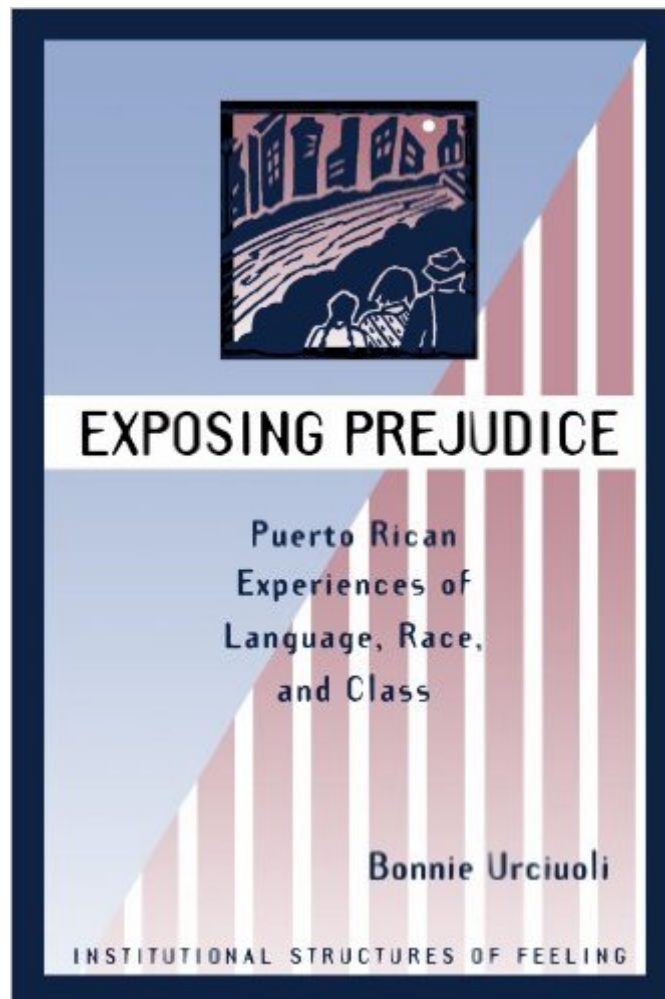# Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences Of Language, Race, And Class (Institutional Structures Of Feeling)

EXPOSING PREJUDICE

Puerto Rican
Experiences of
Language, Race,
and Class

Bonnie Urciuoli

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF FEELING

Synopsis

Puerto Ricans in the United States, like other migrant minorities, face an array of linguistic judgments. They are told they donâ ™t succeed because they donâ ™t speak English. They are told their English is “impureâ • or “brokenâ • because it has been “mixedâ • with Spanish. They are told that they sound inarticulate and that if they speak “correctâ • English, with no sign of Spanish influence—most particularly with no accent, they will get better jobs. In short, Puerto Ricans in the United States are told that the origins of their economic and social problems are linguistic and can be remedied through personal effort, when in fact their fundamental problems stem from racial and class exclusion.Concepts like “mixedâ • or “brokenâ • languages, and “goodâ • and “badâ • English are cultural constructs and therefore are about more than language. In the Puerto Rican experience of devaluation and prejudice in the United States, the institutionalization of racial exclusion and class location are mapped onto English and Spanish in complex and highly politicized ways. Formal linguistic studies of bilingualism rarely engage this process in a significant way. But the place, function, and meaning of cultural constructs within the politicized communicative economy must be understood in terms of the intersections of race, class, and language that shape the lives of working-class Puerto Ricans. Working from ethnographic studies and interviews done on New Yorkâ ™s Lower East Side and in the Bronx, this book examines that intersection in detail.

Book Information

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