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Mestizaje Ideology as Color-Blind Racism: Students' discourses of colorism and racism in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This study will open the discourse on inequity and its maintenance through colorism in Mexico. The largest percent of the population is a mixture of indigenous and Spanish descent. This is where racism via colorism occurs. Considered only as one group, mestizos of a lighter skin color have more resemblance to being of white Spanish descent and therefore are accepted over mestizos of darker skin color, who have a resemblance to indigenous people. Racism is scarcely documented in Mexico. It is systematically embedded in political, cultural and economic practices; and therefore limits democratic and inclusive practices for all. Working with high school and college students, this study will uncover students' experiences with colorism and racism by focusing on the ways in which everyday practices maintain a system of inequality.

Mestizaje Ideology as Color-Blind Racism:
Students' discourses of colorism and racism in Mexico

by

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

La colonización española creó mestizaje; esto señala su carácter, fija su responsabilidad y define su porvenir. El inglés siguió cruzándose sólo con el blanco, y exterminó al indígena; lo sigue exterminando en la sorda lucha económica, más eficaz que la conquista armada." (Vasconcelos, 1925, p 15-16).

Part of developing one's identity is developing a meaning for otherness (Gall, 2004). In Mexico assimilation began with the creation of the national identity that gave superiority to the mixed race, or *mestizaje*. This idea of *mestizaje* did not give superiority to pure blood; the goal was the mixture of White and Indians, and the extinction of the Indian race (Gall, 2004). *Mestizaje* is a dynamic element in the Mexican population. It is considered the "national race" (Knight, 1990). This leads to a lack of public discourse on racism and a denial that struggles between commitment for equality and the uncritical reproduction of racism (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). However, society in Mexico distinguishes between two civilizations that have never been harmonious: the Indian Mesoamerica and the Christian west (Bonfil Batalla, 1996). Both civilizations are considered to be opposites because they impose a western civilization and the control of the Indian population.

A concept that encompasses the power dynamics between the western and Indian culture is the term *malinchismo*. It represents a process of affective and symbolic subjugation to a powerful other (Fortes de Leff, 2002). In popular use it means that one's roots are denied in favor of western power like the U.S, France or Spain (Paz, 1969). The concept originates from two historical figures in Mexico, *La Malinche* and *Cortés*. They represent the union of two cultures in a domination-servitude relationship. The period of the Revolution while pretending to incorporate the Indian, it de-Indianize them, to make them lose their cultural and historical uniqueness (Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Castellanos Guerrero, 2003). The concern over skin color is a reflection of shared cultural understanding, where whiteness is normalized as a space of privilege (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). For this reason, the Indian

part of the mestizo is denied, "the unavoidable presence of our Indian legacy is a mirror in which we don't want to see ourselves" (Bonfil Batalla, 1994).

Over sixty percent of the population in Mexico lives in poverty. 51.3 percent of people live below the poverty line (CIA, 2012), of which three-quarters are indigenous. In this dissertation, I argue that race plays a vital role in Mexico's stratified society. With sixty percent of its population being mestizo, thirty percent Amerindian, and nine percent white (CIA, 2012) racism in Mexico is easy to dismiss. Racism occurs when a society ranks racial groups in a hierarchical order, where some groups, considered superordinate, are given advantageous treatment through policies, laws and social relations (Makalani, 2003). I argue that racism exists and it also exists through colorism, which is the discrimination of people, *of the same-race*, based on the social value attached to skin color (Jones, 2000; Hunter, 2005). My dissertation will look at how practices of colorism are reproduced in social practices by specifically looking at youth's experiences.

Significance of the Study

In Mexico there is an overt social racism where indigenous people are segregated from educational opportunities and economic development (Fortes de Leff, 2002). In education 21.6 percent of indigenous people between 15 to 64 years old are illiterate compared to 6.3 of the national population; 12.8 percent of indigenous children between 6 to 14 years do not go to school. This percentage varies by state where in some states like in Chihuahua 30.9 percent of children do not go to school, compared to 6.9 percent in Quintana Roo (Navarrete Linares, 2008). According the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous people (CDI) indigenous groups are employed in jobs that do not demand formal education. Their primary source of employment is corn, beans, coffee crop; this is followed by masonry. Discussing racism and colorism, and its implication for politics and law, in the XIX century Chiapas' constitution did not include in its language any article that mentioned

Chiapaneco Indian, everyone was "equal." However, 80% of Chiapas' population was of Indigenous. Social and interracial relationships in Chiapas have been characterized by the exploitation of the indigenous labor.

States such as Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca are the least developed in the nation. These states have the greatest percentages of indigenous population, seventy-five percent of indigenous people live below the poverty line and thirty-nine percent live under extreme poverty (Valadez, 2010). Looking at the statistics, it is difficult to ignore the relationship that exists between race and social class. My dissertation proposes that racism and colorism exist in Mexico, and it is one of the major determining factors that define the current class system. This dissertation will discuss discourses of racism and colorism, a topic that is much denied but that is commonly experienced.

Scholars such as Bonilla-Silva recognize the major role that race and color play in a stratified society. Bonilla-Silva (2004) explains the tri-racial system as it is currently developing in the United States, and it is a system that Latin American countries have already fully developed. This system places whites at the top, followed by what he calls "honorary whites" which are light skin Latinos and Asians, and at the bottom, this model places "the collective black" which includes, Black, and dark skin Latinos and Asians. This model explains how, for example, in Mexico it is normal/common to say that there is no race or racism. It is also common to say that in the United States people are very racist, but not in Mexico; and as a result, racism is scarcely documented in Mexico. I use Bonilla-Silva's work because it helps me understand the development of stratification, based on skin color and race, and this model will in turn help me understand the highly divided society and self-proclaimed "raceless" society that Mexico has established. It is systematically embedded in political, cultural and economic practices and therefore limits democratic and inclusive practices for all. This study opened up the discourse on inequity and its maintenance through colorism and racism in Mexico.

Research Question

In order to understand the ways in which colorism and racism are practiced and transmitted in society, I worked with young-adults, because I believe they are at a stage where they are aware of the cultural norms and they are also able to question and challenge established practices. In addition, at this age group, students are able to identify practices that discriminate based on skin-color or race. This study will uncover their experiences and perceptions about their community and culture with a specific focus on the ways in which everyday practices maintain a system of racial exclusion and inequality. In my dissertation I ask:

- What are youths' perceptions of colorism and racism in their community?

- What are the different ways in which colorism and racism are transmitted?

- What are the places and behaviors that reproduce/reinforce these practices?

Through qualitative methodology this research will uncover cultural practices that discriminate based on skin color and race. This study provides an understanding on how racism does exist in this society and how this unspoken reality affects a society's agency for change. My dissertation compiles the students' understanding of racism and inequality in their communities through their color-blind lens. It primarily focuses on the way language has been utilized to transmit messages that discriminate others based on skin color and racial origin, in specific against Indigenous communities. I utilize Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness to analyze the image of the indigenous people to the general Mexican population. To do this I analyze combined notes from interviews, focus groups, media images, photographs and school textbooks. This comprehensive approach allows me to capture the practices that maintain and reproduce racial inequality.

Mexico in Context

The racial construct in Latin America is *mestizaje*, or the mixing of European, African and Indigenous people. Although from a distance it can be considered a 'racial uthopia,' the actual social and political practices that exist in these countries is still highly dominated by whites (Allen, 2001). To understand how Mexico became a country that does not acknowledge the racial diversity of its people, it is necessary to look at the history behind it. Mexico is a country conquered by Spain. Along with their customs, they brought an ideology of superiority of the white race. This system was based on skin color and physical characteristics. During the postcolonial period (1821- 1910) the system of inequality expanded and arguments that there was any inequality was contrasted with the ideology of *mestizaje* (Chavez-Duenas, Adames & Organista, 2014). *Mestizaje,* the ideology where everyone is believed to be of mixed descent and therefore equal, was and is still used as a form to overlook the inequality in the social system where Whites, or those with phenotypical white characteristics, occupy a privileged position (Gates, 2011; Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009). It is a strategy utilized by the Spanish to deny any type of privilege related to being White.

The denial of racial difference was supported at the political level, when President Vicente Guerrero in 1829, of African descent, removed race as a demographic category in the national census (Chavez-Duenas, Adames & Organista, 2014). In fact, an excerpt from the Mexican independence said "May slavery be banished forever together with the distinction between casted, all remaining equal, so Americans may only be known by their vice or virtue (Morelos y Pavon, 1813; as cited in Chavez-Duenas, et al., 2013, p. 8). The outcome was a complete invisibility of the Afro-Mexicans and the Indigenous people.

Over one hundred years later, in the 1940s, a subtle changed emerged as Mario Gamio incorporated in the census a cultural form of identifying an indigenous group. Adding questions to the

census that related to cultural practices; for example, to incorporate indigenous identifiers the words included in the census were: grinding stones, sandals, canoes and corn tortillas as indigenous; on the other hand, identifiers such as phonographs, plows, saddles, machetes and marijuana were associated with European descent (Saldivar & Walsh, 2014, p. 467). This form of identification separated culture from biology (see Figure 1). By differentiating groups not by biology but by cultural practice, any argument of superiority or inferiority was not implied.

INDICE PARA LA CLASIFICACION DE CARACTERISTICAS DE CULTURA MATERIAL.

	A Tipo cultural			B Result. de consumo			C Géneros de artículos y objetos							D Origen y carácter de la producción						E Carácter de uso		
	Indígena	Europeo	Mixto	Eficiente	Deficiente	Perjudicial	Alimentación	Habitación	Muebles e implementos domésticos	Herramienta agrícola e industrial	Objetos artísti-cos, científ. y rel	Indumentaria	Objetos diversos	Doméstica	Regional	Nacional	Extranjera	Manual	Maquinista	Frecuente	Continuo	Esporádico
Metate (corn grinding stone)	X			X					X						X			X			X	
Fonógrafo		X	X						X							X					X	
Silla de montar vaquera		X	X								X			X			X			X		
Machete		X	X							X							X			X		
Huaraches (sandalias)	X			X								X		X			X			X		
Marihuana		X				X					X	X							X		X
Cerámica	X	X								X				X				X			X	
Tortillas de maíz	X				X		X							X			X			X	
Arado moderno		X	X					X								X	X				
Pala		X	X					X								X	X				
Canoa	X			X				*					X	X			X		X		
Etc. Etc.																						

Figure 1. Gamio, M (1935). Index for the Classification of Characteristics of Material Culture. *Hacia un Mexico Nuevo: problemas sociales.* Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista. (as cited in Saldivar & Walsh, 2014, p. 467).

During the time of the Revolution (1910-1920), politician Lazaro Cardenas who defended indigenous rights, was a proponent of assimilating Indians into the Mexican identity, *mestizaje* (Ewen,

1994). By losing their identity as Indigenous, Indian identity would have an opportunity for social upward mobility. With the Mexican independence, the unjust system was no longer a hidden problem. A solution was the elimination of any type of distinction between Indians and non-Indians. Currently, Mexico has included a question about race. That is the question that distinguishes Indigenous populations, is "*auto-description ethnic identity: s/he considers himself/herself indigenous, s/he does not consider himself/herself indigenous, and not specified*" (INEGI, n.d.).

Mestizaje is a hegemonic political ideology, a promise of equality and a racialized and racist experience that normalized privilege and exclusion (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). This is possible due to the belief that in countries where *mestizaje* is prevalent, there is no race. *Mestizaje* as an ideology has "a democratic inclusive aspect... which holds out the promise of improvement through race mixture for individuals and for the nation: everyone can be a candidate for mixture and hence moral and social uplifting. At the same time, of course, it is a deeply discriminatory ideology and practice, since it is based on the idea of the inferiority of blacks and indigenous people and, in practice, of discrimination against them (Wade, 2001, p. 849)." It has also been known to be a "whitening policy", where a complete assimilation would be achieved by mixing the races (Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009). The popular phrase that says "*mejorar la raza*" (improve the race) refers to the mixing of Indigenous or African people with White people in order to erase their indigenous or African characteristics (Castellanos Guerrero, Gomez Izquierdo, & Pineda, 2009; Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009).

On a study by Friedlander, it was noted that White was considered beautiful and that as babies were born among the first questions asked was about its color, and the children in the family were always protected from too much exposure to the sun (1975). More specifically, families can have a child who is light skin and another one with darker skin tone, and even though they are part of the same family they will get nicknames assigned and many times it is related to skin tone. Fortes de Leff

(2002) provides the case of a family where one of two sisters has darker skin tone, one of which is called *L'india*. In this case the family is using racialized language to assign a classification to a person. The family is calling this girl *La India* (the Indian), while pretending to said *linda* (pretty). The family has classified this young woman due to her skin color as linked to a racial group.

In addition, being mestizo also carries with it the result of a "transfer of the values of one group to another... a struggle between worlds" (Anzaldua, 1987: p. 78). This transfer means that one culture will dominate over the other, cause a gradual loss of one of the two cultures, in this case the indigenous culture. *Mestizaje* has been seen as a continuation of colonialism. It is a "contemporary pressure of ethnic fraud, and culture loss renders the critical notion of 'transgressive' identity highly problematic for indigenous people" (Anglas Grande, 2000, p 469). It then becomes the denial or oppression of the indigenous culture, where all mestizos identify with the white "side" of their new culture.

Mestizaje is embedded in Mexican culture. Mestizos compose the majority of the Mexican population. As indigenous people lose their land and are relocated they set aside their traditions and languages and reject their Indigenous identity. "To remain Indian would me repudiating a unifying foundation of the current Mexican identity, an identity that recognized Indianness, but not Indians" (Ewen, 1994). *Mestizaje* is the identity that defined who is Mexican. It became the strategic identity that hid cultural and social divisions of the nation (Weltman-Cisneros & Tello, 2013). This homogenous population distinguished Mexico from other countries (i.e. United States) who had continuous problems with racial division and inequalities. It then represented a "harmonious mixing of [races]" (p. 142).

Due to the ideology of color-blindness that exists in Mexico, defining who is indigenous and who is not becomes *fluid.* Leonardo (2009) argues that color-blind ideologies are strategies to maintain

White supremacy; it is a process that maintains a secure domination of the white race. *Mestizaje* became a hope of being part of the privileged class, that is, to be also White. This means that a definition of who is *indigena* is also a matter of maintaining indigenous traditions and language. The main distinction between indigenous and mestizo is not a phenotypical difference, but a difference in customs, traditions, residence and language (Villareal, 2010; Clarke, 2000).

Colorism

In Latin America it is difficult to assign a race because of the variation of races (e.g. white, black, Native American) and the percentage of mestizos within this group (Wright, 1994). This does not mean that discrimination is not present; in fact, subordinated groups also contribute to the construction of oppressive inter-group relations. Colorism is the inter- and intra-racial and inter and intra-ethnic discrimination based on skin color stratification (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Hunter, 2005), it is argued to be a relation to skin tone rather than racial or ethnic identity (Hunter, 2007). However, this form of skin tone discrimination against dark-skin but not light-skin people constitutes a form of race-based discrimination (Banks, 2000). Colorism extends beyond black-white relations to the realm of interracial relations, as it is prevalent within people of the same subordinate group.

Colorism is a contributing factor to choosing a racial identification (Gross, 2006; Senices, 2005). Many Hispanics can "pass as White" and their experiences may be similar from the majority group. Similar experiences lead to group formation. Colorism has been linked to racial prejudice (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). Similarly to prejudice, it is necessary to maintain and obtain power over others. People remember stereotypes based on skin color and they are less able to repress such stereotypes than ones based on race (Brown, et. al., 1998; Blair, et.al., 2002; Blair, et.al., 2004). From a psychological standpoint, "for colorism to occur, people must see fairly subtle differences of color and must attribute meaning to those differences" (p. 646). Similarly, Bonilla-Silva (2004) argues that

when groups classify themselves they are developing attributes that characterize that classification, for instance those who classify themselves as 'White' will attain White-like attitudes, differentiate themselves from the other groups and even believe they are better than "the collective black."

Saldaña Tejeda (2013) discusses the linkage between stereotypes and race/color. For example, stereotypes are held beliefs about a person or group of people, irrespective of it being true. In the hierarchical system of race Whites occupy the top of the pyramid and indigenous groups the bottom, this pyramid is associated not only with race but also with wealth and occupation. To explain how race, wealth and occupation are commonly perceived by the general population, Saldaña Tejeda makes the connection between a statistic by the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination, that indicates that domestic workers are among the more vulnerable to discrimination, and the general perception or stereotype that domestic workers are indigenous. In fact, it is stated that indigenous women only comprise a small percentage of all domestic workers in Mexico. Media that shows indigenous women as domestic workers, feed the stereotype that most domestic workers are indigenous women, which is not the case in Mexico feeds the stereotype. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography 18.6 percent of domestic workers reported indigenous descent in 2010 (Saldana Tejeda, 2013). This example epitomizes the dynamics of race and skin color in the social hierarchy.

The social hierarchy, in Mexico, is such that Afro-Latinos and Indians are located at the bottom of the hierarchy, followed by mestizos, and at the top white Latinos that claim pure European descent. There is a public discourse, in Mexico and Latin America, everyone is mestizo and therefore there is no racism, no race (Harris, 2008). *Mestizaje* is a fluid concept, it allows people to not have a fixed racial position; this is what Moreno Figueroa calls the racial logics of *mestizaje* (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). In this system differences are then attributed to skin color, people are whiter than or darker than

others (2013). This racelessness is considered a process of racial and racist normalization that allows Mexicans to convince themselves that there is no racism because everyone is mixed (Goldberg, 2002). However, there is an ideology, a system of racial meritocracy where all people can achieve a greater status or possibility of upward mobility by "achieving whiteness" through interracial marriage (Allen, 2001). Such practices are common not only between races but within races, such is the case of Mexico. In fact, there is a popular saying that implies marrying someone of a lighter complexion in order to *mejorar la raza* or "improve the race" (Castellanos Guerrero, 2003). Whiteness is considered an exclusive quality of the elite and it marks distinction.

Preference for light skin has predominated in different cultures, including family relationships. Colorism or discrimination based on one's skin color within an ethnic/racial community present various internal conflicts (Tummala-Narra, 2007). Lighter skin has been associated with higher status, success and happiness; for many people the desire to be whiter has led to the utilization of skin lightening products (Jablonski, 2012). Moreover, intrafamilial colorism has been an increased topic of research in the family studies field. It refers to one or more members of one family being devalued because of their skin color (Fortes De Leff, 2002). This creates unique alliances and triangulations in the family context (Tummala-Narra, 2007). It is only a reflection of a larger society that reinforces and promotes ideas of whiteness as good and better.

Terms used to describe groups of people are also reflections of colorism. For example, the term mulatto is representative of the sentiment of colorism within the White community: "Whites tended to view mulattoes as more intelligent than blacks but not the equal of Caucasians ... mulattoes were intellectually superior to blacks, with whom they were racially grouped, they were leaders in every line of activity undertaken by Negroes... whites believed that 'mixed bloods' were hybrids, morally weak, and physically degenerate" (Gatewood, 1990, p 153). Similarly the term *mestizaje* has been

given to categorize the mixing of European, African, and Indigenous people (Alcoff, 1995). Similar to mulattos, mestizos of darker-skin groups (Afro-Latinos and Indians) are located socially below white Latinos (Allen, 2001). Figure 2, shows how Spanish elites in the 18th century identified people according to their race and how the union between groups had meaning in the social system.

Each classification has meanings attached to it. Interracial marriages were important in developing national identity, which was seen as the "ultimate maker of racial and ethnic integration" (Alba and Nee, 2003; as cited in Telles & Garcia, 2013, p. 137). Utilizing national surveys, Telles and Garcia asked questions related to people's opinion on *mestizaje*. Questions include: *"The mixing of races is good for Mexico. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement."* Data showed that there was an overall support of for the principle of *mestizaje* and for intermarriage, however, the tolerance of intermarriage was significantly less from whites than mestizos. Comments such as "mejorar la raza" are common and prevalent across families and are everyday examples of the acceptance or lack of thereof of intermarriages.

To study the meanings associated to color within a family, Moreno Figueroa (2013), looked at family photographs to understand the meaning of skin color, by focusing on comments of acceptance and beauty. In specific she looked at the differences between being and feeling acceptable. A group of 40 women between the ages of 18 and 55 years old were interviewed. Women who considered themselves as acceptable, were able to "pass" with ease, this privilege provided some of these women with confidence and reassurance. Moreover, Moreno Figueroa found that commenting on other's appearance was common, not only for those that consider themselves as privileged but, in fact, everyone. She sees this as an example of how discrimination is a common practice. Commenting on others' appearance brings up another component to the process of forming one's identity. It is through those comments that people obtain information about themselves. This can, in many cases, provide

conflicting feelings as people's feeling of who they are based on what they think of themselves and what others tell them about themselves.

Figure 2. Las Castas, Anonymous. 18ᵗʰ Century.

As mestizos became the national identity in Mexico, different racial groups are seen as others or not part of the group. This then creates a distinction between what is "normal." Other groups, such

as indigenous, are seen as different from the general population (Fregoso, 2016). In order to understand how students differentiate those students who are considered mestizo or "normal" to those that are considered indigenous, Fregoso conducted a study with university students to identify the characteristics that people use to categorize others. In specific, to understand what the constructions that differentiate indigenous groups and mestizos are (Fregoso, 2016). Among the distinctions found to justify racial categorizations were physical attributes and culture. Fregoso describes *mestizos* in the hierarchical system in that following way "if mestizos can occupy a privileged position in relation to the indigenous or any other form of identity that distinguishes itself from whiteness, it is also a part of a hierarchy of difference… for this it is a prismatic category" (p. 30).

A Color-Blind Ideology and Post-racial Politics

In countries such as Mexico, race is a topic that is not widely discussed, or believed to be something that is present in other countries (i.e. United States). Similarly, the U.S. seems to be heading in that direction, where the recurrent theme of colorblindness is taking a popular stance in society. For instance, the colorblind principle is ingrained in Martin Luther King's civil rights discourse that states that children be judged by the "content of their character" rather than the "color of their skin," the colorblind principle has existed in civil rights discourse (Tate, 1997). However good intentioned, it is a statement that has been used by whites to maintain white privilege. This new form of racism is subtle and non-racial (Bonilla-Silva, 2009), and it is an evolving manifestation of racial discrimination (APA, Presidential Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity, 2012). This system is maintained by a discourse that declares that everyone is the same and has equal opportunities to succeed (Frankenberg, 1993).

Liberalist ideas have supported the colorblind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000) and maintain an unequal system. The first liberalist idea is abstract liberalism, which

opposes policies that would provide increase opportunities to people of color by arguing that it is providing preferential treatment to certain groups. This argument is supported by the idea all people are equal and should have equal chances for success; therefore providing "additional" opportunities to a group would be discriminatory to other groups. A second liberalist idea is called naturalization, which sees the current situation as "the way things are," this idea leaves a system of inequality unquestioned. A third liberalist idea of colorblind ideology is cultural racism, which blames each group for their situation, because people are seen as equals and as having the same opportunities, it is the individual or group of individuals that are blamed for their conditions, people are likely to be blamed as not working hard enough or being lazy as the reasons for their misfortunes. And last is, minimization of racism, which sees racism as not a big issue and something of the past.

According to Moreno Figueroa (2016) these post-racial ideologies reinforce *mestizaje* and serve to delegitimize the importance of racism. Post-racial ideologies are forms of thought, discourses and actions that evade, delegitimize and seek to eliminate racial differences and its effects as a topic and emphasis in academic knowledge, from activist fight, and public and political debate (Costa, 2014, p. 2). In fact post-racial ideologies also reflect in academia. To look the intellectual debate that has addressed racism in Mexico, Moreno Figueroa (2016) conducted a search of academic articles, published in Mexican scientific journals, from 1956 to 2014. Her findings indicate that only 66 articles between 1956 and 2016 (Moreno Figueroa, 2016) had been published, providing an average of 1.11 articles per year. This limited number of publications is reflective of the post-racial ideology.

Education also produces of racism (Velasco Cruz, 2015). This occurs in different ways, through the content and practices that occur at school facilities. Education is an all-encompassing activity where society's institutions permanently function: family, religion, beliefs, the State, and via institutionalized education (p. 383). The school is a venue that tends to reproduce its interest to its

members. For instance, textbooks that establish the national identity as mestizo, or books that exclude indigenous people from the present, or indications that indigenous groups hindered national progress. Moreover, discourses blame the indigenous people for being different and not assimilate or identify with the Mexican identity, they are held responsible for their own marginalization.

Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2001) questioned whether minority groups (i.e. African Americans) utilized a colorblind ideology in their everyday lives. They found that in fact they do; however, not to the extent that White people did. The frame of reference they used were, abstract liberalism, cultural racism, and naturalization. Some of the responses obtained from Black participants were "Affirmative action... I guess I would say I'm against because I believe you should have the equal opportunity not just be given something just because of your race. I think it's just for equal opportunity" (p 51). Others believed racial segregation was natural and not a problem and "no one's fault". And when asked if it was laziness the cause of the difference in success, laziness was not the attributed factor of it but on aspiration "Well, I don't think they [lack] the proper, you know, things to succeed in and ah, but the ones that wants to have, they can have. But it's just some don't want to have anything. They can't blame it on other person, *which I don't*. I don't blame it on anyone 'cause I don't have anything. I blame it on myself 'cause I think I should have did better when I was coming up and got a better education." (p. 55).

Sue (2011) provides an example of how race-blind ideology looks like in Mexico. When interviewing a dark-brown skin man about opportunities related to skin color, this is what Sue found:

CS: More or less what is the life of a White person like here? What jobs do they have? Where do they live?

Alfredo: Well, generally I have observed that they have the best positions. I have noticed that it is easier for them to get a job than for the brown or black person...

CS: And why do you think that is?

Alfredo: About that, I ignore it, I ignore it...Because mainly...when they hire someone in the media they want them to have 'presentation.' This is the advantage of color...to be white...

CS: That is what they want?

Alfredo: Yes they tell you clearly in the jobs.

CS: Why?

Alfredo: Who knows? I also ignore that, who knows [laughs]. That, I ignore...That is life and you have to get used to it. (Sue, 2011, p. 549).

When looking at Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2001) interviews of Black Americans and Sue's interviews with Mexicans, the difference in the color-blind, and race-blind ideologies, is of attribution. The conversation found in Sue's study is similar to the conversations I had with students. Just like this example, people notice the privilege that comes with being white but the situation is not questioned. There is sense of lack of control or naturalization when the different opportunities to people of color and Whites in Mexico are unchallenged. In the interview provided from the United States, race can be an explanation; personal initiative can be another explanation, like not having taken opportunities; and naturalization, seeing it just "as this is the way it is" is another explanation. However, there seems an option "race" that is a factor that is a determinant factor of opportunities, and that if provided can be used to provide fairer opportunities.

The establishment of *mestizaje* as a national identity and ideology is key to understand the recognition and denial of racism, as it establishes a post-racial ideology in Mexico (Moreno Figueroa and Saldivar Tanaka 2016). The *mestizaje* project serves to unify and solidify a group's identity when challenges to their racial identity are contested. *Mestizaje* is alive and current, common discourses

such as "how can we be racist, we are Mexican and mixed" and "look at how racist people in the United States are, how can they call us racists?" (p. 516) are common in Mexico and they are examples of how attention to racism is diverted and contradicted.

This diversion is identified as been part of post racial ideologies. They "operate through racialized forms of power while simultaneously claiming the non- significance of race. They generate fraught understandings of belonging and inclusion that elide racial difference and structural racism in ways that allow the re-articulation rather than the transformation of racial inequalities within national and global developments. Moreover, when deployed as a strategy of power, post-racial ideologies continually seek to depoliticize race, racism, and difference in ways that demobilize anti-racist politics, substantive cultural recognition, and material redistribution" (Da Costa, 2014; p. 2).

Jokes and nicknames are ways people express forms of power. Although, they are justified as being simply funny or benign, they are said "with kindness" (Limon, 1982); they have little or no consequence for the person who says them. A common occurrence of these words happens when identifying beauty. Utilizing family photographs to interview and understand meaning and values of their images, Moreno Figueroa (2013) interviewed women living in urban environments. Comments about feelings of being acceptable came up during interviews, students who described themselves as being lighter showed more confidence. People's freedom to express their opinions about others' appearance is a way to send "information" to others about what is acceptable and considered as beautiful within a society.

Chapter Organization

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the racial/color stratification that occurs in Mexico. The Spanish conquest brought a system of dominance of the white race. As the system of inequality was established, the new group identity, mestizo, became physical evidence that there was no inequality

due to race. This racial "utopia" denies the existing racial inequality. As of now, different indigenous groups lack political recognition, which denies services and allows for racial discrimination. It presents the concept of colorism and *mestizaje* and the role of color-blind ideology in defining the current socioeconomic stratification of the country, and how critical race theory has helped deconstruct relations of power.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and participants. In specific, I describe the research design, forms of data collection, participants of the study, and data analysis methods. Grounded theory is introduced as the conceptual framework that allows to understanding systems of oppression, and the guiding framework for this study. I review some of the qualitative methodology that has been used to obtain youth's perceptions, such is the case of participatory action research. In addition, I describe my experience working with the students and I introduce my subjectivity as a researcher, and discuss the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 discusses racialized language. This refers to language that is used to refer or classify someone based on race or the color of his or her skin. This chapter discusses students' use of nicknames and sayings with their friends as well as with their families, and the meanings associated with skin color. Moreover, it analyzes how language is used to exclude certain groups and communities. Data shows the struggle to conceive racialized language as something that oppresses another group, the constant negotiation between the intention and the impact. The chapter discusses the challenges encountered by the students' denial of racism.

Chapter 5 presents how colorblind ideology serves to justify social differences by indicating differences are a result of social class. In addition, this chapter will examine how colorblind ideology has served to ignore indigenous representation and worked at excluding them in society. Who students

define as poor in their communities is directly related to skin color and race, and describes that being White is a "better" way to look like.

Chapter 6 discusses how the ideology of *mestizaje* and the colorblind ideology reinforce practices that exclude indigenous communities. Spatial stratification is a way in which native communities are pushed to the periphery of a city where their needs and challenges are left unattended and easier to ignore. Moreover, students narrative show how, due to colorblind ideology, practices of exclusion normalize and justify the current social divide and blame the native groups for their socioeconomic status.

Chapter 7 presents the concluding remarks and recommendations made from the findings. It discusses the importance of initiating a conversation with our students. Participants in this study, expressed their desire to have these types of conversations, they recognized there is a problem but do not have a space where they can openly talk about these issues where they are active participants of colorism and racism.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

"Race is a condition of individual and collective identity, a permanent, though tremendously flexible, element of social structure. Race is a means of knowing and organizing the social world; it is subject to continual contestation and reinterpretation, but it is no more likely to disappear than any other forms of human inequality and difference..." (Winant, 1994, p. xiii)

When race is viewed as something that has an impact on life chances that means we are race cognizant, when there is the acknowledgement that race has no significant effect on life chances, that is refer as color-blindness in the United States and *race-blindness* in Mexico (Sue, 2011). It cannot be assumed that all people of color will have the same race-cognizance than people of color from the United States (Dill, 2008). "The racial frames of Mexicans are independent of one's position in the racial-color hierarchy in Mexico; thus, they are very similar to those exhibited by US Whites... a result of a race-blind national ideology operating in Mexico, an ideology whose roots run deeper than color-blind ideology that exists in the United States" (p. 545). In this study, I will refer to color-blindness as the ideology that exists in Mexico. However, I considered it important to introduce the concept of race-blindness because it provides to the readers a perhaps new perspective when thinking about racism in contexts outside the United States. In Mexico, a race-blind ideology means that for that particular group of people talking about race is taboo, it is not talked about in school, at home or public spaces; if it is discussed, it is in relation on how it happens somewhere else (i.e. the Unites States). This chapter will explain how skin color has social meanings, and I will define the concepts of colorism and colorblind ideology.

Race and identity

People interpret the world through racial lenses, thus affecting our worldview and perspective. The concept of "race" was developed when skin color became associated with physical and cultural traits, and was then considered fixed. Our definition of race has now evolved and it is known to be not

biological but social and political. The social and political definition of race must be looked upon, as such definitions carry with them meanings that are given to different racial categories. These definitions have social meanings and consequences attached to them. Racial categories have become institutionalized through language and skin color, and they are symbols of that institutional structure of race (Jablonski, 2012). Racial identity is important to understanding the skin color discourse. It has been identified as an emotional or affection attachment to the concept of belonging to a group of people (e.g. Mexican, Black) (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). Those who have a clear identification of their racial identity are more aware of other people's race in social settings.

According to Hochschild and Weaver (2007) it is race that determines one's life chances. They suggest that the racial meanings attached to racial identity are the primary source of marginalization, and skin color is a secondary form of marginalization. For instance, institutional and individual racism are guided by group membership (Cohen, 1999). Even though, skin color influences self-perception and the perception of other's ethnic and racial groups membership (Tummala-Narra, 2007), it is not, according researchers Hoshchild and Weaver, a component that impacts one's life chances. They indicate that fighting for racial equality cannot be done by looking within group differences but from collectively working as a group to fight against the out-group or oppressor (Hochschild and Weaver, 2007). Working collectively is necessary to address systemic oppression, but differences within group membership do exist and they are influenced by skin color.

Meanings and consequences attached to racial categories, impact a person's life chances, and the accessibility of material and symbolic resources (Wymmer, 2008; Fox & Guglielmo, 2012). These consequences are referred to as social closure. It is racial minorities that have disproportionately been disadvantaged not only between racial categories but also within racial groups, based upon skin color (Turner, 1995). Within racial groups, a lighter skin tone carries economic and personal advantages

(Thompson & Keith, 2001) where access and opportunities are more likely to be given to those of lighter skin color. The outcome becomes a cycle where light-skin Blacks have more prestigious jobs earn greater income, and complete more years of school, while dark-skin Blacks earn lower income and job status, have lower levels of education (Keith & Herring, 1991; Thompson & Keith, 2001). Intra-racial disparities are as detrimental to a person's life chances as are inter-racial divisions (Hughes and Hertel, 1990).

Social closure as related to both race and skin color, helps us understand racial and color dynamics of Latinos in the United States. It refers to the way in which "social groups formed around positions in the technical division of labor; create a social and legal barriers that restrict 'access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles'" (Weeden, 2002, p. 57). Skin color becomes crucial for Latinos' acculturation and assimilation. Light skin tone is a reflection of whiteness and therefore greater opportunities, and dark skin means non-white and therefore implies limited opportunity. Research suggests that Mexican-Americans with darker skin have lower levels of acculturation than those with light skin (Vazquez et al. 1997). Other ways in which people have acculturated are through the use of language. Research found that Puerto Ricans of dark complexion actively tried to acculturate by abandoning the Spanish language and learning English (Mason, 2004).

The United States, as it becomes more racially diverse, is entering a racial system much like the one in Latin American. Bonilla-Silva (2004) describes this as the tri-racial system. He states that the U.S. is no longer a bi-racial (white, non-white) system but that now it is becoming tri-racial (white, honorary white, the collective black). Some indicators of the new shift in the racial order are the growing trend of interracial marriages; the advancement of groups such as Asian Americans, who have a greater presence in colleges and have in some cases, surpassed the income of whites; and changes to the 2000 Census, which has now allowed respondents to mark more than one racial classification.

Colorism is part of the racist system in the US and the world (Hunter, 2007). It is a manifestation of systemic racism (Hunter, 2007) and it is maintained by systemic white racism (Feagin, et. al., 2001). Just like many Latin American and Caribbean countries, the U.S.'s evolving tri-racial system (Bonilla-Silva, 2004) places whites at the top. The categories identified by Bonilla-Silva are: "'traditional' whites, new 'white' immigrants... totally assimilated white Latinos... and lighter-skinned multiracials" (p. 932). The middle group is the honorary white which will comprise most light-skinned Latinos, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, Filipinos, and most Middle Eastern Americans" (p. 933). And the group located at the bottom is the collective black, which will be "blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians" (p. 933). This system uses skin color as the determinant of group differentiation and stratification.

Through intermarriage, colorism is prevalent. The more mixing of races occurs the more difficult it is to detect racial discrimination and discrimination occurs by skin color (Jones, 2000). Since identifying a racial category is becoming more difficult, Jones questions if the current legal frameworks are prepared for the claims that could be coming. For example in Latin America, in countries such as Brazil, Cuba and Mexico social hierarchy is highly based on skin color, however such countries claim this distinction having nothing to do with race, and there is no question about racial injustice or inequality (Harris, 2008). *Mestizaje* is a hegemonic political ideology, a promise of equality and a racialized and racist experience that normalized privilege and exclusion (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). As an ideology it has "a democratic inclusive aspect... which holds out the promise of improvement through race mixture for individuals and for the nation: everyone can be a candidate for mixture and hence moral and social uplifting. At the same time, of course, it is a deeply discriminatory ideology and practice, since it is based on the idea of the inferiority of blacks and indigenous people and, in practice, of discrimination against them" (Wade, 2001, p. 849). Latin America is an example of

how cultures and societies' operate where mestizos are the majority, and where countries proclaim to have a *raceless* society.

Identifying Racism and Colorism through Critical Race Theory

Our understanding of race has moved from a biological to a phenotypical conversation. Cultural forms are now racialized and although racial categories have changed over time, the two stable categories remain Black and White. Both categories are placed on a continuum that places Black and White as opposites and creates a ranking among groups of people that basically define, who is not White (Ladson-Billings, 1998). However, defining who is considered White has changed through time. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an important tool that helps deconstruct, reconstruct and construct relations of power. CRT emerged in the 1970s as a result of the low progress of civil rights law in the United States (Delgado, 1995). It has helped to not only understand the relation between law and racial power but to change it (Crenshaw et al., 1995). It is for this reason that CRT requires both action and reflection (Matsuda, et al. 1993) and social transformation (Calmore, 1995).

CRT scholars argue that a race neutral language negates the experiences both social and historical of oppressed groups, and it leaves white privilege unchallenged (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). For example, in the classroom pretending not to notice students' color "makes no sense unless being of different colors is somehow shameful" (Thompson, 1998, p. 524). As a result, color-blindness becomes a micro-aggression when students of color internalize a sense of shame of abnormality because of their skin color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The belief that color-blindness will eliminate racism ignores the social and systemic nature of racism and posits racism at an individual level and therefore a personal issue (Lopez, 2003).

Race is socially constructed, it is created by people, it is not fixed it is dynamic and constantly changing (Marable, 2002). Because race is so ingrained in our culture and psyche, it is difficult for

people to accept its construction and malleability (Davila & de Bradley, 2010). In order to understand the experiences of people of color, CRT scholars analyze the intersectionality of the different experiences from a structural, political and representational point of reference. In terms of gender, structural intersectionality examines the way in which women experience different forms of subordination simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1993). In this case vulnerability is increased when two oppressive factors are experienced simultaneously and feeding of each other (Tate, 1997).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in response to failures of civil rights to produce lasting racial reform (Tate, 1997; Taylor, 1998). CRT called for a reinterpretation of civil rights, which failed to address institutional and structural racism in the political economy (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 9). Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado reported how racism is ingrained in America's social structures, such as ideology, legal systems, and fundamental conceptions of law, property and privilege (Lynn & Adams, 2002). In law school, scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, and Charles Lawrence advocated for the law curriculum to include issues of race and racism (Tate, 1997). Matsuda defined six principles that move CRT (Matsuda, et al., 1993); first, CRT acknowledges that racism is endemic in U.S. society. Second, CRT intersects with other disciplines to establish intersections between race and other forms of inequality (e.g. classism, sexism). Third, CRT examines the limitations of civil rights law and works to reframe U.S. jurisprudence for the advantage of the oppressed, it insists on a contextual and historical analysis of the law that maintains group advantages and disadvantages. Also, CRT works to expose legal and cultural ideologies that claim to maintain objectivity, neutrality, color blindness and meritocracy. Fifth, CRT places at a center the experiences of people of color and theorizes race within that context. And last, it works to eliminate all forms of oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Tate, 1997; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 9).

In order to describe what has never been described before, and name injustices that have never been considered, new concepts must be created. As a result, CRT scholars saw a need for a new vocabulary that could name race-related structures of oppression in the law and society that had not been adequately addressed in existing scholarship (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Incorporation this new vocabulary into laws is important in critical studies. Critical Legal Studies (CLS) describe the ways that "legal ideology has helped create, support, and legitimate America's present class structure'' (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1350). It contributes to the analysis of legitimating structures of society. Legal analysts concur that the law serves the interests of the powerful groups in society. However, there is criticism that CLS does not adequately address the experiences of people of color (Tate, 1997, p. 198), as opposed to CRT, which places the experiences of people of color at the center of the theoretical analysis.

Scholars such as Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado have contributed to the expansion of narratives of people of color. They utilize metaphorical tales, counter narratives from multiple historical and social perspectives that give voice to the experiences of the oppressed from their perspective (Lynn & Adams, 2002), they strengthen tradition and cultural survival and resistance (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Voice is the major theme in CRT. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) describe voice as "the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge" (p. 10). Personal expression allows people to convey their own knowledge and it serves to empower those sharing their story and those to whom the stories are shared to (Calmore, 1995). Oppressed groups have "known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2436). Solorzano and Van Ausdale (2002) provide four functions of counter-stories: they build community; they challenge the perceived wisdom; they open new windows into the reality of others; and they can teach others about

construction of a 'richer world" that combines the story and the current reality. Through the use of narratives, critical race theory challenges the hegemony of the white experience. It presents the white experience as normative and limiting to people of color (Calmore, 1995). Critical race theory uses those experiences as the bases for the analysis of a legal system that serves to subordinate a group of people.

Racism is ingrained legally, culturally and psychologically in U.S. society (Tate, 1997). It operates through subtle and obvious acts that disadvantage minority groups (Gillborn, 2006). Equal opportunity policies and law can help with obvious racist acts, but they do little to eliminate everyday racism experienced by people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is due to these policies that people assume that racism is no longer part of this society and that all people have equal opportunity. For this reason, stories are important as they serve to add context to the "objectivity" of mainstream positivist perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Similarly, in Mexico, the project of *mestizaje* serves to recognize mestizos as a national identity, and "solidifies into a form of nationalist denial in moments when racism is openly contested or brought up" (Moreno Figueroa, 2016).

The experience of people of color has been silenced (Delpit, 1988) and continues to be silenced with the current color-blind ideology. Stereotypes serve to justify the oppression of people of color, and it is those stereotypes that place Whites as deserving. "Stereotypes serve a hegemonic function by perpetuating a mythology about both Blacks and Whites even today, reinforcing an illusion of a White community that cuts across ethnic, gender, and class lines" (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1371). Stereotypes take the form of language and they communicated in our everyday conversations or racial scripts. In addition to incorporating stereotypes, they comprehend a much broader understanding by including "the social structure, the material conditions, and the historical context" (Molina, 2010, p. 158) of the racialized group. More than stereotypes, racial scripts show relations of power. They are based on our

experiences with the other group, even if there is not much interaction, racial scripts take the contact and lack of it as a factor that affects peoples' lives.

CRT scholars try to dismantle power relations and concepts such as color-blindness and equal opportunity to provide a thorough historical and legal analysis of race and law (Tate, 1997). School funding is a visible example of inequality of institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Educational politics concern the allocation of resources and decision-making processes, both informal and formal, and the outcomes associated with them (Lopez, 2003).

There is an argument that race is untheorized, this does not mean that there is no research on race and education but that the knowledge obtained from that research has not been implemented at a systemic level for the analysis of educational inequality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Interest convergence (Bell 1979) helps understand why policies that aim at achieving equality fail to do so. Interest convergence means that whites will only support policies that work at the advancement of Blacks, or other minority groups, if they also promote White interests. Schools are considered state agencies that are directly affected by politics. CRT helps understand the interaction between citizenship, race and education.

Racist practices go often unnoticed even though its manifestations are blatant (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This happens because racism is so common and pervasive that it is often taken for granted (Lopez, 2003). This is why among the principles of CRT is "to critically interrogate how the law reproduces, reifies, and normalizes racism in society" (Lopez, 2003, p. 83). In order to understand how White hegemony subordinates people of color and to change the connection between law and racial power, CRT scholars employ multiple doctrines and methodologies (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT's purpose is not to predict occurrences, but rather is it a perspective, a set of beliefs about the significance of race and racism in U.S. society (Gillborn, 2006). For example, the policy of affirmative

action has benefited White women as the major recipients as opposed to what it is generally thought (Ladson-Billings, 1998). There is great opposition to affirmative action policies as it is presumed that people of color benefit the most from it. In this case, the "interest convergence" tenet, that is that Whites will tolerate the advancement of people of color as long as it promotes their own (White's) interests (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

It is for this reason that CRT comprises more than the evaluation of institutional racism, involves the critical analysis of U.S. politics and society. "CRT portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest or powerful entities of society" (Tate, 1997, p. 235). Harris (1993) provides a concept that helps understand the dominant scope of White supremacy; she introduces "whiteness as property." In the U.S. property is a right not a physical object. Seeing property as a right helps CRT scholars in the analyses of the value of whiteness. "Whiteness as property is 'the legal legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (p. 1715). Among the privileges and benefits of property is the absolute right to exclude (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Critical Whiteness. White supremacy operates in a society where white people take it for granted and *others* have to find their location in the oppressive reality of the "WhiteWorld" (Gillborn, 2006). For this reason, Matias and colleagues (2014) argue that critical race theory is not sufficient to analyze the white experience. Critical Whiteness studies analyze the ways in which whiteness has been produced. It analyzes white supremacy through law, and how law has impacted whiteness historically and economically. In essence, it is argued that "law influences what we look like, the meanings ascribed to our looks, and the material reality that confirms the meaning of our appearances" (Haney Lopez, 1996 p. 113). It problematizes the identity of the dominant group (Doane, 2003). Especially

when whites are the "Determiner" of what is and what is not racist (Matias et al., 2014). Like critical race theory, whiteness studies explore whiteness comprehensively through cultural studies, education, anthropology, sociology, history and legal studies.

The sociological approach to whiteness looks at it in terms of location, of standpoint, and invisibility (Frankenber, 1997). The location in the hierarchical structure refers to the social system as an advantage to other groups. Standpoint refers to the way in which whites see themselves in relation to others, how they perceive others and society. Most important is that whiteness has been normalized and is therefore invisible, due to this normalization of whiteness cultural practices go unchallenged and unnoticed. From this perspective, the relationship among groups has a certain order, where whites have defined this order and it is a system that has been ascribed as the norm and goes unchallenged by whites.

The political and cultural hegemony of whiteness has established racial order based on racial distinctions. This has privileged whites as the mainstream and any other groups thus feel different. Due to the normativity of whiteness, whites feel cultureless and raceless (Doane, 2003). They see themselves as the standard and others are what different from that standard. White see race as a problem that others have. Through the study of whiteness the attitude and identity of whites is questioned by exploring whites' understandings of themselves and their status in society and their role in maintaining racial inequality (Hartman, Gerteis & Croll, 2009).

Hartman and colleagues worked at identifying through empirical tests the three dimensions that are at the core of whiteness; the first is race as salient and important; the second, understanding of racial privilege; and third, color-blind ideology to which whites adhere to. In their study, questions operationalized these concepts of whiteness theory. Their findings corroborated the tenets of whiteness, that indicate that for whites their racial identities are less visible compared to the

individuals from other groups; that whites are less likely to see their privileges compare to non-white respondents; and that color-blind ideology is not only shared by whites but also by non-whites. These findings show the complexity of whiteness as a systematic form of oppression that all members of society are a part of, to certain degrees. When identifying privilege it is common for whites to resist the privileges that are attached to being white, they generally see themselves and non-players in the racial system. This finding also brings up the notion that the systemic role of whiteness in ordering the social structure, as the results also find that is not only whites who ascribe to the colorblind ideology but also people of color.

White supremacy is a political system that organizes the world as we see it today (Mills, 1997). Mills insists that racism must be recognized as a political system that will in turn let us theorize as a power structure of norms, opportunities, rights and responsibilities. The racial contract is a theory that looks at the two segregated work areas: the world of the mainstream, and the world of the Native American, African American, and Third and Fourth worlds (p.3). The former focusing with ethics and philosophy, and abstractly in justice and rights, and the latter focusing on issues of conquest, imperialism, colonialism, race and racism, cultural authenticity, national identity, etc. This contract is an "exploitation contract" of those categorized as white over the nonwhites, who are then objects of the agreement (Mills, 1997, p. 10). This contract makes the White moral psychology transparent, that is, it legitimizes actions that through history have oppressed non-whites. Mills argues that whites can reject the contract by rejecting all the privileges associated with whiteness and by challenging those practices, otherwise, going along with things makes Whites full participants of the contract.

There is a conscious use of words such as contract, rights and responsibilities that automatically involve the law. When law is involved it means the protection of something, if we then associate whiteness in law, then that refers to a direct protection of whiteness in our judicial system,

that is, the system that ultimately governs a nation. As I previously mentioned, whiteness has been recognized as the ultimate property (Harris, 1993). Property right is one concept that slows down the process of achieving equity. The civil rights movement is about the rights of the individual; and individual rights go hand in hand with the concept of property right (Bell, 1987, p. 239). Considered property, whiteness must then be protected and laws protect it. "Possession– the act necessary to lay basis for rights in property – was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness – that which Whites alone possess – is valuable and is property" (Harris, 1993, p. 1721). Among the functions of whiteness as property is the right to exclude. For instance, in Mexico's history whiteness as property can be demonstrated by the removal of race as a demographic category in the census.

Whiteness as property (Harris 1993) discusses the consequences of race using a social distance approach. In this case whiteness, although it originated as a racial category, has become a form of property and property right that has been protected by the law. There is a distinction between race categories as property and property rights. Harris best describes the complex dynamics of race as property and property rights:

> "The hyper-exploitation of Black labor was accomplished by treating Black people themselves as objects of property. Race and property were thus conflated by establishing a form of property contingent on race - only Blacks were subjugated as slaves and treated as property... Only white possession and occupation of land was validated and therefore privileged as a basis for property rights. These distinct forms of exploitation each contributed in varying ways to the construction of whiteness as property" (p. 1716).

Although this statement is meant to describe the history of Blacks in the United States, this statement has implication to Mexico's history as both Africans and Indigenous people were treated as

slaves. During the colonial period the Spaniards used indigenous and Africans as slaves (Chavez-Duenas, Adames & Organista, 2014). At first, indigenous people were used as slaves of the new world (Tank de Estrada & Marichal, 2010) but with the conditions of slavery their population declined tremendously. It was then than African people were brought to Latin America as slaves "more than 10 million African slaves were brought to Latin America" (Chavez-Duenas, et al., 2014, p. 6). Through law, white supremacy obtained free labor and land justified by the creation of racial categories. Harris description of property rights in the United States is based on racial domination. A story that is similar from Latin American and Mexico in specific.

The Spanish conquerors established a system of inequality that placed the White race as superior. This system also created an ideology that denied this inequality, or also called White supremacy. These ideologies are ingrained in today's social and political system. Katzew (1996) provides a pyramid of the social status reflective of the Latin American social structure (see Figure 3). This type of white domination is never settled and in constant reconstruction and reestablished by whites (Leonardo, 2009). The Latin American Social Caste Pyramid (LASCP) places Africans at the bottom of the pyramid, followed by Indigenous, then *Zambos* (mixed Indigenous and African ancestry), then *Mulatos* is on top (mixed European and African Descent), Mestizos (mixed European and Indigenous ancestry), *Criollos* (Europeans born in the Americas and at the top are Spaniards (those born in Spain). It is important to note that in this pyramid in the section of Indigenous and Africans the description says *phenotypically of*, which states the importance of physical characteristics in the class structure. In sum, this pyramid illustrates how race divides people across origin, gender, class and different social identities (Leonardo, 2009)
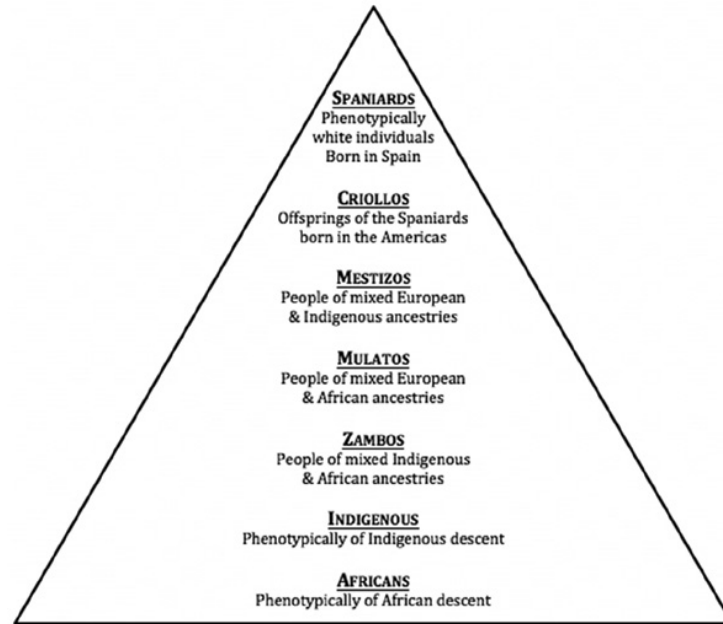
SPANIARDS
Phenotypically
white individuals
Born in Spain

CRIOLLOS
Offsprings of the Spaniards
born in the Americas

MESTIZOS
People of mixed European
& Indigenous ancestries

MULATOS
People of mixed European
& African ancestries

ZAMBOS
People of mixed Indigenous
& African ancestries

INDIGENOUS
Phenotypically of Indigenous descent

AFRICANS
Phenotypically of African descent

Figure 1. The Latin American Social Caste Pyramid (LASCP) Katzew (1996).

In this pyramid Whites control the political, social and economic spheres of society. That is, a white supremacy is set into place where the reestablishment and reconstruction of their superiority is maintained by the privilege. The way this power structure is maintained is through titles, censorship, formal education and other resources (Livi-Bacci, 2008). This pyramid illustrates how whiteness is a structuring property of the social system (Owen, 2007). According to Owen, whiteness has seven functional properties: it defines a standpoint; social location; it normalizes and therefore thought of as normal or natural; it is invisible, even to non-whites; it is grounded on the interest and values of those racialized as White; it is socio-historical; and violent with its origins of slavery, genocide and exploitation of the people of color, all to maintain white supremacy.

Social systems are impacted by the structuring property of whiteness. When this is considered then the implication is that whiteness will impact cultural representations, social practices, and social identity. The social order not only implies roles and the relationship among groups but also places each group in hierarchical order, in a relationship of superiority and subordination (Owen, 2007).

Cultural representations involve images and meanings associated to those images, what is visible. Social practices then are informed by the images of those representations and day-to-day interactions reflect those messages. Based on these practices, our identity and the status of our group in the hierarchical social order have implications for opportunities, wealth, and life chances.

In Mexico, the Spanish conquerors used the myth of *mestizaje* to take possession indigenous cultural beliefs and practices, discredit these culture and make of the White cultural practices as the foundation of a country's identity. A visible example of whiteness as property occurring in Mexico is seeing how laws have not recognized Indigenous, Afro-Mexican, and other groups fighting for recognition as an ethnic group. And therefore, denies them basic public support. *Mestizaje* continues to deny the racial privilege of Whites and is compared to color-blind attitudes seen in the United States (Chavez-Duenas, Adames & Organista, 2014).

Critical race theory builds upon legal scholarship and identifies its text as dominated by White ideology and therefore lacking in bicultural perspectives (Tate, 1997). Critical race theorists argue that political, legal and moral analysis is situational. It is for this reason that stories, 'naming one's reality' is important in legal discourse. Because so much of our reality is based on how it is defined, how the legal system defines the oppressed groups has much influence on the way in which the oppressed groups' problems and stories are shared and handled. On the other hand, the way in which public problems are defined influences the way laws and policies are created (Tate, 1997). Delgado (1989) recognizes four reasons why narratives are important in legal scholarship. First, reality is socially constructed, that is people have the power to construct and deconstruct their realities. Second, stories provide a different perspective that can potentially change mindsets, that is, people have the power to educate other about the realities of the "other". Third, stories help build communities when people share their experience they not only learn about the "other", but the "other" also becomes someone

who might share similar experiences thus forming a stronger bond. And last, they provide members of out-groups mental self-preservation (e.g. demoralization and self-condemnation by internalizing stereotypic images of their group), this is a way in which people share their history, a history that might otherwise not be known, it is a validation of their experiences. In addition, it is through storytelling that people gain insight into how they have been oppressed (Delgado, 1990). Therefore, voice is the first step to the road to social justice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The experiential knowledge of people of color provides a perspective on a society organized by racism (Delgado, 1990). Those stories become counter-stories that challenge current versions of reality and are used as a conceptual, methodological and pedagogical case study (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Stories are a major component of CRT, critical race methodology focuses on the stories and experiences of students of color as a tool to expose, analyze and challenge racial privilege. Therefore, stories become a valid form of evidence that serves to document inequity (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). In education, 'the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system ... Without authentic voices of people of color it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities' (Ladson- Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 58).

Storytelling comes also at a risk, the risk that the story or the story is rejected. Delgado (1989) describes it in this way:

> Stories and counter-stories can serve an equally important destructive function. They can show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion... Stories and counter-stories, to be effective, must be or must appear to be non-coercive. They invite the reader to suspend judgment, listen for their point or message, then decide what measure of truth they contain. They are insinuative, not frontal: they

offer a respite from the linear, coercive discourse that characterizes much of the legal writing (p. 2415).

Storytelling often records instances of the violence experienced by racial oppression. CRT scholar and LatCrit scholars suggest that this can become liberating (Fernandez, 2002). Stories provide information that can be used to empower and transform those that have been oppressed, places that have been identified as sites of oppression can also become sites of resistance (Solórzano and Villalpando, 1998). For this reason that telling your story, providing an opportunity for people to voice their experiences, or naming their reality, have been considered important for achieving racial emancipation (Delgado, 1995). CRT and LatCrit use the experiential knowledge and offer an analytical intervention where race and other social constructs are placed at the center of analysis, that is, race and racism is not seen as a just a part of the story, it is in fact seen as central to the narration (Fernandez, 2002). Delgado (1988) states the difference between people of color and Whites; he says "White people rarely see acts of blatant or subtle racism, while minority people experience them all the time" (p. 407). Stories acknowledge and validate the experiences of people of color, and they are also a tool for creating awareness of the effects of racism and oppression; thus, counter-stories are an essential element of knowledge production.

These stories have remained silent for indigenous people and also for Afro-Mexicans. In Mexico, Blackness has a trajectory of tension and disidentification. Their presence has been made invisible more so than the realities of the indigenous people. Despite this there is an Afro-Mexican group in southern Mexico that are fighting to get their stories heard and their culture acknowledged in the Mexican culture and history (Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013). Afro-Mexican communities are trying to reclaim their history and identity. They are demanding official recognition and visibility.

For example, in the U.S. when discussing issues of educational opportunities and aspirations schools play a major role in students' decisions. Today, we are heading back towards school segregation, where African American and Latino schools are characterized but students of low socioeconomic status and therefore are schools with insufficient funding and a lack of quality in education that underprepares students from college and good job opportunities (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Similarly in Mexico, studies have found that students of dark-skin complexion attend predominantly school of low quality and fewer resources (Villareal, 2010). Using the Mexican Panel Study 2006 the researchers were able to identity a relationship between skin color and socioeconomic.
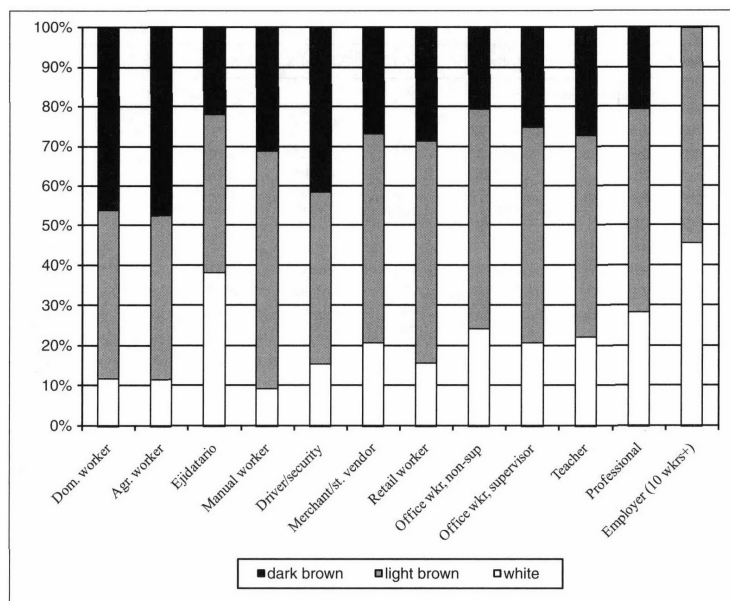
Figure 4. Percent Employed Respondents in Each Skin Color Category by Occupation (Villareal, 2010, p. 666).

Figure 4, shows skin color by occupation results found in the Panel Study 2006. In specific it was found that "Individuals with darker skin tones have substantially lower education levels even once other socio-demographic characteristics, such as... indigenous background at taken into account" (Villareal, 2010, p.665). The results show that 55% of dark brown skin respondents are domestic workers contrary to no dark-brown skin respondents were in the employer category.

Conclusion

Mexico, unlike the United States, has an ambiguous racial classification system. This ambiguity masks a system of inequality. Skin color plays a major role in the distinction between who gets access to what resources. Mestizaje, which is the national ideology in Mexico, comprises the largest percentage of Mexico's population, is a myth that does not prevent discrimination based on skin color (Telles & Sue, 2009). Post-racial ideologies ignore the discriminatory practices that occur, believing that there is only one racial category. They are produced and reproduced by various institutions, such as religion, education, and others. A post-racial ideology impedes the possibility to address unjust practices and hinders the probability of upward social mobility (Villareal, 2010).

Mexico, similarly to the United States, has a history were conquerors viewed indigenous people as backwards, people that needed to be civilized. This means that Mexico was created under a European perception of the world where Whites are superior. This gave rise to a foundation of inequality between White and non-Whites (Soler Castillo & Pardo Abril, 2009). The Mestizo as a national identity is one way in which indigenous groups are *othered* and institutional education has also taken part in this form of post-racial ideology. It can then be understood why even with *mestizaje*, the person who is categorized as indigenous is the one that maintains its indigenous culture and practice. These groups that failed to "*mejorar la raza/improve the race"* through *mestizaje*, are simply non-white and they are viewed as others or simply not seen. Even though researchers such as Gamio tried to provide the political recognition and importance of indigenous culture by incorporating indigenous culture as part of the national census. Today, such recognition of an indigenous identity has been left to one question of language.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

When researching race, racism and classism, it is necessary to investigate feelings and lived experiences. Both quantitative and qualitative research investigates these issues to different degrees. Qualitative research however, gives us a greater insight into the lived experiences of the participants, who are those who experience oppression and discrimination on a daily basis. For this reason qualitative research has been criticized for being subjective and not "scientific" enough. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) assert that one misinformed criticism asserts that qualitative researchers provide subjective impressions, unsubstantiated by rigorous research. Qualitative researchers say their methods are not imprecise and that they are unwilling to sacrifice depth over generalizability. When it comes to choosing methodologies for a study, it is important to be clear about the purposes of the study and the theoretical framework. The methods are guided by the theory guiding the study and they vary depending on the question being asked (National Research Council, 2002).

Much research has been done on the effects of race and racism on children and youth. A major obstacle to youth participation is when youth do not see themselves as agents of change, when they have ideas about how to proceed but do not have the support or resources to take action, and also when adults see youth as deficits rather than resources of knowledge (Checkoway, 2011). This study views young adult students as resources of knowledge and it looks to uncover their experiences and perceptions about their community and culture with a specific focus on the ways in which everyday practices maintain a system of inequality

Using a grounded theory approach, I explore the racialized language that youth and young adults utilize on a daily basis. These racialized discourses, in the forms of jokes, saying and nicknames are the epitome of the racism and colorism that exists in Mexico. To understand race and racism,

qualitative scholars have used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a guiding theory to methods. CRT scholars recognize the intersectionality of identities, which reminds us of the variability of experiences both between and within groups of people (Delgado and Stefancic 2001; Crenshaw 1995; Matsuda 2002).

Qualitative Research

Traditionally, quantitative research methods allow for the testing and exploration of ideas about how our society and psyche work. It allows for the analysis of mass data, national data that is reflective of society's composition in this country. Studies by researchers such as Arce, Munguia and Frisbie (1987), and Espino and Franz (2002), allow for the identification of patterns. They bring to light the current composition and living conditions of people of color in this country. These types of studies are not performed in isolated rooms, they take place at people's homes and they ask facts (e.g. occupation, household income). These studies showed a correlation between someone's skin color and life opportunities; thus, allowing the creation of hypotheses about the causes for the availability or lack of opportunities for some. Quantitative research has allowed for students' identification expressions that refer to indigenous communities, where students demonstrate cultural pride with indigenous cultures while at the same time showing expressions of non-acceptance and rejection towards them (Aguayo Rousell & Piña Osorio, 2016). On another hand, qualitative research allows researcher to emphasize an open-ended approach that aids in creating new directions and insights.

Qualitative research that has involved youth in data collection and analysis do so utilizing different methodologies. Studies that have worked at investigating the relationship between disinvestment and gentrification of their community, public representations and self-understanding had utilized observation archival analysis and focus groups (Cahill, 2006). In specific, her study originated with the intention to understand the experiences of women of color. In qualitative, both the researcher

and the participants provide the data to be analyzed. The participants get to interview, map their community and discuss their experiences about personal experiences of racism at school. A common technique observed in qualitative studies is participant observation, one of the most common qualitative methods. It allows researcher to enter the participants' world and observe their interactions. It allows the researcher to get to know the participants and for the participants to get to know and trust the researcher (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2007; Dunbar, Rodriguez, Parker, 2001).

Qualitative research provides the space and opportunity for participants to voice their experience. Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson and Tuck (2008) describe qualitative research as a 'people-centered space' it was a space for participants to voice their experience and learn and engage in discussion about power structures. In addition, participants undergo a sense of empowerment, in specific they say: "We are not serving or empowering youth because as youth we can do this work ourselves. We can work with allies but only on common ground... this is a lifelong process of challenging assumptions and of having your own assumptions challenged, of breaking stereotypes by outgrowing them, and of being humble enough to see that everyone has something to teach you" (p. 46).

Researching Racism Through Qualitative Methodologies with Youth

By using quantitative and qualitative methodology, critical PAR (Participatory Action Research) develops research designs and methods that recover historical memory, de-ideologize everyday experience and utilizes people's virtues (Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012). When using quantitative methods in PAR the collaboration of all researchers is inherent to the approach and adds dimension to its findings (Fox & Fine, 2012). Overall, it is a collaborative approach were people team in an effort to advocate for social justice using research as a tool to achieve their goals (Reason and Bradbury, 2006). Participatory Action research invites for a narrative collaboration, where multiple

speakers could dominate a conversation or control the direction of a conversation. Consensus and agreement—or disagreement— are never automatic in the work of storytelling and they involve negotiations (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 109). In this case, the researcher has to be careful not to impose ideas or control the direction of the study. In collaborative studies the control of a narrative can be asserted based on hierarchy. On another hand, participatory researchers have all reflected on the conscious attempt to not control the direction of narrative, of letting participant researchers or young co-researchers have equal power as to who and what is researched.

Youth participatory action research provides an understanding of institutional racism; it helps them identify power relations and consequences of oppression; it allows youth to understand how social problems affect their lives and through collective work empowers them to find solutions to these problems (Camarota & Fine, 2008). YPAR is a formal resistance that leads to transformation—systematic and institutional change to promote social justice (p. 2). YPAR teaches that conditions of injustice are produced and therefore changeable.

The Makes Me Mad Project is a project that originated with the intention to understand the experiences of women of color. Through the use of participant observation, archival analysis and focus groups, six women researchers (the FedUp Honeys) investigated the relationship between the disinvestment and gentrification of their community, public representations, and their self-understanding. (Cahill, 2006). The young women formulated questions related to the resources or lack thereof in their community as well as the messages (i.e. stereotypes) encountered in their communities. The researcher investigated their communities, visited local non-profit organizations, interviewed community members, mapped their community and did field trips in their neighborhoods. All the information gathered was then examined and discussed as a group. In addition journals and note taking were part of the research process for these young women. Questions such as "what I like about my

neighborhood" or "personal experiences of racism at school" served to engaged the researchers in-group conversations.

To study youth's experiences and discontent with public high schools in New York, Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson and Tuck (2008) worked together with a groups of 12 youth to create the Collective of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire (CREDD). Similar to Cahill and colleagues' study, CREDD allowed youth to engage in the decision making process. CREDD researched the overuse of the General Education Development (GED) credential as a way to "push out unwanted students in New York City schools" (p. 5). This project was called the Gate-ways and Get-aways Project. Primary data collection methods were individual and group interviews, and focus groups. Secondary data collection methods were surveys, opinion polls, cold calls, memoirs, archival research, and mapping (p. 7). Focus groups used mapping exercises to discuss the experiences of the GED and life satisfaction.

Dialogue is essential to discussing issues of race. Checkoway (2009) analyzed youth dialogues on race and ethnicity in Detroit. This project focused on youth civic engagement and the experiences of youth who participated in intergroup dialogues. Unlike the previous studies mentioned, this study occurred at an already existing program. The Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity is a program that works at increasing intergroup dialogue among the youth of Metropolitan Detroit, one of the nation's most segregated metropolitan area (p. 42). Trained facilitators organized sessions where students explored their identities, developed dialogical skills, and organized community projects.

Another example of YPAR in action is The Opportunity Gap Project (Torre, 2009). Superintendents, researchers and students collaborated to discuss the achievement gap between Asian American, White American, African American and Latino students. Over 100 youth participated in "research camps" to study youth perspective on "racial and class based (in)justice in schools and the

nation" (p. 108). An initial survey was created, were youth were able to revise and provide suggestions (e.g. inserting cartoons, open ended questions). 9,174 surveys were implemented. In addition, The Opportunity Gap Project conducted 24 focus groups and 32 individual interviews. Youth became researchers trained in methods (e.g. conducting interviews, participant observation, survey design and archival analyses) and social justice theory. Through the research methods learned, youth documented "the racialized impact of finance inequity and tracking on the structures, opportunities, social relations and outcomes of public education" (p. 109). More importantly, youth presented their findings at various national conferences. Among the strengths of the Opportunity Gap Project is that youth were provided the tools (i.e. trained in methods) that facilitated their voice and therefore empowered them to participate and take action in this project.

Research Setting

The goal of this study is to get students' opinion and perspectives on how colorism and racism are seen in their communities. The studies descried above, guided me on my selection of methods, data collection and participant selection. Similar to those studies, I decided to use schools as recruitment sites for to invite student participants. A high school in Mexico and international students from Mexico at a community college in the US were invited to participate in the study. Two high schools were contacted to participate in this study, only one of them responded to inquiry. One community college was contacted and approved to conduct this study. Both schools are located near the Mexico-United States border. The students selected at the community college, have only studied in the U.S. for less than two months bringing their culture and beliefs system with them. The age range of all participating students was between 17 to 20 years old.

The college is located in a U.S. southwestern city of a population of about 500,000. The community college has about 20,500 students, 51.9 percent are female and 42.2 percent are

Hispanic/Latino. 40.2 percent are 18-21 years old. The high school is located in a border city with a population of 212,000. The high school I visited is a public school with a student population of about 1,473. The school is a public high school located in a low socio-economic area attended by students of scare resources. The community college was targeted as a site that allowed me to reach students from other areas in Mexico. In addition, at this community college I was able to reach students from four different cities in two states: Chihuahua and Sonora. Utilizing two different sites and within a similar age group allow me to look at patterns that occur across the border region between Mexico and the United States.

Research Participants

This study explores the opinions and experiences of 24 Mexican students. I chose to work with seniors in high school and first and second-year college students because I wanted to work with students who were transitioning to adulthood, but who remained in different educational systems (high school and college). This would allow me to observe any differences in students' understanding of the racial system in their country and it would help me identify if the college system in Mexico provides opportunities for students to address racial inequality. In addition, the group of students represents a variation in socioeconomic status, which allows for a deeper exploration between social class and racism in Mexico. I examined the social system that allows for the creation and re-creation of language and practices that reinforce discriminatory practices against some groups in society. The availability of research participants from different areas allowed for the identification of trends that extend beyond a border city to a broader border region.

At the high school I was introduced to the school counselor who gave me access to the 11th and 12th grade classrooms. I introduced myself to the students. Told them I was pursuing my doctoral degree and that I was interested in working with them on a research study about racism in Mexico. I

mentioned the different methods we could use, such as focus groups, diagrams, photographs, interviews, but they ultimately they would choose what methods and topic on racism they wanted to discuss. Some students expressed interest in learning more about research and the topic I was studying. I distributed students a parent-consent and assent form, or the consent form. I also gave them my contact information, which is also located on the consent form. Lastly, asked if they had any questions. I passed around a sheet of paper for interested students to write their information so that I could contact them with a meeting time and location.

My communication with the students was in Spanish; the script I used to invite the students was also in Spanish and said:

I am Yvonne Perez, I am a college student, and I come to invite you to participate in a research project. If you participate I will ask you some question about the culture here in Mexico and about your experiences in your community. I am inviting you to become researchers along with me. For this part of the project we would gather once a week for one hour and a half and you would be working in groups to give me information about your community. For example, some of the activities that you could do are drawing, taking photos, using maps, creating and acting on a play, or any other activity that you might want to do. This does not mean that you will have to do all those activities; you can choose which activities you want to participate in. The group activity will occur after school.

Now, I will give you two letters to give to your parents where I explain to them what the project is about. In order to participate in this study, your parents must give you permission to do so by signing one of the letters I am giving you. Please do not forget to give them to your parents and then bring it to your teacher. If you have any questions you can contact me. I will be in the school at the end of the school day, so that you and your parents can reach me if you have

any questions.

The procedure I followed for students at the community college was similar, I explained my research and asked them to indicate on a piece of paper that I passed around to write their names and email if there were interested in participating. The students at the college were over 18 years old and there was no need to provide a parental consent form. At the community college, I started my participant recruitment process by targeting the international student club and identified students that participated in short-term programs. Table 1. Identifies the participants by city, school and manner in which data collection was obtained.

Student Name	City	School	Data Collection	Socioeconomic Status
Diana	Nogales	High School	Interview/focus group	low-socioeconomic class
Denisse	Nogales	High School	Interview	low-socioeconomic class
Jorge	Nogales	High School	Focus group	middle class
Antonio	Nogales	High School	Focus group	middle class
Marisa	Nogales	High School	Focus group	middle class
Carmen	Nogales	High School	Focus group	middle class
Enrique	Nogales	High School	Focus group	middle class
Marisol	Obregon	College	Interview	middle class
Graciela	Hermosillo	College	Interview	middle class
Aurora	Obregon	College	Interview	low-socioeconomic class
Arturo	Hermosillo	College	Interview/Focus Group	middle-upper class
Laura	Obregon	College	Interview/Focus Group	middle-upper class
Sofia	Hermosillo	College	Interview/Focus Group	middle-upper class
Alejandra	Hermosillo	College	Interview	middle class
Fernanda	Hermosillo	College	Interview	middle class
Manuel	Nogales	College	Focus Group	middle class
Jose	Nogales	College	Focus Group	low-socioeconomic class
Gustavo	Nogales	College	Focus Group	low-socioeconomic class
Francisco	Nogales	College	Focus Group	low-socioeconomic class
Jaime	Chihuahua	College	Interview	middle class
Claudia	Chihuahua	College	Interview	low-socioeconomic class
Eduardo	Chihuahua	College	Interview	middle class
Antonio	Chihuahua	College	Interview	middle class
Gabriela	Chihuahua	College	Interview	middle class

Table 1. Participant list.

Data Collection

Given the research methods related to PAR and the methodology appropriate for working with

youth, this study adopted an extended epistemology, which moves between and seeks to integrate several different kinds of knowing (McIntyre, 2008). Some of the methods of data collection I used are: interview, focus groups, participant observation, diagramming, and photovoice.

I collected data for one year. The methods of data collection varied depending on the participants' interest and time availability. The study consisted on semi-structured interviews lasting one hour, focus groups lasting one to one and a half hours. Participant observation occurred once a week for a period of 2 hours and for a total of five months. Other sources of data collection were an analysis of elementary schools textbooks, and social media mentioned by the participants during focus groups or interviews. Social media became an important aspect of the students' communication and served to analyze their understanding of race and color. The study began by asking students to define what racism and colorism means to them. Two high school students chose to utilize photos. Photo-voice is the use of photographs that students document an event, an object, or anything that they consider is representative of the topic of interest (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004) to explore their community.

Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were the major form of data collection with the student participants at the community college. Due to the students' schedule and transportation availability, it was more convenient and the preferred method of data collection for the students. The students' were interviewed at their convenience. I introduced myself and have the students introduced themselves to me. I then explained to they that I was hoping to learn about their perspectives about what contributes to inequality in the Mexico, whether or not they believed racism existed in their communities or if they had experienced it in any way. I used open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview approach, which allowed me to obtain a greater range in answers from the participants (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). I was interested in learning about the students' experiences

talking about color and race, about their beliefs regarding the current social inequality for indigenous communities, and their beliefs about their opportunities for success. I also, wanted to know how aware they are of stereotypes about their communities, in specific those related to indigenous communities and the meaning and importance they ascribe to them. From personal experience, I know that initiating a conversation about the effects of racism in a community that has barely or never talked about it requires different approaches. I made an effort to initiate my interviews with the general question "what do you think racism mean?" I did this with the purpose of learning how much they know about this topic and how comfortable they feel talking about it. Some questions I asked were:

- Have you talked about racism in school or at home?

- Do you think there is racism in Mexico?

- Do you use or have you heard nicknames related to skin color?

- How do you think a successful person looks like?

- How do you think a poor person looks like?

- Has someone teased you because of your skin color?

- Have you seen someone being discriminated against because of their skin

  color or race?

Some of the questions I asked were closed-ended questions. The reason why I utilized this approach is because I wanted to know what their exposure to the topic was, each close-ended question was then followed by another question that asked for further elaboration and examples from the participants. The sections below describe some of the methods used during this study. An in any interview some participants are more open to discussion than others, in situations where I saw that a participant was more quiet, I decided to draw a diagram. Diagramming is a method that furthers discussion, analysis and action (Alexander, 2007). It is a method that has been used to initiate the

participation process. It can be inclusive of those who do not have the same verbal ability or language. There is usually a sequence followed in diagraming: brainstorming problems or opportunities, identifying priorities, exploring causes and impact in detail, then suggesting solutions or actions to address them (p. 116). Examples of diagrams are: body mapping, daily schedules, time lines, pie charts, venn diagrams, card sorting. After the students would draw a diagram it was easier to engage in conversation and understand how students saw the relationship between concepts.

I paid careful attention to ask the participants the meanings of the language used by them. I asked for examples, whenever it was necessary, and also I brought up questions and examples from other interviews. For example, the use of memes, because some students had brought it up in conversations I asked other students if they were familiar with memes. Most students were and opened up about their meaning and their use. I found myself asking "in what situations would you use that?" having students elaborate on their use of memes would provide me with the context necessary to understanding certain practices. Other times I would ask students about their feelings with certain comments, whether it was nicknames, sayings, memes, or any other example they provided. For me, asking them about their feeling towards a certain situation would provide me with the true feeling behind a certain practice. It can be customary to disguise the true impact of a joke with a laugh, as will be explain in chapter, but the feeling will provide me with the meaning behind a certain practice. This question allowed for student to question themselves and their reactions towards a joke, a meme or any other similar practice. The main forms of data collection were interviews, participant observation, and focus groups.

Interviews. In qualitative methodology interviews, focus groups, journaling, mapping, among others, serve as a way to voice youth's experiences. In education, it serves to challenge the current failing system and proposes new methods of education for youth and adults (Rodriguez-Brandão,

2005). Interviews are prominent in qualitative research methods, and are one of the main methodologies to document lived experiences. They are conversations—interactions that ebb and flow and that represent opportunities given and taken by participants (Graue and Hawkins, 2003, p 51). One major concern in interviews conducted by adults to youth, is whether both interviewer and interviewee are constructing similar meanings or if they are discussing different things without being fully aware of this (Graue and Hawkins, 2003). For this reason, constantly asking what the meaning and purpose behind certain practices was constantly asked to each participant

To gain the participant's trust I informed the purpose of the interview and assured confidentiality of the information obtained (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) this was purposely done at the beginning of each meeting and was reassured as the interview progressed. As the interviewer I explicitly stated my interest in learning and understanding the experiences of each participant, my interest in learning from the participant extended beyond asking them opinions about my topic of interest but also to ask them questions about themselves, as a way to know them. For instance, I asked them about their families, where they grew up, major, among other questions. To achieve confidentiality and trust of the respondent, interviewing requires flexibility and different techniques such as jokes and also small challenges that will allow for the elaborations of stories. Another technique that researchers might use when interviewing, and that I utilized, is to also share their personal experiences with the respondents (p. 104). During the interview researchers encourage the respondent to talk about a certain area, then pick up on topics and issues that the respondent initiates, then probes more deeply, and so on. It is for this reason that semi-structure and unstructured interviewing can provide greater breadth of data (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In a semi-structure interview, the researcher has a pre-established set of questions that orient the researcher to cover the topics of interest, but it also allows for the introduction of questions that have not been prepared by the

interviewer prior to the interview and that originate as a result of the conversation. In this way the interview becomes a means of contemporary storytelling, where persons divulge life accounts in response to interview inquiries... it has become the most the most feasible mechanism for obtaining information about individuals, groups, and organizations (p. 647). The focus is on the understanding the activities of everyday life and the work these require.

Open-ended questions offered me the opportunity to obtain authentic information from the participants, in which the participant and I, offered mutual understanding and support (Silverman, 2000, p 823). Open-ended questions allowed me to focus on the experiences, the explanations and the reasons of what the students communicated communicate. Some researchers see interviews as stories or narratives through which people describe their worlds. The interview is "constructed as active, the subject behind the respondent not only holds facts and details of experience but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms the facts an details. The respondent can hardly 'spoil' what he or she is, in effect, subjectively creating" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p 8; 1997). The students provided a story that is seen through their lenses. At any interview, same events can have different meanings depending on the level in which they affect the participant. For this reason I paid careful attention to the details and background of the participants, and I was continuously asking them follow up questions.

On another hand, criticism poses interviews as bias and guided by the interviewer. The researcher comes to the research site with an idea of what he or she wants to learn about, he or she researchers a little about the topic with enough information to guide the interview questions. To achieve neutrality I formulated questions and provided the space conducive to open communication (1995, p. 8). For example I posed questions that allowed for students to discuss different sides of an issue. In the interview was role was to incite answers, *"activating narrative production,"* the narratives

state a position, resources, orientation and precedents (1997, 123). During my interviews, the was looking for a story, the participant's story. With the use of details, the students provided their perspectives and understanding about a particular issue.

At the core interviews are an interactional and interpretive activity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). The students were not only a source of opinions to a source of knowledge. Because I saw participants as a source of knowledge I was able to address the interview with an opened mind. Details were sought after and the participants felt the value in his or her contribution. In this search for knowledge the interview becomes a process that is in constant evolution. The interview itself is a "meaning-making project" (p. 150) where identifying the topic, selecting the participant, the questions and answer process, and interpretation is all part of the interview. The challenge of the active interview is to consider what is said in "relation to how, where, when, and by whom experiential information is conveyed, and to what end" (p. 158). For this reason the interviews were a two-way communication that cultivated meaning.

Because the purpose of the interview is to understand the activities of the participant, the context of the experiences shared is essential when reporting the findings. Data gathered from an interview should not just be presented as an "objective" story, but it should be contextualized into the social and historical moment (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2001). Regardless of the techniques used at an interview, it is important to acknowledge that the participants bring subjectivities with them. Dunbar and colleagues say, "the only *ethic* that properly applies in interviewing is one that accords the subject all the humanity he or she deserves" (p. 281). What some researchers have done to fully integrate the participants' perspectives is to incorporate the participant as more than an interviewee but as a member of the meaning-making process, the data analysis and incorporate the participant's voice. One of the many studies that invite participants to fully engaged in meaning making process is the Fed Up

Honeys (Cahill, 2006; Cahill, et al. 2008) were youth participants became researchers in the process. It was the participating youth that collected the data, from interview to archival analysis, to focus groups. Youth documented their community and their experiences. This study put the participants in the context of their lived experiences, worked in constant communication and meaning-making process that allowed for the researcher to understand the experiences of the community under study.

Focus Groups. Focus groups have been a major methodological tool used by researchers. It is a research technique that collects data through group interaction (Morgan, 1996) and brings people to together to talk about a topic of interest (Morgan, 1997). The focus group allowed me to focus on my topics of interest (i.e. colorism and racism) and I was able to utilize different methods such as questions or activities to engage the students to discuss that topic. As with interviews, there are specific elements that are part of a focus group. First, its primary goal is data collection. All activities and questions were focused at addressing the topic of interest. Second, the interactions observed in the group were a major source of data. Interaction and reaction from participants told me a lot about how the participants felt about the topic, I was able to ask about the reactions observed and this can led to meaningful information.

Some focus groups can be structured or less structured. In this case, a less structured group was pursued because it helped me " pursue those issues and topics of greater importance, relevance, and interest to the group" (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007, p. 39). However, focus groups have been used as a "useful starting point for the design of survey questionnaires because they provide a means for exploring the way potential respondents talk about objects and events" (p. 40). They are an excellent tool for exploratory research and a confirmatory method. Through group discussion, focus groups explore an issue that is not well known. In this study, students were able to provide ideas and share their experiences and among them they created meaning of the issues being discussed. This

served to interpret data gathered.

Interviewing styles in a focus group vary; it can be nominal, directive, and nondirective approach (Steward, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). Nominal is where there is no exchange of ideas among the group members, only between the interviewer and the participant. A directive approach means that many topics will be covered within a time frame and this jeopardized group synergy. And a nondirective approach provides opportunity for group interaction, participants explore their views, the researcher does not impose her/his ideas. Among the advantages of using focus groups is that they do not discriminate against people who can't read or write, they encourage participation from all group members, and they can encourage participation from those who think they have nothing to share (Kitzinger, 1995). Students were able to discuss their opinions and they were validating their experiences amongst each other. Students who were quieter had the opportunity share their opinions as well. The space created allowed each participant feel they had something to contribute to the conversation. They also allowed me to experience different forms of communication from people, from jokes, anecdotes, teasing and arguing (p. 299).

Focus groups can also be used in research that looks to 'empower' participants because they can become part of the data analysis (Kitzinger, 1995). An important characteristic of some of the YPAR studies is the use of focus groups, which help reduce intimidation that some participants may experience (Madriz, 2000). Focus groups allow participants to share ideas, beliefs and attitudes, and this can create rich data. Not only are the stories shared providing knowledge and insight on participants' experiences; focus groups allow the researcher to "observe the most important sociological process—collective human interaction" (p. 837). In addition focus groups allow for a space that "gives" voice to the *Other*, that is, participants have a space to share experiences that otherwise and oftentimes are silenced. Also, in focus groups, participants see themselves as creators

and agents of knowledge (p. 840). In focus groups the "collective testimony [has] the potential for 'impacting directly on individual and collective empowerment:" (Benmayor, 1991; as cited in Madriz, 2000, p. 847).

There were a few occasions when students described their neighborhoods, their city or whn they were describing how poverty look like in their community and who was usually poor. When describing this situations. I decided to also asked if they could bring pictures, where it was picture they would have to take of photos from newspapers of magazines, this was possible only with students who mentioned they could meet me another time. Two students brought pictures that to them represented poverty in their community. The idea from asking participants to bring photographs comes from a methods called photovoice, which has been used to represent the lived experiences of the marginalized. Also it is recommended to use 7-10 participants per in-depth discussion (Krieg & Roberts, 2007; Wang 1999) I decided to discuss a photograph with a group even if the group was smaller. As an empowering tool, photovoice leads to critical dialogue (Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Wallerstein & Martin, 2008). To follow a common procedure to elicit information using photovoice, I asked students to reflect and represent their photographs students by responding to the following questions (which are referred to by the acronym SHOWeD): What do we See in this picture? What's really Happening? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does it exist? What can we Do about it? (Shaffer, 1983; Wang 1999).

It has been suggested that photo-voice allows for different levels of consciousness (Freire's,1970/2000) about the interpretation of reality. "At the lowest level of consciousness, the magical level, people were trapped by assumptions of inherent inferiority and lived within a culture of silent acceptance of the status quo. At this level, attitudes of helplessness and behaviors of passive adaptation actively contributed to their own oppression. Moving up to the naïve level of

consciousness, individuals perceived and interpreted the social situation as basically sound but corrupt. However, instead of analyzing and addressing more fundamental issues of injustice, they exhibit behaviors of horizontal violence—blaming peers for the social reality of their lives. Finally, at the highest level of critical consciousness, individuals become aware that their own assumptions shape the interpretations of reality. Individuals with critical consciousness become aware of their own responsibility for choices that either maintain or change that reality" (Freire, 1970/2000, 1973/2002; as cited in Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006 p. 837).

Participant Observation. A I used in this study, although to a lesser degree, was participant observation, one of the most common qualitative methods. By observing the student participants I was able to enter the participants' world and observe their interactions, It was also a way for me to get to know the participants and for the participants to get to know and trust me (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2007; Dunbar, Rodriguez, Parker, 2001). When occurring in their natural setting, it is assumed that observations do not interfere with the people or the activities being observed. When researchers enter the natural environment of the participant it is recognized that he o she can possibly affect what is observed but standards for reporting must balance participation and observation (Angrosino & de Perez, 2000). For the most part my observations occurred where the participants and I were participating in a college activity, so I followed along and participated as another member of the group. However, as the researcher I was conscious that my personal characteristics unavoidably affect the recording process, "the plain fact is that each person who conducts observational research brings his or her distinctive talents and limitations to the enterprise; therefore, the quality of what is recorded becomes the measure of usable observational data rather than the quality of the observation itself (p. 676).

Duneier shows on his work *Sidewalk* (1999) the necessary transition of an observer, conducting

descriptive observation to a full participant in the observation thus becoming an *analytical ethnographer.* In trying to understand the life of street vendors in Greenwich Village, New York, Duneier became a participant observer. Even though my study was not an autoethnography, I decided to use Duneier's work as a guide to my interaction with the participants. His work extended beyond interviews and observations. He became a participating member in the process, this allowed for a full immersion into the life of the participants. By becoming a member-researcher he gained introspection of the daily struggles experiences by his population of interest. By becoming a street vendor, Duneier had full contact with the participants, which allowed him a deeper analytical reflexivity during the process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted throughout the study; to make sense of the data I used personal memos and analyzed the transcribed interview and focus groups. All but two interviews and all focus groups were audio recoded. To record them I used a digital recorded or my personal computer. Notes were also taken sporadically during the observation time; since I was a major participant during the observations I could not be deliberately talking exhaustive notes. Data analysis was a process that involved continuous analysis and reflections of the data I was obtaining. I transcribed all the interview and focus groups. It was important for me to transcribe them because this would allow me to re-experience the interview or focus groups and I was able to highlight moments and expressions from participants that needed emphasis. Transcribing these meetings with the students also allowed me to reflect back on interactions or comments that I might have overlooked, any follow up questions were asked when it was possible for me to do so. I transcribed immediately following each meeting, doing so allowed me to be prepare for any second meeting I would have with the student(s).

After each interview or focus group I was able to write a reflective memos, where I addressed

my experiences during my meeting with the students. I utilized memos to elaborate further on my thoughts and also to elaborate on the observer comments. After each form of data collection, I utilized memos "researcher experience memos" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 29). They allowed me to disclose my experiences during the research encounter. They helped me see the overall and recurrent topics of conversation. Through this form of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009), I was able to identify categories, and identify patterns and identify meanings that which in turn helped me give meaning of my identity as a researcher (Denzin, 1997). Through these notes I was also able to identify points that where confusing and I was sometimes able to contact the participant for further exploration of ideas.

I used comments from memos and incorporated them into the transcripts. As I transcribed these meetings I was able to incorporate observer's comments (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Writing OC (observer's comment) in the text allowed me to clearly identify my thoughts from the conversation occurring at the interview. Included in my observer's comments were ideas, additional information, and thoughts about my experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

In order to make sense of the data, I coded interviews "line by line" as it helped me study my data in more detail (Charmaz, 2000). It was also a way for me to not dismiss any detail of the participants' realities. I chose categories based on the participants words or experiences. For example words like "normal people" or "language" were words that appeared through the students' comments, these became words that carried with them a broader meaning and other words would fall under them. For instance, popular sayings, some were classified as not race related, race-related but "jokes", race-related "offensive", reactions from these sayings from the participants, and my own reactions. I then color coded categories for easier recognition. I revised the transcripts and revised my coding continuously throughout the data collection process. By doing this I was able to identify new categories or expand already existing categories. For example, I had originally started with

"nicknames" to refer to the students use to tease, make fun of someone, or as an endearing practice that occurs among friends and family. As the data collection progressed, I realized that nicknames and their use of them was part of a larger concept. For that reason I created a bigger coding theme called "racialized language" creating this code allow me to incorporate, not only nicknames but also sayings, and the use of native langue as a mocking practices. In fact, chapter 4-6 are representative of the coding that occurred during data analysis.

I got access to textbooks utilized in schools and social media to help me understand the experience participants have had when discussing issues of race. By experience I refer to the exposure from the education system to social media, which were mentioned during my interactions with the participants. The utilization of textbooks was necessary as they show the influence on the history and knowledge imparted to students as part of their basic education in relation to the lack of information and awareness or lack of it regarding indigenous communities and other ethnic groups in Mexico. I was very careful not to incorporate new "memes" into the conversation that students did not already mention. I felt that looking for additional memes, or any other type of media, would be inappropriate and perhaps would spread their use among the students. For this reason, I asked students about their use and understanding of it, if they initiated that conversation.

Theoretical Framework

A social constructionist grounded theory was used to examine data. Grounded theory begins with a perspective on a general problem area, not a preconceived framework (Glaser, 1978). This requires openness of the researcher. As data is gathered, concepts and categories are created through "constant comparison" or "open coding" (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This comparison then allows for the creating of categories. Guided by this I was constantly revising notes and transcript with the goal of capturing meaning behind the students' words. A social constructionist approach

provides "a framework for developing conceptual categories [that] arise through our interpretations of data rather than from data... [encourages researchers to be reflective on] their prior interpretive forms, biographies and interests as well as the research context, their relationship with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording empirical materials" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). The use of memos and observer comments was important in capturing the context behind each concept or category.

One of the important characteristics of grounded theory it its "fitness" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), both theorist argue, "a grounded theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of a substantive area is one that has been carefully induced from diverse data... only in this way will the theory be closely related to the daily realities" (pp. 238-239). Through grounded theory researchers produce theory that is "conceptually dense" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Many conceptual relationships are present. I was able to look for patterns of action and interaction. My data analysis was also guided by discourse analysis, which works at "understanding relationships, activities, and meanings that emerge through language (talk, rules, thoughts, writing) and influence what people in specific institutions take to be true" (Biklen, 1995; as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 22).

Guided by these frameworks I was constantly coding and carefully noted as new themes emerged. For this reason, my use of line-by-line coding was important. Students' views of nicknames were initially mentioned as funny practices, it was the context and tone of the conversation and my interpretation of their comments where in coding I added the comments as being funny "to who?" The types of codes created line-by-line and as data gathering occurred, facilitated the use of comparisons. I was able to compare data from different participants, the individual during different moments of the interview, and with other categories. For example, when a participant mentioned using nicknames I was able to capture that nickname and paid attention to the meaning provided to them, when the same

participant was part of a focus groups others' reactions were also part of the coding process. Oftentimes, students validated each other's answers. Other times, when discussing further the meaning of who the nicknames were directed at, students were less critical of using these names on others than when it was directed at them. Constant comparison allowed me to capture these moments.

Researcher reflexivity

"Qualitative research is intimate (in comparison with experimental research) because it reduces the distance between researcher and 'subjects'" (Howe and Dougherty, 1993, p. 18). Knowing that this was a study that required for students to tell me about their experiences with racism, if they disclosed any; I decided to establish familiarity with their culture during the moment. I introduced myself to the participating students. I presented myself as someone who has lived in the city/country of research and as someone who is also learning about this topic. Once I started the study, I decided to get to know each student personally, it was easy to get to know each other and share information. I presented myself as a student and as someone who valued every input and opinion they had on the matter.

I consider the topics discussed in this study to be sensitive in nature. The study is trying to understand discourses of racism in a culture were the topic of racism is taboo. A closeness with the participants was essential to get a level of comfort were participants could open up about their thoughts and feelings related to colorism and racism. The study took place at the border city where I grew up and in a city that I reside. This allowed for me to have familiarity with the culture I am trying to understand. Knowing about the culture of the research site allowed me some insight into concepts that if I had not been familiar with I would not have been able to address.

The approach I utilized was similar to authoethnographers who while working on their study they have to be explore "the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (Ellis, 2004; p.38) a

process that must be done self-consciously throughout the research process. Reflexivity aids in the process. It's a process that of critical self-reflection about one's biases and context under the study (Schwandt, 1997). By reflecting on their own experiences, researchers can uncover and construct their identities (Attarian, 2011). This allows the researchers to identify themselves in the context of the study.

Delgado Gaitan (2001) states that, "the researcher and the research community are discussed in terms of an insider/outsider relationship. Without question many differences exist in the cultural experience of the researcher and the collaborators in the communities who are the focus of the research" (p. 7). In this study I have two roles, I am the insider because I know their culture, I know their city. I share similar understandings jokes, know the popular TV shows, know about some of the places people go to. This helped me in gaining the participants' trust to participate in the study but also helped me to share some experiences that even though sometimes moved away from the research topic, they allowed for a level of comfort that would have difficult had I not shared their culture, and a comfort that was essential to the research topic.

I was also an outsider within this group. First, I am the researcher, I am older than they are and am coming from an American university which could "distance" myself from the participants. I indicate this could potentially create distance between myself and the participant because as you will see in the students' comments, the U.S. is a representation of an "ideal" way to look or place to live. With the younger participants, I perceived they saw me as an authority figure. I believe this is normal, as this this the first time they have participated in a research study, and also because as youth they are used to being told what they have to do, thus looking for approval in their actions. As soon as I recognized this perception of authority I made sure to re-direct questions and constantly emphasized the importance of their contribution. I asked questions about their opinions and sentiments on the

topics discussed. The sense of having the participants seeing me as an authority figure dissipated as I got to know the students personally. The experience I had when interviewing the older students those who were 19-20 years was not the same. Form the beginning they were eager to share their experiences and opinions about the topics being discussed.

As a qualitative researcher, reflecting on your positionality in a study, recognizing the privileges I have in this study was a necessity. Skin color was a characteristic that one of the participants mentioned during our conversation. My skin color is fair, brown eyes, and medium-dark brown straight hair. My physical characteristics came up in the conversations where a successful person was described physically and one of them described the person and then said "sort of like you, successful." This instance is described in full detail in the next chapter. Before I started this study, I was aware of the privilege of my skin color. However, hearing that specific comment I was aware of how the participants perceived me. I am one example, of the many there are in Mexico, where my skin color and class have positioned me in a privileged group.

Limitations

The data I obtained through the different interviews and observations was what I considered to be rich. I want to emphasize that there were some participants that I only interviewed once and these were the same participants that I did not get to observe in settings outside the interview. Although they were a one shot interview (Duneier, 2007) and as a result I do not have enough context and knowledge about the participants, I found that answers and experiences reported by them were very similar in nature to the ones described by other participants who I got to spend time with for a longer period of time. Also, as I mentioned previously, open-ended interviews allowed the participants to, by discussing details and experiences without constraints, disclose a little bit of the context of their responses. I was also attentive to ask any follow up questions that might arise during the interview as I

was fully aware that the interview time would be the only moment I had to clarify any questions about the story being told.

I had only seven students who were 17-18 years old, that is high school age, and 17 students of ages 18-20 years old, in college. Even though the age range was 17-20 years old and the difference is not great, having younger students could show a different perspective than what I found. Different age groups come with different lived experiences. For example, teasing someone due to their skin color was an event that was described by most participants as happening in high school. Perhaps having a greater group of high schools students would have emphasized that aspect of colorism in Mexico. On the other hand, participants that mentioned having witnessed this, were fully aware of the existence of this and mentioned it during their interviews.

Conclusion

Twine (2000) mentions the racial matching model, that presumes that allowing for the researcher and researched to be of the same group allows for a better understanding of their experiences, such as racial prejudice or discrimination. However, it is not that race is the factor that makes two people connect, but it is the lived experiences and shared understandings of people in one community, that allow for that understanding. In the studies described above, student and community researchers investigated shared concerns and injustices. As a result this facilitated the understanding of the data gathered.

The richness in data gathered is a result of the triangulation of methods used in this research study. In research, different studies show different strengths in methodology. Surveys for the most part, are the venues that researchers will use to collect large amounts of data. Observations, allow researchers to view groups of people in their natural contexts. Interviews, focus groups and journaling allow for a greater reflection and sharing of experiences. Every data collection method has a different

purpose and outcome. Of importance to the researcher is that the methodology used in a study, whether it is quantitative, qualitative or both, be relevant to the question being asked. In the next chapters, the readers will see the different ways in which the participants express their opinions about racism in Mexico, whether it is in a strong sense of denial or acceptance of its existence.

In trying to understand the practices that reinforce racism in Mexico, I am examining youths' discourses and understanding of racism. In order to do so effectively, I have used grounded theory and discourse analysis as the theoretical frameworks that will help me analyze the experiences and mindset of the participants. You will find that the majority of the literature is related to data from the United States; however, the findings are applicable to Mexico. The prevalence of color-blindness in a society that prides itself in being "beyond race" or "raceless", will help understand the students narratives. Conversations with youth resemble a combination of counter stories and stories that have normalized whiteness and its placement at the top of the social hierarchy.

CHAPTER 4

Racialized Language

This chapter presents the dichotomy of a culture that in one hand declares to see no race no racism in their country, and that in another hand utilizes language as a way to transmit racial messages in daily interactions and dominance. When discussing issues of race, a common association is national origin and language. "[L]inguicism has taken over from racism as a more subtle way of hierarchizing social groups in the contemporary world" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 241). Racialized discourses create ideological contexts that become normalized and unquestioned. Schmidt discusses how language can be used as a legitimate form of *othering* those who do not speak the dominant language, "[a] conjunction of the hegemonic position of the dominant English language and the socially constructed normalization of *Whiteness* creates an ideological context within which Americans speaking languages other than English, and whose origins lie in continents other than Europe, are racialized as alien outsiders, as *Others* (2002, p. 142). The conversations presented in this chapter demonstrate how the Spanish language is used to dominate groups based on skin tone or race. That is, language is used as a way to reinforce colorism and racism in the community against indigenous groups and those of dark skin tone by *othering* them in the community.

"Hay que mejorar la raza": Everyday Language

In Mexico 64.6 percent consider themselves to be brown skinned and 54.8 percent of them report to have been insulted by the color of their skin. In addition 15 percent of them believe that their rights have not been respected (CONAPRED, 2010). These insults, in this study, are part of a common language that identifies people based on their physical appearance (i.e skin color). *Apodos*(nicknames) and *dichos* (sayings) are ways to transmit ideologies regarding what is and what is not accepted. Racialized language, such as racist jokes, nicknames or sayings "serve to reinforce

stereotypes and rationalize the existing relations of racial inequality" (Omi, 1989, p 121). Reinforcement not only comes from verbalizing a word or words but also from the reaction of towards that language becomes a form of denial (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). Understanding the active role of jokes and sayings in the reproduction of racism. I prompted participants to think about specific words that served to identify others' by their skin color or race.
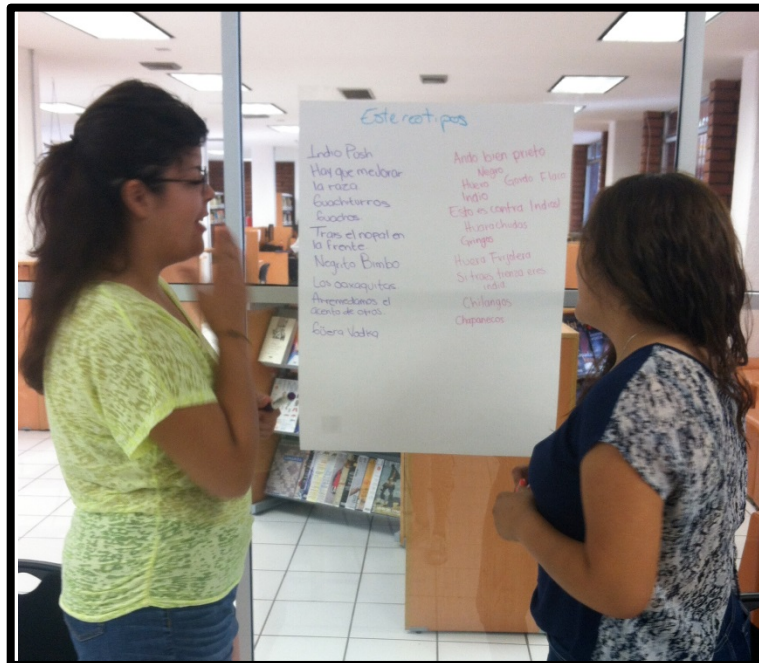
Figure 5. Brainstorming *apodos* (nicknames)

Figure 5 shows two participants brainstorming language that they commonly use that are in one way or another related to race or skin tone. The language the participants identified were reported to be of popular use and not only particular to their city. When in my interviews I asked for specific examples of this language, it did not take long for them to come up with these words and sayings. I did note that when the participants mentioned these words they expressed a guilty or an embarrassed smile. Sometimes, the reaction when I asked about any names that might reflect skin tone, they would smile, nod and then they would say the word.

Consistent with a color-blind ideology, students' easiness and common use of this language demonstrated the *naturalization* ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000) of using skin-color to describe others. From a naturalization perspective, students see this use of language as the "way things are" leaving a system of inequality unquestioned. Moreover, they rationalize and develop links between language and categories by connecting racial, economic and moral attributes, and then ascribed to a certain social group (Gal & Irvine, 1995; Urciuoli, 1996; Woolard, 1989).

This attribution of categories that was used to describe others, and in particular to refer to indigenous groups, is visible is the list of *apodos* and *dichos* (Figure 6). Some of the words written are: Indio 'Push' (it is a way to make someone feel dumb, in this case the word "indio" is equivalent to being not smart or dumb), *hay que mejorar la raza* (we must improve the race), *Guachiturros* (refers to sandals used by indigenous people), *traes el nopal en la frente* (literally it means you have a cactus on your forehead; It refers to having a stereotypical appearance of someone from Mexico, that is therefore undeniable), *Los oaxaquitas* (little Oaxacan, more specifically indigenous people), *quitate del sol* (move away from the sun, with the intention to not get a tan a look darker), *Nigga* (this would be said to someone with a very dark skin tone, this is not said to someone of African descent, at least not with the participants I interviewed since in this community not one of them have met someone of African descent. This word also shows the popularity and influence of U.S media), *Guerra frijolera* (refers to someone with brown skin that is trying to appear white by lightening her hair with highlights), *es contra indios* (refers to something that should be very easy to do, but that you can't do it. In specific it refers that it is something so easy to do that Indigenous people cannot even do, as in they are not smart enough to do it).

The terms are derogatory and offensive towards indigenous people. The speed at which they thought about these words shows the commonality or "naturalization" of their use. Note that among

these words is the word *Nigga*, out of all the words and phrases they said, this is one that shows how international media can spread racial language and stereotypes to other cultures. I asked about where they have heard the word and how they used it, they just said they had heard it and it meant to refer to someone who is Black and that amongst themselves they used it to refer to someone who has a very dark skin tone. It was clear then that they did not know the historical meaning of this word, this is a word they do not connect to.
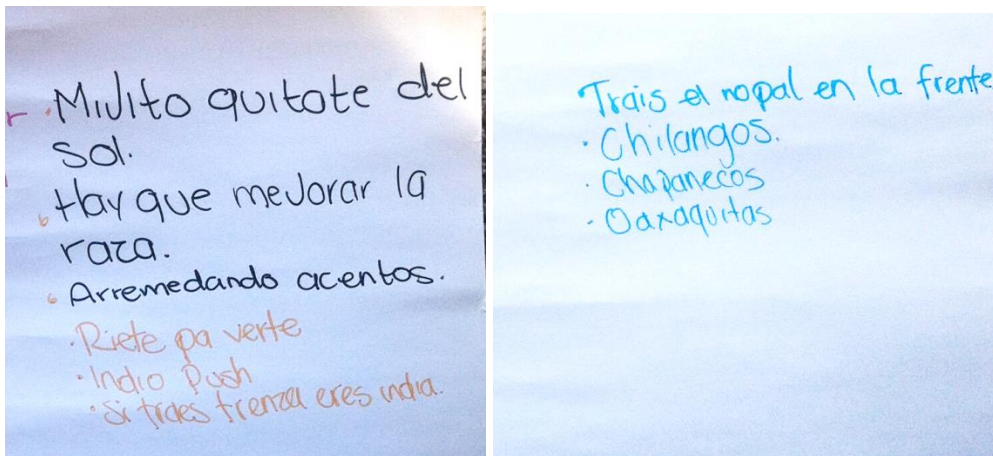

Figure 6. Dichos (sayings).

The iconic links (Gal & Irvine, 1995) developed between a social group and a category becomes natural. Some terms directly mention the targeted group (i.e. indigenous groups) such as "chiapaneco", "oaxaquitas", and "indio push." It reflects common knowledge, preferences, and have sometimes lessons associated to them. Some of these sayings reflect the feelings about indigenous communities and preference for whiteness. Sayings such as *"indio push"* and *"es contra indios"* are sayings that refer to Indians being dumb. Other *dichos* imply or indirectly relate to skin color or race, such as *"hay que mejorar la raza", "traes el nopal en la frente"* and *"mijito quitate del sol."* Are examples of colorism or the preference for light skin color within a group (Tummala-Narra, 2007) due to skin color being associated with higher status, success and happiness (Jablonski, 2012).

These words and sayings are examples of how in Latin America, racial jokes or commentaries occur publicly and are visible to all (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013), unlike the US where such comments are concealed and kept in private (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Racist normalization through *mestizaje* is seen in the comment "*hay que mejorar la raza*" and it is a direct example of how language has a racializing function (Golberg, 1993; Schmidt, 2002). This also demonstrates how the establishment of the *mestizaje* as a national ideology is still alive in today's culture.

Learning Racialized Language with Family and Friends

Guess (2006) describes how racism, or in this case racialized language such as the sayings described above, operates in society in the form of intent and consequence. Racism by intent, operated at the individual level, relates to prejudice and discrimination towards non-whites. This intent then leads to racism by consequence, which looks at how intent produces structural consequences in society. In trying to understand when and in what ways the sayings and nicknames described by students where used, and understand that *dichos* and nicknames are used as part of a larger context, I asked the participants to show a situation where the identified racial language was used.

Whereas nicknames are applied to a person, a phrase carried with it a context that deems it "appropriate" to be told in certain situations. Both participants discussed how they would demonstrate "indio-push". The skit is about two sisters hanging out in their living room.

Skit 1

Denisse.	*Hermana!* Sister!
Diana.	*¿Mande?* What?
Denisse.	*¿Tienes saldo para hacer una llamada?* Do you available minutes on your phone to make a phone call
Diana.	*si, ahí está mi teléfono, agárralo.* Yes, my phone is there. Get it.

Denisse.　　　*¿Y en donde se desbloquea?* Where do you unblock it

Diana.　　　*Ahí donde dice indio-push*. Right where it says Indio push.

When Diana says that last line in the conversation, *Ahi donde dice indio-push*, Diana says it with a tone of voice that indicates Denisse's questions is absurd. Denisse's reaction was that of embarrassment for having asked such a silly question. This saying is popular among the circle of friends of these two participants. What is being criticized or ridiculed is not about a physical trait of the person to whom this comment is directed at, but the action has *othered* her*,* that is, she was considered part of the indigenous group.

The word Indio is being used as equivalent to dumb. I asked them what the meaning behind this saying could be, if it had any negative implications for the indigenous people. They said "*No pues es que no mas lo decimos por decir/*it's because we say it just to say it.*"* Neither one of them saw a negative implication to this saying. It was a saying with no meaning behind it. These "words that express racial stereotypes are powerful, not only reflect ideas about race but also justify and perpetuate discrimination" (Roberts, et al, 2008, p. 343). In fact for the youth, these words or sayings were seen as be meaningless and meant to be comical. In this case, and in others reported throughout this chapters students accepted the used of the racial language without questioning it (Roberts, et al., 2008).

Once again the two high school students looked at the list of sayings they had written down and decided to do a skit of another saying. The second skit they showed me was about a physical trait of a person. In this case, it was about skin tone, it is something that the person already possesses and cannot change. Here one friend is visiting the other.

Skit 2

Denisse.　　*¿Quien?* Who is it?

Diana.	Diana
Denisse.	*Pásale, hay hola amiga ¿cómo estás?* Come on in, hi friend how are you?
Diana.	*Hola amiga, ¿en dónde estás? Ríete para verte, hay no es cierto, hola!!* Hi friend, where are you? Smile so I can see you, just kidding, hi!! (as she walks into the room)
Denisse.	*¿Como estas?* How are you?
Diana.	*Bien ¿y tu?* Fine and you?

This skit was done twice, and this was the only sketch that they did twice and change their roles. The first time, Denisse was the friend visiting her friend and she was the one who got to say that she could not see Diana because of the color of her skin. They re-did the sketch in what seemed to be an improvement from the first try, but they changed their roles. It is in fact Denisse, who has a darker complexion, who decided to be the visiting friend, she was the one assigning roles, but only on the first try. Diana suggested that in fact next time they should try to reverse roles, because "it would be better." But during this exchange of roles, not once was Denisse's skin tone mentioned as a reason for the change. This pattern of behavior is consistent with the fact that in Mexico people "do not" talk about race or color, unless it is in the form of a *carinito, joke, saying,* so anything that is not meant for a serious conversation. They were both unconsciously performing their roles without having to mention or say anything about the other's skin color. They did not discuss their own skin tone but the unspoken communication predominated this conversation. In this interaction the complexity of language, spoken and unspoken, is observed, the greatest message was transmitted without any words being spoken. It is contradicting that even though the skit was about discussing and indirectly mentioning someone's skin color in the form of teasing, the "real" or true conversation between the participants did not mention skin color at all.

These are examples of how racism by consequence operates, where through time, prejudices (racism by intent) evolve into subtle behaviors that serve to "other" a group of individuals, and where behaviors result in custom and impersonal routine (Guess, 2006). Racism by consequence becomes unquestioned and it is so common that people use it in everywhere.

La calle, el trabajo, la escuela, los apodos en casa, apodos en la familia (the streets, work, school, nicknames at home. Nicknames in the family). (Diana, high school student).

Students report learning the use of racial language from families in the form of *apodos* (nicknames); at schools, which represents a varied age range; at a job setting, that could imply educated adults; and, on the streets, which can be anybody. They use this language as a form of endearment or with the purpose to have a good laugh or joke. For example during my conversation with Jaime he said: "it is a joke, it is not with the intention to offend anyone." Jaime's comment is consistent with socialization patterns, racism by consequence, that provide information regarding humor and racism. Countries such as Mexico create strong pressure for individuals to conform to jokes (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). Friendships were the relationships that utilized the most jokes and name-calling. Whenever racialized languages was given as an example it would always be justified as a joke.

Entre amigos es así como que más pesado…Se llevan más pesado pues, pero cuando se dicen cosas. En la familia te dicen cosas y te quedas como que (like if nothing happened) como que es mas de cariño… y luego también es carrilla así como que no tienen problemas, porque hay confianza, y de lo pesado que se llevan es como que, a mira tú esto. Si? pues tu esto, y tú el otro, tú el otro, y de ahí empieza pues, y haz de cuenta que o sea, como dicen si te vas a llevar, pues aguanta. (Among friends it is a lot tougher (teasing)... That's how they get along, it's meaner, when they say things to one another. The family will tell you things too, but you are like whatever (like if nothing happened) it's like is more about affection... And then also it is

teasing, it is not a problem because there is trust, and how though they get along: 'oh, you are this', 'oh, really? Well, you are that,' and 'you're that', and that's how it begins, and like they say, if you are going to get along like that then you should take it. (Denisse, high school student)

Denisse talks about the complexity in meaning and the multiple venues where the learning of, and action and re-action to language occurs. Her comment begins by indicating that this language is utilized with a negative intention, by saying that "it is a tough to way to get along with friends" means that there is an intention to cause discomfort on the person to whom this is said to; it is understood that the person will take the comment negatively. Her comments are also indicate an expectation and pressure for people to conform to the joke, otherwise you could be reprimanded and told "they can't take a joke" (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013) which turns in a "breach in etiquette" (Sheriff, 2001).

Social dynamics show the consequence of racism (Guess, 2006), participants showed an unspoken understanding, where words such as "black," "brown," or "Indian" have a negative meaning attached to them. Present in this conversation was that being black, brown, or Indian was bad, wrong, or simply not desirable. In my conversations with the participants, not one of them explicitly mentioned these negative attributes to any of those words; but the words are used to discomfort someone, to hurt someone then this implies the words have a negative meaning associated to them.

The normalization of racialized language feeds the ideology of racelessness (Golberg, 2002). When this language is used in the family it is in an endearing tone, it is a sign of affection. The family is the primary socializer of the child. Rules and behaviors are learned and modeled as the child grows up. Racial phrases and language are used in everyday conversations. They are transmitted from parents to children. These are seen as jokes and harmless. They are not said with the intention to hurt anybody.

Nonetheless, this "good intentioned" practice has been used by the dominant group (i.e. whites) to maintain privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2009).

> *"Que o sea normalmente, los papás o sea los niños inconscientemente empiezan a decir cosas, y ya cuando están grandes, siguen igual y… como algo normal, porque pues desde pequeños estuvieron escuchando eso, entonces ahí muchas veces no lo hacen con intención de ofender, y lo que hacen es como algo normal, o igual están escuchando a los amiguitos y así, y ya se les va quedando..." (Well, normally, the parents, children unconsciously start saying things, and as they grow older, they keep doing it and... it is something normal, because since an early age they were hearing that, so then most times they do not do it with the intention to offend anyone, and what they do is something normal, or they also listen to their friends, and that is how it is maintained).* (Diana, high school student)

The learning process is coming from many different sources, parents and friends. During our conversation the participants recognized that parents are participants in racial language transmission. Family socialization research record how we learn communication skills or strategies through interactions with parents and siblings (Sillars, 1995; as cited in Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris & Shepherd, 2009). Education, in this case, starts with the family. In the next example, you will see a conversation that Diana mentioned with her mom. Her example demonstrates how racial language is common in everyday conversations. She didn't remember the details of the conversation with her mom but she mentioned the interaction she had, and described it as it being a casual conversation. Although not many details were told about this conversation, in terms of what had happened that caused Diana's mom to have said that, the easiness in which this saying was used is reflective of its normalization.

Estábamos comiendo y dijo que no se de que estaban hablando y luego mi mama dijo que hay el nopal en la frente, (We were eating and, I don't know what they were talking about and then my mom said 'he has the cactus on his forehead'). (Diana, high school student)

Hay yo a mi amá aunque le diga lo malo que es ya no va a cambiar ni por nada, somos igual somos de México y los mismos mexicanos nos decimos las cosas. Even if I tell my mom how bad it is [to say these things] she won't change, we are all from Mexico and we ourselves call each other names. (Denisse, high school student).

Not all nicknames used within families have an endearing tone to it. Intrafamilial colorism refers to members of a family being devalued because of their skin color (Fortes De Leff, 2002). They refer to ideas that promote whiteness as good and better. Preferring some family members due to their skin color is common in mestizo families, the automatic privileges that they receive reinforce racial meanings through racial socialization (Burton, et al., 2010). The only participant that mentioned being called "*mi prietita*" was Denisse. Denisse's mom has white skin and Denisse is brunette. This is indicative that when families have different skin tones, nicknames based on skin tone could exist. However, no other participant mentioned being given a nickname due to his/her skin color. I asked participants to describe their families including skin tone. All of them reported having resemblance to their family members.

Learning Racialized Language in Schools

Schools are socializing agents (Henslin, 1999), that means that schools are responsible for socializing children and people on specific skills and values in a society (p. 77). They are environments that bring people together from different backgrounds. For my participant sample, I do not mean difference in terms of socio-economic status, as for the most part students go to a school where people of the same social class attend. What I mean by this is that, students meet others outside

of their family boundaries, which allows them to interact with people that have similar, or different and contrasting viewpoints. Some students reported using and learning to use this language at home, but all students reported hearing this at school.

> *Por ejemplo a un niño cuando estábamos en la primaria que estaba morenito, le decíamos el negro o le decían el carbón. O sea todo eso si te afecta aunque tu te rías, aunque estés en la prepa o universidad y te sigas riendo, de todas maneras si te afecta. No creo que este bien hacerlo. O sea si te vas a reír de alguien ríete de ti, invéntate un apodo. Algunos si se los toman personal y se molestan pero la mayoría bromea con eso.*

> For example, a kid when we were in elementary school he was brunette, we called him the black one or he was called charcoal. I mean all those things do affect you even if you laugh, or even if you are in high school or the university and you still laugh at those things, it does affect you. I do not think it is right to do that. I mean if you want to laugh at someone, laugh at yourself, get yourself a nickname. Some do take it personal and get upset, but the majority laugh about it. (Marisol, college student).

Marisol is discussing something that was common to hear from students, that name-calling started at a young age. From conversations students mentioned how once a student gets a nickname it lasts until he or she is grown up. In this case, the word charcoal is being used not just as a nickname, but with the intention to tease and bother someone, and in this particular example to make fun of the person. When she says "those things affect you even if you laugh." She is admitting wrongness to this. There is a conscious understanding on her part that calling someone "black" or "charcoal" is harmful to the person. However, even though she admits the harmful effects of this, she considers this to be amusing for those doing this. Marisol challenges racism by consequence (Guess, 2006) when she

consciously identifies a common practice, and questions and identifies this practice as discriminatory or prejudiced.

Similar to Marisol, Jaime also identifies this process of racist humor as part of a social norm to the serious tone of a racist or discriminatory comment.

En la escuela. Bromas. Cuando alguien está muy morenito, pero por lo general es de broma no con la intención de ofender. Porque si hay gente más morenas que en ciertas áreas, no es muy común. Algunos si se los toman personal y se molestan, pero la mayoría bromea con eso. Ellos mismo se hacen chiste. Cuando lo llegan a tratar mal en plan más de atacando, ya no le siguen los demás en la broma, en esos casos yo ya no le veo como broma. Porque es más común ver a gente blanca no es tan común ver a gente morena, y pues por ser cierta manera único atrae a las bromas. At school. Jokes. When someone is really brown, but in general it is a joke, not done with the intention to offend anyone. Because there are brown people in certain areas, it is not very common. Some do take it personally and they get upset, but the majority joke with that. They laugh at themselves. When someone is mistreated as if in a form of attack, others don't follow/support that joke, in that situation I don't see it as a joke. Because it is more common to see White people, it is not as common to see Brown people, and in a way because they are seen as "unique" (different) it attracts jokes. (Jaime, college student).

Jaime describes the different tones or levels of teasing someone through the use of nicknames or racial jokes. And even though the expectation is that people will go along with it as it is part of the social norm (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013), he also describes how changing the tone of the joke or comment to a more serious tone is in fact considered racist (Picca & Feagin, 2007). In his comments, Jaime also talks about how teasing might be due to the fact that in his city there are more white/light skin people. In fact, in Mexico the concentration of people with European descent is greatest in the

north compared to other regions of the country. Therefore, the population tends to be of lighter skin tone than in the south. He attributes name-calling based on a dark skin tone due to its uncommonness in the North. He explains that it is because of the uncommonness of the dark skin tone that they stand out and then they get picked on. The dynamics mentioned by Jaime can be compared to U.S. racial relations, where those of light-skin (white) are considered the majority, and the brown skin-skin are the minority or rare. This comments can be related to research in the U.S. that has found that racial humor serve the purpose of reinforcing social boundaries, legitimating racial hierarchy, and providing a sense of superiority over the *other* (Santa Ana, 2009; Hughes, 2003). When he said, "When someone is mistreated as if in a form of an attack," this is an example of how racism by intent is the superiority of one group over the other.

Based on Jaime's comments these students are targeted because their dark-skin tone is not prevalent in the region he lives in, where all the community participates in "good intentioned" (Bonilla-Silva, 2009) or funny jokes until the joke is not funny due to a seriousness in tone. For example, Manuel and Jose, both college students, go to a school where the majority of the students' are brown. The level of teasing the darker students is similar to the comments made by other participants, regardless of the student population.

> Manuel: *pues en mi escuela es muy común que hay hombres y mujeres de tono muy negro, en especial hombres que les echan carrilla, ya sea por broma o así.* In my school it is very common to have men and women of a very black (dark) skin tone, especially among men get teased about this, whether it is as joke or something like that
>
> Yvonne: *¿me podrías dar un ejemplo, como que cosas les dicen?* Would you give me an example, of what things they say to each other?

Manuel: *eres un maldito negro. Por ejemplo, que yo quiero ir a una fiesta, tu no vas porque eres negro, pero es de carrilla, igual yo lo veo como un insulto. Yo me ofendería si alguien me dijera eso, ya sea de broma.* You are a fucking black. Or for example, if I want to go to a party, no you are not going because you are black, but it is to tease, either way I see it as an insult. I would be offended if someone told me that, even if it was a joke.

Jose: *y es que está entre carrilla y verdad. O sea se lo están diciendo de broma para que no te sientas mal, pero obvio te están tirando la indirecta lo estas discriminando, por algo lo estás diciendo. Es de carrilla pero tiene algo de cierto. Por ejemplo, cómo decir algo, aquí decir, ah mira los oaxaquitos o sea los de sur. Típico que ahí son bajitos y morenos. O sea cualquier persona que veas con esos rasgos o sea le dices, ah la oaxaquita, o sea catalogándolo aunque no lo sea.* And really, whether it is to tease or truth. I mean they are telling it to you as a joke so that you don't feel bad about it, but obviously they are indirectly telling you something, you are discriminating him, there is a reason why you are saying it. It is done to tease you but it has truth in it. Or another example is people that are short and brown. Any person that you see with that appearance you call them Oaxaquitos, you are categorizing them, even though they might not be from there.

Manuel initiated this conversation by saying how common name-calling is in his school. He attributes this to the amount of black students in the student population. When I asked for examples of what was said, there was no hesitation. The example given by Manuel went beyond what I expected for name-calling. Compared with other conversations I had with other participants, where skin tone was used to refer to someone as "not good, not smart"; this comment had a tone of hatred towards

someone because of the color of his/her skin. His comments contradict race-blindness, color-blindness, and racelessness in Mexico.

Space or spatial practices (Delaney, 2002; Dwyer and Jones, 2000) produce and police racial difference (Thomas, 2005). Manuel's comment, "You are not going because you are black," exemplifies this type of exclusion, spatial practice, based on race is. At this moment, there was a more serious tone to the conversation; Manuel indicated he did not see this as being funny or as a joke. Then Jose elaborated saying that there is some truth to the comments, that is, if the comment has a negative connotation to it, then in a way this is the true feeling of the person saying those things. The exclusion of this black student from a gathering as a result of the color of his skin or/and his race is what Bettie (2003) would call space as the outcome of identity practice (as cited in Thomas, 2005). In this particular case, students form their groups and their spaces according to their identity, any *other* students not fitting the particular characteristics of their groups, does not belong in that group.

Manuel was the only participant that indicated that in his school there were many students who were black. I attribute this experience as the reason why Manuel was able to verbalize his disagreement with these nicknames and comment. Conversations with other students indicated the populations' skin-tone to be for the most part similar with some being "*muy morenos o prietos*" but it was Manuel who indicated a black population "*muy negros*". His first-hand experience witnessing this "*carrilla*" seems to have provided Manuel with this insight and understanding of the use of name-calling as a form to insult others.

Another example of how race is identified and targeting directly is present in this conversation. Jose mentioned the term "oaxaquitos" (little Oaxacan). This term is not the term to refer to people from Oaxaca, the term to describe people who are original from Oaxaca is "Oaxaqueños." When using the term Oaxaqueños, it refers to all the people in the state. When the participants used 'oaxaquitas'

they do not refer to all people from that state, but used it to refer to generalize to indigenous people. This term also carries with it a derogative tone to the word. In fact, the Los Angeles times wrote an article about how even in the U.S. people have used that term as a form of discrimination. In specific, the article said: "Oaxaquita (little Oaxacan) is used by other Mexicans to demean their indigenous compatriots... it kind of seemed that being from Oaxaca was something bad... Just the way people use 'Oaxaquita' to refer to anyone who is short and has dark skin" (Esquivel, May 28, 2012).

Appropriation of Indigenous Language, Dominance and Social Media

"Appropriation is a central component of the system of race in the U.S. ...The constitution of White privilege, achieved by recruiting both material and symbolic resources from the bottom of the racial hierarchy, color, to the top. Whiteness, is one of the most important projects of White racist culture' (Hill, 2008, p. 158). Not only were family and school places where racialized language was learned. Students also indicated social media as a way to transmit this language. Through social media students indicated seeing images that make fun of indigenous people, and consequently show their lack of acceptance. Social representations provide us with messages about a group of people, who they/we are, what can someone become or where someone belongs, etc. Social representations provide people with "a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history" (Moscovici, 1973/1988, p. xvii). It was easy for Denisse and Diana to find such representations in the media.

las telenovelas (soap operas) (Diana, high school student)

A de que por ejemplo discriminan , una persona, por ejemplo tiene en una telenovela a una señora de servicio y ponen a una indita o sea gente cabello largo, negro de su color de piel color oscuro (like for example, to discriminate a person , for example in a soap opera is the

maid as an indigenous lady, that is people with long black hair, dark skin color). (Denisse, high

school student).

Telenovelas are very popular in Mexico. They are broadcasted during prime time from 2pm to

9pm in major television networks. Just as Diana and Denisse mention it is very common to see

stereotypical representation of indigenous population in a story that at the same time categorizes them

into the roles of a maid, peon, or laborer. There is however, another trend reported by the participants I

interviewed. The popular use of memes. According to the Oxford dictionary a meme is:

> "An element of a culture or system of behavior that may be considered to be passed
> from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation; a humorous
> image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variation) and spread
> rapidly by internet users" (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Memes that reflect the how indigenous communities are seen or considered in the Mexican culture

were an important part of our conversation.

Figure 7. Three indigenous women "it's Friday... Oh never mind, it's Thursday"

Linguistic indexicality (Hill, 1995) refers to meaning associated with context of speaking. In this picture we can see that three women in skirts and behind them it is a hill (figure 7). This hill seems to be in a remote area, perhaps outside of the city life, there are no buildings anywhere in this picture. These women are walking away from this hill, which indicates they are coming from this remote area (social and spatial distance will be discussed further in the next chapter). The women are also wearing traditional indigenous clothes with the exception that the skirts are shorter. And all three women are wearing braids. The caption reads "it's Friday... Oh never mind, it's Thursday." This image is seen as funny by the participants, not with the intention to offend anyone. So I asked "when you look at this picture, and only looking at this picture what is the impression, feeling that you get about indigenous communities, what does it tell you about them?" The response I got: that they are dumb... because they made a mistake." As meanings are associated to contexts, these contexts can show different order that related to socio political ideologies (Silverstein, 1996; as cited in Kiesling, 2001) and that interact to create social relationships (Morford, 1997).

Moreover, racist practices go beyond images of indigenous people with mock purposes to the appropriation of native language. Hill (1995) analyzes how, in the U.S. "mock Spanish" is a form of racist discourse, serving as an "elevation of whiteness." Although she argues that whites justify using Spanish (or in case of this study native language) as a form to express knowledge or exposure to the language, she argues that this is a form of "covert racist discourse; because it accomplished racialization of the subordinate group targets through messages that must be available for comprehension but are never acknowledged by speakers" (1998, p. 684)

This practice of utilizing native language to establish Spanish as the dominant language can be seen in figure 8. When looking at figure 8, please notice that at the end of some words there is the

ending "tl." This indicates a reference to the Nahuatl, the language spoken by the Aztecs. Marisol, a college student, commented on the use of "tl" in any word; she said

> Marisol - *Oh también se está usando de decir todo con "tl" como party"tl" así como hablando como indígena.* Now it is popular to say everything with a "tl" like party'tl', talking like indigenous

> Yvonne - *Pero cuál es el propósito de esto?* So what is its purpose?

> Marisol - *No se reír un rato.* I don't know laugh for a while

> Yvonne - *Crees que pueda haber algo negativo con esto?* Do you think there can be something negative about this?

> Marisol - *Pues no se... Si, tal vez hacerlos menos.* Well, i don't know…Yes, maybe it's a way to belittle them.

This was the first time that I had heard about this practice. I am not sure if my second question, "do you think there can be something negative about this?" was not appropriate and leading. I have seen images before, but nothing related to comments about native language. As Marisol mentioned how students used it, I had a vague idea of what the conversation would look/sound like using the 'tl'. It was on another interview, who showed me the screenshot of his conversation with his friends (see Figure 8).

The conversation reads:

Person 1: let's get together this week

Person 2: come Manuel

Manuel: "irontl" just tell me when and I will go

Person 2 : "esotl" good (as if praising Manuel for using 'tl' at the end of the word)

Manuel: (thumbs up) 'tl

Person 3: hah

Person 5: you are it "tl

Figure 8. "Tl" Group conversation

Manuel reported that learning about the use of 'tl' as an end to any word was new to him. He was recently introduced to this practice a few months prior to our interview. From the screenshot presented, Manuel is the first one to include 'tl in the conversation. The immediate response obtained was that of approval, not only from person 2, but also persons 3 and 5. By doing this, Manuel seems to gain not only approval from the group, since he is already part of the group chat, but he becomes an insider in the group. When both Manuel and Marisol mentioned this, they mentioned it as a fun practice. Appropriation of language in this case, goes beyond saying one word or two in the targeted language, but in this case the dominant language, but it connects for languages as a form of appropriation but also as mockery. This finding differs from Hill's (1998) "mock Spanish" in that in

"mock Spanish" both English and Spanish are used in one same sentence with the intent to *make fun of,* but in this situation two languages, Spanish and Nahuatl, are combined in one same word.

The mixing of native and Spanish language has also become evident in social media through the creation of memes. The popularity of memes has created controversy. Defenders of indigenous' rights argue against this practice and declare it to be a form of racism. On the other hand, supporters of this practice insist that using such language is not offensive but a form or Mexican satire. In fact, Mexican sociologist and analyst of social media at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Gaona, n.d.) said:

> "Me parece que los memes son una especie de sátira, de burla de nuestra sociedad y sus valores que tienen como objetivo, a través del humor ácido, la pesadez de un mundo cotidiano que no ofrece por sí mismo experiencias significativas. Yo estoy a favor de todo lo que irrumpa en la monotonía de nuestra sociedad, estoy a favor de la sátira y del humor negro".
>
> *I think that memes are a kind of satire, mockery of our society and its values which aim, through the sarcastic humor, the heaviness of an everyday world that does not offers itself meaningful experiences. I am in favor of everything that breaks into the monotony of our society, I am in favor of satire and black humor.*

The comments made by this sociologist were supported by most of the students I interviewed. After learning about how social media spread the use of 'tl' on their images, I decided to look it up on the internet, only to find out that there are webpages dedicated to posting pictures about various topics with the caption "tl." Most of the memes contained an indigenous person with a caption ending in "tl", just like Manuel's chat. The next image is one that was provided to me by Francisco and does not follow the same characteristic.

Figure 9, supports' Hill's (2008) claim that Mock Spanish (i.e. Nahuatl) has a racializing function because this language is often supported by pictorial representations of Indians. In the image a little girl younger than five years is used as the main character. This makes me question the popularity of this practice and wonder whether young children at the elementary school level are using this language. In this picture, it is not clear whether the girl is indigenous or not. Because this is unclear, the creators of this image incorporated a headpiece and a caveman club. The headpiece indicates a mockery of piece of cultural dress that some indigenous groups utilize. The caveman club can represent something ancient, not civilized. This brings up another issue of the stereotypical image of what an indigenous person looks like and wears. The lack of visibility of indigenous people in the media and the visibility that supports stereotypical and historical images of native people homogenizes their identity and further strengthen the stereotype (Leavitt, et al., 2015).

Figure 9. Meme: Girl and 'tl'

Identifying someone's race or ethnicity explicitly in connection to language is the most overt. On the other hand, the strategy of simply marking the *Other* while the self (as well as the self's ways of speaking) remains invisible may not appear on the surface to be racially motivated (Kiesling, 2001). Francisco's comment shows the dynamic between others and the self in using these images.

Francisco- *la verdad viendo esa imagen, yo la bajo me da risa, pero si yo fuera esa persona si me siento ofendido, si fuera esa persona.* Honestly looking at this image, I download it and I laugh, but if I was that person I would feel offended.

Yvonne – *a mí la impresión que me da al verlo es como que los hacen menos, pero no sé.* It kind of gives me the impression that you are belittling that group, but I don't know, what do you think.

Manuel – *sí, yo pienso que sí. No pues si es de burlándose del náhuatl. Tienen muchas palabras que terminan así. Si me tocó ver muchos memes de gente de Oaxaca si del sur. Que decía vamos a la fiesta'tl. Así con la "tl" como burlándose. Pero burlándose de ellos, así ahí si era burla. Cuando lo usamos aquí no más es carrilla entre uno mismo porque ni uno somos de esa etnia.* I think so. It is to make fun of Nahuatl. They have a lot of words that end that way. I got to see a lot of images of people from Oaxaca, like from the South. They said, let's go to the party'tl. With the 'tl' like a mockery. But making fun of them, in that case it was to make fun of them. But when we use it amongst each other it is just teasing because none of us are from that ethnic group.

Yvonne – *o sea que cuando es entre ustedes lo ven como broma?* So when it is between you guy it is just a joke.

Jose – *Sí. es que no es... es que es como para divertirte.* Yes. It is not... it is just to have fun

Manuel – *o sea no te estas burlando en realidad de la gente.* You are not mocking other

people

Yvonne – *pero si tu fueras indígena y están diciendo eso de ti*? But if you were indigenous and

someone is saying those things?

Manuel – *ah no, ahí sí. Pero como le digo si lo estamos diciendo entre gente que no es así pues*

no hay problema. Pero si tengo amigos indígenas y hablan así, no voy a andar yo

arremedándolos. Es no más como para pasarte un rato, reírte un rato pero o sea, pero

pues sabes que está mal, pero pues lo haces. Ah no, then it would be. But like we are

telling you, when it is people that are not like that there is not a problem. But if I have

friends that are indigenous and they talk like that, I am not going to be mocking them. It

is just to have fun, laugh for a while, but you know if it wrong, and you do it.

The conversation goes back and forth, first Francisco says this image makes him laugh, but

immediately he declares that if he was a member of this indigenous group he would be offended.

When I asked if utilizing this language was a form of belittling the indigenous group I had

contradicting thoughts. On one hand, I did not want to incorporate meanings to the conversation that

the participants had not mentioned before, and I felt I was in risk of leading the conversation.

However, this thought had come after a conversation I had with Marisol so I wanted to know if this

was a meaning that they also obtained from this image. I decided to ask this directly because I wanted

to be clear of my understanding of the image as well. There was something about the way they

mentioned this image that made me feel, my understanding of this image was not wrong. Also if they

had thought that this practice of using "tl" was not in any form offensive or belittling indigenous

groups they would not have mentioned it and they did.

The response I got from Manuel was loud and clear. It is a joke when the comments are said about the indigenous groups but if it something personal then it is not. First, he affirms it is not mockery, then I clarified well what if you are part of that group?", then "it would be". The key indicator of whether someone considers jokes, name-calling and saying is if you or your group are the targets of the joke then it is not a joke, but, if you are the outsider saying jokes about *other* group then it is simply humor. These conversations, show how in order to understand how groups maintain dominance it is important to examine their discourse (Kiesling, 2001). This image represents a *mestiza* girl, or dominant race and national ideology, appropriating indigenous of culture and language.

Conclusion

The relationship between discourse, ideology and social norms is a circular one (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). The conversations discussed in this chapter, show how language has been used to maintain dominance over the indigenous community and people of dark skin tone. Through humor, social norms have created an acceptable venue where dominance and hierarchical order are maintained. In Mexico, due to blurred racial lines, distinctions between racial groups are ignored and negated. When race has been disregarded as a reason for distinction, any practice (i.e. jokes, name calling, appropriation of language) that would seem to make someone different or less than or better than other, does not. This is how color-blindness observed in the students is the ideology that justifies and helps understand their actions.

Through language people communicate ideas and meanings. "The power of language to express identities varies depending on the origin of the label (self-chosen or other imposed) and the context. People are usually comfortable with the language they use to describe their own identities but may have issues with the labels others assign to them (Schwartz, 2012). These words are reflective of

a culture. Next chapter discusses how participants see indigenous communities as the "other." And, their social status, and life in poverty as the way things are or as a choice.

CHAPTER 5

Mestizaje Ideology and Normalization of Racism

"Desafortunadamente la forma de discriminación más normalizada es la de los indígenas: El 90% vive en condiciones de pobreza, una situación que no llama la atención ni alarma, la gente está acostumbrada a aceptarlo así" (CONAPRED, 2014). "Unfortunately the most normalized form of discrimination is against the indigenous: 90% live in poverty, a situation that does not draw attention or any alarm, people are used to accept it like that." (CONAPRED, 2014).

The National Center for the Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED) reported that six out of ten people in Mexico consider wealth to be the major reason that divides society, followed by political ideology and education (2011). In specific, 59.5 percent of people indicated that wealth caused division in society, making it the highest rating among the options provided. Ethnicity and foreigners were not seen as a major cause for a divided society, and were in fact considered to be the least factor causing division. However, 29.4 percent of people surveyed indicated that division caused by ethnic differences occurs often. Results found in this survey are consistent with the students' comments that indicated that any division in society is due to social class and not to racial differences. This finding is also consistent with a colorblind ideology that minimizes and normalizes racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000).

Discrimination towards the indigenous communities exists and it affects the services provided to them, job opportunities, and any other opportunities that might be available to the rest of the population (Navarrete Linares, 2008). They are discriminated against based on their language, traditional clothing and physical appearance. In fact, these characteristics were present in students' responses only when they were asked more specifically about the characteristics of a poor person. It was then that skin color and race were salient. Students' responses indicate the complexity of skin color and that people are discriminated against due to the color of their skin.

In this chapter, I will analyze how the colorblind ideology serves to justify social differences based on skin color and race, and how student use social class to make sense of stratification. Some students are more aware of skin-color and ethnicity as factors that divide society and speak more consciously about these differences; other students simply do not see the relation between skin color or race and opportunities. This chapter concludes by analyzing the ways in which education reinforces preferences over light skin, therefore emphasizing that there is an "ideal" way to look like and reinforcing a colorblind ideology.

Who is "poor" in Mexico?

Through a colorblind ideology people lack an awareness of their own race and lack understanding of their active role as racial beings in a society. The claim that race is no longer important perpetuates racial classification (Gilroy, 2000). As Lewis (2004) quoted "the art of this new color-blind ideology is the presumption or assertion of a race-neutral social context". When color or race is disregarded as possible factors in inequality, other factors (i.e. social class) can be attributed to the observed differences. This ideology can be observed in common statements that refer to Mexico's inequality as a result of social class rather than race or color. Students' assertion that social class is the cause of inequality in Mexico can be observed in Arturo's comment:

> *Es que México a mí se me hace un país con mucha diversidad en cómo vive la gente ahí se puede notar mucho quien es de mucho dinero y quien no, y como que las clases sociales hacen mucha distinción en eso, y pues ahí depende de qué zona vivas.* I think Mexico is a country with great diversity in the way people live, you really notice who has a lot of money and who doesn't, and how social classes make great distinctions in that, and it also depends in what area you live in. (Arturo, college student).

His comment about diversity ignores the ethnic diversity that exists in Mexico and focuses only in diversity of social class. In this statement, Arturo recognizes that the social group you belong to can afford you some opportunities. Arturo's statement is consistent with CONAPRED's findings (2011) that the division in the social system is mostly due to social class. In his statement he not only mentions social class but the relation to space and how space is a major determinant that distinguishes a group social group from another.

The ideology of *mestizaje* is a promise of equality and racist practices have been normalized through privilege and exclusion (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). When *mestizaje* was adopted as the national identity, a shift toward racelessness prevailed. Any identification of a racial group becomes problematic. The discourse of a "Mexican" identity is used to "cover up and render invisible processes of discrimination and social exclusion" (p. 399). As a post-racial ideology, *mestizaje* delegitimizes the importance of racism (Moreno Figueroa, 2016); as a result we see comments that divide a society based on class distinctions. Laura describes how in her hometown, people remain within their social circles, that is they interact with the same people, date the same group of people, and ultimately marry someone within their social group.

> *"... es una ciudad muy elitista. Son las mismas familias las que controlan todo, y sus hijos se casan con los hijos de otros de ellos, y ellos se creen mejor que los demás, y la verdad sabes muy bien quienes son, porque todos viven en la misma cuadra."* It is a very elitist city, where the same families control everything and their children and the children of these families marry each other and they believe they are better than everyone else, and you know who they are because they all live in the same block. (Laura, college student).

Laura describes a social order where space and place serve to organize/divide society based on social class. Distancing themselves from other groups in society helps the elite construct "positive

place identities" and "positive senses of self" (Schuermans, Meeus, & De Decker, 2015) that means that connections are created and facilitated by place of residence and group status.

An argument that legitimizes or rationalizes the division of social class can be observed in Diana's comment. In her example, Diana mentions how friendships with the poor would be an economic burden to the rich if the two groups were to integrate. Discussions about how "we have a class system that is divided" was recurrent during our conversations.

> *Por ejemplo los pobres no aceptan a los ricos o al revés, que los ricos dicen, "ah no tu eres pobre no puedes pertenecer a nuestro círculo social porque nosotros no te vamos a poder estar pagando todo (*for example the poor do not accept the rich and vice versa, the rich say, "oh no you're poor you cannot be part of our social circle because we will not be paying for everything*). (Diana, high school student).

Diana's comments reflect a pervasive system of exclusion based on social status; a system where two different social class systems are not to mingle. In her statement, she assumes that the poor friends are the ones that will ask for money, therefore causing the affluent friend a burden, and this interaction would be unequal and unfair for the affluent friend. Her statement is consistent with color-blind liberalist idea, *cultural racism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). The assumption that the poor friend will ask for monetary help from the rich friend can be an example of representation of seeing poor people as begging for money. In this case asking or begging for money, insinuates that people are not working hard and that this laziness is the cause of their economic situation.

Liberalists ideas of the color-blind ideology feed into opportunities for success. Even though there is a shared ideology that in Mexico everybody is equal, the students' comments reflect a different view, that there is 'something' that distinguishes one group over the other. During conversations, and in congruence with a colorblind ideology, the students did not mention a person's color; when asked

directly if color has something to do with the possibilities of success for that person, automatically the students answered "no, because color or race does not matter", which is consistent with Bonilla-Silva's (2001) *minimization of racism*. The students understood social class as clearly defined by economic reasons. Jorge referred to social class as an opportunity provider.

> *En sí todos tenemos las mismas posibilidades, pero las tenemos de dos distintas maneras. Están los que la tienen de una manera facilitada y otra que luchan más para obtener las cosas, por lo mismo por el dinero, porque el dinero es lo que hace girar todo. Todos tenemos las mismas oportunidades pero para llegar a ellas unos las tienen más fácil que otros.* We all have the same possibilities, but we have them in two different ways. There are those who have it in a facilitated/easier way and others who fight more to get things, because of money, because everything revolves around money. We all have the same opportunities but to get to them some have them easier than others. (Jorge, high school student).

Jorge's comment the ideology by indicating that race is not the reason for having different opportunities, social class is identified as the reason. In addition his statement is an example of the *naturalization* (Bonilla-Silva, 2001) of racism, where Jorge sees this situation as the way things are. In his statement racism is seen as something from the past, and people's resources and opportunities are seen as a result of their work. He admits that there are differences but because we all had the same opportunities any resulting disparities are the "way things are".

I decided to take a direct approach to identify those who belong to the high socio-economic class and those who belong to the lower socio-economic class. I asked each student to describe me what a rich person looked like. All answers began describing clothing, posture, even accessories. For instance, Arturo described this person as someone with good posture, eloquent, someone who would not doubt twice his/her decisions. Sofia described this person as male, with suit and tie, and briefcase,

talking on the phone as he walked, well groomed. Most answers were related to physical characteristics that can be bought with money; and personal attributes, such as personality characteristics that are usually created with experience and education, for example assertiveness. There was no problem when describing this person.

I wanted to go deeper into their answer and I asked them, to pretend I was painting a portrait of this person, so I would need to know other physical characteristics such as skin color, eye color, hair color, male/female and so on. After a more detailed description was asked of them, most students answered with pride, that it could be anyone, that there was not something specific about someone that could make them look like the rich person, because everyone is equal. Again this answer was expected since the shared ideology is that in Mexico "we are all equal." I knew that there was an answer to my question, so I said to each student " but what if you really need to know more about this person, if I wanted to paint them what color do I give him or her, and it doesn't mean that this is always the way it is. Just anything, what would this person look like?" After this, the students described this person as male, light skin-tone or light-brown skin, brown – black hair, and the majority of them described him with brown eyes.

Right after the students answered this question I asked them "so what does a poor person looks like?" I noticed that the students did not want to answer this question immediately, every time I asked if they looked at me with a smile, as if not wanting to answer, then they looked either to the side or down and then they would look back at me. Some of them said "oh this is bad" before answering. The majority of them decided to, once again, describe clothing first and then they described skin tone, hair and eye color. In this case, the students described the poor person as either male or female, unlike the rich person who was described as male, this person was brown with black hair. As they answered, they

smiled as if embarrassed to describe the poor person as brown. The following conversation with Marisol shows how the students struggle to answer these questions.

Yvonne	*y es lo primero que se te venga a la mente, como describirías a una persona rica* (and what is the first thing that comes to mind, how would you describe a rich person)
Marisol	*¿físicamente? Erguida uh...uh… no se…(pensando en silencio) ... con los ojos bien abiertos…(silencio).* Physically? Upright uh.. uh… I don't know… (thinking silently)… eyes wide-open… (silent)
Yvonne	*como si yo voy a hacer un dibujo, un retrato pintado de la* persona if I will be drawing a portrait of a person
Marisol	*pues es que cualquier persona puede ser exitosa, pero si me lo dices así, pienso en una persona alta, con un traje, formal, limpio, (sonríe) no se…* well, anyone can be successful, but if you say it like that, I think of someone tall, with a suit, formal, clean, (smiles) I don't know…
Yvonne	*y si le tengo que pintar los ojos, la piel, el cabello* and if I have to paint eyes, skin, and hair
Marisol	*me lo imagino con cabello negro ojos cafés* I think of him with black hair and Brown eyes
Yvonne	*hombre o mujer* man or woman
Marisol	*me imagine a un hombre….* I thought of a man
Yvonne	*y el color de piel* and what about skin color
Marisol	*mm... blanco* mm… white
Yvonne	*¿y a una persona pobre?* And a poor person?

Marisol   *(se sonríe, como no queriendo decir la respuesta) una persona pobre. Una persona chaparrita, gordita, con cabello largo, con faldas largas, con una camisa suelta y … no sé. Color morenito, cabello oscuro y ojos café* (she smiles, as if not wanting to answer) a poor person. A short person, chubby, with long hair, long skirts, a loose shirt and … I don't know. Brown/brunette, dark hair and brown eyes.

Yvonne   *¿y es una mujer?* And is she a woman?

Marisol   *si* yes

Yvonne   *¿y porque crees que tienes estas imágenes? ¿Se te hizo difícil pensarlo o se te hizo difícil decirlo?* And what do you think you have this image in your mind? Was it difficult to think about it or to say it?

Marisol   *se me hizo difícil decirlo. O sea en cuanto lo pensé me di cuenta que que feo… pero pensé en hombre, porque yo creo que de personas exitosas casi no he leído sobre mujeres. Y pues personas pobres, la mayoría de los que ves en los libros son a mujeres con niños mujeres que traen en un rebozo a los niños.* It was difficult to say it I mean as soon as thought about it I realized how bad (sad) it was … but I thought of a man, because I think that about rich people I have not read much about women. And poor people, the majority that you see in books are women with children, women that carry their children in a shawl.

Yvonne   *cuando me describiste a una persona pobre, lo que se me vino a la mente fue una persona indígena ¿eso fue?* When you described a poor person, what came to mind was an indigenous person, was it?

Marisol   *si* yes

In their responses students mentioned that "whiteness" is related to at least not poverty. The students' responses to the skin tone for the rich person varied, although the majority indicated skin tone similar to theirs. However, all students' responses did associate dark skin tone to poverty. This implies an indirect relationship of skin color and opportunity. This finding is consistent to previous research that indicates that opportunities are denied or granted based on one's skin color (Jones, 2000). Moreover, this answer supports research on social representations, which indicate that social messages send ideas that allow people to orient themselves into the social context (Moscovici, 1984). This means that students such as Marisol will utilize the books that she has read as the source of her knowledge of who is rich and who is poor in her community. Marisol's comment is in accordance with Leavitt and colleagues research (2015) that indicates that for some identity groups representation are abundant and positive, while for others, there is limited representation and often negative.

Marisol's description of who is poor is consistent with research (Villareal, 2010) that finds that individuals with darker skin tones have lower levels of education, and consistent with *mestizaje* ideology are people that remain at the lower strata of society. Her comments are also indicative of social representations and stereotypes found in society. The image of the woman with children and carrying a child in a shawl is a stereotype that communicates a social structure and conditions of a group of people (Molina, 2010). In regards to her description of the successful person, she justifies her answers by saying that she has read about successful white males mostly, she indicated not having read anything about successful women. Owen (2007) describes how these cultural representations serve to maintain a social order, they reinforce a relationship of superiority and subordination. These images feed into the *naturalization* idea of colorblind ideology, which sees a current racial and social order as the way things are, without having to question them.

Other students describe the poor and rich person in similar ways, but they used their personal experience to justify their reasoning.

Fernanda *OMG no puedo creer que haya dicho eso, pero es la verdad! ..* I can't believe I said that, but it is true!

Yvonne *¿Y porque crees que se te viene esa imagen?* And, why do you think that image came to mind?

Fernanda *no sé, yo creo que porque he tratado a mucho tipo de gente y toda la gente que trato es así, ¿me explico? O sea se nota mucho la diferencia entre clases sociales, entre gente que tiene dinero y gente que no, y casi toda la gente que tiene dinero y casi toda la gente que no tiene dinero son personas morenas, pelo negro, y las personas que tienen dinero son rubias con ojos de color. Es mas de mi experiencia personal, de una escuela pública a una privada* I don't know, I think because I have met many different people and all the people I have met are like that, do I explain myself? I mean, you can see a big difference among social classes, between people that have money and those who don't, and almost all people that have money and almost all people that don't have it are brown, black hair, and the people that have money are blonde with colored eyes.

This conversation happened right after Fernanda had described the poor person. She was in disbelief of what she had just said. Fernanda has attended both public and private educational institutions. The experience of interacting with different socioeconomic classes allowed her to see that skin tone is somehow related to social class. However, another student presented a different perspective, her personal experiences also served to contradict to some extent the image Fernanda has.

Ese estereotipo que se tenía antes, ya no lo veo tanto. Este grupo de familia que le digo que vive en la pobreza son de piel clara, entonces ya no esta tan marcado, si sigue existiendo

obviamente que los de piel morena estén hasta abajo y los de piel blanca arriba, si sigue existiendo pero no considero que ya tanto. It is the stereotype that people had before; I don't see it that often. That family that I was telling you about, they live in poverty, they have light skin, so now it is not as evident, it does exists, obviously that those that are brown are at the bottom and the ones with white skin on top, it does exist but not as much. (Lita, college student).

The ideology of *mestizaje* works to reinforce the belief that we are all equal, we have equal chances to succeed but also to fail, and race or color has no part in this. In our conversation, Claudia was referring to a Mexican family that has migrated from the United States and lived under extreme poverty for some time. She mentioned how her family helped them occasionally in any way they could. This family is described as light skin. In addition, Claudia has light skin and dark-brown hair and her own family belongs to the lower socioeconomic strata. Even though, she does not discard the fact that poorer people are predominantly dark-skinned, she says that poverty can also be found about those of a lighter-skin tone.

Is there a "better" way to look like?

In general, it was difficult for me to have students openly comment on skin color differences. For most students this was the first time they had the opportunity to openly and directly talk about skin color and race. When I asked them about opportunities to succeed, they indicated there is a better way to look like

> *"pues a los… pues cuando dicen así, beneficiar a los de mejor físico... a los de cabello claro, los que se miran mejor…*well those… well when they say it like, to benefit those with a better physical appearance… those with light hair, the ones that look better."* (Denisse, high school student).

She introduced a new element to the conversation. Denisse added another component that was not being said before. There is a "better" way of looking. Someone with (natural) lighter hair can be generalized to be of lighter skin tone as well. Diana, who is brunette, also indicated that privilege could be obtained by physical appearance. She made a comment about how people are judged by the way they look:

> *"así como que los miran y luego dicen que desde que empiezan "ah no pues tú vas a ser así tú vas a ser así por esto y por esto."* It is like they look at you and then they say "oh, well you are going to be like this, for this and this other reason. (Diana, high school student).

This is a very general statement, it does not mention anything specific about a person, no physical characteristics are being identified. It was more difficult for Diana to come up with a specific example, but still she was able to provide a comment she is familiar with as an example of how people can ascribe attributes to someone depending upon their looks. This comment hides a negotiation on how color can potentially affect her chances to succeed. During our conversations she was confident about the possibilities of everyone (regardless of skin color) succeeding, in fact she described a successful person as brunette, but with colored-eyes. Except for the eye color, she described the successful person as looking similar to her. Even though Diana does not mention race or skin-tone her mentioning of the colored-eyes is a symbolism of the mixing of races to achieve equality, which is consistent with *mestizaje*.

Denisse directly discusses the message that dark skin is not desirable and that whiter/lighter skin is better (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). Denisse, in her comments, mentions how those with a "better" physical appearance are those with lighter hair color. Although in that statement she does not mention

skin color directly, lighter hair color is directly associated with whiteness. Later in our conversations she does identify skin color with wealth and success.

> *"las personas que son más exitosas son más como que tratan de subir por la clase social que tienen pueden lograr más cosas y pues normalmente todo eso se discrimina mucho a las personas por el color de piel, por lo mismo… o sea si eres blanco 'a ok tienes todo eres rico y eres exitoso', puedes llegar a ser exitoso, bueno así lo miro yo, que tiene más oportunidades tal vez.* (The people that are more successful, they try to move up through social class, they can get more things and normally this discriminates a lot of people because of their skin color, for this reason…I mean if you are White 'ok you are rich and are successful', and you can become successful, well that is how I look at it, that you have more opportunities). (Denisse, high school student).

In this statement Denisse gives greater importance to social class being the principal component of success, similar to Arturo and Andrea, and it is consistent with a color-blind ideology. However, Denisse, just like Diana, also associates whiteness with greater opportunities. She talks about the social class system, and how skin color is equal to more opportunities and wealth. She mentions that people are discriminated against due to skin color (CONAPRED, 2010). The existence of stereotypes and prejudice is essential to studying race and racism. Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins (2002) showed how physical features (e.g. skin color, eye color, hair color) influence how people are classified thus leading to stereotypic beliefs about others. Phenotype can boost or hinder opportunity for upward mobility. When Diana mentions *"you are going to be like this for this and this other reason"* she is talking about judgment and opportunity. Opportunities might be denied based on how someone looks, how a person judges one to be like.

Other students have witnessed discriminatory practices against indigenous groups such is the case of Jaime.

> *Si en México, se nota mucho con las persona indígenas que las tratan de una manera las hacen ver menos no les dan las mismas oportunidades que a las no indígenas, se nota mucho en la pobreza, no los permiten entrar en lugares, los ven mal la gente los rechaza. No los dejan entrar a las tiendas, porque los ven feo, o sea si va gente a la tienda, no quieren que los clientes los vean ahí, y no los dejan entrar, es muy raro ver raro ver indígenas. Vivo en una área medio alta.* In Mexico, you can see it a lot with indigenous people that they treat them in a way that belittles them, they don't get opportunities compared to the non-indigenous. You notice a lot the poverty, they are not allowed in places, they are seen as not good, and people reject them. They don't let them in the stores because they look at them with despise, they don't want their clients to see them there, and they don't let them in, and it is very rare to see indigenous people. I live in a sort of wealthy neighborhood. (Jaime, college student).

Jaime discusses blatant discrimination against indigenous groups simply for their race. Denying someone access due to his/her race is an example of how discrimination works in Jaime's city, and how in this city people enforce whiteness as property, with absolute right to exclude (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). He describes a process that might not be visible to most. The fact that indigenous people are not seen at stores can be a result of discriminatory practices that this group has experienced and decided to avoid. In this situation, this community uses its dominance, race, color and class, to legitimize its power maintaining white dominance and privilege (Harris, 1993).

Another student had also experienced the privilege of whiteness. This student is Laura, she has green-eyes, blonde and has light skin tone/white. During a conversation she acknowledged the benefits of having a lighter skin tone, but at the same time was still not fully accepting of it. In this

conversation she was talking about the time she was applying to get her visa to come to the U.S. and she was reminded of her privilege as a white Mexican woman.

Pues la verdad para la visa si iba medio paranoica, porque pensé que tenía algo mal en los papeles y nunca puedes saber quién te toca. Y alguien me dijo, no te preocupes "eres blanca y güera" y yo! Así como que al caso dije yo, y la verdad no puedo decir que me han dicho , oh mexicana porque no me veo así de que sacada del cerro, pero la verdad no.. el pelo es pintado pero siempre eh sido blanquita. Pero es cuando te ven más del estereotipo que tienen de esa persona, porque si me ha tocado de que, hay eres mexicana? Y yo sí, porque cuando tienes el cabello y el color de piel, sé que no es importante, pero la verdad es donde la gente saca, por ejemplo si piensas en americanos o canadienses, los piensas blanquito y güerito. Y si son mexicanos, es que piensan pues de donde tienes descendencia porque creen no son de aquí… de que yo soy mexicana pero no parezco. Honestly my visa [interview] I was a little paranoid, because I thought there was something wrong with the papers and you never know who will interview you. And someone said, do not worry "you are white and blonde" and I was like! (showing amazement) I was like not even, but the truth is cannot say I've been told, 'oh you are Mexican' because I do not look like [indigenous]. But the truth is... I dye my hair, but I have always been white. But it's when they see you more like the stereotype, people have asked me, you are Mexican? And I say yes, because when you have your hair and skin color, I know it is not important, but the truth is this is where people take it from, for example if you think of Americans or Canadians, you think of them as white and blonde. And if they are Mexicans, they think well what is your ancestry because they don't think you are from here ... that I'm Mexican but do not look like one.

This statement has multiple components to it. Andrea mentions her privilege as a white Mexican woman, she distances herself from being identified as the "other" or as indigenous, and she also mentions a common practice for women, dying her hair as a practices that makes her stand out from what a "Mexican looks like." She starts off her comments that being unaccepting of someone else's comments when she is told she would obtain what she wanted (i.e. her visa) because of the way she looks like. She even gasped as she said it; she immediately admitted she has perhaps experienced privilege from this. The tone in which she said it, it seemed like if it was a relief, she positioned herself above what a "Mexican looks like" that is the indigenous resemblance. She implies this when she says she does not look *bajada del cerro*, which is a saying that refers to indigenous groups often uneducated and this is usually a comment used to refer to indigenous people but in a derogatory form. For her it is something positive she doesn't look indigenous. Her hair and skin color allow her to pass as White, in the U.S. this is a privilege she admits to and she sees that other friends that "look Mexican" are automatically classified as outsiders in the U.S. and she is not.

Andrea's comments also resemble what Hartman and colleagues (2009) identify as three dimensions of whiteness. The first is race as salient and important; the second, understanding of racial privilege; and third, color-blind ideology to which whites adhere to. In this example, race was salient for the non-white woman that brought up Andrea's whiteness. This woman understood Andrea's white privilege by indicating she would have no problem obtaining her visa, and this privilege is also admitted in Andrea's comment of others not seeing her as a Mexican woman, as she does not fit the stereotypical image of a Mexican woman. And the last dimension of color-blindness can be seen in her acceptance of those "additional benefits" of her physique but disregarding those and not feeling she had any privileges or benefits in this visa application.

This comment can be seen as contradictory to a color-blind ideology, since it was another person recognizing that skin color would have an impact on her chances of getting a visa. However, the setting where this interaction took place was at an U.S. embassy, could this be the reason why bringing up a stranger's color was acceptable? Would this unknown woman have brought up this comment if the situation happened at a Mexican institution? This is an example of how "law influences what we look like, the meanings ascribed to our looks, and the material reality that confirms the meaning of our appearances" (Haney Lopez, 1996, p. 113).

After some time of my interview with Diana, I had the opportunity to talk to her. She had dyed her hair, the new color was black. When I first met Diana she had highlights. I am not sure if she felt uncomfortable having lightened her hair especially after both she and Denisse mentioned how this was a common practice that women use to be blonde. After acknowledging her new look, Diana said that it made her look a little bit whiter. Although Diana described the successful person as brunette, most students described the same person as light-brown or white skin with dark hair. Her original description was that of a darker person, however, the person she is now "trying" to look like resembles what others describe as successful. In addition, her answer shows her *happiness* with the way her skin tone looks now. Changing her hair to a lighter color has different implications. Her rejection of lighter hair as being better and related to being white and *güera* (blonde) means that perhaps talking about color has made her see the beauty of her natural black hair. On the other hand, darkening her hair meant that her skin color would look ligther, and from her tone of voice this meant something positive and likeable for her.

Education: Representations of society through textbooks

Students' ideas of who is rich or poor or what is normal is a result of messages and information that are transmitted to them from an early age. During conversations with students, it seemed most of

them had no awareness about the existence of native communities in their communities or they would be as representation of ancient history. For instance, Marisol, mentioned that when she was younger she thought indigenous people did not exist. Her comments about the lack of representation on books of any indigenous person, in particular when she says that the reason she described the rich as being white and the poor as being brown is because that is what she has read about, got me thinking about the images and stories students read in their classrooms.

To learn about the images and messages about skin color students are exposed to from an early age, I decided to look at school textbooks used at a national level. In specific, I obtained books from the third grade through the sixth grade (elementary school level), books that are assigned to all children in Mexico in Spanish class. I decided to look at the images and its colors and the stories they represented. Critical race theory allows researchers analyze the relationship between race and education, as whiteness is maintained and supported through formal education (Livi-Bacci, 2008). The structuring property of whiteness identifies a social order that uses cultural representations, through images, to reinforce a social structure. Presentation of these books and their images are examples of how whiteness is overrepresented in these textbooks and also how images become whiter and whiter as the students move up a grade level. The books assigned are examples of how some groups, that is whites, are overrepresented; while other groups, such as ethnic-minorities or natives, are rarely represented (Leavitt and collegues, 2015).

Books inform children about the world they live in; they reflect a society's cultural values and norms (Weninger and Williams, 2005). The books analyzed were printed on April 2014. The third grade book cover (see figure 10) is representative of the images that are found inside the textbook. The three students have different tones of a pale brown tone, or white skin with the illusion of different tones of brown. The girl is the one with the "lighter" skin tone, the shadows in her face have a

yellowish tone with pink cheeks. The boy next to her gives the impression that her is a little bit more brown. The shadows in his face are a light brown and reddish. Both the girl and this boy have brown straight hair. The boy on the right, even though his skin is very light, perhaps whiter than the boy in the middle, his skin-tone is different. The shadows on his face are gray and he has no rosy color on his cheeks. His hair shows some curl and it is blue-black color, giving the impression of an African descent.
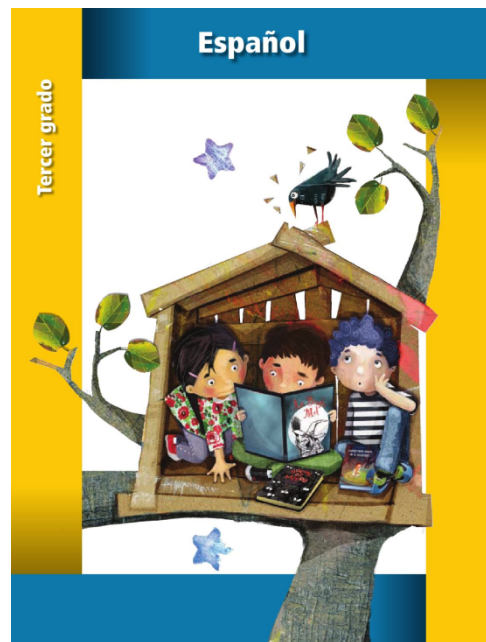

Figure 10. Spanish textbook, third grade

From a distance it seemed that there is an attempt to include a diverse representation, at least when it came to race; the race of the students in this image seems to be inclusive of race. The images' skin color are similar, thus being consistent with an ideology that sees no color differences among people. With the intention to distinguish between the different skin tones in the images, a full review of each image was conducted. As a result, the images found in the book were classified as three skin tones brown (see figure 11), white (see figure 12), light-brown (see figure 13). There were three types

of images that were discarded, two drawings of children that were purple and green, and pictures from

real people (only two pictures).

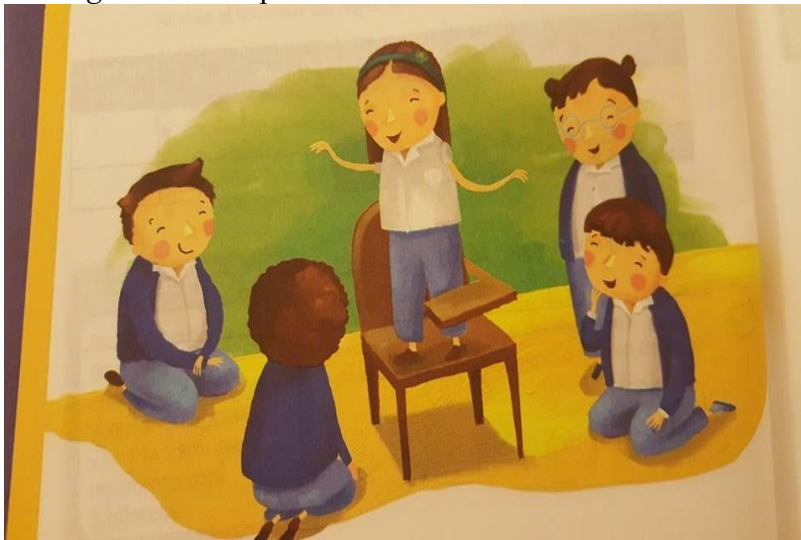*Figure 11*. Sample of caricatures classified as brown

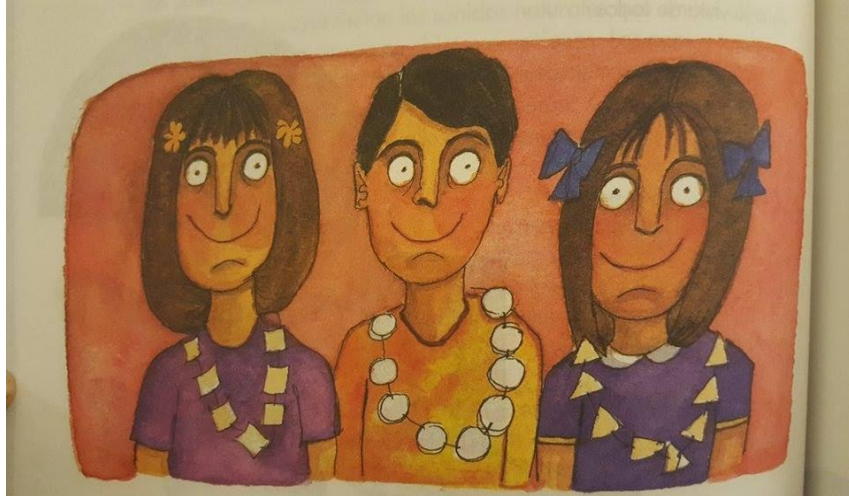*Figure 12*. Sample of caricatures classified as white

Figure 13. Sample of caricatures classified as light brown

Images that were classified as brown had brown skin tone and brown or black hair. Those that were classified as white had white or yellow skin tone and the hair color varied more, sometimes it was black, brown, blonde, or red. The caricatures that were classified as light brown had rosy cheeks and their hair color was brown, brownish-red, or black. The total number of caricatures in the third grade Spanish book was 123 (See table 2). The skin color of the figures varied. A total of 33 caricatures were classified as brown; 22 caricatures were classified as light brown; 66 were classified as white; and 2 were not classified. From all these images only two were wearing traditional indigenous clothing. From the stories included in the textbook, only one story (instructions of a home remedy) contained indigenous language.
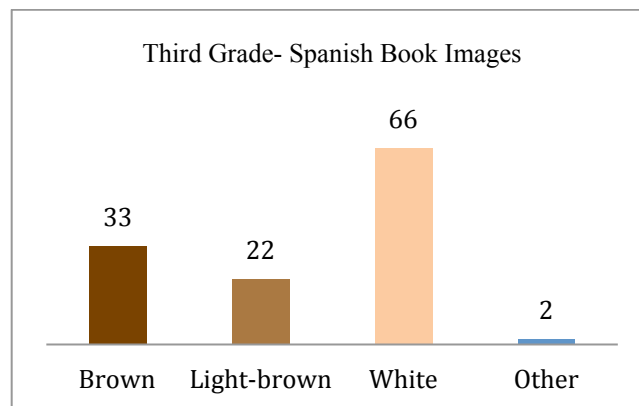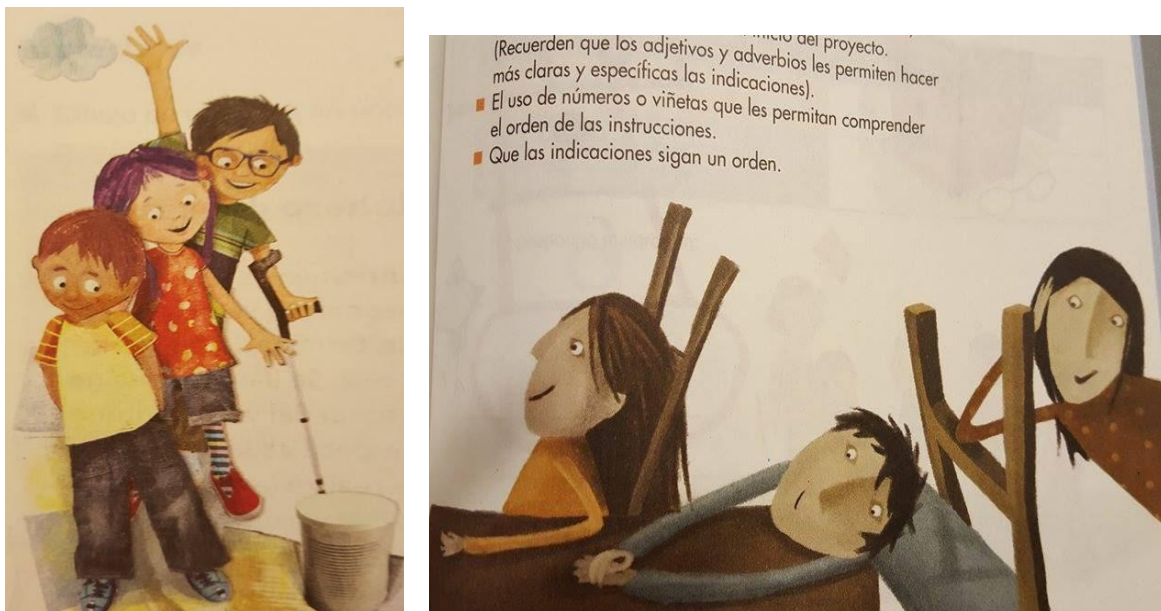

Table 2. Third Grade color classification of images

The color of the images changes as we move up one grade level. Figure 14 shows the cover page of each of these books. You will notice that as the grade level advances the skin tone of the caricatures lightens on the cover page. The skin color of the images in the cover page is consistent with the images represented inside the books. Classifying the images according to skin color was much more difficult when looking the sixth grade book.

The image in the cover page of the sixth grade book clearly shows one white girl with light-brown hair. The majority of caricatures have a white-skin tone. The tone of the color white is what is different (see figure 15 and 16). The color varied with white with a gray, brown and nude tone; others were classified as brown, pink and two that were classified as purple/gray. There were a total of 307 caricatures in this book (see table 3). Classified as white there are a total of 278 images. Within the white classification there are different tones: gray, brown, and nude. Classified as white/gray are 52 images; classified as white/brown are 85 images; and classified as white/nude are 141 images. There were a total of 25 images classified as brown; two classified as pink; and two other gray/purple. Images that were not classified where: photos (black and white) and those that represented the founding fathers (three pictures).

Figure 14. Book cover comparisons. 3rd grade (top left), 4th grade (top right), 5th grade (bottom left), and 6th grade (bottom right).

Figures 15 and 16. Picture on the left from top to bottom classified as white/brown, white/nude, and brown. Picture on the right classified as white/gray.
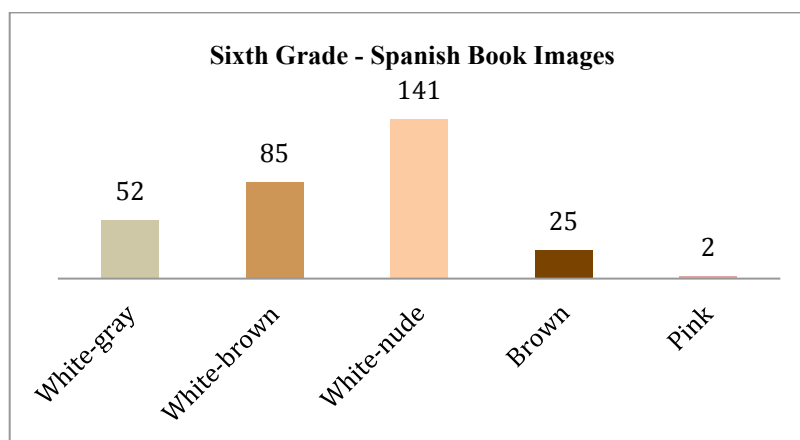
Table 3. Sixth grade color classification of images

Compared to the images in the third grade book all images were well defined and delineated. The hair color varied among the images. Hair color included brown, black, blonde, and red. There were a total of four images representing the indigenous groups: one photograph with two indigenous men and two caricatures. Similar to the third grade book, this book contains poems and riddles in native languages; and, it is important to note that there is an increase from one recipe in native

language (third grade) to nine different pieces in native language (sixth grade). The languages include Nahuatl, Chol, Mocho, Tzeltal, Q'anjob'al.

The number of stories or content that contained indigenous languages increased from one short recipe in the third grade book to eleven poems/riddles in the sixth grade. On one hand, this seems encouraging, as it is indicative of efforts to be inclusive of the indigenous cultures. On the other hand, the images got much lighter as the years progressed. The images of native caricatures are two images in third grade and two in sixth grade plus two extra images in the sixth grade in one photo. There seems to be an attempt to include indigenous cultures in the book, but it seems this inclusion is only a quick fix for diversity in the books. This is consistent with Arturo's comment that states that in Mexico there is a lot of diversity. From these images, it seems that the books are trying to include racial diversity in their books, which would be consistent with a multicultural approach to education. However, there is a negative relationship between indigenous representation and skin color. As the indigenous images and native language increases the skin color of the images lightens. This can be representative of Denisse's comments that say regardless of diversity there is a "better" way to look like. The message seems contradicting, the slight increase in indigenous representation can barely be called representation compared to the dominant whiteness found in the caricatures throughout the book.

From a critical race theory standpoint one can argue that the contents found in earlier grades are dominated by white ideologies (Tate, 1997) where content disregards a native or ethnic perspective. There is an effort observed in including native language in the textbook as the children grow older is an example of efforts to appreciate native origins. Finding this information in textbooks is part of movement called intercultural education for all, which originated in the 1930s. This movement worked at promoting equality and human rights for all (Halvorsen & Mirel, 2013) and

works at diversifying the curriculum by including indigenous language and culture in textbooks. In fact, Intercultural Education was "a major step forward in the attempt ... to promote a 'common civic culture, whose vitality emerges from its diversity," (Selig, 2008; as cited in Halvorsen & Mirel, 2013). Despite efforts to provide an intercultural education, the images are consistent with a colorblind ideology. Images provide children with empowering multicultural portrayals of power, culture and social identity (Weninger and Williams, 2005); in these books, despite the inclusion of native language, the message sent to children is that there is an ideal way to look like, and it is based on skin color.

Conclusion

Consistent with colorblind ideology students did not mention skin color or race as a factor that divided society; it was only through direct questions that students discussed the importance of race and skin-tone for opportunities and inclusion. An important finding is that skin tone was not related to being rich, although most of the responses indicated a white person as rich, there were some responses that indicated that a rich person can be light-brown. However, all participants, except for one student, do see the poor person as being brown, and some even described them as indigenous. All participants show preference for a lighter skin tone. The participants' preference is consistent with the overall cultural sentiment towards whiteness. Books assigned by the Mexican government express this sentiment by including representation of whiteness throughout their images. Next chapter will show how students, regardless of their economic status, understand the concept of space and belonging. These students grew up in a society that is highly delineated by resources where there is a clear awareness of which are the affluent neighborhoods and their own position within the different neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 6:
Identifying Place and Space

> From the mid-nineteenth century began the great plunder of indigenous lands throughout the country, particularly in the most fertile and densely populated regions. On the other hand, Spanish was imposed as the national language: all education was provided in that language, laws were written in Spanish and the courts and government offices, Congress, newspapers and books, used it exclusively. (Navarrete Linares, 2008, p. 37)

This chapter discusses the students' use of cultural racism and naturalization as a way to justify current social and physical/geographic stratification in their communities. I utilize a sociological approach to analyze the hierarchical structure of whiteness that is maintained through physical location, standpoint, and invisibility of the other (Frankenberg, 1997). Students' make sense of the space in which they live, this includes resources available to them, the accessibility of those resources, the group of people they belong to, and the behaviors expected of them and of those around them. In specific, it will show how the students make sense of the society in which they live and how students classify themselves and others according to the group they belong to. Most important, it will describe how the color-blind ideology and *mestizaje* ideology cause an emotional disinvestment on issues that pertain to the indigenous communities. The students' narratives indicated that indigenous communities are seen as outsiders both in terms of physical space, by living at the periphery of the city, and by not following and integrating with the national mestizo identity. And consistent with previous chapters, their narratives demonstrate how students' view their world through a color-blind and *mestizaje* ideology.

Making sense of space

In Latin America, cities are organized in such way that high-socioeconomic groups are found in the central zones, while the lower socioeconomic classes are found at the periphery (Sabatini, 2003). The ways in which this spatial separation is maintained is by increasing housing costs (Bayer,

McMillan, & Rueben, 2004). This spatial separation of different socioeconomic groups determines whom people interact with on a daily basis. The students' comments reflect these interactions and the awareness or lack of awareness of others. For example, people living in affluent neighborhoods will tend to stay within their space thus avoiding interaction with other neighborhoods (i.e. lower socioeconomic neighborhoods).

During my conversations with the students, it was common to hear them say that the indigenous people choose to live in the city's periphery, which consistent with colorblind ideology, minimizes the racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001) that pushes natives outside of the city. All the students were highly aware of the city's distribution; who lives where, and also what are the characteristics of each area. More specific, they also refer to the appropriate forms of behavior that are acceptable for a group of people; this includes dress, behavior, belongings, friendships and education. For example, when asking Laura about the city she lives in, she described her neighborhood in terms of physical structure and also the behaviors associated with that space. She mentioned living close to the area where the affluent people lived; she lived in-between the affluent and the middle class or "middle-working class" as she described it. She described that area, as one where physical appearances mattered most. For instance, a simple decision to quickly run to the nearest convenience store, meant dressing up to not be looked down upon. The racial and group identity she describes involves the formation of social groups organized around material interests with their roots on social structure (Andersen, 2003) and spatial segregation.

> *Vivo en una colonia familiar,... Donde yo vivo también está el túnel, donde hay gente pobre, pero también hay una sección de casas bonitas y grandes. [mi ciudad] es muy grande y sabes donde viven los ricos , los pobres, y donde vivo yo es clase media… es una ciudad muy elitista, donde son las mismas familias las que controlan todo, y sus hijos y los*

hijos de cada familiar se casan con ellos y ellos se creen mejor que todos los demás, y los identificas porque todos viven en la misma cuadra son dos-tres cuadras de casas súper gigantes, sus hijos van a ciertas escuelas. Entonces ya sabes exactamente quienes son. Y pues el simple hecho de querer ir al OXXO en pijamas y luego la gente se te queda viendo feo. ¿O sea el OXXO está en la esquina de mi casa, o sea porque me voy a cambiar para ir por unas papitas para regresarme a mi casa y volverme a cambiar? Es mucho de las apariencias, lo que estás tratando de que la gente perciba de ti.

I live in a residential neighborhood ... Where I live there is also a tunnel, where there are poor people, but there is also a section of beautiful and big houses. [My city] is very large and you know where the rich and the poor live, and where I live is middle class... it is a very elitist city, where the same families control everything and their children and the children of these families marry each other and they believe they are better than everyone else, and they are easy to identify because they all live in the same block, there are two to three blocks of huge houses; their children go to certain schools. Then you know exactly who they are. And, the simple fact of wanting to go to the OXXO [convenience store] in pajamas and having people stare at you. I mean, OXXO is at the corner of my house, why would I change clothes to get some chips, to then go back to my house and change once again? It's a lot about physical appearances, and what you want others to perceive of you. (Laura, college student)

Laura's situation was different from other participants. Her home location, which was described by her as being "in-between" the poor and the rich, caused this her awareness towards these unspoken norms. She was most aware of the "appropriate behaviors" that are expected from different groups of people. It is this awareness that created dissonance and a challenging attitude toward

behaviors that she did not want to participate in. For example, when she mentions that she wants to go in pajamas to the convenient store because it is around the corner from her house. She is uncomfortable to do so because she is aware of the criticism she will receive by doing so. She recognizes the activity (going to the grocery store), she recognizes the expected behavior (dressing a certain way), but she also recognizes how this is tied to a certain class system or classification. By recognizing this, she also sees herself as an "outsider" within this space, and she is therefore able to see social class disparities as being more than just economic resources but a space that is negotiated and attached to behaviors.

Other students did not question their space. They did not have the daily "confrontations" with social classes that Laura had. The areas in which they lived were "good" they had their necessities taken care of, and there was no reason to question that space. They "belonged" to the group that resided in that area. Spatial segregation normalized the daily interactions with others in their neighborhoods. It seemed that interactions with the other group, that is the low-SES and high-SES, was not common. Ideologies, such as *mestizaje,* have the power to mask privileges obtained by the dominant group. As an ideology, *mestizaje* overlooks "that the collective and institutionalized character of the expropriation renders it particularly invisible to its beneficiaries. When a relationship is regularized and institutionalized, it is simply a case of 'c'est la vie.' ... There is thus no need for deep, personal insight into how things work. Nor is there any feeling of personal accountability or guilt for the expropriated benefits one enjoys. Indeed, it is remarkably easy to view one's benefits as the natural outcome of individual endeavor and to overlook the dreary fact that those benefits have been delivered at someone's expense"(Jackman, 1994, p.8).

Mentioning the local tribes and indigenous people in their community rarely occurred. It seemed from conversation that when the word indigenous was discussed the first thought was

indigenous people from southern Mexico, and not the indigenous people who live in their state. This is consistent with *mestizaje* ideology, which puts indigenous groups as the other, and in this case as outsiders even though these groups live in their community. For instance, when discussing her experience sharing space with *others*, both Aurora and Sophia discussed these groups as coming from the South.

> *Igual en el tren hay mucho que se paran en el tren y piden comida y así, hay mucho Guatemaltecos y así.* On the train there are a lot of people that stand by the train and ask for food, they are many Guatemalans. (Aurora, college student)

> *En México muchas veces te toca ver en los semáforos o por las vías del tren, vez a mucho inmigrante y gente pobre pidiendo comida, gente que viene del sur o de Oaxaca y se suben al tren.* In Mexico many times you see at traffic lights or railroad tracks, you see a lot of immigrants and poor people asking for food, people from the south or from Oaxaca and get on the train. (Sofia, college student)

Racial ideologies, such as *mestizaje*, provide ways of understanding the world that make sense of racial gaps, students often fail to understand how race shapes where they live, who they interact with, and how they understand themselves and others (Lewis, 2004). These examples are not atypical of how students identified poverty or the indigenous. The indigenous were for the most part referred to as Mexican people from the South or the people that come from other countries. Mentioning this "other" people as the indigenous and the poor is directly related to their lack of knowledge or interaction with the local tribes. Moreover, identifying poor people as outsiders identifies a problem but for the southern region, not a problem seen in their own community, therefore their problems are less relevant to their lives, or to their city's problems.

Although cities differ and are organized in different ways, for the students that I talked to, it is the poorest communities that remained at the periphery. As the poor gets pushed to the outside of the community so are many of their issues. In our conversations, the students reported not being aware of the issues that pertained to other groups, in specific the indigenous communities. The distance and disconnect that exists between the general population and the indigenous communities seem to cause this lack of awareness. One student indicated she did not know that indigenous groups did not exist anymore.

> *Pues es que los indígenas viven a fueras de la ciudad, para conocerlos tienes que ir como turista… la verdad yo hasta la secundaria supe que había indígenas, yo pensé que ya no había , pensé que era como empezó México y luego vinieron los españoles y luego y ya luego somos así normales, pero tampoco pensaba que en México había pobreza, nada de eso, o sea yo pensé que todo mundo era así normal.* The indigenous they live outside the city, to get to know them you have to go as a tourist… the truth is that it was until middle school that I learned that there were indigenous. I thought there we not any more, I thought it was how Mexico started and then the Spaniards came, and then we were normal. But I didn't think that there was poverty in Mexico either, none of that, I thought everybody was normal. (Marisol, college student)

Marisol's comments show how a lack of visibility of indigenous groups caused her to think indigenous groups did not exist anymore. In her statement, she indicates how these groups live at the periphery of the city. By indicating that she would need to visit that community as tourist she is classifying them as another group a different groups from hers. This statement is consistent with *mestizaje* ideology, which sees mestizos as the national identity and any other group is *othered* (Fregoso, 2016). Moreover, her comment also indicates that she thought indigenous people were

something of the past. On a conversation with Marisol she said that she learned about indigenous people in textbooks and in relation to history, during the times of the Mexican independence, revolution and other historical events. Without actual representation and with a lack of interaction with the indigenous communities it is not surprising that she was unaware of the indigenous communities and their needs. These comments are consistent with research that indicates that limited representation of a group sends messages to the community that their group does not belong in the community (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014). The constant indication that indigenous communities live at the city's periphery makes them outsiders, thus indicating they do not belong to the group.

There are many implications to the way in which the poor or more specifically, the indigenous groups are located in the remote areas of a city. This may cause for these communities to be "not visible" and therefore "not existing" and their needs are ignored. For the most part, people 'forget' they live there, the outer areas become "their areas" so when they come to the city they are seen as "the other", as not part of their group. This spatial segregation creates a lack of knowledge and relational distance from the indigenous communities, they live in the outer areas of a city and their needs become an outside problem. A lack of knowledge about indigenous communities and the issues that affect them was common throughout my conversations with the students. Some of the effects of spatial segregation can also be seen in Andrea's comments.

> *Para mí se me hace que la principal son las de las clases sociales, más que yo se que hay*
>
> *de que personas de que contra los indígenas, pero como ellos están tanto en su ambiente*
>
> *pues no se ven en la ciudad, pero yo sé que si estuvieran en la ciudad todavía se viera de*
>
> *una manera más grande, pero normalmente es de clase económica, de que quien es el que*
>
> *tiene más y quien tiene menos. Pero eso es lo que yo más veo. Porque están los yaquis,*
>
> *pero los yaquis ni los ves están en su parte del pueblito. Lo único cuando los ves es*

cuando estaban tapando la carretera pero de ahí en fuera ni los ves. Y lo de la clase

económica se ve más.

For me it seems to me that the main reason (for social differences) is social class, but I know there are people that are against the indigenous, but because they are in their environment you don't see them in the city, but I know that if you saw them in the city you would see it (differences) in a much bigger way, but usually is economic class, that is who has more and who has less. But that's what I see more. Because the Yaquis are there, but you don't see the Yaquis they are in their own part of their little town. It is only when they were blocking the road that you see them, but from there on you don't see them, and the problem is social class is what you see more. (Andrea, college student).

Andrea's comments are consistent with a naturalization perspective of color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). As discussed in previous chapters, her position on why inequality exists is due to social class. However, she has normalized (i.e. naturalization) the spatial segregation in her community, thus disregarding this group's disadvantages. Comments such as *"they are in their environment," "in their little town"* distinguish them as separate independent groups, and the *other* group, near her community. A consequence of this is the resulting lack of empathy for their social problems. In this case there their presence is acknowledged, however, because they are in their "little town" they are seen only when they do protests and when they cause disturbance. So unless there are social problems, indigenous groups (i.e. Yaquis) are not visible. In her comment there was another sentiment beside lack of empathy, when Andrea says "little town" although literally this refers to the size of the town, the meaning behind this shows an expression that unimportance.

I inquired about the situation she mentioned about the Yaquis (local indigenous group) blocking the highway in protest and her comments were vague and uninterested. Other students

mentioned this incident but none of them showed concern about this. The concerns that were mentioned were mostly about how having the road blocked negatively affected their personal lives. For instance, they mentioned how because the road was blocked they would have to wait longer in the highway to get to their destination. Noticed that the way Andrea mentioned that incident was almost insignificant to the other information she was giving me. These comments are consistent with the racist nature of *mestizaje*, where *mestizaje* is an ideology and a practice that supports the inferiority of indigenous groups and supports discriminatory practices against them (Wade, 2001). The incident was in fact a major struggle that the Yaquis were fighting for against the government[1]. One student mentioned comments she had heard others say about that problem

> *Entre Obregón y Hermosillo pues eran los Yaquis los que estaban manifestándose y pues independientemente de que si estaba bien o no tal vez no usaron la herramienta adecuada, pero todo mundo decía "¿Para que les hacen caso? ¿Que les están preguntando?" pero pues si fuera gente normal tal vez les harían caso "si ni aportan nada, que les están haciendo caso, que los levanten de ahí."* Between Obregon and Hermosillo it was the Yaquis that were manifesting and regardless of whether they were right or wrong, maybe they did not use the right tools, everybody said "why are you listening to them? What are you asking them?" but if there were normal people maybe someone would listen to them "if they don't contribute anything, why are you listening to them, they should be removed from there." (Graciela, college student)

[1] Members of the Yaqui tribe and agricultural producers resumed the blockade of Federal Highway Mexico 15 in protest of the operation of the *Independence Aqueduct*, considering that the government of Sonora and the Federation is in breach of the mandate of the Judiciary. The *Independence Aqueduct* is the work that the administration of then President Guillermo Padrés Elías (2009-2015), implemented to solve the waste of water in the capital of Sonora, through the transfer of 75 million cubic meters of water for human consumption of the same basin that irrigates the fertile agricultural fields of the Yaqui Valley. Protesters affirm the overexploitation of the aqueduct will irremediably affect the availability of the water resource. The spokesman of the tribe said on an interview "Removing water would condemn our existence in the short and medium term… If we think badly, we see a policy of extermination against us."

Graciela's comment, consistent with *mestizaje* ideology, sees natives as the *other,* as not normal. In her statement Graciela, does not show much interest on who was right or who was wrong. She blames the Yaquis for not utilizing the right tools to manifest their discontent. In fact, in her statement, she mentions how others' comments about the Yaquis were demeaning and mentions how others see them as people who don't contribute anything to society. Graciela's opinion is that of disapproval towards the strategy of protest, she seems not engaged or concerned to know who is right or wrong in the matter. But she, just like other students, sees the Yaquis as not normal. And because they are not normal their voices and their concerns are not heard. Moreover, her comments are reflective of cultural racism, which is supported by color-blind ideologies that blames a group of people for their misfortunes, reasoning that it is their lack of work and laziness that cause inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

Besides the lack of concern the students showed, there was also a lack of knowledge about the matters that affect this community. Students mentioned that even though the protest was covered in the news there was not sufficient information about the problem. The students knew about the problem but only one of them was able to mention some details about it. In this situation, media had the power to influence what the community understood about a group of people and their contexts (Mastro, 2009). As a result, the students I interviewed were less informed and less likely to form a strong opinion about the matter in dispute. The students mentioned learning about this matter from the media, but their knowledge was still vague.

The North vs. South

There were other instances where conversations about different social classes and identifying who belongs, was reflective of personal interactions and also reflective of general observations. The most common form of visibility was seen homeless on the streets, people asking for money at the

streetlights, and so on. Some students attributed poverty to indigenous groups coming from the south of Mexico or even Central America due to immigration. The students mentioned immigrants from southern Mexico and also Central and South America. They also mentioned other elements that are part of this journey, such as food, the railroad and the train. For the students, it seems that the train was a representation of "others." The "others" usually referred to people from the South are poor and discriminated against. Fernanda explains how she believes discrimination might happen more in northern Mexico.

Hay mucha discriminación entre nosotros mismos en el país, porque es como que si eres del norte si eres de sonora, es como que ah nos creemos mucho, incluyéndome, todos los de Sonora y los de Monterrey, y los del norte, discriminan mucho a los que viven en el sur, y por la apariencia y por su acento. No es por otra cosa más, o sea no te fijas en lo que puede aportar, te fijas en lo que tiene diferente a ti, ¿Qué es lo que tiene diferente a ti? Es morenito, y habla diferente, y es chaparrito, a diferencia a los que estamos acá en el norte. There is a lot of discrimination amongst us in this county, because if you are from the north, if you are from Sonora, it's like we think too highly of ourselves, including me, everyone from Sonora and the ones from Monterrey, and from the north, discriminate a lot those who live in the south, for their appearance and their accent. It is not for any other thing, I mean you don't see what they can contribute, you look at what at the ways in which that person is different from you, how are they different? They are brown, and speak differently, and they are short, compared to how we are in the north. (Fernanda, college student).

In fact, Fernanda's comment is consistent with what researchers found in Mexico. The National center to prevent discrimination (CONAPRED) conducted a study stated that among the ten

largest cities in the nation, Monterrey shows the greatest levels of intolerance towards the indigenous groups and foreigners (Ochoa, December 2014). In her comment Fernanda discusses how it is the feeling of superiority that divides the different regions in the country. She mentions the intra-colorism found within Mexico. The colorism described by Fernanda, the stratification between people of the same group, in this case mestizos, that are distinguished by their skin color (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Hunter, 2005). In her comment, Fernanda does not mention any indigenous groups; however, Banks (2000) indicates that any form of discrimination or stratification based on skin color has its roots in racism.

For colorism to occur, individuals have to identify subtle differences of skin tone and attribute meanings to those differences (Blair, et.al., 2004). Fernanda attributes these distinctions based on physical trait among the different regions in the northern Mexico proximity to the United States is described as a privileged position the north has over the south.

> *Pues no sé, porque siento porque estamos pegados a Estados Unidos, porque estamos blancos, porque nos parecemos a los gringos. O se creen más los del norte porque hay menos gente, o hay más maneras de salir adelante en el norte. La main reason es porque estamos pegados a Estados Unidos, porque somos altos, porque somos güeros, no sé, por eso.* Well, I don't know, I feel it is because we are next to the United States, because we are White, because we look like Americans. Or we think we are better because there is less people, or there is more ways to move forward in the north. The main reason is because we are next to the United States, because we are tall, because we are blonde, I don't know, that is why. (Fernanda, college student).

Colorism is linked to racial stereotypes (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007) and it is characterized by a need of power over others. When students classify themselves as part of one group (North vs South),

they are ascribing themselves attributes that are consistent with the group they belong to (i.e. whites) (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). The following conversation explains how the proximity with the United States, or whiteness, facilitates this student identifying with this group.

Yvonne   *Entonces ¿están de acuerdo a que el color tiene que ver en las oportunidades?* So do you agree that skin color has something to do with opportunities?

Jorge   *Si porque es muy notorio, y si vemos en México, como somos países vecinos, Estado Unidos siempre ha mostrado la imagen de la raza siempre, bueno en la mayoría de las veces, para demostrar que es lo más aceptable, como somos países vecinos nos adaptamos a las ideas poco a poco para llegar a su nivel de ellos, entonces si ese planteamiento lo están dando ellos, ese planteamiento los estamos adoptando aquí.* Yes, because it is very obvious, and if we look at Mexico, because we are neighbor countries, the United States has always an image of race, well the majority of the time, to demonstrate what is most acceptable, because we are neighbors we adopt to those ideas slowly but continuously to be at their level, so if that is the approach they have, that is the approach we adopt here.

Yvonne   *¿Cómo creen que eso afecte a la cultura, a los que vivimos aquí en Nogales?* How does that affect the culture, for those that live here in Nogales?

Jorge   *Que no podemos tener un idealismo mexicano, no podemos decir ¿sabes qué? Las ideas son estas, que son diferentes, que son un tipo de diversidad de personas a las que están en el país vecino, pero ven que en país vecino*

están mejores, se ven mejor, lo puedes ver en las redes sociales, que están más guapos ojos verdes y ¿qué imagen tienen de México? Tienen a chaparro, moreno, son las diferentes representaciones que tenemos, entonces eso afecta mucho aquí porque está tratando de meter aquella perspectiva de personas, que no nos podemos conformar con lo que ya somos tenernos que ser como son ellos, no podemos llegar a cómo son ellos. That we cannot have a Mexican idealism, we cannot say you know that? The ideas are these, they are different, they are a type of diversity of people to compare to those in the neighboring country, but they see that in the neighboring country they are better, they look better, you can see it in the social networks, that are more handsome green eyes, and ¿What image do they have of Mexico? They have a short person, brown, those are the different representations that we have, then that affects a lot here because it is trying to put that perspective of people, that we cannot be satisfied with what we already have, to be like they are, we cannot become what they are like.

This statement shows how students attribute traits to skin color, showing how colorism is present in these regions. Moreover, this statement is also reflective of *mestizaje* ideology that holds a promise of inclusivity, based on the improvement of race through a mixture with whiteness, while at the same time is a discriminatory practice that feeds the belief of the inferiority of indigenous groups and in practice is discriminatory against them (Wade, 2001). In these statements, the whiteness of these students or the resemblance to the U.S. white citizen provides the northern region a classification that is privileged over their southern counterparts.

Space and Resources: Identifying the Problem

There were students who were able to question the current living situation of native communities. The shared space that has given a student the daily visibility of native people panhandling makes a student not normalize a situation or blame the group, but makes him question the causes that lead to their living conditions.

Por mi casa justo en un semáforo siempre está el mismo grupo de personas, que están pidiendo dinero porque los tienen apartados y tienen que estar pidiendo dinero. Es más por pedir dinero. By my house right by the streetlight there is always the same group of people, that are asking for money because they are isolated and they have to ask for money. (Jaime, college student).

The example Jaime gives is similar to what Aurora and Sophia say. They mentioned the indigenous people asking for food and Jaime mentions money. What is different in the two responses is that Jaime gives an explanation for this activity. He says, "They have them isolated and they have to ask for money." In this case, there are two groups of people that he refers to, the government or general population, and the indigenous groups. He sympathizes with the native groups, by providing a reason why the indigenous groups ask for money, their isolation and the fact that there is a group of people that keeps them isolated. His statement indicates that this situation is outside of the control of indigenous groups. In his statement, Jaime contradicts the colorblind ideology as he is aware of issues of power and privilege. Although his awareness of issues of race and color come from his personal experience living in the United States for five years during elementary school, he was not the only student who noticed a lack of opportunity for native communities.

Denisse mentioned it is very common for them to see indigenous women on the streets selling candy (see Figure 17). For the most part, these women are seated on the floor with a box of candy; and

on occasions, these women are carrying young children with them. She categorized these women as been outsiders in their community by indicating they probably came from the south. Denisse said that with the lack of opportunity and education they only option they have is to sell candy on the streets.

> *Luego yo creo que también tiene mucho que ver el nivel de educación que muchas personas discriminan a otras porque no tuvieron, por la misma posición económica, no tuvieron la oportunidad de estudiar de tener una educación de saber leer de saber escribir* (it also has to do the level of education that many people discriminate others because they did not have, due to the same economic position, did not have the opportunity to study, to have an education, to learn to read or write). (Denisse, high school student)

Figure 17. Indigenous women selling candy on the streets (picture taken by Denisse)

When thinking about possible causes of the disparity of poverty for the indigenous people in Mexico, or any other place. People tend to look at the effects of a failing system. Denisse discussed educational opportunity as a cause for social disparities. The more education someone has the greater the likelihood that person will do well economically. Denisse mentions education as the reason why

differences are seen in her community. As a reproducer of racism (Velasco Cruz, 2015), education serves to create the interests of society. While Denisse referred to the broader educational problem in Mexico, Aurora, another student, provided a specific example as reason for the poverty lived by indigenous groups. She mentioned education and lack of resources.

> *A lo mejor quizá es porque no tienen educación. Lo niños donde yo iba no más había primaria, ni secundaria o prepa. Hay un camión en la mañana como a las 7am y si te quieres regresar tienes estar hasta las 6pm. Y pues hay menos oportunidades. La gente indígena vive en comunidades más lejos o aisladas, o están acostumbrados a no vivir en zonas urbanas.* Maybe it is because they don't have an education. Where I used to go (as a volunteer) there was only an elementary school, there was no middle or high school. There is a bus that comes in the morning at around 7am and if you want to come back you have to be there at 6pm. And there are fewer opportunities. The indigenous people they live in farther communities or isolated or they are used to living in urban areas. (Aurora, college student)

Aurora refers to the lack of resources and opportunities for an education. Aurora is a student that volunteered in this native community and her understanding and empathy toward the living conditions of this community differs from other students I interviewed. Even though she acknowledged that the indigenous communities live at the periphery and that they are not used to urbanization, which is similar to comments that will be presented below, her statement is not that of criticism but an awareness of the lack of support between the urban community and the indigenous one. There is a physical disconnect in terms of territorial distance, but also in public transportation and lack of a basic right to education for the young natives. Public transportation only comes to the indigenous town twice a day early in the morning and late at night. She mentioned if someone missed the bus there was no other opportunity to get there, except for personal rides.

Most students did not have the interaction or knowledge about the native communities in their region. The lack of visibility of native students in the schools can cause the general population to believe that the indigenous culture is a culture that does not encourage education. From a colorblind perspective, people tend to blame a group for their economic hardships because we are all equal and all have the same opportunities (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). This cultural racism attributes failure to a group's customs and traditions. Alejandra's comment is an example of this.

> *Porque yo creo que es porque siguen viviendo el mismo estilo de vida de siempre de sus ancestros… y jamás se dieron cuenta de la urbanización, de que empezó a cambiar el mundo, nunca tuvieron interés de mudarse o estudiar una carrera. Yo creo que por las mismas costumbres y cultura que han vivido toda su vida. Yo pienso que su estilo de vida no lo ven mal, porque están acostumbrados a ese estilo de vida. Están tan enfocados en su estilo de vida que no se dan cuenta que están pobres. Lo que yo pienso personalmente es que ellos piensan que su vida está bien.* I believe it is because they live the same lifestyle as their ancestors... and they were never aware of urbanization that the world started to change, they never had the interest to move or study a career. I believe that it was their customs and culture they have lived all their lives. I think they don't see anything wrong with their lifestyle, because that is what they are used to. They are so focused on their lifestyle that they don't realize they are poor. (Alejandra, college student).

Alejandra blames culture and traditions as the reasons why there is that separation of community. In fact, she says that indigenous communities are not aware of the many changes in the world and that they had no interest in participating in it. She explicitly states that there was not an interest on their part to obtain an education. And believes they see this as normal because it is not part of their lifestyle. The way in which she describes the indigenous communities is as if they are

completely isolated without any acknowledgement of the surrounding communities, and without an awareness of their impoverished living conditions. Alejandra continued with her explanation,

> *Y es que yo creo que en todo la mayoría de los indígenas así es, que las mujeres tienen que hacer las cosas de las mujeres, cocinar, lavar, estar en la casa, ser ama de casa, y los hombres tienen que trabajar. Yo creo que ya están tan acostumbrados a esas cosas y a esos roles de vida que no lo ven mal y nunca avanzaron pues, nunca avanzaron como sociedad, nunca fueron a estudiar, nunca quisieron ser algo más, nunca se dieron cuenta de la urbanización, nunca se dieron cuenta que podían tener más, que se quedaron ahí, y pues ahora como la sociedad está tan avanzada, yo creo que ver su estilo de vida lo marcas como pobreza porque ya la gente no está acostumbrada a ese tipo de vida pues.* I think that is the way it is for the majority of indigenous people that women have to do things women do, cook, wash (laundry), stay at home, stay at mom, and men have to work. I think they are used to those things and their roles that they don't see them as wrong and they never progressed, they never progressed as a society, they never went to study, they did not want to be something more, they never acknowledge urbanization, they never realized they could have more, they remain the same, and now with society is more advanced, I think their lifestyle is marked by poverty because people are not used to that lifestyle. (Alejandra, college student).

Alejandra is describing "traditional" roles in the household, where the man/husband goes out to work and the woman stays at home to take her of household. However, in her statement she mentions these activities as something unique to the native groups and blames them for their lack of participation in society. She goes on to mention that it is this group's choice to "not study and not wanting to pursue something more." Because Alejandra believes all people have the same

opportunities for success she arrives at the conclusion that it might be their lack of interest and effort to "be something more". In fact she normalizes their situation in a way that identifies these communities as being so disconnected to society that they do not realized the opportunities they would have. Alejandra interchanges both naturalization and cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001) to make sense of the living situation of native communities. Similarly, Fernanda mentions that native groups' current economic situation is due to a choice, but she also recognized the role of the government and their lack of support.

> *A que no quieren dejar sus costumbres y a que el gobierno no los apoye porque siento que ellos quieren seguir viviendo en sus costumbres, y quieren vivir... siento que ellos no se fijan en lo que ganan o no, si no en preservar sus culturas , sus costumbres sus tradiciones, y siento que están así porque.. no porque quieran, pero porque, bueno si porque quieren pero por su gente, porque siento que son más unidos son como si fueran una familia enorme, y es como si tú los dejas, no sé, si tú los dejas es como que te sales de la cultura. Y siento que están así porque el gobierno no los apoya, y nosotros tampoco los apoyamos cuando hacen sus artesanías o sea también nosotros le queremos regatear a la gente cuando literal se matan haciendo esas artesanías para poder ganar el pan de cada día para sostener a sus hijos y nosotros o comprándolo aquí en Estados Unidos y hasta más caro.* They don't want to leave their traditions and that the government does not support them because I feel they want to continue living their costumes, and they want to live... I feel that they don't look at what they earn or not, but in preserving their cultures, their customs, their traditions, and I feel they are like that because... not because they want to, but because, we partly because they want to, but for their people, because I feel they are more united like if they were a huge

family, and if you leave then, I don't know, if you leave them it's like you are out of their culture. And I feel they are like that because the government does not support them, and we don't support them either when they do their crafts I mean we want to haggle when they literally kill themselves making their crafts to be able to earn the daily bread to feed their children and we are buying here is the in the United States and even at a more expensive price. We don't support our own culture. (Fernanda, college student).

In this statement, Fernanda does mention culture as a reason why indigenous groups choose to remain isolated, which still blames the group for their living condition without questioning the societal structures that prevent their acceptance as recognized members of the larger community. Moreover, her comments provide cultural pride of the indigenous culture and recognize that society at large does not value their culture or their work.

Another student provided a different explanation for the poverty and current living conditions of indigenous groups. For Claudia, indigenous culture is still a factor that influences, if not determines poverty, she see society as playing an important role in the living conditions of the indigenous communities, which is a way to recognize the racism in society's structures. However, she does so in a way that is consistent with *mestizaje* ideology.

Yo creo que se debe en gran medida a que están muy arraigados a sus costumbres y el mundo está cambiando muchísimo. La verdad no se mucho de sus costumbres, pero si necesitan... bueno es que por ejemplo los que trabajan en el campo que llega una compañía o que la ciudad se expande. Pues les quitan el espacia les quitan las tierras, ¿Dónde van a trabajar? Ellos no son tan adaptables, "pues ¿Me voy a la ciudad?" hay algunos que sí lo han hecho, pero hay otros que por quedarse en sus tierras, por quedarse

en sus costumbres... como que nosotros mismos al expandir una ciudad pues nosotros como que les estamos haciendo más pequeño su espacio, más pequeño su grupo. Pero por ejemplo tal vez entre su comunidad ellos estén bien, todos sean iguales, pero si quieren venir a la ciudad, quieren entrar a la escuela tienen que pagar un precio. I think part of it is due to how rooted they are to their customs and the world is changing so much. Honestly, I am not very familiar with their customs, but they do need... well, for example, those who work in the fields that a company settles there or that the city expands. Well they take away their space, they take away their land. Where are they going to work? They are not as adaptable, "well I am going to the city?" there are some that have done it, but there are others that in order to stay in their land, to keep their customs... it's by expanding the city, we are constricting their space, their group. But for example maybe in their community they are fine, they are all equal, but if they want to come to the city, if they want to go to school they have to pay a price for it. (Claudia, college student).

Claudia mentioned that their culture is not adaptable to the ever-changing world, which is consistent with *mestizaje* ideology where conquerors viewed native as backward and in need to be civilized. She then admitted not knowing much about indigenous cultures and mentions something not any other participants had mentioned, that property rights are (Bell, 1987) created in favor of the white majority, or the big companies that need the property were natives reside. Claudia referred to how their right for a space is not important.

Moreover, Claudia also recognized education as the tool that will allow them to obtain a better future. When she mentions that they "are not adaptable" she justifies getting rid of their culture and leaving behind their community in order to succeed in life. Her statement is consistent with Navarrete Linares (2008) that reports that in Mexico the indigenous community is seen as a minority, in a

subordinate position that must integrate their culture to the norm imposed by the majority (i.e. mestizos). This part of the position reinforced the ideology of *mestizaje* where these groups need to *mejorar la raza* by adopting "white" standards, and if failure to adhere to this ideology or removing the indigenous out of the person, then any failure to integrate into society is a personal choice.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how students justify social stratification and socioeconomic differences though the use of color-blind and *mestizaje* ideologies. Using these ideologies as reference to the analysis, it was not surprising that students did not consider race as a factor that is related to inequality, but personal choice and practices as its reason. In Mexico, indigenous groups are considered a minority; a group that maintains their own language and culture that are not consistent with the "national language and culture" and that are not integrated (Navarrete Linares, 2008). This sentiment was shown in the conversations with the students, where some blamed the native communities for not integrating with the community and therefore seen as *not normal*. This culture of racism blames the victim for not leaving their language and traditions and integrating with the majority. Indigenous people are seen as not normal and blamed for their social status. Their problems become something that would be resolved if they were a part of the group. Due to their status as outsiders their voices are seen as irrelevant to the larger group.

Lack of visibility was a common topic of conversation, whenever indigenous people were mentioned they were considered as being "on their own" they were not considered to be part of their community, of their city; they are not considered members of their community. The data discussed here also showed that the students' backgrounds and experience affect the level of awareness and understanding of the problems of the indigenous groups. Few students showed awareness of the problems of the indigenous groups and recognition that there were unjust practices towards them but

there was not an open challenge on the social structures that reinforce this stratification. Not one of them challenged or criticized any entity in particular. Their situation was seen as not right but as the way things were, it was *naturalization.*

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

This study looked at the practices that reinforce racism towards indigenous communities and colorism in Mexico. Working with students, I was able to understand the complexities of the colorblind ideology and how youth make sense and justify discriminatory practices. I decided to work with young adults because I believe they are the experts in their social environment. Through interviews I gained insight into the different venues that inform students about what is good, about who belongs, what their community looks like, and other related issues. While researchers have studied the perceived existence of racism in their community and have replicated studies that show that in Mexico there is preference towards whiteness. This study looked at the messages that are transmitted in the community that lead to the preference of whiteness, in terms of race and skin color. This study does not intend to see students as the reproducers and creators of discrimination, rather it explains the complexity of the environment in which they interact and the constant messages they received and engaged in as active members of society.

Findings

Mestizaje normalizes whiteness as a site of legitimacy and privilege (Moreno Figueroa, 2010). Latin America is an example of a racially stratified society, where all people, including people of color participate in the reproduction and naturalization of a racial hierarchy (Warren and Twine, 2002). Non-whites "tend not to perceive racism, are deeply racist, and thus are central to the maintenance of white supremacy" (Warren & Twine, 2002, p. 550). Chapters four through six provided different examples of how youth participate in this reproduction and naturalization, through their understanding of social hierarchy, their relationship with others, and use of social media.

According to Katzew's Latin American Social Caste Pyramid (1996), Mexico's social structure still places Whites at the top of the pyramid. Racial hierarchy is nourished and developed through

ideologies and practices that encourage us to compare ourselves with others (Fortes de Leff, 2002).
People of mixed descent separate themselves from other mestizos who might not be successful, and
they proclaim their whiteness. Through the use of language, youth shared their experience with name-
calling, sayings, nicknames as a way to establish a hierarchical system based on skin color. This was
evident when Manuel mentioned how some students were not included in the group or certain events
because of the color their skin. The racialized language the youth produced and reproduced served to
"reinforce stereotypes and rationalize the existing relations of racial inequality (Omi, 1989, p. 121).
This language provided insight into the youth's understanding and meaning given to skin tone. In their
narratives, there is a constant comparison of who looks whiter and who doesn't. Andrea also provided
an example of this, when she indirectly mentioned her skin color as something that brings her privilege
and makes her stand out from the rest of her community by not looking like the stereotypical Mexican.

The *Mestizaje* ideology reinforces the belief that through racial mixture racial problems are
resolved by transcending race; that fluid racial identity is an indicator of a form of racial progress; and
that discussing race or focusing on race is itself racist because it disrupts the harmony of race
neutrality (Hernandez, 2002). Consistent with *mestizaje* ideology, the youth identified, not race, but
social class and wealth as the reason for social divisions in their community. The students in this study
did not see skin color as having any relation to social status until they are asked to identify how people
in different social strata look. Although for the most part, being white was associated with power and
higher social classes, there were very few students who did identify being light brown as someone in
power. However, a significant finding was that most students identified the poor person as being
brown and indigenous. Bonilla-Silva (1996) described the racialized social system that exists in
Central and South America and the Caribbean as social hierarchies based on "social estimations." This
is related to phenotype, where physical attributes define which group looks better or is smarter, and is

consistent with research that has found that having dark skin is associated with Indian origin and therefore considered of inferior social class (Fortes de Leff, 2002). The relationship of skin color and the social hierarchy was observed when Denisse talked about how people with "better physical appearance" had better opportunities to succeed.

Skin color and features associated with Whites, such as light skin, straight noses, and long, straight hair, take on the meanings that they represent: civility, rationality, and beauty. A lot of stereotypes are difficulty to challenge due to the social and physical structure of a city, where students reported how indigenous groups are kept at the city's periphery and denied access to certain facilities. Instead of questioning the structural practices that push native and poor communities to the city's periphery, such as increased in housing costs (Bayer, McMillan, & Reuben, 2004), students attributed it to personal choice, thus minimizing the existing racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Unless students have had contact with the native community, problems or issues that affect native groups went unnoticed. The ideology of *mestizaje* legitimized practices that "*othered*" native groups, and blames them for their misfortunes and their inability to be part of the larger group. Students would often comment on the indigenous groups' lack of interest in incorporating and living in the city and they were also blamed for not obtaining an education. There was an overall description of *them* and *us.* This segregation was physical (geographical, appearance) and cultural.

Who is Indian and who is not is a fluid categorization that is directly related to retaining an indigenous culture versus those who do not. Those *mestizos* who have adopted the accepted culture (i.e. mestizo identity) are still at a disadvantage because their physical appearance hinders his/her upward mobility to the middle and upper class (Villareal, 2010). An example of how physical appearance affects social mobility is when indigenous people that wear their traditional dress are denied entrance to different places. They are seen as people who have chosen to not be part of the

larger group (i.e. mestizo) and are seen as the "other" and "not normal". Moreover, access to education or to simple general services is not available for all. Student discourses regarding the limited opportunities for education available for the indigenous community showed the cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001) against these communities that are blamed for their situation.

The limited visibility and lack of representation of indigenous groups allowed for students to think of them as outsiders and not part of their group (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014). Social representations inform us who we are and provide an image of our future possibilities. Moreover, they provide information as to what is and how a community looks like. The students' description of a poor person, is consistent with media portrayals of a social class system where whites are located at the top and brown and indigenous groups are located at the bottom. All students but one student described the poor person in their community as brown-skin and dark hair. In this case the media becomes a reflection of society's composition or the image the community aspires to be. The youth also obtained messages about skin tone in textbooks. For instance, chapter four showed how the elementary school textbooks provide a clear representation of a community that values whiteness. The textbooks do not show the true color of its community but the color it aspires to become. The messages about their community leave many unaware of the realities and problems of the indigenous communities.

Students' accounts of how inequality and inequity is reproduced, offered a complex view of the accessibility of resources available and the lack of effort by the government to support indigenous communities. This in turn creates a vicious cycle where the indigenous community and culture are blamed for their condition, thus causing a decreased in support from the broader community. For instance, the lack of accessibility to quality education, where the schools located in indigenous land do not have all academic grade levels available for the students (Navarrete Linares, 2008). Results of this study are consistent with research that demonstrates that discrimination against indigenous groups is a

result of skin color discrimination, class origin and rural residence (Flores and Telles, 2010). Skin color and class what reproduce the system of inequality, and that inequality in education is observed at an early age.

Findings in this study recognize that the education system is working at including a multicultural perspective in textbooks. Chapter 4 noted the inclusion of indigenous language increased from grades 3 to 6. However, this approach must be challenged to not only include token stories in each textbook, but to also include images that are representative of the physical and racial composition of the country. Multicultural Education calls for the respect and inclusion of diverse groups in curriculum. In this case, textbooks provide social messages that orient students about their social location in their community (Moscovici 1973/1988; 1984). Students' identities are impacted by their group membership, if their group is positively represented, their self-esteem may be enhanced favorably (Lorenzo-Hernandez & Oellette, 1998). When students see only light-skin tones in the images presented, what message that does give to students? When only one race is presented what message does it send? An effort to include characters in schoolbooks that show classmates from different backgrounds (i.e. indigenous, Afro-Mexican, dark-skin, light-skin, and others) should be made.

Racism and colorism must be challenged not only with images and stories, but also with dialogue in schools. All student participants were excited to share their opinions. They mentioned at the end of the interviews that they would like the opportunity to discuss these topics at school. In order for schools to interrupt segregation and inequality, and break the silence about racism they should create an environment of productive dialogue designed to lead to effective action and social change (Tatum, 1997). These topics could be incorporated into social sciences courses that incorporate purposeful exercises that incite meaningful dialogue and challenge current color-blind ideologies. The

methodology used in this dissertation, guided by participatory action research, allowed for students to openly express their opinions. A similar methodology and teaching plan should be incorporated into the classroom, this would allow the students to move at their own pace, while at the same time challenging current practices.

Implications for future research

The study demonstrated how a colorblind ideology serves to protect white privilege, which is maintained through the use of language, representations, and social segregation; and how the concept of whiteness as property legitimizes power (Dixson & Rosseau, 2005). This was evident in the students' stories of the social distance that exists between the general community and the indigenous one, where the majority have the right to exclude. Students interviewed in this study gained a new consciousness about how their use of social media and jokes maintain a divided society. For the most part, students were interviewed only once, future research should look at the impact of these conversations over time. One of the students interviewed, Diana, showed a change in behavior by correcting her mom. This brings the question of whether or not students will change or modify some of their behavior if they consider they are being discriminatory towards a group of people.

On another hand, this study has only provided the view and experiences of the majority group. Among the tenets of CRT, is that the experiences of people of color (i.e. indigenous groups) are at the center and race is theorized within that context (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). This dissertation is that it is focused solely on the discrimination against indigenous communities, which was a conscious decision based on students comments' and personal experiences; and, it is a choice that can be seen as complicit to the current rhetoric that silences and ignores other marginalized communities. Exploring the indigenous and other marginalized groups (i.e. Afro-Mexicans) experiences and stories will challenge the existing discourse that views racism as non existing in Mexico and may contradict views

that racial language that demeans indigenous' culture and people are benign and part of Mexican satire. The indigenous communities must be provided the space to voice their experience and question practices that have been normalized. Also, the Afro-Mexican population must also be part of the conversation, for their perspectives on racism and colorism in Mexico are essential to advance research in this field.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Foundations of Education,   06/2017
Ph.D. Candidate, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Masters of Arts in Educational Psychology,
12/2009
The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology,
12/2005
The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Work Experience

Program Coordinator, International Development   01/2015 – Present
Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ
- Managed the IME Becas-Juntos Podemos scholarship grant of $90,000 for the 2015-2016 academic year. A total of 98 scholarship were granted to qualifying students.
- Managed the IME becas scholarship grant of $90,000 for the year 2014-2015. A total of 85 scholarships were granted to qualifying students.
- Managed and wrote grant for Juntos Podemos scholarship of $120,000 for the 2017 year.
- Serve as one of the primary coordinators for the SEP Bécalos Santander Universidades International Program 2016. Maintain communication with scholarship funders throughout the program.
- Co-writer and coordinator of Fulbright Scholar in Residence grant program.
- Serve as the primary contact for international short-term programs
- Work with faculty and staff in the coordination of the summer short-term programs
- Co-teach faculty professional development Topics in Pedagogy course
- Create international recruitment marketing materials and initiated a Facebook page to foster an engaging community for current international (and domestic) students
- Work on improving communication with current international students through the creation of a new international listserv
- Research internationalization strategies utilized by higher education institutions
- Presented to international partners and administrators the services provided by Pima Community College to the Becalos students
- Assist Vice President of International Development in duties as needed

Program Coordinator, Becalos-Santander-Universidades International Program
08/2014-12/2014

Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ
- Helped the international students integrate into the Tucson and Pima Community College community
- Participated in the development and implementation of program goals, objectives, and monitored program budget
- Developed and maintained documentation of programmed activities and student participation
- Coordinated the use of facilities, transportation, and other details
- Coordinated orientation programs, tours, and student engagement programs
- Overviewed PEER mentors' and Conversation Partners' work with the international students
- Created evaluation materials of the short-term program

Teaching Assistant   08/2001-05/2013
Syracuse University School of Education, Syracuse NY
- Planned and facilitated weekly group discussion
- Graded and evaluated student assignment, tests, and overall progress
- Assisted the professor to fulfill overall course objectives

Lead Student Recruiter   08/2009-12/2009
The University of Arizona Office of Admissions, Tucson, AZ.
- Supervised Student Recruiters
- Participated in recruitment functions and programs as a representative of the Office of Admissions/Minority Student Recruitment
- Assisted students with important enrollment processes such as admissions, scholarships, financial aid, housing, and orientation

Graduate Assistant   07/2008-06/2009
The University of Arizona, Office of Admissions, Tucson, AZ
- Developed, managed, coordinated, implemented, and evaluated recruitment efforts associated with target site schools specifically on campus visitation programs
- Performed general admission counseling, recruitment, and customer service functions, representing the University and The Office of Admissions in a variety of venues
- Coordinated various admission-related programs, activities and/or events
- Served as a pivotal member of the college counseling community by developing and maintaining close contact with school officials, personnel, and students to accurately convey the academic, cultural, and social environment of the University
- Participated in regular High School visitations, Community College visitations, counselor updates, and College Fair programs

Student Recruiter   09/2007-05/2008
The University of Arizona, Office of Admissions, Tucson, AZ
- Worked primarily with minority, low income and first generation high school seniors who planned to enroll at The University of Arizona
- Assisted students with important enrollment processes such as admissions, scholarships, financial aid, housing, and orientation

- Participated in recruitment functions and programs as a representative of the Office of Admissions/Minority Student Recruitment
- Conducted admissions and financial aid presentations to various populations as needed

Youth Program Aide   07/2006-06/2007
Catholic Community Services, Tucson, AZ
- Planned and implemented educational sessions for youth
- Responsible for monitoring youth behavior and providing a safe and clean environment
- Assisted students with their educational needs
- Assisted with special events

Research

Principal Investigator   08/2013 – present.
Mentor: Dr. Dalia Rodriguez
    Project title: Mestizaje Ideology as Color-Blind Racism: Students' discourses of colorism and racism in Mexico

    Working with a group of high school and college students, I am trying uncover students' experiences with colorism and racism by focusing on the ways in which everyday practices maintain a system of inequality.

Principal Investigator   05/2011-12/2012
Mentor: Dr. Dalia Rodriguez
Project title: Who supports children's education?
    In this study I tried to understand the elements of a culture of collaboration that exist at a Mexican school, a collaboration that has proven to be successful. More specifically, I explored ways in which teachers, parents and students contribute to a successful collaborative culture, as well as it identified elements that challenge their contribution.

Principal Investigator   08/2009-12/2009
Mentor: Dr. Levine-Donnerstein
Project title: Cultural diversity as a mediator of conflict resolution
    I explored how culture influences affective processes involved in dealing with conflict. Specifically, the study measured how perspective and empathy are influenced by culture. Moreover, in this study I examined how people approach conflict negotiation and problem solving.

Graduate Research Assistant   07/2005-09/2007
Mentor: Dr. Stephanie Fryberg
    I interviewed academically at-risk school students at Tulalip Elementary School. As part of a 2-year longitudinal study, I collected several dependent measures, including but not limited to self-esteem, theories of intelligence, and sense of belonging. I assisted in a longitudinal study of academic disidentification. As project leader, I worked on various projects and organized data collection, oversaw data entry, and helped with data analyses.

Presentations

- SEP-Becalos-Santander Universidades Program 2014 – Best Practices Reunion. Presentation: Pima Community College and SEP-Becalos-Santander Universidades Program. Mexico City, Mex. January 2015.
- National Collegiate Leadership Conference 2015- Root, Grow, Branch. Presentation: "Creating Community and Developing Global Leaders through the PCC Becalos Program." Co-Presenter.
- Critical Graduate Research Symposium: Investigating Inequalities, organized by the Sociology Graduate Student Assemblage at Syracuse University. Presentation: "Who Should Support Children's Education? The Role of Teachers, Parents and Students as the Pillars of Education."
- NYU International Education Conference 2012- Advancing Global Education in Austere Times. Presentation: Teachers and parents as the backbone of achievement in a Mexican Elementary School.

Publications

- Castro Salazar, R., Merriam-Castro, K. & Perez Lopez, Y. (2016). Building a World-Class College: Creating a Global Community at Pima Community College. In Rosalind Latiner Raby & Edward J Valeau (Eds.), *International Education at Community Colleges: Themes, Practices, and Case Studies* (pp. 175-188). US: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Leavitt, P.A., Covarrubias, R., Perez, Y.A. & Fryberg, S.A. (2015). "Frozen in Time": The impact of Native American media representations on identity and self-understanding. *Journal of Social Issues, 71(1),* 39-53.

Awards, Activities, & Scholarships

- Hispanic Leadership Institute participant. (February – Abril 2016)
- Justice, Advocacy, Dialogue, & Empowerment facilitator, Pima Community College (November, 2014).
- Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award 2012-2013 nominee.
- Critical Statistics, The Public Science Project, City University of New York, Directors: Michelle Fine & Maria Torre (June 2012).
- Critical Participatory Action Research Participants, The Public Science Project, City University of New York, Led by: Brett Stout (June 2012).
- Graduate Tuition Scholarship (Syracuse University) recipient 2009-present.
- Everett L. & Marian G. Holden Memorial Endowed Scholarship 2008-2009-recipient.

Volunteer/Community Service

Make-A-Wish Foundation, Wish Granter   07/2016 - Present
- Work with families and children who have been diagnosed a life-threatening illness to find out something that the child wishes.

Resplandor International Inc., Guanajuato, Gto, Mex.   05/2013-07/2013
- Worked to improve the facilities at a community center.
- Participated and instructed various educational sessions.
- Assisted the program coordinator in tasks needed for special events, such as *semana cultural* (cultural week) and free hearing screenings provided to the community.

Skills

- Strong customer service skills.
- Fluent in Spanish both through written and oral communication.
- Proficient in Power Point, Excel, Microsoft Word.
- Analytical, research, and writing skills.
- Experience with statistical/research software: SPSS
- Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) trained

References

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