lo disfraza.”*]

These results validate what is commonly accepted among Puerto Ricans: that the *pendejo* word has a vulgar connotation in Puerto Rico.

### *Characteristics*

Participants offered a number of descriptions that provide insight about the components of the *pendejo* phenomenon. Out of a total of 21 characteristics, 12 complied with the required minimum selection criteria of five sources and five references. Five of these selected 12 characteristics were pointed out by all of the participants; the other seven were mentioned by the majority of the interviewees (see Appendix H). Following

is the list of the 12 main characteristics describing the *pendejo*, including excerpts representative of the participants' comments.

To the participants the *pendejo* is:

1. An *overtaking event*, which “grabs” the person by surprise (you “get caught”, you are “taken”) [Sources: 8; references: 68].

Re: You [mean] you are more exposed... [that] you need to be constantly, practically...?

*[¿Estás más expuesto... tienes que estar constantemente, prácticamente...?]*

Nora: On the alert.

*[Alerta].*

Re: On the alert. Is this what you are telling me?

*[Alerta, ¿Eso es lo que tú me quieres decir?]*

Nora: Yes. We need to be very careful.

*[Sí. Hay que tener más cuidado.]*

Re: We need to be very careful?

*[¿Hay que tener más cuidado?]*

Nora: Because... there are many crazy people out on the street.

*[Porque... hay muchos locos en la calle.]*

Re: You mean, that... that... no matter what, you see it as... for you it is like a threat.

*[O sea, que...que... como quiera que sea, tú lo ves como...para ti es como una... como una amenaza.]*

Nora: Yes. They are out to catch you...

*[Sí. Que te quieren coger...]*

Re: That they are out to catch you at any moment?

*[¿Que te pueden coger en cualquier momento?]*

Nora: They sway you very easy. They might convince you very easily. Many people... I think that many people get caught. But there are people that... well, they seem to like it, and they continue, well... each one does his-her own thing. To me this is: “They *caught* me as a *pendejo!*”

*[Tuve la experiencia de que... No me llegaron a coger, pero... es...este... te convencen bien fácil. Puede ser que te convenzan bien fácilmente. Mucha gente... yo pienso que mucha gente cae. Pero hay gente que... pues, le gusta, y siguen, pues... cada cual con lo suyo. Para mí eso es: “¡Me cogieron de pendejo!]*

2. *A learning experience, a wake-up incident.* Once a person undergoes a *pendejo* experience it turns into a learning experience that will help people be aware so as not to *get caught* again. [Sources 8; References 35]

Ana: And then, well, I... like I say... well one resurrects on the third day. I allow myself to feel the depression, but after a reasonable time, I mean, or also during this time, I am doing things that allow me to overcome it... because this is really a learning process. Sometimes when they take you for *pendejo*, well, there is a positive side ... to this, because you are learning a lesson.

*[Y entonces, pues, yo... como yo digo... pues uno resucita al tercer día. Yo me deajo sentir la depresión, pero después de un tiempo razonable, o sea, o durante ese tiempo también, yo estoy haciendo cosas que me permitan superarlo... porque todo es un proceso de aprendizaje. A veces cuando te cogen de pendejo pues hay un lado positivo... en eso, porque estás aprendiendo una lección.]*

José: So I don't feel good about myself. Well because this happened, and I allowed myself to be “taken” [for *pendejo*]. Then, that is why, hmm...for upcoming occasions one tries to identify... well by then, one is more alert.]

*[Pues yo no me siento bien conmigo mismo. Pues porque pasó y pues, me dejé coger. Por eso entonces es que, eh... en las próximas ocasiones uno trata de identificar... pues entonces uno está más alerta.]*

*Rita:* I can tell you that in that moment... up to that moment I thought that... I presumed that everybody was good, and that everybody worked for the common good. After that event [the *pendejo* event]... BOOM... I woke up!]

*[Yo te puedo decir que en aquel momento... hasta aquel momento yo pensaba que... tenía como fundamento que todo el mundo era bueno, y que todo el mundo obraba por bien. Después de ese suceso [de peñejo]... ¡BOOM... desperté!]*

3. A generalized occurrence in Puerto Rican's discourse. All participants agreed that the word *pendejo*, or allusions to this concept, is a common and frequently used construct in Puerto Rican *tête-à-tête*. In the participant's own words, *pendejo*-related expressions occur everywhere, at anytime during normal everyday conversation [Sources 8; References 32].

*Re:* How frequently do you observe these phrases, the ones we just mentioned, right, in the everyday discourse of Puerto Ricans?

*[¿Cuán frecuente tú observas estas frases, las que hablamos ahora, verdad, en el discurso común del puertorriqueño?]*

*Luis:* I would say everyday.

*[Yo diría todos los días.]*

*Re:* Everyday. You mean this is frequent?

*[¿Todos los días. O sea, que es frecuente?]*

*Luis:* Frequent, yes... yes.

*[Frecuente, sí... sí.]*

*Nora:* You know that this is an everyday word.

*[Tú sabes que eso es una palabra diaria.]*



Re: An everyday word... a word that...

*[Es una palabra diaria... una palabra de...]*

Nora: Yes. And not necessarily... it is... you know, that “they took you for a *pendejo*”, instead this is something... that they use... with much liberty. You know, even if it goes or not with the occasion... they keep on inserting... you know... the *pendejo* always comes up.

*[Sí. Y no necesariamente... es... cabe, tú sabes, que “te cogieron de pendejo”, sino es algo... lo usan muy... con mucha libertad. Tú sabes, vaya con la ocasión o no vaya... siguen metiendo... tú sabes... el pendejo siempre aparece].*

4. *Relies on self-perception and intuition.* This is based mainly on mind-reading, the six- sense, and interpretation of nonverbal cues. All participants admitted that they rely on their perception and on their intuitive skills to detect when someone is trying to “take them for *pendejos*”. They all gave their intuitive potential absolute credence, and insisted on the veracity of their assessment even after the culprit insisted that this was not the intended behavior. [Sources 8; References 29]

Re: How do you identify... before we continue... uhum... [that the other person] “took you for *pendejo*”, or is out to “take you for *pendejo*”?

*[¿Cómo tú identificas... antes que nada... ajá... [que la otra persona] te tomó de pendejo, o te quiere tomar de pendejo?]*

Nora: If he-she has done this before... I don’t know, sometimes one has bad vibes.

*[Si lo ha hecho antes... se... no sé, a veces uno tiene unas malas vibraciones.]*

Re: Bad vibes?

*[¿Unas malas vibraciones?]*

Nora: Yes.

*[Sí.]*

Re: Like an intuition?

*[¿Es algo como una intuición?]*

Nora: Uhum... sixth sense.

*[Ujú... sexto sentido.]*

Re: Sixth sense, OK.

*[Sexto sentido, OK.]*

Rita: Yes, due to the fact that one starts observing some signs... you know, in the other person. In the way she treats you, in how he talks, in the... the... the... Oh, the pat on your back when, well, she doesn't even look at you or... or even speaks to you, that is... and you say: "Damn... where is he coming from?" I mean...

*[Sí, dado el caso de que uno ya ve como algunos indicios... ya sabes, en la persona. En el trato, en cómo le habla, en el... el... el... la pasadita de mano en la espalda, cuando, pues, ni te miran o... o ni tan siquiera te hablan, o sea... Y tu dices: "coño... ¿por donde vienen?" O sea...]*

Re: Even though... even though they haven't told you anything, you are... you are sure... about this...?

*[¿Aunque... aunque no te han dicho nada, tú te... tú te sientes segura... de eso...?]*

Rita: Yes, yes.

*[Sí, sí.]*

Re: About what you are assuming?

*[¿...de eso que tú estás asumiendo?]*

Rita: Yes, yes... yes. Or in some instances, well... in the... in the way that they speak or how they tell you. Because, well, there are people that are very careful not to tell you upfront or verbally, well... "You are a *pendeja!*" But in the manner that they speak, whether in their tone of voice or... or in the words they use, it creates a

certain... this certain feeling of “wait... this person believes that I am a *pendeja*” [laughter]. I mean, you know... Hello!

*[Sí, sí...sí. O en algunas ocasiones, este... con la... con la manera en que te hablan o lo que te dicen. Porque, pues, hay personas que son muy cuidadosas en no decírtelo de frente ni verbalmente, este... “¡Tú eres una pendeja!”. Pero en la manera en que te hablan, sea en el tono de voz o... o las palabras que utilicen, te crea esa cierta... ese cierto feeling de “espérate... éste se cree que yo soy una pendeja” [risa]. O sea, sabes... Hello!]*

5. *The word pendejo is often disguised.* Mainly due to the notion that this word is considered to be vulgar or a bad in Puerto Rico it is often disguised and substituted by more socially accepted words. This characteristic avails the vulgar connotation already mentioned above. Even though participants may hear or utter other substitute words, they all agreed that it is the word *pendejo* they are referring to. As Puerto Ricans they concurred, and seemed to have no doubt, about the collective meaning of the *pendejo* word be it explicit or implicit. [Sources 8; References 19]

Re: But is it understood?

*[¿Pero se sobreentiende?]*

Pedro: Yes... but...

*[Sí... pero...]*

Re: That it is disguised?

*[¿Que se está disfrazando?]*

Pedro: Exactly. For example, in front of my daughter I do not mention [the word] *pendejo*... I rather say *menso*.

*[Exacto. Por ejemplo, yo con mi nena no digo pendejo... yo digo “menso”.]*

Re: *Menso*, uhum...OK.

*[Menso, ajá...muy bien.]*

*Pedro:* [Laughs openly] But I am talking about the *pendejo*.

*[[Ríe abiertamente] Pero estoy hablando de pendejo].*

*Re:* OK... well... I don't know if you have heard the word *pendango*...

*[Ajá... este... no sé si tú has oído la palabra “pendango”...]*

*Pedro:* Yes... uhum.

*[Sí... ujú.]*

*Re:* *Zángano*... Well...

*[“Zángano”... este...]*

*Pedro:* Yes.

*[Sí.]*

*Re:* Do you mean that it can be disguised with other words, but...?

*[O sea, se puede disfrazar con otras palabras, pero...]*

*Pedro:* Yes.

*[Sí.]*

*Re:* Are you sure that what this person refers to is [to the word] *pendejo*?

*[... tú estás claro de que lo que esa persona se refiere es a pendejo.]*

*Pedro:* Exactly... and... and *pendejo* is what the person wants to say and would say, but because the person is in a situation where one should not speak vulgarly, well, then [the word *pendejo*] is disguised.]

*[Exactamente...y... pendejo es lo que la persona quiere decir y estaría diciendo, pero al estar en un ámbito en donde no se debe hablar vulgarmente, pues se disfraza.]*

*Luis:* Well in-between lines it... it is understood but most of the time the word is not uttered as such.

*[Pues entrelíneas se... se entiende pero que no se dice la palabra como tal muchas veces.]*

Re: You mean... sometimes they say it, but... many times...

*[O sea... a veces sí se dice, pero... pero muchas veces...]*

Luis: Yes, yes... not... it is not... the word as such, but, to what it refers to... well yes it is... it is...

*[Sí, sí... no...no se... la palabra como tal, pero, a la referencia a... pues sí se...se...]*

Re: And... and when this happens, you sure that what they refer to is to the word *pendejo*?

*[Y...y cuando eso pasa, tú estás seguro que lo que se están refiriendo es a la palabra *pendejo*.]*

Luis: Yes, yes, yes... yes.]

*[Sí, sí, sí... sí.]*

6. *Impinges on Puerto Ricans' cultural fiber and sense of identity.* This description includes a perceived ingrained tendency to label Puerto Ricans as *pendejos* and to the use of the concept as a self-referent. Almost all participants made expressions that indicate this strong identification with the *pendejo* concept and how deeply it intertwines with the participant's cultural fiber and sense of identity. [Sources 7; References 30]

Omar's statement that "this word is part of us, it is the rice and beans [of Puerto Ricans]" and his assertion that "it is deeply ingrained" in this population coincided with the arguments presented by almost all of the participants. José's words summarized what others declared as valid.

Re: That is, in this case you would say, for example that... that Puerto Ricans are pre... predisposed to be taken for *pendejos*?

*[O sea, en este caso ¿tú dirías, por ejemplo que... que los puertorriqueños estamos pro... propensos a que nos cojan de pendejós?]*

José: I would say yes... I would say yes. That, well, ehh... I believe that this is something ehh... that has to do with the people, to say it in other words. I believe that... that the expression *take for pendejo* is related to the people. This is something really, ehh... no matter where the person lives, whether it is an extremely wealthy urbanization, or in an extremely simple house, ehh... I believe that the word *pendejo*, and *coger de pendejo*, and *tomar de pendejo*", well, it is generalized to all... to all the people, this is truly so.

*[Yo diría que sí... yo diría que sí. Que, pues, ehh... yo creo que esto es algo ehh... de... de pueblo, por decirlo así. Yo creo que la... la expresión "coger de pendejo" es algo de pueblo. Es algo realmente, ehh... no importa donde viva la persona, sea una urbanización extremadamente cara, o sea en una casita extremadamente sencilla, ehh... yo creo que la palabra pendejo, y "coger de pendejo", y "tomar de pendejo", pues, es generalizada en todo... en todo el pueblo, de verdad que sí.]*

Re: This is why... you... are you familiarized, have you heard the phrase, or have even used the phrase: "Oh, it's that we Puerto Ricans are *pendejos*... we are so *pendejos*!"?

*[Por eso... tú... ¿tú estás familiarizado, has oído esa frase, o inclusive has utilizado esa frase: "Ah, es que los puertorriqueños somos pendejós... ¡somos tan pendejós!"?]*

José: Well, there have been occasions, ehh... I think, for example, well yes, yes I have used [this expression] and some time ago, while talking with a woman doctor ehh... well, that she also works for... for... well, specifically looking after families' welfare, I mean... she was telling me about a study to be conducted here in Puerto Rico... they were going to... I think at the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus that is promoting [this investigation] regarding a new... a new contraceptive and... and... when I heard this, I said to myself: "We [Puerto Ricans] are really a bunch of *pendejos*, we truly are!"

*[Pues, en ocasiones ehh... pienso, por ejemplo, pues que sí, sí la he utilizado y hace un tiempo atrás, hablando con una doctora ehh... pues, que también trabaja para... para... pues, buscando el bienestar de la familia específicamente, este... me estuvo contando de un estudio que se va a celebrar aquí en Puerto Rico... se*

*va a estar... creo que de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Ciencias Médicas, es el que está promocionándolo con respecto a una nueva... a un nuevo contraceptivo y... y... cuando yo escuché eso, yo dije: "Es que nosotros somos unos pendejos, de verdad que sí".]*

Re: This means that you... you too have used this phrase.

*[O sea, que tú... tú inclusive, has utilizado esa frase.]*

José: Yes... because really, eh... when, when we as a people, in this sense, allow ourselves to be trampled upon... well here is the word, that, really... I have to say that we are truly *pendejos*.

*[Sí... porque realmente, eh... cuando, cuando realmente nosotros como pueblo, en ese sentido, nos dejamos someter... que aquí está la palabra, pues, realmente... de verdad tengo que decir que somos unos pendejos.]*

Re: Would you say that the word *pendejo* here in Puerto Rico goes beyond a mere definition, can it be a feeling too?

*[Tú dirías que la palabra pendejo aquí en Puerto Rico va más allá de una definición. ¿Es una sensación también?]*

José: That's correct, yes... yes, this is truly so, this is truly so. This is truly so, I mean, this is the way I feel... it is the way they make me feel, and also, if the person that you understand that is *taking you for pendejo* mentions this up front, well he-she is only corroborating what you probably thought, or felt.]

*[Es correcto, sí...sí, la verdad que sí, la verdad que sí. De verdad que sí, o sea, es como me siento... es como me hicieron sentir, e inclusive, si la persona la cual tú entiendes que te está cogiendo de pendejo te lo dice directamente, pues entonces te está confirmando lo que quizás tú pensaste, o sentiste.]*

7. *There are various meanings and degrees of pendejos.* There are different kinds of *cogidas de pendejo* or *pendejo* experiences. All except one participant mentioned these distinctions. Usually to be *taken for pendejo* has a strong negative connotation, but there are occasions where being *taken for a pendejo* has a positive intention including a pleasant surprise or a term of endearment. In this sense participants distinguished

between positive and negative experiences, even though being *taken for pendejo* implies the certainty of a deceiving act. [Sources 7; References 14]

*Re:* So, there are different degrees of *pendejos*...

*[O sea, que hay distintos grados de pendejo... (risas).]*

*Enid:* Yes, there are different degrees. There is maybe the one that makes you brutally angry lik[e]... “[he-she] took me for a *pendejo*”, but this is shocking, it opens wounds, it really hurts and... [there are other instances when] you can also say “this person took me for a *pendejo*” but... but it is something that you can let go because it is just a silly thing, but... and it goes away, and you can relax and even laugh at it.]

*[Sí, hay distintos grados. Hay quizás el que te da un coraje brutal porque com... "me cogió de pendeja", pero es algo que te choca, que te hiere, que te duele de verdad y...puedes decir "este me cogió de pendeja pero...pero es algo que pasa porque es una tontería, pero...y pasa, y tú lo coges relax y hasta te puedes reír.]*

8. *Concealment of pendejo feelings.* People tend to conceal the feeling and the certainty that they were *taken for pendejos* or that *they are pendejos*. Participants expressed that they preferred not to exteriorize their feelings after a *pendejo* episode. To them this was something that they did not publicize. There seemed to be a sense of shame and self-doubt about the possibility of really being a *pendejo* after all. Luis and Omar were very eloquent about this tendency to keep private any *pendejo* inkling. [Sources 7; References 11]

*Luis:* Oh no, no, this here... he did not find out... he did not find out... my wife did not find out either... I didn't tell her. You know? In occasions like this, if you tell everyone... well, then more and more people will believe that you are a *pendejo*. It is better to keep quiet and [laughter]...

*[Ah no, no, ahí eso...no se enteró... no se enteró...la esposa mía no se enteró tampoco... No se lo dije. ¿Sabes? En estas cosas así, tú se lo dices a todo el mundo... pues entonces más gente y más gente se creen que tú eres un pendejo. Mejor te quedas callao y [risas]...]*



Re: You better keep quiet so that other people will not find out what a *pendejo* you were?

*[¿Mejor te quedas callao pa' que la gente no se entere de lo pendejo que tú fuiste? [risas].]*

Luis: Yes, yes! At a moment like this, well, you are better off if you keep quiet...]

*[¡Sí, sí! En ese momento, pues, mejor uno se queda callao...]*

Omar: What happens is that one goes overboard to justify...

*[Lo que pasa es que uno para justificar se va más allá...]*

Re: OK...

*[Ajá...]*

Omar: Because no one... nobody is willing to accept that one is a *pendejo*. In my case I tend to justify it [like] “Ah well, this person *took me for pendejo* because he-she is not honest, that person is not, whatever...” but one always tries to banish that word... nobody likes it...

*[Porque uno...nadie quiere aceptar que es un pendejo. Yo en mi caso suelo justificarlo “ah pues esta persona me cogió de pendejo porque esa persona no es honesta, porque esta persona no es lo otro...” pero uno siempre trata de sacarse de encima esa palabra...a nadie le gusta...]*

Re: You mean, that you do not say, you do not admit ... “I am a *pendejo*” in public.

*[O sea, tú públicamente no dices, no admites... "yo soy un pendejo" ...]*

Omar: Right.

*[Claro...]*

Re: But to yourself...?

*[¿Pero a ti mismo...?]*

Omar: “I am a *pendejo* and probably everybody knows it!”

*[“¡Un pendejo y tal vez todo el mundo lo reconoce!”]*

9. *Perceived vulnerability*. Participants expressed that they felt that they had been vulnerable, and were still vulnerable to be taken for *pendejos*. They asserted that they were *taken for pendejoes* while undergoing difficult or unsuspecting situations that opened the door for others to take advantage. This could be either failed relationships, or problems at the workplace, or problematic situations with family or friends. Most of the participants mentioned that *being a good person* made them vulnerable to being *taken for pendejoes*. [Sources 6; References 17]

Re: The weakness that results from being too good, from being too... I mean, sincere, transparent...?

[¿Esa debilidad de tú ser demasiado bueno, de ser demasiado... o sea, sincero, claro...?]

Pedro: Exactly! Because it is in my nature, it is not...

[¡Exactamente!... Porque está en mi naturaleza, no es...]

Re: In other words, that being like this, well you can... you put yourself... You mean exposed?

[O sea, que al ser así, pues te puede... te pones... estás... ¿estás expuesto?]

Pedro: I am exposed. This can happen to me again some other time.

[Estoy expuesto. Me podría suceder en otra ocasión.]

Re: To being taken again as a *pendejo*.

[A que te vuelvan a coger de pendejo.]

Pedro: Yes... yes, yes.

[Sí... sí, sí.]

Ana: This can happen to anyone because when you trust somebody... you become vulnerable.

*[Le puede pasar a cualquiera porque cuando tú confías en alguien... te vuelves vulnerable.]*

10. *Belittling process.* A *pendejo* incident sparks off a process that is both disparaging and underrating for its self-professed victim. It puts into question the person's capacity to do things well, and to feel good about him-herself. The victim assumes that the culprit thinks very little of him-her as a person. This is very painful for the victim following a *pendejo* experience. José and Nora expressed this as follows:

*José:* One felt, or was told directly up front "I was taken for a *pendejo*" or "I took you for a *pendejo*" or whatever, but really, this is not the essence of this human being. Then at that moment... or at least in my own particular case, well I don't feel good about myself. Well, because [I allowed] this to happen, I allowed myself to be "caught".

*[Uno se sintió, o se lo dijeron de frente directamente "me cogieron de penejo" o "te cogí de penejo" o lo que sea, pero realmente, la esencia de lo que es ese ser humano no es esa. Entonces en ese momento,... o por lo menos en mi caso en particular ese momento, pues yo no me siento bien conmigo mismo. Pues porque pasó, me dejé coger.]*

*Re:* And the phrase: *I am a penėja?*

*[¿Y la frase: "Soy una penėja."?]*

*Nora:* Well... OH, [it is] very denigrating.

*[Ehh... Ay, bien denigrante.]*

*Re:* Very denigrating?

*[¿Bien denigrante?]*

*Nora:* Yes. Well... Your self-esteem is way down, hmmm... you feel demeaned.]

*[Sí. Ehh... auto estima por el piso, eh... te sientes poquita cosa.]*

11. *Traumatic event.* A *pendejo* incident can be a traumatic event for the self-proclaimed victim. This person is convinced that he-she stood out as a *pendejo* and can be conceptualized as such by others. The impact on the victim can be devastating as well as degrading to the point where the incident is seldom forgotten. [Sources 5; References 11]

Nora verbalized how she felt: “It is an awful sensation, truly, it is an awful sensation.” [“*Es una sensación mala, en verdad, es una sensación mala.*”] Rita affirmed that “the experience, at that moment was traumatic [“*esa experiencia, en el momento, fue traumática*”]. Participants, including Rita, tended to blame themselves for what happened. Rita added that this impacts your whole being, how you feel about yourself, how you visualize yourself after getting portrayed as a *pendejo*. To her, the *pendejo* narratives in her Autobiographical Anecdotes made her change her whole perspective.

*Rita:* Because it’s... They are often so sly that... it’s... “Shit! How could I have fallen for it... ehh...?” And then, well it’s not good... not good. Everything that involves feelings, and how you feel, and how you visualize your self at that moment... In other words, it changes the whole perspective.

[*Porque es... Son tan astutos muchas veces que... que... es, “¡Coño! ¿Cómo es posible que yo me haya dejado caer... o sea...?” Entonces, pues, no es buena... no es buena. Todo lo que encierra los sentimientos, y cómo tú te sientes, y cómo tú te visualizas en ese momento... o sea, es cambiar completamente la perspectiva.*]

*Re:* Yes, yes... In other words you are... it’s something that...

[*Sí, sí... O sea, estás... es algo que...*]

*Rita:* No, no... [It’s] inconceivable.]

[*No, no... inconcebible.*]

12. *An occurrence that offends, hurts.* A *pendejo* incident can be a very painful experience for the self-proclaimed victims. A majority of the participants expressed feeling emotional hurt as well as betrayal. Enid's words echoed what the other participants also expressed. [Sources 5; references 7]

*Enid:* Because when they... when someone takes advantage of me, when they *take me for pendeja*, I feel hurt... I feel betrayed.]

*[Porque cuando me... me toman el pelo, cuando me cogen de pendeja, yo me siento herida... me siento traicionada.]*

### *Category 2: Assumptions*

An assumption is “a premise or supposition that something is fact; that is, the act of taking something for granted” (APA, 2007, p. 78). The assumption that the *pendejo* is a fact is something that all participants took for granted. All of the participants were convinced that they were *taken for pendejos* or that they “*cayeron de pendejo*” in the past and remain liable of being *taken for pendejos* anytime in the future. Assumptions about the *pendejo* phenomenon emerged as one of the main categories to surface from the data. A total of 242 references are registered under this category in the NVivo *Code Summary Report*. There are assumptions regarding others, assumptions regarding self, and assumptions about what seems to be a perceived imminent threat to a person's moral fiber. Figure 2 summarizes assumptions made by the participants.

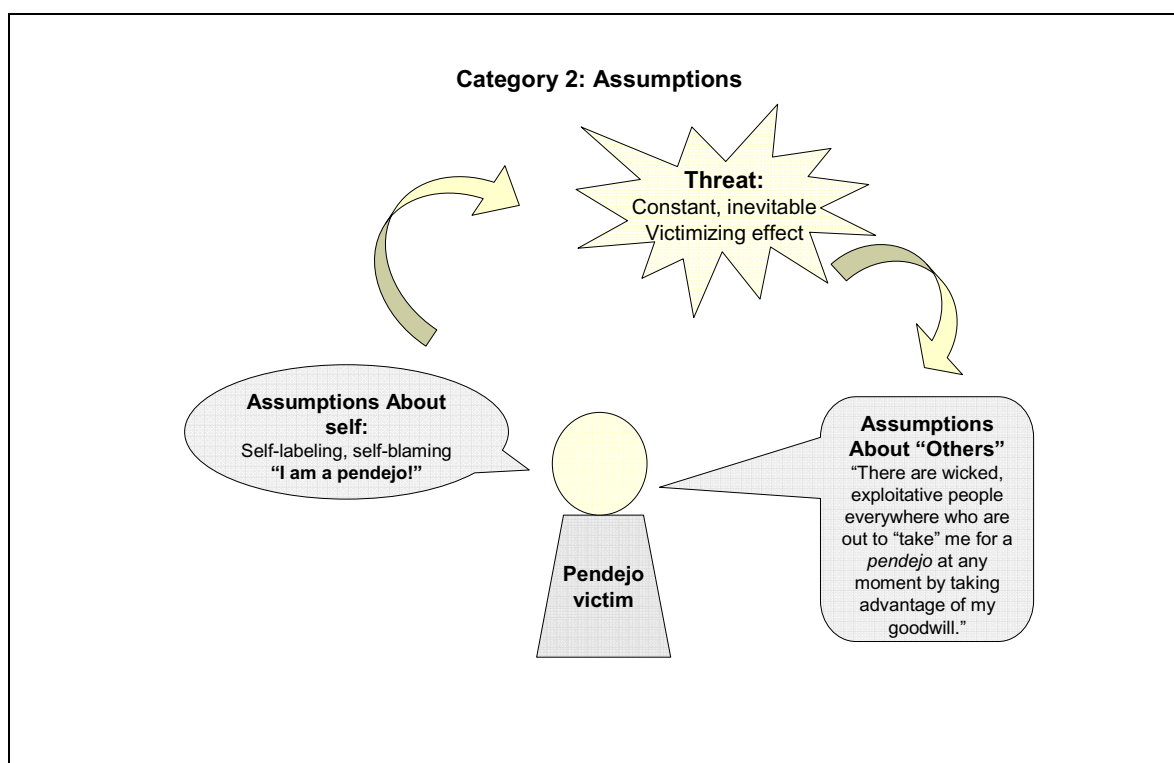


Figure 2. Participants' assumptions of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

### *Assumptions Regarding Others*

Narratives elicited from the interviews demonstrated a marked tendency and a consensus among participants—who revealed themselves as victims—to ascribe intentions on the person or persons (portrayed as victimizers) who *take* others for *pendejos*. External attributions of *taking advantage* of the victim's good will; *wickedness*, or the intention to do harm; and *exploitation*, in the use of deceit to obtain what the individual wants, were three main themes identified as culprits for what was depicted as a *cogida de pendejo* incident. The description of these three main themes as narrated by the

participants themselves follows. The themes are presented in descending order beginning with the one cited by all those who participated in the study.

*Taking advantage.* All participants expressed that “people” are out to take advantage of them. They all mentioned personal experiences with family members, friends, coworkers, and even strangers who they were sure “took” them for *pendejos* because of these people’s craftiness and ill intentions to take advantage of the participant’s good will. Rita, Jose, and Omar’s accounts are representative of the other subjects’ narratives. Rita lamented the fact that she *cayó de pendeja* because she trusted her best friend whom she was always trying to help. [Sources 8; references 22]

*Rita:* I was really angry, because I would say, “Dear God, eh...I was really a *pendeja*, because I gave her the best of me and all she did was take advantage of me.

*[Y entonces sí me dio coraje porque yo decía “Dios mío e...de verdad, de verdad fui una pendeja porque le di todo lo mejor de mí...y ella lo que estaba haciendo era aprovechándose.]*

José firmly believed that there are many people out there ready to take advantage of you and to take others for *pendejo*.

*José:* Well then, there are many people who are ready, really, to take advantage [of others]... to say it this way. I mean, the truth for me is that to take for *pendejo* is to want to take advantage of the other person, or of some specific circumstances, eh... Maybe the finality of the other person is not to harm you...maybe. But yes, it is to want to take advantage of the person, I mean, and in that sense well I answer that, eh...How liable are we? [to be taken for *pendejos*]... Well very much so [liable], this is the truth.

*[Pues entonces, hay mucha gente que está presta, realmente, a querer aprovecharse... por decirlo de esa forma. O sea, para mí de verdad, el coger de pendejo es querer aprovecharse de otra persona, de alguna circunstancia específica, eh...Quizás la finalidad de la persona no sea hacer daño...quizás.]*

*Pero sí es querer aprovecharse de la persona, o sea, y en ese sentido pues yo contesto que ehh... ¿cuán propensos?...Pues mucho, la verdad que sí.]*

When asked to elaborate on the meaning of *coger de pendejo* or *caer de pendejo*, Omar responded the following way:

*Omar:* I see this as taking advantage of another person. When you take someone for *pendejo* it's like you are trying to take advantage... of a situation.

*[Yo lo veo que es como aprovecharse de alguien. Tú coger de pendejo es como querer aprovecharte...de una situación.]*

Omar offers a similar response to the phrase “I am a *pendejo* or a *pendeja*”

*[“soy un pendejo o una pendeja”]:*

*Omar:* Well I understand this likeee...If I consider myself to be that way [a *pendejo*]; it's that they took advantage of me! They took advantage of me!

*[Pues eso yo entiendo como queee...si me considero así [un pendejo], ¡Como que se aprovecharon de mí! ¡Se aprovecharon de mí!]*

*Wickedness.* Refers to the intention to do harm, the other person doesn't care what happens to you as long as he-she benefits from taking you for a *pendeja*. Almost all of the men and women who participated in this investigation—7 out of 8—firmly believe that people take others for *pendejos* knowing that, in some way, they will do harm to them. There were 23 references under this theme. Narratives on this topic referred to people in all kind of relationships: intimate, family, working, as well as close friends and acquaintances. Participants expressed this intentional attribution of wickedness in their own words. To Rita, there are people who enjoy taking others for *pendejos*. Doing harm by making you “fall” as a *pendejo* is like a game for them.



*Rita:* Everything is like a game. For many people, to try...trying to make you “fall” like a *pendejo*, is their game. It’s their *modus vivendi*.

*[Es que todo es como un juego. Para muchas personas el que...el tratar de hacerte caer a ti como un peñejo, es su juego. Es su modus vivendi.]*

Enid expressed her opinion about people who are out to take others for *pendejos*. She firmly believed that we live in a world where there are people very different from her, people with bad intentions who want to take you for a ride.

*Enid:* I say that they are insensitive people that really want to do harm, because...humm...on the one hand, there are people that really want to harm you, and they do this consciously...but....they don’t have values, nor...nor...nor do they care about what is happening nor do they care about your suffering.

*[Yo digo que son personas inconscientes, que te quieren hacer daño realmente, porque...este...por una parte, hay personas que realmente te quieren hacer daño, que lo hacen conscientemente...pero...que no tienen valores, ni...ni...ni le importa lo que esté pasando ni lo que tú sufras.]*

Like most participants, Omar also believed that taking someone for *pendejo* is doing something to that person with the intention of doing harm.

*Omar:* OK, I understand that this is like taking advantage of someone...possibly, it is doing something with an intention knowing that the results for that person are not going to be favorable, that you can cause some harm and you know it. And that is why you are...and you can *take someone for peñejo*. You are doing this with an intention, all the while knowing that you know that you are going to cause some harm.

*[OK, yo entender [sic] que es como aprovecharse de alguien...es posiblemente tú hacer algo con una intención sabiendo que los resultados para esa persona no van a ser los mejores, que le puedes causar algún daño a sabiendas tuya. Y por eso tú estás...y tú puedes coger de peñejo a alguien. Lo estás haciendo con la intención, a sabiendas de que sabes que vas a causar algún daño.]*

*Exploitation.* Six out of 8 participants assumed that people who take others for *pendejos* make use of deceitful tactics to obtain what the individual wants. There are 23

references under this theme. These participants told about instances where someone tricked them, or tried to trick them into doing something that only benefited the perpetrator. In all instances participants seemed convinced that the person involved “took them” or “tried to take them” for *pendejos*. Ana and Pedro told about experiences in their work settings where they felt that people with authority used exploitative tactics for their own benefit. Both Pedro and Ana were sure that this other person was thinking that they were *pendejos*. In Ana’s case, her boss tried to induce Ana to tell a lie regarding her co-worker and good friend who had told the boss that she was pregnant; which eventually led the boss to fire her. Ana felt that her boss was treating her as a *pendeja*: “At this moment my world fell apart because I felt that he put me between ‘the wall and a hard place’ and that I had to choose between the boss and my friend, and I felt that he was taking advantage of the situation.” Following is an excerpt of Ana’s interview:

*Ana:* One day my boss called me to meet with him and tells me the story about the lawsuit and tells me “Hey, you remember that time we were entering the park and Jane Doe notified me that she was pregnant...?” And I answered, “Yes, I remember.” And he tells me “Well *chica*, the thing is that she put a claim in court against me and this isn’t what bothers me, what I don’t like is the lie... and, do you remember when she told me about her pregnancy and I said ‘Oh, good!’? And I was very happy and told her that I congratulated her...” At that moment I didn’t say anything to him, but then he tells me: “Well look, later my lawyer will call you and I want you to tell her the truth. I want you to tell what we are talking about today, that I was very happy and that I congratulated her, etc.”

*[Un día el jefe me llama para reunirme con él y me hace la historia de la demanda y me dice “¿Oye, tú te acuerdas aquella vez que estábamos entrando al parque y fulanita me dijo que estaba embarazada...?” Y yo le digo, “Sí, me acuerdo.” Y me dice “Pues chica, es que ella me está demandando y a mí no me molesta que ella me halla demandado, lo que pasa es que no me gusta la mentira...y, ¿Tu te acuerdas que cuando ella me dijo lo del embarazo yo le dije ‘¡Ay, que bueno!’? Y yo me puse bien contento y le dije que la felicitaba...” Yo en ese momento no le dije nada, pero el me dice “Pues mira, más tarde te va a*

*llamar mi abogada y yo quiero que tú le digas la verdad. Yo quiero que tú le digas esto que estuvimos hablando, que yo estaba bien contento y que yo la felicité, etc.”]*

Re: And you were aware that this was not the way things happened?

*[¿Y tú estás consciente de que eso no fue lo que pasó?]*

Ana: Exactly! [I'm] very much aware.

*[¡Exactamente! Muy consciente.]*

Pedro also had an exploitative experience when negotiating a contract with an engineering contractor. When asked why he felt that he had been taken for *pendejo*, Pedro provided his own explanation.

*Pedro:* Well, because... because he said that he approached other consultants and that they... [the] other consultants...indicated that yes, that the total amount of work that he wanted to do could be done for the amount [of money] that we initially negotiated. But...humm...I know that this, that this is not true, because of the experience I have doing this kind of work.

He used this strategy to try to persuade me to do the additional work for the same amount [of money].

*[Pues, porque...porque él dice que él contactó a otros consultores y que esos...otros consultores le de...le dieron el indicio que sí, que el trabajo completo que él quería se podía hacer por la cantidad que le negociamos. Pero...ehh...yo entiendo que eso no...que eso no es cierto, por la experiencia que yo llevo trabajando en esto.*

*El usó esa estrategia para tratar de persuadirme a que yo hiciera el trabajo adicional por los mismos [honorarios]...*

Re: In other words, to make you end up as a *pendejo*?

*[¿O sea, hacerte quedar como un pendejo?]*

*Pedro:* Yes, yes...exactly.

*[Sí, sí...exacto.]*

Taking advantage of others, the intent to do harm (wickedness) and the use of deceit to benefit oneself (exploitation) surfaced as three main suppositions about other's intentionality in the descriptions of most participants. According to their accounts, perpetrators are out to harm, exploit, and take advantage of their targeted *pendejo* victims. In Pedro's own words, "nobody with good intentions is out there taking others for *pendejos*."

#### *Assumptions Regarding Self*

The highest ranking category in this investigation was *Self-labeling*. All participants contributed by making a significant number of references that provided compelling insight into how they experience the *pendejo*. A significant finding is the fact that all participants accepted that it is they—and not the identified culprit—the ones who labeled themselves as *pendejos* in the first place, and who tended to use it as a self-referent after an identified *pendejo* incident. It is interesting to note that participants seemed to conclude that their own personal *pendejo* self-assumptions were definite and absolute and that the other person's implicit intention was indeed to take them for *pendejos*.

Another interesting angle of the *Self-labeling* subcategory is the way that participants consistently referred to themselves as *pendejos* and how they assumed the blame for falling victims of what they interpreted as a *pendejo* event. In this sense, they seemed to act as their own worst enemy. When confronted, all of the interviewees admitted that they were the ones to blame for having allowed someone to *take them for*

*pendejos*. Their discourse was very injurious toward themselves and was directed inward most of the time. There seemed to be an inner sense of shame that compelled the interviewees to clam-up and to literarily lick their own wounds. Luis even expressed that he rather not make what happened public (he didn't dare tell his wife) because then everybody will become aware of what a *pendejo* he had been.

All participants asserted that they *cayeron de pendejos* and categorically mentioned that they were definitely *pendejos* at the time because they allowed the perpetrator to take them for one. It is significant that all participants seemed to not forgive themselves for having allowed *haber caído de pendejo*, and also reproached themselves for not being alert enough or astute enough to avert the *pendejo* situation. This is something that still hurts them even though some of the *pendejo* anecdotes took place a number of years before. It seems that the interviewees still feel *pendejos* when they bring to mind a past *pendejo* incident. Most became emotional when recounting the experience. Following are some of these narratives.

*Re:* And who is the one that defines this as an [event] where somebody *took you for a pendejo*, or tried to *take you for a pendejo*... Is it you, yourself?

*[Y quien define que te cogieron de pendejo, o trataron de cogerte de pendejo... ¿eres tú mismo?]*

*Omar:* It's me... yes! I am the one who gives me the title of "*Pendejo*"... It is not that somebody bestows it on me (both laugh)... but one understands this, internally.

*[¡Soy yo... sí! Es que me puedo dar el título de pendejo... no es porque nadie me lo dé (ríen ambos)... pero uno internamente entiende...]*

*Re:* And when... and when... and when you are sure that they took you for *pendejo*... I mean... How you say it? You... you yourself are very clear that they *took* you.

*[Y cuando... y cuando... y cuando estás seguro que te cogieron de pendejo... este..., ¿como se llama? Te... te... tú mismo estás bien claro de que te cogieron].*

Omar: Yes, very clear.

*[Sí, bien claro.]*

Re: It's not that they tell you... that they are telling this to you.

*[No es que te lo dicen... que te lo están diciendo...].*

Omar: I am the one who is sure that I am the greatest *pendejo* of all!

*[¡Yo mismo me considero tremendo pendejo!]*

Re: So your brother was not the one who told you straightforwardly... "I took you for a *pendeja* because I know that you are a *pendeja*, because I..."

*[Tu hermano no te dijo directamente... te cogí de pendeja porque como yo sé que tú eres una pendeja pues yo...]*

Enid: No, no... He never did. To him, he was not taking me for a *pendeja*.

*[No, no... en ningún momento. Para él, el no me cogió de pendeja.]*

Re: To him he was not taking you for a *pendeja*.

*[Para él no te cogió de pendeja.]*

Enid: For him, he did me no harm, and did not take me for a *pendeja*.

*[Para él, él no me hizo nada, ni me cogió de pendeja].*

Re: That means that...this is something that you are dealing with yourself.

*[O sea, esto... esto lo estás manejando tú contigo misma.]*

Enid: It is me the one who thinks that he indeed did it.

*[Yo conmigo misma que soy la que pienso que sí lo hizo.]*

Re: How... how can you be sure that this person assumes that you are a *pendejo*?

[¿Cómo... cómo tú estás seguro de que esta persona parte de la premisa de que tú eres un *pendejo*?]

Luis: Well, that is something that I could never find out... Well, one says that this... because... well because I allowed him to... I offered him the aquariums, I lend them to him and he took advantage of me... well... of the situation and well, since he had to flee and well... well... you would say that I am a *pendejo* because... I did nothing... so as not to...

[Bueno, eso nunca lo pude averiguar... Bueno, uno dice que este... Porque... bueno porque yo le dejé... yo le ofrecí las peceras, se las presté y él se aprovechó de mí... este... de la situación y pues como que tuvo que echar y pues... pues... tú dirías que soy un *pendejo* porque... porque... no hice nada... pa' no...no...]

Re: You declared yourself *pendejo*.

[Tú te declaraste *pendejo*.]

Luis: Yes, yes.

[Sí, sí.]

### *Being Good or Being Noble*

Among all the participants there is the belief that others “act in good faith just as I do”. In the *pendejo* mentality this places the person in a vulnerable position and exposes him-her to other’s ill intentions which can put the victim in harms way. [8 sources; 38 references]

When the person feels that the other person takes advantage of his-her good will and noble purposes, distrust sets in and being noble is deemed synonymous to being *pendejo*. It is like, “Because I was good to this person and tried to help him-her, he-she

took advantage of my noble intentions and treated me like a *pendejo*. So, I allowed this to happen to me for being so naïve, so trusting... so *pendejo!*” In this sense, the victim blames him-herself for being so noble, so naïve, so trusting. This causes shame and compels the victim to clam-up and deal with the hurt and the shame internally most of the time.

Rita echoes the rest of the participants with her expressions about being noble and being taken for *pendeja* in the following two narratives.

*Rita:* And then, I was really angry, because I would say, “Dear God, ehh... I was really a *pendeja*, because I gave the best of me and all she did was take advantage.

*[Y entonces sí me dio coraje porque yo decía “Dios mío e...de verdad de verdad fui una pendeja porque le di todo lo mejor de mí...y ella lo que estaba haciendo era aprovechándose.]*

*Re:* She took advantage of your good nature.

*[Se aprovechó de tu bondad.]*

*Rita:* Exactly.

*[Exacto.]*

*Rita:* At one point in the conversation that night, that first occasion, n..., we were still girls in High School, ehh... I told her... “Yeah, look, I was so... I am such a *pendeja* because I never paid heed to anyone who came to warn me that you were not a good person. And I made them turn away from me because I defended you, and now look what you are doing. I truly had to have been really blind... real abnormal, really submitted, to keep on playing the role that you wanted me to play.”

*[En un momento dado en la conversación en esa noche, en esa primera ocasión, n..., siendo todavía muchachitas de High School, ehh...yo le dije, ehh...”Sí fíjate, fui...soy tan pendeja al no hacerle caso a nadie de los que vinieron a advertirme que tú no eras buena persona. Y me los eché a ellos en contra por defenderte a ti, y ahora mira lo que haces. De verdad tenía que estar bien, bien, bien ciega...bien*



*anormal, bien sometida para seguir jugando el papelito que tú quisiste que yo jugara.”]*

*Re:* You were playing the role of *pendeja*.

*[Hacías papel de pendeja.]*

*Rita:* Sure... sure, I was the *pendeja*.

*[Claro...claro...yo era la pendeja.]*

### *Assumption of Potential Threat*

Participants conceived the *pendejo* as a real threat and as a menace to a person's dignity or well being. All of those interviewed, manifested an ingrained fear and, consequently, a need to be constantly on the alert due to the supposed imminent threat and to the certainty that they could be *caught as pendejos* by ill-intentioned and unscrupulous people at any time. Surprise, suspicion, and a fear of harm were by-products of this threatening aspect of the phenomenon. [Sources 8; References 60]

There were two aspects of this perceived potential threat that stood out in the participants' stories: It was constant and inevitable, and it had a victimizing effect.

Following are excerpts of these stories.

1. The threat is constant and inevitable: [Sources 8; References 33]

*Ana:* Because... I think that everybody can become a victim of that [the *pendejo*], because everybody can... *fall for a pendejo* at any moment... or everybody is going to *fall for a pendejo* at any moment... I mean, nobody is exempt.

*[Porque... pienso que es que todo el mundo puede ser víctima de eso, porque todo el mundo puede ser... caer de pendejo en algún momento... o todo el mundo va a caer de pendejo en algún momento... o sea, nadie está exento.]*

Re: Because there is a real menace... that... that you can be *taken for pendejo*?

[*¿Porque hay una amenaza real... de que... de que te pueden coger de pendejo?*]

José: That is correct, that is correct... yes. That is why, that is why maybe I say... well ehh... more on the defensive side, well we could define this maybe as an alert [signal]... I mean, ehh... we need to be careful.]

[*Es correcto, es correcto... sí. Por eso, por eso quizás digo... pues ehh... más que a la defensiva, pues podemos definirlo quizás como alerta... o sea, ehh... hay que tener cuidado.*]

Re: Then this means that they won't take you for *pendejo* anymore.

[*Quiere decir que entonces ya no te cogen más de pendejo.*]

Luis: Not really. Je, je, je... you know...

[*No totalmente. Je, je, je... tú sabes...*]

Re: Even if you are alert...?

[*¿Aunque estés alerta...?*]

Luis: Even if I am alert.

[*Aunque esté alerta.*]

Re: It can happen... that... you know...

[*Se puede dar el... el... tú sabes...*]

Luis: It can come to pass [that I am taken for a *pendejo* again], yes... yes.

[*Se puede dar el caso [de que te cojan de pendejo otra vez], sí...sí.*]

Re: Then, your alert signals... [laughter] and, your monitoring system did not work here.

[*O sea, tú señal de... de... [risas], de alerta y de monitoreo ahí no funcionó.*]

Luis: NO! No... Exactly, exactly.

[*¡NO! No... exacto, exacto.*]

Re: Then you fell as... [It's like] "I fell as a *pendejo* again."

*[Entonces volviste a... "volví a caer de peñejo".]*

Luis: Yes!

*[¡Sí!]*

2. The threat has a victimizing effect: [Sources 8; References 18]

*Omar:* The doctor arrived at our [hotel] room, he stayed less than five minutes, put his hand to her forehead, determined that she was running a fever, prescribed some regular pills for the headache... and after only five minutes he charged me \$500.00 for the visit. And I, well... it had to do with my wife's health so I did not put much [thought]... but... but I felt... I felt a bit uncomfortable. I said to myself... well, I know what a doctor's visit costs and I understand that this is an emergency visit... but, due to the fact that maybe this doctor had to travel a long distance to get here and Las Vegas is so big, and since there are no hospitals nearby... well, I gladly paid those \$500.00... The next day when I went out with my wife to get to know Las Vegas, because we got here late at night, in the morning... just one block away from... from... from the hotel where we were staying I saw a small emergency medical center... and... And understood that this was a monumental *cogida de peñejo*... OK great...

*[El doctor llegó a nuestra habitación, no estuvo cinco minutos, le puso la mano en la frente, dijo que tenía fiebre, le recetó unas pastillas regular para el dolor de cabeza... y después que pasan esos cinco minutos me cobra \$500 dólares... por esa visita. Y yo bueno... se trata de la salud de mi esposa y yo no puse mucho... pero... pero me sentí... me sentí un poco incómodo. Yo decía... bueno, yo sé lo que vale a una visita de un médico y entiendo que esto puede ser una emergencia... pero, dado el caso si es que ese médico tuvo que viajar tanto para llegar aquí, y Las Vegas es tan grande, y como no hay los hospitales cerca... pues le pagué los \$500 pesos con gusto... Al otro día cuando salgo con mi esposa a conocer Las Vegas, porque llegamos muy tarde en la noche, por la mañana... a una cuadra del... de...de...del hotel donde nos estábamos quedando veo que había un pequeño centro de emergencia médico... y...y entiendo que fue tremenda la cogida de peñejo... bien chévere...]*

Re: They took you for a *pendejo*.

*[Te cogieron de peñejo...]*

*Omar:* Yes, without a doubt.

*[Sí, sin duda.]*

*Re:* And on that occasion you assumed, I mean... You felt ... *pendeja*?

*[Y en esta ocasión tú asumiste, o sea, ¿tú te sentiste... pendeja?]*

*Rita:* Oh yes, that they *took me for a pendeja*, yes. For many years...

*[O sí, que me cogieron de pendeja sí. Por muchos años...]*

*Re:* For many years you carried this [feeling].

*[Por muchos años cargaste con esto.]*

*Rita:* Oh yes... yes... definitely.

*[O sí... sí... definitivamente.]*

### *Category 3: Emotions*

A *Pendejo* incident has emotional repercussions which vary in intensity depending on the *pendejo* episode and the vulnerability of the presumed victim. There were a total of 14 identified underlying emotions which provoked the responses mentioned and described by the participants. Five of these emotional responses complied with the required minimum selection criterion of 5 sources and 5 references needed to identify categories and subcategories that form patterns considered relevant to this investigation.

Taking into consideration the interviewees' descriptions, after a *pendejo* happening most of them experienced one or most of the following responses: anger, ire;

mistrust; self-victimization; helplessness, impotence; anxiety and fear. Descriptions of the main emotional responses mentioned and consequent selections extracted from the participants' narratives follow.

### *Anger and Ire*

All participants expressed feeling very angry, some expressed being furious, when they concluded that someone *took them for pendejo*. The experience was interpreted as a lack of respect, humiliating and of bad taste. Feelings of frustration, betrayal, deception and disillusion were among the emotional descriptors used to describe the underlying emotions that surfaced after a *pendejo* act. The following quotes give an idea of the intensity of these emotional outbursts. [Sources 8; References 41]

*Enid:* It's a gross lack of respect, it's humiliating, of bad taste... and it provokes anger. I get very angry.]

*[Es una falta de respeto, es humillante, de mal gusto... y da coraje. Me da mucho coraje.]*

*José:* They took me for *pendejo*. The first thing that I feel is a lot of anger... truly yes. Well... great ire, great... I get frustrated, well, because I really say... I mean, "Gosh, ehh... no... they are taking you, they are catching you for something you are not"... and in that sense, well I feel very angry.

*[Me tomaron de pendejo. Lo primero que me da es mucho coraje... de verdad que sí. Este... mucha ira, mucha... me frustró, pues, porque realmente digo... o sea, "Caramba, ehh... no... te están tomando, te están cogiendo de lo que tú no eres"... y en ese sentido, pues me da mucho coraje.]*

*Nora:* You know, you live and re-live it... and [you ask yourself] Why did I fall? And... and...

*[Tú sabes, lo vives y lo revives...y ¿por qué caí? Y... y...]*

*Re:* You keep repeating this, and repeating this...

*[Te lo sigues diciendo, y te lo sigues diciendo...]*

*Nora:* Yes, it's like a fury.

*[Sí, es como una furia.]*

*Rita:* When I feel betrayed, or *taken for pendeja*... or that they want to *take me*, well, I get charged up with... with a lot of anger... and the anger makes me cry.

*[Cuando me siento traicionada, o cogida de pendeja... o me quieren coger, pues, yo me cargo de... de mucho coraje... y el coraje a mí me hace llorar.]*

### *Mistrust*

Trust issues seem to go hand in hand with a *pendejo* situation. Feelings of mistrust were evident in all of the participants' narratives. All interviewees stated that they were wary of other people's intentions, more so when their intuition or sixth sense warns them that something "fishy" might be happening here. This is so even when the person involved is a close friend. This wariness about the intentions of the other person triggers alert signals within the potential victim of a *pendejo* threat. Pedro's comments provide insight about this issue. [Sources 8; References 13]

*Pedro:* Yes, I see it as a threat, eh... that is, I understand that one... that one does have to be, eh... alert, daily, in all environments... except in the intimate environment. See, in the intimate context, I don't feel that I have to have... that I have to have that... shield. But outside, yes... including friends. In other words, eh... maybe in a... it's part of the same process... that is leading me, towards this feeling of lack of trust towards everyone. But it is something that I have learned after having... these experiences of *falling as a pendejo*.

*[Sí, yo lo veo como una amenaza, eh... o sea, yo entiendo que uno... que uno sí tiene que estar, eh... alerta a diario, y en todo ámbito... excepto el íntimo. Fíjate, el ámbito íntimo no siento que tengo esa... que tengo que tener esa coraza. Pero en el mundo exterior, sí, e incluso en amistades. O sea, eh... quizás en un... es parte del mismo proceso de... que me está llevando como a perder la confianza en todo el mundo. Pero es algo que he ido aprendiendo después de haber... tenido estas experiencias de caer de pendejo.]*

### *Self-victimization*

A *pendejo* situation is fertile ground for double victimization of the injured party due to the fact that people not only fall prey to others ill intentions but, many times, they lay the blame on themselves. The added self-inflicted victimization can be a blow to the person's own sense of worth. This can be detected in various participants' self-blaming accounts of their experiences. [Sources 5; References 14]

*José:* Then really, well, I myself well, I am a *pendejo*, well because really I allowed myself *to be caught* or... or because well really this... I allowed... it was I who allowed others to take advantage [of me].

*[Cuando realmente, pues, yo mismo pues, soy un pendejo, pues porque realmente me dejé coger o... o porque pues realmente este... me dejé... yo mismo me dejé que otros se aprovecharan.]*

*Re:* In all this, and in that instance where you categorically accept or... where you see yourself like "yes, I fell for a *pendejo*", I am a *pendejo*... I was a *pendejo*. Well... is this something that somebody told you? I mean, the... the...

*[En todo esto, y en estos momentos en que tú categóricamente aceptas o... te ves como que sí caí de pendejo, soy un pendejo... fui un pendejo. Este... ¿es que alguien te lo dijo? O sea, la... la...]*

*Luis:* Well, my wife has told me. She...

*[Bueno, la esposa me lo ha dicho. Me...]*

Re: Your wife has told you?

*[¿La esposa te ha dicho?]*

Luis: She told me. But, at times, well... one clearly... how you say it? I realize, well I can see that I am a *pendejo*...

*[Me ha dicho. Pero, otras veces, pues... claro, uno... ¿como se dice? Realiza, uno ve que uno es el pendejo...]*

Re: So you are the one who say this [to yourself] first?

*[¿Tú te lo has dicho primero?]*

Luis: Yes... I say this to myself first, yes.

*[Sí... me lo he dicho primero, sí.]*

Re: That is, you validate what she... what she told you.

*[O sea, tú validas lo que ella te... te ha dicho.]*

Luis: Yes, yes.

*[Sí, sí.]*

### *Helplessness, Impotence*

A majority of the people interviewed manifested feelings of helplessness and impotence when they encountered their *pendejo* events. There seemed to be a certainty that “I can do nothing” or “I could do nothing” to solve or to revert this situation. The following quotes bare this helplessness feeling. [Sources 5; References 5]

*Pedro:* I mean, that... that I still don't... don't feel that I have the mechanism to face the person who wants to *take me for a pendejo* and... and to verify or insist... or even more than that, to change things so that I can come out of this (??)



*[O sea, que... que todavía no... no siento que tengo un mecanismo para volver donde la persona que me quiere coger de pendejo y... y verificar o insistir... o más que eso, cambiar la... la cosa para yo salir (¿?).]*

*Omar:* Well, I am disappointed... I am angry. I feel distrust toward the person that *took me for pendejo*... ehh, it's a sensation of... Many times one even feels impotent when faced with a situation where you feel you were *taken for pendejo*.

*Pues, me siento decepcionado...con coraje. Siento desconfianza, en la persona que me cogió de pendejo...ehh, una sensación de...muchas veces uno se siente hasta impotente ante una situación donde te cogieron de pendejo.*

#### *Anxiety, Fear*

The majority of the interviewees manifested feelings of anxiety and fear. A *pendejo* event supposes an imminent threat that provokes stress probably due to a constant—though most of the time—implicit state of alert. In her anecdote Enid revealed that she felt great fear while Nora mentioned having feelings of anxiety. [Sources 5; References 5]

Pedro and Omar talked about experiencing moments of anxiety, mental choke, stress, uneasiness and nervousness when asked about their emotional responses to a *pendejo* situation.

*Pedro:* Anxiety... it's like a mental block... that is, it makes me... me... I know that this is not physical, but this is something like ehh... it occupies the mind.

*[Ansiedad... como un sofoque mental... o sea, eso me... me... sé que no es física, pero eso es algo como que ehh... me ocupa la mente.]*

*Omar:* Well look, this causes me, it causes me a lot of stress. Ehh... it causes me... it causes uneasiness, I become nervous... I become very nervous. I become anxious...]

*[Pues mira, a mí sí me causa, me causa bastante stress. Este... me causa... me causa intranquilidad, me pongo nervioso... me pongo muy nervioso. Me pongo ansioso...]*

#### *Category 4: Behaviors*

The American Psychological Association defines behavior as “an organism’s activities in response to external and internal stimuli, including objectively observable activities, introspectively observable activities, and unconscious processes” (APA, 2007, p. 107). The responses and actions of the *pendejo* study participants provided insight about how they experienced the phenomenon and about their manifested behaviors and reactions to a *pendejo* event.

#### *Physical Symptoms*

All of the participants admitted feeling one or more physical warning signs upon confronting a *pendejo* threat or episode, indicative of gender free occurrences. There is nervous tension generated by the certainty or by the sensation of being *caught for a peñejo* which is manifested physically by the presence of one or more of the following symptoms: headaches, hyperventilation, hyperactivity, physical exhaustion, blushing due to rising blood pressure. [Sources 8; References 21]

The subsequent excerpts from Ana and Rita’s interviews specify physical manifestations suggestive to stress generated by a *pendejo* act. Ana mentioned taking deep breaths, rising blood pressure and blushing as main symptoms.

*Ana:* Well, I tell you...maybe I can... maybe I can take an initial deep breath... and my blood pressure will rise and I can turn red as a tomato... and well, maybe I will explode and tell you two or three things... that is, it can go from the sublime to the very... ehh... ugly. But yes, there is a... yes, the breathing... and I feel my blood pressure rising.

*[Pues, como te digo...me puede...puede que respire profundo inicialmente...y me suba la presión y me ponga roja como un tomate...y pues, a lo mejor explote y te diga dos o tres cosas...o sea, puede ir desde lo más sublime hasta lo más... este... feo. Pero sí hay una...sí, la respiración...y yo siento que me sube la presión.]*

*Re:* So you can feel it, you feel it in your body...

*[O sea que lo sientes, lo sientes en el cuerpo...]*

*Ana:* Uhum... yes, something changes... there is a change, yes.

*[Ujú...sí, hay un cambio...un cambio, sí.]*

Rita, on the other hand, bared physical and emotional symptoms suggestive of the nervous tension unleashed by a *pendejo* incidence.

*Re:* What physical manifestations you experience when you feel, or you are sure, that you were *taken for a pendejo*...?

*[¿Qué manifestaciones físicas experiencias ante lo que sientes como una cogida de pendejo?...]*

*Rita:* Ohhhh!

*[¡Ayyyyy!]*

*Re:* [When you feel] that they took you for a *pendeja*?

*[¿... que te cogieron de pendeja?]*

*Rita:* Well, I cry... [and] the headaches... because I get... I get charged up... so charged up, that I get headaches. I mean, depending on the situation at hand, well, I can even become exhausted because I can end up feeling that way. Then...

*[Pues, llorar... los dolores de cabeza... porque me... me cargo... tanto, que me da dolor de cabeza. Este...dependiendo de la situación, pues, puedo llegar hasta desgaste porque lo he sentido. Entonces...]*

Re: You can end up how?

*[¿Puedes llegar a qué?]*

Rita: With a physical exhaustion.

*[Un desgaste físico.]*

Re: A physical exhaustion...

*[Un desgaste físico...]*

Rita: Yes. I mean, I have to lie down in bed because... I can't [take it]. I can't take it anymore. I don't want to think, I don't want to feel..."

*[Sí. A decir que tengo que acostarme porque... no puedo. No puedo. No quiero pensar, no quiero sentir...]*

Re: This looks like a depressive moment to me.

*[Eso se parece como a un momento de depresión.]*

Rita: Yes, yes... yes, [and] this comes hand in hand with sleepiness. It is like your body telling you, "I am entering into a shut-down, I don't want to think, I don't want to think, and I don't want to feel... You need to go to sleep." Well, this is what can happen to me on occasions like this.

*[Sí, sí...sí, junto con somnolencia. Que es que el cuerpo te dice, "estoy entrando en 'shut-down', no puedo pensar, no quiero pensar, no quiero sentir... Te tienes que dormir". Pues, eso es lo que me pasa a mí en ocasiones.]*

### *Behavioral Patterns*

Behavioral patterns emerged from the stories of those interviewed that are consistent with the definitions, assumptions, emotional and physical manifestations of

this phenomenon as discussed above. Participants revealed 21 discernible reactive behaviors or behavioral themes that are directly related to their personal *pendejo* experiences. Ten of these identified themes were mentioned by the majority of the interviewees. A discussion of these 10 behaviors allows for a better understanding of actions taken that are typical to this phenomenon.

*Inaction, clamming-up, and internal management.* The most prominent behavioral response to a *pendejo* bashing event was *inaction* with indications of potential escapist postures [Sources 8; References 53]. In their *pendejo* anecdotes and interview narratives, participants admitted to doing nothing or doing very little to avert or to confront what they interpreted as a derisive *pendejo* affront. The most likely response to such offense was to *clam-up, keep it private* and to begin an *internal healing process* to try to overcome the detrimental effect of a supposed *pendejo* attack. In other words, inaction, clamming-up and the internal management of the *pendejo* trauma were typical reactions within the immediacy of an identified *pendejo* act. Ana's answer was typical to all interviews. When asked, *what did you do?* Ana expressed the following:

*Ana:* Did not confront... there I did not confront.

*[No confrontaste... en eso sí no confronté.]*

*Re:* In other words, in some specific situations, ehh... like those you wrote about [autobiographical anecdotes]... what you did was... to clam-up.

*[O sea, que en unas situaciones en específico ehhh... que son las que tú escribiste... la acción tuya fue... que te lo tragaste.]*

*Ana:* I did not confront... yes, yes... exactly.

*[No confronté... ujú, ujú... exacto.]*

*Re:* You did not confront. Then, maybe... maybe... ehh... maybe that person was not even aware...

*[No confrontaste. O sea, lo... lo.... Este... a lo mejor la persona ni se enteró...]*

*Ana:* Exactly...

*[Exacto.]*

*Re:* That you felt you were taken for *pendejo*... and you did not seek an explanation from that person...

*[Que tú sentiste que te cogieron de pendeja... y no le pediste cuentas a la otra persona.]*

*Ana:* Yes, that is true, that's true.

*[Sí, es verdad... es verdad.]*

*Hypervigilance, analysis, withdrawal and termination, warning, defensive*

*postures.* After going through a *pendejo* experience, participants described a series of behavioral reactions geared to eliminate or to prevent the possibility of falling victims of a future *pendejo* incidence. These behaviors are consistent with the assumption of the *pendejo* as a constant, inevitable threat.

The most prominent of these coping behaviors, mentioned by all of the participants, was *hypervigilance* or the need to sustain an almost perpetual, although many times implicit, state of alert [Sources 8; References 40]. Participants were categorical in their expressions about the relevance of being always on alert to make sure that they will not to *fall as pendejo* again. Rita was very straightforward in stating that she needed to be vigilant because “one needs to be attentive to everything that goes on around you.” She also analyzed the situation and manifested that one needs to “Be alert!

[You need to] keep your five senses focused, well, to try to analyze, you know, where that person is coming from.” Rita not only kept up a defensive posture and sent out a warning, but in the following excerpt she terminated the relationship.

*Rita:* “OK. You made me do this... perfect, so you got what you wanted. It won’t happen again. Now I am much more aware... and I don’t want you near me.”

*[“OK. Tú hiciste que yo hiciera esto... perfecto, te saliste con la tuya. No va a volver a pasar. Ya yo estoy consciente... y no te quiero cerca.”]*

Omar not only avowed the need to maintain a hypervigilant, defensive posture, but he also sent a warning to an imagined potential perpetrator.

*Omar:* I felt like a great big *pendejo*, but the message that one wants to send to the other person is that, NO! And, OK... you are not going to *take me for a peñejo*, don’t even dare to try to *take me for a peñejo*, because I am alert.

*[Me sentí como un buen peñejo, pero el mensaje que uno le quiere llevar a la otra persona es que ¡NO! Y, ajá... como que no me vas a coger de peñejo, ni me vuelvas a coger de peñejo, que estoy alerta.]*

Most of those interviewed made use of these typical *pendejo*-related behaviors and strategies to protect themselves from possible future *pendejo* assaults. In other words, most of the participants used all or some of these tactics to be on the safe side and also to be prepared and ready to detect and deter any possible *pendejo* attempt.

*Confrontation.* Even though inaction is likely the usual response to a *pendejo* affront, some participants do engage in some kind of confrontational behaviors which can be either *assertive* or *meeek*. But either way, their confrontation presupposes that the other person *took* or is trying to *take them for peñejos*. The interviewees seemed not to confront based on the need to clarify the assumed intentions of the other person, but to

state or to make clear that “I know that *you took me* or want to *take me for a pendejo*.”

Pedro presented a typical example of the meek way of confronting:

*Pedro:* Yes... uhum. As far as the mechanisms, I'd like to comment something... Sometimes I feel bad questioning the person that I think might be trying to take me for a *pendejo* too much. So then, well, I question very little. And... and... and it's like I give them the benefit of the doubt, simply because I am questioning. In other words, by questioning I am giving the benefit of the doubt regarding what they are telling me, in the sense that what they are telling me might be correct. So unless, unless I can at least detect clearly in the answer that... that it's a lie, or that they are trying to take me for a *pendejo*, with the clarifications—if it's not something very obvious—well I give the benefit of the doubt and remain vulnerable to fall as a “*pendejo*” again. In other words, to fall, in the end, if that was the intention of the person.

*[Sí... ujú. En cuanto a los mecanismos, quería comentarte algo. Que a veces yo me siento mal cuestionando, demasiado, a la persona que creo que me quiere coger de pendejo. Entonces, pues, cuestiono poco. Y... y... y como que suelto el beneficio de la duda, simplemente porque estoy cuestionando. O sea, que también en otras palabras, al cuestionar doy el beneficio de la duda de que lo que me están diciendo es correcto. O sea que, que a menos que yo detecte claramente en la respuesta que ... que es mentira, o que me quieren seguir cogiendo de pendejo con las aclaraciones—si no es algo fácil que se cae de la mata—pues di el beneficio de la duda y quedo vulnerable a volver a caer de pendejo. O sea, a caer finalmente, si es que era la intención de la persona.]*

The assertive way of confronting is more along the lines of, “You think that I am a *pendejo*” or “You took me for a *pendejo*.” In most cases the supposed perpetrator forcefully denied this assertion and even acted puzzled that the victim would even think that they see them as *pendejos*. This tended to anger the supposed victim even more because they interpreted the denial as “Does this person really think that I am so *pendejo* that I will believe that his-her intention had nothing to do with *taking me for a pendejo*?” Rita presents a good example of this assertive way of confronting.



*Rita:* Oh yes. And I told him, “I am sorry... I am not one of those... You mistook the person I am.” I turned around and left. He went after me... and told me that I had misinterpreted things... that it was not the way I had, hmmm... that it was not the meaning that I had given things... I told him, “Look, don’t waste your saliva, or your efforts, nothing, because... I am sorry, this is the end. I repeat, I am not one of those. You will not make me fall; I am clear on my position and what I am.” And... [I said] “Bye, bye” ... I put him out of my life.

*[O sí. Y le dije, “Lo siento, este...yo no soy de esas...te equivocaste de persona.” Ahí me di media vuelta, y seguí caminando. Y él se fue detrás de mí...me dijo que yo había malinterpretado las cosas...que no era así como yo las había, este...con ese “meaning” que yo le había dado... Y yo le dije, “Mira, ni gastes saliva, ni esfuerzos, ni nada porque...lo siento...hasta aquí llegamos. Te vuelvo a repetir, no soy de esas. No me vas a hacer caer, yo estoy muy clara en lo mío y en lo que yo soy.” Y... “bye, bye”...lo despaché de mi vida.]*

*Re:* Then you understand there, that he tried to take you for... [*pendeja*]?

*[¿Entonces ahí tú entiendes que se trató de cogerte de... [*pendeja*]?)*

*Rita:* Oh yes! He was using all his wiles.

*[¡O sí! Por todas las artimañas.]*

### *Intentionality*

This subcategory answers the question: *Who is a person capable of taking others for pendejo?* It takes into account both *self-intentions* or how inclined I am to take others for *pendejos*; as well as *other’s intentions* or how motivated others are to take people for *pendejos*.

*Self-intention.* In terms of self-intention participants answered the following question in *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Guide*: Are you aware of ever taking someone for *pendejo* in a premeditated, intentional way with the purpose of doing harm? All interviewees answered along similar lines. They expressed that they would

never consciously or intentionally harm other people, much less take anyone for *pendejo*.

Most cited The Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.*

Ana's answer to the question echoed the responses of all participants.

*Ana:* Yes because... it's that... maybe this is also an ethic or moral question, I mean, of... of seeing your neighbor as a person just like you... I see it that way. I mean, when you regard others as your equal well I... it doesn't fit in my mind that I can take you for a *pendejo* when you are a human being the same as me. Then, since I see it from this point of view, well I don't know... but I could not take others for *pendejo*.

*[Sí porque...es que... esto quizás también tiene que ver con una cuestión de ética y de moral o sea, de...de tu ver al prójimo como tu igual...yo lo veo así. O sea, cuando tú veas a las personas como tu igual pues yo...a mí no me cabe en la mente que yo te pueda coger a ti de pendejo cuando tú eres un ser humano igual que yo. Entonces, como yo lo veo desde ese punto de vista, pues no se... no podría coger de pendejo a nadie.]*

*Other's intentions.* Attributed intentionality regarding others includes participants descriptions of who is capable of intentionally taking others for *pendejo*, what kind of person is apt to engage in this kind of detrimental behavior, and which are the likely environments where people are at risk to being *taken for pendejos*. The answers to these questions allowed for a better understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Three fourths of those participating in this investigation agreed that *anyone is capable* of taking others for *pendejos* [Sources 6; References 10]. They mentioned that it can be not only strangers, coworkers and acquaintances, but also close family and friends including spouses, parents, siblings and even one's own children. Ana summed this up in her following expressions.

*Ana:* Yeeesss... There are people... there are people who are predisposed to *take people for pendejo*... Definitely, [you see this] every day in the streets! Je, je... Right now the newspapers are full of these stories...

*[Síí... si hay gente... hay gente que es capaz de coger de pendejo a uno...  
¡Definitivamente, todos los días en la calle! Je, je... Ahora mismo el periódico  
está lleno de esas historias...]*

Re: So, this is very real.

*[O sea, que es algo que es bien real.]*

Ana: Ohh... yes... definitely.

*[Sí... ohh... definitivo.]*

Re: This means that they can be... even family members... friends?

*[O sea, que pueden ser... ¿inclusive familiares... amistades?]*

Ana: Oh yes, yes... it can be anyone... Oh yes! The person that has no scruples can be your husband, he can be your son, it can be anyone... that has no scruples.

*[O sí, sí... cualquiera... ¡O sí! El que no tiene escrúpulos puede ser tu marido,  
puede ser tu hijo, puede ser cualquiera... si no tiene escrúpulos.]*

Re: You mean that anyone can have the... the ability, or the intention of *taking others for pendejo*...

*[O sea, cualquiera puede tener la... la habilidad, o la intención de coger de pendejo...]*

Ana: Yes, yes.

*[Sí, sí.]*

Most of those interviewed agreed that people who are apt to engage in this kind of injurious behavior—and make others fall for *pendejos*—are astute, wicked people with no scruples who seek to take advantage of a situation regardless of whether you are a stranger, a family member or a close friend. This was the typical answer to the question: *Who or whom are people capable of taking others for pendejos?*

*José:* To me, they are people who seek to take advantage of a situation or of a friend... and also persons who have no scruples, this is truly so.

*[Para mí, personas que buscan aprovecharse de una situación o de un amigo... y personas sin escrúpulos, de verdad que sí.]*

*Nora:* What I wrote is... that they are people who are very astute, and who don't have... well... never... the good intentions and... and the well being of the other person [in mind].

*[En lo que escribí fue... que son personas bien listas, que no tienen ehh... el...nada... las buenas intenciones y... y el bienestar de las otras personas.]*

Almost all of the participants expressed that people who are predisposed to take others for *pendejos* can be found everywhere, and in any setting. To Pedro this happens not only at work, but also at a more personal level. José agreed with Pedro but included one's neighborhood, including your Church. Enid was sure that you can find these kinds of people even within your own intimate family. José provided the typical answer to the question, where do you find these people?

*José:* I think that... that they can be everywhere.

*[Yo pienso que... que en todos los ambientes puede haber.]*

#### *Category 5: Propensity*

This category includes a perceived personal and socio-cultural susceptibility to be taken for *pendejos* and/or be labeled as such. Participants' narratives suggested that they are under the impression that the propensity to fall for *pendejos* is very high. This assertion can be understood with the data collected which reveals an insistence among those interviewed that anybody can take anyone for *pendejo* anywhere, anytime.

*Personal propensity*

In terms of how susceptible am I to be *taken for pendejo*, participants agreed unanimously that they all felt vulnerable to *fall*. Following is Rita's answer when questioned about this topic.

*Re:* Rate the propensity with which we are taken as *pendejo* or *pendeja*.

*[¿Cuán propensos estamos a ser cogidos de pendejo?]*

*Rita:* Well see, I answered... and I reiterate a thousand times what I wrote. To my best understanding, all the time [laughs]. All the time, because... no matter how high your defenses are, or the care... to think things out about how that person is coming or... how he-she is going to act, or what she is telling you... and his-her body language. Ehh... no matter how much you try, ehh... to avoid, to be taken for a *pendejo*... you can't always avoid it. Sooner or later, you will fall in one way or the other. Maybe one day you may escape from it, but not always... really, no.

*[Pues, mira, yo te contesté... y me reitero mil veces en lo que te escribí. A mi mejor entender, todo el tiempo [risa]. Todo el tiempo, porque es que... por más que tu tengas las defensas altas, o el cuidado de... de pensar mil veces como puede venir esa persona o... o cómo va a actuar, o qué te está diciendo de boca y qué está diciéndote en...en su "body language." Este... por más que uno intente, ehh...evitar, o que te cojan de pendejo... no siempre lo vas a lograr. Tú siempre vas a caer en una u otra. Puede ser que un día sí te escapes, pero, no siempre... de verdad que no.]*

*Socio-cultural Propensity*

A socio-cultural propensity to view Puerto Ricans as being collectively vulnerable to be seen as *pendejos* was detected in the narratives. Participants considered certain ascribed Puerto Rican personality traits to be practically the same as their own definitions of a *pendejo*. In the questionnaire and during the interviews, they answered the question: *How do you relate the concept pendejo with ascribed Puerto Rican personality traits*

*like: passive, docile, indolent, submissive, conformist, belittling, lazy and noble?* Even though there was some discrepancy among participants' coupling of personality traits and the word *pendejo*, results revealed that all of them link up most if not all of these personality traits to their own particular descriptions of a *pendejo*.

Ana was the most reluctant among those who participated in the study to accept that these personality traits were indistinguishable from her notion of a *pendejo*. She made her point that these identified Puerto Rican traits were not tantamount to her conception of a *pendejo*. Nevertheless, Ana did admit that being *submissive* was the same as being *pendejo*. Also, even though several of the participants were reluctant to include *docile* and *noble* as *pendejo*-related traits, most of these participants concluded that being too docile or too noble were *pendejo*-like behaviors that could induce others to pull off a *pendejo* sting.

Luis, on the other hand, was categorical in stating that these personality traits “*describen al Puertorriqueño*” [describe Puerto Ricans].

*Luis:* I... I... wrote: “We conform to the conditions that our country is in and we allow politicians and foreigners to take us for *pendejos*. We are collectively *pendejos* and we allow... and we don't... and we are not even aware of this.”

*[Yo... yo... yo puse: “Nos conformamos con las condiciones del país y dejamos que los políticos y extranjeros nos cojan de pendejo. Somos colectivamente pendejos y nos dejamos... y no... y no nos damos cuenta.]*

*Re:* And we are not aware... So, these traits mentioned here, can they be directly related to... to ... to what we've been talking about, to what is conceptualized as a *pendejo*?

*[Y no nos damos cuenta... ¿O sea, que éstos rasgos que están ahí, pueden relacionarse con la... lo... lo que hemos hablado, lo que se conceptúa como pendejo?]*

Luis: Yes, yes... uhum.

*[Sí, sí... ujú.]*

Re: You mean that being passive, docile, indolent, submissive, conformist, belittled, lazy, noble... ehh... well, yes it can have a connotation related to the connotation that is given... that is given to the *pendejos*.

*[O sea, ser pasivo, dócil, indolente, sometido, conformista, rebajado, vagos, nobles... ehh... pues, sí pueden tener una connotación relacionada a las connotaciones que le dan... que le dan a los pendejos.]*

Luis: Uhum.

*[Ujú.]*

Luis, as well as most of those interviewed, established a correlation between ascribed Puerto Rican personality traits and their own descriptions of a *pendejo*. Awareness of this correlation was not taken lightly by most participants. There was an initial resistance to accept, at least some of these traits, as synonymous to characteristics attributed to people who are considered *pendejos*. Rita accepted that initially she rejected the comparison. Following are excerpts taken from two instances of her interview where she first admits an initial moment of denial but after further analysis she comes to the conclusion that, “later on I wrote to you in pencil [laughs], they are synonyms of the... they are synonyms of the word *pendejo*” [*“después te escribí a lápiz [risa], son sinónimos de la... son sinónimos de la palabra pendejo*].

Rita: Uhum, Uhum... Look, I answered your question... My first phrase was: “The lion is not as fierce as they paint it” [the bark is worse than the bite]. Ehh... honestly I don’t... I don’t want to believe... that... that we are that way. [This is] because I don’t see myself as a lazy, or belittled, or... or a conformist Puerto Rican.

*[Ujú, ujú... Mira, yo te contesté... Mi primera frase fue: “No es tan fiero el león como lo pintan.” Ehh... honestamente yo no... no quiero creer... que... que*

*seamos así. Porque no me visualizo... como un puertorriqueño vago, o rebajado, o... o conformista*

Soon after, however, Rita reconsiders her initial position and comes to the following conclusion which closely resembles Luis's statements about Puerto Rican character and the *pendejo* descriptors.

*Rita:* Yes, to be honest with you, yes. I see it, ehh... this can be seen, ehh... I see it from that point of view, because if we begin to compare, more or less, the meanings of the words written here... they do incorporate what is considered, or what is denominated, a *pendejo*. [That is that Puerto Ricans] are conformists, that they are docile, that they are obedient, that they are, I mean... that they allow others to give them orders, that we are puppets, that... And this is the side I took [laughs]. So this is why I rejected them [the comparison of Puerto Rican traits and the *pendejo* descriptors] at first [laughs].

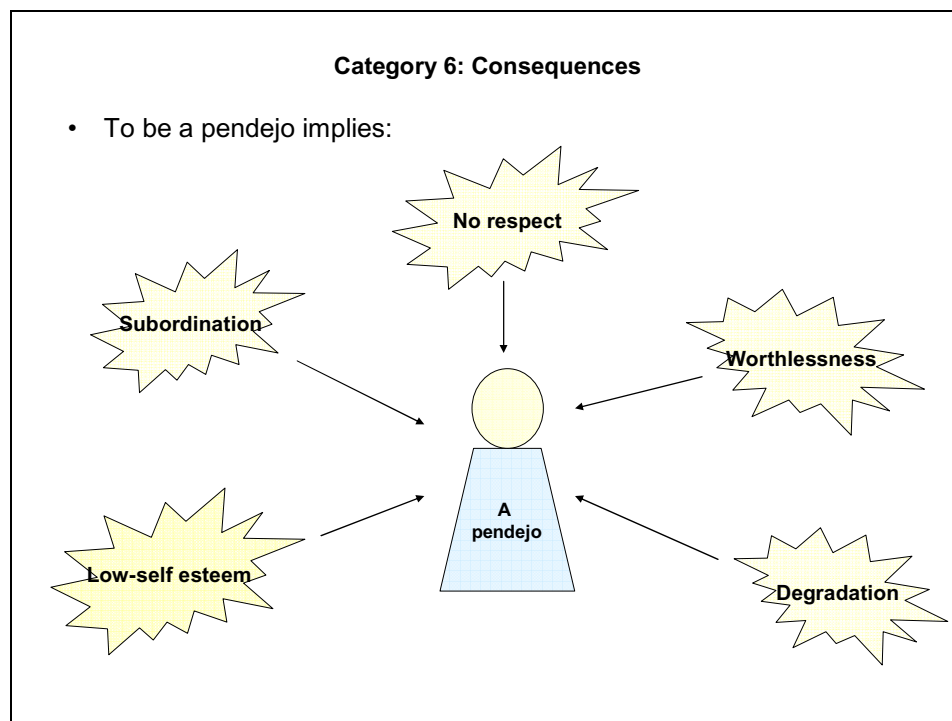
*Sí, te soy sincera, sí. Yo lo veo, ehh... se puede ver, ehh... yo lo veo desde ese punto de vista, porque es que si nos ponemos a comparar, más o menos, los significados de las palabras que están escritas ahí... llevan a lo que se considera, o se denomina, un *pendejo*: Que son conformistas, que son dóciles, que son obedientes, que son este... que se dejan mandar, que somos títeres, que... Y por ese lado yo me fui [risa]. Y yo las rechacé [risa].*

#### *Category 6: Consequences*

People who are definitely *pendejos* suffer from the consequences of being labeled as such. Participants answered the question: *what are the consequences for someone who is irrevocably a *pendejo*?* The purpose of this question was to gain access to participants' worst fears of being classified as *pendejos*. Their answers provided insight into why they perceive the *pendejo* as a threats as well as insight to their need to develop behavioral responses or "survival skills" that help them evade *pendejo* categorizations.



Five consequences were mentioned by most of those interviewed. All participants agreed on the first two, while at least five participants named the remaining three consequences as important. All five elements are considered relevant to understanding the persistent aversion to being labeled as *pendejo*. Figure 3 illustrates these perceived consequences.



*Figure 3. Consequences of being a pendejo.*

Two consequences common to all participants, with a total of 16 and 15 references each are: a *pendejo* is considered a *nobody*, a *worthless individual* and a *pendejo* assumes *degrading, upsetting positions* in reference to others. Most of those interviewed also mentioned three other consequences: a *pendejo* has *little or no self-*

*esteem, he-she is subordinate to the whims of others and a pendejo merits no respect.*

These answers exemplify assumptions that convey very negative psychosocial consequences to the alluded person. The words of several participants speak for themselves.

*Omar:* OK... ehh... as I perceive it ehh... a *pendejo* is not valued, nor does he-she value him-herself. It is a person that maybe... ehh... does not deserve other people's respect ehh... and... I see him-her... ehh... as a person... to say it this way, as a pitiful individual. A person that doesn't... that doesn't go far in life, he-she is not going... that is, this is the way I perceive him-her... that is no... like people say, he-she is a "Mr. Nobody."

*[OK... ehh... según mi percepción ehh... un pendejo ni es valorado, ni se valora a sí mismo. Una persona a la cual quizás... ehh... las personas no le guardan el respeto que se merece ehh... y... lo veo como... ehh... como una persona... por decirlo así, un pobre hombre. Una persona que no... que no llega lejos, no va a... o sea, es como yo lo percibo... que no... que es como dicen, un "Don Nadie."]*

*Nora:* He-she gets squashed and... Anybody can take advantage... and it's not necessarily because of lack of formal education.

*[Se deja pisotear y... cualquiera se aprovecha... y no necesariamente por falta de educación.]*

*Ana:* But... when this becomes your life pattern that they keep *taking you for pendejo* many times, well then, I think that this is a matter of low self-esteem.

*[Perooo... cuando ya eso es un patrón en tu vida que te cogen muchas veces de pendejo, pues entonces, pienso yo que hay una autoestima baja.]*

*Enid:* [A *pendejo*] is somebody who cannot make his-her own decisions because everybody else make decisions for him-her. Well... he-she does what... all the time he-she keeps doing what others tell him-her to do.]

*[Un pendejo es] alguien que no toma decisiones por sí mismo porque los demás toman decisiones por él. Este... hace lo... todo el tiempo hace lo que los demás le dicen.]*

Taking into consideration the negative consequences of being a *pendejo*, as exposed by all participants, Luis' answer to the Researcher's question makes sense.

*Re:* Does not deserve respect... So... in other words... he-she is a person that... Would you like being a person like this?

*[No inspira respeto... Este... en otras palabras... es una persona que... ¿A ti te gustaría ser esa persona?]*

*Luis:* NO!

This part of the data analysis focused on organizing, presenting and analyzing the data staying close to the stories as revealed by the participants themselves (Wolcott, 1994). The descriptions facilitated by those interviewed initiated the process of exploration and discovery and lead to a deeper understanding of Puerto Rican participant's collective worldview of the *pendejo* construct. These descriptions revealed pertinent information that is central to the purpose of this research project. The following part of the Data Analysis, *Findings Related to the Research Questions*, takes the data collected and looks for answers to the research questions that guide this investigation.

## Findings Related to the Research Questions

### *Research Question Number 1*

The question: How do middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants describe their experience of the *pendejo* construct? was answered in detail in the preceding section. There were no perceptible discrepant cases.

The ways participants explained and clarified the meaning they ascribe to this construct suggest cohesion in the implications of the word *pendejo*. A majority of those consulted concurred in 52 out of 98 identified themes. Interviewees not only assented in the way they defined the concept but there was also consistency in their presuppositions and in their emotional, physical and behavioral responses to a *pendejo* incident. This evidences that participants see the *pendejo* through a similar lens and manifest meaning-making processes that may be characteristic to their particular cultural group.

The way participants describe and experience the *pendejo* construct is also consonant with Mischel & Shoda's (1999) contention that personal constructs can have cultural components that impact the collective worldview of a society. Jose's words validate this line of reasoning.

*José:* I believe that this is something cultural.... I believe that this [*pendejo* phrase] goes way beyond the mere word. I think it goes even further, I think it is... it is more like “how I feel”, it is “how you made me feel”, it's like I.. I.. “How I allowed myself [to be caught as a *pendejo*]”... I mean, yes, it goes beyond that. That is, and I think that the culture... our people, we as Puerto Ricans, well, we are the ones who have given this connotation and this importance to the word [*pendejo*] and to all its manifestations... because... really ehh... it is here in Puerto Rico where I usually hear this.

*[Yo creo que es algo cultural.... Yo creo que va más allá de la palabra. Yo creo que va más allá, yo creo que es...es “cómo me siento”, es “cómo me hiciste sentir”, es cómo me...me...”como yo quise que me dejaran”...o sea...va más allá, de verdad que sí, va más allá. O sea, y pienso que la cultura...nuestro pueblo, nosotros como puertorriqueños, pues le hemos dado una connotación y una importancia a esta palabra, y a las manifestaciones de esta palabra, este...pues porque realmente ehh...donde más yo escucho eso es aquí en Puerto Rico.]*

The shared meanings inherent in the participants' answers about their experience of the *pendejo* construct also make it obvious how it is likely to perform as a meme—or

an idea or behavior “that spread from person to person within a culture” (Merriam-Webster, 2003, p. 774; see also, Cacioppo, 2002; Dawkins, 1989; De St.Aubin, 2004; Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000)—and can have a far-reaching impact in Puerto Rican society.

### *Research Question Number 2*

Combined experiences of the *pendejo* construct answer the second research question: Taking into account their collective experiences, how are these conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon?

APA (2007) defines *phenomenon* as “an observable event or physical occurrence” (p. 695). Along similar lines Merriam-Webster (2003, p. 929) indicates that a phenomenon is “an observable fact or event.” Isolated descriptions of an event do not constitute a phenomenon per se in the sense that there are no common threads weaved together to account for a specific happening. Such would be the case if participants in this study would have provided dissimilar and unrelated descriptions of their *pendejo* experiences. Commonality of descriptions related to the *pendejo* construct provided by the interviewees, however, substantiate the conceptualization of these collective experiences as an observable event or a phenomenon, in this case, the *pendejo* phenomenon.

*Research Question Number 3*

Third research question: How is this phenomenon represented de facto in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the daily life of the participants as a cognitive distortion and a negative self-referent? This question is approached through a discourse analysis of the participants' expressions. Drew, Dobson and Stam (1999) validated the discourse analysis approach because of its emphasis on language and shared communication.

Language can be seen to have an active, functional, constructive orientation. In addition to constructing different versions of reality, it performs social actions, such as requesting, apologizing, thanking, blaming. Hence, language is not detached from social reality and has very definite social consequences. When discourse is analyzed, researchers endeavor to identify the social actions being performed and the possible functions they serve by examining these consequences. (p. 193)

Meissner (2008), meanwhile, concluded that, "the word... is a partial and incomplete expression of the fullness and complexity of the thought behind it" (p. 220). It is significant that all participants coincide that the *pendejo* is a term commonly used in Puerto Rican everyday conversation [8 sources, 32 references], even though the word is often disguised [8 sources, 19 references]. This demonstrates how embedded this concept is in the Puerto Ricans' mind frame, and one can only infer about the depth and scope of this phenomenon through the descriptions provided by those who participated in this study.

### *Cognitive Distortions and Irrational Beliefs*

Participants' discourses about their *pendejo* definitions and about their personal experiences revealed a tendency to presuppose that people are out to do them harm, as well as a tendency to assume the *pendejo* as a negative self-referent. Their collective narratives suggest widespread distortions in their assertions about the phenomenon. These findings are consistent with answers provided by people participating in 13 focus groups in the *pendejo* session of the Personal Development Workshop mentioned in the Explorative Review section on the Research Method chapter.

All interviewees agreed that the *pendejo* is perceived as an overtaking event [8 sources, 68 references] that poses a constant, persistent threat [8 sources, 33 references] where the person is prone to fall victim [8 sources, 18 references] to a supposed perpetrator's ill intentions. Most of them considered that everybody, including close family and friends, is a potential perpetrator [6 sources, 10 references]. They also agree that a *pendejo* incident can happen anytime, anywhere [7 sources, 12 references] and that people capable of doing this are vile, ill-intentioned individuals who are out to make others act and look like fools, in other words, *pendejos* [5 sources, 8 references].

Curiously, though, all participants were categorical when explaining that they would never take others for *pendejos* with a conscious intention to do them harm and cited moral and ethical reasons to back up their contention [8 sources, 17 references]. The question here is: If none of them is motivated to take others for *pendejos*, how come there are so many people out there willing and consciously engaging in malicious

*pendejo* schemes and acts with the intention to do harm even to loved ones and close friends?

Participants' narratives also provided information about specific behavioral manifestations, including actions taken as well as emotional and physical reactions connected to their *pendejo* experiences. These manifestations are consistent with the recurrent cognitive distortions, or "faulty, or inaccurate thinking, perception or belief" (APA, 2007, p. 189) detected in their discourses.

All participants mentioned being always on the alert so as to be able to detect a possible *pendejo* threat [8 sources, 40 references]. This in turn lead most of those interviewed to assume defensive, sometimes defiant, postures [5 sources, 11 references]. However, the usual reaction to a *pendejo* event, according to all the participants interviewed was inaction [8 sources, 53 references]. They preferred to clam-up, to "keep it private" [5 sources, 11 references], and to manage the situation internally [7 sources, 15 references]. To prevent further *pendejo* incidents they habitually engaged in particular behaviors such as: systematic analyzing of suspicious interactions with particular others [7 sources, 28 references]; issuing verbal warnings [7 sources, 14 references]; and withdrawal, distancing and/or termination of the relationship [7 sources, 16 references].

Even though the participants often engaged in mostly escapist, evasive compartments, some confrontation with the perpetrator can take place. These confrontations can be meek, docile [5 sources, 10 references] or assertive [5 sources, 17 references]. Both types of confrontation, though, are based on the premise or "fact" that the other person's intention was to take the self-identified victim for *pendejo*. Little



margin is left for the supposed perpetrator to clarify or explain him-herself. In any case, there is a marked lack of credibility to any explanation provided.

Emotional and physical responses are direct offshoots of the cognitive distortions that characterize this phenomenon. All of the participants mentioned experiencing one or more physical symptoms following a *pendejo* situation [8 sources, 20 references]. These symptoms are consistent with threatening situations that provoke fear and anxiety. The most common symptoms mentioned were: headaches, rising blood pressure, blushing, hyperventilation, perspiration, physical exhaustion, sleepiness. On the emotional aspect, all of those interviewed mentioned feeling anger, even ire [8 sources, 41 references], and great mistrust [8 sources, 13 references] after a *pendejo* incident. There was also a feeling of helplessness and impotence [5 sources, 5 references], as well as anxiety and fear [5 sources, 5 references]. A majority of the participants self-victimized [5 sources, 14 references] or blamed themselves for having allowed others to *take them for pendejoes*, in other words, to take them for fools.

### *Negative Self-referent*

Discourse analysis of the data collected revealed not only manifestations of cognitive distortions such as those mentioned above, but it also provided insight into how participants assume the *pendejo* as a negative self-referent, which leads to self-victimizing—though mostly out of awareness—diatribes. Perceived *pendejo* acts lead participants to take on self-labeling and self-blaming behaviors [8 sources, 75 references] with self-victimization consequences.

Peculiarly, all participants accepted that nobody told them that they were *pendejos*. The fact is that they were the first who identified themselves as *pendejos*, and their subsequent reactions parted from the self-assertion that they were looked down upon as *pendejos*. This assertion was given absolute credibility and was seldom verified. Participants were certain that they were or acted as *big great pendejos* and seemed not to forgive themselves for allowing such a thing to happen, “they should have been more alert, they should have known better.” This is compounded by the fact that those interviewed tended to engage in inactive, escapist behaviors and to keep this unforgivable *pendejo* sensation to themselves. If we add the perception that most participants have about a person who is considered a *pendejo*—and the negative connotation that they ascribe to this word—it is understandable that the tendency to self-label and to self-blame themselves for actually being and feeling like *pendejos* institutes the *pendejo* as a phenomenon that operates as a negative self-referent for all study participants.

The discourse analysis of the data gathered during the in-depth interviews validates the fact that this phenomenon is represented de facto in the daily discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the participants as a cognitive distortion or irrational belief and a negative self-referent. The analysis followed Drew et al.’s (1999) indications for considering language as a social reality with definite social consequences. By analyzing the interview data from this point of view it was possible to identify cognitive distortions and the consequent negative self-referents brought to light by the participants’ personal stories.

#### *Research Question Number 4*

The answer to the fourth and last research question—How and in what ways is the *pendejo* phenomenon reflected in the psychological make-up of those who experience it?—is detailed throughout the analysis of the data in this chapter. The data collected exposed relevant information about the psychological make-up of those who participated in the study.

One element that seems to be inherent to the *pendejo* phenomenon is a state of constant alert due to the certainty of a persistent, inevitable threat that supposes being “caught as a *pendejo*” or “being taken for a *pendejo*.” The data revealed consequential psychological manifestations to this supposed threatening experience, such as learned helplessness and powerlessness, irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions, low self-esteem, magical thinking, generalizations, causal attributions, characterological self-labeling and self-blaming with consequent self-victimization, and mistrust, among others. These psychological manifestations, when taken together, point to an ingrained *paranoid tendency* with manifestations typical to this phenomenon, and to *hurt feelings* as an interpersonal emotion made evident in all participants’ accounts. These two aspects of the phenomenon are discussed in detail.

#### *Paranoid Tendency*

The DSM-IV *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (APA, 1994) presents the diagnostic features of the paranoid personality disorder. These features have many things in common with expressions made by participants about

their personal experience of the *pendejo* phenomenon. Psychological literature distinguishes between clinical paranoia and the state, subclinical and nonclinical kind (APA, 2007; Combs, 2004; Combs, Penn, Chadwick, Trower, Michael, & Basso, 2007; Newhill, 1990; Thewissen, Bentall, Lecompte, Van Os, & Myin-Germeys, 2008). APA's dictionary exposes diverse paranoia-related definitions consonant with the tendency among scholars and clinicians to place levels of paranoia along a continuum, ranging from nonclinical to clinical paranoia, in the name of accuracy when diagnosing this condition (Combs et al., 2007; Thewissen et al., 2008).

The term nonclinical paranoia applies to the sample in this study which consists of fully functional, successful professionals with no known mental or personality dysfunctions. Terms like *paranoid tendency* and *paranoid ideation* best capture a paranoid proclivity noticed throughout the participants' narratives. Paranoid tendency is "a propensity toward feelings of mistrust, persecutory beliefs, and negative perceptions of oneself and others," while paranoid ideations are "thought processes involving persistent suspiciousness and nondelusional beliefs of being persecuted, harassed, or treated unfairly by others" (APA, 2007, p. 670). Data collected support both definitions of paranoid tendency and paranoid ideation as characteristic to participants' descriptions about their personal experiences of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Newhill (1990) focused on how cultural and societal forces influenced the development of paranoia and paranoid beliefs. She cautioned about the need to differentiate what she called "healthy cultural paranoia" from paranoia as a functional illness. According to Newhill, minorities and disadvantaged populations are prone to

manifest paranoid beliefs and tendencies “as adaptive mechanisms to cope with the constant threat and danger inherent in the life experiences of those persons” (p. 177). She explains this further.

The realistic appraisal and response to the common fears of everyday life by those of lower SES [socioeconomic status] may eventually be the development of paranoid mistrust as a common element in interpersonal relations. Mistrust as an adaptive mechanism is often found where opportunities and resources are scarce, where protection by social institutions and agencies is weak, and where exploitation and victimization are common. In such situations, mistrust and the development of paranoid beliefs can be rational responses toward the world. (p. 177)

Paranoid tendencies, beliefs, and ideations noticeable in all of the participants’ accounts are consistent with Newhill’s (1990) definition of “healthy cultural paranoia” and with recent research findings indicating that paranoia can be found in normal individuals (Combs et al., 2007; Combs & Penn, 2004), notwithstanding their economic and social status. Puerto Rico’s historic past and present detailed in chapter 2, provided the contextual forum for the emergence of the *pendejo* phenomenon with its plausible consequential impact (e.g., paranoid tendency, beliefs, and ideations) on the psychological make-up of members of this society.

### *Hurt Feelings*

An added element to consider in this analysis is what researchers describe as *hurt feelings* (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; May, Byrd, Brown, Beckman, & Sizemore, 2007). Leary et al. describe hurt feelings the following way:

Subjectively, hurt feelings appear to involve feelings of general distress or upset in which common distinctions among emotional states such as anxiety, sadness,

anger, and guilt are difficult to make. Hurt feelings may be accompanied by particular emotions—the hurt person may feel angry as well as hurt, for example—but, at their core, hurt feelings simply hurt. The ways in which people describe their feelings of hurt convey the truly painful nature of the experience. In response to hurtful events, people may say they felt “crushed,” “stung,” “burned,” or like they were “slapped across the face”.... All varieties of negative affect are, by definition, unpleasant, but hurt feelings appear to involve an affective quality that is particularly aversive. (p. 1226)

*Pendejo* episodes necessarily involve hurt feelings. These are very upsetting experiences which often leave deep open wounds and may produce great psychological distress.

Participants’ stories are fraught with examples of how traumatic being *taken for pendejos* or being *caught as a pendejo* had been for them. Rita’s comment that “It’s denigrating... I visualize it as though someone tried to crush my face on the ground” is in line with Leary et al.’s depiction of responses typical to this emotional state.

Leary et al.’s (1998); see also, May et al., 2007) description of the causes, phenomenology, and consequences of hurt feelings presented an interesting angle about emotions that in many ways underlie the *pendejo* phenomenon. The authors related hurt feelings and interpersonal events. They focused on hurt feelings as a little studied exclusively interpersonal emotion that can involve long lasting pain.

One interpersonal emotion that has nearly escaped the attention of behavioral researchers involves the experience that people colloquially call “hurt feelings.” The psychological hurt engendered by interpersonal events can be as acute and aversive as the physical pain of bodily injury, and it sometimes lasts far longer. (p.1225)

A variety of situations and events create pronounced distress that can eventually strain relationships. May et al. (2007) expressed that “recent research suggests that having one’s feelings hurt is detrimental to the hurt person’s self-esteem and damaging to

relational stability” (p.51). On the other hand, Leary et al. (1998) explained that any hurtful messages involve negative evaluations made by others, but they point to the nonverbal aspect of communication where people are hurt by what they interpret that others have said or not said about them. There is a similarity to what happens in the *pendejo* phenomenon, although in this case negative evaluations are made mainly by the victim themselves and not necessarily by the supposed perpetrator. This is also in line with May et al.’s *introjective hurt* pattern of responding to hurt feelings where people with an introjective hurt dispositional style “tend to internalize their hurt, thereby exacerbating it and engaging in self-blame” (p. 52). Self-labeling and its consequent tendency to self-blame came out as the strongest subcategory in this study [8 sources, 75 references].

To Leary et al., “the common denominator in all instances of hurt feelings is the perception of *relational devaluation*—the perception that another individual does not regard his or her relationship with the person to be as important, close, or valuable as the person desires” (p. 1225). In the *pendejo*, however, hurt feelings come about by the individual’s perception of *relational degradation* where the other person might still regard the relationship with him or her to be important and close but, for some unknown reason, the individual perceives that the perpetrator’s intention is to degrade and to do harm by putting him or her in a *pendejo* position that “makes me feel and look as a *pendejo*,” in other words, as a complete fool. This is consonant with the feeling manifested throughout the study narratives that the intention or act of “*taking me for a peñejo* degrades me as a person.”

A significant finding in Leary's et al. (1998) and May et al. (2007) research—that might very well apply to *pendejo* victims—is that hurt feelings correlated significantly with lowered self-esteem, lower self-confidence, and great preoccupation about being hurt again. Data collected for this study seems to be consistent with Leary et al., and May et al.'s findings and the *pendejo* phenomenon, but further research is needed for corroboration.

### Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented and analyzed the data collected for this study which was based on descriptions of the *pendejo* experiences of those who participated in this investigation. The data was organized, presented, and analyzed following Wolcott's (1994) method of staying “close to the data as originally recorded” (p. 10). The main interest in this analysis was to closely examine the participants' anecdotal narratives to uncover, describe and explore the *pendejo* construct as a phenomenon indigenous to Puerto Rico. Data analysis supported the contention that participants experienced the *pendejo* as a phenomenon that has specific phenomenon-related characteristics with distinct physical, emotional, and behavioral consequences.

The way Puerto Rican participants described their *pendejo* experiences produces more questions than answers. These questions have gone unanswered due to a lack of awareness of the existence of this phenomenon. The questions seek answers to the following enigmas: Why does this phenomenon exist? What purpose does it serve? How



did the *pendejo* emerge as an irrational belief or cognitive distortion in the Puerto Rican mindset? Why do so many people seem to be under the influence of this mentality?

The results of the study demonstrated conclusively that congruence in the collective *pendejo* experiences of all those interviewed allowed for the conceptualization of their cumulative experiences as the *pendejo* phenomenon. Chapter 5 seeks answers to these questions. It also presents an overview of the study and a brief summary of the findings with concluding remarks bounded by the evidence collected. The chapter will also include implications for social change and recommendations for further action.

## CHAPTER 5:

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Overview

#### *The Problem*

The problem that motivated this research project was the need to describe and to explore the *pendejo* construct as an unidentified indigenous Puerto Rican cultural phenomenon with distinct psychological manifestations. The study uncovered an ingrained fear among Puerto Ricans of “being taken for fools” or “caught as *pendejos*” at any time. This usually self-deprecating tendency has an impact on self-worth and on behavior. As researcher, I believed that the unveiling of the *pendejo* phenomenon provides psychologists with information on particular Puerto Rican mindsets that can hinder the therapeutic process and proposed an in-depth qualitative study to explore the existence and scope of the previously unidentified phenomenon. I relied on thick descriptions made available through the personal anecdotes and transcribed interview narratives provided by a selected group of people who accepted to participate in the study.

#### *The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if there is indeed a particular Puerto Rican mindset that constitutes a phenomenon. In other words, if there was a need to uncover the *pendejo* phenomenon as a well-defined cultural mindset underlying emotional and behavioral responses typical to Puerto Rican society. The study was based

on the premise that the collective worldview of any particular cultural group is embedded in the experiential reality of its members and shapes how they interpret their world (Crotty, 1998). I also explored the *pendejo* construct as a *meme* with survival implications and looked for immature coping and adapting strategies that often lead to misunderstandings and alienation among people.

This investigation was crucial for uncovering the *pendejo* phenomenon as a covert but powerful cultural icon that triggers specific thought patterns and behavioral responses to perceived threats. My presumption was that it is only through immersion in the experience of particular members of Puerto Rican society that these thinking patterns and behavioral subtleties can be understood. Psychologists and other mental health professionals stand to benefit from this investigative work for they will be in a better position to understand their Puerto Rican clientele.

### *Methodological Approach*

From my point of view, psychology has to do with people's feelings, perceptions, and underlying belief patterns. In this research work I tackled the *pendejo* phenomenon as an unexplored, socially constructed experience that centers upon the collective meaning that Puerto Ricans ascribe to the *pendejo* construct. There is also an interest in helping to develop a Puerto Rican psychology by conducting significant context-bound investigative studies (Rodríguez et al., 1999). For this investigation I adopted a qualitative methodological approach and developed a phenomenological case study design, utilizing direct interview strategies, to understand the particularities of the *pendejo* phenomenon

through the rich descriptions provided by a criterion sample consisting of eight participants. Both method and design are recognized by a number of scholars as an excellent way to make psychology more culturally sensitive (Adair, 1999; Adair & Díaz-Loving, 1999; Díaz-Guerrero & Pacheco, 1994; Greenfield, 1997; Kim, 2000; Lucca-Irizarry & Berríos-Rivera, 2003; Rodríguez et al., 1999; Sinha, 1997). To produce credible results, I used three types of triangulation methods for data validation purposes: *Data triangulation*, or the use of various modes to collect data; *Investigator triangulation*, consisting of three evaluating sources: the researcher, and the two reviewers; and *Analytical triangulation*, or the use of multiple strategies to approach a single phenomenon that include: the primary researcher's direct review and interpretation; the first and second reviewers' data management verification; and the use of the NVivo qualitative analysis software computer program to help break down raw data into smaller meaning units and themes, link data and ideas within the project, and allow for immediate access to interpretations and insights.

### Interpretation of the Findings

Chapter 5 focuses on exploring different angles related to pertinent data collected. This exploration required some degree of interpretation of the results to help bring into awareness the psychological impact of the *pendejo* phenomenon on those who experience it. In Wolcott's (1994) terminology, "the goal is to make sense of what goes on, to reach out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis" (p. 10). For Wolcott, interpretation

“addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts: “How does it all mean?”  
“What is to be made of it all?” (p. 12).

### *Conclusions of the Study Related to Research Questions*

Four research questions guided this investigation. These research questions framed the study and provided the necessary structure for the collection of data, and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of results. The research questions are significantly related one with the other and were thoroughly discussed and analyzed in the previous chapter. Answers to the four questions provided a basis for the following concluding remarks.

The data collected provided insight about the particular way that interviewees conceptualized and described how they experience the *pendejo* word. Their collective descriptions answered the first research question: How do middle and upper class, college graduate native Puerto Rican study participants describe their experience of the *pendejo* construct? The participants’ narratives brought to the forefront the distinct mindset or mentality that frames the phenomenon. Their thick descriptions also provided insight about definitions, assumptions, emotional as well as physical and behavioral responses, intentionality, propensity, and consequences involving a *pendejo* event.

Consequently, participants defined a *pendejo* as a person who is naïve, negligible, dumb, stupid, *zángano*, submissive, passive, ignorant, easily manipulated, noble or too good, with a low self-esteem and little sense of self-respect and self-worth. In other words, a *pendejo* stands for an insignificant human being. Also, within the *pendejo* mind-

set, there is a certainty that many people are out to *take others for pendejo*. These people, seen as perpetrators, are depicted as being insensible and ambitious. They are also considered to be witty, toady, and wicked persons whose intentions are “to do harm” and “to take advantage of you.” This kind of person belittles and shows no respect for others.

The data confirmed that the word *pendejo* is considered to be a bad, vulgar word in Puerto Rico and the concept has a negative connotative meaning among its people. “Making one stand out as a *pendejo*” is deemed as an attempt against the person’s sense of dignity, capacity, and respect which are three of Puerto Ricans’ highly cherished values (Díaz-Royo, 1974, 1983; Lauria, 1964). The end result of a *pendejo* experience is that the individual ends up feeling ignorant, degraded, manipulated, utilized, ignored, and insignificant. To be *taken for pendejo* is a traumatic event that hurts people’s feelings. It is also a generalized, degrading state of affairs made evident in Puerto Rican everyday conversation even though the word is usually disguised. The victim is left in a very vulnerable position because it touches upon the person’s cultural fiber and sense of identity.

A majority of those who participated in this research characterized the *pendejo* as an event that “grabs” you by surprise, in other words, people can *fall as pendejos*, can be *taken for pendejos* or are *caught as pendejos*. It is not uncommon to hear phrases like, “He-she took me for a *pendejo*,” “He-she thinks I am a *pendejo*,” “He-she thinks that he-she can take me for a *pendejo*,” including the most self-deprecating phrase of all, “I am a great big *pendejo*.” A curious aspect of the *pendejo* mindset is the fact that all participants rely on self-perception, mind reading, and intuition—not on verification or

clarification—in concluding that someone *took them* or attempted to *take them* for *pendejos*. One last feature that all participants agreed upon is their assertion that a *pendejo* incident served them as a “wake-up call.” This was a learning experience that compelled all participants to be more alert next time around.

The data collected also bared assumptions that participants make about others and about themselves. They understand that people who take others for *pendejo* are out to do them harm (wickedness), that people make use of deceitful tactics for their own benefit (exploitation), and that people purposely take advantage of the supposed victim’s good will.

In terms of self-assumptions, all participants admitted that they were the ones who labeled themselves as *pendejos* and blamed themselves for being so. Interviewees also admitted that no one told them that they were *pendejos* or that they see them as *pendejos*. Another self-assumption has to do with the participants’ impression that being noble and being good puts them in a vulnerable position to be taken for *pendejos*. Most of the participants related being noble, or being too good, to being *pendejos*.

Pivotal to the *pendejo* mentality is the assumption of the *pendejo* as an imminent, constant threat—similar to the fictitious, but menacing, “boogeyman”—where participants expressed certainty and fear about the possibility of being “grabbed,” “taken,” or “caught” as *pendejos* by someone whose intention is to harm them by making them stand out as stupid fools.

Understandably, *pendejo* happenings involve emotional responses that include anger or ire, mistrust, anxiety, fear, as well as a sense of helplessness and impotence. In a

mysterious way, a *pendejo* event allows for the double victimization of the targeted person. Besides feeling wronged by a supposed perpetrator, participants tend to adopt self-victimizing postures and blame themselves for being so naïve and not alert enough to thwart an offensive *pendejo* act. There seems to be an element of shame involved. Shame is considered to be a self-conscious emotion (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996; Tangney & Salovey, 1999). Tangney et al. (1996) make the following observation.

In shame, an objectionable behavior is seen as reflecting, more generally, a defective, objectionable self (“I did that horrible thing, and therefore I am unworthy, incompetent or bad person”). With this painful self-scrutiny comes a sense of shrinking or of “being small” and feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. Shamed people also feel exposed. (p. 1257)

In the *pendejo* phenomenon shame does not come about because I *did* something wrong, it comes about because maybe there is something wrong with *me*. It is more like, maybe “I *am* defective and objectionable in some way.” Tangney et al.’s quote, can be changed to “I *am* a horrible thing; therefore I am unworthy, incompetent or bad person.” Like in Tangney et al.’s quote above, in the *pendejo* phenomenon the resulting painful self-scrutiny gives way to a sense of shrinking or of being small and to feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. The possibility of an underlying sense of shame in the *pendejo* phenomenon helps understand the self-victimization and the self-labeling/self-blaming tendencies observable in all participants. It could come from an embedded self-doubt which makes people ask themselves, “Am I really a *pendejo*, after all?” The element of self-doubt involving this peculiar sense of shame is evident in Luis’ comment.

*Luis:* Oh no, no, this here... he did not find out... he did not find out... my wife did not find out either... I didn’t tell her. You know? In occasions like this, if you tell



everyone... well, then more and more people will believe that you are a *pendejo*. It is better to keep quiet and [laughter]...

*[Ah no, no, ahí eso...no se enteró... no se enteró...la esposa mía no se enteró tampoco... No se lo dije. ¿Sabes? En estas cosas así, tú se lo dices a todo el mundo... pues entonces más gente y más gente se creen que tú eres un pendejo. Mejor te quedas callao y [risas]...]*

Likewise, all participants admitted to have experienced an array of physical symptoms in response to a *pendejo* event. Among the symptoms commonly mentioned were headaches, rapid heart rate and rising in blood pressure, blushing, perspiration, physical exhaustion and decompensation, and hyperventilation. Tangney, et al. (1996), mentioned that “shame was regarded as a more intense and more dysphoric feeling that occurred more suddenly and was accompanied by greater physiological change (e.g., blushing, increased heart rate)” (p. 1260). It is possible that at least some of the *pendejo* physical symptoms respond to the shameful feeling of having been *caught as a pendejo*.

The data also made evident notable behavioral responses that are prominent in *pendejo* incidents. All participants assumed passive, escapist postures with inaction as their typical response reaction. It showed that self-labeled victims tend to withdraw, put distance, and terminate any relationship with the identified perpetrator. Individuals preferred to keep mum and keep their hurt feelings private while undergoing internal healing processes keeping all the anger and frustration to themselves.

To make sure that they will not be *caught as pendejos* again interviewees adopted hypervigilant coping strategies. They assumed defensive postures, analyzed the situation, and used warning signs to offset a further intent to take them for *pendejos*. Confrontation

could be assertive or meek, but it was based on the absolute, irrefutable certainty that the other person's intent was to *take them for pendejos*.

Participants were convinced that anyone is capable of taking others for *pendejo*; this includes close, intimate family and friends. These participants were talking about people they love and feel close to. Incongruously, though, potential perpetrators were described as sly, wicked *people* with the intention to do harm and make others end up as *pendejos*. Those interviewed admitted that the propensity to *take* and to be *taken for pendejos* is very high and most of them see a relation between most Puerto Rican negative personality traits and their own descriptions of a *pendejo* person.

A notable and expressed aversion among interviewees to being depicted as *pendejos* can be understood in lieu of their own conclusions about the consequences that await an individual with a *pendejo* personality. They all saw a *pendejo* as a degraded person, a "Mr. or Mrs. Nobody." In other words, they all envisioned a *pendejo* as a despoiled, worthless individual with a very low self-esteem, who merits no respect and is subordinate to the whims of others.

The analysis of the participants' descriptions evidenced that participants live out the *pendejo* as an imminent threat against their dignity and sense of respect. Even though they developed well thought out defensive strategies against perceived perpetrators' ill intentions to exploit them and to take advantage of their good will, all interviewees felt helpless and powerless to overcome the looming threat of being *taken* or *caught* as *pendejos*. They feel in constant danger of being *taken for pendejos* by anyone, at anytime, even though they seemed not to be aware of this subconscious constant state of alert.

Participants' in-depth descriptions demonstrated that there is widespread agreement in the way interviewees defined and experienced *pendejo* events and showed how generalized the *pendejo* issue is in Puerto Rico. This widespread agreement reflected on the cumulative experiences of those participating in this research study allow for this happening to be conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon, which answers the second research question: Taking into account their collective experiences, how are these conceptualized as the *pendejo* phenomenon?

The third research question is: How is this phenomenon represented de facto in the discourse and in the behavioral manifestations of the daily life of the participants as a cognitive distortion or irrational belief and a negative self-referent? Participants answers demonstrated how ingrained the phenomenon is in their everyday life. The discourse analysis of their narratives, as detailed in chapter 4, revealed how cognitive distortions and irrational beliefs abound in what can be called a *pendejo* mindset. Results also demonstrated consequent negative emotional, physical, and behavioral responses. This is evident in the assumptions participants made about this threatening event and about themselves. The self-labeling and self-blaming aspects of the phenomenon demonstrated the way participants internalized the phenomenon as a negative self-referent.

*Omar:* It's me... yes! I am the one who gives me the title of "*Pendejo*"... It is not that somebody bestows it on me (both laugh)... but one understands this, internally.

*[¡Soy yo... sí! Es que me puedo dar el título de pendejo... no es porque nadie me lo dé (ríen ambos)... pero uno internamente entiende...]*

*Re:* And when... and when... and when you are sure that they took you for *pendejo*... I mean... How you say it? You... you yourself are very clear that they *took* you.

*[Y cuando... y cuando... y cuando estás seguro que te cogieron de pendejo... este..., ¿cómo se llama? Te... te... tú mismo estás bien claro de que te cogieron].*

Omar: Yes, very clear.

*[Sí, bien claro.]*

Re: It's not that they tell you... that they are telling this to you.

*[No es que te lo dicen... que te lo están diciendo...].*

Omar: I am the one who is sure that I am the greatest *pendejo* of all!]

*[¡Yo mismo me considero tremendo pendejo!]*

The fourth and last research question is integral to the conclusions of this project: How and in what ways is the *pendejo* phenomenon reflected in the psychological make up of those who experience it? The discourse analysis of the data in chapter 4 points to a series of distinct psychological manifestations that seem to be directly related to the *pendejo* phenomenon. All of the following manifestations were evidenced by most, if not all, of those interviewed: mistrust, learned helplessness and powerlessness, irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions, low self-esteem, magical thinking, generalizations, causal attributions, and characterological self-labeling and self-blaming with consequent self-victimization. Underlying these manifestations is, on the one hand, a possible *paranoid tendency*, and on the other hand, deeply ingrained *hurt feelings* as discussed in detail in chapter 4. The following section expands on the research question and binds the phenomenon with the evidence collected. It also relates the findings to the literature, including the conceptual or theoretical framework.

### *Conclusions*

Boarding a topic as covert as the *pendejo* phenomenon was no easy task.

The initial goal was to describe, and explore the phenomenon to uncover its underpinnings. The need emerged to connect the *pendejo* phenomenon with the socio-historical path of the Puerto Rican people to search for plausible, though by no means conclusive, explanations about the breadth and scope of the phenomenon and to consider the psychological impact on those who experience it. Due to a lack of available data based on extant theory and research on this issue, it was necessary to ground the study on historical and contextual accounts about the life and struggles of the Puerto Rican people during the five centuries since Columbus claimed the Island as a Spanish possession.

My impression was that immersion into Puerto Rico's historical past would provide an adequate background to understand this phenomenon and that it was the only information available on which to base this study. I was interested not so much on the chronological aspect of historic events, but on the ethnic component and on the socio-psychological aspects of Puerto Rican society in order to get a grasp of what was going on with the people as history unfolded before them. To better understand the life and struggles of Puerto Ricans and of the development of a Puerto Rican personality, I scrutinized pertinent literature on Puerto Rican issues (see chapter 2) to look for clues that could provide insight about how and why the *pendejo* phenomenon took hold. The preceding chapters served the purpose of uncovering and amply describing the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Salient in these descriptions were the participants' sensation and fear that they can be *taken* for fools or be regarded as fools by anyone at any moment. Following is Rita's answer when asked to rate the degree of propensity that a person has to be *taken for pendejo or pendeja*.

*Rita:* Well see, I answered... and I reiterate a thousand times what I wrote. To my best understanding, all the time [laughs]. All the time, because... no matter how high your defenses are, or the care... to think things out about how that person is coming or... how he-she is going to act, or what she is telling you... and his-her body language. Ehh... no matter how much you try, ehh... to avoid, to be taken for a *pendejo*... you can't always avoid it. Sooner or later, you will fall in one way or the other. Maybe one day you may escape from it, but not always... really, no.

*[Pues, mira, yo te contesté... y me reitero mil veces en lo que te escribí. A mi mejor entender, todo el tiempo [risa]. Todo el tiempo, porque es que... por más que tú tengas las defensas altas, o el cuidado de... de pensar mil veces cómo puede venir esa persona o... o cómo va a actuar, o qué te está diciendo de boca y qué está diciéndote en...en su "body language." Este... por más que uno intente, ehh...evitar, o que te cojan de pendejo... no siempre lo vas a lograr. Tú siempre vas a caer en una u otra. Puede ser que un día sí te escapes, pero, no siempre... de verdad que no.]*

The way interviewees lived this experience was similar to the way children assumed the boogeyman, or the *cuco* in Puerto Rico. Some time ago, when someone wanted to scare little, impressionable children they only needed to shout "*¡Ahí viene el cuco!*" ["The boogeyman is coming!"]. Children ran wild because they were terrified by this fictitious, intangible "being" that was out to catch them and could even eat them whole. One can see some parallels with the *cuco* and the *pendejo*. Both are threatening, intangible experiences that suppose that someone or something will "grab" you and do something bad to you if you are not alert and don't run away from it fast enough. Both seem to be products of the victims' imagination based on irrational beliefs, and no one

questioned the veracity of the *cuco*, or the *pendejo*; people just assumed that it exists.

Nora's answer is typical of the *pendejo* mentality.

Re: You mean, that... that... no matter what, you see it as... for you it is like a threat.

*[O sea, que...que... como quiera que sea, tú lo ves como...para ti es como una... como una amenaza.]*

Nora: Yes. They are out to catch you...

*[Sí. Que te quieren coger...]*

Re: That they are out to catch you at any moment?

*[¿Que te pueden coger en cualquier momento?]*

Nora: They sway you very easy. They might convince you very easily. Many people... I think that many people get caught. But there are people that... well, they seem to like it, and they continue, well... each one does his-her own thing. To me this is: "They caught me as a *pendejo*!"

*[Tuve la experiencia de que... No me llegaron a coger, pero... es...este... te convencen bien fácil. Puede ser que te convenzan bien fácilmente. Mucha gente... yo pienso que mucha gente cae. Pero hay gente que... pues, le gusta, y siguen, pues... cada cual con lo suyo. Para mí eso es: "¡Me cogieron de peñejo!"]*

Both the *cuco* and the *pendejo* were perceived as threats. Both events were invested with catastrophic consequences. The *cuco* made vulnerable, unsuspecting children "disappear to eat them whole." In a different but likely traumatic way, the *pendejo* "eats away" a person's sense of dignity and respect and is experienced as an attempt against the victim's sense of self-worth. The *cuco* fantasy is outgrown early in childhood. The *pendejo* is probably embedded in a person's psyche for life.

As mentioned before, this threatening aspect of the *pendejo* phenomenon, and the way people who feel this threat respond to such an event, prompted me to search within

Puerto Rico's cultural and historical background for plausible answers to help make sense of how this phenomenon took hold. To explore the constructed meaning of the *pendejo* word in Puerto Rico, I utilized a multicultural approach and an emic, indigenous perspective. I agree with advocates of multicultural and indigenous approaches (Adair, 1995; Choi et al., 1993; Díaz-Guerrero and Pacheco, 1994; Greenfield, 2000; Kim, 2000; Sinha, 1997; Triandis, 2000; Yang, 2000) that context is relevant to study an indigenous phenomenon and that the collective history plays an important role in organizing personal subjectivity. The aim was to locate the underpinnings of the *pendejo* phenomenon in Puerto Rico in the collective history of its people, through the subjective personal accounts of the population sample chosen for this investigation.

### *Conditioning Variables*

The literature review exposed important ethnic, historical, political, and sociological interacting variables underscoring particular cultural patterns that served as a blueprint to explore the intricacies of the Puerto Rican personality. Analysis of the data suggested a strong link between the conditioning variables underlying the formation of the Puerto Rican people and the descriptions provided by the participants relative to their *pendejo* experiences.

Historical accounts attest to Puerto Rico's threatened existence since the early years of colonization. Puerto Rican history as "the oldest colony of the world" (Trías-Monje, 1999) revealed the saga of a society plagued with the consequences of more than five centuries of colonial status under two culturally-opposite imperial powers, Spain and



the United States. There is ample evidence of the struggle of the Puerto Rican people to survive as a distinct cultural entity on its own right despite concerted efforts to the contrary by both ruling metropolises (Abbad, 1788/1979; Babín, 1971, 1986; Blanco, 1981; Díaz-Quñones, 2003; Duany, 2002; García-Passalacqua, 1993, 2001; Gelpí, 2000; Morales-Carrión, 1983; Picó, 2000; Quintero-Rivera, 2003; Trías-Monje, 1997, 1999). González (2007) elaborated on what he called the *Colonized Personality Disorder* affecting Puerto Ricans, and on how this colonial situation shaped the collective unconscious of its people. Taking into account González' argument, the *pendejo* phenomenon can be a behavior learned throughout the years, rooted in the collective unconscious of Puerto Ricans.

Nobody has to remind us if we are a colony or not, as this is a function of the collective unconscious. In the collective unconscious, we find behaviors learned throughout the years, which have functioned over time to work through different situations. The colonial situation of Puerto Rico is recorded in our brains. (p. 38)

The literature review revealed how the colonial reality of the Island, and the ensuing sociological and political power play (described by García-Passalacqua (1993) as the masses/elite/metropolis tripod), promoted a particular adverse social and political environment in Puerto Rico. Scholars agreed that this colonial reality pervaded the historical and sociological development of Puerto Rico and had a direct impact on the formation of the Puerto Rican personality (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Duany, 2002; González, 2007; Rivera-Ramos, 2001; Trías-Monje, 1999; Varas-Díaz & Serrano-García, 2003). This led Varas-Díaz and Serrano-García to assert that “this experience has direct negative effects on Puerto Ricans’ national identities and their emotions” (p. 301).

The literature review also unveiled unswerving instances where lack of control, deceit, neglect, helplessness and hopelessness were still the norm for this society. This staunch reality underscored potential threats to Puerto Ricans' sense of security and stability as well as threats to their values and their way of life. The resulting impact on trust and self-worth provided the fertile ground for the *pendejo* phenomenon to emerge and this is made more evident through the study of the *Jibaro* element in Puerto Rican society.

Torres-Robles (1999; see also Guerra, 1998; Pedreira, 1934/1979) asserted that “for many critics and for Puerto Ricans in general, the *Jibaro* figure represents the essence of the Puerto Rican nationality” (p. 241). The author added that “the denigrating attitude of those born on the Iberian peninsula towards *criollos* was responsible for the genesis of a distinct Puerto Rican national consciousness and that the articulation of this new cultural identity found form with the *jibaro*” (p. 25).

The Puerto Rican *Jibaro* is a direct descendant of a mixture of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds called *Cimarrones*. The common denominator of this conglomeration of people was that they all felt threatened by the military enclave in San Juan and fled to the mountains for survival (Quintero-Rivera, 2003). Because of their escapee origins they developed their own characteristic traits. To Quintero-Rivera, “this heterogeneous ethnic amalgam of *Cimarrones* began configuring a rural social structure marked by a sense of worthlessness” (p. 41).

Many people have written about the *Jibaro* element in Puerto Rican society and about how the *Jibaro* came to represent the Puerto Rican soul (Guerra, 1998; Pedreira,

1934/1979; Quintero-Rivera, 2003; Scarano, 1996; Torres-Robles, 1999). The literature review exposed how, configured within the *Jibaro* symbol, one can detect the character dispositions archetypical to the Puerto Rican personality. These character dispositions have endured across time. Many of these traits can be traced back to Taíno Indians, the Black-Africans, and the Spaniards which were integral to the formation of the Puerto Rican race.

In the literature review one takes notice of how the Taíno Indians' trusting, hospitable, trustworthy, and noble nature (Babín, 1974) facilitated their massive, brutal exploitation, and eventual destruction as a society. One can understand why they learned to distrust the Europeans and fled to the mountains and neighboring islands to survive (Blanco, 1981; Golding, 1973; González-Muñiz, 2001; Gutiérrez, 1989, 1993; Las Casas, 1552/1999; Morán-Arce, 1985; Pedreira, 1934/1979; Rosario-Natal, 1987). Noble, trusting, friendly, and hospitable are considered to be positive Puerto Rican character traits. Interestingly, results in this study demonstrated that in the *pendejo* mentality, being noble and trusting makes one vulnerable to be *taken for peñejo*.

*Ana:* This can happen to anyone because when you trust somebody... you become vulnerable.

*[Le puede pasar a cualquiera porque cuando tú confías en alguien... te vuelves vulnerable.]*

There is a similarity with historic accounts about the Indians' extinction as a race because the Spaniards took advantage of their noble, trusting nature, and the participants' belief that you can *fall for a peñejo* because if you are noble and full of good intentions, people are out to take advantage of your goodwill.

The Africans' mode of resistance to the regime of slavery was passive-aggressive according to Picó (2000). To Gelpí (2000) it was mostly individual and passive. Besides the passivity disposition, Gelpí also mentioned specific behaviors like a chronic state of melancholy (mistaken for laziness), and manifestations of helplessness.

Many Spaniards also escaped to the mountains for various reasons and lived as fugitives. This group included: military deserters, crew members who escaped from ship duty, persecuted people, and even foreigners who were not allowed to enter Puerto Rico until 1815. They also became escapees and also resorted to isolation in order to survive.

Coincidentally, participants in this study preferred to deal with a *pendejo* ordeal in a passive, individual manner. Their usual response to a *pendejo* experience was inaction. They preferred to clam-up, and to keep their hurt feelings to themselves. Nora corroborated this tendency.

*Re:* So, you usually deal with this [the *pendejo* incident] yourself, and you keep this to yourself.

*[O sea, usualmente tú manejas esto dentro de ti, y te quedas con eso adentro.]*

*Nora:* Yes. I don't know. No... [I don't] confront anyone, no.

*[Sí. Yo no sé. No...para confrontar a nadie, no.]*

*Re:* No...

*[No...]*

*Nora:* This [confronting] is not the normal way.

*[No es lo normal.]*

*Re:* OK. Well... so, you let the person go and you stay hooked with this yourself.

*[Está bien. Este...o sea, que tu dejas ir a la persona y tú te quedas enganchada, contigo misma...]*

Nora: Uhum... yes, I have to deal with this myself.

*[Ujú...sí, yo tengo que bregar.]*

Also, a sense of helplessness was notable in the participants' beliefs that the *pendejo* threat is constant and inevitable and that they can fall victims no matter how alert and how prepared they can be.

Ana: Because... I think that everybody can become a victim of that [the *pendejo*], because everybody can... *fall for a penjejo* at any moment... or everybody is going to *fall for a penjejo* at any moment... I mean, nobody is exempt.

*[Porque... pienso que es que todo el mundo puede ser víctima de eso, porque todo el mundo puede ser... caer de penjejo en algún momento... o todo el mundo va a caer de penjejo en algún momento... o sea, nadie está exento.]*

One can also detect a parallel between the Puerto Ricans' ethnic origins and the descriptions of the *Jíbaro* personality. Interestingly, Pedreira's (1934/1979) depiction of the *Jíbaro* element in Puerto Rican society was congruent with the data collected from the participants' narratives of their *pendejo* experiences.

Our *jíbaro* is distrustful and evasive by nature, though benevolent with what is his, he is generally suspicious and astute. Fed-up with unfulfilled offerings and promises he has had to recur to his skillful ingeniousness to put limits to fraudulent postures and misdemeanors coming from outsiders. (p. 12)

Lewis (1963) follows suit when he cited a medical report about the moral and social degradation of the *Jíbaro*.

The *jíbaro* mountain bred, wrote Drs. Bailey Ashford and Gutiérrez Igaravidez in their outstanding medical report of 1900, avoids the genteel life of a civilization higher than that of his own. He instinctively tucks his little hut away in the most inaccessible spots; he shrinks from the stranger and lapses into stolid silence when brought face to face with things that are foreign to his life. He does

this because he had been made to feel that he must do all that he is told by established authority, and he knows that this authority never takes the trouble to look for him unless it expects to get something out of him; because he is suspicious of outsiders, having been too often led astray by false prophets and disappointed by broken promises; because he realizes that he is not a free agent anywhere save in the mountain fastness. Added to this there was the fear bred of the social and mental gulf between him and his “betters,” who regarded him with condescending and half-affectionate contempt. (p. 96)

Both Pedreira's (1934/1979) and Lewis (1963) comments underscored the *Jibaros'* evasive nature, their benevolent demeanor toward their own kind, and a deep-rooted distrust after centuries of false promises and unfulfilled offerings. Most of these characteristics are remnants of their ethnic origins, their escapee realities, and the resulting social conditions and isolated environments. This was a threatened breed of people, representing the lower strata of society from where the bulk of Puerto Rican society emerged. All of these elements are found in the participants' *pendejo* descriptions.

Quintero-Rivera (2003) reported that this rural peasantry displayed diffident, self-effacing, behaviors among strangers and among authority figures. They searched for freedom through isolation, but the author explained that this isolation derived from an inferiority complex. He also mentioned that rebellion and defiance were manifested by a tendency to flee instead of fighting back (Quintero-Rivera, 2003). The *Jibaros'* diffident, self-effacing behaviors as well as their isolation and flight instead of fight tendencies are reflected in the *pendejo* phenomenon. Inaction, clamming-up, and internal management of the phenomenon was one of the behavioral responses mentioned by all of the participants in this study.

*Personality Traits*

Puerto Ricans' impression of who they are as a people seem to be based on early historic accounts written by historians whose own biased views, interpretations, and mostly injurious depiction of the salient negative character traits of a nascent Puerto Rican personality, persisted across the centuries and were perpetuated in Puerto Rican literature up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Abbad, 1788/1979; Belaval, 1977; Golding, 1973; Kazin, 1960; Marqués, 1977; Pedreira, 1934/1979). Puerto Rican elite scholars followed the directives of these foreigners and perpetuated the mostly grim depiction of the Puerto Rican personality. These scholars were neither psychologists nor people knowledgeable of human behavior. They seem to have taken as absolute the opinions and impressions of foreigners like Abbad and Kazin who came to Puerto Rico and wrote about the people from an imperialist perspective with an outsider's view of reality. Sadly, this is the perspective that Puerto Ricans have had access to through literary accounts across the centuries.

Kazin (1960), a visiting American scholar at the University of Puerto Rico, faulted Puerto Ricans for being docile and non-aggressive. This scholar asked about their docility and provided his own answers. Kazin's exposition was pivotal to the unveiling of the *pendejo* phenomenon: "Are they "docile" because someone has always taken them over—or are they just docile? To me they are the waifs and wards of big power politics, the submerged colonial mass incarnate..." (p. 25). Kazin also observed that "Puerto Ricans are always being reformed, educated, studied, analyzed, worked on, 'developed' by others," and also commented that "they are used to waiting on life, waiting on other

people; they are used to taking orders; they are 'sensitive' beyond endurance, but not stormy." The author takes notice that Puerto Ricans "are very quick to suspect, to be hurt" (p. 25). Kazin's observations and conclusions validated the lack of assertiveness and mostly passive escapist behaviors revealed by participants, and the element of mistrust and sensitiveness evidenced in the data collected.

Marqués (1977), a Puerto Rican well-known author, did not question Kazin's argument and accepted it as absolute. The author took note of Kazin's observations and wrote a book about the docile disposition of Puerto Ricans where he made evident his mortification with his own people's meekness and with their indolent, servile, subordinate, passive, submissive, compliant ways. Marqués also alluded to a characteristic impulse to morbidly direct aggressive impulses toward the self. This tendency was observed in the participants' self-victimization tendencies and their inclination to self-label and self-blame salient in their *pendejo* narratives. Unfortunately, these are the character dispositions that Puerto Ricans have heard over and over again as descriptors of their personality.

Puerto Ricans grow-up under this negative depiction of their personhood, which needless to say, casts a doubt on their self-worth, has an impact on their self-esteem, and puts to test the Puerto Ricans' values of dignity, capacity, and respect. It is not uncommon to hear Puerto Ricans referring to themselves as "a bunch of lazy people." In all probability, this negative self-attitude is fertile ground for the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Personality dispositions are consistently identified in Puerto Rican literature as: obedient, passive, compliant, submissive, indolent and lazy, conformists, acquiescent,



subservient, peaceful, docile, dutiful, and oddly, noble. They are mostly negative character traits. Even though being noble is one of the positive personality traits ascribed to Puerto Ricans, participants in this study assumed that being noble can be regarded by some people as negative in the sense that being “too good, too compliant, too docile” sets yourself up to being *taken for pendejo*. This negative perspective of the noble disposition was also observed at the *pendejo* sessions at the personal development workshops at MBW. All participants agreed that the noble trait, when taken to an extreme, is interpreted as being a *pendejo*. Considering that all of the participants see themselves as noble persons who are prone to helping others, the impression is that “being my own good self sets me up to be looked down upon and to be treated like a *pendejo*.” Omar explains this position.

*Omar:* It all depends on how far you take it. It all depends on how far you take it... how far you go being noble, how far you go being docile... because... it all depends on the extremes that you go. Because a person who is noble can be a very valuable person to me and I can admire that he-she is noble. But noble, to the point that goes to an extre... an extreme... of being [too] noble... that everybody does with you whatever they like... that no... Well, here you will earn the *pendejo* degree.

*[Todo depende hasta qué punto. Todo depende hasta qué punto... hasta qué punto tú seas noble, hasta qué punto tú seas dócil... porque... todo es dependiendo a los extremos a que se llegue. Porque una persona noble par mí puede valer mucho y yo puedo admirar que sea una persona que sea noble. Pero noble, al punto que sea extre... un extremo... que sea noble que... que todo el mundo haga lo que le dé la gana... que no...pues ahí se puede ir al grado de pendejo.]*

When asked: How do you relate the concept *pendejo* with ascribed Puerto Rican personality traits like: passive, docile, indolent, submissive, conformist, belittling, lazy, and noble? Almost all of those interviewed saw a strong relationship between all or some Puerto Rican negative personality dispositions and the descriptions that they themselves

provided of a *pendejo*. Some participants were selective pointing out several of these personality traits, but others were under the impression that all of the ascribed dispositions are synonymous to what being a *pendejo* is all about. Pedro and Luis are but two examples of this partial and/or total connection between Puerto Rican personality traits and the *pendejo* descriptors.

*Pedro:* Uhum, well, I think that all of them... all of them are related to... to the *pendejo*, but, for example, I pondered... [and] I wrote here that... that I [personally] know educated, scholarly people, who... can *fall for pendejos*, who can be *taken for pendejos* because—I identified here—because they are passive, peaceful, and noble.... Yes, noble and passive, and these are two characteristics that allow that they be taken for *pendejos*. On the other hand, nonscholarly people, with little formal education, well, yes, I see these people as more submissive, compliant, and docile.

*[Ujú. Bueno, yo pienso que todas... todas están relacionadas con el... con el pendejo, pero, por ejemplo, pensé... escribí yo aquí que... que yo conozco personas educadas, con escolaridad, que... podrían caer de pendejo, que los podrían coger de pendejo porque—identifiqué yo aquí—porque son personas pasivos, pacíficos o nobles.... Pero sí, nobles y pasivos, y esas dos características los llevan a caer de pendejo. En cambio, personas no educadas, con poca escolaridad, pues sí los veo más sometidos, conformistas, y dóciles.]*

*Re:* Ok... And how do you relate the concept *pendejo* to the following personality traits ascribed to Puerto Ricans?

*[Está bien... ¿Y cómo relacionas el concepto pendejo con los siguientes rasgos de personalidad vinculados con los puertorriqueños?]*

*Luis:* It describes the Puerto Ricans.

*[Describe a los puertorriqueños.]*

It seems mind boggling to witness college educated, well-to-do Puerto Ricans identify and link their *pendejo* descriptions to their own character dispositions. Luis categorical opinion about his people is in itself revealing.

*Luis:* We conform ourselves with the conditions that our country is in and we allow politicians and foreigners to take us for *pendejos*. We are collectively *pendejos* and we allow... and we don't... and we are not even aware of this.

[“*Nos conformamos con las condiciones del país y dejamos que los políticos y extranjeros nos cojan de pendejo. Somos colectivamente pendejos y nos dejamos... y no... y no nos damos cuenta.*”]

Luis only echoed a charged, but very common expression heard in diverse Puerto Rican forums: “It’s that we Puerto Ricans are ‘sooo’ *pendejos!*”

The overlapping of *pendejo* descriptors and character dispositions suggests an introjection of the *pendejo* myth that can be an aspect of Puerto Ricans’ collective unconscious. If a person considers that those characteristics that define his-her own personhood are *pendejo*-like traits, then there can also be a subconscious fear of an inborn propensity or a predisposition to a *pendejo* personality that other people can detect and take advantage of. The self-labeling, self-blaming, and self-victimization reality evidenced in the data attests to the fact that the participants are the one who actually see themselves as *pendejos*, maybe as a negative implicit self-attitude (see Conner & Barrett, 2005), but attribute to others the action of *taking* them as such, or making them *fall* as such. The underlying feeling is of a *pendejo*, but the person operates thinking and acting as though the other persons are out to *get* them. This covert perspective of the *pendejo* mentality makes the surfacing of this phenomenon the more significant and urgent in the conception of a Puerto Rican psychology.

### Implications for Social Change

This study seeks to advance scientific research and to help develop a culturally appropriate psychology in Puerto Rico. Indigenous research on the *pendejo* phenomenon provides insight and brings into awareness a particular mindset involving deep-rooted beliefs with characteristic definitions, assumptions and behavioral consequences emblematic to this phenomenon.

The population profile in the United States is changing at a noteworthy speed, forcing Americans to address cultural diversity in distinctive ways (Hall, G., 2003; La Roche, 2005; Sue et al., 1999). Psychologists are aware of the challenges that this presents for the profession and, together with their psychological organizations, are heeding a call for the diversification of psychology to keep abreast with the needs of the multicultural population they serve. There is agreement on the importance of a multicultural psychology built upon theory and research on cross-cultural as well as on indigenous themes (Adair, 1999; Adair & Diaz-Loving, 1999; APA, 2003; Arnett, 2008; Carter, 1991; Diaz-Guerrero & Pacheco, 1994; Hall, G., 2003; Hoare, 1991; Kim, 2000; Rodriguez et al., 1999; Sinha, 1997; Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1999; Yang, 2000; Yu, & Gregg, 1993).

Schneiderman (1988) expressed that “the attitudes that permeate a culture are symptomatic of the threats that its people have internalized historically and against which they have erected their characteristic defenses” (p. 62). He added that “an important dimension of every culture consists of the psychological defenses that have been elaborated in order to cope with shared fears, conflicts, and social pressures” (p. 57).

Schneiderman also mentioned that “in the light of Freud’s insights into man’s irrational nature it would not be surprising to find that many people cannot perceive logical inconsistencies, especially where deeply ingrained, emotion-laden values and beliefs are concerned” (p.63). The *pendejo* phenomenon fits into Schneiderman’s line of reasoning about inherent cultural fears and psychological defenses. The *pendejo* may be symptomatic of the threats that Puerto Ricans have internalized historically and the phenomenon is likely to have emerged as a defense mechanism where logical inconsistencies are the norm. These logical inconsistencies, revealed in the participants’ narratives, take the form of irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions and are likely to respond to deeply ingrained emotion-laden values and beliefs based on Puerto Ricans’ perennial personal and collective struggle to survive and to be acknowledged as a people and as a distinct society.

To Schneiderman (1988) “it is not hard to conceive of circumstances in which a beleaguered society might overlook realistic options in favor of wishful thinking, nourished by unexamined cultural traditions and inimical to constructive social change” (p. 56). This study examined the *pendejo* phenomenon as a personal and likely cultural tradition or event with the purpose of helping mental health professionals—not only in Puerto Rico but also in the United States and abroad—to become aware of its existence, and manage it accordingly.

Through an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon’s characteristics and of its dynamics, psychologists and mental health professionals—as well as historians and sociologists—can work together to offset its mostly derisory effects. Psychologists will

be in a better position to understand their Puerto Rican clientele and to devise strategies geared to do away with potentially negative *pendejo* mindsets. These clients can learn more assertive and proactive ways to deal with their often implicit negative self-attitudes, with their realities, and with their relationships in a rewarding manner. As a Puerto Rican, as a psychologist, and as a researcher, my goal is to augment Puerto Rico psychology's knowledge base, and to help promote constructive social change in Puerto Rico and for Puerto Ricans no matter where they may reside.

### Proposed Solutions

The initial intention to investigate a possible indigenous covert phenomenon resulted in the uncovering of diverse aspects of Puerto Rico's history and peculiar state of affairs that seem to be internalized in the *pendejo* mentality. The data collected show convergence in the study participants' descriptions of their *pendejo* experiences that validates its existence. Causality is contextual and the sources of the *pendejo* phenomenon can be traced back to the initial years of Puerto Rico's colonial existence and to the ongoing development of various dimensions of Puerto Rican life.

Participants in this investigative work introjected the *pendejo* phenomenon as a mental representation to deal with specific psychological threatening events. APA's (2007) definition for the word *introjection* coincides with the dynamics observed in the *pendejo* mentality.

Introjection.... 2. In psychoanalytic theory, the process of internalizing the qualities of an external OBJECT into the psyche in the form of an internal object or mental REPRESENTATION, which then has an influence on behavior. This

process is posited to be a normal part of development, as when introjection of parental values and attitudes forms the SUPEREGO, but may also be used as a DEFENSE MECHANISM in situations that arouse anxiety. (p. 498)

Data suggest that people's introjection of the *pendejo* makes them unaware of its cognitive inconsistencies and on the effect that the *pendejo* word, together with all its manifestations, has on their way of thinking, on their feelings and on their behavior.

Discovery of this phenomenon allows psychologists and mental health practitioners working with Puerto Rican clients, to augment their knowledge base about the psychological makeup of their clients. It is important for clinicians to take into consideration possible *pendejo* manifestations (i.e., definitions, perceptions, assumptions, and behaviors) to be more effective in therapy.

I have chosen cognitive therapy, including rational emotive behavioral therapy, as an effective way to deal with the *pendejo* issue when it surfaces in therapy. Upon detecting a *pendejo* situation, the incident is addressed in a straight forward manner by challenging the cognitive distortions, inconsistencies, and irrational beliefs that surface in the clients' discourses and attitudes. Once the underlying *pendejo* mentality is brought out into the open and presented to the unaware client, then he-she can become aware of the futility and senselessness of his-her way of interpreting reality.

I use this approach in therapy and with the focus groups at *pendejo* sessions of the Personal Development Workshop at MBW with evident success. By becoming aware that the *pendejo* exists in their minds, clients then examine the effect that the *pendejo* has had in their life. People express that they had never thought about what the *pendejo* was all about, much less they had never imagined the way that this phenomenon affected their

thinking as well as their feelings and behaviors. I am convinced that awareness of the dynamics involved in this phenomenon helps clients to deal with their internalized *pendejo* aspects in a sound, assertive, manner.

Besides psychologists and mental health professionals, other institutional organizations such as academic forums, as well as government agencies, economic entities, and religious groups should take the results of this study into account. The *pendejo* mindset may very well permeate not only the personal realm but it can also touch on society as a whole. The *pendejo* phenomenon may be present when Puerto Rican government officials and business entrepreneurs interact with people from other countries. *Pendejo*-like reactions can only serve to tip the scales to the other side.

The results bring to the forefront the need to develop adequate social sciences and history curriculums in Puerto Rican academic institutions. Puerto Rican historical events and the social formation of its people should have a prominent role in history classes. It is imperative for Puerto Rican children to develop a healthy image of who they are. They need to have access and learn about all the positive moments contained in their history and traditions, in order to be proud of their country and their heritage. Healthy pride will inspire Puerto Ricans to stand up for their rights and to feel free to question others about their intentions, instead of engaging in escapist, self-victimizing postures based on subjective, biased interpretations fostered by the *pendejo* phenomenon.

At present, half of the Puerto Rican people live in the United States. They are considered to be part of the Hispanic population, which constitute the largest minority group. The needs of an ever increasing population presuppose the presence of trained



psychologists. Learning about the *pendejo* phenomenon as a culture-specific, indigenous phenomenon will allow mental health professionals—both in Puerto Rico and in the United States—to address this issue in therapy to the benefit of their Puerto Rican clientele.

As a Puerto Rican and a researcher, I am aware of the importance and the impact of this study in any forum that involves Puerto Ricans, both in Puerto Rico and in the United States. Since this investigation brings into awareness a previously undisclosed phenomenon with notable connotations for all involved, I plan to disseminate the results through conferences, workshops, and seminars at different settings, such as Universities and other academic institutions; governmental agencies; business environments as well as other countries and cultural settings. One of my goals is to write a book, both in English and in Spanish, to make this information accessible to all people. I also plan to further develop the *pendejo* workshop to help people not only to become aware of the phenomenon, but also to learn how to change the way they see themselves so they can develop a more realistic, wholesome self-concept and consequent sense of worth.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

The way Puerto Rican participants described their *pendejo* experiences produced more questions than answers. These questions were never made due to the lack of awareness about the existence of this phenomenon. Further research is needed to reproduce and verify this study and to look for answers to the following questions: How widespread is the *pendejo* phenomenon among Puerto Ricans? Can the *pendejo*

phenomenon be generalized to the entire population? Are there gender differences in the way it is internalized and in its behavioral manifestations? How do different age groups experience the *pendejo* phenomenon? Are there different manifestations of this phenomenon? What strategies can be used to better deal with the negative consequences of this phenomenon? Does the *pendejo* phenomenon generate other more dire social problems such as domestic violence at all levels, and the so called crimes of passion?

Further study of the *pendejo* phenomenon requires the use of appropriate investigative methods and research strategies. There is a need for both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to study the depth and scope of the phenomenon. Quantitative studies can be generalized to larger populations. Also, novel therapeutic strategies and settings will benefit from quantitative approaches that can measure their effectiveness. On the other hand, qualitative investigations can replicate and further validate this study. The use of qualitative approaches utilizing diverse research strategies will provide a broader picture of what the *pendejo* is all about. In-depth knowledge of the *pendejo* phenomenon will help to expand Puerto Rican psychology's knowledge base and provide practitioners with the benefit of more appropriate therapeutic interventions to better serve their Puerto Rican clients.

#### Researcher's Perspective

As a researcher and as a Puerto Rican I had to juggle with possible biases that could intervene with the rigors of a scientific study. To offset potential biases, I kept close to the data, like Wolcott (1994, 2001) suggested, and made sure that it was the

participants' voices that were heard. Also, I benefited from the expert advice of two authorized reviewers who provided constant feedback, not only for results and analysis purposes, but also throughout the whole writing process by reading and commenting on the material produced. These two well-qualified professionals are versed on the *pendejo* topic. An added benefit to offset any bias, is the fact that one of them was born and raised in Puerto Rico, but was reared by an American family. The other reviewer has lived in Puerto Rico for more than 30 years but is a Spanish citizen and was born and raised in Spain. Even though they understand the dynamics involving the phenomenon, they retained an outsider's perspective in evaluating this study.

As a Puerto Rican researcher I adopted a *participant-observer* role (Patton, 1987). and combined my own in-context, personal experience of the *pendejo* phenomenon, with an outside, observer role after spending more than 30 years observing this phenomenon in diverse settings. Creswell (2003) indicates that in doing research the emphasis should be on cultural imprinting and on subjective meanings. By focusing on the specific contexts where people live one can understand the contextual reality of the participants. In my role of participant-observer, I made use of my own in-context, personal knowledge of the *pendejo* issue but adopted an observer's role as the phenomenon revealed itself through the stories of the participants in this study.

Changes in my way of thinking as a result of the study and personal interpretations about what the phenomenon may represent are detailed in the following "Closing Remarks" section. I am aware that the purpose of this study was to uncover, describe, and explore the *pendejo* phenomenon as manifested in Puerto Rico. This

purpose was accomplished in the results chapter. In the following concluding remarks I allowed myself to “fly” beyond the boundaries of this investigation. My comments should be taken as what they are, just personal allusions of a divergent and creative, scientific mind. My hope is that these divergent opinions become food for thought for further research.

### Closing Remarks

Investigating the *pendejo* phenomenon has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. Like many Puerto Ricans, I had very little knowledge about my people and about my heritage. I grew up hearing over and over again that we lived in a small, rather insignificant island with no natural resources or economic means so we could not survive on our own. I also learned that we were indolent, lazy people almost totally dependent on the “benevolence” of the United States.

We gave credibility and took as an absolute truism any negative comment that came our way. In accepting and conspiring to propagate injurious epithets about Puerto Rico, we were perpetuating the myth that we are not “good enough”, and we need to be “guided” and “protected” by other more powerful forces who were the ones who conveniently “knew” what was best for us (see Blanco, 1981; Díaz-Soler, 1998; Golding, 1973; González-Vales, 1998; Morán-Arce, 1985; Picó, 1998; Rivera-Ramos, 2001). With rare exceptions (see Rosario-Natal, 1987), and up to recent times, Puerto Ricans did not confront these assumptions about who they are, a tendency made evident in the *pendejo*

phenomenon. This mentality is still with us, it undermines our sense of worth and our possibilities for growth and development.

In doing this research study, and after a comprehensive literature search to look for the origins of the *pendejo* mentality, I became aware that our history and the *pendejo* phenomenon are intertwined one with the other. My impression is that through the *pendejo* Puerto Ricans reenact their deep-rooted fears of annihilation as a people, and project their doubts about their worth. Because of their history of neglect and subordination, Puerto Ricans have had to always prove their worth to others. There remains a feeling that we are not “good enough,” that we are “flawed” one way or another. The *pendejo* phenomenon reveals this fear of being exploited and harmed by people who place themselves above.

What we as Puerto Ricans are not aware of is that we are victims of our own irrational thoughts and cognitive inconsistencies. The study revealed that the participants were the ones who called themselves “*pendejos*” and the ones who engaged in the characteristic *pendejo* mindset with all its limiting manifestations. If these self-defeating tendencies were to be generalized to the whole Puerto Rican population, then it would make sense to say that we are the ones who see ourselves as *pendejos* and the ones who are full of self-doubts about our dignity, capacity, and sense of respect as a people. This is understandable when one has access to Puerto Rico’s historic accounts.

Based on the results of this study, and stretching my analysis and interpretation a bit further, it is my impression that the *pendejo* mentality seems to have emerged, and has served Puerto Ricans as a defense mechanism and as an alert signal to protect ourselves

against attacks to our integrity. This warning device may have served well during a time where there was an imminent threat of cultural annihilation and of subjugation to foreign tenets.

At present, even though we still suffer from colonial dictates, the *pendejo* mentality is an immature way of dealing with the reality at hand. It inhibits assertive, more proactive behaviors and only helps to keep Puerto Ricans in a flight position, which serves to fuel the feeling of “being taken for a ride for centuries” (Colón, 1995). Unknowingly, by escaping and not standing our ground, we are the ones who have permitted and perpetuated this belittling conception of who we are, for centuries.

The *pendejo* phenomenon study should serve to shake-up Puerto Ricans who identify with the descriptors of this phenomenon. Convincing ourselves that the *pendejo* is the by-product of an ongoing colonial reality and that it resides in our minds will help Puerto Ricans to adopt more forceful and adequate ways to stand up for our rights as a person and as a people. When our own inner voice shouts “¡Ahí viene el cuco!” we will not run away anymore.

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APPENDIX A:

GENERAL MILE'S PROCLAMATION

General Nelson A. Miles's historic proclamation to the people of Puerto Rico  
July 28, 1898

We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring you protection, not only for yourselves but to your property, to promote prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government. It is not our purpose to interfere with any existing laws and customs that are wholesome and beneficial to your people as long as they conform to the rules of military administration, or order and justice. This is not a war of devastation, but one to give to all within the control of its military and naval forces the advantages and blessings of enlightening civilization. (González-Vales, 1998, p. 351)

Note: This proclamation was delivered in the Spanish language in an attempt to justify the American invasion.

APPENDIX B:

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTE

**Anécdota Autobiográfica**

- A. Narra alguna ocasión donde sentiste que te “cogieron de *pendejo/a*” o “caíste de *pendejo/a*.” Explica en detalle.
- B. Menciona otras instancias en que entiendes te “cogieron de *pendejo/a*, caíste de *pendejo/a*” o intentaron hacerlo.

Autobiographical Anecdote:

- A. Narrate an occasion where you feel that you were “taken for a pendejo.”
- B. Mention other instances where you believe that somebody “took you for a pendejo”, or they tried to “catch you for one.”





9. ¿Qué manifestaciones físicas experimentas ante lo que sientes como una “cogida de *pendejo/a*”? (What physical manifestations you experience when you feel, or you are sure, that you were “taken for a *pendejo*”?)
  
10. ¿Quién o quienes son personas capaces de “coger de *pendejo/a*” a otros? (Who do you think can “take you for a *pendejo*”?)
  
11. ¿Tienes conciencia de haber “cogido de *pendejo/a*” intencionalmente a alguien con ánimo de lastimarlo o de hacerle daño? ¿Quién? ¿Cómo lo hiciste? Elabora. (Are you aware of ever taking someone for *pendejo* in a premeditated, intentional way with the purpose of doing harm? Elaborate.)
  
12. ¿Cómo relacionas el concepto *pendejo* con los siguientes rasgos de personalidad vinculados con los puertorriqueños como: pasivo, dócil, indolente, sometido, conformista, rebajado, vago, y noble? (How do you relate the concept *pendejo* with ascribed Puerto Rican personality traits like: passive, docile, indolent, submissive, conformist, belittling, lazy, and noble?)
  
13. ¿Qué le sucede o qué finalidad tiene una persona que se deja “coger de *pendejo/a*”? (What is the end result or what can happen to a person that allows him/her to be “taken for *pendejo*”?)



## APPENDIX D:

### INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### Phone Script – Spanish Version

Hola, mi nombre es Miriam Biascochea y soy estudiante de doctorado en *Walden University*. Tu nombre me fue referido por \_\_\_\_\_. Estoy buscando candidatas/as para participar voluntariamente en un estudio investigativo que estoy llevando a cabo para obtener el título de doctora en filosofía y letras con especialidad en consejería psicológica. El título de mi disertación es *El Fenómeno del Pendejo en Puerto Rico*. Mi estudio enfoca en el sentido que le otorga el puertorriqueño a la palabra *pendejo* y su efecto en la conducta y en la psicología de este grupo cultural.

Estoy buscando personas nacidas y criadas en Puerto Rico; que hablen español como primer idioma; que tengan entre 30 y 45 años de edad; que pertenezcan a la clase media o a la clase alta; y que se hayan graduado de universidad. Me interesa saber si alguna vez en tu vida te sentiste que te “cogieron de *pendejo*” o si sientes que alguien te “ha tratado o te trató de coger de *pendejo*”, incluso, si crees que hay personas capaces de “coger de *pendejo*” a otras. [Si la persona no se identifica con el *pendejo*, no será considerada para participar en el estudio.] Si la persona se identifica con el *pendejo*, se le hace la siguiente pregunta:

*¿Te gustaría participar en este estudio?* [Si contesta en negativo, se dan las gracias y el investigador se despide amablemente.] Si contesta en la afirmativa, se le provee la siguiente información:

El proceso para recopilar la data tomará aproximadamente tres horas. El estudio requiere llenar personalmente dos formularios para recoger información escrita sobre el tema. Inmediatamente después de llenados los formularios, se llevará a cabo una entrevista profunda basada en las preguntas y respuestas en los formularios. Esta entrevista será grabada con el motivo de ahondar en tu conocimiento y tus impresiones en relación al tema del *pendejo*. Tú vas a aprobar con tu firma la versión transcrita de esta grabación. La entrevista se puede llevar a cabo en las oficinas del Movimiento por un Mundo Mejor o podemos acordar otro lugar que sea más conveniente.

Toda documentación grabada o escrita será estrictamente confidencial y la identidad de la persona se mantendrá anónima. Se identificará la data a través de códigos. Sólo personas relacionadas con el proceso de aprobación de la disertación tendrán acceso a la data. Estas personas habrán firmado un acuerdo de confidencialidad requerido por Walden University.

Cualquier pregunta que quieras hacer con mucho gusto la contestaré.  
Próximamente te llamaré para confirmar tu participación y para ponernos de acuerdo sobre el lugar y la fecha de la entrevista.

Gracias por tu atención.

### Phone Script - English translation

*Hello, my name is Miriam Biascochea and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. Your name was referred to me by \_\_\_\_\_. I am looking for candidates who are willing to participate in a research study conducive to my PhD in psychology degree. The title of my dissertation is “The Pendejo Phenomenon in Puerto Rico.” My study focuses on the meaning that Puerto Ricans ascribe to the word “pendejo” and its effect on the behavior and the psychological make up of this cultural group.*

*I am looking for middle and upper class, 30 to 45 years old, college graduate, native-born Puerto Ricans who speak Spanish as their first language. I need to know if you feel that you were “taken for a pendejo”, or that somebody “tried to take you for a pendejo” at any time in your life. Also, do you think that there are persons capable to “take others for pendejos?” [If the person does not identify with the pendejo, he/she will not be considered as a participant.] If the person does identify with the pendejo I will ask:*

***Are you interested in participating in this research study?*** [If the answer is “no”, I will thank the person in a respectful manner and end the communication. If the person answers in the affirmative, I will provide the following details about the study.]

*The data collection process will take approximately three hours to complete. You will be asked to fill out two related forms in order to gather personal written accounts of the pendejo topic. Immediately after, an in-depth interview will follow using the questions and answers on the preceding forms as a guide. The interview will be audio-taped to learn more about your knowledge and personal impressions of the pendejo theme. You will approve and sign the transcribed version of this interview. The data collection process will take place at Movement for a Better World office or at another, more convenient location.*

*All audio-taped or written documentation is strictly confidential and the participant’s identity will be safeguarded at all times. The data collected will be coded and only persons related to the study will have access to the de-identified data. Persons with access to the data are bounded by the confidentiality agreement required by Walden University for this kind of research.*

*I will gladly answer any questions that you might have at this time. In the next few days I will call you back to confirm your participation in the study and to agree on a date and place for the interview process.*

*Thank you for your help.*

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

Name	Age	Sex	Civil Status	College Degree	Profession	Nationality	Citizenship
Ana	42	Female	Married	B.B.A. - Marketing	Housewife – Medical Rep.	Puerto Rico	United States
Enid	38	Female	Married	B.B.A. - Accounting	High School Teacher	Puerto Rico	United States
José	38	Male	Married	B.B.A. - Accounting	Accountant	Puerto Rico	United States
Luis	45	Male	Married	B.S - Marine Biology	Agricultural Inspector	Puerto Rico	United States
Nora	32	Female	Divorced	B.B.A. - Marketing	Human Resources	Puerto Rico	United States
Omar	38	Male	Separated	B.B.A - Marketing	Insurance Agent	Puerto Rico	United States
Pedro	39	Male	Married	B.S. Civil Engineering; M.S. Environmental Engineering	Self-employed/ Environmental Engineering Firm	Puerto Rico	United States
Rita	35	Female	Married	B.A. Psychology	Administrative Officer/ Family Department	Puerto Rico	United States

APPENDIX F:

CONSENT FORM

**Hoja de Consentimiento**  
**El Fenómeno del *Pendejo* en Puerto Rico**  
**Walden University**

[Consent Form, Spanish version.]

Usted está invitado/a a participar en un estudio que explorará el *fenómeno del pendejo* en Puerto Rico. Ha sido seleccionado/a como participante porque su opinión es muy importante para el adelanto de este trabajo investigativo. Por favor lea la forma con detenimiento y sienta la libertad de hacer cualquier pregunta que pueda surgir antes de dar su consentimiento para participar en este estudio exploratorio.

El estudio es realizado por Miriam Biascoechea-Pereda, estudiante y candidata a doctorado en Walden University, y servirá para explorar el constructo *pendejo* como un fenómeno cultural que puede estar enraizado en la personalidad del puertorriqueño, interfiriendo con la interacción saludable entre personas. Este trabajo investigativo mantiene un enfoque autóctono que sirve para en el desarrollo de una psicología que sea culturalmente apropiada con oportunidad para posibles cambios sociales en esta población.

**Trasfondo del Estudio**

El propósito del estudio es explorar cómo puertorriqueño/as entre las edades de 30 a 45 años, pertenecientes a la clase media y alta, y graduados de universidad, describen sus experiencias en relación al constructo *pendejo* para determinar si estas experiencias pueden ser conceptualizadas como el *fenómeno del pendejo*.

**Procedimientos:**

Al firmar esta hoja de consentimiento usted conciente a:

1. Escribir una *Anécdota Autobiográfica*. Se le entregará una hoja de papel donde va a escribir una anécdota autobiográfica sobre alguna instancia donde sintió que lo/a “cogieron de pendejo/a” o donde alguien intentó “cogerlo/a de pendejo/a.” Es importante que narre toda la historia según la recuerda incluyendo detalles

como: ¿Qué pasó? ¿Cómo te sentiste? ¿Qué hiciste? ¿Qué hubieses hecho diferente?

2. Contestar el *Cuestionario del Pendejo y Guía de Entrevista*. Inmediatamente luego de escribir la anécdota autobiográfica se le pedirá que conteste el *Cuestionario del Pendejo y Guía de Entrevista*. El cuestionario/guía consiste en 13 preguntas relacionadas con el constructo *pendejo*. Se le pedirá su opinión sobre aspectos importantes pertinentes a este tema.
3. Participar en una *entrevista audio grabada*. Luego de llenar las formas mencionadas arriba, seguirá una entrevista profunda que será audio grabada. La información provista en la anécdota autobiográfica y en el cuestionario/guía servirá para realizar esta entrevista. El propósito de la intervención es recopilar descripciones significativas del fenómeno bajo estudio, consistentes con una investigación cualitativa de excelencia.

La participación en este estudio exploratorio permitirá recolectar data importante respecto a reflexiones personales sobre el tema del *pendejo*. Ayudará, además, a determinar la relevancia de la *Anécdota Autobiográfica* y del *Cuestionario del Pendejo y Guía de Entrevistas* como instrumentos adecuados para estudiar este tema.

Los participantes para el estudio serán seleccionado/as a través de contacto personal y a través de diversas fuentes de referidos. El proceso completo se espera que tenga una duración de aproximadamente 3 horas en total.

### **Naturaleza Voluntaria del Estudio:**

Su participación en este trabajo investigativo será estrictamente voluntaria. La decisión de participar o de no participar no afectará de ningún modo su relación presente y futura con Miriam Biascochea-Pereda ni con el personal del Movimiento por un Mundo Mejor (MMM). Si inicialmente consiente en participar en esta investigación, usted mantiene la libertad de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin que se vean afectadas estas relaciones.

### **Riesgos y Beneficios al Participar en este Estudio Exploratorio:**

No se anticipa ningún riesgo a daño físico o Psicológico por participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, en la eventualidad de algún daño inesperado (ej. estrés, ansiedad, coraje, depresión), el investigador dará por terminado el estudio y

proveerá la asistencia necesaria a la persona o personas afectadas. Se hará un referido inmediato a recursos psicológicos previamente identificados—libre de cargos—que se mantienen disponibles en MMM.

En la eventualidad de experimentar estrés o ansiedad durante su participación en este estudio exploratorio usted puede dar por terminada su participación en cualquier momento. Usted puede negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que considere invasiva o estresante.

Como beneficio por participar se ofrece la posibilidad de tomar parte en un proyecto de investigación que puede servir para descubrir un fenómeno cultural puertorriqueño con connotaciones psicológicas. Los participantes se beneficiarán también de la participación gratuita en el *Taller de Desarrollo de la Persona* donde se presentan estrategias ya probadas que ayudan a eliminar o minimizar la mentalidad del pendejo/a. Estudios investigativos como éste ayudan a los psicólogos y terapeutas a aumentar su caudal de conocimientos y a encontrarse en una mejor posición de servir a su clientela.

**Compensación:**

No habrá compensación monetaria.

**Potencial Conflicto de Intereses:**

No se anticipa ningún conflicto de intereses en este estudio.

**Preguntas y Personas a Contactar:**

La investigadora a cargo de este estudio es Miriam Biascochea-Pereda. La persona a cargo de la supervisión de esta investigación es la Dra. Stephanie Cawthon. En este momento puede hacer cualquier pregunta que surja. Si surgen preguntas en un futuro, puede contactar a la Sra. Miriam Biascochea-Pereda en el Movimiento por un Mundo Mejor a los teléfonos (787) 282-0501 o al (787) 282-9062. La Procuradora de Participantes en Investigaciones (*Research Participant Advocate*) en Walden University es Leilani Endicott, y puede conseguirla en el 1-800-925-3368, extensión 1210, para cualquier pregunta relacionada con su participación en este estudio.

Usted recibirá una copia de esta forma de manos de la investigadora.

**Declaración de Consentimiento:**

Certifico que he leído la información presentada previamente. He hecho las preguntas pertinentes y he recibido respuestas. Consiento participar en este estudio.

Nombre completo en letra de molde: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del Investigador: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_



**Consent Form**  
**The *Pendejo* Phenomenon in Puerto Rico**  
**Walden University**

You are invited to participate in an explorative study of the *pendejo phenomenon* in Puerto Rico. You were selected as a participant because your input is very valuable for the progression of this study. Please read this form and feel free to ask any questions that might arise, before giving your consent to take part in this explorative study.

The study is being conducted by Miriam Biascochea-Pereda, a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and will serve to explore the *pendejo* construct as a cultural phenomenon deeply rooted within the Puerto Rican personality structure which may cause interference with otherwise healthy interactions. The study follows an indigenous approach to research that will assist in developing a culturally appropriate psychology with subsequent opportunities for social change in this population.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of the study is to explore how the *pendejo* construct is described in the experience of middle and upper class, college graduate Puerto Ricans, between 30 to 45 years of age, to determine if these experiences can be conceptualized as the *pendejo phenomenon*.

**Procedures:**

Upon signing this consent form you agree to:

1. Write an *auto-biographical anecdote*. On a sheet of paper you will be asked to write an *auto-biographical anecdote* about an instance when you feel that you were “taken for a *pendejo*” or that somebody tried to “take you for a *pendejo*.” It is important that you tell the whole story as you remember it including all the details like: What happened? How did you feel? What did you do? What would you have done differently?
2. Answer *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule*. Immediately after writing the *auto-biographical anecdote* you will answer *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule*. The Questionnaire consists of 13 questions related to the *pendejo* construct. You will be asked to provide your input about important aspects of the *pendejo* issue.
3. Participate in an *audio taped in-depth interview*. After filling-out the two forms mentioned above, an audio-taped, in-depth interview will follow. The information provided in the auto-biographical anecdote and in the

*Pendejo* Questionnaire and Interview Schedule will guide the interview. The purpose of the interview is to gather thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study, consistent with sound qualitative research

Participation in this explorative study is expected to provide significant data about personal reflections on the *pendejo* topic. It will also help to determine the relevance of both the *auto-biographical anecdote* and *The Pendejo Questionnaire and Interview Schedule* as workable instruments for the study of the *pendejo* phenomenon.

Participants will be selected on a voluntary basis from personal contact and from referrals through diverse sources. The process is expected to take about three hours to complete.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Miriam Biascoechea-Pereda, or Movement for a Better World (MBW) personnel. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in this Explorative Study:**

There are no anticipated physical or psychological risks in this study. Nevertheless, in the event of unexpected harm (e.g. stress, anxiety, anger, depression), the researcher will terminate the study and will provide the necessary assistance to the person, or persons involved. Immediate referral to identified available psychological resources—free of charge—is accessible at MBW.

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the explorative study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

The benefit of participation is the possibility of taking part in an investigative project that will serve to uncover an unexplored Puerto Rican cultural phenomenon with observed psychological underpinnings. Participants will also benefit from workshop participation and will learn proven strategies to help offset the *pendejo* mentality. Research studies such as this, allow psychologists and practitioners to augment their knowledge base and be in a better position to serve their clientele.

**Compensation:**

There will be no monetary compensation.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Tape recordings and written material will be used only for dissertation and educational purposes and will be erased and destroyed when these purposes are accomplished after a required five years' minimum storage time.

**Potential Conflict of Interest:**

There is no anticipated potential conflict of interest in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Miriam Biascoechea-Pereda. The researcher's adviser is Dr. Stephanie Cawthon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact Ms. Biascoechea-Pereda at Movement for a Better World, phone number (787) 282-0501 or (787) 282-9062. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study.

You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX G:

INVENTARIO DEMOGRAFICO  
Demographic Inventory

Nombre (Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Edad (age): \_\_\_\_\_

Sexo (Sex): \_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_ F

Status Civil (Civil Status): \_\_\_\_\_

Etnia (Ethnicity): \_\_\_\_\_

Lugar de nacimiento (Place of birth): \_\_\_\_\_

Grado Académico (Academic degree): \_\_\_\_\_

Universidad donde obtuvo el grado (Academic institution):

\_\_\_\_\_

Ocupación (Occupation): \_\_\_\_\_

Lugar de trabajo (Workplace): \_\_\_\_\_

Dirección Residencial (Residential Address):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dirección Postal (Postal Address):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Correo electrónico (e-mail address) \_\_\_\_\_

Teléfonos (Telephones): (787) \_\_\_\_\_

(787) \_\_\_\_\_

(787) \_\_\_\_\_

Clave: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX H:

ENGLISH TRANSCRIPTIONS: RITA AND PEDRO

Participant: **F-3-35** (**Rita**) Date of interview: 9 June 2007

*Autobiographical Anecdote:*

**Investigator:** Well, let's begin by discussing an autobiographical anecdote where you will narrate an occasion (event) when you felt that someone took you for a "pendejo," or you felt that you fell as a "pendejo".

**Rita:** Do I have to read it as I wrote it or...

**Investigator:** You can tell me in your own words, that is...

**Rita:** OK... this is the main idea, ehh... It is based on a relationship. Ehh... I have this friend, a girl that grew up with me because we have known each other since we were little, ehh... she was in school with me, and she lived close to my house also, she was in the same group as I was. Ehh... the years went by and we reached *High School*, (high school). Let's say, more or less at the beginning of year 12 (?), there is a change, that is...., in terms of attitudes. And I saw that all this comes because at that time, I had a boy friend... ehh, we had already... There were plans to more or less drop the relationship because of situations and the problematic we were going through. There's this day when there was a discussion between my boy friend and myself and we broke up and, what a coincidence, that same night she comes to my house because she wants to talk to me. What she expressed was a monologue, because I did not speak, I was totally shocked... And it was... She established [mentioned] "*this only difference*" that she was sick and tired of being compared to me, and that she had always grown in [under] my shadow. But that she wanted to be herself and that she was tired of playing my game..., that she wanted to be herself. That she had come to notify me that she had been, that she was with him, with whom, at that time I still considered my boy friend. She turned around, left me with the bomb and left. Obviously, after that, well my boy friend and I broke up..., she was the one with him all the time...; friends [would say], "but come on, and that change?", because this happened from one day to the other. Also, hmm... I can say that yes, I felt taken for a "pendeja", that is, both by him and by her... by both of them. This is the story I told you.

**Investigator:** (;?)...what did you do?

**Rita:** [Sighs] After working through the anger [she laughs]... an intense anger, ehh..., mixed with [feeling] disheartened. That you thought that... who you thought to be your best friend, ehh... The person you grew up with..., and for her to come from one moment to the other to tell you that she was tired of being your shadow, that she was tired... that

is, you like don't understand... that is... I, did not understand. And yes, I had people around me and..., and my Mom for years would tell me, "be careful, I don't like it". And I would do my own way: "I am the one to choose my friends and she grew up with me, and I love her as though she were my sister". And looking back, well, it was hard... I can't deny... very hard! [sighs, laughs nervously]... working through that, because ehh... I was also dealing with my own stuff, but also, school and the environment at home. At home, well, my Mom... "I told you so, but you wouldn't pay attention". OK, but this is not the moment to tell me that you told me so... It's a question of, well, of supporting me and telling me, hey what can I do! And at school, well, friends... that is... hmmm. I belonged to this big bunch of people, we were easily, easily 25 that always hung out together, and because of what happened, the group split up because many of the boys and girls that gave me – without knowing, because I never told anyone what happened—and many of them well supported me, "But Rita, hmmm... what happened, what did you do..., what...". I [would tell them] "nothing, I simple... it's all done, ended. She's over there, I am here..." [Friends would say] "But, what about so and so?" [Rita answers] "She is with him now."

**Investigator:** OK then, in this situation you actually did nothing.

**Rita:** I spoke with him, with ..., with the guy that was my boy friend and I told him that I congratulated him for how everything turned out for him..., because I was really angry (laughing). And that, ehh... he should learn to be a better judge of people. That was all that I... left him with. Then hmm, I couldn't say anything to her, because ehh..., well it would mean more conflict, because I knew that the moment that I opened my mouth ehh..., I was going to humiliate her, ehh... by talking about her personality, of ...how... of how she was... co... that is... and I chose not to [talk to her].

**Investigator:** That is, you did not confront her.

**Rita:** No, not her.

**Investigator:** And, practically, your boy friend neither.

**Rita:** No, I simply let him go, let him go..., let him go... let him go... and ... and.

**Investigator:** You let him go... and you stayed hooked up... with the...

**Rita:** It was later when I realized... I can say that it was a year later when I realized, ehh... how badly I had worked through this situation... That I had remained... I had remained, left behind, that I had not closed... hmmm..., that..., chapter, ehh, adequately. Instead of growing, what I did was bury myself.

**Investigator:** It was sort of... like an escape reaction.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... I saw at that moment that it was a wise choice, but after all was said and done, it was not.

**Investigator:** It was therefore, an escape measure more than anything else.

**Rita:** Yes, totally, because I did not want to face it. I did not want to confront.

**Investigator:** Yes.

**Rita:** And, it is strange... and, but, I say it is strange, because to me... I have always been characterized as facing everything all the time, except this one time. It is the only time that I can say that I went backwards. And I can't explain it, that is... I understood that was the best way to handle that moment. Afterwards I said it wasn't.

**Investigator:** And, on that occasion you assumed, that is, you felt..., "“pendeja”".

**Rita:** Oh, yes, that they took me for a "“pendeja”", yes. For many years...

**Investigator:** You carried this for many years.

**Rita:** Oh, yes... yes... definitively. I said it..., I began to work this out, I could tell you...easily, easily... I met with her again during my last year at the university. That was four years later, almost five since the original event, and even then, I became aware that at that moment when I met up with her up front, I had assumed a better position than she had. Because she was still dragging the idea that she was my shadow.

**Investigator:** Well, anyway, I understand that this is still something that... carries this sensation... "Maybe I was, taken for a "“pendeja”"."(?)..."

**Rita:** Oh, yes.

**Investigator:** ...up to this day, when you bring it up as a fact, an example, right? Ahh, you are convinced that person saw you, or treated you as a "“pendeja”"?

**Rita:** Yes, yes, because in the long run, when one analyzes, and more in the sense that she was raised, growing up with me... ehh..., there were differences. My home, well, I had my two parents together. She had her home divided, because her mother had divorced... ehh... her father did not have a good relationship with her, hmmm, she, in fact, said one time about me, ehh... We would share clothes, hmmm, accessories, that is, shoes, because we wore the same size, our bodies were more or less the same... And

then, I was really angry, because I would say, “Dear God, ehh... I was really a ““pendeja””, because I gave the best of me and all she did was take advantage.

**Investigator:** She took advantage of your good nature.

**Rita:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** In other words...

**Rita:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** Ehh... So... She told you directly that you were a ““pendeja””.

**Rita:** Yes, she [actually] told me on two occasions. That I..., I had played the role well. And... I remember that on that occasion I told her: “But, what role are you talking about, speak to me clearly”. She told me... “You were one good ““pendeja””. And at that moment she started to explain a bunch of things in the comparisons that were made between us... the (?)... she would be mistaken for me, hmm... that she was sick of that. That is, she led me to believe a whole bunch of things during all... in all the time that she shared with me... which weren’t true.

**Investigator:** And you... Did you corroborate this ““pendeja”” attribution with her... or ... or..., how should I say, did you ask for clarification?

**Rita:** Yes... that’s where the fact that she explains to me..., or tells me well... “I used your clothes, your shoes... I took advantage of this and that... and then in the end, to reaffirm she said... I took advantage in such a way, that I am keeping your boy friend.”

**Investigator:** She made you feel even more like a ““pendeja””.

**Rita:** It made me angrier.

**Investigator:** It made you angrier...

**Rita:** Yes, because one does not expect that reaction, or that type of behavior from the person that you have beside you constantly. And really, at that point, as soon as she went out the door of my house, the first thing that came to mind was: “What a “pendeja” I have been!”... Which, in a certain way, I myself was reiterating it, and ... and confirming (ironic laughter).

**Investigator:** And confirming... In fact..., that is, you yourself manifested this categorically...



**Rita:** Oh, yes, yes... definitively... that is I myself... me... ¡What a “pendeja” I have been!”

**Investigator:** Hmm... that is.., that to a certain point, you are the one that has the idea that this had to do with the “*pendejo*”, that “I saw myself as a “pendeja”, or you came to talk to a “pendeja””...

**Rita:** Oh yes, Oh yes...

**Investigator:** Your friend corroborated later... but..., but while it was happening, at the moment [at the end] of all of this, you were the “pendeja” that told you so.

**Rita:** Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes... honestly yes. I fell like what... “What a “pendeja”... all of these years trying to give the best of me, to protect her, to... offer to her, what in a certain sense I understood she lacked.

**Investigator:** Did you at any moment defend your position? That is, did you at any moment... because what I have heard is that she, she certifies things to you...

**Rita:** Ujum.

**Investigator:** And you keep pushing it in... you keep telling your self that, in other words. But do you, at any moment, stop her flat down and... and told her what... what you... were feeling, what you had seen that had happened?

**Rita:** At one point in the conversation that night, that first occasion, n..., we were still girls in High School, ehh... I told her... “Yeah, look, I was so... I am such a “pendeja” because I never paid heed to anyone who came to warn me that you were not a good person. And I made them turn away from me because I defended you, and now look what you are doing. I truly had to have been really blind... real abnormal, really submitted, to keep on playing the role that you wanted me to play.”

**Investigator:** You were playing the role of “pendeja”.

**Rita:** Sure... sure, I was the “pendeja”.

**Investigator:** Hmmm...

**Rita:** Years later, when we met again at the university, my last year of university, hmmm... there was like a resurgence of communication, because unfortunately we bumped into each other, ehh..., she was in the area of communications, I was in psychology, and there was an colloquium and we met at that same place and they left us alone, unfortunately (ironic laughter), in a place... two more people were supposed to be

there, but they were to arrive later, so...both of us were there. And, well... she tried to start a banal conversation, and I well, stopped her flat out and said to her: “Look... don’t try to... don’t give it any more though ehh... you simply come for your stuff, I come for mine. Because we know each other from the past, that does not mean that we are to be buddies now, and for good friends, because there is nothing, nothing existed, it never was...ehh... I do recognize that at that moment I was, and I followed your game, but at this moment I am not the same person that you met at that time.”

**Investigator:** “I am not the same “pendeja” as before...”

**Rita:** Exactly! And I told her, “I am not going to start games again with you, it’s not worth it... no... in my case I don’t have the need because I could – I know where I stand—I am not entering into any chit chat with you... I simply want it to be clear to you. It is done. That point [relationship] died. You are so yesterday, and he is yesterday and has been for many years, and that feeling, that emotion, that... thing that was eating at me inside, of having followed your game, to have fallen for a ““PENDEJA”” ... look, I was able to deal with it. I worked it out, and I overcame it all. So...”

**Investigator:** In other words, you... actually worked this out alone.

**Rita:** Oh yes.

**Investigator:** You yourself...

**Rita:** Oh yes, yes... little by little...

**Investigator:** You managed the “pendeja” within yourself.

**Rita:** Yes, until I was able to do away with her. I was able to convince myself of many things and of the value I had. That my actions were not... Were not sort of predetermined. But that I was feeling them in such a way that all I wanted to do was good. And that’s that. That is the frame of mind that allowed me to heal little by little and eliminate the feeling... that she had taken me for a “pendeja”. To such a point that, well, when that situation happened, I could manage it in a way I never thought that I could simply..., very relaxed... good... I was like... “well... you are there..., well you arrived... Well, that’s fine... just another [person], in other words, but... no anger... no...

**Investigator:** That took what four years... six years...

**Rita:** Oh yes, oh yes... that is, hmmm... and definitely that marked like a milestone in me, because from that moment on, ehh... I was like more aware, more ehh... how can I tell you... more watchful...

**Investigator:** More alert.

**Rita:** More alert... ehh... in how people approached me, in what way... ehh... I would look for the pro and cons, in how I could see... their behavior... what they were looking for or... what they wanted to do.

**Investigator:** What their intentions were...

**Rita:** Exactly. Yes... definitively.

**Investigator:** In other words that they... wouldn't take you for a "pendeja" again.

**Rita:** Exactly (cough), "exactly". And, that helped me a lot, it really did. That experience, was at that moment traumatic, but it helped me...

**Investigator:** It taught you...

**Rita:** Oh yes. The har... the hard way, but it taught me (ironic laughter), it taught me.

**Investigator:** It taught you to be... how do you say it...

**Rita:** [not to be] With my guard down.

**Investigator:** With your guard down...

**Rita:** Exactly... exactly.

**Investigator:** In other words, from that moment on you keep your guard up.

**Rita:** Oh yes... all the time...all the time. Hmmm... I have long time friends that for many years have told me, "When I met you, you had like this only wall all around you, and you only let in, what you wanted to let in."

**Investigator:** That was after that experience.

**Rita:** That was after that experience.

**Investigator:** In other words, you built these walls...

**Rita:** Oh yes!!! Totally to protect myself...

**Investigator:** To protect yourself...

**Rita:** I kept anyone away that I wanted to keep away, I kept them away. Because I was the one in control. I was the one who determined if he or she entered or not. And if he or she entered, [I determined] the way they entered. Because I never, ehh... wanted to go through that same situation. No!... It was too hard [difficult].

**Investigator:** You don't like the "pendeja".

**Rita:** NOOOOO!... [laughter]... No way! Honestly no way, no way.

**Investigator:** Therefore you have to be... really alert

**Rita:** Yes, yes... definitely yes.

**Investigator:** Do you have any other experience...?

**Rita:** Yes, yes ehh... You were asking for other instances in which you understand that you were taken, or could have fallen, or they tried to take you...

**Investigator:** Ujum.

**Rita:** Based upon what I have been saying regarding the walls that I created, as a consequence of the first incidence of being taken for "pendeja", there was another person, a boy came to my life, very good, very noble, a simple guy..., but with double intentions. Ehh... I have always been... well, I was raised, you know.... With lots of strong values and morality. I don't advocate, ehh... sexual relations before... marriage. And I was very strict in that. In other words, it was part of my convictions. Then this guy comes along... well, looking for friendship, wanting to know me... Everything was going well, until in one situation that happened at the same university... there was this situation with him and other people, another girl..., and the comment he made, because he had his back toward me... he was not aware that I had arrived, and he makes this comment – about the other girl... and I realized... I said, "Aha! Wait a minute, this guy wants something else... I am very, very soorry..."

**Investigator:** But did you hear that he said anything...

**Rita:** Oh yes, he made a very grotesque comment about the girl with this situation...ehh..., there was a "heavy" situation between them... hmmm.... It seems as though she was a person... a one night stand... that was how he named her. Hummm... and he was throwing her away, because he was waiting for his new conquest. And his new conquest was me. When I heard that, unfortunately for him, I touched his shoulder and said "Well if you are talking about me, I am here". And I told him. "I am here, and you are as good as dead, because I will be no one night stand, nor will you ever be with

me... hmmm... For you to be with me, a whole lot of time has to pass, a solid loving relationship, and that we are married. So I am sorry for you.”

*Investigator:* (?)

*Rita:* Oh yes. And I told him, “I am sorry... I am not one of those... You mistook the person I am.” I turned around and left. He went after me... and told me that I had misinterpreted things... that it was not the way I had, hmmm... that it was not the meaning that I had given things... I told him, “Look, don’t waste your saliva, nor your efforts, nothing, because... I am sorry, this is the end. I repeat, I am not one of those. You will not make me fall, I am clear on my position and what I am.” And... “bye, bye” ... I put him out of my life.

*Investigator:* Then you understand there, that he tried to take you for....

*Rita:* Oh yes! Using all his wiles. Later, well, we saw each other again, because he was majoring in the same area, so we had to see each other around there or in classes... and yeah, I could see that err... ehh... I was not mistaken in my... conception of him. He was a cold and cunning man... and that he was only after... having girls fall for him. And..., I had been one of his targets. Fortunately for me, that other situation had happened... or that I understand that eventually I would become aware...

*Investigator:* You would become aware.

*Rita:* Exactly. Hmm... of what he was looking for, and up to that moment... also, it would have been the end [of the relationship].

*Investigator:* And when you spoke to him at that moment, you expressed... hmmm... you tried... to take me for a “pendeja”.

*Rita:* Ah, no. I told him... I told him, “I am sorry for you but I don’t have a single “pendeja” hair [on my head].” Then he told me, “I am not... I was not trying to lay down the bed for you as a “pendeja”.” And I told him, “Ah, no... and then what was it you were trying to do? Because everything led to that.” And he told me... “I do not consider you to be a “pendeja”.” And I told him, “No, no, no... excuse me. **I am not “pendeja”.** I heard... I am so sorry but you go your way and I’ll go my way. If you want to make others fall [for your wiles], that is your problem. But, I will not fall [for them]... so I’ll be seeing you.” I told him, and loud and clear. Real clear.

*Investigator:* And you left... (?)

*Rita:* Oh, yes, fortunately, and thank God [laughter].

**Investigator:** You are not sorry.

**Rita:** No, no way [she laughs loudly]... no way!

**Investigator:** Well then. These are the two circumstances, right, that you are presenting to me...?

**Rita:** Yes, yes... yes.

**Investigator:** Hmm... let go on to the questionnaire on the topic of the “*pendejo*”.

**Rita:** OK.

*Questionnaire on the topic of the “*pendejo*”*

**Investigator:** The first question, Define *the concept of “*pendejo*”*...

**Rita:** When someone close or a stranger, tries to do things to you that you do not consent to, or are able to make you yield or direct you to what they want from you.

**Investigator:** Then, how would you define a... a... how would you identify a person who is a “*pendejo*”?

**Rita:** A “*pendeja*” person?

**Investigator:** A “*pendejo*”...a “*pendejo*”.

**Rita:** It could be someone that has... low self esteem... ehh...

**Investigator:** Think, what is a “*pendejo*” to you? What... what...

**Rita:** Ay...a “*pendejo*” to me is “like this only person” that doesn’t have his-her own criteria...

**Investigator:** That doesn’t have his-her own criteria...

**Rita:** That does not have much... who is not immersed in knowledge, in other words, who does not search to grow, doesn’t search to be in touch with what is surrounding him-her... who is blind in many occasions. Who doesn’t look to analyze things further. Simply, well because you say so, I believe it...

**Investigator:** A person who allows to be carried away...

**Rita:** Exactly. A real easygoing, who allows the tide to move her. Even if later she-he is able to say, “ah, if I follow this one, and he throws him-herself off a cliff, I also throw myself off... in other words, lets him-herself go.

**Investigator:** He-she allows to be handled... allows to be manipulated by others.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes, yes... because he-she is, well, doesn’t have self control, doesn’t have that... a way of saying no. Simply, “Ah, because you say so I do it.”

**Investigator:** As if he-she didn’t have self-criteria.

**Rita:** No, no he-she doesn’t have it because a person who has self criteria doesn’t allow, first to be imposed upon. He-she can say no, this is so... But, hello... why are you this way... just because you say so? No. Convince me, give me reasons. In other words, a ““pendejo”” person, is the one that flows with the current, that is... period, and done. Given the circumstances or situations that might surround the person, he-she let’s him-herself go, period and done.

**Investigator:** When you felt “pendeja”...at that moment, how would you describe yourself, how did you see yourself?

**Rita:** At that moment I saw myself as a girl, ehh...with no meaning, ehh... blind, ehh... real *easygoing* in the sense that I allowed myself to be taken and I believed everything she was telling me, ehh... that in spite of thinking that I supported her, and gave her the best of myself, ehh... not with a feeling of reciprocity, because I was aware that it was not so. That is...

**Investigator:** A person that was... who had been manipulated and allowed to be manipulated..., in other words.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.... I saw myself that way. I saw myself as a marionette.

**Investigator:** A marionette.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes, honestly yes. And she knew very well which chords or what keys to press, or what to say in order for me to follow through in the same line... that I believed everything and keep quite and be happy, quote, unquote.

**Investigator:** Well, a “pendejo” is a person who can be a marionette that is manipulated, managed, led around as anyone pleases...

**Rita:** Oh yes... yes, because its because...

**Investigator:** ...he-she is not aware, doesn't have the capacity to realize what is happening around him-her.

**Rita:** Yes, because he-she is so alienated from reality... he-she does not observe... doesn't measure the pros...

**Investigator:** That has no malice?

**Rita:** No, doesn't have any malice. I can tell you that, at that moment... until that moment, I thought that... I had like bearings, that everyone was good, that everyone was operating from good faith. After that incident.... BOOM... I woke up!

**Investigator:** But sometimes, to be too good...

**Rita:** Oh yes, it is considered... because...

**Investigator:** ...it is to be a "*pendejo*", o you can fall as a "*pendejo*".

**Rita:** Or fall as a "*pendejo*", yes. Yes, because people are sly, they know how to configure things around you for you to fall... [as such]. And I don't know...

**Investigator:** It's to allow... to give space to other people to play with you.

**Rita:** Yes, because it's like a ping-pong ball, you are bouncing all around because according to what they want, that's what you do. But when you realize what is around you, you assume control, and that control is what lets you establish your own criteria.

**Investigator:** In other words so as not to be a "*pendejo*", or not to fall as a "*pendejo*", you must assume control of your life...

**Rita:** Oh yes, of what you want.

**Investigator:** You must be constantly alert...

**Rita:** Alert, alert...alert, and not let yourself be scammed (taken). Another point is that you can't let yourself be led by... impulses, because ehh..., they can tell you something, bring you, -- what I call *bochinche* (embroiled gossip) – which happens a lot – they come to you and say, "Hey, so and so said this and that, this and that, this and that, about you", they you explode like a bomb... you don't think, you don't analyze and right away you go to the other so and so, and you tell them "Well hey, what's going on... and this and that... and blah...blah...blah... blahhh." I have seen lots of situations like that... and in



the work place it happens a lot. Where so and so wants another to go to a third person and make [telling on him-her] ehh... an embroiled mess. Then you get that situation where you fell as a “pendeja”, because you did what the other one wanted you to do.

**Investigator:** Therefore you have to be... you have to be a person who is more intelligent... than the rest...

**Rita:** Yes..., slier... you have to have a combination and a balance within so as to be able to measure and analyze coldly, “Ok, so and so came and told me this, but, what is behind that? What does he or she want...?”

**Investigator:** That is a part then, of being alert...

**Rita:** Yes, yes... because you have to be aware of EVERYTHING that happens around you.

**Investigator:** Because... the “pendejo” to a certain extent then, is a... possible... a possible threat...

**Rita:** Yessss....

**Investigator:** In other words, it is threatening, it’s something that...

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** It something that can fall on you, that can grab you, that can take you.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes, yes. It’s like everything is like a game. For many people it’s like... trying to... trying to make you fall like a “pendejo”, that’s their game. That’s their *modus vivendi*. Then they become so sly [so deft]...in building everything around you so that you can see this thing they are building...

**Investigator:** That it is like a preparation...

**Rita:** Oh, yes! But you have to be more analytical than that, and don’t let yourself be carried away. Simply take your time to establish yourself and say, “OK, I am here, this is happening, what can happen if I do this, or this, or this? Who am I going to benefit, or who am I going to harm? These are strategic ways.

**Investigator:** In other words what can save you is your capacity for analyzing things...

**Rita:** Oh yes. I understand that yes, that is it, because it is the only thing that can keep me centered... and no one better than myself to know what is... surrounding me, that is...

**Investigator:** In order to identify.... What is happening...?

**Rita:** Yes, and to be able to be clear, and make...a wise and conscious decision.

**Investigator:** So not to fall..., that is, so as not to fall again as a “pendeja”.

**Rita:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** Let’s move on to the second question. *What connotation does the word “pendejo” carry for you?*

**Rita:** Negative. It is a demeaning treatment toward the person.

**Investigator:** Is it lack of appreciation, denigrating?

**Rita:** Yes, yes, it is denigrating. For someone to tell you that “you are a “pendejo”,” it is to try to throw you down.

**Investigator:** And when you say it to yourself?

**Rita:** Look... I have learned through time... you know... while one continues to live one continues to acquire experience, it’s logical, one continues to grow. That is what we strive for. In the beginning... I accepted, or... or I myself used the word towards... myself. But, well, as time goes on, one continues to learn so much from others, from books, from what falls around you and one grabs, and... and I knew to learn, that if one uses negative terms toward oneself, more and more you destroy your self-esteem. Thanks to that, I have eliminated, little by little, ehh... many of those words and connotations... and the first one that I tried... and the first one that I tried and that still gives me a bit of... ehh...

**Investigator:** Of work?

**Rita:** “pendeja”. Why? Because you can be all the cunning you can be, and all the analytical that you are, there are certain occasions in which, unfortunately, others were at a higher level and no matter what, you fall. But, if I fall, I don’t let the effect be as devastating and I try to deal with it as soon as possible and get it out of my system... And yes, I have learned that confrontation – with a good reason—without having to recur to insults or to aggression towards the other person, simply... in a dialogue... I get it out of my system, because.... I will let you know. “OK, you made me do this... fine, you got

what you wanted. It's not going to happen again. I am aware... I don't want you near me." Either you change... or...

**Investigator:** And, do you say it like that, "you took me for a "pendeja"?"

**Rita:** Oh yes. "You took me for a "pendeja". I fell for it... I fell for it..."

**Investigator:** And what does the other person say to you?

**Rita:** Well see, I have had different reactions. I have had persons that what they ...have done is laugh, and... and they confirm, "yes, yes, that is what I wanted you to do", as [also], I have had persons that hide under this like, mask of "Ahh... who, me?, that's impossible I am not capable of doing that". And I tell them, "I'm sorry but the mask and the curtain have fallen. I already know who you are. Don't worry, I will not fall for it again."

**Investigator:** But the one who gives the connotation of "pendeja", or that this is an act of "pendejismo", if we could say it this way... is you.

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** La otra persona no es que te lo dijo, no es la que lo (¿?)...

**Rita:** No, no, no they don't... don't... no, no.

**Investigator:** In other words, you... you confirm it on your own...

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** ...on your own.

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** OK. Then, let's move on to the third question: Elaborate on the following phrases: "taken for a "pendejo" or to fall as a "pendejo", in other words, what does "taken for *pendejo*", or "fall as a *pendejo*", mean...

**Rita:** What I did... fall for... take another for... "*pendejo*"...hmmm...made someone do something that I wanted. Ehh... I told so and so such a thing... because I knew that earlier rather than later, she was going to tell the third person. So, indirectly I made her give the other one the message.

**Investigator:** In other words, to take someone as “*pendejo*” is like grabbing someone. As... as...

**Rita:** I manipulated the situation in such a way... I

**Investigator:** Manipulate, that is all right.

**Rita:** ...so that she would do what I wanted. And to fall as a “*pendejo*” is that...

**Investigator:** She fell.

**Rita:** Exactly. She did what I wanted her to do.

**Investigator:** so, when the person does what... she falls victim of the intentions, of the bad intentions of the other person.

**Rita:** Oh yes, yes, yes...

**Investigator:** That is what “to fall” means...

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** And what does, “he-she wants to take me for a “*pendejo*”,” mean?

**Rita:** When they try, but you become aware and reason that “Ah, but wait a second. That is what you... I am not going to fall for that. You are not going to take me for a “*pendeja*”.”

**Investigator:** So then that is when you realize.

**Rita:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** That is when the alarm sounds...

**Rita:** It’s when you already... you already know and say... “wait a second, this is not mine. This is your stuff..., you do it.”

**Investigator:** Yes this is... this is alert...

**Rita:** ...“You don’t need to involve me”. And that...

**Investigator:** When you say to yourself, “I am “*pendejo*” o “soy “*pendeja*”?”

**Rita:** When I realize that I did what the other person wanted me to do and wasn't aware at the moment, but rather [that] I realize it after the situation happens.

**Investigator:** When my defenses and strategies fail?

**Rita:** Oh yes! Totally. (?) [laughs]. I don't see...

**Investigator:** When not even my analysis helped me!

**Rita:** Exactly... helped me. In other words, I get lost, or I got lost. OK I was so... so immersed in the situation, that, well see, I fell... you know... one like reaffirms it: "What a "pendeja" I have been!"

**Investigator:** At that moment you categorically declare yourself a "pendeja"...

**Rita:** Ay, Yes, yesssss! Because, well it's Argh!!!! One fills up with like so much anger! But... what... Uy! What a "penzuata" ["pendeja"]... That is... in other words, one enters into this... emotional realm, that geez! After I analyzed so much, after I did... and even so...

**Investigator:** And, not even that helped me out...

**Rita:** Exactly, no matter what, you fall for it.

**Investigator:** In other words, that sometime, all of the defenses that one has...

**Rita:** Oh yes, they don't help you at all; sometimes they do not help at all.

**Investigator:** They do not help at all.

**Rita:** No.

**Investigator:** Then you, well reaffirm even more that, well "I fell as a "pendeja"."

**Rita:** Yes, yes... definitively... yesssss, yes... definitively... ehh...

[The recording stops abruptly]

*[9/7/2007 – The interview begins where it left off during the first interview on Se reanuda la entrevista comenzando en el punto donde terminó en la primera entrevista efectuada el 6/9/2007. This follow-up interview took place at the home of the interviewee, between 5:30 y 7:00 PM.]*

**Investigator:** We are starting a second part of this interview. The code is F-3-35. The first part was done on June 9, 2007; this second part is being held on September 7, 2007. The first time, the interview was discontinued because the recording terminated abruptly. We are going to begin with question number 3 of the Questionnaire, at the part with the following phrase: “*She-he believes that I am “pendejo” o “pendeja”.*”

Elaborate on the following phrase, right...

**Rita:** Ujum.

**Investigator:** We had already spoken of the three phrases mentioned before, and we are now on the phrase: “*He-she believes that I am “pendejo” o “pendeja”.*”

**Rita:** Well, what can I say about that one...? Look, I had written in that... in... well, that one thinks, that the person thinks... In other words, that I had written, that one thinks “that one does not have their own criteria”, ehh... referring to the... well to the concept of the person that... that thinks that about me, that thinks that about me, but I think that of the other person...

**Investigator:** Explain.

I’ll explain. That person says to me... think, that I am a “pendeja” well, because... I fell into certain circumstances, or made me do... that... that... He-she got what she wanted, in terms of a situation, or she got this... from me.

**Investigator:** You assume that the person is thinking that she can take you for a “pendeja”.

**Rita:** That I am... exactly. That thinks... that I am a “pendeja”. That I am able to be managed, to pull and tug at his-her desire.

**Investigator:** But that is something that you are assuming.

**Rita:** Yes, given the case that one already sees like, indicators... you know, in the person... In her treatment, in how he-she speaks, in the...the... the... Ay, in the patting your back, when, they don’t look at you eye to eye or... or they don’t even talk to you, that is... And you say: “shit... where are they coming from?” In other words...

**Investigator:** Even if... even if they haven’t said anything, you... you feel sure... of that...

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** ...of that you are assuming.

**Rita:** Yes, yes...yes. Or, on some occasions, hmmm... with the.... With the way they speak, or what they tell you. Because, well there are persons that are very careful in not telling you up front, nor verbally, like... “you are a “pendeja”.” But in the way they speak to you, the tone of voice, or... or the words they use, that creates this... sort of feeling, of “wait a second... this one thinks that I am a “pendeja”.” [laughter]. In other words, you know... *Hello!* Hmmm... and...

**Investigator:** And its like the alarm... the alarm goes off?

**Rita:** Oh yes... yes, the alarm goes off and says: “Hey be careful!” Ha, Ha... “Watch out” (“watch out for the thief”)... But yes.

**Investigator:** Fine then, let’s continue with the fourth question. *How frequently do you observe these phrases in the common discourse of the Puerto Rican people?*

**Rita:** Wow! I hmmm.... had written “I can easily observe this daily and sometimes... many times during the day”. And yes, this happens... this happens... when one... for example... for example, I work ... hmmm, and in my work area, I work together with... ehh... directly with eight people, we are totally different. I am the little girl of the group. The rest are more... adults, in other words, they have more experience in that... in that type of work. Ehh..., but even though I am the youngest, I... I have known, ehh... to establish norms, and... and in the interaction of the whole office it can be seen. In other words, ehh...not only with my own co-workers but with the other programs that work in the same... in the same... in the same place...

**Investigator:** In other words, in all of the employees?

**Rita:** Yes, then you notice it in ... in phrases that you can say, ehh... in people that are beside you, or in the conversations by the... of two of your co-workers. In how they treat [each other], ehh...

**Investigator:** In how they treat each other... how is this?

**Rita:** Today, see, today... a situation... today. Ehh... there is... there is one of my co-workers, he has a strong temperament, that is, ehh... his personality is very strong, and he is (“*Al pan, pan y al vino, vino*”) “He speaks his peace”. In other words, speaks up front: “This bothered me, I don’t like that attitude..., blah, blah, blah, blah.” But today he was in the position of... “I am bothered but I don’t want to waste effort in... going and saying that I am bothered.” And he was in like the “I don’t give a shit”, attitude. Another co-worker comes and says, “No, look, that the boss is asking... this and that...” And my co-worker looks at him and says: “Look so and so, don’t make yourself to be a

“*pendejo*”! They sent you to ask and to verify how I was... and the role doesn’t become you... the role of messenger does not become you. So, don’t act like a “*pendejo*” and don’t fall into the wiles of the other [boss]. Avoid problems for yourself.” And that happened in front of me... So then it is so, so common... it is so ingrained in our daily things, in our own self, it is something so... easy daily... so easy... its there!

**Investigator:** Is it so common?

**Rita:** Oh yes! Then, in many occasions it can be... what ... what you live, at one moment, then the next, you don’t... that you aren’t aware that you are going through a situation, or... or they are telling you “*pendejo*”, or you are trying to take someone for “*pendejo*” then later when you do a *rewind*... “Ahh... see, yes. Oh my, I’m sorry!” Then you say, “Gee, I have to go to so and so, or to him-her, and say I’m sorry, tell her “Hey, girl... Hello!... which is much more common than one would think,... this type of game... yes.

**Investigator:** In other words, that this “*pendejo*” thing permeates everything.

**Rita:** Oh yes... yes, yes. It is ... it is... It is so ingrained that unfortunately... one... many times... this “*pendejo*” situation, it even goes unawares. But it is there. And the word not necessary needs to be said exactly.

**Investigator:** OK, explain that.

**Rita:** OK. That they make you feel... in other words, that they try to take you for a “*pendejo*” implies, as far as I understand... its... you have feelings, eh... or... or they are underestimating you... you feel down... “Look, shit, they tried to take for a “*pendejo*”...” One feels enraged; angry... you manifest it in different ways... Not necessarily do they have to say: “Aha, I tried to take you for a “*pendeja*”!”... They don’t have to say it with the word...

**Investigator:** You know it.

**Rita:** Exactly!

**Investigator:** You feel it...

**Rita:** I feel it. And through the feeling I can... eh... classify it.

**Investigator:** Classify it. Its not that you can... confirm it directly.

**Rita:** Exactly, exactly. Oh, no... or that the person has to be totally direct... no!



**Investigator:** Then, obviously, your reaction is going to be from what you are feeling.

**Rita:** Oh yes, definitively! And from that I will react [laughter].

**Investigator:** And you understand that these... phrases, that all of this has to do with the “*pendejo*”, eh... well then it is, pretty common...

**Rita:** Oh yes!

**Investigator:** ...in the Puerto Rican person.

**Rita:** Oh yes, it is really ingrained! At the level of women and men. That is, there is no... I can't say that it happens more in one sex than the other, no... it's the same for women as well as for men.

**Investigator:** And the use of the word...? Because... the word “*pendejo*”, eh... has a vulgar connotation, and for many people it is a bad word. So then, eh... that if this is so common, you understand, in the Puerto Rican discourse... it means that when speaking... when talking...

**Rita:** Its there... the topic is changing.

**Investigator:** Is it changing in generational terms?

**Rita:** Yes, because already... it does not seem so... directed as a bad word. It is being seen more as part of the dialect...

**Investigator:** Common...

**Rita:** ... proper and common, a daily occurrence... to use it. Then, eh... although it does have strong repercussions, but it is not being seen as a bad word, because it is seen as something that occurs [that is a part of] daily [life].

**Investigator:** All right. Eh... have you noticed if there are persons that... use other words, even if they don't use the word directly?

**Rita:** Oh yes, eh... “zoquete” (sucker)... eh... “de mangó bajito” (like a low lying fruit)... eh... these are the ones that come to mind *right away*, eh... that they associate. These are like... associations to the “*pendejo*” or “*pendeja*” that is...

**Investigator:** I have heard, “pendango”...

**Rita:** Ah, yes, also... OK... [laughs].

**Investigator:** “Stupid...”

**Rita:** Yes, yes... that is right, you know...

**Investigator:** Well, then, lets go to number 5... *Rate the propensity with which we are taken as “pendejo” o “pendeja”.*

**Rita:** Well see, I answered... and I reiterate a thousand times what I wrote. To my best understanding, all the time [laughs]. All the time, because... no matter how high your defenses are, or the care... to think things out about how that person is coming or... how he-she is going to act, or what she is telling you... and his-her body language. Ehh... no matter how much you try, ehh... to avoid, to be taken for a “*pendejo*”... you can’t always avoid it. Sooner or later, you will fall in one way or the other. Maybe one day you may escape from it, but not always... really no.

**Investigator:** OK. Ehh...earlier you had mentioned that... that one of the things that you do is analyzing all situations well (?).

**Rita:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** In other words that you... that you have learned little by little with your experiences...

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** But, even so...

**Rita:** Yesssss!

**Investigator:** ...you are not immune.

**Rita:** No, no I am not immune. One does not have a wall of 100% guarantee that it will not happen that someone will take...that someone will take you for a “*pendeja*”. No... that is not so. One tries, daily... daily one tries. [laughs].

**Investigator:** One tries to be alert.

**Rita:** Be alert! One must keep the five senses focused, ehh... to try to analyze, well from where the person is coming from... the pros and cons. Ehh... three times... so... Not always are you... in 100% alert necessary to avoid that it happens.

**Investigator:** OK. In other words, it’s impossible to be 100% immune.

**Rita:** Yes definitely.

**Investigator:** Good, then, number 6... *How would you identify when someone has taken you for a “pendejo” or you feel that someone is trying to take you for a “pendejo”?*

**Rita:** Well look, eh... what I... what I wrote, I will explain. Eh... I identify it when my inner voice alerts me, or when the situation creates mistrust, or when the same person that comes towards me creates mistrust. Eh... I call it... I call it like this only sixth sense, or inner voice of alert, that lets me know, eh...”something fishy is going on”. Mainly eh... when it comes toward me... all of my sensors are triggered. In other words, eh... I get totally... eh, I close up. Then I pay more attention to what the person is saying, eh...

**Investigator:** OK, then, we are now on question number 7.

**Rita:** Ay!

**Investigator:** What is, *what mechanisms do you use in order not to fall into being a “pendejo”?* ... No, it's OK, go on, because we are answering both [questions 6 and 7].

**Rita:** Eh... yes, what I do is I clam up, then I pay more attention to... well, the tone of voice... how the person is talking to me, the body language, I... I like stare, eh... stare at the person. Eh... I get serious, because then I cut the nice part... the...no, I get in a serious attitude. Eh... I start to analyze. On the one hand I receive the information, and on the other I analyze. Which sometimes is very difficult... to do both things at the same time, because, well, there are things that can escape that are important to retain. But I try to stay as focused as possible so that... eh... Then this alert sense within me, eh... what it creates is... eh, many times even... it's like a reaction against the person, because what I do is, well, this sense of self-protection.

**Investigator:** In other words, you become defensive.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, I get defensive... Yes I get defensive... totally. And... and as I was saying, I try to see the pros and cons, and where they are coming from. And...

**Investigator:** So, this is a pretty elaborated process... right...

**Rita:** Oh yes... and tiresome.

**Investigator:** Yes, and tiresome, in other words it requires a whole lot of preparation...

**Rita:** One gets so tired... one gets so tired. You invest so much energy that you get very tired. And, yes... yes... really yes... Eh... it's... it's really uphill.

**Investigator:** And back to question number 6, that is, this happens more by intuition.

**Rita:** Yes... yes... the... the little voice, as I call it [laughs], is the one I pay attention to and... and up to the moment...

**Investigator:** So, it's not...it's not someone... it's not that you are told directly...

**Rita:** No... because when you are told directly...

**Investigator:** ...that I am taking you for a “pendeja”, or that you are a “pendeja”, or whatever. It's that you detect it.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... definitively.

**Investigator:** Hummm... OK. Let's go to 8, because you already answered number 7. *What would your reaction be, when faced with what you interpret as being taken for a “pendeja”?* In other words... *What do you say to yourself? What feeling or what sensation does it generate? What is your usual response?*

**Rita:** Look, I wrote – and I believe that those are the steps I take—that I identify myself so brutally, sooo brutally, that I say, “Dear God, living Father, help me”, but... First it's that I put sooo much effort, ehh... depending on the reaction I might have, ehh... That first reaction, I put in 100% effort so as not to cry. Because, well, I am a very ... very sentimental person. And... ehh... when I feel that I have been betrayed, or taken for “pendeja”... or that someone wants to take me for one, well I get charged... with a lot of anger... and anger makes me cry. So then that is my first...that tends to be my...

**Investigator:** First impulse?

**Rita:** Exactly. That is, then, its like my eyes fill up with tears and... and you can see me, that I get sooo angry...on top of the anger that I already had when they try to take me for a “pendeja” [laughs]... that's it... this is like brutal!

**Investigator:** In other words, you get angry because you feel like crying.

**Rita:** Oh yes! Yes, yes. I get very angry.

**Investigator:** You get double angry.

**Rita:** A double anger... and I try to appease this...this...this impulse of... of what... and what comes to mind is, “I will not give this person the privilege of seeing me cry.”

That's the first thing that crosses my mind. And then you can see how I start to repress myself. Then, eh... what do I do also for...this...? Should I clam up?

**Investigator:** You clam up?

**Rita:** Yes, I clam up, I clam up, eh... it's a measure for self... protection, eh... and not let anything in, so as not to receive more aggression, more emotional blows. Eh... escape measures...? Music... music.

**Investigator:** So, you use escape measures...

**Rita:** Oh yes...

**Investigator:** ...in a situation like that.

**Rita:** Yes, yes. So as to not analyze... that is to not analyze it at first and not, how should I say it, eh... explode with...

**Investigator:** With the person?

**Rita:** With the first stone in my hand and.... No.

**Investigator:** So your reaction usually, is a reaction that we could say is... escape...of escape...

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ...More than, let's say, stop the person flat out.

**Rita:** It could happen... I have, I have both. It all depends on the mood, or the way the situation happens. Because if I am caught totally off guard, my first reaction will be: "clam up, cover up and leave". For what? To try to calm down, to analyze what I'm going to do, and then later a confrontation.

**Investigator:** In other words, initially you manage this internally.

**Rita:** I, I...I, because I need to calm myself down, let it out of my system, so I can act assertively. And well, tell the per... to the person the truths, without... without aggression. Because... if on the one hand I am so sentimental, on the other, I have this temperament, a bit furious and I recognize it myself. And I try...

**Investigator:** You try... you try not to hurt the other person.

**Rita:** Yes, yes. I don't...

**Investigator:** Not to be aggressive... not to be aggressive to the person.

**Rita:** I try not to do what the person did to me.

**Investigator:** So, even when you confront...

**Rita:** Oh yes...

**Investigator:** ... you confront...

**Rita:** Very subtle, but with the truth. And on occasions I have known to declare myself "pendeja" in the sense that... "You tried to take me for a "pendeja", congratulations!, But I swear... it will not happen again."

**Investigator:** And the response of that other person when you confront him-her that way?

**Rita:** Well see, I have had a variety. There is... there are... I have had situations in which automatically the person hits back, tries to hurt again.

**Investigator:** They don't accept...

**Rita:** Oh no!

**Investigator:** ... that she sees you as a "pendeja" and that she took you for "pendeja".

**Rita:** No, no... no way they accept.

**Investigator:** No... they don't accept.

**Rita:** OH no! No, no...

**Investigator:** That is the usual reaction.

**Rita:** Exactly, exactly... Ehh... but I have also met with persons that... well I understand that they have their pants on tight, because happily they have told me, "Oh yes I did try to take you for a "pendeja""... or "I took you for a "pendeja"." And this comes in like this only lack of balance, because I get like so angry again... but then and there I appease the person, and say, "No, no, I'm sorry I am not a "pendeja". I acted this and that way for this and that reason." But yes... it gets... it gets my gears both up and down.

**Investigator:** Is this type more or less?

**Rita:** This type is less! Most of them are those that say “Ay... ME! Impossible, Rita, no...no, not me no... no.”

**Investigator:** Do you believe them... when they say this?

**Rita:** NO, no... no.

**Investigator:** Then you continue with your original version...

**Rita:** Oh yes... yes...

**Investigator:** ... Humm... based upon what you felt, on your intuition.

**Rita:** Yes... aside from what... from what they are telling me at those moments, that I am feeling it and that I see in their body language. Because they can say, “Oh, no Rita, how can that be!” but their body language is “Ha, ha, ha, ha... you sucker!” In other words there is a contradiction and one perceives it, one feels it. And in the face of this, well I know who I can believe and who I can’t believe. I think that once or twice... it has happened to me... that honestly that person did not do it in spite. And I... feel it, I... and I feel it. And the person has been genuine.

**Investigator:** So you... you give a lot of credit to your perceptions... to your...

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Investigator:** To your intuitions, to...

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... yes because... throughout my ... sorry, of my life and the experiences that I have had, ehh... my perceptions have been correct most of the time.

**Investigator:** So, your perceptions have been correct...

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ...most of the time.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... and I trust them. That is...

**Investigator:** Well fine, then... good. Ehh... we were on...

**Rita:** On 8 [question number 8].

**Investigator:** Ah, yes, we had gone back and forward again... We were on 8, and we finished number 8.

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Let's go on to number 9... *What physical manifestations do you experience when you feel that you have been taken as a "pendeja"?*

**Rita:** ¡Ayyyyy!

**Investigator:** ... that you have been taken as a "pendeja"?

**Rita:** Well, I cry... headaches... because, I get so charged up... so much, that I get headaches. Ehh... depending on the situation, well, I can even reach exhaustion with what I have felt. Then...

**Investigator:** You can reach what?

**Rita:** Physical exhaustion.

**Investigator:** Physical exhaustion...

**Rita:** Yes. To say that I have to lie down because... because I can't. I can't. I can't think, I don't want to think, I don't want to feel...

**Investigator:** That seems like a moment of depression.

**Rita:** Yes, yes...yes, together with sleepiness. It's that the body is telling you, "I'm entering a shut down, I cannot think, I don't want to think, I don't want to feel..." You have to sleep. Well, that is what happens sometimes.

**Investigator:** It's a way also, to escape...

**Rita:** Oh yes! Yes, definitely.

**Investigator:** ...even physical.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... and that I have experienced it in what... That is, Wuups, to bed! And I say, "*Oh, my goodness!*"

**Investigator:** So the *shock* has been really strong.



**Rita:** Oh yes, yes, yes. The experience has been very strong.

**Investigator:** Very strong. Ehh... in other words, you feel it, definitively in the body.

**Rita:** Oh yes... yes.

**Investigator:** You definitively feel it.

**Rita:** Yes... and also it is more like this feeling that... I believe—its my opinion... that... my very own—that... when you think a lot about something, and you keep mulling over, and mulling over....

**Investigator:** You ruminate.

**Rita:** Yes, ehh... and that has ... you are creating a heavy load, ehh... you yourself are creating it and it will come a time when you believe it and reach a time when you yourself will make your body fail.

**Investigator:** In other words, your thoughts affect your health.

**Rita:** It will exhaust you, exactly, they will exhaust you. And automatically they will take you to experiment, well I don't know... to a... to a physical ailment.

**Investigator:** Yes... physical violence?

**Rita:** No [dolencia] ailment...

**Investigator:** Ah, ailment.

**Rita:** Ailment, physical ailment.

**Investigator:** So... it's like a brutal energy discharge?

**Rita:** Oh yes, yes... yes. Because you mull over, over and over, and over and over again... but you are not aware either of the energies that you are using, you are consuming them, but... no energy is coming in from any other source, and then the moment will come when you... will touch bottom. And when you touch bottom is when I tell you, that I feel the exhaustion, and my body tells me, "No, No, No, No... you are going to bed!" and *zoom!* To bed you go...

**Investigator:** So there is a decompensation... a decompensation.

**Rita:** Yes, yes, yes... at the physical level, yes. You get to that.

**Investigator:** Well let's go on to question number 10. *Who or which persons are capable of taking others for "pendejos"?*

**Rita:** Look, at first, my answer was: "intelligent, witty, people that have... that have studied people very well." Then... a little bit later, I wrote something else, that I understand is what... framed... framed everyone.

**Investigator:** Everyone?

**Rita:** Everyone. Because, whether you want to or not, there are times when you do it, unwillingly.

**Investigator:** So..., then...?

**Rita:** That is coming... I see it as though it comes inside of us, because with all the experiences you have had, that they try... or they do take you for a "pendeja", one learns. One learns.

**Investigator:** In other words, this can... this can... they can be strangers or co-workers...

**Rita:** Oh Yesssss!

**Investigator:** ... and also family members...

**Rita:** Ones own family...

**Investigator:** Friends?

**Rita:** Friends. Everyone, everyyyoonnee... everyone is capable of doing it.

**Investigator:** In any type of environment?

**Rita:** Anywhere you find yourself, and you relate to others, this situation where... they try to take you as a "pendejo", or that you try to take me for a "pendejo".

**Investigator:** [Laughs] Then, now comes this question, number 11. *Are you aware of having taken someone as a "pendejo" [or "pendeja"], with the intention of hurting them?*

**Rita:** Look, at this moment I can tell you I have not. Ehh... never consciously, that I have said that I will do this meticulously, precisely and exactly in a logical order... that I want you to do this, to obtain these results and take you for a “pendeja”, no. Because it’s like I myself am so given to the belief that people... all people are good, and that is my frame. And even more...

**Investigator:** In other words, that everyone is like you.

**Rita:** Exactly! And I frame things a lot from the aspect that, well, I do not do to others, what I don’t want them to do to me. And ... if I have done it, I have done it unconsciously, ehh... never with the... wish of... with the... with the intention.

**Investigator:** Never with the wish to hurt anyone.

**Rita:** No, no...

**Investigator:** You don’t see yourself...

**Rita:** No.

**Investigator:** ... as a person...

**Rita:** Honestly, no... no. I don’t see my self as cold and calculating to the point of ... of doing that.

**Investigator:** Good, let’s go on to question number 12. *How do you relate the “pendejo” concept with the following personality traits attributed to Puerto Ricans, such as passive, docile, indolent, submissive, lazy, belittled, conformists, noble? ... and we could also add here, to a certain point, escapists.*

**Rita:** Ujú, Ujú... Look, I answered... My first phrase was: “The lion isn’t as fierce as its made out to be.” Ehh... honestly I don’t... I don’t want to believe... that... that we are that way. Because I cannot visualize myself... as a lazy, belittled, or... or conformist. Ehh...passive... Puerto Ricans have a strong temperament, ehh... I see myself more as entrepreneurial, a fighter, ehh...

**Investigator:** Passive is like often allowing... things to happen... so...

**Rita:** In that... in that sense...yes, because we are seen... I see myself as *easy going*.

**Investigator:** It’s in the general sense. Therefore... in general terms the Puerto Ricans

**Rita:** Well yes, in that sense yes.

**Investigator:** ... obviously there are persons who are more or less... and I am not saying that these... that these characteristics, at least all of them, are necessarily bad.

**Rita:** No, no...

**Investigator:** They also have... good points also, right.

**Rita:** OK.

**Investigator:** But in... ehh... in writings, right, that... that, through history...

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ... one sees these characteristics...

**Rita:** Underlined...

**Investigator:** ... It's like they keep appearing, they keep appearing, so...

**Rita:** Underlined.

**Investigator:** Underlined.

**Rita:** Ujú, Ujú... I understand.

**Investigator:** And... to what extent well...

**Rita:** Well, look, humm... in... This is what I wrote first. Then I wrote in pencil [laughs], "That they were synonymous of... they are synonymous with the word "pendejo"."

**Investigator:** OK.

**Rita:** [Laughs] Humm...

**Investigator:** Maybe that is why you rejected it at first also.

**Rita:** [Laughs] ¡Yo creo que sí!

**Investigator:** You think so?

**Rita:** I understand that, yes, because...ehh...

**Investigator:** Because you saw them as very similar?

**Rita:** Yes... I went more towards the negative side, not the practical sense or... objective sense of the Word itself, ehh... if I am honest, yes. I see it, ehh... it can be seen, ehh... I see it from that point of view, because if we are to compare, more or less, the meanings of the words that are written there... they lead to what is considered or is named as a “*pendejo*”: That they are conformists, that they are docile, that they are obedient, that they are... that they allow to be handled, that we are marionettes, that... And that is the angle I took [laughs]. And I rejected them [laughs].

**Investigator:** OK... Here, for example, the Word “noble”, is something good, but when one sees it like...

**Rita:** It’s like you are sooo good... like sooo... Listen to my... my tone... Sooo good... such an idiot [laughs], such a “*pendejo*”... In other words, in that sense, unfortunately it’s why I went with that angle... that is, I didn’t see it as something ... good. I saw it as something bad.

**Investigator:** In other words, “he-she is such a good person that he-she is a “*pendejo*”.”

**Rita:** Exactly, exactly.

**Investigator:** Have you heard it, or have you thought of it...?

**Rita:** Oh yes... oh yes..., yes of course [laughs].

**Investigator:** So... therefore...well, you said it there, you see it... you see it as... synonymous?

**Rita:** Of the word “*pendejo*”... truly yes.

**Investigator:** Ok, let’s go on to the last question. *What happens, or what end goal, may a person have, who allows him-herself to be taken for a “pendejo”?* In other words, a person who is a “*pendejo*”... what awaits him-her... what is the end result... that is, how... how is he-she?

**Rita:** Look, I wrote there, and I believe that I frame it in... that... first it is the self concept, of oneself that is low, that is... therefore the self esteem is very low. Ehh... or its constantly up and down, like [the horses on] a carrousel, ehh... according to what is around them, it’s like who goes to a dance. Depending on the music, they dance. So... I see it as, well depending on that up and down, the person can succumb. And I explain. It is easier to let the other person control your life, and tell you what to do, or what not to do, and how to do it... ehh...

**Investigator:** Submissive, docile...

**Rita:** Oh yes.

**Investigator:** ...passive, conformist, belittled...

**Rita:** Oh yes, yes... exactly. Ehh... [you need to] confront and say, “No!... I have criteria, I have intelligence, and I too can do things for myself. In other words... that is how I see a person who lets others take him-her for a “*pendejo*”.

**Investigator:** So then... is it someone that you value?

**Rita:** No, no, no.

**Investigator:** That you admire?

**Rita:** Noo, no... no! A person who lets another take him-her for “*pendejo*”, no. Ehh... [Laughs] And it’s a contradiction... because when one applies it to oneself... because when one falls, one says “Shit, like... this is brutal! So... Ehh...”

**Investigator:** In other words, when you say “*pendeja*” to yourself, or you feel “*pendeja*”, when you say to yourself, “I was a “*pendeja*,” at those moments...?

**Rita:** You are angry...

**Investigator:** ...you are feeling as though this person, like– or it seems like– it is a person that... that has no personality...?

**Rita:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ...in other words, like a “Mr. Nobody”?

**Rita:** Yes. Yes...

**Investigator:** Yes?

**Rita:** Yes... yes, yes. Because, it’s like you have... no criteria, no... no you you’re your personality is not involved. Your criteria, your values, what you are as a person, your... your... your own opinion, is not involved! Then, I can’t see it... I can’t see it...

**Investigator:** In other words, it’s very... depersonalizing?

**Rita:** Yes, yes... yes. It's like you drag yourself... it's like you are being dragged.

**Investigator:** Like you are being dragged?

**Rita:** It's like as if you are being dragged, because they take you by the hair on your head and they continue to pull.

**Investigator:** This "*pendejo*" situation...

**Rita:** Yes, yes... and then, it's...

**Investigator:** ... it's denigrating?

**Rita:** Denigrating and upsetting.

**Investigator:** Aha...

**Rita:** Because it's... They are often so sly that... it's... "Shit!" "How is it possible that I fell for it... ehh..." And then, well it's not good...not good. Everything that involves feelings, and how you feel, and how you visualize your self at that moment.... In other words, it changes the whole perspective.

**Investigator:** Yes, yes... In other words you are... it's something that...

**Rita:** No, no... inconceivable.

**Investigator:** I am going to ask you one last question that is not in the questionnaire...

**Rita:** No problem.

**Investigator:** ... but, it has come up while reading the transcriptions, right.

**Rita:** Ujú.

**Investigator:** Ehh... it is related to what we have been talking about up to now. A person who is a "*pendeja*". *Do you believe that the fact that someone takes you for a "pendeja", is an assault on your dignity, on your sense of self-respect, on your capacity as a person?*

**Rita:** Yes totally. Because it's denigrating... it's... to try to put... I visualize it as though someone tried to put my face on the ground.

**Investigator:** In other words, that... you don't have... they see you... or you feel that...

**Rita:** They see me as weak...

**Investigator:** Is it like assault?

**Rita:** ... it makes me weak...

**Investigator:** That it is why it is an assault on your feeling of dignity.

**Rita:** Yes, yes... yes.

**Investigator:** To your sense of self-respect...

**Rita:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** Your self-respect, right, your capacities as a person.

**Rita:** Yes, yes... they are underestimating you, totally... totally. It's denigrating.

**Investigator:** Well precisely, that dignity, respect and capacity, are three of the values that have been studied... regarding the values that are truly ingrained in us.

**Rita:** WHAT! (¿?)

**Investigator:** That means then, that by the answers that you are living me, that this is... this is an assault on our values. This is something that... is affecting our values, that is, it shakes our values [value system].

**Rita:** Yes, yes... because it's an attempt to upturn your foundation.

**Investigator:** It's an attempt against you.

**Rita:** Yes, against my foundation.

**Investigator:** That is why I have to be constantly on alert...

**Rita:** And defend myself, yes, so as not to fall.

**Investigator:** And it's so as not to be a "pendejo".

**Rita:** Yes, to not be a "pendejo". And it's contradictory because, it is sooo common, and something that happens daily, that then, it is scary, because...



**Investigator:** There is a danger.

**Rita:** ... It's eating away with the goodness and structure that we have. And then, this gets me to thinking, what are we creating? What are we educating? Because I think about the...future generations of children. No, I think about everybody, because everybody grows constantly.

**Investigator:** Is this an assault to our fiber ...?

**Rita:** To the sense, to our ... to our...

**Investigator:** To our sense of identity?

**Rita:** To our identity. That is how I understand it, yes.

**Investigator:** In other words, the “*pendejo*” is, in the end, an assault to our identity.

**Rita:** Yes, yes... yes, and in great magnitude...

**Investigator:** In great magnitudes?

**Rita:** In great magnitudes. It breaks one... it breaks, yes. .

**Investigator:** In other words, this is serious.

**Rita:** Definitively yes. And you have given me another perspective to think about. Thanks.

**Investigator:** You're welcome... [laughs].

**Rita:** [Laughs]... and to break my head [to beat my brains].

**Investigator:** Oh, my God! Well... many thanks. I think that with this, well, thank God we could finish our interview. Ehh... So I appreciate that you came again and gave me another opportunity. As I said before, well, ehh... I offered the opportunity to the participants of these... these interviews, of this study, to participate in a workshop that I lead where we work on the topic of the “*pendejo*”, there is a whole session for this topic of the “*pendejo*”...

**Rita:** OK...

**Investigator:** Because there, then, you will see... that you can learn to manage that. Because the study at this moment, is based on the dis...on the discovery and description,

¿OK? You have helped me a great deal here, eh, as well as the other participants. But then a next step would be, right...

**Rita:** On how to manage...

**Investigator:** ...how to manage it.

**Rita:** Ay, yes!

**Investigator:** So, I will give you the opportunity in... in the workshop... Another way of dealing with it is to have an individual session with all of the participants in order to deal only with the topic of the “*pendejo*”. The advantage of the workshop is that you benefit from the whole workshop...

**Rita:** Of the whole gamut.

**Investigator:** ...and for that, well I offer it to you. The next workshop will open in January. We were to have now, but it's not going to be possible. So we will let you know... and if for any reason you cannot attend the workshop, or prefer to deal with it differently then we will do it differently.

**Rita:** No problem, Miriam, really, thanks a lot.

**Investigator:** So, thank you a lot, again...

**Rita:** No, thank you, really, for the opportunity. A lot is learned, really, yes.

**Investigator:** You learn a lot... and this is just a little bit of it... and all that's left [to learn]!

**Rita:** Thank you...

**Investigator:** Well, many thanks and then, well, we end this session, this interview.

Participant: *M-3-39* (*Pedro*)

Date of Interview: 12 June 2007

*Autobiographical Anecdote:*

**Investigator:** Relate to me the incident in which you felt that you were taken for a *pendejo*... eh... if you want, explain it in your own words...

**Pedro:** Well, I have this client for whom I had worked a few times, and I had another job with him and... he tells me that... that he has new project, that ... the project is rather urgent and that he needed a meeting for the next day in order for me to understand what the job was all about. Eh... the job interested me so I said yes. The next day I went to the meeting. It was with the clients of that person, and it was a meeting with a number of different persons that... that were related to the same project. At that meeting they spoke about a [particular] task that was necessary... a task that I was to perform immediately. There were two tasks, two permits. Eh... And they gave me the information that... that ... the permits that I had to get, eh, these were permits that the project should have had, and didn't, in other words there was a legal implication. Eh... So, therefore, I understood the urgency and said, "Well, OK, fine, I am ready to start work, immediately." Eh..., anyway they asked for a proposal, eh... so, I... really wasn't sure that I would get the job..., but anyway I prepared the proposal, with the fees that are normally charged for that type of job, eh... and the fees that I normally would have charged for that, in spite of the fact that I had to drop other things in order to do that immediately. And, the amount of the fees was too high for the client ... he asked for a reduction and I adjusted the amount. Even so, it was still high... too high. I asked then, "what amount of money did you budget for that?" He specifically told me the amount, and that eh...he would be unable to charge his client, eh... above that amount. So... for that reason, I reduced my fee even more, so that he could get something in turn for giving me the job. So, we reached an agreement and I started work, eh... I had negotiated those conditions, which were not favorable for me, eh, so I put in some payment clauses, for payments earlier than usual, and the person did not protest and accepted the proposal under those terms. Eh...

**Investigator:** In other words, he accepted the proposal as you presented it.

**Pedro:** In the end...

**Investigator:** In the end.

**Pedro:** Aha. Then... after lowering the fees, but under the conditions of... rapid payment. Eh... we started the job and complied, eh... handing in one of the completed tasks within the agreed time period. I invoiced this job, this part of the job... it was half [of the total amount]. We continued work and finished the second task of the job. In

other words, we understood that we had complied... not 100%, but... sufficiently on time, ehh..., and we sent in another invoice for this second task.

Up to that time, we had not received any payment. The client began evaluating... the work I had done, and he started to complain that he was not satisfied with the quality of what had been done. He began to question ehh... the methods and the way it was done. And at all times I tried to explain, "Look, there can be glitches regarding... the... the... the exactitude, but these are reasonable within what is being done, and... and this will not bring you any problems regarding... regarding the granting of the permit. Anyway, ehh... the client was a bit bothered... a bit... unsatisfied, and ehh... later he calls me and tells me that there are still two more tasks to carry out. I explained to him that I had not included this in the proposal... that I did not know that they were necessary... that he had not informed me that they were necessary and that because it was an urgent project, specifically, to attend one particular problem that they had identified, and therefore... we limited our work to the job specified in the proposal.

The client says that he is too busy, that he didn't have time to read the proposal and that he had not realized that I had left out these two services, and that he felt that I had taken him for a "*pendejo*". I explained to him that was not my intention in any way, ehh..., that..., on the contrary, I am always on the lookout for more work, and that... I would have gladly proposed additional work. I didn't, at any time, say anything regarding the lowered of fees, or that because the fees were lowered, those two tasks were not performed.

**Investigator:** You are conscious that the work that you had budgeted and that you later lowered the price for, had been done.

**Pedro:** Exactly. Well, it seems that he understood that I had not acted... intentionally to wrong him... and in the same meeting, he says, "well look, draw up a proposal for these two additional... jobs. I prepare the proposal, and he tells me it's too high. And I tell him, "Well, if it's not for this amount, I can't... I can't lower my fees further. I prefer not to take on the job, see someone else." And we left it at that. We left it at that, hmm..., at that meeting. And, after having talked about that extensively, I asked him for the first payment... for the payment of the first service, and with a bit of... reluctance, he gave me... he gave me, he paid me. Then... time went by, and they continued to question the work, and so, but finally things were calm, and I continued to follow up on the second invoice and finally he paid. And to this day, we have continued... ehh, without saying frankly..., we have finished the services and no... no go... the intention is... not to do business with this person.

**Investigator:** And, in what sense do you understand... that you were taken for a *pendejo*?

**Pedro:** Well, I understand that... the client took advantage of my own language and my... well because I expressed that I wanted to continue doing business with him, and that I was interested in him as a client. Then, maybe there... I let go of what was my leverage..., my capacity to negotiate, and he... maybe, he saw a weakness, and I understand that he took advantage of that to carry me to where it was convenient for him. On the other hand, I saw it...

**Investigator:** In other words, you are seeing that he took advantage of your weakness... of your honesty.

**Pedro:** Of my honesty, exactly. And...I was seeing it all, as a way to... keep on doing business with this person, and to continue a relationship that, up to the moment, had been fruitful for me... and for him also. He was ... in other words, I never, in any of the other projects took advantage of him, never...

**Investigator:** In other words... you do not understand that there may be any reason for him to understand that you were taking advantage of him.

**Pedro:** I don't understand. That is correct.

**Investigator:** A moment ago you said that he seemed to feel that you were taking him for a "pendejo".

**Pedro:** Yes, yes, he... he thought that...

**Investigator:** And he told you in that same way, that you were taking him for a *pendejo*?

**Pedro:** He told me... yes...yes, he told me that... that with the experience that I have in the field, I should not have written the proposal without those services. And...and that he believes that I intentionally left them out of the proposal, to ask for more money, or to make the time- tables coincide with the lowered fees.

**Investigator:** In other words, he assumed for you. He placed intentions where you had none.

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** And... and at that moment in which he understood that you had tried to take him for a "pendejo", then and there a good relationship that had been going on up to that point... ended.

**Pedro:** Correct.

**Investigator:** And however on the other hand, you feel that he took you for a "pendejo".

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** So then we have two instances here... in which both persons feel that they were taken for “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** OK, [lower voice] this is interesting... This... is... in other words... you ended...

**Pedro:** Yes, we are... it’s almost... in other words, this job is finished, eh... well there are still details, but we are finishing in a cordial manner... Hmm... there are other jobs that we are finishing... We had additional work approved, that well I would prefer not... not to do it with him.

**Investigator:** That is why, that is, you felt – let’s see your side—you felt that... you were the one to be taken as a “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes... yes, yes.

**Investigator:** What... what... In what sense... did you feel that you had been taken as a *pendejo*?

**Pedro:** Well, because... because he says that he contacted other consultants and that ... those other consultants told him... they gave him an indication that yes, that the whole job that he wanted could have been done by the amount that we had negotiated. But... eh, I understand that isn’t so... that is not correct, in my own experience working on that type of work, so. But, that doesn’t mean that someone... just to get the job... could have told him that yes, he could reduce the fees to that amount. So...

**Investigator:** You didn’t ask for...?

**Pedro:** For him to show evidence...

**Investigator:** That he show you evidence of what he was telling you.

**Pedro:** NO.

**Investigator:** ...so you could compare...

**Pedro:** Exactly, no.

**Investigator:** You left that... you left that space open to him.

**Pedro:** I gave him the space... he told me that... that in the market someone could do the job for... for less, and I told him, “well, me too, I also do that”.

**Investigator:** Then, what you did was... you accommodated yourself to him.

**Pedro:** I accommodated to him.

**Investigator:** In other words... you lowered even more, in spite of the fact that it was not what the job was worth.

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** So... in other words, you tell me ... that you were within your range.

**Pedro:** Uhum...

**Investigator:** There is an element there that... it's as though they took advantage of your goodness.

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** An acceptance?

**Pedro:** That is true.

**Investigator:** Yes?

**Pedro:** I understand so.

**Investigator:** OK. Then... What did you do?

**Pedro:** Ehh... obviously that bothered me a great deal... ehh, well because...my good intentions and...and the wish to...get more work... led me, ehh... well, to lose a client. To lose a business relationship. And... and... and I understand...

**Investigator:** To lose the client because of your fault, or his?

**Pedro:** Well, because of ... my fault... you know... no... The fault aspect doesn't interest me so much, it's what happened, right. But, well... this weakness worries me – which is with me—hmmm... with me all the time, and when I try to negotiate other jobs, the same thing could happen, right. In other words you know...

**Investigator:** That weakness of your being too good ... of being, that is, honest, clear...

**Pedro:** Exactly! Because it's in my nature, its not...

**Investigator:** In other words, being this way, you are... you are... are you exposed?

**Pedro:** I am exposed. This could happen again at any other time.

**Investigator:** That you are taken again for “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes... yes, yes.

**Investigator:** In other words, you are convinced that this person saw you or treated you as if you were a “*pendejo*”... so...

**Pedro:** Yes... yes.

**Investigator:** So... in this case, he told you, directly, that you were a “*pendejo*”

**Pedro:** No, he did not tell me.

**Investigator:** Not that he told you. But, that this is something that you assumed.

**Pedro:** I assumed it.

**Investigator:** Hmm...

**Pedro:** I, also, as a curious anecdote, during the meeting I told him... I told him... “Look...” and I remember because I have told... I have told other clients, I have told them, “I don’t want to be the most “*pendejo*” of this ... of this business.” In other words..., I used, this... this...

**Investigator:** In other words, you yourself use it as ref... as a self-reference.

**Pedro:** Exactly. Not a self referent... like... like to give them the message to... to whomever I’m talking to that, “Hey, I am on this, I know what is going on, and I am going to be alert...”

**Investigator:** “You are not going to take me for a *pendejo*...”

**Pedro:** “You are not going to take me for a *pendejo*...”

**Investigator:** You anticipate this?

**Pedro:** Well, in that... OK, moment, we were discussing the controversy with the delivery of the job, and that was when I brought the issue.

**Investigator:** With that same client...



**Pedro:** With that same client, yes. With another client that... with which... with which we are trying to... negotiate, this one... and that I see him like doubting, well I to [ld]... I used the expression also. I told him, you know, that I didn't want to be the most "pendejo" of the group... "Give me significant projects also, that I can carry out. Don't give me... you know... the smallest, the most insignificant, the ones with the low fees. In other words, I am here also... I am claiming my space with the other consultants, the same as the others that you have."

**Investigator:** So... in the case that we are speaking of, when you felt that you were taken... that you were being taken as a "pendejo", did you ask for clarification, at that moment, for that incident?

**Pedro:** No, not... not to the person... not to the client. We talked a lot, we talked extensively, we talked about that we did a good job... that we complied... that how was it possible that this person had... I don't know... that attitude.

**Investigator:** In other words that you managed this on your own...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:**... and, if any, with those persons that are close, but you... you didn't conf... that is, you did not confront the client directly, what you were feeling that had happened.

**Pedro:** No... I commented with the pers... with the client, once I had processed and having finished. I did, speak with the person and I said, hmm... you know, I told him that... that... I felt that no... you know, that no... that we had not understood each other, or that... or that he was taking me for "pendejo", you know.

**Investigator:** And you told him point blank: "You are taking me for "pendejo".

**Pedro:** Maybe I did not... not use the word...no...

**Investigator:** You did not verbalize it.

**Pedro:** I did not verbalize it. I simply insisted in explaining how I did what I had proposed, and I completed the job accordingly. However, towards me, that person was not honoring his part of the agreement, we could say... or I was receiving additional requirements that were **not** reasonable.

**Investigator:** So, he was taking advantage of that.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** And trying to get more... more for... for his buck.

**Pedro:** Exactly, exactly. In other words I understand that the person is clear that I felt taken for “*pendejo*”.

**Investigator:** Even if you did not say it explicitly.

**Pedro:** No, no, I didn’t say it explicitly...

**Investigator:** You understand that the person...

**Pedro:** Knows it.

**Investigator:** Sooo... Sooo... then... then, who gives, to what happened, right, and to yourself, the category of “*pendejo*”?

**Pedro:** ME. I myself, yes.

**Investigator:** In other words, at that moment you felt... “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes... yes, yes.

**Investigator:** That is, that at that.... At that moment, when this event happened.

**Pedro:** That is so.

**Investigator:** So then... And how are you sure that this person saw you as a “*pendejo*”, or presupposes that you are a “*pendejo*”, or ... or that his intention was to take you for a “*pendejo*”?

**Pedro:** Because this person, had this attitude disbelief about what I was telling him. In other words, he could not believe that I... that I did not include those additional services that he believed were necessary. It is then when he questions my capacity and... that I had not realized those services were needed.

**Investigator:** So, then... then – correct me if I am wrong—that he to a certain point... was making you feel that you were a “*pendejo*” that had not... that had not taken into account things that you should have taken into account.

**Pedro:** That also.

**Investigator:** So, not only was he taking you for a *pendejo*, but also you had this intuition, I imagine, --because it wasn’t like you talked directly, right...

**Pedro:** We did not speak directly...

**Investigator:** ...that you were...whether you were an incapable person.

**Pedro:** Yes... exactly. He used... he used that strategy to try to persuade me to do the additional work for the same...

**Investigator:** In other words, to make you be a “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes, yes... exactly. Once he saw that opportunity, he continued to use his... his... you know, verbalize how the situation was going to be managed, I understand that he wanted to continue to take me for a “*pendejo*”...

**Investigator:** He was trying, and seeing...

**Pedro:** Up to where he could reach.

**Investigator:** Yes. As if you were a “*pendejo*”, and in fact, he... he... as though his intention was to make you feel...

**Pedro:** Yes, I think so.

**Investigator:** ... and end up being a “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** Hmm, but that is not something that he told you... that he verbalized...

**Pedro:** NO.

**Investigator:** No. It is something like...as though... that is... like something that you interpreted.

**Pedro:** I interpreted that to be so. I interpret that to be so because, humm, various things... indicate this. Ehh...

**Investigator:** So there are indicators...

**Pedro:** Yes... for example I know...

**Investigator:** And you gave... the definition... that you did.

**Pedro:** That is so. I know, for example, that the project is short on funds, so obviously, if it is short on funds, he will try to get as much as possible from my services, for the... least amount of money. OK. So... in other words, he needs to use the strategies available to get what he wants to get.

**Investigator:** It's like a premeditated attitude...

**Pedro:** Yes, yes, yes. But I identified that later... after my analysis, not at the beginning. The other thing is... his client...

**Investigator:** At the beginning it's like... you understand that you fell into his game.

**Pedro:** I fell into the game.

**Investigator:** You fell like a “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Yes... and they weren't... and I was so obfuscated in the technical part of the issue, that it never crossed my mind. Hmm... I truly believed that it was a problem related to the funds of the project, and that, well, that it was about lending a hand to a... friend.

**Investigator:** And back to the same, he took advantage of your goodness.

**Pedro:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** So then... in general, who initiates the idea that this is a case in which they see me as a “*pendejo*” or I am taken as a “*pendejo*”?

**Pedro:** At all times it's me... I think that it is mine... this is a term...

**Investigator:** A term? The idea is... that you were the one ... that gave way to that idea.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Ok, then, well... is there any other thing, eh... Are there any other incidents in your life where... that are more at the personal level, not so much work related when you also feel or that you could have felt..., that you felt “*pendejo*”, that you were treated as a “*pendejo*”...

**Pedro:** No, really, like that there hasn't been anything in the personal realm.

**Investigator:** Well, then, lets... answer the questionnaire... to go ahead with the interview...

### *Pendejo Questionnaire*

**Investigator:** The first question: *Define the pendejo concept. In other words, how do you see a person... how would you define a person that... is “pendeja”?*

**Pedro:** I answered: “a person who in a naïve manner, or with little malice, accepts arguments and decides –with the limited information that he-she has to work with—to do something detrimental to—him her, and does it all without being aware. “

**Investigator:** So, if we were to put this in words... more concrete words, right, well, it could be said that it is a naïve person.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** OK. What other descriptors...

**Pedro:** Little malice...

**Investigator:** Little malice...

**Pedro:** I found other words, in other questions.

**Investigator:** OK, well then let's go on to the second question: *What connotation does the Word "pendejo" have for you?*

**Pedro:** Negative, totally.

**Investigator:** Negative.

**Pedro:** [A person] who does not get far, who doesn't reach his-her goals, is not clear in what he-she wants or how to obtain it.

**Investigator:** In other words a person who is "pendeja"...

**Pedro:** Has those characteristics.

**Investigator:** All of those... things...

**Pedro:** All... of those possible conclusions...

**Investigator:** Conclusions... OK... And the third question: *Elaborate on the following phrases: "take for pendejo", "fall as a pendejo".*

**Pedro:** In "take for pendejo", its like to mislead or to con someone... to con someone.

**Investigator:** Uhum...

**Pedro:** And fall as a "pendejo", "I was conned".

**Investigator:** You were conned. In other words, a person that is taken for or falls as a "pendejo", would be a person that...

**Pedro:** Well... like, we already spoke of naïve...

**Investigator:** Naïve.

**Pedro:** Yes... but... that is how I would define the person, right, ehh...

**Investigator:** The phrase “he-she-wants to take me for a “*pendejo*”...

**Pedro:** Then, that is... that is a person... Some person that is offering me something that makes no sense or is not reasonable.

**Investigator:** It’s a person... that you understand, that does not have a good concept of you, or does not have good intentions.

**Pedro:** NO, no... totally, bad intentions.

**Investigator:** Bad intentions...

**Pedro:** Yes... I think that anyone that has good intentions does not go around taking others for “*pendejos*”. [Laughs]

**Investigator:** In other words, he-she sees another as a naïve person, and can take advantage of her.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** He-she can manipulate...

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** But does not have a good concept of the other person.

**Pedro:** Correct.

**Investigator:** And the phrase: “I am a “*pendejo*”?”

**Pedro:** That I don’t have sufficient malice to be aware that they are trying to deceive me.

**Investigator:** So, you are a person who is exposed to others so they take advantage... to hurt you.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Yes.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Hmm... At any time, have you told yourself “I am a *“pendejo”*, or I acted like a *“pendejo”*?”

**Pedro:** Yes, yes...

**Investigator:** Ehh... and the phrase: He-she thinks that I am a *“pendejo”*?

**Pedro:** That person believes that I am naïve, because he-she is proposing something that is absurd. In that case, well, one suspects, right, that someone is out to take you for a *“pendejo”*... and...

**Investigator:** Are you already anticipating that...?

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** You are seeing that there is something...

**Pedro:** Something strange.

**Investigator:** ... something strange? OK.... *How frequently do you observe these phrases in the common discourse of the Puerto Rican people?*

**Pedro:** At least weekly.

**Investigator:** So... you understand that it is pretty common.

**Pedro:** Yes, really common.

**Investigator:** (?)... this phrase. Ehh... and ... in what environments can you hear this?

**Pedro:** Ehh... where I think that this is most common is in... in commerce, that is, when one goes to buy something. Ehh... but, but... it happens also at a personal level... it happens at the level of friendships, in... in business...

**Investigator:** In other words, it's pretty common.

**Pedro:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** It is a pretty common discourse.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Even when the word *“pendejo”* is a word that traditionally is considered...

**Pedro:** A bad word.

**Investigator:** ...a bad word, vulgar...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ... it's disguised many times...

**Pedro:** Yes...yes... Yes that is correct, and when I say that... that it is heard frequently, it's not only the word "*pendejo*" itself that is heard.

**Investigator:** But, is it understood covertly.

**Pedro:** Yes... but...

**Investigator:** It's being disguised?

**Pedro:** Exactly. For example, I don't talk with my daughter that way... I say "menso".

**Investigator:** "Menso", aha...very good.

**Pedro:** [Laughs out loud.] But I am talking about "*pendejo*".

**Investigator:** Aha... ehh... I don't know if you have heard the word "pendango"...

**Pedro:** Yes... uhum.

**Investigator:** "Idiot"... ehh...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** So, it can be disguised with other words, but ...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ...you are clear that what a person [using that word means] refers to is "*pendejo*".

**Pedro:** Exactly... and...and "*pendejo*" is what the person would like to say, and would be saying, but if he-she is in a context where vulgar language is not acceptable, well he-she disguises it.

**Investigator:** He-she protects him-herself. OK... *And the propensity with which we are taken as a "pendejo"?*

**Pedro:** High propensity... daily!



**Investigator:** Daily... hmmm...

**Pedro:** I haven't talked about politics, but in politics also, as far as I understand.

**Investigator:** In politics also... in other words, in any context. Professional, family, politics...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** In any context?

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** So. There is a high propensity to be taken for "*pendejos*". That is, there is always the possibility or the fear that we might be taken as a *pendejo*?

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** OK. Ehh... *How would you identify when someone takes you for a "pendejo" or you feel that someone is trying to take you for one? How do you identify it?*

**Pedro:** Ehh... the typical signs for me are when I am being offered something that is not clearly defined... that is not explained correctly, that doesn't have much detail. Or also when something "too good to be true", that is, too... sounds too good to be real. At least...that, at least daily, I am alert.

**Investigator:** Ehh... so, it is something that is spoken about directly or it's something that you perceive...?

**Pedro:** Ehh... I think that... that...

**Investigator:** Like a... like a... like an intuition, that is... (?)... Ehh... how do you identify, or define, like, "wait a second... this person is trying to take me for "*pendejo*"... or... or [are you on the] alert... "let me...?"

**Pedro:** Yes... I think that one has the intuition...

**Investigator:** You have the intuition?

**Pedro:** Yes, that is at the onset and... if the person is in front [present], at least I don't tend to say it at the moment. I prefer to keep quiet, continue until... until it is a fault (sic) and then I analyze and... and if I have to go to the person to attend to the situation, I don't go and say, necessarily, "You are taking me for a "*pendejo*". I simply, well, [I say] "No, look I am not interested in the issue".

*Investigator:* In other words...you... you.

*Pedro:* I leave.

*Investigator:* ... to a certain point, you leave...

*Pedro:* Yes.

*Investigator:* ...You evade [the situation].

*Pedro:* Exactly.

*Investigator:* ...Ehh... you do not really confront...

*Pedro:* I do not confront.

*Investigator:* ...as you are perceiving it exactly...

*Pedro:* That is it...exactly.

*Investigator:* So, you manage it at an internal level.

*Pedro:* Yes.

*Investigator:* At a personal level. You make your own decisions based upon what you have perceived or the intuition you had...

*Pedro:* Correct.

*Investigator:* And... you manage it within...

*Pedro:* Yes, I prefer that.

*Investigator:* Ehh... and usually what you do is that [you tell yourself] “OK, let’s leave it here...”

*Pedro:* Yes.

*Investigator:* “...and then I am more alert next time... so that it doesn’t happen”. Is that what you usually do?

*Pedro:* Yes... exactly. And I don’t give a second opportunity. That is, once I realize that is the attitude, I don’t consider it anymore.

**Investigator:** You don't consider it further. Even though you did not confront the person directly to make sure that what you are thinking is what the person is seeing.

**Pedro:** Yes... yes that's it. That is what my own nature leads me to.

**Investigator:** That is your nature...OK.

**Pedro:** Yes... Maybe in the business aspect I put more effort into, into, you know, if I am really interested in what I am looking for, eh, to obtain what I want. But I understand that I am on the losing end. In other words, I feel that... I still don't feel that I have a mechanism to go to the person that is trying to take me for a "*pendejo*", and... to verify... or ins... [inquire]... or more than that, change the... the thing, in order for me to end up... (?).

**Investigator:** That is, usually what you do, to a certain extent is, well...

**Pedro:** I eliminate it...

**Investigator:** You eliminate it. In other words, you... you leave that space open, or you keep alert so it doesn't happen again.

**Pedro:** Yes, yes... in other words, the... the learning part and... and so it doesn't happen again, well, no, I don't have it to use when I want to or when I don't. That is, I am not always thinking... I don't have that shield on all the time, I put it on, when I feel... when I foresee that... that something... really that... I might be taken for a "*pendejo*".

**Investigator:** When you see clues in the air, right, that indicate...

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** ... that there might be something...

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** ... that might have to do with the "*pendejo*".

**Pedro:** But my nature is, eh... its good in the sense that I am not... I am not constantly thinking that everyone wants to take me for a *pendejo*. On the contrary, I tend to think when I initiate a relationship, that it's not... that it's not...this or that... for the well being...

**Investigator:** That he-she comes in good faith.

**Pedro:** Yes, that he-she comes in good faith.

**Investigator:** In good faith, just as you.

**Pedro:** Yes, like me.

**Investigator:** That he-she thinks like you.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** OK... eh... so you give the benefit of the doubt...

**Pedro:** Yes, yes.

**Investigator:** So then.... *What mechanisms do you use to avoid falling as a pendejo?*

**Pedro:** When I have that intuition, then I question, compare, I talk to a friend, I delve deeper into the issue.

**Investigator:** Hmm... in general terms, if in this... in this anecdote that you specified here... How do you avoid to be taken as a “*pendejo*” again? What mechanisms or, what position do you assume?

**Pedro:** Well, there... yes... Well, nothing; recently I heard an... expert in diplomacy [laughs], a short interview, but a professor of George Washington University say, that in... every negotiation one has to have a leverage... a way of one... putting pressure when any aspect of the negotiation fails. And there I understood that all negotiations may have aspects of failure. In other words, one... therefore, has to have that leverage. That is it is something that I learned, it seemed curious, and I will... I will start to...

**Investigator:** To exercise...

**Pedro:** To practice, yes... but well, it's something new that I haven't practiced yet, and it's not in my nature yet, so I have to develop it... practice...

**Investigator:** It's not your nature...

**Pedro:** It's something that I have to learn.

**Investigator:** Eh... you can see... all of this has to do with the “*pendejo*” right and the way that you saw yourself from that perspective... it's not... it's like its... something ominous, or something that can come...?

**Pedro:** Yes, I see it as a threat, eh... that is, I understand that one... that one does have to be, eh... alert, daily, in all environments... except in the intimate environment. See, in the intimate context, I don't feel that I have to have... that I have to have that... shield. But outside, yes... including friends. In other words, eh... maybe in a... it's part of the

same process... that is leading me, towards this feeling of lack of trust towards everyone. But it is something that I have learned after having...these experiences of falling as a “*pendejo*”.

**Investigator:** So, then... then... insofar as you have had these experiences of falling as a “*pendejo*”, you are more alert, more vigilant ...

**Pedro:** Uhum.

**Investigator:** ... like... more... more prepared to... read those clues that... that indicate that in this or that situation there might be something like, “they might want to take me for a “*pendejo*”.”

**Pedro:** Yes... Uhum. As far as the mechanisms, I'd like to comment something... Sometimes I feel bad questioning the person that I think might be trying to take me for a *pendejo* too much. So then, well, I question very little. And... and... and it's like I give them the benefit of the doubt, simply because I am questioning. In other words, by questioning I am giving the benefit of the doubt regarding what they are telling me, in the sense that what they are telling me, might be correct. So unless, unless I can at least detect clearly in the answer that... that it's a lie, or that they are trying to take me for a “*pendejo*”, with the clarifications—if it's not something very obvious—well I give the benefit of the doubt and remain vulnerable to fall as a “*pendejo*” again. In other words, to fall, in the end, if that was the intention of the person.

**Investigator:** So, you don't really delve... into the situation...

**Pedro:** No, not always, no.

**Investigator:** ...nor...nor...how should I say? You... don't ask, like they say in English... “accountability”, of the other person, regarding what you understand might be happening, but rather you... leave it... you let it... you let it go.

**Pedro:** Correct...exactly, or...

**Investigator:** But you stay... you still have the sensation ...

**Pedro:** Yes...

**Investigator:** ...of... of what...?

**Pedro:** No... usually I, when I decide that... that no... when I think that I will not fall as a “*pendejo*”, and I yield, or... or make the transaction, I feel satisfied. If I don't... once I decide, ehh... I feel fine, and I continue with... with my operation and don't... I don't

keep harping on, I think I fell as a “*pendejo*”, but let’s... ehh, get angry with the person and such, no. If I negotiated, and accepted, I assume responsibility and continue.

**Investigator:** And you don’t dwell on the sensation.

**Pedro:** No, exactly. Yes, yes... I... not as “*pendejo*” no... knowing and being conscious that I was taken for “*pendejo*” no... you know... I finish whatever and if I think that I was not taken for “*pendejo*”, then I am fine and I continue...

**Investigator:** Do you clarify or verify.... or do you at least have the sensation that not... not... not necessarily they are out to take you for a “*pendejo*”.

**Pedro:** Exactly.

**Investigator:** Ehh... *What is usually your reaction with what you interpret as being taken for “pendejo”?* In other words, what do you say to yourself? What feelings or sensations does it produce? What is usually your response? It’s to know what you do, or what you did.

**Pedro:** Frustration... “This is not going to happen again”, apathy, wanting to end the relationship and not interact more with the person.

**Investigator:** In other words, leave.

**Pedro:** Leave.

**Investigator:** Leave the situation. Eh... *What physical manifestations do you experience with what you feel is having been taken as a “pendejo”?*

**Pedro:** Anxiety... as a mental burnout... in other words, that... that... I know it’s not physical, but it’s like, ehh... something that occupies the mind. Lack of concentration... pensive... in other words, no... Not necessarily is it physical, but I can imagine that eventually it does become physical.

**Investigator:** Aha. Physically I understand that there are persons that evidence sadness, anxiety, ehh... the thing is that (?) it reflects on their body, like for example, a tightening of the chest, a headache, or... or sweating, or cold hands, or...

**Pedro:** Yes...

**Investigator:** ...or their face turns red..., so...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** ... do you in any way feel this in your body?

**Pedro:** Yes, yes... definitively. Headache, I can say that yes, I have felt it... and that I get red in my face... that type of thing...

**Investigator:** In other words, that the sensation that I was taken or I was left feeling like a “*pendejo*”, or I fell as a “*pendejo*”, is something that provokes or can provoke... physical sensations.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** OK. Then, *what person or persons are capable of taking others for “pendejos”?* We spoke about this a while ago..., a little, right?

**Pedro:** Ehh... I wrote: Sly people, those who take advantage, people who are not dedicated or, ambitious people.

**Investigator:** And we had said that this is rather... you know, it is generalized, it’s pretty common... in the environment.

**Pedro:** Yes... uhum.

**Investigator:** Ehh... *Are you conscious of having taken someone for “pendejo” intentionally...,with the express intention of hurting him-her?.*

**Pedro:** No.

**Investigator:** No, nothing.

**Pedro:** I have no... really, I have no recollection of having done this ever.

**Investigator:** You don’t see yourself as a person...

**Pedro:** No. That I am running around taking others for “*pendejos*”, no... I cannot think of... of something... really, no.

**Investigator:** In other words, that is... alien to your nature.

**Pedro:** Yes... yes. For example this client, ehh...if he proposes another job, well maybe I might be motivated... You know, I was saying that... if this person that already took me for a “*pendejo*” offers me another job, maybe I, maybe not now, but in a year, or in some time later, well I... I could prepare a proposal and probably charge more than reasonable, which would be like trying to take him as a “*pendejo*”. And..., maybe not as a reprisal, but as a way to recuperate the money that I... that... that I think that I lost in the other transaction...

**Investigator:** Does that reflect the feeling of taking him for a “*pendejo*” or more a feeling of making justice?

**Pedro:** More a feeling of justice.

**Investigator:** Of justice...

**Pedro:** Yes, yes because... it would not be like taking him for “*pendejo*”... It would be more...

**Investigator:** In other words, you don’t feel good taking someone else for “*pendejo*”?

**Pedro:** No.

**Investigator:** You wouldn’t like that title...

**Pedro:** I would not like that title.

**Investigator:** ...of a person... ehh... then, *How do you relate the concept of pendejo with the following characteristics of the Puerto Rican people?* Let me explain... throughout all of the literature, right, including the first documents regarding Puerto Rico, and the Puerto Ricans mostly, ehh... Puerto Ricans have been described through different... traits that persist through time... such as, Puerto Ricans are passive, docile, indolent, submissive, conformist, belittled... Belittled in the sense of being rendered as “nobody”; lazy... they have been called lazy... and Puerto Ricans have also been referred to as noble, as very good...

**Pedro:** Uhum.

**Investigator:** The goodness of the Puerto Rican... has been exulted, the outgoing nature of the Puerto Rican...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Ehh... and..., and..., it’s not here, also, but there is another characteristic which is escape. In other words, the Puerto Rican does not face, does not confront, he-she does not ask for explanations... does not hold, as they say in English, does not hold others accountable...

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Rather, he-she leaves... leaves the space..., so...

**Pedro:** Yields.



**Investigator:** Yields. OK. Keeps quiet... manages things inside.

**Pedro:** Uhum.

**Investigator:** How do you relate those characteristics with what we have spoken about, that is with the concept of a... of a “*pendejo*” person...?

**Pedro:** Ehh... I, well, ah...

**Investigator:** Clarifying, that not necessarily these words... are all... all negative.

**Pedro:** Correct.

**Investigator:** You understand?

**Pedro:** Correct.

**Investigator:** But... up to what point can they be related...?

**Pedro:** Uhum. Well, I think that all... all are related with the... with the “*pendejo*”, but, for example, I thought... I wrote here that I know educated people, with studies, that could fall as “*pendejos*”, that can be taken for “*pendejos*” because—I identified here—they are passive, peaceful or noble persons. But, of course, being intelligent persons, or that have... have studied, I don’t see the other characteristics in these people. I don’t see them as submissive, nor conformists, nor docile. But as noble and passive, yes, and these two characteristics lead them to fall as “*pendejos*”. But uneducated people, with little schooling, well I see them more submissive, conformist and docile.

**Investigator:** Ehh... and *what happens, or what end goal does a person who lets him-herself be taken for “pendejo”, have?*

**Pedro:** Suffers, he-she is stepped on, and has low self-esteem... or the event affects his-her self-esteem.

**Investigator:** His-her self-esteem... in other words, hmm... a person that you see as “this person is a “*pendejo*”, in the total sense of the word... is a person that... you see that person as someone who values him-herself or not?

**Pedro:** Does not value him-herself.

**Investigator:** Does not value him-herself. A person who feels... who feels respect or... or inspires respect?

**Pedro:** Does not inspire respect.

**Investigator:** Does not inspire respect. Ehh... in other words, it's a person who is a "little nothing"?

**Pedro:** Yes... or that some... something or some experience or another person, has led him-her to believe that, no?

**Investigator:** But that person that you can identify as such, a "*pendejo*".

**Pedro:** Yes...yes, yes... definitively. That person does not value him-herself...

**Investigator:** And you don't... you don't feel much respect towards that... that type of person.

**Pedro:** That's correct. I feel, I feel compassion, or... right... sorry for... sorry for people that are that way.

**Investigator:** In other words, that person is more worthy of compassion, and of... of... It's like if he-she were a nobody.

**Pedro:** Exactly. He-she does not have the tools to live in this world...

**Investigator:** In this world...

**Pedro:** In this jungle. [Laughs]

**Investigator:** Ehh... OK, well, [Pedro], thank you so much for your contribution, ehh... I think that this is going to help me very much in this study, and, and also, well the... regarding the benefits, right, of participating, the first thing is that my goal... my wish is that this study will signify an impact in us, in our culture, on our psychology. And, well... you have been a part... of all of this. But also, I offer the benefit, because here, as I said, we are describing this [*"pendejo"* phenomenon]... but, the mechanisms of how to manage it, well this is not a part of the project at this moment.

**Pedro:** Sure...

**Investigator:** Well then, I give you the possibility of, ehh... of participating in a workshop that has a complete session for [dealing with] the "*pendejo*"—and obviously the workshop leads to that—ehh... The cost of the workshop if one were to participate to the whole thing, would be \$xxx.xx. But it would be totally free of any cost; or also an individual session during which we can talk more about the mechanisms to manage all of this "*pendejo*" issue in a positive manner.

**Pedro:** OK...

**Investigator:** To change schemes.

**Pedro:** Yes.

**Investigator:** Another thing is that I will... when... when I transcribe all this that we have spoken about, I will give you a copy so you can verify and sign it, to certify that it is what we talked about here.

**Pedro:** OK.

**Investigator:** And when the study is finished, I will notify those who participated, and the best is... is a summary, of what were... the conclusions of the study.

**Pedro:** That's fine...

**Investigator:** And anything, questions, eh... doubts, at any time, at any moment, you have the right to ask. Is that OK?

**Pedro:** Thank you very much.

**Investigator:** Well, thank you very much. This interview has ended.

APPENDIX I:

CODES: ENGLISH AND SPANISH

**The Pendejo Phenomenon – English Codes  
Sources and References**

Definitions of Categories and Sub-categories:			<u>So / Ref</u>
I. Definitions	DE		
A. What it is?	[WA] DEWA		
1. Who?	[WO] DEWAWO		8/ 33
2. How	[HW] DEWAHW		5/ 19
B. Connotative meaning	[CO] DECO		
1. Negative connotation	[NC] DECONC		
(a) Attempts against one's sense of capacity, respect and/or dignity.	[AT] DECONCAT		5/ 16
(b) The person feels one or more of the following: ignorant, degraded, manipulated, used, ignored, and/or insignificant.	[IG] DECONCIG		7/ 17
2. Vulgar connotation	[VC] DECOVC		
(a) Considered to be a bad word in Puerto Rico.	[BW] DECOVCBW		5/ 7
C. Characteristics	[CH] DECH		
1. Something that hurts, offends	[HO] DECHHO		5/ 7
2. Learning from experience, a wake-up incident.	[LE] DECHLE		8/ 35
3. Reliance on self perceptions and intuitions: mind-reading, sixth sense, and non-verbal cues.	[IN] DECHIN		8/ 29
4. Overtaking event (you're "caught," "taken").	[OV] DECHOV		8/ 68
5. Belittling process.	[BP] DECHBP		6/ 11

6. Generalized occurrence.	[GO]	DECHGO	7/ 19
7. Word is often disguised	[WD]	DECHWD	8/ 19
8. Concealment of pendejo feelings.	[CF]	DECHCF	7/ 11
9. Perceived vulnerability.	[VUL]	DECHVUL	6/ 17
10. Traumatic event.	[TE]	DECHTE	5/ 11
11. Impinges on Puerto Rican's cultural fiber and sense of identity.	[IM]	DECHIM	6/ 18
12. There are various degrees and meanings of Pendejo.	[GR]	DECHGR	7/ 14
II. Assumptions		AS	
A. Regarding others	[RO]	ASRO	
1. Intentional attribution	[IA]	ASROIA	
(a) Wickedness	[WI]	ASROIAWI	7/ 23
(b) Exploitation	[EX]	ASROIAEX	6/ 23
(c) Taking advantage	[TA]	ASROIATA	8/ 22
B. Regarding self	[RS]	ASRS	
1. Self-labeling	[SL]	ASRSSL	8/ 75
2. Being good or being noble	[BN]	ASRSBN	8/ 38
C. Threat	[TH]	ASTH	
1. Victimizing effect	[VI]	ASTHVI	8/ 18
2. Constant, inevitable, on-going	[CO]	ASTHCO	8/ 33
III. Underlying Emotions and/or Emotional Response		[EM]	EM
A. Self-victimization	[SV]	EMSV	5/ 14
B. Anger/ire	[AN]	EMAN	8/ 41

C. Mistrust	[MI]	EMMI	8/ 13
D. Helplessness	[HE]	EMHE	5/ 5
E. Anxiety, fear	[AN]	EMAN	5/ 5
 IV. Behaviors	[BH]	BH	
A. Response Reaction	[RR]	BHRR	
1. Physical Symptoms	[PH]	BHRRPH	8/ 20
(a) Headaches	[HE]	BHRRPHHE	
(b) Rapid heart rate	[HR]	BHRRPHHR	
(c) Sleepiness	[SL]	BHRRPHSL	
(d) Blushing	[BL]	BHRRPHBL	
(e) Perspiration	[PE]	BHRRPHPE	
(f) Decompensation, physical exhaustion and/or physical shut-down.	[DE]	BHRRPHDE	
(g) Gestures	[GE]	BHRRPHGE	
(h) Hyperactivity	[HY]	BHRRPHHY	
(i) Hyperventilation	[HP]	BHRRPHHP	
2. Action	[AC]	BHRRAC	
(a) Clam-up, "Keep it private."	[CL]	BHRRACCL	5/ 11
(b) Analysis	[AN]	BHRRACAN	7/ 28
(c) Hyper vigilance, to be alert.	[HY]	BHRRACHY	8/ 40
(d) Confrontation, assertive.	[CO]	BHRRACCO	5/ 17
(e) Confrontation, meek	[CM]	BHRRACCM	5/ 10
(f) Withdrawal, distancing, and/or termination of relationship.	[WD]	BHRRACWD	7/ 16
(g) Defensive, defiant postures.	[DP]	BHRRACDP	5/ 11
(h) Inaction, likely escapist behaviors.	[IN]	BHRRACIN	8/ 53
(i) Internal healing process	[IH]	BHRRACIH	7/ 15
(j) Warning	[WA]	BHRRACWA	7/ 14
 B. Intentionality	[IN]	BHIN	
1. Self-intention	[SI]	BHINSI	
(a) Negative, never	[NE]	BHINSINE	8/ 17
2. Others'-intentions	[OI]	BHINOI	
(a) Everyone is capable	[EV]	BHINOIEV	6/ 10

	(b) Any environment	[AE]	BHINOIAE	7/ 12
	(d) Intelligent, witty (crafty) people	[IW]	BHINOIIW	5/ 8
V. Propensity		[PR]	PR	
A. Personal		[PE]	PRPE	
1. High propensity		[HP]	PRPEHP	7/ 8
B. Socio-Cultural		[CU]	PRCU	
1. Possible relation between Puerto Rican personality traits and the pendejo phenomenon.		[PT]	PRCUPT	
(a) Synonymous		[SY]	PRCUPTSY	7/ 23
(b) Not synonymous		[NS]	PRCUPTNS	6/ 9
VI. Ensuing Consequences:		[EC]	EC	
A. Low self-esteem.		[LE]	ECLE	6/ 9
B. Subordinate to the whims of the "Other."		[SU]	ECSU	5/ 8
C. Does not merit any respect.		[NR]	ECNR	5/ 8
D. A "nobody," a valueless individual.		[NO]	ECNO	8/ 15
E. Degrading, upsetting position.		[DE]	ECDE	8/ 15

El Fenómeno del *Pendejo* – Códigos,  
Fuentes y Referencias

Bosquejo de categorías y códigos en español.			<u>So/Ref</u>
I. Definiciones:	[DE]	DE	
A. ¿Qué es?	[QU]	DEQU	
1. ¿Quién?	[QN]	DEQUQN	8 / 33
2. ¿Cómo?	[CM]	DEQUCM	5 / 19
B. Significado connotativo:	[SI]	DESI	
1. Connotación negativa.	[CN]	DESICN	
(a) Atenta contra el sentido de capacidad, respeto y/o dignidad de la persona.	[AT]	DESICNAT	5 / 1
(b) La persona se siente una o más de las siguientes: Ignorante, degradada, manipulada, utilizada, ignorada, y/o insignificante.	[IG]	DESICNIG	7 / 17
2. Connotación vulgar	[VU]	DESIVU	
(a) Considerada como una mala palabra en Puerto Rico.	[MP]	DESIVUMP	5 / 7
C. Características	[CA]	DECA	
1. Es algo que lastima, hierde.	[LA]	DECALA	5 / 7
2. Experiencia de aprendizaje, un despertar a la realidad.	[AP]	DECAAP	8 / 35
3. Se depende de la auto-percepción y la intuición basándose mayormente en la lectura de la mente, el sexto sentido y las claves no-verbales para llegar a conclusiones.	[IN]	DECAIN	8 / 29
4. Es un evento que “agarra” por sorpresa a la persona (te “cogen”, tu “caes”).	[AG]	DECAAG	8 / 68



5. Proceso rebajante.	[RE]	DECARE	6 / 11
6. Suceso generalizado, uso frecuente en discurso del PR.	[GE]	DECAGE	8 / 32
7. Usualmente se disfraza la palabra.	[DI]	DECADI	10 / 19
8. Ocultar sentimientos de <i>pendejo</i> .	[OC]	DECAOC	7 / 11
9. Situación de vulnerabilidad.	[VUL]	DECAVUL	6 / 17
10. Evento traumático.	[TR]	DECATR	5 / 11
11. Incide en el sentido de identidad y en la fibra cultural de los/as puertorriqueños/as.	[ID]	DECAID	7 / 30
12. Hay distintos grados y significados de <i>pendejo</i> .	[GRA]	DECAGRA	7 / 14
II. Presuposiciones	[PR]	PR	
A. En relación al otro	[RO]	PRRO	
1. Intención atribuida	[IA]	PRROIA	
(a) Maldad	[ML]	PRROIAML	7 / 23
(b) Explotación	[EX]	PRROIAEX	6 / 23
(c) Aprovecharse	[AP]	PRROIAAP	8 / 22
B. En relación a uno mismo	[UM]	PRUM	
1. Imponerse etiquetas, auto-atribución.	[IE]	PRUMIE	8 / 75
2. Ser noble, ser bueno.	[SN]	PRUMSN	8 / 38
C. Amenaza:	[AZ]	PRAZ	
1. La persona cae víctima	[VIC]	PRAZVIC	8 / 18
2. Constante, inevitable y persistente	[CON]	PRAZCON	8 / 33
III. Emociones Involucradas	[EM]	EM	
A. Auto-victimización	[VI]	EMVI	5 / 14

B. Coraje/ira	[CJ]	EMCJ	8 / 41
D. Desconfianza	[DC]	EMDC	8 / 13
C. Indefensión, impotencia	[IF]	EMIF	5 / 5
D. Ansiedad, miedo	[AS]	EMAS	5 / 5
IV. Conductas:	[CO]	CO	
A. Respuestas de reacción:	[RR]	CORR	
1. Síntomas físicos	[SF]	CORRSF **	8/2
(a) Dolor de cabeza	[DO]	CORRSFDO	
(b) Palpitaciones, y/o subida de presión	[PA]	CORRSFPA	
(c) Somnolencia	[SO]	CORRSFSO	
(d) Sonrojarse	[SR]	CORRSFSR	
(e) Sudor	[SU]	CORRSFSU	
(f) Descompensación, agotamiento, y/o desgaste físico.	[AG]	CORRSFAG	
(g) Gestos	[GE]	CORRSFGE	
(h) Hiperactividad	[HI]	CORRSFHI	
(i) Hiperventilación	[HP]	CORRSFHP	
2. Acción	[AC]	CORRAC	
(a) Callarse, mantener en privado.	[CL]	CORRACCL	5 / 11
(b) Análisis.	[AN]	CORRACAN	7 / 28
(c) Hipervigilancia, estar alerta.	[HI]	CORRACHI	10 / 40
(d) Confrontación asertiva.	[AR]	CORRACAR	5 / 17
(e) Confrontación dócil.	[DC]	CORRACDC	5 / 10
(f) Retiro, distanciamiento y/o terminación de la relación.	[RE]	CORRACRE	7 / 16
(g) Estar a la defensiva, mantener posturas desafiantes.	[DF]	CORRACDF	5 / 11
(h) Inacción, y/o posibles conductas escapistas.	[IN]	CORRACIN	8 / 53
(i) Manejo interno del fenómeno.	[MA]	CORRACMA	7 / 15
(j) Advertencia	[AD]	CORRACAD	7 / 14
B. Intencionalidad:	[IN]	COIN	
1. Intención propia	[IP]	COINIP	
(a) Negativo, nunca.	[NN]	COINIPNN	8 / 17

2. Intención del Otro.	[IO]	COINIO	
(a) Cualquiera es capaz.	[CU]	COINIOCU	6 / 10
(b) En cualquier ambiente.	[AM]	COINIOAM	7 / 12
(c) Personas astutas y/o malintencionadas.	[AS]	COINIOAS	5 / 8
 V. Propensión:	[PP]	PP	
A. Personal	[PN]	PPPN	
1. Muy propensos.	[MP]	PPPNMP	7 / 8
B. Socio-Cultural.	[SO]	PPSO	
1. Posible relación entre los rasgos de la personalidad adscritos a los puertorriqueños /as y el fenómeno del <i>pendejo</i> .	[RP]	PPSORP	
(a) Sinónimo.	[SI]	PPSORPSI	7 / 23
(b) No sinónimo.	[NS]	PPSORPNS	6 / 9
 VI. Consecuencias: Finalidad de una persona pendeja.	[CN]	CN	
A. Baja auto-estima.	[BE]	CNBE	6 / 9
B. Subordinado al capricho del "otro."	[SB]	CNSB	5 / 8
C. No merece respeto.	[RE]	CNRE	5 / 8
D. Un "don nadie", una persona sin valor.	[NA]	CNNA	8 / 16
E. Posición degradante, desconcertante.	[DN]	CNDN	8 / 15

## APPENDIX J:

### DEFINITIONS OF CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

#### The *Pendejo* Phenomenon – *El Fenómeno del Pendejo*

I. **Definitions [Definiciones]:** The action or the power of describing, explaining or making definite and clear. In this study, it refers to how Puerto Ricans describe, explain and make definite and clear the meaning that they ascribe the *pendejo* construct. [La acción o el poder de describir, explicar, o aclarar definitivamente. En este estudio se refiere a cómo el puertorriqueño describe, explica, y aclara el significado que ellos le dan al constructo *pendejo*].

A. **What it is? [¿Qué es?]** What does the phenomenon consists of? [¿En qué consiste el fenómeno?]

1. **Who? [¿Quién?]** Who is a *pendejo* and who is a person capable of taking others for *pendejos* [Quién es una persona *pendeja* y quienes son personas capaces de coger de *pendejo* a otros].

2. **How? [¿Cómo?]** How are people taken for *pendejos*, how does this comes about. [Cómo las personas caen de *pendejo*, cómo se da esta dinámica.]

B. **Connotative meaning [Significado connotativo]:** Includes the various ideas and emotions that suggest the way people experience the *pendejo* within the Puerto Rican culture. [Incluye las varias ideas y emociones que dan forma al fenómeno del *pendejo* en la cultura puertorriqueña].

1. **Negative connotation [Connotación negativa].**

(a) Attempts against one's sense of capacity, respect and dignity [Atenta contra el sentido de capacidad, respeto y dignidad de la persona.]

(b) The person feels one or more of the following: ignorant, degraded, manipulated, utilized, ignored, and/or insignificant. [La persona se siente una o más de las siguientes: ignorante, degradada, manipulada, utilizada, ignorada y/o insignificante.]

2. ***Vulgar connotation [Connotación vulgar]***

- (a) Considered to be a bad word in Puerto Rico.  
*[Considerada como una mala palabra en Puerto Rico.]*

C. ***Characteristics [Características]***

1. Something that offends, hurts.  
*[Es algo que lastima, hiere]*
2. Learning from experience, a wake-up incident.  
*[Experiencia de aprendizaje, un despertar a la realidad.]*
3. Reliance on self perceptions and intuitions: mind-reading, sixth sense, and non-verbal cues.  
*[Se depende de la auto-percepción y la intuición basándose mayormente en la lectura de la mente, el sexto sentido y las claves no-verbales para llegar a conclusiones.]*
4. Overtaking event (you're "caught,"; "taken").  
*[Es un evento fuera de control, que agarra sorpresivamente a la persona (te cogen, tu caes).]*
5. Belittling process. *[Proceso rebajante.]*
6. Generalized occurrence. *[Suceso generalizado.]*
7. Word is often disguised. *[La palabra se disfraza.]*
8. Concealment of *pendejo* feelings. *[Ocultación de sentimientos de pendejo.]*
9. Perceived vulnerability. *[Situación de vulnerabilidad.]*
10. Traumatic event. *[Evento traumático.]*
11. Impinges on Puerto Rican's cultural fiber and sense of identity.  
*[Incide en el sentido de identidad y la fibra cultural de los/as puertorriqueños/as.]*
12. Various degrees and meanings of *pendejo*. *[Hay distintos grados y significados de pendejo].*

II. **Assumptions [Presuposiciones]:** The premise or supposition, as seen in the *pendejo* phenomenon, that something is fact; that is, the act of taking something for granted. [*La premisa o suposición, como sucede en el fenómeno del peñejo, de que algo es un hecho, o sea, el acto de dar por seguro dicha suposición.*]

A. **Regarding others [En relación al otro]**

1. **Intentional attribution** or suppositions about others' intentionality [*Intencionalidad atribuida o suposiciones formuladas sobre la intención del otro*].

(a) **Wickedness [Maldad]** - Intention to do harm [*Intención de hacer daño*].

(b) **Exploitation [Explotación]** - The use of deceit to obtain what the individual wants [*El uso de engaño para obtener beneficios propios*].

(c) **Taking advantage [Aprovecharse]** - To take advantage of my good will [*Aprovecharse de mi bondad*].

B. **Regarding self** or suppositions about oneself [*En relación a uno mismo, o suposiciones sobre mi propia persona*].

1. **Self-labeling [Auto-etiquetar]** - to affix a label to oneself [*Imponerse etiquetas uno mismo*]

2. **Being good or being noble [Ser bueno, ser noble]**.

(a) In the *pendejo* mentality it is the belief that others act in good faith as I do [*Pensar que otros actúan de buena Fe también*].

(b) Makes the person vulnerable to others' bad intentions [*Ser bueno lleva a caer presa de las malas intenciones de los demás*].

(c) Allow others to take advantage you [*Permite a otros aprovecharse de mi bondad*].

C. **Threat [Amenaza]:** The *pendejo* incidences are seen as a menace to a person's dignity or well-being. [*El peñejo como una amenaza a la dignidad o al bienestar de la persona*].

1. Victimizing effect [*La persona cae víctima*]

2. Constant, inevitable, on-going [*Constante, inevitable, persistente*]

### III. *Underlying Emotions and/or Emotional Response [Respuestas de Reacción Emocionales]:*

- A. Self-victimization [*Auto-victimización*]
- B. Anger/ire [*Coraje/ira*]
- C. Mistrust [*Desconfianza*]
- D. Helplessness, impotence [*Indefensión, impotencia*]
- E. Anxiety, fear [*Ansiedad, miedo*]

IV. **Behaviors [Conductas]:** An organism's activities in response to external and internal stimuli, including objectively observable activities, introspectively observable activities, and unconscious processes. The responses and actions of the *pendejo* study participants that reveal how they experience the *pendejo* phenomenon.

*[Las actividades de un organismo en respuesta a estímulos externos e internos, incluyendo actividades observables objetivamente, actividades observables introspectivamente, y procesos inconscientes. Las respuestas y acciones de los participantes en este estudio que revelan cómo ellos experimentan el fenómeno del peñejo.]*

**A. Response Reaction [Respuestas de reacción]:** Participants' manifested reactions or responses to a *pendejo* event. *[Respuestas o reacciones manifestadas por los participantes relacionadas con eventos del peñejo].*

#### 1. **Physical Symptoms [Síntomas físicos]**

- (a) Headaches [*Dolor de cabeza*]
- (b) Rapid heart rate, high pressure [*Palpitaciones, presión alta*]
- (c) Sleepiness [*Somnolencia*]
- (d) Blushing [*Sonrojarse*]
- (e) Perspiration [*Sudor*]
- (f) Decompensation, exhaustion and/or physical shut-down. [*Descompensación, agotamiento, y/o desgaste físico.*]
- (g) Gestures [*Gestos*]
- (h) Hyperactivity [*Hiperactividad*]
- (i) Hyperventilation [*Hiperventilación*]

#### 2. **Action [Acción]**

- (a) Clam-up, "Keep it private." [*Callarse, mantener en privado.*]
- (b) Analysis. [*Análisis*]
- (c) Hypervigilance, to be alert. [*Hipervigilancia, estar alerta.*]
- (d) Confrontation, assertive. [*Confrontación, asertiva*]
- (e) Confrontation, meek. [*Confrontación, dócil.*]
- (f) Withdrawal, distancing, and/or termination of relationship. [*Retiro, distanciamiento y/o terminación de la relación.*]

- (g) Defensive, defiant postures. [*Estar a la defensiva, mantener posturas desafiantes*]
- (h) Inaction, likely escapist behavior. [*Inacción, con posible conducta escapista.*]
- (i) Internal healing process. [*Proceso de recuperación se maneja a nivel interno.*]
- (j) Warning. [*Advertencia*]

D. **Intentionality** [*Intencionalidad*]: Who is capable of taking others for *pendejo*? [*¿Quiénes son capaces de “coger” a otros de pendejo?*].

1. **Self-intention** [*Intención propia*]: How inclined I am to take others for *pendejos*. [*Cuán inclinado yo estoy de coger a otros de pendejos*].

- (a) Negative, never. [*Negativo, nunca.*]

2. **Others'-intentions** [*Intención del Otro*]: How motivated are others to take me for a *pendejo*. [*Cuán vulnerables estamos de ser “cogidos de pendejo” por otros*].

- (a) Everyone is capable. [*Cualquiera es capaz.*]
- (b) In any environment. [*En cualquier ambiente.*]
- (c) Witty people, wicked people. [*Gente astuta y malintencionada.*]

IV. **Propensity** [*Propensión*]: Susceptibility to be “taken” or to be “caught” as *pendejos*. [*Susceptibilidad a ser “cogidos” o a “caer” de pendejos.*]

A. **Personal** [*Personal*]: How susceptible am I to be “taken for *pendeja/o*.” [*Cuán susceptible estoy yo a que me “cojan de pendeja/o.”*]

- 1. High propensity. [*Muy propensos.*]

B. **Socio-Cultural** [*Cultural*]: Propensity of Puerto Ricans to be “taken” or labeled as *pendejos*. [*Cuán propensos están los puertorriqueños a ser “cogidos de pendejo.”*]

1. Relation between Puerto Rican personality traits and the *pendejo* phenomenon. [*Relación entre los rasgos de la personalidad adscritos a los puertorriqueños y el fenómeno del pendejo.*]

- (a) Synonymous. [*Sinónimo.*]
- (b) Not synonymous. [*No es sinónimo.*]



**VI. Ensuing Consequences:** Finality of a person who is *pendejo*.  
[*Consecuencias, finalidad de una persona pendeja*]

- A. Low self-esteem. [*Baja auto-estima*]
- B. Subordinate to the whims of the “Other.” [*Subordinado al capricho del “Otro”*]
- C. Does not merit respect. [*No merece respeto*]
- D. A “nobody,” a worthless individual. [*Un “don nadie”, una persona sin valor.*]
- E. Degrading, upsetting position. [*Posición degradante, desconcertante*]

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### **Professional License:**

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### **Education:**

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Summer and Fall semester, 1981

*University of Wisconsin - Madison*

M.S. Counseling and Guidance, 1981

Concentrations: Individual, Group Counseling

Thesis: The Hemispheric Orientation of the Puerto Rican People

*Universidad de Puerto Rico – Río Piedras*

Teacher's Certificate required courses

18 credits – 1977 to 1979

*Universidad de Puerto Rico – Río Piedras*

B.B.A. Major in Finance, 1965

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### **Professional Experience:**

*Movement for a Better World*

*Opciones* Program

Director, 1987 to Present

*Private Practice*, 1982 - 1987  
Counseling and Consulting by referral

*Nuestra Sra. De la Providencia Academy*  
Senior Home Room Teacher, 1977 - 1979  
Accounting, Typing  
Seventh grade Biology

*Lennen & Newell, Inc.*  
Assistant Comptroller, 1965 to 1967  
Advertising firm  
Accounting Department

**Additional training:**

Trained and experienced in a diversity of areas related to Counseling:

- Transactional Analysis
- Dale Carnegie courses
- Personal development workshops
- Communication skills workshops
- Parents' Effective Training
- Crisis management courses and training
- Virginia Satir workshop: "Advances in Family Therapy: New strategies and techniques."

**Work Responsibilities:**

*Movement for a Better World*

*Opciones*, Director  
Professional Development Program:

Designed, organized, developed, and currently conduct various professional-oriented activities, involving counseling, teaching, and entrepreneurial skills including:

- Career Exploration Workshops
- Personnel Development Workshops
- Individual and Group counseling
- Consulting services for various organizations and institutions

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Developed, organized, and currently conduct activities utilizing acquired therapeutic, teaching, coaching, and leadership skills to deliver the following services:

- Counseling services:
  - Individual
  - Couples
- Workshops, Seminars, Lectures:
  - Groups
  - Institutions
- Workshop design, elaboration, and delivery for:
  - Human growth and development
  - Single people
  - Couples
  - Communication skills
  - Conflict management
  - Crisis
  - Grieving processes
  - Parenting skills
- Marathon Workshops
  - Weekend sleep-over activities designed to promote life enhancing skills

**Additional Skills and Qualifications:**

Microsoft Office, Internet  
*NVivo* Qualitative computer software program  
 Fluent in Spanish and English

**Memberships:**

- APA American Psychological Association
- ACA American Counseling Association
- AMCD Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development
- APAGS American Psychological Association of Graduate Students