

# The Trinidadian ‘Theory of Mind’

## Personhood and postcolonial semantics

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In this paper, we study the cultural semantics of the personhood construct *mind* in Trinidadian creole. We analyze the lexical semantics of the word and explore the wider cultural meanings of the concept in contrastive comparison with the Anglo concept. Our analysis demonstrates that the Anglo concept is a cognitively oriented construct with a semantic configuration based on ‘thinking’ and ‘knowing’, whereas the Trinidadian *mind* is a moral concept configured around perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. We further explore the Trinidadian moral discourse of *bad mind* and *good mind*, and articulate a set of cultural scripts for the cultural values linked with personhood in the Trinidadian context. Taking a postcolonial approach to the semantics of personhood, we critically engage with Anglo-international discourses of *the mind*, exposing the conceptual stranglehold of the colonial language (i.e., English) and its distorting semantic grip on global discourse. We argue that creole categories of values and personhood — such as the Trinidadian concept of *mind* — provide a new venue for critical *mind* studies as well as for new studies in creole semantics and cultural diversity.

**Keywords:** ethnolexicology; ethnopsychology; postcolonial semantics; Trinidadian Creole; Anglo English; ‘Theory of Mind’

### 1. Introduction

In modern Anglo-international discussions of what makes up a person, it is quite acceptable to question the ontological status of ‘the soul’. By contrast, in this critical discourse of personhood, typically conducted by Anglo scholars in Anglo English, ‘the mind’ rarely comes up for such scrutiny (Wierzbicka 1989; Dixon 2003).<sup>1</sup> Anglo scholars tend to take the word *mind* for granted. They pan-humanize the

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1. The label *Anglo English* is borrowed from Wierzbicka (2006a: 5–7). It is a shortcut for describing the more prestigious, modern, Western varieties of English, such as English English,

underlying concept and talk about it as if it existed per se, roaming in a non-linguistic, a-cultural space (for criticism, see Levisen 2012, forthcoming; Wierzbicka 1989, 1992, 2013, forthcoming). They publish on “how the mind works,” on “the mind and the brain,” on “body and mind,” etc., as if ‘the mind’ was an obvious and apparently natural feature of the human setup, as obvious and apparently natural as the language they speak. However, Dutch language philosopher Michiel Leezenberg and his colleagues remind us that complexities hide behind that apparent naturalness: “the language we speak is such an obvious and apparently natural feature of our environment that, in situations of practical communication, we only become aware of some of its complexities when confronted with speakers of a different language” (Leezenberg et al. 2003: 7).

The basic arguments against the use of the English word *mind* as a common yardstick relate to Anglocentrism, untranslatability, and absolutization. Wierzbicka (2006b: 166) says:

Comparing folk concepts through culture-specific English words like *mind* gives such English words an unjustifiable status of neutral analytical tools and ignores the fact that they themselves stand for language- and culture-specific folk concepts which need to be explained and “deconstructed” just like any other folk concept.

Diachronic study has demonstrated that ‘the mind’ is in fact a relatively recent concept in the English language, and that the word *mind* had a different semantic configuration in earlier times, such as in Shakespearean English, where *mind* was linked with emotions (*happy mind*, *fiery mind*) and moral impulse (Wierzbicka 1989, 2013). Thus, ‘the mind’ is a folk concept of contemporary Anglo English, and this has far-reaching consequences for modern discourses around *body and mind*, *mind and brain*, etc. On historical evidence alone, it is clear that the modern Anglo-specific *mind*-based interpretative scheme cannot speak for all of humanity. The Anglo-international discourse of ‘the mind’ is also in dire need of cross-linguistic confrontation. Not only does the Anglo English concept of ‘the mind’ not translate (directly) into European languages such as French, German, Danish, or Russian (Wierzbicka 1992, 2013; Levisen 2012, 2014); recent studies in Japanese, Malay, Korean, and Thai personhood constructs have further questioned the Anglophone stronghold of ‘the mind’ (Hasada 2000; Goddard 2001, 2008; Yoon 2006, 2008; Svetanant 2013).<sup>2</sup>

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American English, Australian English, etc. Throughout this paper, the adjective *Anglo* will also be used to identify scholars writing in Anglo English, concepts belonging to Anglo English, etc.

2. On personhood constructs in psychological and philosophical discourses, see Gergen (1985); Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt (1990); Harré (1998); Torchia (2007); Hardcastle (2008); and Martin, Sugermaann, & Hickenbottom (2010).

Wierzbicka (2013: 192) calls for an end to the absolutization of the Anglo *mind* and demonstrates how Anglo-specific concepts in general can become 'conceptual prisons' (see also Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014). We want to continue this attempt to dethrone 'absolutized categories' in Anglo English and to challenge the view that modern Anglo English concepts are representative of what it means to be 'human'. Indebted to the first two waves of criticism (European and Asian) of the 'mind'-driven hegemony in psychology and social sciences, we want to launch a third wave of critical semantic studies, in which evidence from postcolonial Englishes and English-related creoles is systematically explored. The reification of 'the mind' as a panhuman concept, rather than an Anglo construct, is particularly glaring within the current discourse on the so-called *theory of mind* — a buzzword that originated in primate research and brain science (Premack & Woodruff 1978). Our paper seeks to develop a *Trinidadian* 'theory of mind' based on postcolonial semantic principles. As a creole language, the Trinidadian universe of meaning relies primarily on English words, but the *meanings* of these words are often distinctively Trinidadian, created and maintained to fit the needs of Trinidadian speakers. We want to undertake an in-depth semantic study of the Trinidadian folk concept of *mind* (sometimes written as *mine*), as a way of understanding the Trinidadian theory of personhood. We see our study as an exercise in *ethnolinguistics*, and more particularly *ethnolexicology* (à la Peeters 2013), as well as a model for using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) in the study of creoles and other postcolonial language varieties. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach offers an ideal tool for our exploration, since it relies on semantic-conceptual primes, elements of meaning which appear to have exponents in all (or in almost all) languages and linguistic varieties. The primes include simple meanings such as I, YOU, THINK, FEEL, GOOD, BAD, NOT, VERY (Anglo English exponents) and MEH, YUH, TINK, FEEL, GOOD, BAD, EH, REL (Trinidadian exponents).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 maps the linguistic, historical, and cultural contexts for contemporary Trinidad. Section 3 deals with our theoretical perspective ('postcolonial semantics') and our methodological tool (the Natural Semantic Metalanguage). In Section 4, we analyze the word *mind* based on examples from Trinidadian creole, and offer a semantic explanation for the concept in contrast and comparison with the Anglo English *mind*. In Section 5, we articulate a cultural script for *good mind*. Section 6 provides further reflections on the Trinidadian 'theory of mind', and discusses the implications for our analysis and for future studies in creole semantics and postcolonial studies of personhood. A few concluding remarks are offered in Section 7.

## 2. The Trinidadian universe of meaning

In 2014, Trinidad and Tobago shared a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population of approximately 1.3 million people.<sup>3</sup> There is a range of different ethnic groups, with Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians making up the majority. The two main religions are Hinduism and Christianity, but Afro-Caribbean religions and Islam are also present. Ethnic minority groups include Chinese, Arabs, South Americans, and Europeans, as well as a growing group of people with so-called ‘mixed’ ethnic background.

Trinidadian nationals are called *Trinis* and the de facto language of national identity in Trinidad is the creole language, which we will call Trinidadian. Contemporary Trinidadian serves as a shared linguistic currency in Trinidad: it reflects the Trinis’ linguistic worldview, cultural values, and colonial history. In the literature, Trinidadian is classified as an ‘English-based creole’. It is also known by names such as *Trini dialect*, *Trini talk*, or *Trini slang*, and in scholarly discourse it is often called *Trinidadian English Creole* (Winer 1993, 2007; Mühleisen 2013). It is related to (but also quite different from) other Caribbean creoles such as Jamaican, Guyanese, and other creole languages in the region, which are standardly classified as ‘Caribbean English Creoles’ (Winer 1993:3, 2009).<sup>4</sup> Trinidadian is the main vehicle of communication, but Standard English is the official language in Trinidad. Depending on their level of education and their socioeconomic status, Trinis communicate on a spectrum ranging from Standard English to Trinidadian.<sup>5</sup> Some variation exists within the Trinidadian language, mainly in accordance with the regional and socioeconomic background of speakers. In the following, we will provide a snapshot of the ethnolinguistic history of Trinidadian and a brief summary of the sociohistorical contexts that have given rise to a Trinidadian-specific universe of meaning.

### 2.1 Language and social identity in the history of Trinidad

Christopher Columbus was acting as an agent for the Spanish monarch in 1492 when he discovered the islands that comprise the West Indies (Williams 1964).

3. According to the website of the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago’s Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development (<http://cso.planning.gov.tt>, accessed 19 December 2014)

4. In this paper, we do not address Tobagonian Creole, the creole of Tobago, which differs substantially from Trinidadian. For more information, see the resources on <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/toba1282>.

5. ‘Standard English’ is a fourth stage of English resulting from popular education; it came about in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries (Ramchand 2004; for more information, see Section 2.2).

Trinidad, a south-easterly island of the Antilles, remained under Spanish rule from 1498 until it was handed over to a British naval expedition in 1797 (Winer 1993:9). The British ruled over Trinidad until independence was gained in 1962 (Ferguson 1999). British English was made the official language in 1823 (Mühleisen 2013:62). Even after independence in 1962, "English, which had been the lingua franca of former years, persisted and has remained what it was under colonialism, the one and only official language of Trinidad and Tobago" (London 2003:287). At the time of Spanish rule, Trinidad was opened to Roman Catholics, and in particular slaves and planters from Haiti, Martinique, St. Lucia, and other Caribbean Islands moved to Trinidad. The 'white' migrants spoke French and French creole, and the 'black' migrants spoke French creole and various African languages (Winer 1993, 2009; St-Hilaire 2011:36). Trinidad's new 'black' population originally came from West Africa (Warner-Lewis 1996) and spoke languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Mandinka, Hausa, Umbundu, Kisi, KiKongo, and Twi (Mühleisen 2013:62; Warner-Lewis 1996:50). French Creole continued to be a lingua franca after the English conquest, until it was gradually replaced by Creole English. In the shift to Creole English, African languages such as Trinidad Yoruba gradually went "from mother tongue to memory" (Warner-Lewis 1996). The multicultural setup of Trinidad was further developed after the abolition of slavery in 1834, when immigrants from Sierra Leone and St. Helena were recruited (Mühleisen 2013:62), as well as people from other West Indian islands and the United States, Spanish-speaking migrants (particularly from Venezuela), and Portuguese-speaking migrants (from Madeira).

A major shift in demography came during the Indian Indentureship (1845–1917) when, "with absolutely false hopes and promises" (Hangloo 2012:1), the British colonial masters pushed more than half a million Indians to the Caribbean as indentured laborers. They mainly came from Uttar Pradesh (Brereton 1981:103). Many were speakers of Bhojpuri (Mühleisen 2013), others of Assamese, Bengali, Nepali, Bihari, Punjabi, Oriya, Marathi, and Malayalam (Mahabir 1999). Among these Indian languages, only Bhojpuri did not die out completely. Sanskrit was retained in religious use, and Hindi gained entry through movies and 'heritage' teaching. However, many of these other languages became marginalized in Trinidad and died out or transformed over the years as its speakers shifted to creole.

## 2.2 The colonial ideology of English

In colonial Trinidad, West African languages were thought of as "mumbo-jumbo" (Warner-Lewis 1996:1) or 'non-language'. The linguistic ideology of British colonialism aimed to "produce a hybrid class who would appreciate, respect, and put the highest value on the English language and British culture" (London 2003:313).

The colonialists' classification of 'language' (English) versus 'non-language' gave rise to a third option, 'bad language', which became the stigmatic label attached to Trinidadian Creole. In the colonial ideology of language, the creole in Trinidad simply came to be known as *bad English* (Mühleisen 2001).

Early Trinidadian was infused with "inter-African contact features, borrowings from African into European speech cultures, and vice versa" (Warner-Lewis 1996:205). Apart from English and some West African words, the new variety also drew substantially on creole French (Winford 1975). Ramchand (2004) has described the colonial language ideology in the West Indies as having four phases. This is based on a model outlined in Edward Long's text *The History of Jamaica* (1972; first published in 1774). Long and Ramchand's four phase model is as follows:

- i. The language of the Creoles [first White Creoles, then also Black Creoles (note added by C.L. and M.J.)] is bad English, larded with the Guiney dialect, owing to their adopting the African words in order to make themselves understood by the imported slaves; which they find much easier than teaching those strangers to learn English (Long 1972:426).
- ii. The better sort are very fond of improving their language, by catching at any hard word that the Whites happen to let fall in their hearing; and they alter and misapply it in a strange manner; but a tolerable collection of them gives an air of knowledge and importance in the eyes of their brethren, which tickles their vanity and makes them more assiduous in stocking themselves with this unintelligible jargon (Long 1972:426–427).
- iii. This sort of gibberish likewise infects many of the White Creoles, who learn it from their nurses in infancy, and meet with much difficulty, as they advance in years, to shake it entirely off, and express themselves with correctness (Long 1972:427).
- iv. [Ramchand adds a fourth stage of Englishness called Standard English, which he uses in his criterion of 'correctness'.] Individual blacks had attained competence in this fourth type in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it is only in the twentieth century and late in the nineteenth century, as a result of the establishment of popular education in the islands, that we can speak of a class of educated speakers of English from among the African and other non-white elements in the population (Ramchand 2004:61).

Within the colonial narrative and its semantics of 'language', *Good English* became indexical of 'progression' and 'correctness'. As Ramchand illustrates in stage four, education became the means by which people in the West Indies would learn to correct their creole (i.e., make their *bad English* better). Nearly a decade after Ramchand's diagnosis, English is still a distant symbol of 'progression' and 'correctness' (for further discussion, see Section 6). Trinidadian continues to

dominate as a spoken language whereas English is the official written language of the country (Mühleisen 2013: 66).

For the Indian migrants, English and Trinidadian were initially seen as threatening forces changing their identity. For instance, the Indian immigrants would reprimand their children for speaking English at home. No matter whether it was the 'good' or the 'bad' version, for the Indians, "speaking English even until the 1930s in Trinidad was interpreted as a sign of becoming 'creolised', speaking the language of the Africans or the English" (Mahabir 1999: 19).

### 3. Postcolonial semantics

In general terms, postcolonial semantics is a new field in linguistic semantics which seeks to integrate perspectives from postcolonial studies and linguistic semantics (Levisen & Priestley forthcoming; see also the Bremen school of postcolonial linguistics, particularly Warnke 2009 and Stolz, Vossmann, & Dewein 2011). Its aim is to explore the cognitive realities of speakers in postcolonial societies by studying the concepts embedded in the linguistic varieties spoken in these societies, such as creole languages, postcolonial Englishes, and other languages rich in colonial contact features. It further aims to explore how European colonial languages (mainly English, French, Dutch, and Spanish/Portuguese) were imposed, resisted, regurgitated, or appropriated semantically by the speakers in colonized societies, and to monitor how neocolonial linguistic attitudes are used to systematically misrepresent and marginalize certain language varieties and their semantic categories.<sup>6</sup> Describing the situation in Trinidad, London (2003: 306) says:

English-language education in Trinidad and Tobago during the late colonial period was designed to equip locals with linguistic and literary competence deemed appropriate by the imperial state and built on a foundation established earlier in the colonial contact. This was the objective that meets the eye. A postcolonial understanding of the enterprise, however, reveals some additional, more penetrating and deceptive aims. First of all, the English-language program and how it was administered constitutes a snapshot of larger European discourse of 'Self' and 'Other'.

Postcolonial semantics, including creole semantics, is best conducted with a rigorous and empirically substantiated metalanguage such as the one developed over

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6. It is also important for postcolonial semantics to study the meanings of dominant colonial and neocolonial semantic categories, in order to contest their supposed 'non-neutrality' and to qualify the specific nature of neocolonial conceptual control exercised by dominant global discourses. The concept of *mind* is only one such neocolonial Anglo English concept. Others include *happiness*, *politeness*, *fairness* etc. (see Wierzbicka 2013).

the last several decades by Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard. The metalanguage in question is NSM, presented in more detail in the introduction to this issue. The first in-depth study of a creole language on semantic principles was Ryo Stanwood's *On the Adequacy of Hawai'i Creole English* (1999), in which he questioned the 'deficit discourse' on creoles. He demonstrated that the semantic primes at the heart of the (NSM) approach are lexicalized in a creole language, in exactly the same way as in any other language. Stanwood's findings have since been vindicated by studies of core semantics in other creoles (Priestley 2008; Nicholls 2013; Levisen & Priestley forthcoming; Bøegh in progress). Our study of Trinidadian semantics tells the same story and lends further support to Wierzbicka's (in press) contention that, in all languages, irrespective of their genesis, there are "two levels of verbal communication," because there are "two kinds of words: universal and culture-specific":

Universal words have simple meanings with precise counterparts in all, or nearly all languages. Culture-specific words are words whose meanings are complex and shaped by a particular culture and which do not have counterparts outside the circle of that culture. (Wierzbicka in press)

Applying the findings in previous NSM work to a Trinidadian context, we can find exponents of semantic primes (the shared universal meanings) as well as Trinidadian-specific (or Caribbean-specific) word meanings. As an iconic example of the latter, consider for instance the word which is perhaps the most well-known of all Trinidadian words globally. *Liming* can be translated very roughly as "hanging out with friends or gathering a party," or "engaging in the art of doing nothing," but it has a rich and complex semantics which cannot readily be captured in English words (see Eriksen 1990; Winer 1993: 57, 2009: 533; Clarke & Charles 2012). The concept of 'liming' may be shared in other Anglo-Caribbean languages, but it has a specific Trinidadian ring, and its precise semantics is clearly not universally lexicalized. Also, the culture-specificity of *liming* is related to colonial history. The most convincing story of origin is that *liming* goes back to the nick name for British naval soldiers, so-called *Limeys*, who became known in the Caribbean for their propensity to 'have a good time' when they went ashore (Clarke & Charles 2012: 303).<sup>7</sup>

*Liming* belongs to the non-universal stock of concepts in the Trinidadian universe of meaning along with many other meanings (see, e.g., Warner 1993: 57–58). Other Trinidadian words do reflect the shared stock of human concepts, found in all other languages. The exponents of the semantic primes in Trinidadian and Anglo English are listed in Table 1.

7. Forced consumption of lime juice in the British navy gave rise to the nickname *limeys* for British navy soldiers (see Clarke & Charles 2012: 303).

**Table 1.** Semantic primes (English and Trini exponents), grouped into related categories

<b>MEH, YUH, SUMBODY, SUMTING~TING, PEOPLE, BODY</b> I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	substantives
<b>KINDA, PART</b> KINDS, PARTS	relational substantives
<b>DIS, DE SAME, ODAH~ELSE</b> THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE	determiners
<b>WUN, TOO, SUM, ALL, PLENTY, FEW</b> ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW	quantifiers
<b>GOOD, BAD</b> GOOD, BAD	evaluators
<b>BIG, SMOL</b> BIG, SMALL	descriptors
<b>TINK, KNOW, WANT, EH WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR</b> THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	mental predicates
<b>SAY, WUD, TROO</b> SAY, WORDS, TRUE	speech
<b>DO, HAPPEN, MOVE</b> DO, HAPPEN, MOVE	actions, events, movement
<b>DEY IN, IT HA, BE (SUMBODY/SUMTING)</b> BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)	location, existence, specification
<b>(IS) MINE</b> (IS) MINE	possession
<b>LIVE, DEAD</b> LIVE, DIE	life and death
<b>WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, AH LONG TIME, AH SHORT TIME, FOR A LIL BIT, IN A VAPS</b> WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	time
<b>WHEY~PLACE, HERE, ON TOP, UNDER, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH</b> WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH	place
<b>EH, MAYBE, CUD, BECAUSE, IF</b> NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	logical concepts
<b>REL, MORE</b> VERY, MORE	intensifier, augmentor
<b>LIKE</b> LIKE~AS~WAY	similarity

Notes: Primes exist as the meanings of lexical units (not at the level of lexemes) • Exponents of primes may be words, bound morphemes, or phrasemes; They can be formally complex; They can have language-specific combinatorial variants (allolexes, indicated with ~); Each prime has well-specified syntactic (combinatorial) properties.

As can be seen from Table 1, there is extensive overlap in the form-meaning correlations of Anglo English and Trinidadian exponents of semantic primes. On

that basis, we can conclude that the form-meaning correlation of Trinidadian and Anglo English is relatively ‘shared’ in terms of the lexical surface of the core vocabulary. There are some distinctive differences, but compared with, say, English-related Pacific creoles such as Tok Pisin and Bislama, core Trinidadian seems closer to core English in surface form (Levisen & Bøegh forthcoming). However, from a semantic viewpoint, the surface forms are in themselves not particularly interesting. The main thing is whether or not these meanings *are* lexicalized, and because we can confirm that they are, we can say that Trinidadian has metasemantic adequacy, i.e., it can be used as a metalanguage to explain and explore its own semantics. We can utilize this ‘core Trini’ to explore the more complex and culture-specific aspects of the Trini universe of meaning. The Trini *mind* is a case in point.

#### 4. The semantics of the Trinidadian mind

All human languages appear to be able to express the concept of ‘body’ in the form of a lexical unit (Wierzbicka in press). They do not agree, however, on how to deal with invisible parts of personhood. In Anglo English, ‘the mind’ is the key concept of personhood, perhaps along with ‘the heart’ (Goddard 2008). Diachronic semantic analysis shows that shifts in the discourse of ‘personhood’, emerging out of the British Enlightenment, led to a “fall of the soul” and a “rise of the mind,” reflecting a shift in values (Wierzbicka 1992:63). The word *soul* was embedded in a semantic web which included other words like *passions*, *affections*, *God*, *consciousness*, etc., whereas the word *mind* co-occurs with words like *brain*, *behavior*, *psychology*, and so on (Dixon 2003:4–5). The point here is that *mind* in its current semantic configuration is a culture-specific construct, emerging from historical discourses in the Anglosphere. The Anglo-specificity of *mind* means that it doesn’t qualify as a metalinguistic device for describing personhood more broadly. We need a more fine-grained analytical tool. The metalanguage of semantic primes offers an ideal tool for unpacking complex and culture-specific meanings across languages.

To explicate the Anglo English *mind*, which they have done in a number of publications, Wierzbicka and Goddard rely on examples such as (1) to (7), which provide illuminating clues:

- (1) My mind
- (2) Her/his mind
- (3) Body and mind
- (4) The brain and the mind

- (5) A brilliant mind
- (6) An enquiring mind
- (7) What is going on in his mind?

Below, we have replicated the most recent explication for the Anglo English *mind* from Wierzbicka (in press), with one minor adjustment based on the discussions in Goddard (2008) and Levisen (2014).

- [A] Anglo English *mind* (explicated in English NSM)
- a. something  
this something is one of two parts of someone  
one part is the body, this is the other part  
people cannot see this part
  - b. because someone has this part, this someone can think about many things  
at the same time, because someone has this part, this someone can know many things
  - c. when someone thinks about something, something happens in this part

The Anglo *mind* can be described as 'something' which is part of someone (*my mind, her mind, his mind, etc.*). Unlike physical body part terms, the *mind* is a part of a person that "people can't see." The Anglo discourse around *body and mind* suggests a dualism, and a folk ideology of the human person being split into two parts, a body and a mind. These elements are at the basis of what we can call the fundamental paronymic status of the concept; they are represented in component a. In component b, the 'essence' of the *mind* is represented. This part of a person is linked to 'thinking' (*a brilliant mind*) and 'knowing' (*an enquiring mind*). Finally, through its component c, the explication also accounts for the fact that the *mind* is a part where thought processes are believed to be happening.

Now that we have devised a Trinidadian version of NSM, we can present explication [A'] of the Anglo *mind* in Trini NSM, as another way of stating the same conceptual content.

- [A'] Anglo English *mind* (explicated in Trinidadian NSM)
- a. sumting  
dis sumting is wun ah too parts ah sumbody  
wun part is de body, dis is de other part  
people cyah see dis part
  - b. because sumbody ha dis part, dis sumbody cud tink about plenty tings  
at de same time, because sumbody ha dis part, dis sumbody cud know plenty tings
  - c. when sumbody tinks about sumting, sumting does happen in dis part

Having provided the same explication of Anglo English *mind* in two formal versions (English NSM and Trini NSM), it is time to look at the Trinidadian word *mind*. Both words belong to the culture-specific level of verbal communication, i.e., both are conceptual constructs that reflect cultural cognition. The latter has its origin in English, but its semantics is distinctively Trinidadian. We would like to first explore some shared aspects of the Anglo *mind* and the Trinidadian *mind*, then move on to the differences. To begin with, both the Anglo English *mind* and the Trinidadian *mind* are thought of as something that is an invisible part of a person (“people can’t see this part”). The main difference is that the bifurcated *body-mind* distinction in Anglo English does not seem to be part of the Trinidadian setup. This takes us to the partial explication in [B]:

- [B] Trini *mind* — the basic paronymic status  
 something  
 this something is a part of this someone  
 people cannot see this part
- sumting  
 dis sumting is a part ah dis sumbody  
 people cyah see dis part

Another major overlap between the two is that both constructs encode a similar ‘activity’ component, namely, component *c* in the explication for Anglo English *mind*. In both languages, the mind is considered to be the part of the person where thinking occurs. This can be illustrated by means of examples (8) and (9):

- (8) *In de taxi meh mind run somewhere far and I forget to tell de driver to stop.*  
 “In the taxi my mind was elsewhere and I forgot to tell the driver to stop.”
- (9) *When I smell dat goat guts cooking meh mind tun from eatin dah kinda meat.*  
 “When I smell those goat intestines cooking my mind turns away from eating that kind of meat.”

It is clear, though, that the Trinidadian concept of *mind* is not only about the activity of thinking in general. There is a more specific type of thinking that commonly occurs in the Trini *mind* and that therefore needs to be explicitly acknowledged in an NSM explication. More specifically, the Trini *mind* is the part of a person where someone is thinking *about other people*. As evidence, consider the following examples. Example (10) is something that could be equally well said in Anglo English; example (11), however, appears to be distinctly ‘more Trinidadian’:

- (10) *Dat girl, she always on meh mind.*  
 “This girl is always on my mind/in my thoughts.”

- (11) *Meh mind run on yuh de odah day.*  
 “My mind thought of you some days ago.”

We can represent this as in [C]:

- [C] Trini *mind* — the ‘activity’ component  
 when someone thinks about something, something happens in this part  
 when someone thinks about other people, something happens in this part  
  
 when sumbody tink bout sumting, sumting does happen in dis part  
 when sumbody tink bout odah people, sumting does happen in dis part

With respect to the basic paronymic status and the activity component, we find relative agreement, with the exceptions mentioned above. In the core component, the one that deals with the ‘essence’ of the Anglo English and the Trini *mind* and that will therefore be called the ‘essence’ component, we find that the two concepts are really very different. As we have seen, the Anglo English *mind* encodes ‘thinking’ and ‘knowing’ in its core component. ‘Thinking’ and ‘knowing’ is, so to speak, what the *mind* ‘is there for’. The Trinidadian mind seems ‘to be there’ for a different reason. We believe that the key to understanding the nature of the Trinidadian *mind* lies in the two collocations *bad mind* and *good mind*, and the related pair *ha mind* and *ha no mind*. For instance, if a person is seen as doing good deeds towards others, they are described as a ‘person with good mind’; likewise, if a person is known for doing bad deeds or actions towards others, they are described as a ‘person with bad mind’.

- (12) *Dat oman ha rel bad mind, dat is why she always in sum kinda commesse.*  
 “That woman has a very bad *mind*, this is why she is always in some form of gossip or confusion.”
- (13) *Boysie cyah do no wrong nah, he ha a good mind, he conscience go beat if he do sumthin wrong.*  
 “Boysie can’t do wrong things because he has a good *mind*, he will have a guilty conscience if he does something wrong.”
- (14) *Janet was always a good gul but now she ha bad mind too bad.*  
 “Janet was always a good girl but now she has plenty of bad mind.”

The ‘essence’ of the mind in Trinidadian folk theory appears to be moral. At the core, the Trinidadian *mind* is a question of ‘good and bad’ — or perhaps the proper order should be ‘bad and good’, since references to *bad mind* seem to have greater discursive salience. They can be related to the phrase *no mind*, and the fact that immoral people are described as missing their *mind*. Winer (2009: 599) provides evidence for the claim that this moral grounding of the Trini *mind* is an ‘old’ part

of Trinidadian semantics. She cites a historical record going back to 1904, where we find the Trini *mind* embedded in exactly the same moral discourse.

- (15) *So wot ever you lose is tru you own bad, wortless, good-fo-noten, teefin habits. You ain't got no mind.*  
 “So whatever you lose is through your own bad, worthless, good for nothing stealing habits. You don't have *mind*.”

Through an Anglo English prism, the words *you ain't got no mind* are likely to be understood as “being stupid,” but this is clearly not the meaning of the sentence. It is clear from the context that having *no mind* is said about a ‘bad person’ who does ‘bad things’. The moral base of the Trini *mind* can also be found in the dialogues of the Trinidadian-born writer V. S. Naipaul. In his representations of spoken Trini, we find usage patterns in full agreement with our ‘moral hypothesis’:

- (16) *That boy Elias have too much good mind.* (Naipaul 1971: 23)  
 (17) *Boy, I don't like meddling with that man. These people really bad-mind.*  
 (Naipaul 1971: 40)

We can model the moral ‘essence’ of the Trinidadian *mind* as in [D]:

- [D] Trini *mind* — the ‘essence’ component  
 because someone has this part it is like this:  
     this someone can be someone good  
     this someone can be someone bad  
 because sumbody ha dis part is like dis:  
     dis sumbody cud be sumbody good  
     dis sumbody cud be sumbody bad

Linked to the ‘moral essence’ component of the Trini *mind* construct is an affiliated ‘behavioral’ scenario. The Trini *mind* condenses within its semantics a particular way of thinking on how to relate to others in the community. Tellingly, the word *mind* therefore also takes on a special role in the discourse of child-rearing.<sup>8</sup>

- (18) *De chile gone an ask he fadda fuh meh when he ain't see meh in de house. Dat chile ha plenty ah mind.*  
 “The child asked his father for me when he did not see me in the house. That child has plenty of *mind*.”

8. For an NSM analysis of child-rearing practices, see also Horn (2014); Levisen (2012); Wong (2006, 2013); Wierzbicka (2004); and Wakefield (2013). On the linguistics of morality, see Wierzbicka (2005, 2006a: 80) and Levisen (2013).

- (19) *My mudda and fadda raise meh to ha plenty ah mind even for people who no good.*  
 “My mother and father raised me to have plenty of mind, even for people who are not considered to be good people.”

The Trinidadian *mind* is also used in a social or relational sense to describe functions within society, i.e., the roles or the responsibilities a person accepts in the family or community. We note that, in Trini, the *mind* of personhood is semantically and culturally related to the verb *to mind* “rear children, take care of children.”

- (20) *I mind dem chirren from small and bring dem big.*  
 “I minded those children from small and raised them until they were adults.”

In Trinidad, members of the family or community *mind* their children. This goes beyond nurturing them physically. The Trini verb *mind* means “to nurture *chirren* [i.e., children], both physically and mentally, and to raise them *to have good mind*.” In other words, children are to be raised with good social habits and must learn how to consider others, or have consideration for others, in the family and the community. The verb *mind* requires a separate treatment and explication, and it goes beyond the scope of this paper to provide this analysis. What we would like to raise attention to, however, is the fact that the semantic link between the verb and the noun is rather transparent, in contrast to Anglo English, where ‘to mind’ and ‘the mind’ have a rather opaque connection, if any synchronic connection at all. In Trini, once a person has developed a *bad mind*, it seems to stick to that person, and his/her behavior can be explained by the ways of his/her mind:

- (21) *For ah man ah God, he doh want to congratulate dey chile on she success, because he ha real bad mind.*  
 “For a man of God (a priest), he doesn’t want to congratulate the child on her success, because he has plenty of bad mind.”

In the discussion of how the Trini *mind* links ‘essence’ with behavior, we have noted a quasi-autonomous nature, or an ‘agentivity’, in the way the mind is conceptualized. *Meh mind* “my mind” seems to be able to do things almost independently of *meh* “I/me.” We can represent this aspect of meaning as in [E]:

- [E] Trini *mind* — the ‘agentive’ component  
 sometimes this part wants this someone to do something  
 if this part of someone is good, this someone does good things for other people  
 if this part of someone is bad, this someone can do something bad to other people  
 sumtimes dis part want dis sumbody to do sumting  
 if dis part ah dis sumbody is good, dis sumbody does good tings to odah people  
 if dis part ah dis sumbody is bad, dis sumbody cud do sumting bad to odah people

This takes us to explication [F] of Trini *mind*, organized in a semantic template of four parts:

- [F] *somebody mind* “someone’s mind” — Anglo English version
- a. something PARTONOMY  
 this something is a part of this someone  
 people cannot see this part
  - b. because this part is a part of someone, it is like this: ESSENCE  
 this someone can be someone bad,  
 this someone can be someone good
  - c. sometimes this part wants this someone to do something AGENTIVITY  
 if this part of someone is good, this someone does good things for other people  
 if this part of someone is bad, this someone can do something bad to other people
  - d. when someone thinks about something, something happens in this part COGNITIVE ACTIVITY  
 when someone thinks about other people, something happens in this part
- [F'] *somebody mind* “someone’s mind” — Trini version
- a. sumting PARTONOMY  
 dis sumting is a part ah dis sumbody  
 people cyah see dis part
  - b. because sumbody ha dis part is like dis: ESSENCE  
 dis sumbody cud be sumbody good  
 dis sumbody cud be sumbody bad
  - c. sumtimes dis part want dis sumbody to do sumting AGENTIVITY  
 if dis part ah dis sumbody is good, dis sumbody does good tings to odah people  
 if dis part ah dis sumbody is bad, dis sumbody cud do sumting bad to odah people
  - d. when sumbody tink bout sumting, sumting does happen in dis part COGNITIVE ACTIVITY  
 when sumbody tink bout odah people, sumting does happen in dis part

Based on this new analysis, we can now pinpoint the similarities and differences between the Trini *mind* and the Anglo English *mind*. In the basic configuration of personhood, component a, the concepts are similar. They are both thought of as ‘something’ which is a part of the person, but a part of the person which people cannot see. One diverging point here is the explicitly dualistic nature of the Anglo English *mind* (enacted in discourses of “the body and the mind”). We have found no evidence for a similar dualism in Trini.<sup>9</sup> The ‘essence’ section of the explications differs significantly: roughly, we can talk about a ‘moral’ orientation for the Trini

9. ‘Lack of visibility’ does not equal ‘conceptual dualism’. Both concepts are considered parts of a person that people cannot see (as opposed to, e.g., many body parts).

concept and a 'cognitive' orientation for the Anglo English concept. Furthermore, Trini *mind* has an 'agentive' component without any parallel in the Anglo *mind*. However, both concepts do seem to assign a 'cognitive activity' to the *mind*; in addition, the Trini concept seems to emphasize 'social cognition'.

Overall, we can say that the English *mind* and the Trini *mind* differ substantially. There is a radically different conceptualization at play in the core semantics of the two words, with the similarities being mainly found in the shared personhood template: both words refer to something which is part of a person and which other people can't see.

## 5. The 'Good Mind' script

In this section, we want to further explore Trinidadian cultural values seen from the prism of *good mind* and its associated cultural script. We have shown that *mind* is an important concept in Trinidadian ethnopsychology, moral cognition, social behavior, and child-raising practices. But *good mind* is particularly important because it adds to the ethnoaxiological originality of Trini. Winer has characterized the attitude captured in *good mind* as a "willingness to forgive, tolerate, and to think the best of a person or situation" (Winer 2009: 390). In our view, Winer's characterization is basically right, except that the word *willingness* might be a slightly misleading term, considering the general framework for the Trinidadian 'theory of mind' we have diagnosed in this paper so far. The Trini *good mind* is not an 'act' that can be conducted, or a choice. It is construed as a constant state, existing beyond just actions. At the same time, the discourse of *good mind* does provide a social perspective on a person and his or her actions (or non-actions). On this basis, we would like to propose cultural script [G]:

[G] The Trini 'Good Mind' script — Anglo English version

- a. many people here think like this:
- b. it is good if someone can think like this:
- c. if someone does something bad to me,
  - I will not do something bad to this someone afterwards because of it
  - I will not feel something bad towards this someone afterwards because of it
- d. at the same time it is good if this someone can think like this:
- e. maybe this someone didn't do something bad
- f. maybe good things can happen after this



## 6. Cryptodiversity in postcolonial personhood constructs

In this section, we would like to discuss some key issues in postcolonial semantics. We will begin with what we call 'the third wave' of studies in personhood. Cross-European studies in cultural semantics and ethnopsychology (first wave) have shown that traditional European languages such as English, French, and Russian do not share a semantics of personhood, that concepts of a person in different ethnolinguistic communities reflect cultural history, and that personhood is fundamentally linguistic in nature (Wierzbicka 1989, 1992). Studies in East Asian personhood (second wave) have thrown further light on the extent of diversity in personhood constructs, and have allowed us to develop a semantic template through which we can study this diversity (Levisen 2014). Despite these insights and results, the *mind* is still unduly 'pan-humanized' by Anglophone academia. Unless we question these strongholds of English categorization, we continue to exercise 'conceptual colonialism'. Sometimes it takes more than one wave to break through a stronghold of monolingual obstinacy. In the third wave, we want to better understand the role of creoles and postcolonial Englishes, varieties which might formally dress up much in the same way as Anglo English, but which, underneath the lexical dress, show real semantic difference reflective of different cognitive realities.

Our study confirms the findings of previous cross-semantic studies on personhood, namely, that *mind* is not a universal human construct, but a product of the Anglosphere. We add to this story an important insight, which is that formal identity is no guarantee for Anglo semantics. Unlike European constructs such as Danish *sind* "mind, disposition, inner being" (Levisen 2012, 2014) or East Asian constructs such as Korean *maum* (Yoon 2008), which differ in both form and meaning from the English word *mind*, the Trinidadian *mind* is not formally different when compared to its English counterpart. In a sense, then, the Trinidadian *mind* and the Anglo English *mind* provide a case of 'cryptodiversity' — i.e., the visible structure of the word does not give away that two different concepts are at stake. Traditional structural-historical linguistics, with its focus on lexical labels and word form origin, seems blind to this aspect of semantic diversity. In traditional thinking, it is largely assumed that meaning follows structure, but we know that structures can hide semantic diversity. Through our analysis of *mind* as a keyword in the Trini universe of meaning, important for both Trinidadian ethnopsychology and ethnophilosophy, we have demonstrated how English-lexified varieties cannot be taken to automatically mirror English semantics. In any case, only semantic analysis, not structural or formal analysis, can help us explain and understand how language links up with ethnopsychology and with cultural values.

From a postcolonial perspective, we have also sought to take issue with the ‘bad English’ stigma of Trinidadian. Developing a Trini NSM, one that demonstrably can do the same academic job as English NSM, is a way for us to show that Trinidadian has full metasemantic adequacy: it is a real, ‘good’, and capable language, and there is no worthwhile reason for barring Trinidadian from academia. The current situation in Trinidad is that highly educated students who gain entrance into universities are expected to write in Standard English. These students also aim to speak this prestige language with their teachers and highly educated friends. The ability to speak and write well using Standard English reflects status and therefore still distinguishes highly educated Trinidadians from those who are not highly educated and speak using only Trini *dialect*. This differentiation, caused by education which separates speakers, has been seen as a long-term influence of colonialism dividing speakers between highly educated (speakers of Anglo English) and uneducated (speakers using Trinidadian).

Finally, our research has raised a series of new questions, which we would like to address. One of the most pressing issues is to further explore the discourse of personhood in Colonial English. We know that the English *mind* had a different meaning in pre-Enlightenment Anglo English. It raises the question as to what the word *mind* meant to the British colonizers, and whether the ‘moral’ Trini *mind* is closer to the folk understanding of *mind* in colonial English than to the modern English word. The link between *mind* as a verb and *mind* as a noun has more or less disappeared in Anglo English, but Trinidadian seems to maintain a more transparent link, as our discussion of child-rearing as ‘minding *chirren*’ has shown. Does this suggest that the Anglo *mind*, the personhood concept, has changed and that the Trinidadian *mind* simply displays a more conservative English semantics? There is no simple answer to this question, but it would be helpful to study in detail how colonial English has affected the semantics of languages elsewhere in the world, and also how other English personhood constructs, such as *soul* and *heart*, were adopted, resisted, or reinvented in colonial contexts.

Another venture would be to systematically explore the role of African languages. While only relatively few West African word forms are present in contemporary Trinidadian, there is reason to expect a substantial African legacy underneath the English surface. From a personhood perspective, we might ask, for instance, what the Trinidad Yoruba construct *inu* “mind, psyche” meant, and how the meaning of this term relates to the contemporary Trini *mind*. The above, rather rough, translations of *inu* are provided by Warner-Lewis (1996: 158); however, given what we know, it is highly unlikely that *inu* precisely mirrored the semantics of the Anglo *mind*, or the Greek *psyche* for that matter.

Although the Trinidadian creole was already in existence before the Indians arrived, a closer look at the personhood constructs in Indian languages would

also be highly relevant. How, for instance, was personhood construed in Trinidad Bhojpuri? The question of Indian personhood semantics is particularly interesting because of the well-known differences in general philosophy and religious thinking in the Indosphere (see, e.g., Malhotra 2011). The body-mind dualism of the English language is most certainly not compatible with Indian monism. We might even speculate that the Indian monist influence could be the reason why the Trini *mind* is not a 'dualistic' personhood construct.

Finally, we need to ask ourselves how internal developments in the multicultural and multi-religious Trinidadian discursive environment may have colored the current semantic configuration of *mind*. To gain currency as a personhood construct in multi-religious Trinidad, the 'mind' concept had to cater for a basic religious worldview, rather than a specific one. With all the major world religions — Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam — present, along with Afro-Caribbean spirituality, the Trini *mind* might have taken on a rather general 'moral' meaning, with an emphasis on being bad or good, and on doing bad or good things. Also, the 'agentive' construal of the Trinidadian *mind* seems to underscore a pan-religious cosmology without a very specific ecclesiastic currency (on the link between agency and religious cosmology, see Wierzbicka in press). Studies in comparative Caribbean semantics, including also French creoles, would help us single out to what degree the Trinidadian concept is in line with an areal Caribbean semantics of personhood, or whether it has further evolved internally, based on Trini-specific discourses.

Many different kinds of linguistic worldviews have been present in the history of Trinidad. The new creole worldview that was created was based on shared experience and conceptual influences from a variety of sources, but in negotiation with French creole, colonial English and, in modern times, Anglo English. The ethnopsychology of personhood that developed in Trinidadian reflects these negotiations of cognitive, cultural, and spiritual orientations within the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

## 7. Concluding remarks

The Trinidadian 'theory of mind' offers new insights into the diversity of ways in which human languages have construed the concept of a person. The Trini *mind* is a moral construct of personhood, revolving around 'good' and 'bad'. By contrast, the Anglo *mind* is a cognitive construct, revolving around 'thinking' and 'knowing'.

Personhood constructs are reflective of worldviews, including social and cultural values, religious beliefs and cosmologies — and as such, they call for interdisciplinary cooperation. Language, however, remains a key issue for any study of

personhood. The semantic comparison between the Anglo English word *mind* and its Trini counterpart further shows that we need to go beyond 'lexical form' analysis. We have shown how the NSM approach can help us explore cryptodiversity, where word forms are shared but meanings differ. NSM was advocated as a tool for the description, since our explicit goal was also to resist the 'conceptual colonialism' latent in many Anglophone publications on personhood, where the mind is taken to be a pan-human, rather than an Anglo, construct. The postcolonial semantic framework allowed us to address the meaning-making of communities, from a sociohistorical as well as a conceptual and a cognitive perspective, and to synthesize these insights into a Trinidadian 'theory of mind'.

## Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the Velux Foundation and ANUCES. We would like to thank the Centre for European Studies at the Australian National University and the Cognitive Creolistics group at Aarhus University for facilitating our field work and for providing stimulating interdisciplinary research environments. We are grateful to senior community members from Claxton Bay, Trinidad, as well as to participants at the 2014 joint SPCL/SCL/ABCLPE conference in Aruba for helpful suggestions. Finally, we would like to thank Anna Wierzbicka, Bert Peeters, and an anonymous peer reviewer for their inspiration, comments, and suggestions.

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