

## **Linguistic Intimacy and Semiotic Conjectures: Venezuelan Sociolinguistic Imaginaries Online**

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Gal and Irvine (2019:16) point out how for C.S. Peirce “the unified subject is not the center of his philosophy, which is built on acts of conjecture, not on persons”. In this presentation, I explore how focusing on acts of sociolinguistic conjecture, instead of models of real personhood, can help us understand the development of Venezuelan diasporic intimacy online. Venezuela is a country that imagined itself as a host of European and South American diasporas for most of the 20th century, especially after it became an oil exporting country. Oil gave the country economic resources that made possible for the upper and middle class to live what Fernando Coronil called a magical state, one in which modernity and cosmopolitan consumption was assured. Venezuelans could be tourists abroad but the only real diasporic community that became prominent in its social imaginary was Florida’s. In Florida Venezuelans became “Mayameros.” There was never a large Venezuelan diaspora anywhere in Latin America or Europe that could compare with Mayameros. This all changed after Hugo Chavez’s death in 2013 when coincidentally oil prices plummeted. This brought the most severe economic crisis in the country’s history. The economic collapse very quickly became worse than the economic collapse during the Venezuelan Federal War. Hunger, unemployment, and lack of opportunities pushed almost 20 % of the country’s population to emigrate to countries in South America. Today more than 6 million Venezuelans, a displaced population that rivals the Syrian refugee crisis, live abroad. This has drastically changed the way Venezuelans imagine themselves. Central to this sociolinguistic imaginary there are ideological conjectures that do not correspond with a model of a real diasporic person. In this presentation, I argue that conjectures about Venezuelanness, not necessarily descriptions about actual people, pervade the ideological imagination of this profound and sudden historical transformation. I will show, through examples of online performances and communication, how Venezuelans construct a new diasporic conjectural sociolinguistic imagination.

**Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

**2 – 3:30 PM, in-person (GC 4422) and via Zoom**

**In-person registration (CUNY community only): <https://bit.ly/SLXEBAPR1>**

**Zoom registration: <https://bit.ly/SLXAPRIL1>**