Gender Asymmetries in Seychelles Creole Human Nouns

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1.0 Introduction

As a typical characteristic of Creoles (Neumann-Holzschuh, 2006, p.251), SC is considered to be a 'genderless' language. Absence of grammatical genders, which, according to Hockett (1958, p.231), are 'classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words', is acknowledged for SC in its earlier (Bollée, 1977, p.27; Corne, 1977, p.17) and more recent (Choppy, 2013, p.58) descriptions. This means that SC nouns do not influence the form of adjectives, determiners or verbs they combine with (Choppy, 2013, pp.64, 76; Maurer and the APiCS Consortium, 2013), and there is no difference in how SC nouns are pronominalized. In fact, any singular noun can be substituted by one personal pronoun *I* 'he, she, it' in the subject position, and one personal pronoun *li* 'him, her, it' in object position (Choppy, 2013, p.59). Lexical gender in SC is also considered to be not prominent, with most human nouns being gender neutral (Choppy, 2013; Corne, 1977). Thus, Corne (1977, p.23) states that in SC '…nouns do not in general have the lexical feature [± masculine]…'. Biological opposition of human sex in SC can be expressed by combining generic gender-marked nouns with gender neutral nouns, e.g. *gard fanm* 'a woman guard' (Choppy, 2013, p.57) or 'police-woman' (D'Offay and Lionnet, 1982, p.127). Notably, though potentially both male and female markers could be used to establish gender-specific reference (Corne, 1977), male nouns normally go unmarked, and the female marker *fanm* literally 'woman' is added to refer to female humans (Neumann-Holzschuh, 2006, p.256; Choppy, 2013, p.57). Alongside the acknowledgement of gender establishing compounds consisting of gender-neutral personal nouns and a generic gender-marked noun, Choppy (2013, p.57) states that there are some SC nouns which distinguish males or females without additional markers, e.g. *vwazen* (m)/*vwazin* (f) 'neighbour'; *bonnonm* (m)/*bonnfanm* (f) 'old man/woman'. However, there is no evidence of how sizable the group of such nouns is and what their semantic specifics are. Lexical representation of men and women constitutes one of the important areas of multidimensional linguistic research of gender. Compared to other lexical classes, personal nouns are assigned specific cultural significance because they not only define people but also present them as members of different social groupings and convey certain social attitudes, including 'proto- or stereotypical schemata' (Hellinger and Bußmann, 2001, p.2). Given the above, a number of languages have been engaged to explore patterns of gender representation in personal nouns (Dahl, 2000; Lirola, 2016; Michálková, 2009; Motschenbacher, 2009), including some creole languages (Escure, 2001; Térosier, 2023). With this in mind, systematized data for SC

personal nouns referring to gender will provide material for further cross-linguistic explorations of gender-related issues in language. Thus, this paper sets out to investigate lexical representation of men and women in SC. The study addresses three research questions. What semantic fields have gender-specific human nouns in SC? What differences in representation of men and women by SC human nouns are observed? To what extent is representation of men and women by SC human nouns balanced and what are the implications of the observed status quo?

This paper focuses on SC gender-specific human nouns – nouns whose meaning includes reference to biological categories of femaleness or maleness. The above nouns, which will further be referred to as Gender Nouns (GNs) can be streamed into two groups: those which contain a semantic feature [female] and thus are female-specific: *nanni* 'grandmother', *madanm* 'woman', *serdper* 'half-sister on father`s side', eroin 'heroine', etc., and those which contain a semantic feature [male] and thus are male-specific: *boyfrenn* 'boyfriend', *dobi* 'laundry boy', *dadi* 'daddy', *lerwa* 'king', etc. Human nouns which do not contain male/female specification are gender neutral: *lider* 'leader', *reporter* 'reporter', *sef* 'head, chief, boss', or gender inclusive: *selibater - **garson** ouswa **fiy** ki'n fini vin adilt e ki pa ankor marye* 'celibate – a **boy or a girl** who has become an adult and has not married'.

1.1 Methodology and data

The study is based on the officially documented lexicon of SC. Research material was sampled from three dictionaries: Diksyonner Trileng Kreol Seselwa, Francais, English (2018), The Seychelles Creole-English Dictionary (2019) and Diksyoner Kreol Seselwa (2022). Lexicographic definition was the point of reference in sourcing, and the lexeme qualified as gender specific if its definition contained generic gender nouns, e.g. *lerwa: **zonm** ki diriz en monarsi, en rwayonm* – 'king: **a man** who rules in a monarchy, a kingdom'; *mis: tit pour **en fanm** ki ansenyan* – 'miss: the title for **a woman** teacher'. English translations of SC GNs provided in this paper are taken from corresponding sections of the above dictionaries.

It should be noted that the lexicon documented in the above dictionaries may not necessarily include the most recent developments in SC, which will be reflected in their further editions. With reference to this, some lexical items not registered in the discussed dictionaries were included in the sample based on consultations with dictionary compiling team members who are native SC speakers. This applies, for example, to the word *manman sonnyen* 'foster mother' which is a well-known term overlooked in the above dictionaries. On the other hand, some of the sampled human nouns are archaic and not in active use anymore (e.g.; *lepouz* (arch.) 'bride' or *lepou* (arch.) 'bridegroom'). Such lexical items were included as the stylistic specifics of usage are not relevant for the purposes of the current study which analyses the SC gender-

specific noun lexicon in terms of its capacity to capture gender distinctions, regardless of chronological variation.

Altogether, the sample comprises 372 nominations which have inherent gender specification, derived from 330 noun lexemes. The difference in the number of sampled lexemes and the number of analysed gender nominations relates to the fact that a number of SC nouns are polysemic. This means that one lexeme can present several related senses. Thus, for example, the lexical entry for GN *fanm* registers four semantic variants: (i) *et imen seks feminen* 'a female human being'; (ii) *femel imen laz adilt* 'an adult woman'; (iii) *partner feminen dan en koup* 'woman partner in a couple'; (iv) *fiy ki nepli vyerz* 'a girl who is no longer a virgin'. So, the polysemic lexeme *fanm* gives four GNs for this analysis.

Next, sampled SC GNs were classified according to the manifested semantic features into four semantic groups: Generic GNs (see 2.0); Relational GNs (see 3.0); Occupational GNs (see 4.0) and Characterizing GNs (see 5.0). To illustrate, variants (i, ii, iv) of *fanm* above were included in Generic GNs and variant (i) was referred to Relational GNs. Smaller sub-groups were identified within some main classes of GNs for the purposes of more detailed analysis. Furthermore, each semantic group was analysed for the asymmetries in representation of its male and female constituents, looking at lexical gaps (representation of the concept with only one sex GNs), quantitative imbalances (differences in the number of male and female GNs representing one concept) or qualitative asymmetries (variation in connotations in male- and female-specific nouns representing the same concept). Analysis of the above linguistic asymmetries in representation of men and women in SC provided a number of observations linking to the socio-cultural asymmetries in the treatment of women and men in the Seychelles context.

2.0 Generic Gender Nouns

Alongside gender-neutral nouns to refer to human beings regardless of their sex (e.g. *dimoun* 'person'*, imen* 'human', *kreatir* 'creature, human being', *lendividi* 'individual, person') or accommodating both sexes (e.g. *adolesan - zenn **garson**, zenn **fiy** ki dan ladolesans* 'adolescent' - a young **boy**, **girl** during adolescence), there are a number of SC human nouns which generically refer to people distinguishing between a male and a female. The basic contrasting noun pair to indicate the natural sex is *fanm* 'woman'*/zonm* 'man', whose prototypicality is supported by the fact that these nouns serve as markers to establish gender for gender-neutral human nouns: for example, *gard fanm* 'a woman guard', *malfezan fanm* 'evil person (f)' (Choppy p.57), more specifically referring to evildoers associated with sorcery (D'Offay and Lionnet, 1982, p.252). Notably, SC generic GNs incorporate age distinctions and refer to people at different stages in life (see Table 1).

Table 1: Generic Gender Nouns

	FEMALE	gloss.	**MALE**	gloss.
ADULT	*fanm*	woman	*zonm, lonm, onm*	man
CHILD	*fiy, fiyet*	girl	*fis, garson*	boy
YOUNG	*fiy, demwazel, manmzel*	young woman	*garson*	young man
OLD	*lavyey bonnfanm*	old woman	*levye, vyeyar*	old man

A group of GNs combine generic reference to a male or a female with social positioning or attitude, manifested as formal, respectful, or affectionate forms of address.

Table 2: Address Gender Nouns

TYPE OF ADDRESS	**FEMALE**	**MALE**
Formal address	*madam, danm* 'woman' *demwazel, manmzel* 'young woman, maiden'	*msye, imsye* 'man, gentleman'
Affectionate appellation	*ma* 'affectionate form for an elderly lady'	*boy* 'affectionate term for a male person'
	mafiy 'name used by a mother or an elder person to address a girl'	
Respectful appellation	*lavyey, matant, manmi* 'respectful name for an elderly woman'	*papi, ton, tonton, bonnonm* 'respectful term for an elderly man'
		grannwanr, gransemesye zantiyonm 'respectful name for an adult male'
Familiar appellation	*label* 'term to call a woman without naming her'	*boug, bougla, menn* 'fellow, chap'
		toto 'familiar name for a small boy'

Some generic GNs include additional semantic components, such as reference to availability of children or reproductive capacity, for example: *mer, merdfanmir* 'a woman who has children'/*per, perdfanmir* 'a man who has children'; *granmer* 'a woman who has

grandchildren'/*granper* 'a man who has grandchildren'. Alongside the above-mentioned symmetrical pairs of generic GNs marked by descriptive semes, there are several female GNs which do not have a male counterpart: *grannfiy* 'a girl who started to have periods', *granfanm, fanm* 'a girl who has lost her virginity', *manman* 'a woman who has given birth' (see 5.0).

There are no gaps in generic gender nomination in SC, and the life-spanning taxonomy of humans is fully and symmetrically represented by both male and female lexemes. However, there are some lexical gaps when generic representation of men and women is combined with descriptive semantic features. In particular, while there are some female GNs which include reference to reproductive capacity (see above), there are no male nouns with a comparable semantic component. Furthermore, there are some quantitative asymmetries in generic representation of men and women. First, the dictionary indicates more lexemes to refer generically to an adult male human (*zonm, lonm, onm*) than a female one (*fanm*) (see Table 1)*.* Also, there are more GNs to refer to a male in a respectful way (*grannwanr, gransemesye, zantiyonm, papi, ton, tonton, bonnonm* vs *lavyey, matant, manmi*) or in a familiar way (*boug, bougla, menn, toto* vs *label*). In contrast, there are more lexemes to refer to a young woman (*fiy, demwazel, manmzel*) than to a young man (*garson*) and more female nouns for formal address (*madanm, danm, demwazel, manmzel* vs *msye, imsye*) (see Table 2). Qualitative asymmetry of generic GNs is revealed in the different semantic volume of female and male counterparts referring to the same concept. Thus, for example, apart from reference to old age, the definition of the male GN *bonnom* includes the component *ki enspir respe* 'who experiences respect', while the female GN *bonnfanm* has only the age reference. Next, while some definitions of female GNs include reference to marital status (*fiy, demwazel, manmzel* include the semantic component *ki pa ankor marye* 'who has not yet married'*, madam* has the component *ki'n marye* 'married'), there is no reference to marital status in generic male GNs (*garson - zenn seks maskilen* 'boy – a male youth'; *msye - tit ki nou donn en zonm* 'man, gentleman – the title given to a man').

The prevalence of female GNs to refer to young age and with reference to physiology and marital status may signal specific value attached to young women and the importance of their transition to the marrying age associated with fertility. Contrasted to stronger linguistic accentuation of young women, more variable linguistic representation of male humans at all stages of life (boys, middle-aged and elderly men) suggests respective distribution of social prominence, with men dominating throughout life and women being especially valuable when young as potential mothers and wives.

3.0 Relational Gender Nouns

A number of SC GNs signal relational connections defined as biological or formed kinship. Relational GNs will be considered in the three corresponding subsections below (3.1-3.3).

3.1 Biological kinship Gender Nouns

These actualize the concept of connection through common ancestry. SC ancestry nouns are gender-symmetrical and include separate female and male lexemes to refer to members of the external family defined by blood (see Table 3).

Table 3: Biological kinship Gender Nouns

FEMALE	gloss.	MALE	gloss.
mer, manman, mami, manmi,	mother, mummy	*per, papa, papi, dadi,*	father, daddy
fiy	daughter	*fis, garson*	son
ser	sister	*frer*	brother
zimel	twin (female)	*zimo*	twin (male)
granmanmman, nanni	grandmother	*granpapa*	grandfather
granmer	great-grandmother	*granper*	great-grandfather
tant	aunt	*tonton*	uncle
kouzin	cousin	*kouzen*	cousin
neve	nephew	*nyes*	niece

Though there are no gaps in nominal representation of blood family members, there are some differences in the number of lexemes which represent corresponding male or female counterparts. Thus, there are two terms (*fis, garson*) with the meaning 'son', and only one term (*fiy*) with the meaning 'daughter'. On the other hand, there are two lexemes (*granmanmman, nanni*) which represent the concept 'grandmother', while there is one lexeme (*granpapa*) to

represent the male counterpart. Another difference refers to the degree of relatedness of various terms representing certain female and male referents. Thus, although there are multiple lexemes to refer to mother (*mer, manman, mami, manmi*) and grandmother (*granmanmman, nanni*), there is either a morphological (shared root) or semantic (the word *nanni* also means 'nanny', which points to the typical conception of grandmothers as caregivers) connection between the synonyms. Contrary to female terms, the male synonyms do not demonstrate any morphologic or semantic relatedness: *fis* and *garson* for 'son'; *papa, papi* and *dadi* for 'father'. That is, apart from quantitative asymmetries, biological kinship GNs reveal a qualitative asymmetry, whereby some male family members are represented with various independent lexemes, and female family members are referred to with morphologically or semantically related lexemes.

3.2 Formed kinship Gender Nouns

These present relationships based not on common ancestry but on some institutionalized social practices such as assumed spiritual responsibility, nursing, childminding, adoption, marriage, etc. For the current research, GNs of formed kinship are streamed into three major groups (3.2.1-3.2.3).

3.2.1 Caregiving Gender Nouns
GNs in this sub-group represent parties engaged in voluntary caregiving to children, such as assumed spiritual responsibility by godparents, physical responsibility by childminders and nannies, or social responsibility by adoptive parents.

Table 4: Caregiving Gender Nouns

FEMALE	gloss.	MALE	gloss.
marenn	godmother	*paren*	godfather
manman sonnyen	foster mother	*kok sapon, sapon*	foster father
nouris	wet nurse, child minder	-	-
ser dile	milk sister	*frer dile*	milk brother

Unlike biological kinship nouns (3.1), SC gender terms of caregiving are not always balanced. Thus, though connection through assumed spiritual responsibility is symmetrically represented by the nouns *marenn* 'godmother' and *paren* 'godfather', in case of adoption, there

are two terms to refer to a male parent (*kok sapon* (fig.) 'foster father', *sapon* 'a man who takes care of the children who are not his') and only one term to refer to an adoptive female parent. The gapping is represented by the noun *nouris* 'wet nurse, child minder' which does not have a male counterpart. Though the latter gap is justified biologically, as men are not breast feeders, the prevalence of male lexemes to refer to an adoptive parent may have some social implications and point to an established opinion that men, rather than women, have means and resources to adopt.

3.2.2 Marriage Gender Nouns

A number of GNs in SC refer to kinship relations formed though marriage. The nouns in this sub-group will be analysed in 3 groupings related to patterned stages associated with marriage: courting, wedding, and matrimony (see Table 5).

Table 5: Marriage Gender Nouns

	FEMALE	MALE
COURTING	-	*pretan, soupiran* 'suitor'
WEDDING	*lamarye, lepouz* (arch.) 'bride'	*lepou* (arch.) 'bridegroom'
	fiydoner 'bridesmaid'	*garsondoner* 'best man'
MATRIMONY		
Spouses	*fanm* 'wife'	*mari* 'husband'
	bonnfanm 'familiar term for wife'	*bonnonm* 'polite term for husband'
	epouz 'spouse'	*epou* 'spouse'
	madanm marye 'married woman'	-
	matriark 'matriarch'	*patriark, patriars* 'patriarch'
	merdfanmir 'mother, family woman'	*perdfanmir* 'father, family man'

	-	*kornar* 'cuckold, deceived husband'
	-	*bater fanm* 'wife-beater'
	-	*manrmay* 'childish husband'
	vef 'widow'	*vev* 'widower'
In-laws	*belmer* 'mother-in-law, stepmother'	*boper* 'father-in-law, stepfather'
	belfiy 'daughter-in-law, stepdaughter'	*bofis, zann* 'son-in-law, stepson'
	belser 'sister-in-law'	*bofrer* 'brother-in-law'
	serdper 'half-sister on the father`s side'	*fredper* 'half-brother on the father`s side'
	serdmer 'half-sister on the mother`s side'	*fredmer* 'half-brother on the mother`s side'
Never married	*vyeyfiy* 'spinster, old maid'	*kokmaron* 'bachelor'

Courting GNs in SC are characterized by a gapping asymmetry. While there are two male lexemes *pretan* and *soupiran* meaning 'suitor', there are no female GNs with such meaning. Notably, the two female GNs to refer to a young unmarried woman (*manmzel, demwazel)* which parallel the above male GNs, do not have the meaning of intention to marry a certain person and only include indication of being not married (see 2.0). Thus, the active role of courting and choosing a person to marry, foregrounded in the male GNs *pretan* and *soupiran*, is positioned as more typical for men than for women. The passive role of women in the courting process suggested by the above lexical gap is supported by another gap presented with the occupational female GN *saperon* 'chaperone' to denote a companion for an unmarried young woman, as prescribed by the once-accepted social rules for pre-marriage communication (see 4.0). Furthermore, another asymmetrical nomination with no male counterpart for the female GN *kouri* 'a young girl who runs away from home to live with a boy' (see 3.2.3) adds to the biased attitude to women in pre-marriage relationships. The above noun emphasizes the woman`s being in the focus of social criticism for the relationship

outside marriage. Thus, asymmetries in pre-marriage GNs highlight socially constructed gendered expectations associated with this period. They position men as active participants in the courting process in contrast with women, viewed as a passive target in courting, needing guidance and protection and taking responsibility and criticism for deviating from the established social norms.

Wedding GNs denote participants of the wedding ceremony – the event which, following courting, legalizes the relationship. While there are no gaps in the wedding GNs, they are characterized by quantitative asymmetry (see Table 5). In particular, alongside parallel male and female terms to refer to persons being married (*lepouz* (arch.) 'bride', *lepou* (arch.) 'bridegroom'), and their respective escorts (*fiydoner* 'bridesmaid', *garsondoner* 'bestman'), the SC lexicon registers an additional female GN *lamarye* 'the bride'. More lexemes to denote a female participant of wedding suggests more prominence given to a woman`s transfer from maidenhood to married life, compared to that of a man.

Matrimony GNs refer to a man and a woman in marriage. There are no gaps in GNs which indicate family roles: *fanm, bonnfanm* 'wife' and *mari, bonnonm* 'husband'; *epouz* 'female spouse' and *epou* 'male spouse'; *merdfanmir* 'mother, family woman' and *perdfanmir* 'father, family man'; *patriark, patriars* 'patriarch' and *matriark* 'matriarch'. However, there is a quantitative imbalance at the expense of the female GN *madanm marye* 'married woman' which does not have a male counterpart. This lexical asymmetry points to the increased social emphasis on marriage for women.

Furthermore, there are qualitative asymmetries in matrimony GNs observed in conceptualization of respective family roles for men and women. First, some pairs of GNs, which symmetrically denote spouses and are morphologically related, reveal differences in definitions. Thus, whereas *perdfanmir* 'family man' is defined through a man`s resposibility (*zonm ki annan lasarz son fanmir* 'the man who is in charge of his family'), its female counterpart *merdfanmir* is defined with a focus on care (*madanm ki annan zanfan e ki reste kot lakour pour okip zot* 'woman who has children and lives with them at home to take care of them'). Furthermore, the male GN *bonnom* 'husband' defined as *term poli pour mari* 'polite term for husband' does not parallel the respective female GN *bonnfanm* 'wife' defined as *term ki zonm i servi pour nonm zot madanm* 'term which a man uses to name his wife'. While the male GN assigns polite attitude to a husband, its female counterpart implies familiar attitude to a wife. Moreover, different conceptualization of men and women in marriage is revealed in how they are presented descriptively. While the lexicon registers three male GNs which foreground certain behavioral or situational features of a husband: *bater* 'wife-beater', *manrmay* 'childish husband', *kornar* 'cuckold, deceived husband', there are no nouns to descriptively refer to a wife. Apart from giving more lexical prominence to men, the above descriptive male GNs reveal certain marriage trends which are detrimental (e.g. family violence) or disadvantageous

(e.g. emphasized responsibility) for women, or present women in a negative light. Thus, while a woman`s cheating is implied by the noun *kornar* 'cuckold, deceived husband', absence of the female counterpart suggests that men either never cheat or their cheating does not count as deceit.

A group of marriage GNs refer to the status acquired by relatives as a result of marriage between their kin: *belmer* 'mother-in-law, stepmother', *boper* 'father-in-law, stepfather', *belfiy* 'daughter-in-law, stepdaughter', *bofis*, *zann* 'son-in-law, stepson', *belser* 'sister-in-law', *bofrer* 'brother-in-law'. The quantitative imbalance is observed in the nomination of children-in-law: there are two lexemes to represent son-in-law (*bofis* and *zann*), but only one lexeme (*belfiy*) to represent daughter-in-law.

Different approaches to men and women are also observed in the lexicalization of the concept of not having a spouse at a mature age. While there are two symmetrical nouns denoting a man and a woman who have lost their spouses, *vef* 'widow' and *vev* 'widower', reference to people who have never got married is established by two GNs: a female noun *vyeyfiy* 'spinster, old maid' (literally 'old girl') and a male noun *kokmaron* 'bachelor' (*zonm ki pa'n marye e ki annan relasyon avek plizyer fanm* 'a man who has not married and who has relations with several women'). From the above definitions, mature unmarried women and men are conceptualized differently: a physiological feature (implied virginity) is foregrounded in the female nomination while the male nomination accentuates social behaviour. The above asymmetry reveals an underlying social opinion that while it is normal for men to stay unmarried, women are marriage dependent and, for them, missing marriage is not natural.

To sum up, marriage GNs reveal three types of asymmetries: gaps, quantitative imbalance, and qualitative imbalance. Gapping is observed in references to women and men at the courting stage, with no female nouns to denote a person actively choosing a match. Quantitative imbalance is established by more nominations of both the female participant of the wedding ceremony and the married woman. Also, there are more GNs to refer to sons-in-law than daughters-in-law, and more descriptive references to a male spouse. Qualitative asymmetry is observed in the conceptualization of roles of men and women in marriage, and marital status at mature age. The above-mentioned asymmetries reflect certain socially constructed expectations for women and men. In particular, lack of freedom in choosing a partner, increased emphasis on compliance with social rules, more prominence at the pre-marriage stage, marriage dependence and greater responsibility for women.

3.2.3 Non-institutionalized relationship Gender Nouns

These refer to love affairs outside marriage. Alongside a symmetrical pair *lanmoure* 'lover (m)'/*lanmourez* 'lover (f)', there are a number of GNs to refer to either a male (*galan* 'lover', *boyfrenn* 'boyfriend', *poulayer* 'a man who lives with a woman outside of marriage') or female

(*metres* 'mistress', *danre* 'lover or girlfriend', *kouri* 'a young girl who runs away from home to live with a boy') lover.

Linked to the concept of relationships outside marriage are a number of characterizing GNs which refer to a person's sexual behaviour (see 5.0). Notably, most GNs in this category have male reference and denote a person who has casual love affairs: *bandi* 'seducer, womanizer', *lougarou* 'werewolf, womanizer', *taper* 'fickle lover, womanizer', *pwenter* 'playboy, womanizer', *fanbre* 'Casanova, Don Juan, womanizer', *drager* 'man who always tries to seduce girls', *raklon* 'womanizer', *vera* 'expression about a womanizer'; contrasted with one female GN *difeble* 'flirtatious woman'. Various features of a casual lover (passion, irregularity, unloyalty) connoted in the male GNs above naturalize sexual affairs outside marriage for men, and also contrast men`s agentivity in seduction to women's passive causation of such through their appealing appearance of flirtatious behaviour.

Perception of women as potentially provoking desire is illustrated by a number of related female GNs referring to appearance: *fanfles* (arch.), *galez* 'seductive woman', *zibye* 'expression about a beautiful woman', *label* 'good looking girl'; and only one corresponding male GN *dyouk* 'attractive young male' (see 5.0). Furthermore, a group of GNs related to the concept of love for sale (see 4.0) also links to the concept of relationships outside marriage. Notably, nominations of a female prostitute (*batez lari*, *bordel*, *bordelderi*, *delannos*, *fanmdevi*, *fanmpiten*, *piten*) outnumber male GNs with such meaning (*bat lari* and *zigolo*). Thus, SC GNs reflect different social attitudes to men and women`s involvement in sexual relations outside marriage. While men in such relations are emphasized as casual lovers and seducers, women are viewed as those who provoke seduction. Furthermore, while men`s relationships outside marriage is naturalized and conceptualized as casual or fickle love, women`s sexual episodes outside marriage are conceptualized as illegitimate or immoral.

4.0 Occupational Gender Nouns

Most terms to refer to jobs and professions in SC are gender neutral and can be used to refer to both men and women; for example, *antrenner* 'trainer, coach'. However, there are some nouns which apart from occupational reference include gender indication. Thus, there are pairs of morphologically related GNs referring to either a male or a female representative of the same profession: *aktris* 'actress'/*akter* 'actor'; *direktris* 'headmistress'/*direkter* 'head teacher'; *kwizinyer* 'cook (f)'/kwizinyen 'cook (m)'; *barmed* 'barmaid'/*barmenn* 'barman'; *berzer* 'shepherdess'/*berze* 'sheperd'; *santez* 'singer (f)'/*santer* 'singer', etc. Apart from occupational GNs which share a root, SC lexicon has morphologically unrelated GNs to refer to men or women in the same occupation: *fanmdesanm* 'chambermaid'/*boy* 'domestic servant (male)'; *dobi* 'laundry boy'/*blansisez, lavez* 'laundrywoman'.

Asymmetries in the nomination of men and women with reference to their occupation are represented by lexical gaps and quantitative imbalances. Thus, a number of occupations are represented by only male or only female GNs. Gapping in this case can be accounted for by either natural or socio-historical factors. For example, there is no male counterpart to the female GN *nouris* 'wet nurse', which can be explained by the gender-specific physical limitations of breastfeeding. Further on, several lexical gaps are present because some jobs are historically associated with either men or women. Thus, there are several GNs which have in their structure components *onm* 'man', *menn* 'fellow, chap' or *boy* (from English 'boy'), signaling a male referent. Occupations referred to by such nouns either require physical strength and are predominately done by men (e.g. *winsmenn* 'winchman', *kawboy* 'cowboy') or relate to political or governance structures historically dominated by men (*onmdeta* 'statesman', t*yermenn* 'chairman', *vistyermenn* 'vice chairman', *pyon* 'office boy'). On the other hand, some jobs related to childbirth, childcare or supervision of young girls, as well as needlework, which were traditionally done by women, are represented only by female GNs: *fanmsaz, sazfanm* 'midwife'; *nanni, nennenn* 'nanny'; *saperon* 'chaperone'; *brodez* 'embroiderer'; *fanmsinwa* 'woman who has a habit of sewing all day long'. Some more gaps in occupational GNs are established by lexemes referring to religious context – the area historically characterized by limited participation of women. Thus, there are no female counterparts for such male GNs as *anfandker* 'altarboy', *orfeonis* 'member of a male choir'.

Alongside lexical gapping there is quantitative asymmetry in occupational nomination of men and women. Thus, a male GN *dobi* 'laundry boy' has two female counterparts *blansisez* and *lavez* 'laundry woman'. Furthermore, though there are both male and female nominations to refer to prostitution (*batez lari* 'prostitute (f)'/*bat lari* 'prostitute (m)'), the SC lexicon registers more additional female GNs to refer to prostitution (*bordel, bordelderi, delannos, fanmdevi, fanmpiten, piten, prostitye, trenerdri*) than male ones (*zigolo*). Quantitative gender asymmetries are revealed not only for nominations within the same occupation, but across occupations. Thus, there are more female nominations of servants (*domestik* 'domestic servant, maid', *servant* 'maidservant'; *fanmdesanm* 'chambermaid'; *brosez* (arch.) 'maid (who polished floors)'; *blansisez, lavez* 'laundry woman') than male ones (*serviter* 'servant (male)', *boy* 'domestic servant (male)', *dobi* 'laundry boy'). On the other hand, there are more male GNs to denote healers or individuals with attributed magic power (*geriser, gangan, bonnonmdibwa, ptitalber, sorsye, treter*) than female GNs (*sorsyer* 'sorceress, witch').

5.0 Characterizing Gender Nouns

There are a number of GNs which incorporate various characteristics of men or women, such as: character, behavior, appearance, origin, age, social standing, social function, etc. Some characterizing GNs present symmetrical gender nomination, while others reveal imbalances.

5.1 Symmetrical gender characterization

This is observed in GNs presenting some objective characterizations, such as reference to a certain **social function**, for example: *danm* 'female partner in dancing'/*kavalye* 'male dancing partner'; *eroin* 'principal actress, female character'/*ero* 'character, hero'; *profet* 'prophet'/*profetes* 'female prophet'; *kopen* 'school friend (m)'/ *kopin* 'school friend (f)', *vwazen* 'neighbour (m)'/*vwazin* 'neighbour (f)'. Also, symmetry in gender nomination is revealed by GNs which refer to the **person`s country or area**: *Franse* 'Frenchman'/*Fransez* 'Frenchwoman', *tyokri* 'small girl of Indian origin'/*tyokra* 'small boy of Indian origin', *Renyonnez* 'native of Reunion (f)'/*Renyonnen* 'native of Reunion (m)'; Digwaz, Pralinwaz 'person from La Digue, Praslin (f)/Digwa, Pralinwa 'person from La Digue, Praslin (m)'etc. There is also a pair of GNs referring to the **person`s age**: *dwayenn* 'the oldest woman in the community or organization'/*dwayen* 'the oldest man in the community or organization'. One more group of symmetrical GNs presents **titles**: *baron* 'baron'/*barones* 'baroness'; *prens* 'prince'/*prenses* 'princess'; *lerwa* 'king'/*larenn* 'queen', etc.

5.2 Asymmetrical gender characterization

In contrast to the GNs above which present objective characteristics and reveal balanced gender nomination, GNs which include evaluative components manifest gender asymmetries. In particular, uneven distribution of characteristics is demonstrated by a group of GNs presenting their referents` **character traits or attributes**, such as: wisdom or intelligence (*grantantin* 'wise old woman', *grantonton* 'wise old man', *grannwanr* 'clever resourceful man'); malice (*dyables* 'very naughty, malicious woman'; *gars* 'naughty, malicious, woman/girl', *pigriyes* 'wicked woman'; *bater* 'wife-beater'); verbosity (*kakayez* 'slanderous, scandalmongering woman', *kankannyez* 'gossiping woman', *kakayer* gossiping man); vanity (*satigan* 'dandy, conceited man', *karyon* 'vain woman'*)* (see Table 7). Asymmetry is also observed in GNs which present men or women with reference to their **behavioral patterns**: *soulez* 'female drunkard'; *kok kapon* 'a man who is afraid of confrontation'; *soutirez* 'woman who tolerates or encourages someone else`s capricious behaviour'; *fanbre, drager, raklon, vera, bandi, lougarou, taper, pwenter* 'womanizer', etc. Another group of asymmentrical characterizing GNs include reference to the person`s **physicality**, for example: *grofanm* 'fat woman'; *penglet* 'too frail woman'; *galez, fanfles* 'seductive woman'; *zibye* 'beautiful woman'; *gala* 'well-shaped woman'; *label* 'good-looking girl'; *negres* 'a black woman'; malbares 'a woman with Indian features'; *milatres* 'mulato woman'; *kapor* 'very strong man'; *dyouk* 'attractive young man'*; grimas* 'ugly man'; *neg* 'a black man'; or **physiology**: *grannfiy* 'a girl who started to have periods', *granfanm, fanm* 'a girl who has lost her virginity', *manman* 'a woman who has given birth'. One more group of GNs lacking symmetry in gender nomination deals with referents` **social standing**, for example: *granfanm* 'independent

woman'; *gransemesye* 'respectful, powerful man'; *zantiyonm* 'nobleman, gentleman'; *grobonnen, groboy* 'rich man'; *sevalye* 'chevalier, knight'.

To sum up, characterizing nomination of women and men is gapless, as both sexes can be presented with reference to various personal attributes. However, there are certain quantitative and qualitative asymmetries. First, female GNs outnumber male ones in physical characterization. Next, there are more female GNs including indications of such negative characteristics as wickedness, gossiping or ill-speaking. On the contrary, there are more male GNs to denote wisdom and social prominence. Male GNs also prevail in characterizations of sexual behavior (see Table 7). Qualitatively, there is a difference in the way men and women are characterized with regard to a similar trait. For instance, social prominence for women is conceptualized as independence (*granfanm – fanm endependan* 'independent woman'), whereas for men it includes reference to power and wealth (*gransemesye – gran msye ki annan bokou lenportans akoz son byen* 'important man who has a lot of power due to his possessions or property').

6.0 Conclusion

Overall, SC has GNs which cover the broad spectrum of human existence. The lexicon captured by the analysed dictionaries registers designated lexemes to generically refer to or address female and male persons of different age groups (children, young people, adults, elderly people) (see 2.0); to nominate members of external family defined by common ancestry (3.1); or parties in relationships underpinned by institutionalized practices (marriage, adoption, spiritual guidance) (3.2), or formed outside acknowledged institutions (unmarried love affairs) (3.2.3); to name men or women with reference to their occupation (4.0) or characterizing feature (5.0).

Some GNs are symmetrical, presenting lexical pairs to refer to female and male counterparts within one concept; others are not balanced, revealing gaps, quantitative imbalances or qualitative asymmetries in gender nomination. Lexical gaps present lack of either male or female lexemes to denote a certain concept (see Table 6). For example, there are no male lexemes to balance the female GN *kouri* 'a young girl who runs away from home to live with a boy', or no female counterpart of the male GN *pretan, soupiran* 'suitor'. Quantitative imbalances reveal a bigger number of either female or male lexemes to refer to the same concept (see Table 7). Thus, the concept 'a person engaged in numerous casual love affairs' is lexicalized by one female GN *difeble* 'flirtatious woman' and 8 male GNs *fanbre, drager, raklon, vera, bandi, lougarou, taper, pwenter* 'womanizer'. Qualitative asymmetries identify the difference in the meaning of lexical pairs referring to the same concept, whereby male and female counterparts are accentuated with different additional semes (see Table 8). One

illustration of qualitative asymmetry is the availability of the component [unmarried/married] in the definition of female GNs lexicalizing the concept of young (*manmzel, demwazel*) or adult (*madanm*) human, and the absence of such component in corresponding male GNs (*garson, zonm, lonm, onm*). As a result of qualitative asymmetry, male and female representatives of the same concept are conceptualized differently.

More asymmetries are found in evaluative nominations (see 5.1) than in references to objective concepts (see 5.1). Some asymmetries can be explained by natural factors determined by physiological differences between males and females (illustrated by female-only GN *nouris* 'wet nurse'), whereas most asymmetries are socially constructed and reflect specific positioning of men and women in the community.Thus, lexical gaps, quantitative imbalances and qualitative asymmetries identified in this analysis reveal: the higher prominence of young women as potential mothers and wives, lack of freedom in choosing a partner, emphasized compliance with social relationship regulations, dependence on marriage, assumptions of caretaking and housekeeping, focus on physicality, expectations of ill-speaking, malice and sexual promiscuity. In comparison, identified asymmetries in SC gender nomination foreground male prominence throughout the life cycle and in various contexts (in the family and in the society), freedom in choosing a partner or in choosing not to have a family, assumed power and potential to be in charge, naturalized love affairs outside marriage, representation in a broader range of occupations.

Tables 6-8 below summarize the main fundings of this research. Table 6 presents lexical gaps in gender nomination by human nouns in SC lexicographic sources.

Table 6: Lexical gaps in Seychelles Creole Gender Nouns

CONCEPT	MALE Gender Nouns	FEMALE Gender Nouns
A person who is breastfeeding and taking care of children	-	*nouris* 'wet nurse, child minder'
A person with reference to physiology	-	*grannfiy* 'a girl who started to have periods', *granfanm, fanm* 'a girl who has lost her virginity', *manman* 'a woman who has given birth'
A person actively choosing a match	*pretan, soupiran* 'suitor'	-

Obligatory supervisor of pre-marital communication	-	*saperon* 'chaperone'
A person in an unmarried relationship at the young age	-	*kouri* 'a young girl who runs away from home to live with a boy'
Deceived spouse	*kornar* 'cuckold, deceived husband'	-
Violent spouse	*bater* 'wife-beater'	-
Spouse requiring extra care	*manrmay* 'childish husband'	-
A person in maternity care	-	*fanmsaz, sazfanm* 'midwife'
A person doing needlework	-	*brodez* 'embroiderer', *fanmsinwa* 'woman who has a habit of sewing all day long'
A person in religious context	*anfandker* 'altarboy', *orfeonis* 'member of a male choir'	-
A person in a physically challenging job	*winsmenn* 'winchman', *kawboy* 'cowboy'	-
A person in governance structures	*onmdeta* 'statesman', *tyermenn* 'chairman', *vistyermenn* 'vice chairman'	-

Table 7 summarizes quantitative asymmetries, presenting concepts lexicalized by more female or male GNs.

Table 7: Concepts predominantly lexicalized by Seychelles Creole male and female Gender Nouns

MALE Gender Nouns	FEMALE Gender Nouns
Adult person generically	Young person
Familiar appellation	Formal address
	Grandparent
Respectful appellation	Person being wedded
Child-in-law	Spouse
Child in a family	Occupations in maternity care, childcare, and education
Physically demanding jobs	Occupations in service and housekeeping
Occupations in governance structures	Physically attractive person
Occupations in religious context	Physicality
Promiscuous person	Malicious person
Wisdom	Verbose person
Social prominence, wealth, power	Prostitute
A person bringing up children who are not theirs	

Finally, Table 8 illustrates qualitative asymmetries, showing how female and male lexemes within the same concept get a different focus due to additional semes in their definitions.

Table 8: Descriptive semantic components in definitions of Gender Nouns pairs referring to the same concept

CONCEPT	MALE Gender Nouns		FEMALE Gender Nouns	
	Semantic component	**Example**	**Semantic component**	**Example**
Young person	age	*garson*	age+unmarried	*manmzel, demwazel*
Adult	age	*zonm*	age+married	*madanm*
Family person	power, responsibility	*perdfanmir*	care, home	*merdfanmir*
Spouse	politeness	*bonnom*	familiarity	*bonfanm*
Grandparent	grandchildren	*granpapa*	grandchildren+childcare	*nanni* 'grandmother'
Old person never married	social behaviour	*kokmaron*	physiology	*vyeyfiy*
Socially prominent person	power and wealth	*gransemesye*	independence	*granfanm*

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