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IRVINE

NAMING RACISM, CONFRONTING ANTI-BLACKNESS: TRANSNATIONAL MEXICAN AMERICAN RACIALIZATION AND COALITION BUILDING

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Political Science

by

Bianca Sofia Rubalcava

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Mary McThomas, Chair
Professor Davin Phoenix
Professor Michael Tesler

2022

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DEDICATION

To

my parents, Agustin and Stacey Rubalcava

in recognition of their sacrifices,
unconditional love, and unwavering support
thank you.

my sister, Valentina,

Thank you for always believing in me.
Without you, there would be nothing.

Y por la familia Rubalcava, lo hicimos.

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I am deeply grateful for everyone who has supported and encouraged me throughout this process.

The last word goes for Valentina, my sweetest love, you are the light of my life and have given me the strength and motivation to keep going. Thank you.

VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Naming Racism, Confronting Anti-Blackness: Transnational Mexican American Racialization and Coalition Building

by

Bianca Sofia Rubalcava

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Irvine, 2022

Professor Mary McThomas, Chair

This dissertation seeks to trace a geneology of anti-Blackness within Mexican American and racial identity formation. By understanding the nuanced differences between white supremacy, racism against Mexicans and the structural racism of anti-Blackness, I believe that Mexican Americans and Black communities can build solidarity and successfully resist racism. I argue that global anti-Blackness and racial capitalism have been foundational in the development and sustainability of anti-Blackness within the Mexican American community. Furthermore, Mexican Americans, as a colonized people, have been subjected to discrimination, state sanctioned violence, harassment, and harmful national rhetoric. However, by creating and clinging to an ambiguous *Mestizo Latinidad* as a racial identity, Mexican American racial identity has been *and continues to be* anti-Black and harmful especially to Afro-Mexicans, Black Mexicans, and Indigenous Mexicans.

Through archival research, large N survey data, and legal analysis, I argue that for Mexican Americans, racial identity has been and continues to be both an internal and an external negotiation; by which I mean Mexican Americans have negotiated for themselves their own racial identity (through legal processes, social Movements, and

cultural reproduction). However, their racial identity has also been imposed by structures like white supremacy which names them a racialized other. Through these processes of negotiation, Mexican Americans have become complicit in reproducing and normalizing harmful anti-Black sentiments. Rather than joining Black communities in fighting oppression and white supremacy, history has demonstrated that Mexican Americans have often been complicit in the oppression of the Black community.

INTRODUCTION

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" – AUDRE LORDE, *Sister Outsider*

On February 12, 2012 the world lost Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch vigilante. Trayvon Martin, unarmed, was carrying iced tea and candy when he was shot. George Zimmerman had phoned 911 to report a "suspicious person" moments before taking Martin's life into his own hands. George Zimmerman was acquitted of all charges in July of 2013 citing self-defense and Florida's "stand your ground" law. The only "suspicious" aspect of Martin was his Black skin and the fact that he was walking alone at night.

Zimmerman exhibited strong anti-Black bias from the moment he made the 911 call to his shooting of the unarmed Black teenager. Since that time, he has engaged in several acts that can, and should, be considered racist by commemorating the murder of Trayvon Martin, including selling the handgun that he used and calling it an "American Firearm Icon." While this case brought media attention to and sparked a debate about the meaning of Black Lives in the United States, one conversation that arose from the brutal incident was a question of "Can non-Black people of color be racist?" And later, "Who is white?"

Zimmerman's father wrote a letter to the press claiming that Zimmerman could not have acted in a racially motivated manner because he is "Hispanic;" as if being of Hispanic descent precludes the ability to be racist against Black people in the United States. Additionally, this led many to question: Can Latinos be white? The racial ambiguity of Zimmerman (is he white? Is he Latino? Both?) brought a moment of reckoning within the Latinx community regarding whiteness and complicity with white

supremacy. Unfortunately, this moment was not enough. Instead of interrogating such complicity, many Latinx people merely denounced the idea that someone who is Latino could be white and vice versa. Zimmerman's actions present an interesting question, whether Zimmerman, himself, identifies as Hispanic American: How are we, in the Latinx community, complicit in perpetuating anti-Black racism? How do we participate in white supremacy?

Zimmerman is far from the only example. While not as violent or deadly as Zimmerman's offence, anti-Blackness within the Latinx community is insidiously present in everyday life. In 2017, famous and outspoken Latina actress Gina Rodriguez tweeted in response to the Disney and Marvel movie Black Panther: "Marvel and DC are killing it in inclusion and women, but where are the Latinos!? Asking for a friend…" Her suggestion not only erases the Afro-Latinx actors and actresses that have been a part of the Marvel film franchise, but it also alludes to a reverse discrimination phenomenon: Why are Black people getting representation and we're not? By representing Black communities on screen, her Tweet suggests, such films are taking time and resources away from potential Latinx movies or projects that might be "more" deserving because of the lack of Latinx representation. This anti-Blackness turned a moment that could have been spent admiring and addressing the historic film into a competition between racial minorities for crumbs of representation. Then, in 2019 she posted a video of herself singing The Fugees song "Ready or not" in which she sings lyrics including the n-word. While she has apologized for perpetuating anti-Black racism in both instances, she denies accountability and emphasizes how much she "loves" the Black community, going as far as to say that the Black community is her community. Gina Rodriguez's comments are not an anomaly within the Latinx community. I argue that they are indeed reflective of the anti-Black sentiments that our

parents, grandparents and community members feel. Furthermore, both Zimmerman's and Rodriguez's behavior speak to deep-seated anti-Black sentiments in the Latinx community. More specifically, the idea that Latinx people cannot be racist because they are also discriminated against, or the notion that Latinidad shields Latinx folks from perpetuating racism.

Anti-Blackness[1] in the Latinx community remains unchecked and mostly unaddressed, and when it is brought up it is labelled as "divisive" and an attempt at hindering solidarity. Additionally, many people feel that because Latinx communities are historically marginalized and oppressed, they are not capable of oppressing or marginalizing other groups. George Zimmerman's father's appeal to his Hispanic heritage was an attempt to silence Black people from claiming racism as motivation. To be clear, there is no comparison between the actions of George Zimmerman and the words of Gina Rodriguez. However, both incidents demonstrate the anti-Black logics that underpin the racialization – as well as the racialized attitudes - of Latinx people in the United States.

Anti-Blackness, however, extends past the literal and symbolic borders of the United States. In fact, it permeates the borders and is insidiously present both in Mexico and the United States. This is because of racial ideologies like mestizaje and structures that hide race, like the emphasis that the Mexican government places on class and culture rather than racial identity.[2] Even the Mexican government has

[1] Anti-Blackness is simultaneously a social order and an ontology. By anti-Blackness as a social order, I argue that it is a foundational structure in understanding the racial order. Ontology as it relates to anti-Blackness is that anti-Blackness constructs the daily means of existence not only for Black people but also for other racial groups and how they interact with both Blackness and Black people. To understand racial relations in the United States, we need to reckon with racial groups' relations to Blackness and complacency with anti-Blackness.
[2] Mestizaje is the racial ideology created in the legacy of Spanish colonization of Mexico. For more on colonization and the creation of mestizaje as a racial identity please see chapter 2.

engaged in activities that can only be understood as anti-Black. One of the most striking examples of this was the cartoon, *Memín Pinguín. Memín Pinguín* was a children's comic book character created by Yolanda Vargas Duche in 1943. Vargas Duche was reportedly inspired by Black children in Cuba and based *Memín Pinguín* after them. *Memín* and his mother are both Afro-Mexicans.[3]

In June of 2005, the Mexican Postal Service issued a series of postal stamps with the character of *Memín*. Immediately, Black Americans, including Jessie Jackson, criticized the Mexican government for reproducing racist images and reprinting racist caricatures of Black people. Instead of apologizing, the Mexican government argued that *Memín* opposed racism and harmful stereotypes. But they also doubled down by arguing that the United States, through cartoons like Speedy Gonzales, are not offensive to Mexicans even though they are stereotypical representations. Implying that because the United States has caricatures of Mexicans, like Speedy Gonzales, Mexico is entitled to keep and praise caricatures like *Memín*.

In fact, after public figures in the United States began to call *Memín* racist, the stamps, produced by the Mexican government as a part of a special collection honoring Mexican comic books, sold out with Mexican collectors buying the full edition. Additionally, the stamps were selling on internet auction sites for several times their face value and sales of the magazines featuring *Memín* skyrocketed. The comic book is still being reprinted to this day with one of the latest issues featuring *Memín* walking alongside Michelle Obama saying "and this job is one that African Americans really want to do" reportedly poking fun at President Fox's racist remarks about Mexicans

[3] *Memín Pinguin* roughly translates to Billy the Little Devil. Scholars and public figures have likened the image of *Memín Pinguin* to other Black caricatures of the Jim Crow era with roots in blackface and the American minstral show tradition. Critics of *Memín* have argued that the comic book follows the portrayal of *Memín* as the pickaninny and his mother as the mammy figure.

doing jobs that African Americans don't want. Not even in Mexico are claims of anti-Blackness taken seriously. Instead, the racist cartoon is sensationalized with sales skyrocketing and museum exhibits honoring *Memín*.

I. Research Question

Of primary importance in this project is the role of anti-Blackness in the racialization of Mexican Americans in the United States and how *both* anti-Blackness and white supremacy work in tandem with one another to construct the Mexican American as a racial category. Race in the United States is unstable and fluid depending on the socio-political environment. Dating back to the inception of the nation, the definition of who is white has fluctuated which complicates our current understandings of racialization and racial projects in the United States.

Anti-Black racism and anti-Black bias, however, remain stable and constant throughout the different racial projects. Mexican Americans present an interesting entryway into understanding more broadly the role of anti-Blackness and how it works with white supremacy to inform the racialization of non-Black people of color. To interrogate this further, my dissertation addresses the following questions: *How do experiences and understandings of Blackness change the way Mexican Americans experience and negotiate their own race and identity? How does anti-Blackness inform the racialization of non-Black Mexican Americans? How does anti-Black bias within the Mexican American community affect coalition building between Mexican Americans and Black communities?*

Evidently, the United States, as a colonial institution has engaged in racial projects and difference making that has affected and continues to affect coalition building between people of color. It has been beneficial to white supremacy and white

hegemony to encourage non-Black people of color to reinforce or perpetuate anti-Black racism as a rights-claim or a claim to social mobility. In this way, anti-Blackness perpetuated by people of color, in this case Mexican Americans, has served to obscure and detract from coalition building among the oppressed communities. It is imperative, to achieve an anti-racist future, to recognize and rid ourselves of the anti-Black bias. It is for this reason that I ask *How does anti-Black bias within the Mexican American community affect coalition building between Mexican Americans and Black communities?* A good starting point to answer these complex questions can begin with an interrogation not only of what is Latinx identity but also how we understand race and racialization within the United States.

II. Racial Projects and the Black/White Binary

Linda Alcoff (2002) states, "If W.E.B. DuBois were alive today, he would probably tell us that the problem of the twenty-first century will prove to be the lines between communities of color, or the question of cross ethnic relations" (5). The dividing lines, Alcoff goes on to argue, are due to the Black/White binary, which inhibits the ability of different races and ethnic groups to come together to combat White supremacy. She argues, along with Juan F. Perea, that race studies need to move beyond what Perea defines as the Black-White paradigm. To begin to understand the Black-White paradigm, we can use Perea's definition, as cited by Alcoff, "the conception that race in America consists, either exclusively or primarily, of only two constituent racial groups, the Black and white…" (Alcoff 2002, 7), which applies to races outside the Black/white binary. This paradigm, Perea (2011) argues, operates even in antiracist theory. Perea deems the Black/white binary the most perverse and powerful paradigm of understanding race and racialization in the United States. As a result of this paradigm,

other racial groups are ignored in considerations of how race operates in the United States. Therefore, Perea argues, in order to think about the racialization of groups like Latinos/as and Asians, we need to move beyond the Black/White paradigm. The dichotomous relationship between white people and Black people, therefore, has set the stage for further racialization of groups that do not neatly fit into the Black/White binary. The desire to move beyond the Black-white binary, however, needs to be critically examined.

For Alcoff and Perea alike, the use and deployment of the Black/white binary means a flattening of experiences of racism:

> To understand race in this way is to assume that racial discrimination operates exclusively through anti-Black racism. Others can be affected by racism, on this view, but the dominance of the Black/white paradigm works to interpret all other effects as "collateral damage" ultimately caused by the same phenomena, in both economic and psychological terms, in which the given other, whether Latino/a, Asian American, or something else, is placed in the category of "Black" or "close to Black" (Alcoff 2002, 8)

To put it simply, under the guise of the Black/White binary, there is only one form of racism: anti-Black racism. This proves, for Alcoff and Perea, to be an ineffective and inadequate way of understanding race. While for Alcoff and Perea, remaining within the Black/White binary is dangerous; for Sharon Holland, moving beyond may be where the danger lies.

Holland (2012) responds to the need to move beyond, writing: "Theoretically speaking, beyond signals a very dangerous turn for antiracist struggle as it reifies nonrelation while simultaneously reinscribing the past (one's history) in a master-slave dialect. Such is the order of things" (19). The moving beyond race, or in this instance, the Black/White paradigm underscores a need to divest ourselves with the

preoccupation of the past. In this way, moving beyond looks a lot like getting over. She writes, "One of the primary truths of African- Americanist intellectual work is that we are not yet done with slavery – a political stance on the historical that continually thwarts scholarly and well-intentioned efforts to move beyond it" (31). Current discourses surrounding race frame it as a temporality, something that happened and is over. However, as Holland claims, racism, racialization, and race are not over. We cannot move beyond something we do not understand and are still in the thick of.

In a similar vein, I argue that Alcoff (2002) and Perea (2011) are mistaken in their claims that we need to move beyond the Black/White binary, due to their misunderstandings of anti-Blackness. They argue that the Black/white binary implies that there is only one form of racism, yet racism can manifest itself in many different ways. Whereas anti-Black racism is not the only form of racism, I argue it is the foundational structure of all racism. Anti-Blackness is not only perpetrated by whites, but by all races. In a similar manner, white supremacy does not exclusively affect Black people, but rather manifests itself in various ways affecting each racial group differently.

Finally, I argue that the implication of moving beyond the Black/white binary is itself an act of anti-Blackness that incorrectly assumes that slavery and anti-Black racism is over. As Sexton (2010) notes in "People of Color Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery" the dogma that the media deplores, encouraging people of color not to play "Oppression Olympics"

> …Allows us to understand better the intimate relationship between the censure of Black inquiry and the recurrent analogizing to Black suffering mentioned above: they bear a common refusal to admit significant differences of structural

> position born of discrepancy histories between Black people and their political allies, actual or potential (Sexon 2010, 47).

The insistence that we need to move beyond the binary, therefore, reflects the inability to acknowledge and work with and through the structural differences that plagues anti-Black racism and other manifestations of racism. This is not to say that anti-Black racism is more important than other forms of racism, but rather that anti-Blackness functions differently than other forms, and that it is foundation of other manifestations of racism.

I do find common ground with both Alcoff and Perea in their argument that Latinx racialization needs to be studied and understood as distinct from Black and white processes of racialization. Latinx folks in the United States face discrimination and have been a historically marginalized group in the United States. The racialization of Latinx folks has important consequences for the way that we understand and can conceive of race in the United States.

In order to dive into the arguments that I make about Latinx communities, and Mexican Americans more specifically, it is important to understand some of the key terms. I argue that Latinx folks negotiate their racial identity and racialization through both white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Racialization, in this context, refers to a social process in which a group of people are ascribed a set of common imagined (or socially constructed) characteristics that lump them together as a racial or ethnic group.

This process of racializing between the two consistent and stable poles of whiteness and Blackness has been a racial project since the inception of the United States. Omi and Winant (2014) define "racial project" as

> simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning (Omi & Winant 2014, 109).

This process continually exposes the fluidity of the white racial category (expanding or retracting) while Blackness maintains its social taboo. This process of moving between racial groups I argue is an act of negotiation. Negotiation in this context means that non-Black people of color have some degree of agency in challenging and changing their racial status. Because they are between Blackness and whiteness, they have some room to maneuver and can occasionally see racial social mobility as long as Blackness remains at the bottom. This doesn't necessarily mean that non-Black people of color are always aspiring to whiteness, but there are privileges and rights that come along with being lumped into the "white" category. Attempting to negotiate one's racial status or racial positioning is not only trying to secure social and legal privileges (having a generally positive relationship with the police, assumed innocence, racial representation, generally higher socioeconomic status, etc.) but it is also about engaging in anti-Black actions (shooting an unarmed Black child, saying the N-word) and discourse (arguing against affirmative action, defending racists, and not questioning your inherent biases). Through these actions and discourses non-Black people of color attempt a negotiation of their racial status by displaying anti-Black attitudes and actions.

III. Racialization of Mexican Americans

The racialization of Latino/Hispanic/Latinx[4] is complex and doesn't have a clear starting point. Mexicans coming into the United States have often been assumed to be "blank-slates" when it comes to understanding race in America. Once they cross the borders, however, they are forced to reconcile with the strict racial regime and hierarchy in the United States. Once inside the bounds of the United States, Mexicans become lumped into the racial/ethnic category of "Latinx/Hispanic." Similar to the racialization of Asian Americans or Middle Eastern Americans, Latinx/Hispanics are located somewhere between Black people and White people within the racial hierarchy (Kim, 1999).

Claire Kim calls this process "racial triangulation" (1999) in which non-white and non-Black people of color are subjected to racialization which locates them as in-between whiteness and Blackness. These racial groups do not have access to all the privileges of whiteness, but they also are not subject to anti-Black racism the way that Black people are. Furthermore, depending on the political climate, Asian Americans Latinx, and Middle Eastern Americans fluctuate by either coming closer to whiteness, which is the ideal, or inching closer to Blackness.

The racialization of Mexicans entering into the United States into the category of "Latinx/Hispanic" depends on many factors. I argue that Black Mexicans in the United States are racialized as Black and not viewed as Mexican despite their Mexican heritage.[5] However, non-Black Mexicans are racialized into the Latinx/Hispanic

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[4] Traditionally, in literature that deals with Latinx identity formations, Latinx are either referred to as "Hispanic" or "Latino." There is a more recent push to move to "Latinx." The term "Hispanic" means of Spanish descent and refers to Spanish speaking countries. "Latino/a" is a gendered term which signifies that a person is from Latin America (which can include the Caribbean). I use the term "Latinx" in order to be more inclusive of geography and the different gendered experiences of people that enter into the United States and become racialized as Latino/a.
[5] For more information on how Black Mexicans entering into the United States are racialized as Black please see chapter 2.

category. While I argue that racialization as a whole is a negotiation for the racial group "Latinx" it is important to note that the racial category of Latinx is a social construction of a pan-ethnic group of people. The category Latinx is broadly defined and encompasses all people from Latin America and of Latin American descent. Latinx identity, then, is difficult to define because it includes varying races, nationalities, and cultures. Scholars have noted how difficult it is to establish a strong racial identity with such a diverse group of people (Beltran, 2010; Rumbaut, 2011; Obler, 2002). Not only does the broad categorization hinder group identification, but it also obscures historical specificity.

Histories of Latinx in the United States broadly defined is nearly impossible to pinpoint. This is because groups like Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans have different histories and experiences in the United States, which make their processes of racialization and therefore their political identities differ from other groups like Mexicans or Colombians. This dissertation focuses on the racialization of non-Black Mexicans and non-Black Mexican Americans.[6] I am limiting my study from the overall racialization of Latinx to the racialization of Mexican Americans in order to approach the topic with feminist research methods of historical specificity and interrupting the "god trick of seeing everywhere from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988) that literature on Latinx racialization and Latinx politics often takes. Specifically, I am referring to the

[6]I initially make a distinction between Mexicans (people from Mexico) and Mexican Americans (American citizens of Mexican descent). This is because undocumented people in the United States are in a precarious position and do not have access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by citizens. Additionally, Mexican Americans who are citizens of the United States have not only citizenship privilege but access to the culture in a different way because they do not have to be in hiding or at risk for deportation. Additionally, some Mexican Americans have been acculturated or (assimilated) into American culture and society and therefore may have a different or dominant understanding of American racial orders or hierarchy. It is important for theoretical accuracy to note the distinction between Mexican Americans and Mexicans in order to emphasize and account for their differing positions within the United States and the different ways in which they are racialized and experience the United States.

feminist epistemology that challenges scholarship whose author is supposedly "objective," without a gender, race, or any other social identity. These claims to objectivity assume that the social or political identity of the author is unimportant or does not affect the scholarship. As feminist scholars have noted, this is seldom possible and as Black, Latina and Indigenous feminists have argued it may not be desirable. As a Mexican American woman, I am particularly invested and interested in the stakes of the process of racialization for Mexican Americans and as an anti-racist scholar it is critically important for me to hold myself and my community accountable for anti-Blackness in order to counter racism and limit obstacles to forming coalitions with the Black community.

While I am using the term "Latinx" it is critical to acknowledge that Latino/Hispanic/Latinx identity does not exist outside of the literal and imaginary bounds of the United States. This is to say; this is racialization process is a specifically US phenomenon that begins upon entry into the United States.[7] The racial processes and projects of the United States have created and fostered the use and broad understandings of Latinx, as a non-Black body, with some claims to Whiteness (as I will demonstrate). Latinx identity, therefore, is both homogenizing and bounded. It is useful to explore both aspects of Latinx identity formation, beginning with the homogeneity.

Because of the bounded (yet homogenizing) nature of the identity "Latinx," I want to be clear that I am referring to non-Black Latinx when I use the term "Latinx." Current literature about the racialization of Latinx immigrants renders the Afro-Latinx

[7] I do not mean to imply that racialization is a phenomenon unique to the United states. Instead, I argue that the racial category of Latinx is unique to the United States.

invisible: an impossible subject.[8] Specifically, even though Afro-Latinx exist, Latinidad and exclusive Latinx identity formations have traditionally excluded them from theories of Latinx identity formation. I aim for the theory I offer here to provide both an explanation as to why that is and a possibility that this will not always be the case. For the purposes of this project, however, I am distinguishing between Black and non-Black Latinx—a distinction that is important and necessary due to the different mechanisms of racialization, but one that is seldom made.

Wendy Trevino (2016), writes poetry about the racial positioning of non-Black Latinx persons. She writes,

"We are who we are

To them, even when we do not know who we

Are to each other and culture is a

Record of us figuring that out"

She seeks to analyze the internal mechanisms of racial identity formation. In an interview she expands on these thoughts, "… Racial identity is an imposition first and foremost a "we" defined not by us – who might have less in common than not – in order to make "us" legible to colonizers, slavers, capitalists, the state – who "we" are racialized in relation to." (Trevino 2017, para. 15). For Trevino, race and a racial identity are imposed on groups that otherwise do not have much of anything in common. Unlike other identities, as Trevino highlights, it is not something that was chosen of their own accord.

[8] For more on this, please see: Jasmine M. Haywood (2017) "'Latino spaces have always been the most violent': Afro-Latino collegians' perceptions of colorism and Latino intragroup marginalization."

Racial identity, in this instance, is constructed as a mechanism in order to control and dominate an entire subgroup of people. Racialization, therefore, is an act of homogenization; the lumping together of people of different cultures and backgrounds in order to form a "we." It is a systematic and effective way of "othering." The creation of the pan-ethnic category of Latinx enabled white people to create a fungible identity that furthered their power by positioning Latinx people in direct conflict with other racial groups. Both this intergroup conflict and the understandings of other racial groups are precisely what enabled anti-Blackness.

IV. Looking Forward

The following project is an exercise in theory building focused on tracing the genealogy of Blackness within Mexican and American overlapping racial projects. Throughout the project I argue that anti-Blackness has been present within every aspect of the racialization of Mexican Americans and that Mexican Americans, at times, have actively participated in upholding the racial hierarchies that maintain Blackness as a subordinate racial identity.

Chapter 2: Foundational Anti-Blackness: Blackness Across Borders takes a transnational approach to racialization. I argue that one cannot understand the current racialization of Mexican Americans without understanding the history and dual legacies of colonialism that loom over the racialization and racial identity of Mexican Americans to this day. Mexican Americans are a doubly-colonized people. First colonized by Spain in the 1500s and then again by the United States vis-à-vis the Mexican American War. Because of this unique history, Mexican Americans have had to navigate multiple racial orders: colonial Mexico, Mexico, and the United States. Building on the work of Laura Gomez, Martha Menchaca, and Maria Josephina Saldana-Portillo, I

argue that to understand the racialization of Mexican Americans it is necessary to understand the racial order of both Mexico and the United States to understand not only the racial project of the United States but also the understandings of race and ethnicity that Mexicans are bringing with them into the United States. Additionally, I analyze Black and Abolition newspapers to understand how Black Americans understood the incorporation of Mexicans into the United States and the way that Mexicans would fit into the racial project of the United States.

Building on the analysis of mestizaje and the competing racial projects of the United States and Mexico, **Chapter 3: Unstable Whiteness**, traces the ways in which Mexican American claims to whiteness were, in some ways, explicitly anti-Black. Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican Americans were considered to be citizens. Under the Naturalization Act of 1790 citizenship status was reserved exclusively for white people. Regardless of this supposed privileged legal status, they were often discriminated against and treated like second class citizens by white Americans. Nevertheless, due to their legal protections of whiteness, I argue that they were able to leverage their unstable and tenuous white-by-law status to distance themselves from Black Americans, which has impeded their ability to build coalitions with the Black community.

Scholars have shown that Mexican Americans in the 1924 immigration act were compared to Black people and slaves. Building on this research, I demonstrate how this comparison has a stronger implication for Black Americans than it did for Mexican Americans. I also utilize archival research to not only understand how Mexican Americans were being portrayed at this time, but how Black Americans understood and reacted to Mexican American's white-by-law status through Black newspapers.

Additionally, this chapter provides a legal analysis of landmark Mexican American civil rights cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster* and *Hernandez v. Texas.* Through their civil rights claims and legal cases, we are able to see that Mexican Americans – because they were classified as white-by-law - distanced themselves from Black people and Blackness in order to make claims to civil rights. Thus, I show that while Mexican Americans had access to some of the legal protections of whiteness, they exploited this to distance themselves from Blackness based on their understandings of Blackness.

The Chicano Movement served as a fundamental shift in Mexican American racialization when a new generation of Mexican Americans sought to identify their own non-white racial identity, arguing that Chicano is a separate and discrete race. **Chapter 4: The Chicano Movement: Viva la Raza**, closely examines the Chicano Movement as a moment in which anti-Blackness explicitly prohibited coalition building among communities. Tanya Kateri Hernandez argues that histories of the Chicano Movement, in addition to the Chicano Movement itself, are anti-Black due to the erasure of Black Mexicans from this history. Additionally, instead of building a coalition with Black Civil Rights Movements or Black Power Movements, Mexican Americans appropriated aspects of these Movements without acknowledgement of this fact. This is crucial because the appropriation of their struggle demonstrates how Chicanx in this instance wanted access to the gains made by the Civil Rights Movement while still maintaining their distance from Blackness.

I document this phenomenon using archival and secondary sources regarding the Chicano Movement and the formation of a Chicanx identity. I argue that the construction of La Raza simultaneously formed a distinctly non-white racial identity while differentiating themselves from the Black community. Additionally, I analyze the

use of indigeneity in the myth of Aztlan and the use of historical indigeneity as another way to distance themselves from Blackness. Once again, this appropriation and lack of support for the Black Movements of the time furthered the ruptures and hindered coalition building among the Black and Mexican American communities.

After I have established the theoretical and historical foundations for Mexican American anti-Blackness, I turn to the practical and current day implications of my argument. **In chapter 5: Inter-Ethnoracial Dating and Intimate Anti-Blackness**, I argue that anti-Blackness is present at every stage of racialization and even permeates the intimate family and dating lives of Mexicans. The concept of mestizaje is rooted in the colonial racial orders of Spain and the racial "mixing" that took place under colonial Spanish rule. The conceptions of Mexicans as mestizos blurs racial lines and obscures the lived reality of Indigenous and Black people who face discrimination and oppression. Building on these arguments, I examine the ways in which mestizaje and notions of "beneficial" or "good" racial mixing are present in Mexican American interracial dating. Essentially, this chapter argues that anti-Blackness is so insidiously present that it even impacts the ability to date and form intimate relationships outside of their own race. Additionally, I emphasize the way that interracial marriage and dating serves as a race-making project through the wombs and bodies of women.

Finally, I conclude by thinking about Mexican American's relationship with the social Movement #BlackLivesMatter birthed following the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin. I argue that anti-Black sentiments that influence and position Mexican Americans within the Black/white binary are still insidiously present within Mexican American communities. Additionally, I interrogate to social media hashtag

#LatinosforBlackLives and the harm in creating and promoting a hashtag that further distances Latinidad from Blackness.

This project serves as a testament to the words of Audre Lorde, “For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 2007). Th impact of anti-Blackness on Mexican American racialization results in the ability of Mexican and Black communities to fight white supremacy and racial oppression. The master’s tools, in this case, refer to white-supremacy, tenuous claims to whiteness, and the strategy of distancing oneself from Blackness. For it is only when the Mexican American community is able to check their anti-Blackness and understand that true liberation comes with the end of white supremacy and anti-Black racism that they will be free.

CHAPTER 2

Foundational Anti-Blackness, Examining the Making and meaning of Blackness in Mexico and the United States

Colonial occupation was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area and writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations. This was, ultimately, tantamount to the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arraignments; the classification of people according to different categories; resource extraction; and finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries. These imaginaries gave meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space" – Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

"In order to properly understand the contemporary ramifications of these racialized geographies, the urgency of the present if you will, it is necessary to reconstruct the genealogies of our divergent yet shared Mexican and U.S. racial geographies" Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*

Introduction

The dual processes of white supremacy and anti-Blackness have historical roots in colonialism. In this chapter I trace the genealogy of *both* white supremacy and anti-Blackness in Mexican and Mexican American colonization leading to the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.* In doing so, I push back against theories that racialize Mexican Americans only within the bounds of the United States and argue that the foundations of race-making lie in the colonization of the Americas as opposed to just the British colonization of the United States.

Mexican Americans are a doubly colonized[9] peoples. First, they were colonized by Spain then, once they declared independence, they were invaded by the United

[9] I borrow the term "doubly colonized" from the work of legal scholar Laura Gomez. She refers to the Mexican American population as doubly colonized referring to the colonization of the indigenous populations of Mexico and then the re-colonization of newly independent Mexico by the United States.

States under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. While Spain seized the territory first, the United States ended up obtaining more than half of Mexico's territory after the War. Laura Gomez (2007) argues that after the Mexican American war, that Mexican people residing in the United States became a racialized population within the bounds of the United States.[10] I argue that they *already* were a racialized nation (in Mexico), bringing with them into the United States their own understandings of race and racial hierarchies.

Oftentimes, race is talked about as though it is an American phenomenon, that racism is exclusive to the United States. However, the manifestation of capitalism that we are living and have been living is inherently racial. Built into the fabric of the nation, built into the fabric of the world. Racial capitalism maintains that deep racism and racial divides. Racial capitalism created the modern world system, through slavery, colonialism, and genocide because "the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology" (Robinson, 1983, p. 2). Racial hierarchies and capitalism, under this lens, were developed concurrently and sustain one another. In this way, capitalism is necessarily racist because the creation of arbitrary distinguisher (phenotype, culture, race, etc.) facilitates the development of a racially excess group which is then exploited to advance the aims of capitalism and profit. In this way, racial exploitation can also be construed as a means to advance the interests of society in a meaningful way that excuses the human rights abuses and racial degradation that racism alone fails to justify.

[10] I do not wish to imply that racialization of Mexican people is unique to the United States. Instead, I argue that the creation of Hispanic/Latino/Latinx is a racialized subgroup unique to the United States. Mexican Americans are traditionally considered to be a part of the pan-ethnic Hispanic/Latino/Latinx are a subgroup.

Hence, in order to understand the status and positioning of Mexican and Mexican American in the American racial order it is necessary to keep one eye on Mexico's racial order and the history of Mexico's colonial and national racial projects. This is because racial orders and racial projects do not exist within a vacuum. They were created vis-a-vis colonialism and are recreated daily through shifting socio-political terrain and dependent on historical circumstances. Although socially constructed, race has a material impact on lived realities for Mexican Americans (of all shades) and their life chances.

This chapter takes seriously the feminist claim that historical specificity and context are essential in creating a robust and accurate depiction of events. This chapter is grounded in uncovering and interrogating the relationship between Mexicans in Colonial Spain and Mexicans in the United States through the Mexican American War, subsequently the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* and into the Mexican revolution. By closely analyzing the history and particular lived realities and experiences of Mexican-ness, Blackness and Indigeneity, I unearth the residual anti-Blackness that is present and corrosive within the Mexican American community to this day. I also closely analyze two abolition newspapers, *The Liberator* (1846-1850) and *The North Star* (1847-1850) to understand what they wrote about Mexico, Mexicans and the Mexican American War within the context of the racialization and racial projects within the United States.

The question that this chapter asks is, *how did anti-Blackness (understandings of) influence the racialization of Mexicans and Mexican Americans? What is the role of anti-Blackness in Mexican American racial projects?*

I. Conquest, Hierarchy, and Colonial Mexico

In the late 16th century, England, France, Spain and the Dutch Republic launched colonization programs in North America. The land that is known as modern day Mexico was first colonized by the Spanish empire in the 1500s and around the same time, the land that we know now as the United States of America was colonized by the English crown. While the colonial projects varied in their practices, as Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo in her groundbreaking book, *Indian Given*, argues, the colonial projects of Spain and England were overlapping in their white-supremacist ways and co-constitutive of one another in their reinforcing of racial hierarchies. She writes, "These visualized geographies cross each other, they work at cross purposes, conflicting and constituting each other. They are interactional and intermixed. They exist *entre dos paises* – between two countries – and because of each other" (pg. 154). When we look at the geographies of the United States and Mexico, including the U.S. – Mexico border, we are able to see how prior to colonization the borders were fungible and did not exist prior to European colonization.

Moreover, the Spanish and British colonies both enacted their own racial projects and in distinct but often overlapping ways:

> Spanish and British colonialism in North America were space-making endeavors, and I argue that they created space through careful placing (and displacing) of indigenous subjects in landscape. As such, they produced distinct, indeed divergent racial geographies: colonial places and apparently replete with Indians or bereft of them, despite the actual presence or absence of Indians (Saldaña-Portillo, 2016, 215).

While Saldaña-Portillo analysis is limited to the racial geographies of Indians, *los indios*, or the Indigenous populations of Mexico. I argue that the racial geographies and the

racial projects of the Spanish and British empires were also directly constitutive of and constituted by understandings of Blackness. In fact, historian Colin A. Palmer found that Mexico had the largest number of Black slaves with upwards of 100,000 slaves before 1650 and that altogether upwards of 200,000 Black slaves resided in Mexico (Palmer 1876). While the type of slavery in colonial Mexico was not akin to chattel slavery, regardless this indicates that colonial Mexico enslaved hundreds of thousands of Black slaves and had some understandings of Blackness alongside the United States government.

Saldaña-Portillo aptly continues, "Spanish and British colonial missions, in other words, were competitive enterprises, but they were at times complicit in their creation of their racial geographies and the types of Indians therein" (Saldaña-Portillo, 2016, 220). However not only were the Spanish and British colonial empires complicit in their creation of "Indians" but also in their creations and maintenance of Blackness. The conceptualization of the very *mestizx* identity underscores not only the positioning of the Indigenous as a historical fiction[11] but also facilitates the erasure of Blackness from the racial geography of the mestizx.

Furthermore, the *casta* system, established in colonial Mexico, directly signals not only the positioning of Indigenous Mexicans but also the role of Blackness in determining status on the hierarchy. The *casta* system was in essence a racial hierarchy that signaled people's place in society based on their blood and ancestry. The *casta* system was often depicted through art and displayed in public as a means of showing

[11] Saldaña-Portillo argues that the indigenous peoples in Mexico, particularly, are not conceived of as a material reality or an actual population in Mexico and have instead become a fiction in the national narrative. She writes, "Mexico prides itself on its indigenous past and present. "*México se folkloriza solo*" (Mexico folklorizes itself), as a friend and colleague are fond of saying, and it does so through the deployment of its indigenous cultures" (254). Mean that Mexico constitutes its national image by using the image of the Indian but not by actively inviting the indigenous person to be an agent.

the general public of Spain the racial diversity and the types of mixing happening in the "New World." Spain strongly encouraged the inter-mixing of Spanish and Indigenous peoples as a tool of conquest and used the *casta* system as a way to organize and classify the new mixtures and organize the population.

Gendered Sexual and Racial Order

In the process of colonization (hetero-)sexuality and gender were used as tools of conquest. Spain imposed strict gendered hierarchies, relegating women to the domestic sphere and forcibly erased many of the cultural customs of the indigenous group through the imposition of the Catholic religion. Along with Catholicism came heterosexuality and the outlawing of any non-heterosexual practices or behaviors. By erasing customs and banning Indigenous practices and ways of life, the colonizer was more easily able to implement their own systems of beliefs, like Catholicism, and impose their hierarchies both gendered and racial onto the Indigenous people living there.

Feminist scholars of coloniality tell us that implementing new gendered and racial hierarchies among Indigenous peoples was a tool of conquest, Ronaldo Dominguez-Ruvalcaba writes,

> "To subject sex to strict codes of mandatory heterosexuality is a colonizing action. Queerness is found in the interstices of cultural differences, the gaps left in translation. In the first place, queerness is not what describes nonreproductive sexual practices admitted or tolerated in Native cultures of America; instead, I want to argue that queerness starts with the estrangement and condemnation of native sexual cultures, making criminal and sinful practices that used to be sinless" (Dominguez-Ruvalcaba 2016).

The condemnation of native cultures and their "queer" (Ruvalcaba 2016) practices served as a form of erasure and estrangement for Indigenous peoples from their own way of life. In addition, it was a form of violence not only in erasure but physically brutal as well. If they were caught, they were beaten and, in some cases, killed.

As further evidence that heterosexuality and the gender binary of male/female did not exist in North America, or Mexico, prior to colonization, Indigenous groups, like the Aztecs/Mextica group, which largely dominated the region, did not even have a word for gender (Sigal, 2011). Sigal notes, "Elders say that in ancient, pre-colonial Zapotec language there was no difference when referring to a man or a woman; there were no genders." (*Sexuality and Translations in World Politics).* It was the introduction of Christianity (Catholicism) facilitated through the Spanish conquistadors that enforced a binary gender and heterosexual societal organization. The introduction and enforcement of a new gender hierarchy left the Indigenous populations susceptible to other forms of domination, including racial subjugation.

This newly colonial gender and sexual formation, heterosexuality, was a tool in exploiting and conquering the indigenous populations. It is also a place where British and Spanish colonial systems depart. In the United States, under British colonialism, miscegenation, or interracial marriage was a punishable offence: outlawed.[12] On the other hand, under Spanish colonial rule, miscegenation and sexual intermixing was strongly encouraged to breed loyalty to the Spanish crown. Intermarriage, then, became a tool of white supremacy and domination. Lower-ranking Spanish settlers were encouraged to take Indigenous wives to instill loyalty to the Spanish crown

[12] The United States forbade the formal or official interracial marriage between whites and Black slaves through social pressures and through legislation like anti-miscegenation laws. For more on miscegenation and inter-ethnoracial marriage please see chapter 4.

through Spanish children (Menchaca), creating a new category of racialized individuals: Mestizos.

Interracial marriage, then, was another tool of domination. It is important to note, however, that the practices of interracial marriage were highly gendered in that while Indigenous groups were expected to "give" their women as wives to Spaniards, the Spaniards did not reciprocate (Menchaca). This necessarily genders the production of the mestizo as a racial category because they are meant to have an Indigenous mother and a Spanish father. In present day Mexico, this gender formation is maintained through the popular tale of *La Malinche*. *La Malinche* is a Nahua woman who became known for aiding in the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire by acting as an interpreter to Hernan Cortez. Cortez then chose her to bear his children and she became the mother of his first-born son, Martin – one of the first mestizos. The reputation of *La Malinche* is that of a traitor with novels, dramas, and songs portraying her as an evil temptress who betrayed her peoples. *La Malinche,* because she gave birth to one of the first mestizos, became a generalization for all Mexican mestizos. As. Saldaña-Portillo writes, "…The terms of becoming Mexican are highly gendered: Malinche, mother-a-territory, is ripped open by the masculine energy of the Spaniard, and the products of this rape are consequently engendered as humiliated, enraged, and brutish male subjects (sons)" (Saldaña-Portillo, 349). Therefore, all Mexicans become hijos de la chingada (sons of the fucked one) while at the same time "contains within himself the one who rapes, the chingon" (Saldaña-Portillo, 353).

This moment of interracial marriage and childbearing represents the conception of the entire Mexican nation which creates tensions within the very creation of the national mestizo ideology. Nevertheless, interracial marriage was formally encouraged by the Spanish crown for Spanish settlers along with the influence of the Catholic

church that emphasized that the Spanish settlers should not just procreate with Indigenous women but marry them to decrease the burden on the church for taking care of bastard children (Menchaca). This heavily gendered interracial marriage with an Indian mother and a Spanish father was meant to instill loyalty to the Spanish crown by having the mestizo children reared in a home loyal to the crown. In this way, the Spanish crown overrode colorism because most of the children would have had darker skin than their fathers. This is why various colonial structures of domination are not exclusively based on pigmentation and are ore analogous with racism rather than colorism.

Menchaca calls on Levi-Strauss's conception of intermarriage to explain the stakes of the practice, "in precapitalist societies intermarriage has traditionally been used to form enduring alliances between political groups" (pg. 54). She also notes that marriage is an attempt to not only ensure peace but also grow trust. Strauss notes, however, that while the dominant groups will accept women as wives, they will not give women as wives. Menchaca confirms: "Apparently, this practice was replicated in Mexico: the Indians offered their women kin, but the Spanish did not return this symbolic gesture" (Menchaca, 54). Not only do women become currency for peace for the colonial nation, but they also become vessels for nation building. More specifically, Indigenous women and Mexican-native women are given away or offered to the colonial institution and the colonists as a sign of complacency or agreement. However, they are also expected to marry and procreate with their colonizer husbands.

The production of these mixed children, born of a Mexican-native Mother and a colonial father became recognized as legitimate and members of the "new" state. There were also rules and regulations that the women were expected to follow: baptizing their children and raising them to identify with Spain. Menchaca writes, "By having the

father live with the family, Spanish culture and the Catholic faith could be transmitted to his children and to his wife's kinfolk" (Menchaca, 54). Through reproduction of children, vis-a-vis wombs, colonial culture is reproduced and becomes an intimate part of daily life. Spain was quite literally encircling and permeating the homes and intimate lives of the colonized.

Interracial marriage served not only to indoctrinate a new generation of colonial subject but also served as a racial project aiming to create a more amenable and palatable race of subjects. Interracial marriage was essential to the creation of a new colonial race: the *mestizo/a/x* body. The mestizx, then is as much a gender formation as it is racial. This is because mestizaje sustains gendered formations (heterosexual gender roles) as much as it maintains anti-Black and anti-Indigenous formations.

Casta System

The phenomenon of interracial marriage, then gave way to a new racial order*: the casta system*. The *casta* system evolved from Spanish, indigenous, and African miscegenation and was strategically flexible among the lower ranks where the Spanish blood was nearly non-existent. Although the *casta* system indicates that miscegenation was encouraged to create a new mestizo population, there is no doubt that "pure blooded" Spaniards were at the top of the racial hierarchy. In fact, upon first contact, as Ramon Gutierrez points out, the Spaniards immediately concluded that the Pueblo Indians were uncivilized, unintelligent, and a "people without capacity." Soon enough, the Spaniards had categorized Indians into two categories: Christian Indians (or those who converted easily) and "barbarous Indians" (those who they were unable to assert authority over) (Gomez, p. 50-51). The difference being that civilized or Christian

Indians had the chance to become mestizos while the barbarous Indians would not be fully incorporated into Spanish rule.

The social and sexual intermixing resulted in the establishment of the "regimen de castas" which some scholars conflate with phenotype (Gomez). However, I argue that the casta regime was a socially constructed racial regime that is fungible based on phenotype. The lighter skin the more you could pass as a higher caste, unless you had Black blood. The general hierarchy placed Spaniards (peninsulares) at the top along with their direct colony-born descendants (Creoles). With Indian/Spanish mestizos in the middle followed by Indian populations. Indisputably at the bottom were Spanish/Black (mulattos), Indian/Black (Lobos) and African slaves at the base.

There is a debate in regard to whether *indios* or mulattos were ranked higher than one another, some scholars argue that relative to mestizos, mulattos had an advantage over Indigenous populations due to their Spanish blood. Smith notes, "The role and position of mestizos, thought to have ancestors from both Old world and New, were distinct from those considered to be Indians or New World Spaniards." (Smith 1997). While the nuance is not lost on me, the order of the racial hierarchy is often assessed through relations to whiteness, I argue however that the order is distance from Blackness, with fungible racial identification except for Blackness. This encouraged considerations of race when picking partners: the lighter the better which is often depicted in *casta* artwork displayed in Spain.

Laura Gomez argues that under colonial rule and into modern-day arrangements, Mexico and colonial Mexico established a "reverse one drop rule" This refers to an American legal statute that declares that one drop of "Black" blood is enough to classify a person as Black regardless of how they identify or present. The

reverse one drop rule that Gomez is referring to is that “one drop of Spanish blood allowed them to claim whiteness under certain circumstances” (pg. 5) because of the flexibility of the *casta* system depending on physical appearance one could either move up or down along the racial hierarchy. Many scholars, including Laura Gomez, (2007; 2020) have argued that colonial Mexico had a “reverse one drop rule” in which one drop of white blood or Spanish blood would elevate a social status or position in the c*asta* hierarchy. The idea of a “reverse one drop rule” understates the meaning of Blackness in colonial Mexico and even Mexico following independence. Black Mexicans had to pay a special tax simply for being Black and faced more discrimination than other Mexicans (both Indigenous and mestizx) which indicates that Black “blood” was socially significant and impacted material and lived realities.

The Spanish crown also leveraged this flexibility by offering a service of legal whitening. By 1795, the Spanish crown institutionalized the purchase of whiteness through a policy called *gracias al sacar* (thanks for the exclusion). *Gracias al Sacar* was a royal decree that exempted an individual from a restriction. In this instance, it was purchased, or in some cases issued, to elevate an individual in the *casta* system.

> “The purchase of whiteness was one of seventy-one favors sold by the Crown to remedy flaws in a person’s *naturaleza* (inherent attributes) stemming from their birth (illegitimacy), religion (Jewishness), or race (pardonness). Anybody without purity of blood was subject to provisions against holding office, practicing certain professions, or access to white spaces. (Twinam, 2015).

The ability to purchase whiteness was particularly important for people with African blood and dark skin. The access to whiteness, then was the ability to access social and economic mobility that was exclusively reserved for Spanish and light-skinned

mestizos. This further demonstrates that the racial hierarchy in colonial Mexico was not exclusively based on phenotype.

Evidently the *casta* system was a problematic way of organizing society in that due to the unrestricted social and sexual mixing of the races phenotype and lineage made it difficult for the Spanish crown to enforce a clear Black and white hierarchy as it was in the United States. As such, only one clear rule emerged from the *casta* system: that it was *best* to have Spanish blood so long as you were not of African descent. Because of the racial discrimination and subordination to pure blooded Spaniards, upon independence Mexico eliminated any formal racial hierarchies and abolished African slavery which created tensions among Mexican elites.

Blackness in Mexico: From the Colonial Period to Independence)

Directly following the colonization of Mexico Spanish settlers attempted to enslave the Indigenous populations and have them work as indentured servants. However, due to the introduction of diseases and rebellions, the Indigenous populations severely decreased resulting in the need to cheap labor. This is why Mexico became the largest importer of enslaved Africans in North America at one time having over 200,000 enslaved peoples. It is noteworthy that the Spanish empire's version of slavery differed quite dramatically from that of the American colonies.[13] One of the main differences was that children born to enslaved women were considered to be free Black people and the law prohibited people from being born into bondage. In addition, enslaved Black people were able to buy themselves out of slavery and eventually gain their freedom. The differences in slavery for the United States and

[13] I do not wish to normatively debate which version of slavery was better or worse but rather describe the material reality of slavery in both colonial Mexico and the United States for a more accurate representation.

Mexico was largely a result of the influence of the Catholic Church and the restrictions that the Church placed on the morality of slavery. This resulted in a sizable Afro-Mexican or Black Mexican population in Mexico.

Due to the political activism of the Catholic church, by mid 1600s Mexicans were no longer importing enslaved Africans and Mexican elites began to contemplate the morality of the African slave trade. Menchaca writes, "Feeling the pressures from the Catholic Church, the crown reluctantly followed suit and discouraged Spanish entrepreneurs from investing in the slave trade expeditions." She goes on to make an important distinction, Spain "did not, however, issue a proclamation discouraging people from purchasing slaves – quite the contrary. The crown was not prepared to end the slave trade and instead circumvented its agreement with the Catholic church by contracting with Portuguese and British business to export slaves to Mexico" (p. 60). Tensions between the Catholic Church and the Spanish crown regarding slavery remained.

There was a sizable population of free Afro-Mexicans who were considered to be Spanish if they had one-sixteenth African blood. They were considered to be *Afromestizos* if they were mixed with Spanish or mestizos. While *afromestizos* were considered to legally be the same as mestizos, they were stigmatized and considered to be socially second-class citizens (Menchaca, Love). They were also subjected to laws that were designed to humiliate them. For instance, as Menchaca points out, "An *afromestiza* who was married to a Spaniard or was of noble birth was forbidden to use the traditional clothing of Spanish women or person of high social standing" (Menchaca, 64). Being *afromestizo* had financial consequences as well. Free *afromestizos* were forced to pay taxes because they were part Black (Menchaca 64). To assure the governments were able

to collect their taxes, local governments kept registries of *afromestizos* and if they travelled or resided in another place, they were forced to pay double the taxes to compensate for taking up additional space (Menchaca 64).

Once Mexico declared Independence, they formally abolished slavery and all forms of legal racial classification. Under the Plan de Iguala, a provisional constitution, race could no longer be used to prevent anyone from exercising their citizenship rights. Following Independence, however, the war left Mexico economically destitute with Spanish elites leaving and taking their assets and the Spanish crown leaving them bankrupt with a debt of over 76 million pesos (Menchaca). Nevertheless, under the new constitution, all forms of the slave trade were illegal including buying and selling slaves. Instead of abolishing slavery as promised, the Mexican government instead enacted a more liberal slave code promising that once Mexico was economically solvent it would then abolish slavery.

Due to the destitute economic conditions of Mexico, the government contracted Anglo Americans, like Stephan F. Austin, to bring immigrants and settle on Mexican lands. This opened the floodgates for Anglo-Americans to come to Texas and bring their slaves with them. In response to the problem of Anglo slavery, the Mexican government declared that settlers could have their slaves for six months before they had to emancipate them. This resulted in people claiming that they emancipated their slaves "but had been forced to place them under a lifelong peonage contract because they did not have the ability to support themselves financially" (Menchaca, 165). Texas successfully seceded from Mexico due to tensions over slavery which opened the door for the Mexican- American war.

II. Manifest Destiny, Slavery and the Mexican American War

The story of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States has a long and complicated history including the overlapping colonial geographies (Saldaña-Portillo) and the often-overlapping racial projects and role of white-supremacy. Once Mexico was able to declare independence and free itself from its European colonizers, the United States quickly took advantage of the precarious state that Mexico was in due to economic decline. Under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, President Polk formally declared war against the Republic of Mexico. More specifically, Mexico refused to recognize Texas' independence which impeded the ability of Congress to declare Texas as a part of the Union. In addition, President Polk and Secretary of State Buchanan believed that it would be quick and easy for Americans to expand westward.

The desire to expand Westward is due to the doctrine of Manifest destiny, which was an inherently racist doctrine that insisted American settler's God given right to expand across North America. Manifest Destiny is understood to be a blatantly racist policy used to justify the killing of Indigenous and Mexican populations and the seizure of their lands. Albert K. Weinberg's (1935) study of manifest destiny reveals that "historians have […] debated whether Manifest Destiny was anything more than an elaborate rationale for aggressive land acquisition and imperialism, an expression of ethnocentrism and excessive nationalism, or a manifestation of American racism" (Braurer, 1999, 379). The doctrine of Manifest Destiny, or American's God given right to the land even convinced anti-war Whigs to support the war with Mexico. The *American Whig Review* wrote, "Mexico was poor, distracted, in anarchy, and almost in ruins – what could she do to stay the hand of our power, to impede the march of our greatness? We are Anglo-Saxon Americans; it was our 'destiny' to possess and to rule this continent – we were bound to it!" James Polk officially declared war against Mexico

on May 11, 1846. The U.S. Mexico War officially lasted from 1846 to 1848 when the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* was signed in February 1848.

With the Mexican American War signaling the formal beginning of Mexican Americans it is important to understand the role of race in the Mexican American war. Common sense understandings of the Mexican American War are that the war was simply a matter of Manifest Destiny and the desire for Westward expansion. While that definitely influenced the decision to go to war, the roots of the conflict were much more insidious. To examine the roots of the Mexican American War, I systematically reviewed two abolition newspapers, William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* and Fredrick Douglass' *The North Star* over the entire duration of the war from January of 1846 to December of 1850, after California was admitted into the union. I read every issue of both newspapers*, The Liberator* (1846-1850) and *The North Star* (1847-1850) to understand what they wrote about Mexico, Mexicans and the Mexican American War. Fredrick Douglass was so inspired by *The Liberator*, he set out to publish his own newspaper, *The North Star,* which is why *The North Star* did not exist prior to 1847.

Both of these newspapers were written and published by prominent abolitionists. William Lloyd Garrison joined the abolition Movement when he was 25 and soon after founded his widely read antislavery newspaper, *The Liberator* and published until slavery was abolished in 1865. Garrison helped found the American Anti-Slave Society and supported the immediate and uncompensated emancipation of slaves in the United States. *The Liberator* was a weekly abolitionist newspaper printed and published in Boston and was widely circulated to more than 3,000 subscribers. Fredrick Douglass, who founded *The North Star* was a former slave and a national leader of the abolitionist Movement. Douglass was known for his oratory skills and his

intellectual capacity. Douglass was so inspired by Garrison's The Liberator that he stated that Garrison's newspaper was second only to *The Bible*. Like The Liberator, The North Star was published weekly and was disseminated to over 4,000 subscribers. Both of these newspapers focus on current events and advance, albeit differently, strategies of emancipation with the focus on ending slavery in the United States.

Slavery and the Mexican American War

According to the abolitionist newspapers, there was no doubt regarding the motives of the war with Mexico. In a news article following the formal declaration of War, *The Liberator* writes, "This is clearly *a war for slavery!*" Noting that the hostilities between the two countries are couched in the desire for American slave owners to expand Southern slave states into Texas. The article continues, "The Seminole war was a war to break up the refuge of the fleeing slaves in the everglades of Florida. The present war is a war for the extension of territory for the accommodation of slavery."[14] The article goes on to note that despite the fact that Mexico is a Catholic Country, necessarily "heathens"[15] at least they abolished slavery and therefore have the moral upper hand in the war.

In the same edition, The Liberator published an anti-war pledge encouraging its subscribers to commit to not supporting the U.S. Mexico War. The pledge is as follows:

> We, the undersigned, desiring to show our utter abhorrence of slavery, and every act either of the State of the individual, which means to support it, -- and to bind ourselves, before God and the world, to side with the oppressed, and not with the oppressor, hereby pledge ourselves, neither by act nor deed to aid, support, or countenance the Government in the War with Mexico; but all

[14] *The Liberator* June 5, 1846, Volume 16 Number 23
[15] Throughout the Newspapers, Mexicans were referred to as heathens due to their Catholic faith which was viewed as a threat to Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

hazards, and at every sacrifice, to refuse enlistment, contribution, and countenance to the war.[16]

The Liberator clearly and methodically draws a connection between the War with Mexico and the abolitionist Movement. Imploring its readers that if they are true abolitionists that they, under no circumstances, should support the War with Mexico. In addition, this pledge reveals to us that the abolitionists viewed Mexicans as victims of the government, referring to them as "oppressed."

One of the main themes of *The Liberator* from 1846 though the signing of the *Treaty* in 1848 and for *The North Star* from its inception in 1847 through 1848 was the emphasis on solidarity with the people in Mexico. At one point, The Liberator encouraged its readers, "Let us recognize them as brothers!"[17] Noting that the plight of the Mexicans during the War was a cause that they should care deeply about and be affected by. The North Star also published a number of articles with anti-war propaganda. Noting that the "slaveholding President"[18] is continuing his "slaveholding crusade"[19] in Mexico and characterizing Mexico as "a doomed victim to Anglo-Saxon cupidity and love of domination."[20]

It is crucial to note that Black and abolition newspapers viewed the Mexican American war as an opportunity for solidarity with Mexicans. In fact, there was not a single article published that justified the War or even implied that the war was a just endeavor. Instead, every single article published in both newspapers highlighted that

[16] *The Liberator* June 5, 1846, Volume 16 Number 23
[17] *The Liberator* February 4, 1848, Volume 18 number 5
[18] *The North Star* January 21, 1848
[19] *The North Star* January 21, 1848
[20] *The North Star* January 21, 1848

Mexicans were a victim of the Government of the United States and more specifically that President Polk was nothing more than "slavery, treachery, and mad ambition, are at the head of the government in the person of James K. Polk."[21]

The review of these newspapers further ground my understanding that the Mexican American war, while in part a desire to expand the United States Westward was little more than the desire to expand slavery. This also highlights Black American's desires to solidarity with the colonized populations of Mexico. As a matter of fact, before the war was over or any talk of peace had begun, Congress was already debating the fate of the Southwest in regard to slavery. Charles Chauncey Shakford's lecture delivered at Lyceum Hall in Boston, Massachusetts was published in both The Liberator and The North Star and explicitly outlines the impact of the war on the institution of slavery, warning that "the war was instigated by Southern slave-holders in Texas."[22]

The fear that the War with Mexico would expand slavery was not exclusive to Black or abolition newspapers. It was fiercely debated in both the House of Representative and the United States Senate. In the House of Representatives, long before the war ended, in 1846, Honorable A. Kennedy, a Democrat, gave a speech supporting the President and the War efforts. He asks, "Are you horrified at the success of American arms? I verily believe that many of you would have been better pleased if the results of this war had been the defeat of our armies and a loss of American territories, and more especially had it secured the defeat of our dominant party?" In his speech, he implies that anti-war sentiments are un-American and that

[21] *The North Star* February 25, 1848
[22] Shackford's "Lecture on the War with Mexico" January 16, 1848

the lack of support for the war can directly be tied back to anti-slavery sentiments in the North noting that the result of acquisition will be the expansion of slave territory.

In different speech, Honorable Alexander Harper, a Whig, expressed doubt over the motives of the War. He says, "Now, sir, it may be asked, what motive could induce the president to pursue a course calculated to lead to such results? I answer, a desire to acquire foreign territory, to be annexed to the United States, so as to secure to the South, and to her "peculiar institutions," in all time to come."[23] Honorable Alexander Harper is arguing that the real roots of the Mexican American War are not simply to acquire new territory but rather to expand the South's "peculiar institution." At the end of his speech, he issued a warning to the House, "… when that is done, and the question of making the territory thus acquired, or any part of it, slave states, then will arise a conflict that may and probably will, rend this confederacy asunder."[24] In essence, he was warning the House that if the United States were to continue down this "slaveholding crusade"[25] it may have irreparable consequences for the rest of the nation.

Based on the speeches given in Congress, throughout the War period, it is clear that the war was about so much more than Manifest Destiny. It was a microcosm of the tensions between the Democrats and the Whigs, of the North and the South over slavery. Both sides feared that the expansion of the United States into the Southwest and the decision to expand slavery in these territories would result in a Civil War and the ultimate dissolution of the union. Ultimately, the War ended in 1848 with the

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[23] Speech given by Alexander Harper of Ohio on the Mexican American War in the House of Representatives on February 13, 1847

[24] Speech given by Alexander Harper of Ohio on the Mexican American War in the House of Representatives on February 13, 1847

[25] Speech given by Alexander Harper of Ohio on the Mexican American War in the House of Representatives on February 13, 1847

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which annexed territory that became a part of the United States but did not bring any states into the Union until California in 1850.

III. Race Making: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

The *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* was signed in 1848 as an effort by the governments of the United States and Mexico to end the Mexican- American War. The peace *Treaty* gave Mexican citizens [about 100,000 Mexicans were affected by the *Treaty* (Griswald del Castillo 1998, 36)] a year to either declare themselves citizens of the United States or relocate to a different part of Mexico. Additionally, the treaty gave Mexicans settled in the "new" United States citizenship. Under Article 8 of the *Treaty*, the United States agreed to extend citizenship rights to all Mexican citizens who remained in the ceded territory. At that time, citizenship was reserved, exclusively, for Whites.[26] Mexico wanted their citizens to become citizens of the United States, should they choose to stay (although most were not financially able to relocate), to protect them from slavery and the United States' racial structures. This can, and should, be read as a direct response to the racial category of Blackness. At the time, Mexico had its own systems of slavery in place. Furthermore, Mexico (under colonial Spain) used African slaves. Thus, Mexico, and Mexicans by extension, understood the category of Blackness and its relation to slavery.

With this fundamental understanding of Blackness and the intimate understandings of slavery, Mexico did not want its nationals, even within the bounds of the United States, to be considered "Black." As a result, Mexico advocated on their nationals' behalf to racialize them as White. This juncture is key in understanding

[26] Under the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited naturalization to "white people… of good character." Therefore, under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican Americans were granted citizenship and declared white-by-law.

"Latinx" identity as a twofold process. Through the example of the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, we are able to trace the beginning of the Mexican American push away from "Blackness." It is critical to note here that this is a legal procedure, although there may have been social discrimination and other forms of discrimination, the importance of *legally* declaring Mexicans as White cannot be understated.[27]

Natalia Molina (2010), among other scholars, postulates that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo offered Mexicans a second-class citizenship: legally White but socially nonwhite. Molina (2010) writes, "The Mexican American War (1846-1848), the ideology of Manifest Destiny that justified it, and the resulting second-class citizenship rights extended to Mexicans after the war were all key in establishing Mexicans as an inferior race" (159). While the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* did have adverse consequences for Mexican Americans, including social discrimination and some forms of segregation, it would be irresponsible to not recognize and give importance to the anti-Black foundation in declaring Mexicans as legally racially White.

Here, it is important to note the fundamental difference between second-class citizenship, which Mexicans were afforded, and the positioning of the slave as the non- or anti-citizen. The anti-citizen according to Olson refers to the idea that the construction of the "traditional" American citizen was built as an antithesis to the Black slave.[28] While acknowledging the social stigma, segregation, and discrimination faced by Mexican Americans, it is also important to acknowledge the

[27] For more on the importance of Mexicans as legally white or "white-by-law" please see chapter 3.
[28] For a more in-depth conversation about this please see Chapter 3: Unstable Whiteness.

differences in positionality that affect their relations to and distinctions from Blackness.

The *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* granted Mexican landowners land rights in the areas annexed by the United States. As a result, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants have land claims to the lands we now know to be Arizona, California, western Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and parts of Utah. In practice, however, Mexican land ownership varied from place to place and land to land. Many Mexicans lost their land to both White settlers and Mexican elites. Whether or not Mexicans retained control and ownership over their lands, they were seen as agents who were able to enter into a treaty with the White settlers. This is an act of reciprocation that informs their position within the United States and the wider racial landscape. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, therefore, directly signifies a prior claim to the land and territory that serves as a recognition that Mexicans have, or had, a right to exist on these lands. This recognition and reciprocation serve to further distance Mexicans from Black people because they were allowed agency, whereas Black people systematically and fundamentally were not (not even allowed to contract into labor relations).

The ability of the Mexican American to enter into a treaty with the White settler, once again, is a positioning that delineates them from the Black slave. Jared Sexton (2015) writes,

> … [We] note the fact that "the absolute submission mandated by law was not simply that of slave to his or her owner, but the submission of the enslaved before all white" The latter group is better termed *all nonblack* (or, less economically, the unequal arrayed category of nonblackness), because

> Blackness is a necessary condition for enslavement that matters most, rather than whiteness as a sufficient condition for freedom (36).

This fundamental difference, again, that Mexican Americans were able to enter into a treaty vis-à-vis the Mexican government, while Black slaves were not afforded the same privilege cannot be understated, as it illuminates the way that anti-Blackness functions through Mexican American racialization. Mexican Americans were recognized as legal subjects by both the Mexican and the United States governments in addition to the fact that they were seen as legitimate landowners; both of which speak to their recognized personhood, and thus, distance from slaves.

Black Newspapers and The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

While many Americans celebrated the signing of the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* because it meant the expansion of the United States and the end of an unpopular war. By the time the United States signed the *Treaty*, President Polk was under intense pressure to end the War. Once the United States signed the *Treaty*, mainstream American newspapers published articles rejoicing. Abolition newspapers, on the other hand did not view the *Treaty* as a time for celebration. *The Liberator* published an article noting that the Treaty was an expense to the country, at 15 million dollars, "which almost as certainly extends and perpetuates slavery to a frightful extent."[29] Noting specifically, that the Treaty contains no restrictions on slavery which for *The Liberator* meant the inevitable expansion of slavery.

On the other hand, *The North Star* published an article entitled "Peace, Peace, Peace!" which was a scathing article about the Treaty. Writing,

[29] *The Liberator* March 17, 1848, Volume 18, Number 11

> The shout is on every lip, and emblazoned on every paper. The joyful news is told in every quarter with enthusiastic delight. We are such an exception to the great mass of our fellow countrymen, in respect to everything else, and have been so accustomed to hear them rejoice over the most barbarous outrages committed upon an unoffending people, that we find it difficult to unite with them in their general exultation at this time; and for this reason we believe that by *peace* they mean *plunder*.[30]

The North Star again furthers the idea that the abolition and Black newspapers viewed Mexicans and the conquest of the Southwest not only as a sympathetic cause, meaning that they did not support the War on Mexico and did not believe the *Treaty of Guadalupe* to be a fair compromise between the two nations. Making a clear point that the *Treaty* was not a moment to delight, but rather that Americans should "hang their heads in shame."[31]

The newspapers, together, show us that they understood the Mexican American war as nothing more than a ruse to expand slavery. Moreover, they show that they saw the plight of Mexicans as a similar violation by the United States government. On the one hand, it signals that there was a possibility for solidarity among Mexicans and Black Americans following the *Treaty* and the formal incorporation of Mexicans into the United States. On the other, the newspapers note that once again, slavery prevailed in that the *Treaty* did nothing to prevent the spread of slavery and no provisions were adopted in congress to prevent the newly acquired territory from allowing slaves.

Mexicans in America: The Aftermath of the Treaty

Returning to Laura Gomez's claim that Mexicans are a doubly colonized people, we are able to see that Mexican land and peoples were first colonized by Spain in the

[30] *The North Star* March 17, 1848
[31] *The North Star* March 17, 1848

16th century, after they successfully declared independence from Spain in 1821, they were colonized for a second time by the United States. The second time, however, the government of Mexico ceded lands to the United States in exchange for 15 million dollars and protections for their people living in the ceded territories. According to the *Treaty*, Mexicans deciding to reside in the United States would have become citizens of the United States and be allowed to keep their lands and possessions.

This double colonization also meant that the people in the colonized lands had to learn how to navigate two different colonial orders, Gomez argues, "For example, those native to New Mexico – the Mexican, Pueblo Indian, and other Indian communities – negotiated the American racial order in the shadow of the Spanish Mexican racial order." (Gomez, 47). In addition to now being under a different government, Mexicans were also forced to reconcile with a shift in racial orders. In a similar way, the United States and Anglo Americans were forced to reconcile with Mexicans as a new part of their racial landscapes. Some scholars content that Mexican Americans were treated like Black Americans (Molina) while others argue that Mexicans were more closely racialized as Indigenous peoples. Whereas some scholars don't believe that the distinction is important "… whether Mexicans were treated "like Indians" or "like Blacks" in the American context may have been inconsequential, since both groups were excluded from the rights and privileges accorded to whites" (Gomez, 59). I contend, however, that Mexican Americans, due to their ambiguous racial identity were able to leverage the Black/white binary to distance themselves from Blackness while claiming whiteness when it benefitted them.[32]

[32] For a more in-depth conversation about Mexican Americans and their relationship to whiteness, please see Chapter 3: Unstable Whiteness.

The racialization of Mexican Americans following the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* was anything but inconsequential, in that Mexican Americans were able to leverage their racial ambiguity, or their mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry to make legal claims to whiteness and to secure privileges and protections that were not afforded to either Indigenous peoples or Black Americans. In some ways, Mexican Americans were able to navigate the United States as an ambiguous group, or in some "off-white"[33] way that other groups like Asian Americans were unable to do because they did not have access to the protections provided by the *Treaty* because the governments were differently positioned.[34] This is an important distinction in so far as Mexican Americans could distance themselves from Black Americans and make themselves appear more palatable for the white race.

After U.S. occupation of the Southwest, Congress determined that the Indigenous populations living in the Southwest were distinct from the Mexicans living there. Just as the Spanish crown had distinguished between Christian Indians and barbarous Indians, the United States only allowed that the Christian Indians be extended the same rights as the rest of the Mexican Americans (Menchaca 218). The government was responsible for determining if the Indian tribes were either Christian or barbaric based on whether or not they were loyal to the Mexican government and if they were considered to be Mexican citizens. If they were not, they were classified as nomadic Indians and considered to be enemies of the state. For the Indigenous tribes that fell outside of the protections of the Treaty, they were forcibly relocated onto Indian reservations (Menchaca 219).

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[33] Laura Gomez terms Mexican Americans racialization as "off white" (84) indicating that they were never classified as completely white but rather occupied an ambiguous racial status.
[34] Asian American immigration was controlled by two major policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Page Laws which demonstrate the different positioning of Asian Americans in relation to Mexican Americans.

Furthermore, Black Mexicans, or *afromestizos*, were not afforded the same privilege as mestizos who could claim to be *both* Spanish and Indigenous. In California, slavery was never permitted and so *afromestizos* became classified as free Black people with restricted privilege and subjected to segregation laws. Under the Organic Act of 1850, citizenship was extended to all former citizens of Mexico. In that same year, however, congress refused to recognize that Mexico had "ever" extended citizenship to Black people (Menchaca, 225). In addition, Congress determined that Black people could not become citizens since Mexicans had to pledge allegiance to their new country and Black people did not have this privilege since they could not take the oath of citizenship (Menchaca, 225).

Evidently, not all Mexicans were racialized equally. While some Mexicans, mainly mestizos and white-Mexicans were able to racialize into the United States under their ambiguous racial identity others like non-assimilated Indigenous groups or Black Mexicans were racialized differently and subject to different rules and restrictions. This highlights that Mexicans did occupy a different bracket of racialization and were racialized as distinct from both "Indians" and Black Americans in a meaningful way that contributed to their ability to claim rights and privileges that were definitively unavailable for Black and Indigenous Americans.

IV. Transnational *Chicanismo*: The Influence of the Mexican Revolution

In chapter 4, I discuss the Chicano Movement and ways in which the Chicano Movement and modern conceptions of Mexicans as a minority racial group can be traced back to the ideas birthed during the Mexican Revolution. Many of the ideas perpetuated in the Chicano Movement and the insistence on a national identity as a racial identity highlights the construction of racial identity as fluid and socially

constructed. Adapted and changing at any given moment, even absorbing, and conflating national identities with racial identities. Particularly, the Chicano Movement builds on the identities created in the Mexican Revolution, as a way of engendering pride in a national Mexican identity. The Mexican Revolution took place in the time following the Independence of Mexico, the Mexican American War, and marked a time of uncertainty for the national identity of Mexicans. Drawing on the seminal work of Jose Vasconcelos, the Mexican Revolution centered and institutionalized the *mestizx* as the national image of the Mexican.

The revolution began as a bloody war to end the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz and reinstate democratic elections. Revolutionaries like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata united the north and south respectively to force Diaz out of the government and instill Francisco Madero as the new leader. However, Madero was slow on reforms and keeping his promise to return indigenous lands back to the Native populations and therefore, Zapata, an indigenous activist himself, turned against him soon after. Mexican national image was in shambles and the revolution was therefore necessary to instill a strong national image and unite the country.

The goal, therefore, of the Mexican revolution was to institutionalize a national imaginary of the Mexican people. This resulted in the conception of the mestizo as the national image and in doing so the restoration of pride in indigenous cultures. Unfortunately, this meant appropriating indigenous cultures without recognizing the actual lived reality of *indios* in Mexico. Anne Doremus, in writing about national identity in Mexico in the 1940's and 50's, notes that the government of Mexico hoped that indigenous peoples living in Mexico would begin to acknowledge themselves as Mexican and as a result that Mexico could have access to their lands. She writes, "Their

goal was not to Indianize Mexico, but to Mexicanize the Indian while at the same time preserving indigenous culture (language, dress, religion, customs, etc.)" (Doremus 2001). By "Mexicanizing the Indian" the government was able to appropriate specific cultures (like dances, clothing, myths) and incorporate them into the national imaginary without actually inviting Indigenous peoples to be a part the national image or have power over their own image and identity. As Rodriguez & Cuevas (2017) write,

> "a driving force in Mexico's nationalist agenda, this understanding of mestizaje fueled Mexicanismo and a view of Mexican identity that could all at once claim indigenous rights to settled land and erase specific understandings of Indigeneity and relations to land before colonization. One-way Mexicanismo did this was through art, philosophy, and literature that attempted to cement an Aztec/Nahuatl origin for all Mexicanx into popular culture" (Rodriguez & Cuevas, 2017 pg. 230).

The institutionalization of the mestizo as the national image was quickly adopted into popular culture and further entrenched the idea that race does not exist in Mexico. Furthermore, following Mexican independence and the Mexican revolution, the mestizo was the epitome of Mexican national identity. Meaning that all other identities (Black and Indigenous) would be subsumed by this new Mexican identity.

Two noted academics, Jose Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio were highly influential in identifying not only what it means to be a nation of mestizos but also in institutionalizing mestizaje as the national imaginary. Specifically, Jose Vasconcelos' text *La Raza Cosmica: Mision de la Raza Iboamericana* outlined the origins and future of mestizaje. In this text, Vasconcelos argues that Mexicans constitute a unique, cosmic race that was a superior race due to the social and sexual mixing of Indigenous and Spanish peoples during colonization.

The creation of the ideal mestizo or the mestizo as the exclusive Mexican subject was quickly instituted in education and popular culture through Jose Vasconcelos. Vasconcelos was not only a philosopher, but quickly became a governmental agent, serving as Mexico's secretary of education from 1921-1924. Throughout his time as the secretary of education, he worked hard to systematically institute the idea of the mestizo as the only Mexican subject. Undermining, therefore, any potential for cultural reproduction of actual indigenous practices. More specifically, "…he shaped the ideological and aesthetic parameters of nation-state formation. He founded rural schools to give isolated indigenous communities a sense of national pride, commissioned murals to detail the nation's history on the walls of government buildings, and gave composers the institutional support to combine indigenous, popular, and classical inspirations into a transcendent auditory experience (Cohen 2021). Jose Vasconcelos specifically designed these policies against Jim Crow segregation, which he experienced as a child in Eagle Pass, Texas. Ironically, however, the schools that Vasconcelos pioneered along with their curriculums were heavily assimilationist and reinforced a Mexican identity over an indigenous identity.

Continuously, however, Vasconcelos asserted that the Black population in Mexico was meant to disappear or would soon be bred out (Hooker 2017). In fact, during a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1926, Vasconcelos spoke directly about Blackness in Mexico as Theodore Cohen notes, "Blackness was still present in tropical regions [of Mexico], including along the coast of Mexico, which were "largely mulatto, a mixture of the Spanish and the Negro." Its survival was "probably the most vital problem for the future of our whole continent – perhaps even the most vital for the future of humanity at large" (Cohen, 2021; 47). By speaking only of Blackness as "probably the most vital problem" it demonstrates that Blackness, specifically in

Mexico, was theorized as a problem and as outside of the national imaginary. Meaning that Black Mexicans would continue to pose problems for the advancement of the Mexican peoples as a whole.

Manuel Gamio, on the other hand, departed from Vasconcelos' theorization on Indigenous Mexicans. Rather than taking a eugenic or assimilationist approach and trying to breed out indigeneity, Gamio stressed the importance of indigeneity for Mexican society. As he famously declared in 1916, "To incorporate the Indian we should not attempt to 'Europeanize' suddenly; on the contrary, we must 'Indianize' ourselves a little in order to present to him our civilization already diluted by his, which will make ours no longer appear exotic, cruel, bitter, and incomprehensible to him" (Cohen 2021, 45). While Gamio stressed the importance of adopting indigenous practices, albeit as a manipulative approach, he refused to address Blackness as Mexican (Cohen 2021, 45).

Both Gamio and Vasconcelos had a tremendous impact on establishing a Mexican national identity and emphasizing mestizaje as the root of Mexican pride. While on the surface it may appear as though Mexico has embraced an Indigenous identity, claiming an Indigenous identity and land claims, it fails to genuinely support and embrace indigeneity as a material reality rather than a symbolic form of identification. Instead of providing Indigenous folks with tools and resources like economic resources and comprehensive education, the government peddled assimilation education and erasure of Indigenous identities. In addition, coinciding with the rise of the Mexican Revolution was the denial of Blackness as a part of the Mexican national image. This all had reverberating impacts on the Chicano Movement and on Mexicans residing in the United States because due to the political and

economic upheaval many Mexicans emigrated to the United States seeking economic security.

Mexicans coming into the United States throughout this time presumably were heavily influenced by the image of the Mexican national identity and brought with them their understandings of race into the racial landscape of the United States. Furthermore, this conception of Mexicans as an Indigenous peoples with ties to the land is seen and mirrored through the Chicano Movement. While the Chicano Movement emphasized a non-white racial identity, it was specifically emphasizing a Mexican racial identity or a "Brown" identity that is constructed though Spanish and Indigenous ancestry. This negates any room for Blackness to be a part of the Brown racial identity and therefore excludes Black or Afro-Mexicans from being a part of the Mexican or even Chicanx identity.

V. Conclusion: Tri-Racial Order?

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva recognizes the differing understandings of whiteness for both the United States and argues that the United States may be undergoing a "Latin Americanization" of whiteness. In which Latin America has a tri-racial stratification system (Bonilla-Silva 2002, 4) with whites at the top, honorary whites in the middle and a "collective Black" at the bottom. This is based on Latin American nation building projects that center mestizaje or "mixed" race as their national identity but prioritizes whiteness and light skin as desirable social capital.

Unfortunately, Bonilla-Silva's model of "Latin Americanization" fails to contend with the lived reality of Black and Indigenous people in both the United States. Instead, as demonstrated in this chapter, Blackness remains stigmatized and marginalized both in Mexico and abroad. In the next chapter, I demonstrate that tenuous claims to

whiteness following the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* and into the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout this time, claims to whiteness were used to advance legal rights and, in some ways, assimilate into American society. This is a direct legacy of the colonial regimes and racial hierarchies in both Mexico and the United States. Further, the legacy of Mexican Americans and their relationship to whiteness persists to this day.

CHAPTER 3

Unstable Whiteness: Negotiating Mexican American Whiteness

Introduction

Mexican American racialization is traditionally read through the lens of white supremacy. I argue, however, this becomes problematic when we think through and analyze the harmful anti-Black sentiments present in the process of racialization of Mexican Americans. To address this oversight, this chapter seeks to understand the legal strategies taken by Mexican Americans in gaining civil rights. Particular focus is given to the role of anti-Blackness, subsequently explaining how the racial construction of Mexican Americans can be in itself understood as a perpetuation of anti-Blackness. This particular application of anti-Blackness serves as an entry point into the understandings of the intricate racialization of Latinx Americans more broadly. In addition, I further complicate conventional understandings by arguing that the racialization of Latinx people occurs both internally and externally.

Thus, it is important to understand that the racialization of Latinx people is a twofold process. Racializing is done *to* Latinx by White hegemony and White supremacy, as a way to maintain power. It is also an internal process whereby understandings of Whiteness and Blackness inform the ways that Latinx people identify themselves and their positionality within the broader racial structure. Thus, it is necessary to elaborate on and analyze both mechanisms of racialization: internal and external. Moreover, I argue that anti-Blackness is insidiously present at both stages of racialization. Therefore, examining only Latinx's relationship to Whiteness, as is typically done, is insufficient.

In bringing these two processes together, this chapter seeks to theorize the racial positionality of Latinx through the framework of anti-Blackness in conversation with white supremacy. This is not to suggest that white supremacy and white hegemony are not real and do not have an impact on the racialization of Latinx; but rather, to put the framework of anti-Blackness into conversation with the framework of white hegemony. Anti-Blackness and white supremacy work together to both maintain white power and retain Blackness as the antithesis of human. Therefore, these frameworks function in tandem with one another to racialize groups like Latinx, Asians, and Middle Eastern people in conflict with both whiteness and Blackness.

The conception of the United States as a biracial society informs the ways that other racial identities are formed and articulated. As many scholars have argued, race is a relational process. We are able to understand the category of Latinx, or Mexican American, due to our understandings of other racial categories such as white and Black. Taken alone, race may appear illegible because it is socially constructed and holds no inherent value. Due to the relational aspect of racialization, the creation of race itself becomes a bifurcated process: internal and external. Moreover, because racialization is relational, the processes of internal and external racialization are informed by understandings of other race's positionings, as well as the broader understandings of the racial structures. Moreover, while race is ascribed onto racial groups by processes of white hegemony and white supremacy it is also an internal process in which racial groups attempt to position themselves within the broader structure. The apparatus of anti-Blackness functions, therefore, at both levels.

I. Fungible Whiteness: Brief Overview of Whiteness in the United States

While Blackness has remained consistently stigmatized in the United States, the racial category of whiteness has both retracted and expanded depending on the sociopolitical terrain. An abundance of research has shown that a hallmark of antebellum middle class, around the time that Mexicans were being incorporated into the United States, was distance from Blackness.

In his book, *The Wages of Whiteness,* Roediger argues that white workers in the antebellum south emerged from a slaveholding republic in which they came to define themselves against both slavery and Blackness (Roediger). Roediger specifically focuses on Irish Americans and their liminal relationship to whiteness. Olson, citing Roediger writes, “Roediger point out, for Northern workers in early 1800’s to be “white was both an urgent necessity and a lifeless burden.” It guaranteed standing but was a cultural straitjacket.” (Olson, pg. 174). Specifically, it cut off Irish immigrants from forming alliances for coalition building with Black workers and American Indians. Scholars like Olson, Roediger, and Ignatiev argue that for ethnic groups like the Irish and Italian, they understood that the best way to get ahead was to prove themselves white. With Olson clarifying, “not so much by looking white as by proving themselves sufficiently anti-Black” (pg. 174). Olson further notes,

> Racial oppression in the 19th century, as DuBois argues, destroyed any hope for working class unity and greater democracy because it provided white workers certain “public and psychological wages” that compensated for their own exploitation by setting them above black workers (pg. 175).

While it may have made more sense for the white workers, as a group, to stand in solidarity with similarly situated Black workers they were incentivized vis-à-vis the racial hierarchy to claim whiteness as a political strategy.

Moreover, even following emancipation, it was necessary for the white working class to distinguish themselves from free Black people in order to maintain the status quo and their place along the racial hierarchy. Matthew Frye Jacobson notes that whiteness in the period between 1790 and 1965 took on a three-stage chronological progression.

> From the 1790s to the 1840s, in an era of relatively few immigrants, Americans saw people as either white or black. Between the 1840s and the 1920s, a period of massive foreign immigration and pervasive prejudice against various immigrant groups, there emerged a pattern of – variegated whiteness – in which some groups appeared better - whiter - than others. Finally, beginning in the 1920s, with immigration restriction, color again triumphed as a badge of race, and Americans came to see - and celebrate the diversity of - a – Caucasian – race that encompassed diverse nationalities previously deemed racially deficient (Kolchin 2009, 120).

Jacobson builds on the argument of Roediger, however, instead of focusing on class as the catalyst of whiteness, Jacobson highlights the role that immigration and nativism in the history of whiteness.

Joel Olson offers an invaluable addition to not only whiteness studies but also conceptions of American citizenship arguing that whiteness and citizenship were co-constructed. Writing, “once conjoined, the two identities were practically interchangeable” (pg. 174). However, along with the construction of white-middle-class-American-citizenship was the creation of Black Americans as the anti-citizen. Noting that Black Americans were the antithesis to white citizenship: “As the antithesis of the white citizen, black people in the Jacksonian era were not simply non-citizens but anti-citizens. They were not merely excluded from the social compact, they threatened it.” (Olson, 171).

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, a period that Jacobson contends sees massive foreign immigration and therein hierarchies of whiteness begin to occur. This is also around the time that Mexicans were incorporated as – white – citizens under the Treaty. According to Jacobson's theory, then, Mexicans would have been considered to be white albeit inferior to preferable whites like Anglo-Saxon Americans. What is critical to note however, is that Mexicans had access to whiteness in so far as they were able to prove themselves to be sufficiently anti-Black.

II. Anti-Blackness as Negotiation

Toni Morrison contends that whiteness and American (read: white, hegemonic) culture is defined by distancing itself from what she calls "Africanism" (Morrison 1992 8). American society and culture are therefore defined against the Blackness. In terms of race relations, this means that those who enter the United States are racialized in relation to the Blackness. On this racialization, Morrison (1993) in her essay *On the Back of Blacks* writes:

> Only when the lesson of racial estrangement is learned is assimilation complete. Whatever the lived experience of immigrants with African Americans -- pleasant, beneficial, or bruising -- the rhetorical experience renders blacks as noncitizens, already discredited outlaws(para. 3).

As Toni Morrison articulates, the lesson of racial estrangement has indeed been learned. Furthermore, this lesson of racial estrangement, of distancing oneself from "Africanism" is quintessentially antiblack. It has been manifested within the Latinx identity and rears its head in Chicanx scholarship.

It is for this reason, this distancing of Mexican Americans from Blackness, that the conceptionof white hegemony needs to speak to and acknowledge anti-Blackness. Prominent racial scholarsspeak to the racialization of various racial groups (including Black Americans) through the framework of White hegemony:

whiteness on top of the hierarchy. I do not wish to imply that this theory is incorrect; instead, I argue that it is incomplete without the framework of anti-Blackness. Mexican Americans, through the processes of racialization, perpetuate anti-Blackness by being complicit within a system of anti-Blackness. In accordance with Morrison's writing, Mexican American racial formation can be defined as distancing itself from "Africanism."

Gloria Anzaldua, a Feminist theorist, and a Chicana scholar, writes about what she calls *la raza*. Having grown up along the U.S.-Mexico border, she writes about occupying the literal borderlands, and the metaphysical borderlands within her mind and identity. Her theories become problematic when one applies the framework of anti-Blackness and contextualizes them within Latinx claims to whiteness. It is important to note that her ground-breaking work, *Borderlands/La Frontera* was published in 1986, after the Chicano Movement where Chicano activist championed a non-white *mestizo* racial identity. However, in order to formulate her theories, Anzaldua relies on Mexican philosopher, Jose Vasconcelos and his conception of *la raza cosmica.* Vasconcelos proposes that Mexican colonization created a race that otherwise would not have existed (Taylor 2018, para. 6). He argues that due to colonization, "pure Indians"are dead. In re-articulating Vasconcelos' notion, Anzaldua not only erases the experiences of indigenous peoples, but also fails to correct the anti-Blackness that undergirds Vasconcelos' theory, which becomes Anzaldua's foundation.

Taylor (2018) questions, "If *mestizo* people are genetically superior, as [Anzaldua] claims, what is the implication for indigenous and black people?" (para. 8) Trevino responds to this anti-Blackness directly,

He sounds like a Nazi as he lays out

A hierarchy of races with Black
At the bottom &white at the top, though
He imagines a mixed race, a new shade
Of white, that will trump them all. He sounds like
A Nazi who believes 'the Indian's
A good bridge' between the Black race & white (Trevino 2016, 13).

Anzaldua's insistence that Vasconcelos' theory is not white supremacist may be true, but it is inherently antiblack. Vasconcelos' theory directly erases the identities of both Indigenous and Black people in Mexico and Mexican Americans by consequence. The *mestiza* identity that Anzaldua is claiming for her Chicanx people is tainted with anti-Black sentiments. Nonetheless, Anzaldua identifies herself, and has been identified by others, as antiracist. Perhaps her antiracist efforts were poised towards eradicating white supremacy as opposed to anti-Blackness.

That is to say that combatting white supremacy and hegemony is distinct from combatting anti-Black racism. While Anzaldua takes on white supremacy, and forges alliances with other women of color in antiracist efforts, she does not acknowledge the anti-Blackness that undergirds her theory. Furthermore, to conflate fighting of white supremacy with the fighting of anti-Blackness often times has the result of reifying or perpetuating anti-Blackness by ignoring the complexity and uniqueness of anti-Blackness. Further, combatting white supremacy does not mean that one is also combatting anti-Blackness. Instead, as demonstrated by the case studies, the need to center anti-Blackness is the only way to guarantee the dismantling of anti-Black and white supremacist racial structures, given that they constitute one another.

Once again, the ways that people interact with notions of whiteness and Blackness informs the ways that they understand Latinx. Natalia Molina (2013) coins the term racial scripts to identify this phenomenon. She writes, "A racial script

approach pulls the lens back so that we can see different racial projects operating at the same time, affecting different groups simultaneously" (7). Molina (2010) recounts the racial scripts used to racialize the Latinx immigrants within the United States after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act. She argues that how Mexican immigrants were directly compared to other racial groups in the United States, particularly Black Americans, is key to informing white Americans what "Mexican" meant. She cites conversations amongst politicians debating Mexican immigration. The politicians arguing against the immigration of Mexicans, according to Molina, used racial scripts to inform audiences. For example, Molina (2010) cites debates that focused on comparing Mexican immigrants to Black slaves, "They argued that like slaves, the Mexican population would increase at unprecedented rates and in their estimation, reap a multitude of problems" (163). By employing racial scripts, Molina argues, it informed the audiences that Mexicans were something to be feared. Through their understandings of Blackness, they were able to process the position of Mexican immigrants.

Molina makes a compelling argument, that race is relational and that the only way to understand the position of one racial group is in relation to other racial groups. However, given the history of Mexican Americans and that of Black-Americans, I am inclined to argue that the racial scripts say more about the position of Black-Americans than they do about the attempted positioning of Mexican immigrants. Bringing Morrison (1993) back into the conversation, the comparison "renders Blacks as noncitizens, already discredited outlaws" (para. 3). Black people are, for white Americans, the antihuman. They are a pillar of comparison. But due to paradigmatic differences in the positioning of these respective groups, Mexican immigrants may be

compared to that of Black-Americans, however their positioning within society will never be comparable to that of the Black American.

Mexican Americans and Latinx people suffer discrimination that is compared to that of Black Americans, although it is not comparable to that of Black Americans. Furthermore, due to structural differences in the positioning of Black Americans and Latinx people, the forms of discrimination that each faces are paradigmatically different, although they manifest themselves in nearly identical ways. Further, Latinx suffer discrimination and racism daily, are often scapegoated in the media and politics, and are subject to low-wage and physically demanding jobs due to their precarious status as Latinx. However, Latinx people do not share a history of slavery and are not subjected to what is called the afterlife of slavery. The afterlife of slavery refers to the enduring systemic violence of slavery that is found in contemporary society

(Hartman 2007, 6). Due to their white-by-law status, Mexicans (and here I wish to extend my analysis to include Latinx people more broadly), were not formally, or legally, subjected to the unconstitutional segregationist Jim Crow laws. I do not wish to imply that Latinx immigrants were not subjected to discrimination and social stigma, but rather to demonstrate the anti-Black formations of Latinx identity. Furthermore, Latinx people living in the Southwest faced social discrimination daily, exclusion from juries, segregated businesses, and public accommodations, and even school segregation. However, due to their legal claims to whiteness, they were afforded protections that Black Americans and even Chinese Americans were not afforded.

III. Negotiating Whiteness By-Law

There are three key moments in Latinx identity formation that highlight the necessity of using *both* the frameworks of anti-Blackness and white hegemony.

These fundamental moments are the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947), and finally *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954). As I will demonstrate, each of these foundational moments demonstrate the processes of negotiation (either internally or externally) that cemented Mexican-American and Latinx identity as fungible. Additionally, what I am referring to as "negotiations"will also serve to demonstrate the anti-Blacksentiments in Latinx identity formation. Revealing that whiteness (by-law) was more than just a legal strategy.

In Re: Ricardo Rodriguez

The *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* was signed by the United States and Mexican governments in 1848. In the conditions agreed to in the *Treaty*, included the stipulation that the Mexicans who were to remain in the United States would become citizens of the United States. At the time, citizenship and naturalizing into the United States was reserved for white people. Under the Naturalization Act of 1790, the law limited naturalization to "free white person(s) […] of good character." Thus, excluding Native Americans, slaves, free Black people, and later Asians from becoming citizens of the United States. Then, in 1870 the government passed the Naturalization Act of 1870, which explicitly extended naturalization rights to all "aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent." At this point, the ability to naturalize and become citizens of the United States was restricted to either white or Black people residing in the United States.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo included Mexicans within the bounds of whiteness and allowed them to naturalize and become citizens of the United States. However, when Ricardo Rodriguez, a Mexican national residing in San Antonio, Texas applied for citizenship, his application was denied. Rodriguez was an illiterate native of Guanajuato, Mexico who had lived in Texas since 1883 and "by all accounts he was

an industrious, law-abiding man with only one stated reason for desiring citizenship: because he lived here" (Cantrell 2013). A populist attorney, Theodore McMinn and Republican attorney Andrew Jackson Evans were lawyers contesting Rodriguez's application. In front of the presiding judge, Thomas S. Maxey. The lawyers saw Rodriguez's application for citizenship as an opportunity with Cantrell noting, "the attorneys filed an amicus brief challenging the application on the grounds that Rodriguez was not white and therefore ineligible for citizenship under American immigration law" (Cantrell 2013).

This was particularly important because upon conferral of citizenship, Rodriguez, or Mexicans more broadly, would become eligible voters in Texas and the Southwest. If McMinn and Evans succeeded in declaring Mexicans ineligible for citizenship, they would effectively weaken Mexican Americans as a voting bloc and maintain control over the Southwest.

Ricardo Rodriguez was described as a "copper-colored" man with "dark eyes, straight black hair, and high cheek bones" (Cantrell 2013; DeLeon 1979). Rodriguez himself considered his cultural heritage to be "pure-blooded Mexican" and testified that he was not a descendant of the Indigenous people in Mexico, nor Spaniards, and certainly not African. In accordance with the Naturalization Act of 1790, Rodriguez brought attorney James Fisk, to testify to his character, who testified that Rodriguez was "a good man, of sound moral character, a hard worker, a peaceful law abiding citizen"[35] and whose "ignorance of the Constitution notwithstanding, would dutifully uphold his principles if he knew them."[36] However, Rodriguez's behavior and moral

[35] Information retrieved by the Texas State Historical Association: https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/in-re-ricardo-rodriguez
[36] Information retrieved by the Texas State Historical Association: https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/in-re-ricardo-rodriguez

character was not the only question considered by the course. Attorneys McMinn and Evans would question the race of Rodriguez and argue that Ricardo would not be considered to be white "under any scientific or common understanding of the term" (Cantrell 2013).

Two clear precedents were considered by Judge Maxey before making his final decision: *In re Ah Yup* (1878) and *In re Camille* (1880). *In re Ah Yup* (1878) was a court case in which a federal judge ruled that a person of Chinese descent was not considered white and would be considered to be ineligible for citizenship. Similarly, *In re Camille* (1880) a federal court decided that a person who was half-white and half-Native American was also ineligible for citizenship because they would not be considered to be white under the law. Following these court cases, the arguments against Rodriguez's citizenship appeared sound and reasonably based. However, due to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Mexican Americans were differently positioned in that their claims of whiteness were based in a *Treaty* between the government of the United States and the government of the Republic of Mexico. This is a privilege that was not granted to either Chinese-born individuals or even Native Americans, which deemed them ineligible for citizenship.

Ultimately, Judge Maxey stated that Rodriguez had the right to become a citizen of the United States affirming that since 1836 both "the Republic of Texas and the United States had by various collective acts of naturalization conferred upon Mexicans the rights and privileges of American citizenship."[37] Noting that this right was further extended by the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* in Article VIII which conferred American

[37] Information retrieved by the Texas State Historical Association: https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/in-re-ricardo-rodriguez

citizenship onto Mexicans who continued to live in the United States after the Mexican American War. This moment was groundbreaking in the history of Mexican American litigation and Civil Rights because it affirmed the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* and noted that the *Treaty* could be used in determining the rights and privileges of Mexicans and Mexican Americans residing in the United States. It further highlights the privileges that Mexican Americans have, and legitimized Mexican Americans claims to whiteness, setting the stage for legal strategies and serving as the basis for rights claims for Mexican Americans for nearly a century.

Mendez v. Westminster (1946)

In Orange County, California students of Mexican descent, notably children of darker complexion were forced to attend segregated schools, "schools for Mexicans" (Valencia, 2005 395). This was not a unique Orange County phenomenon, but rather was taking place throughout the Southwest. The Texas Educational Survey Commission described a Latinx school as "a dilapidated, two or three room building. The toilets were unscreened, and the grounds poorly kept" (Rochmes, 2007 9) and the Latinx schools more broadly were described as "…generally inferior and inadequate" (Rochmes, 2007 10). In Orange County, Gonzalo Mendez and his sister attempted to enroll their children at the local school, which accepted his sister's children because they had light skin. However, his children were forced to enroll at a school designated for Mexicans. Therefore, Gonzalo Mendez and four other fathers filed a class action lawsuit for unconstitutional segregation of over five thousand children of Mexican descent. The suit argued, not that segregation was unconstitutional, but rather that Mexicans are legally White and therefore should not be subjected to segregation.

Haney-Lopez (1997) correctly diagnoses this strategy: "Seeking to take advantage of their liminal position, elite Hispanics have traditionally claimed for themselves and their communities' White identities." The Mendez case did just that. Interestingly enough, this court case has been hailed as having paved the way for Brown v. Board of Education (Valencia 2005), "as if to say, Latinos pioneered the argument, and Blacks received the benefit" (Rochmes 2007, 14). In some ways this may be true: it proved and legitimized the harmful effects that segregation had on the children of Mexican descent. However, the strategy deployed by Mexicans in Mendez is exemplary of the racial logics of Latinx identity in which positionality is determined through its distance from both White and Black. The Mexican plaintiffs in Mendez argued that Mexicans are legally White and therefore entitled to the privileges and benefits afforded to White students.

Despite the fact that the ruling happened to articulate disapproval of separate but equal, the Mexican plaintiffs were in no way arguing for racial solidarity, or the end of discrimination for all people. Mendez coupled with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, therefore, served to distance Latinx from that of Black.

The Mendez case, therefore, can be taken to be both an internal and external negotiation of the ascribed status. Through the comparisons between Mendez and Brown, one is able to better understand the strategy deployed by the Mexican plaintiffs:

> Mendez lawyers argued that Anglos had treated Chicanos as second-class citizens because of their Mexican background. They claimed that their client's 14th Amendment rights had been violated because Chicanos were being singled out due to their Mexican Ancestry. Brown lawyers argued that Anglos treated Blacks as second-class citizens because existing segregation laws allowed

> separation based on race. *However, Brown lawyers claimed that segregation – by its very nature – was inherently unequal and violated the 14th Amendment* rights of black students. [Emphasis mine] (Ramos 2010, 252).

Furthermore, the most important distinction between the two cases becomes nearly a nuance in the literature: the lawyers in Brown argued that segregation itself was unconstitutional while Mendez lawyers claimed that segregation against Mexicans was unconstitutional. Granted, the Mendez plaintiffs and lawyers were working within a racist system, and no longer wished to face discrimination. Additionally, one is able to see the external processes working though the ways that the courts were able to negotiate the racial standing of the Latinx plaintiffs vis-à-vis their ruling that Mexicans are White-by-law. Therefore, I argue that both the courts and the lawyers negotiated Mexican's status as white-by-law, through the Mendez case.

Hernandez v. Texas (1954)

In 1954, just two weeks before the Supreme Court decided the landmark case, Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court heard Hernandez v. Texas, which dealt with the lack of Mexican American jurors in jury selection processes in Jackson County, Texas. The court ruled that Mexican Americans are a distinct class, not by race, but by ancestry and therefore they are entitled to 14th Amendment protections. In order to understand the importance of the Hernandez verdict, one must first contextualize the events leading up to it.

In Edna, Jackson County, Texas, Pedro (Pete) Hernandez walked into Chicho Sanchez's tavern and shot and killed Joe Espinoza over a verbal dispute. Pete Hernandez was then indicted for first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. For Gustavo (Gus) Garcia, the lawyer who defended Pete Hernandez, the question was not whether or not Hernandez was guilty. In fact, it was largely accepted

that he was not innocent of the charges. The problem, according to Garcia, was that he was tried and convicted by an all-white (Anglo) jury. Furthermore, "Gustavo Garcia, an experienced Mexican American civil-rights lawyer, represented Hernandez without a fee, seeing the case as a challenge to the systematic exclusion of persons of Mexican origin from all forms of jury duty in Texas" (Rumbaut 2004-2007, 281).

The case was taken all the way to the Supreme Court, not to defend Hernandez, but rather to challenge discrimination against Mexican Americans in jury selection processes. Once again, the legal team defending Hernandez deployed what Haney-Lopez (1997) refers to as the "other white legal strategy." Furthermore, both the lawyers arguing for the state of Texas and those defending Hernandez understood, and argued that, Mexicans were legally white. In accordance, the state of Texas denied the appeal citing that "the Fourteenth Amendment covered only two racial groups, whites and blacks; that Mexican Americans were classified as white, not black: and therefore that Mr. Hernandez's rights has not been violated inasmuch as the juries that indicted and tried him were "composed of members of his race." (Rumbaut 2004-2007, 282).

However, when brought before the Supreme Court, the Court led by Justice Earl Warren, ruled on behalf of Hernandez. Interestingly enough, however, Justice Warren disclaimed race as a basis for his ruling. Instead, The Court acknowledged that in Jackson County, businesses, and citizens themselves routinely distinguished between "white" and "Mexicans." In fact, the courthouse bathrooms themselves served as a key pillar, as Gus Garcia cited the signage that read "Whites Only" and another: "Colored Men Here" and "Hombres Aqui" (Olivas 2006, 216). Rather, the court ruled that

Mexicans constituted a distinct class, not based on race, that was subject to discrimination and therefore should be afforded 14th Amendment protections.

The Hernandez case did two things for the status of Mexicans: first, it acknowledged the discrimination and sought to recognize them as a separate class deserving of protections, while at the same time, maintaining their claims to whiteness. Similar to the Mendez case, Hernandez did not seek to end discrimination or dismantle Jim Crow. Rather, Hernandez did not even begin to question the racist underpinnings of Jim Crow segregation. Distinct from Mendez however, the lawyers in Hernandez attempted to secure Mexicans positioning as a distinct class worthy of protection without forfeiting their claims to whiteness. Moreover, this case was a part of a greater legal strategy: the opportunity to fight against discrimination against Mexican Americans in jury selection processes in the Southwest United States. According to Haney-Lopez, within the context of Texas race politics, "Mexicans on juries was tantamount to equal status with whites" (Haney-Lopez 2005, 63).

Hernandez serves as an interesting legal case because the negotiations take place both externally and internally. By this, I mean that both the Supreme Court Justices and the lawyers arguing for Hernandez engaged in a process of negotiating the racial positioning of Mexican Americans. By choosing to forego the racial argument the Court is making an implicit racial appeal. They are clinging to the Black/White binary and negotiating the positioning of Mexican Americans within the racial system. This verdict, that Mexicans are legally white, serves to further distance them from Black people despite the fact that they faced similar discrimination; they still aimed to legally distance themselves from the racial position of the Black person.

Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District (1970)

Following the decision by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, it took a long time for many school districts to begin the process of school desegregation, even reluctantly. Despite the Supreme Court ruling that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional, and the mandate to desegregate schools following Brown in 1954, in 1970, school integration remained a heated debate. Mexican Americans feared the strategy of integration undertaken by the school districts would be to merge the Black and Mexican schools and to leave the white schools out of the equation. For this reason, many prominent Mexican American civil rights leaders sided with the government to extend and prolong segregation (Behnken, 673).

This would have been possible because there were no laws or policies legitimizing school segregation for Mexicans and therefore all segregation was de facto which left them vulnerable under the law because there were no laws or policies that explicitly segregated Mexican Americans. Since there were no laws or policies that Mexican Americans could formally challenge the burden was higher. They did not have the protections afforded by *Brown v. Board of Education* because due to the ruling in *Hernandez v. Texas*, they were "other white" and were not afforded the protections of being an "identifiable minority." Meaning that in the Cisneros case, Mexican Americans had to prove that they not only were an identifiable minority but also that they faced discrimination that is unconstitutional according to the ruling handed down in *Brown*.

For Mexican Americans, their fears came true and in San Antonio, the school district only integrated Black and Mexican schools to avoid integrating white students. The district claimed that because Mexicans would be considered white under the law, the integration of Mexican and Black schools would be sufficient integration. As a result, Mexican Americans began boycotting schools in San Antonio. Black Civil Rights

leaders felt that this was a racist response to Black students in Mexican schools (Behnkin, pg.). With George Martinez noting that Black leaders felt that "Mexican Americans ride their [Black] coat tails and share in the benefit" (Martinez 1997). Martinez's words perfectly showcase the dual strategy of claiming whiteness while at the same time needing the protections of being an identifiable minority.

In *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* Mexican Americans finally began to shift the focus of the "other white" legal strategy to "apply the Brown findings of the 14th Amendment violation" yet to do so required gaining "judicial recognition as a separate class or an identifiable minority group." Becoming an identifiable minority group meant that Mexican Americans would have to prove that they were suffering from discrimination based on their classification of Mexican American. Several cases including *Mendez v. Westminster* and *Hernandez v. Texas* expanded Mexican Americans claims to rights and privileges but took on a legal strategy that sought to declare Mexican Americans as white-by-law and argued that their discrimination was unconstitutional because they were legally considered to be white.

It was politically expedient to have Mexican Americans identified as a separate class "having unalterable congenital traits, political impotence, and the attachment of a stigma of inferiority" (San Miguel 2001, 77). This was important because Black Americans began to litigate cases following *Brown v. Board* that demonstrated that claims of racial discrimination alone were enough to secure rights and privileges that were previously guaranteed only to white people; thus, proving that claiming a minority status that was protected under the law was a viable alternative to the white-by-law argument that Mexicans had previously undertaken. The argument that was

presented in the Cisneros case was also reflective of the shift to a non-white racial identity in the Chicano Movement.[38]

Cisneros was the first case to extend the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to Mexican Americans. The decision in *Cisneros* replaced the "other white" argument established in *Hernandez v. Texas*, which provided constitutional rights based on an "other white" strategy and discrimination based on ancestry and national origin rather than race. Judge Seals even cited the "other white" argument as proof of segregation but held that Mexican Americans are an identifiable minority group. Further, the Judge ruled that "[Mexican American's] physical characteristics, their Spanish language, their Catholic religion, their distinct culture and their Spanish surname, Mexican Americans were an identifiable ethnic minority for desegregation purposes and that *Brown* applied to them" (San Miguel 2001, 178). Cisneros, however, was seen as too little too late by Black Civil Rights leaders and organizations like the NAACP, with Civil Rights Leaders calling this new strategy of being Brown as a legal protection "disingenuous and opportunistic" (Behnkin).

The decision by elite Mexican Americans to become Brown when it convenience them rather than continue to emphasize their whiteness under the law came only after major Civil Rights gains by Black organizations and litigators like Thurgood Marshall. In many ways the decisions by Mexican Americans can, and should, be considered as disingenuous and opportunistic because the reason that they shifted their legal strategy was only to gain access to the legal protections that were afforded to Black Americans.

[38] For more on this please see Chapter 4: Anti-Blackness in the Chicano Movement to understand how The Chicano Movement appropriated various aspects of the Black Power Movement and was anti-Black in its very foundation.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter seeks to address two different trends regarding the racialization of Latinx peoples. The first is the racialization that happens to Mexicans when crossing the Southern border into the United States, and the second is the internalized understandings of what it means to be a Latinx person in the United States. Both are critical processes that affect how Latinx people are not only racialized but also negotiate their own racial experiences within the United States. For instance, Julia Taylor in her article, “Fungible Indigeneity and Blackness: On the Paradigmatic Domination of Borderlands Theory” recalls a conversation that she had with her mom:

> I referred to another Latinx person as a “person of color.” My mom stopped me and asked what I meant by that to which I responded, “someone who is not White.” She shook her head in disbelief, and said “Well I think Latinos are White. Your *abuelo* always said we were White” (as if Whiteness could be spoken into existence). (Taylor 2018).

I do not wish to imply that Latinx people in the United States want to literally become White. Rather, they want to have access to the resources and privileges that White people enjoy. This is a logical response to oppression. Undoubtably, Latinx people in the United States suffer discrimination: mass incarceration, police profiling, mass deportation, just to name a few. I rather aim to bring forward a long overdue conversation regarding anti-Blackness and its direct relation to the construction and continuation of the Latinx identity.

Latinx people have been negatively stereotyped. In this political climate, it is critical for Latinx people to understand their oppression and the ways that the United States government is systematically discriminating against them. However, I am arguing that in doing so Latinx people need to be aware of their complacency in anti-

Blackness, and in perpetuating anti-Blackness in discourse surrounding the racialization of Latinx people in the United States.

As previously stated, racism takes on different manifestations for different racial groups, but in their relationality, we are able to understand and expose anti-Blackness as the foundation of racism and racialization, alongside discourses surrounding white supremacy. Further, conversations about racialization and white supremacy must make explicit reference to anti-Blackness and critically examine racialization and its complacency in the perpetuation of anti-Blackness. To that end, I have presented a new framework that sheds light on both internal and external processes of racialization and analyzes the racial structure through the lens of white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

CHAPTER 4

Anti-Blackness in the Chicano Movement

I. Introduction

The Black Power Movement had a tremendous impact not only on Black politics and community building but also on perceptions and understandings of nationalism and self-determination for non-white racial minorities. The Black Power Movement also influenced the creation of various nationalist organizations such as the American Indian Movement, Brown Berets, Red Guard, the Young Lords, and the Chicano Movement. The Chicano[39] Movement was modelled off the Black Power Movement, asserting the viability of a non-white Mexican American identity.

In this chapter, I argue that the Chicano Movement appropriated the racial nationalism used in the Black Power Movement. I also argue that the strategy of declaring Mexican Americans as a non-white racial group in the United States also served as a mechanism of distancing themselves from Blackness in order to maintain their ambiguous racial identity. Furthermore, building on the work of scholars like Kateri Hernandez and Saldaña-Portillo, I argue that the Chicano Movement also systematically erased Blackness and Indigeneity from the reality of Mexican national identity by obscuring Indigeneity as a historical fiction and erasing Blackness from the narrative. Furthermore, I argue that this had serious consequences for the possibility of coalition building among Latinx and Black communities that are still seen today.

The Chicano Movement marked the rise of conceptualizing Mexican Americans not only as non-white but as an ethnic "Brown" racial group. Scholars such as Banks

[39] I use the term Chicano in reference to the Chicano Movement rather than more recent terms like Chicanx or Xicanx to highlight the masculine (macho) discourse that plagued the Chicano Movement and to acknowledge the shortcomings of the Chicano Movement including the gendered inequities and rampant sexism within the Movement.

(2006), Hernandez (2004), Haney-Lopez (2003), and Busey & Silva (2021) note that the Chicano Movement in part embraced Brownness "to distinguish themselves from blackness and the black experience in the United States" (Haney-Lopez, 2003, pp. 211-212). The decision to emphasize a non-white racial identity directly followed the Civil Rights Movement, which emphasized a non-white racial identity as a means of securing rights and civil liberties. Nevertheless, however, it resulted in the marginalization and erasure of Afro-Mexicans which, in turn, impeded the possibility of coalition building among the two communities.

The Chicano Movement marks an important transition in the racial identity of Mexican American identity because it marks the beginning of the shift from a legally white emphasis (gained through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) to the focus on establishing a collective non-white racial identity. As Wilson notes, "The success of Mexican American Civil Rights organizations required proof that anti-Mexican discrimination existed – separate from the African American civil rights legislation" (Wilson, 2003). Therefore, Mexican Americans needed to prove that they legally constituted a non-white racial group.

Previous Mexican American civil rights gains, such as school desegregation, the right to serve on juries, and more depended on proving that Mexican Americans were classified as legally white and that they were entitled to the privileges associated with whiteness (this was seen through the legal strategy undertaken in *Mendez v. Westminster (1947)*). Moreover, some scholars notes that prior to the Chicano Movement, the strategy undertaken by the Mexican American community was to make Jim Crow more palatable and comfortable for Mexican Americans rather than challenging discrimination and segregation. By this I mean that, while Mexican

Americans did not want to be segregated themselves, they also did not seek to abolish Jim Crow segregation as a whole. For example, as Behnken shows, some Mexican restaurant owners in Texas were unhappy with desegregating their facilities out of fear that they would lose business (pg. 657).

The Civil Rights Movement opened the door for strategies of collective organizing, especially through the use of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause.[40] The Fourteenth Amendment was used during the Civil Rights Movement to advance equality under the law by arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause guarantees equal treatment under the law. Specifically, *Brown v. Board of Education* successfully argued that public schools (and later extended to other public services) could not segregate or discriminate on the basis of race due to the equal protections guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. More specifically, Black civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) demonstrated that successful claims of discrimination based on a protected class such as race could be successful in dismantling de jure segregation and formal Jim Crow policies. Court cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) opened the flood gates to challenge the constitutionality of formal and legal segregation and was the first step in ending de jure racial segregation.

Brown v. Board and the establishment of race as a protected class through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had reverberating impacts on other ethnoraical groups,

[40] The Fourteenth Amendment states that "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The Fourteenth Amendment was purposefully written to counteract The Supreme Court ruling of Dred Scott, a ruling that denied citizenship and Constitutional rights to slaves.

because securing rights and access to privilege depended on their ability to prove discrimination based on their ethnoracial identities; in other words, to prove that they were a protected class. A protected class constitutes a group of people sharing a common trait who are legally protected from being discriminated against based on that trait. In the 1960's following Brown v. Board (which declared separate but equal unconstitutional and guaranteed equal access to public schools), Congress passed The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII of The Civil Rights Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. Later, this was expanded to include sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity).

Becoming a protected class was prudent for Mexican Americans to fight future discrimination cases in court by demonstrating that their common characteristic (being Mexican Americans) constituted a protected class. Moreover, Mexican Americans no longer had to legally prove that they were white in order to fight discrimination in court. This led to the emphasis on a non-white racial identity, such as Chicano, in order to constitute themselves as a protected class. Nevertheless, scholars have noted that this unfortunately did not lead to cross-racial solidarity, particularly among Black and Mexican/Latinx groups, due to underlying prejudice.[41]

I will begin by giving an overview of the Chicano Movement. Then, I will analyze how the Chicano Movement erased Blackness and treated Indigeneity as a fiction through the metaphorical claim to Aztlán. Next, I will elaborate on the problematics of the rallying cry "La Raza" due to its controversial transnational roots in the Mexican Revolution. Finally, I will end with an analysis of the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and the

[41] For more about Mexican-American's tenuous relationship to whiteness please see Chapter 4.

Black Panther's "10 Point Program" to demonstrate how the Chicano Movement appropriated the Black Power Movement in harmful ways. Finally, building on the Critical Latinx Indigeneities, I propose a racial reckoning and critical examination of rallying cries and the like to move forward and to begin forming coalitions with other communities of color.

II. The Chicano Movement

The Chicano Movement emerged during the Civil Rights era in the 1960's. It was a grassroots organization which was incredibly popular among high school and college aged students and educators. The word Chicano comes from alternating the Spanish word for Mexican, *Mexicano*. Reflecting the way that Mexicano was pronounced Mexicans in the United States. The Chicano Movement challenged the idea of a white Mexican identity. As Ian Haney-Lopez notes, "Inspired by the Black Power Movement, many Mexicans came to embrace a politics of cultural distinctiveness and to view themselves as members of a brown race" (Haney-Lopez, 2003, 4). Due to a frustration with community elders and Mexican elites clinging onto a white-by-law identity, the Chicano Movement spearheaded by young activists sought to distance themselves from white identity and assert a brown racial identity that relied on common culture and blood as a signifier of belonging.

The Chicano Movement had three main goals: (1) the restoration of land; (2) rights for farmworkers, and (3) a higher quality education. The Chicano Movement is one of the most important moments in Chicano history because it challenged the discrimination faced by Mexican Americans like never before. The Chicano Movement countered stereotypes of Mexicans being lazy and passive people. Not only did the

Chicano Movement counter racist stereotypes, but it affirmed the rich cultural heritage of Mexicans and instilled a sense of pride in the newfound Chicano identity.

More specifically, the Chicano Movement began questioning the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which formally ended the Mexican American War and gave Mexican Americans citizenship rights. The Chicano Movement grappled with the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe had been continuously violated and demanded that the land be returned to the rightful owners, Mexican Americans. Furthermore, the Chicano Movement contended that the Southwest was their ancestral homeland: Aztlán. Therefore, making land claims based on their *right to the land* became a central rallying cry.

Rodolfo Corky Gonzalez, a Mexican American political organizer and activist from Colorado penned a seminal poem "I Am Joaquin" an epic tale outlining the plight of Mexican Americans in the United States. In the poem he explicitly acknowledges the Treaty violation, writing:

"The Treaty of Hidalgo has been broken and is but another treacherous promise.
My land is lost and stole.
My culture has been raped." (Gonzalez, 1967).

In his poem, Gonzalez indicates that the government of the United States has unlawfully stolen land that rightfully belongs to Mexican Americans; thus, highlighting his legal and cultural claim to *his* indigenous lands.

Throughout the poem, Gonzalez asserts his indigeneity and indigenous ties to the land. He writes,

"I owned the land as far as the eye

could see under the Crown of Spain

and I toiled on my Earth and gave my Indian sweat and blood."

By emphasizing his indigenous roots, Gonzalez was solidifying his claim to the land and emphasizing his spiritual connection to the land lost. In regards to the legitimacy of land claims and the obfuscation of anti-Black and anti-Indigeneity, Denise Fernandez highlights:

> The reconstruction of this harmonious past is most recognizable in the mythological figure of Aztlán which is symbolically and physically mapped onto constructions of mestiza/o histories and culture. Saldaña-Portillo points out that "Chicanos appropriated the discourse of mestizaje in the early 1970s when we claimed Aztlán as an Indigenous nation historically anterior to the founding of the United States" (413). Aztlán as the mythological and territorial origin of Chicana/o identity "lent a moral and historical legitimacy to claims for economic and civil rights" (Saldaña-Portillo, 413), and consequently informed the creation of a Chicana/o nationalism dependent on a presumed access to Indigenous subalternity. (Fernandez 2019, 24)

It's important to note that the Aztlán is a symbolic homeland with no real or historical ties to the lands in the Southwest region of the United States (Saldaña-Portillo, 413). Additionally, the claims of indigeneity upon which the entire conceptualization of the Chicanx identity rests is rooted in a historical fiction (a tale, if you will) rather than a material present.

This is mirrored in the racial politics of Chicano's literal homeland: Mexico. The Mexican government has institutionalized the national identity as a mixed-race or "mestizo" identity signaling that the country has moved "beyond" the Indigenous Mexican. The conceptualization of the Indigenous Mexican as a historical past rather

than a reality indicates that the country has moved on from the realities of indigeneity and further marginalizes the experiences of indigenous peoples in Mexico.

Moreover, the Chicano Movement cemented the way that we understand Latinx identity today: through the lens of mestizaje. Mestizaje is a colonial legacy, highlighting colonial policies of racial intermixing between Indigenous, Spanish and African persons in Mexico. More recently, scholars have begun to interrogate the legacy of slavery and some have deemed African as Mexico's "third root" (Anzaldua). However, popular culture still conceptualizes mestizaje as an ambiguously Brown (mixed Spanish and Indigenous) largely ignoring Blackness as an ancestral lineage. As Kateri Hernandez notes, the Chicano Movement fundamentally ignores the African legacy in Mexican racial identification through what Kateri Hernandez calls the absorption theory. She writes,

> "Yet, Mexicans prefer to presume that the African heritage is merely part of the obscured past of slavery and that all Blacks have long since assimilated into "Mexican society. At least one scholar similarly subscribes to the notion that most Afro-Mexicans were absorbed into the indigenous community and spent little time as an identifiable community. But the absorption theory has been strongly disputed by both historians and anthropologists and is undermined by all the contemporary documentation about the continued existence of an identifiable Afro-Mexican population" (Kateri Hernandez 2003, pp.).

The absorption theory posits that African people are no longer a reality in Mexico and instead have been subsumed under the Mexican national identity. More recently, scholars such as Banks (2006), Kateri Hernandez (2003) and Hooker (2017) have emphasized the thriving Afro-Mexican communities in Mexico and the systematic discrimination faced by these communities both in Mexico and abroad.

Furthermore, the Chicano Movement leveraged an ambiguously mixed Spanish and Indigenous identity in order to secure rights and privileges associated with the Civil Rights Movement. In part, the emphasis on a unique non-white but also non-Black racial identity was an attempt to gain rights and legal protections that they otherwise would not have been able to access. Nevertheless, the Chicano Movement cemented the problematic nature of mestizaje as a cornerstone for understanding and theorizing about Mexican American racial identity. After two major victories, Mendez v. Westminster (1947) and Hernandez v. Texas (1954), Mexican Americans began to question the legal strategy deployed by elites in these cases, white-by-law (Haney Lopez 1997). White-by-law is the legal strategy undertaken by Mexican Americans prior to the Chicano Movement in which they challenged discrimination namely school desegregation (*Mendez*) and exclusion from juries (*Hernandez*) by proving that they, as a collective, are legally classified as white and therefore are entitled to the rights and civil liberties associated with whiteness.

The Chicano Movement began the problematic discourse of Mexican Americans as a "Brown" race. By naming Mexican Americans as a Brown race, it locates conversations of race and ethnicity around skin-color and biological race-making (Banks 2006; Lao-Montes & Buggs 2014; Milian 2013; Telles & Paschel 2014; Wade 2016, 2017). This is problematic because consistently perpetuating the idea of all Latinx as Brown or as mestizx with blood ties to both indigeneity and Spain subverts the fact that race is socially constructed (Haney-Lopez 1997, 2006; Omi & Winant 2014). Chicana feminists also reify biologized notions of race, noting that Anzaldua in her seminal work on the Mestiza Consciousness draws on Vasconcelos' political theory of The Cosmic Race to construct a hybrid Chicana identity (Anzaldua 1987). The adoption of a "brown" racial identity rests on not being Black and the formal distancing of

Chicanos from Black Americans though their own counter-cultural Movement asserting their own racial identity.

While the Chicano Movement was one of the most important moments in Mexican American history, unfortunately the Movement did not last for a long period of time. While the Movement made many important gains like educational reforms, a growing number of Chicanx students in higher education, and increasing political participation among Mexican Americans, the Movement was plagued with internal problems. These issues included rampant sexism and the desire for Chicano men to control and re-establish machismo gender norms. Maylei Blackwell's (2011) book *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* chronicled the marginalization of women in the Chicano Movement. She demonstrates how the male leaders in *el movimiento* dismissed Chicana ideas and relegated them to domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning for men in leadership.

In addition, Tanya Kateri Hernandez (2004) in her article "Afro-Mexicans the Unknown Story" notes how difficult it is for scholars to tell how many Black Mexicans supported and/or were involved in The Chicano Movement due to the exclusion of Blackness from the Chicano narrative. In addition, she chronicles how Afro-Mexicans experience alienation from the Mexican American communities (1547), suggesting that they would not be comfortable enough as Black Mexicans to be directly involved in the Chicano Movement, further entrenching the anti-Blackness prevalent in the Chicano Movement.

Transnational Chicanismo: The Influence of the Mexican Revolution

Many of the ideas perpetuated in the Chicano Movement and the insistence on a national identity as a racial identity highlights the construction of racial identity as

fluid and socially constructed. Adapted and changing at any given moment, even absorbing and conflating national identities with racial identities. Particularly, the Chicano Movement draws on the identities created in the Mexican Revolution, as a way of engendering pride in a national Mexican identity. The Mexican Revolution took place in the time following the Independence of Mexico, the Mexican American War, and marked a time of uncertainty for the national identity of Mexicans. Drawing on the seminal work of Jose Vasconcelos, the Mexican Revolution centered and institutionalized the *mestizx* as the national image of the Mexican. This all had reverberating impacts on the Chicano Movement and on Mexicans residing in the United States because due to the revolution and political and economic upheaval, many Mexicans emigrated to the United States seeking economic security. The migration of Mexicans into the United States resulted in hostility from Americans against the rising number of Mexicans, leading to discrimination.

Mexicans coming into the United States throughout this time presumably were heavily influenced by the image of the Mexican national identity and brought with them their understandings of race into the racial landscape of the United States. Furthermore, this conception of Mexicans as an Indigenous peoples with ties to the land is seen and mirrored through the Chicano Movement. While the Chicano Movement emphasized a non-white racial identity, it was specifically emphasizing a Mexican racial identity or a "Brown" identity that is constructed though Spanish and Indigenous ancestry. This negates any room for Blackness to be a part of the Brown racial identity and therefore excludes Black or Afro-Mexicans from being a part of the Mexican or even Chicanx identity.

III. Indigeneity and Blackness as an Ancestral Past/Historical Fiction

The entire Chicanx racial ideology was predicated on a symbolic (or fictional) "homeland" that needs to be returned through the Land Grant Program. Saldaña-Portillo brilliantly argues that the Chicano Movement further marked the Indio as an ancestral past. Specifically, she asks, "But what of the living Indian who refuses mestizaje as an avenue to political and literary representation; what of the *indigena* that demands new representational models that include her among the living?" (Saldaña-Portillo 2016). By ancestral past, I specifically invoke Saldaña-Portillo's idea that locating Indigeneity as a historical past (a legend, symbolic, or otherwise) obfuscates the living reality of Indigenous Mexicans who are very much alive and politically active both in Mexico and in the United States. Further, claiming that ALL Mexican Americans are indigenous and have legitimate claims to lands harms the identifiable Native American groups with meaningful connections to the land. This does not erase the reality that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was repeatedly violated and that land was lost in the colonization of the Southwest. However, Critical Latinx Indigeneity as a theoretical framework encourages non-Indigenous Mexican Americans to conceptualize themselves as settlers on native lands.

Land Grant Program

In the 1960's Reies Lopez Tijerina reached prominence as a Chicano activist as he spearheaded the Land Grant Movement in New Mexico. Tijerina spent time in Spain, Mexico and the United States researching land grants in archives in order to make a credible claims to the lands (Fernandez & Jensen 1995). He believed that he was "an agent in God's plan" to bring Latinos to their "divine Destiny" (Hammerback, Jensen, & Gutierrez 1985, 17). Despite the fact that not everyone agreed with his self-description, his speech entitled "The Land Grant Question" (1967) inspired students at the

University of Colorado and gave him credibility in spearheading the Land Grant Movement.

Tijerina based his claims to the lands of the United States' Southwest based on many different ideas such as a divine right to the land (that God intended for the land to be occupied and used only by Mexicans), the idea that the Treaty of Guadalupe is "the supreme law of the land" and that the Treaty was equivalent to the Constitution (Cisneros 2012), and the idea that the American Southwest is the ancestral homeplace of Aztlán. Tijerina often emphasized his rights as an American citizen all the while reifying his claim to the lands due to his Spanish and Indigenous blood ties to the Southwest. Extrapolating from this line of argument, Tijerina is implying that Anglo Americans have no rights to the land because of their Anglo blood, whereas Mexican Americans have ancestral and Indigenous ties to the land. While Tijerina spearheaded the land grant Movement, it was popular discourse among Chicanos at the time and became a major pillar of the Movement as a whole.

Ancestral Ties: Inventing Aztlán

The claim to land, not only due to the rights associated with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo but has been grounded in the myth that the U.S. Southwest *belongs* to the United States because of the indigenous ties to Aztlán. In recounting the meaning and making of Aztlán, Perez-Torres writes, "…Aztlán has come to represent a nationalist homeland, the name of that place that will at some future point be the national home of a Chicano people reclaiming their territorial rights. It has also come to represent the land taken by the United States in its nineteenth-century drive to complete its manifest destiny" (Perez-Torres 2020, 211). Ultimately, however, as

Saldano-Portillo emphasizes Aztlán is nothing more than a cultural myth used to signify indigenous ties.

Some argue that Aztlán is an empty signifier because it is not a geographical location that Chicanos can return to. However, that negates the significance that Aztlán has had and continues to have as a cultural signifier and metaphor. More specifically, "three moments of contestation are evoked in the naming of Aztlán: the Spanish invasion of the Aztec Empire, the appropriation of Mexican lands by the Untied States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the immigration to (or the reconquest of) the US Southwest by Mexicanos and Centrral Americans in the contemporary era" (Perez-Torres 2020, 211). In this way, Aztlán has become a symbol of resilience among Mexican American (and Latinos more broadly).

Despite the importance of the Aztlán in the Chicano Movement, the myth of the ancestral homeland has consequences for lived realities of Indigenous peoples with actual connections to the lands. Furthermore, frameworks like Critical Latinx Indigeneities invite us to consider the differences between actual Indigenous groups like the Mayas, Zapotecs, Mixtexecs, Garifunas, among others have to the land and does not reaffirm the misguided notion that the entire Southwest belongs to Mexican Americans due to their ancestral homeland (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, Urrieta 2017). Similarly to the way in which the Mexican nation state viewed Indigeneity as a vehicle for nation building, the Chicano Movement also used the myth of Aztlán not only to build community but also as a way to cement their claims to the Southwest United States.

IV. Appropriating Blackness: Nationalism and the Chicano Movement

The Chicano Movement was an important moment for community building among Mexican Americans and for the important shift from a white-by-law to a non-white racial identity. Yet the rise of the Chicano Movement directly followed the Civil Rights Movement and ultimately appropriated many of the tactics of the Black Power Movement, such as emphasizing a separatist approach, and a distinct non-white racial identity rather than an integrationist approach taken by prior decades of activists. The Black Power Movement, spearheaded by leaders like Malcolm X emphasized nationalism and self-determination as the basis for Black liberation rather than the Civil Rights integrationist approach championed by Martin Luther King Jr.

In addition, the Chicano Movement selectively endorsed a quasi-Indigneous identity for themselves, positing themselves as *mestizos*, of Spanish and Indigenous descent. While this further cemented and advanced their case that they have natural claims to the lands of the American Southwest, it also served a broader purpose. Through the decision to highlight Indigenous identity over the "third root" (Anzaldua 1987) of Blackness, the Chicano Movement was intentionally and systematically distancing itself from Black Americans. This resulted in the complete erasure of Blackness from Mexican identity and the further marginalization of Black and Afro-Mexicans who are a lived reality both in Mexico and in the United States.

Ironically, while the Chicano Movement fundamentally distanced themselves from Blackness and foreclosed any possibility of Blackness as being a part of Chicano identity, they nevertheless appropriated various techniques and strategies undertaken by the Black Power Movement. This indicates that while they did not want to be associated with Blackness or to form coalitions with Black civil rights organizations, they had no qualms with appropriating their struggles and packaging them as their

own. Perhaps the most obvious appropriation of the Black Power Movement was the copying of the Black Panther Party's 10 Point Program and repackaging it as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*.

The Black Power Movement and the Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party's 10 Point Program is a party platform written by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in 1967. The 10 Point Program comprised of two sections, the first was titled "What We Want Now!" which described the demands of the Black Panther Party from American society. While the second section, titled "What We Believe" outlines the philosophy of the party and the rights that African Americans should have but have historically been denied. The 10 Point Program was important for the Black Panther Party because it laid out a set of demands that addressed the physical needs of Black Americans that could easily be understood by everyone. The platform laid out in the 10 Point Program was essential to the party because it was widely disseminated and laid out clearly the demands of the party. The demands are as follows:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black and oppressed communities
2. We want full employment of our people
3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities
4. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings
5. We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society
6. We want completely free health care for all Black and oppressed people
7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people, other people of color, all oppressed people in the United States
8. We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression

9. We want freedom for all Black and oppressed people now held in U.S. Federal, State, County, City, and military prisons and jails
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people's community control of modern technology

El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán

On the other hand, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* was a pro-Indigenous manifesto advocating for nationalism and self-determination of Chicanos. It was first adopted by the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in 1969, only two years after the 10 Point Program. *El Plan* outlines the demands of the Chicano Movement centering around the return of the American Southwest to Chicanos and includes a declaration of sovereignty. *El Plan Espiritual* became an important doctrine of the Chicano Movement as it was widely disseminated and adopted into curriculums across the Movement.

El Plan begins with a statement declaring that Chicanx are a unified front and should be recognized as an exclusive racial group due to their community, ancestry, and blood ties to one another. *El Plan* declares that all Chicanos are within the brotherhood and must present a unified front. Writing, "*Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada."* Literally translating to "For our race, everything. Outside our race, nothing." Indicating that nationalism and a Mexican national identity should come first and be the *only* priority for the Chicano Movement. The organizational goals that they outline are as follows:

1. UNITY: in the thinking of our people… all committed to the liberation of La Raza
2. ECONOMY: economic control of our lives and our communities
3. EDUCATION: must be relative to our people, i.e. history, culture, bilingual education, contributions, etc.

4. INSTITUTIONS: shall serve our people by providing the service necessary for a full life and their welfare on the basis of restitution, not handouts or beggar's crumbs. Restitution for past economic slavery, political exploitation, ethnic and cultural psychological destruction and denial of civil and human rights.
5. SELF-DEFENSE: of the community must rely on the combined strength of the people
6. CULTURAL: values of our people strengthen our identity and moral backbone of the Movement.
7. POLITICAL LIBERATION: can only come through independent action on our part, since the two-party system is the same animal with two heads that feed through the same trough. Where we are a majority we will control; where we are a minority, we will represent a pressure group, nationally, we will represent one party: La Familia de La Raza!

Adoption and Appropriation

One of the main differences between the two documents is obviously the identities that are the focus of the respective demands. For the Black Panther's 10 Point Program, they emphasize the struggles and the rights denied to Black Americans. They make tangible demands like employment, healthcare, food, shelter, and education. *El Plan*, on the other hand, emphasized a hybrid Spanish-Indigenous identity that has ancestral ties to the American Southwest as a group who were colonized by the United States. *El Plan* focuses on establishing and validating Mexican American claims to a non-white racial identity as a basis for claims to land, education, and employment.

While the Black Panther's 10 Point Program is explicitly inclusive, including "AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES" at nearly every turn *El Plan* is exclusive, only applying to the in-group. As a matter of fact, right before going into the 7 points included in *El Plan*, there lies a disclaimer: "*Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada*." This disclaimer demonstrates that the demands listed in *El Plan* are exclusively for "La

Raza" and those who are conceived as a part of the Chicanx racial group. Outside of this racial group then, like Black Americans, were not deserving of anything that *El Plan* has to offer.

In a stark contrast, the Black Panther's platform recognized the common struggle which is evident through their wording in numbers 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9. At times referencing "all oppressed people" which could also include economically marginalized white people in addition to other racial group and at other times explicitly opening the demands to include "other people of color" in their direct verbiage. This indicates that the Black Panthers were open to the possibility of coalition building between communities and even explicitly included them within their party platform. Even more, the inclusion of "oppressed people" and "other people of color" indicate that the Black Panther party understood that their struggle for liberation was directly connected to the struggle of "other people of color" and "oppressed people."

Additionally, the Chicano Movement and *El Plan* intentionally shut out Blackness and all other races from their plan. This suggests that they saw themselves as their first and only priority despite the fact that they were directly appropriating or building on (to be generous) the platforms set forth by the Black Panther Party. It is no coincidence then that all the demands or materials covered in *El Plan* such as unity, education, economy, self-determination, were previously laid out by the 10 Point Program.

V. Insights for Coalition Building

Despite the educational and the political gains made by the Chicano Movement, such as the establishment of a Chicano political party "La Raza Unida," one area that

the Chicano Movement fell short was in forming coalitions with Black Americans and community members. Evidently, the Chicano Movement and the Black Power Movements had many common aims and goals, nevertheless conflict and perceptions of competition stood in the way of any meaningful coalition building between the two groups.

In the 1960's the federal government declared a formal War on Poverty and began distributing resources and other material goods to communities of color. In a seemingly race-neutral policy, it would appear that communities of color would have united under the new federal programs and leveraged the programs for gains for their respective communities. Robert Bauman (2007) outlines the realities of the War on Poverty for Black and Latino communities in Los Angeles. Noting that the War on Poverty were endorsed by Black elites like Martin Luther King Jr. but remained controversial among Black communities due to their lack of focus on Black specific solutions. Ultimately, however, the War on Poverty pit Black and Brown communities against one another and often found themselves "in competition for political and economic leftovers" (286).

This perception of competition between communities, and the hostile negotiations over federal resources led to suspicions that impeded coalition building and the ability of the communities to come together and rally under a common cause. In fact, a 1965 study found that "only 16 percent of Mexican Americans surveyed supported any type of black-Chicano coalition" (Bauman, 2007; 286). Implying that the problem was much deeper than simply the federal government seemingly pitting the communities against one another. Instead, it is clear that anti-Black sentiments and prejudices run deep in the Mexican American community. Quite literally figuring

Blackness as incompatible with understandings of Mexican American or Chicano identity.

CHAPTER 5

Inter-Ethnoracial Intimacies: Everyday Anti-Blackness

Introduction

In 2012 when George Zimmerman took the life of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, the question of Zimmerman's Latinidad ruptured traditional conversations about police brutality and anti-Black racism. George Zimmerman's father, Robert Zimmerman, wrote a letter to the Sun Sentinel closely following the arrest of Zimmerman, noting: "George is a Spanish speaking minority with many black family members and friends. He would be the last to discriminate for any reason whatsoever." Going even further, Robert Zimmerman doubled down,

> "One black neighbor recently interviewed said she knew everything in the media was untrue and that she would trust George with her life. Another black neighbor said that George was the only one, black or white, who came and welcomed her to the community, offering any assistance he could provide. Recently, I met two black children George invited to a social event. I asked where they met George. They responded that he was their mentor. They said George visited them routinely, took them places, helped them, and taught them things and that they really loved George. The media portrayal of George as a racist could not be further from the truth."

The obvious undertone of the message was that Zimmerman could not possibly be racist because of his close and intimate ties to the Black community with both Black family members and friends.

A year after the incident, Zimmerman's mother, Gladys Zimmerman, a Peruvian immigrant, wrote a letter in support of her son blaming the justice system for failing George. During the trial, Zimmerman's mother, testified, with the expressed purpose of

undermining the testimony of Trayvon Martin's own mother. Earlier in the trial, Martin's mother, Sybrina Fulton, testified that on the 911 call she could hear her son, Martin screaming and crying out for help. Gladys Zimmerman went on to testify that it was actually her son, George, that was crying out for help. Outside of the trial, the Zimmerman family continued pushing the narrative that Zimmerman was innocent because he's Latino but making a claim that he was facing reverse discrimination on the grounds that he doesn't look Latino enough. In an interview with Fox News Latino, Robert Zimmerman Jr boldly claimed, "If his last name was Gonzales or Lopez would this have turned into what it is? Hard to tell but I doubt it. "Questions of whiteness, Latinidad, a feelings of closeness with Black neighbors and family members all served to deflect attention from the actions of Zimmerman is taking the life of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin for simply walking down the street. Ultimately, however, it worked. Zimmerman was acquitted and went on to sell the firearm used and ultimately profit off the death of Martin.

It is interesting and important to reflect on the ways that proximity to Blackness ("I can't be racist, I have Black friends!") is used to defuse conversations about racism. In some ways, inter-ethnoracial intimacies tell us a broader story about coalition building and how intimate distance from Blackness becomes a hallmark of Latinx identity all the while attempting to maintain the claim that as a minority group in the United States, they also face discrimination and therefore could not be racist. Inter-ethnoracial intimacies are an important part of coalition building because close proximity and feelings of closeness increase group consciousness, which in turn would increase groups desires to work together. Instead, a closer look at the inter-ethnoracial intimacies between Mexican Americans and Black Americans reveals that anti-

Blackness is not only in the political attitudes and strategies as we have seen in previous chapters but also is insidiously present in day-to-day life.

I. Understanding Inter-ethnoracial Intimacies

Mexican American's tenuous relationship with whiteness is stabilized through inter-ethnoracial and inter-ethnoracial relationship monitoring and control. Establishing racialized sexual boundaries is essential in reproducing and maintaining Mexican claims to whiteness. But more importantly, by restricting or discouraging inter-ethnoracial relations between Mexican Americans and Black people, Mexican Americans are maintaining distance and separation from the racial category of Black. Noting that while racial categorizations and understandings of whiteness are fluid, contracting and expanding based on social and political circumstances, the conception and implications of Blackness have remained stable.[42]

Inter-ethnoracial relationships are often considered to be a signal of racial relations in the United States. Increases in inter-ethnoracial marriage are believed to signal increased acceptance among racial and ethnic groups (Lee & Bean 2010; Moran 2001; Qian & Lichter 2018; Sanchez Stewart 2019). Following *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) where the Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional, only 3% of newlyweds were with someone of a different race. This number then rose in 1980 to 7%, and to 17% in 2015 (Livingston & Brown 2017). Notably, the largest share of inter-ethnoracial marriages is non-Hispanic whites with a Hispanic partner, making up an astounding 43.2% (Rico, Kreider, & Anderson 2018) while Hispanic-Black marriages make up only 4% of the total (Livingston & Brown 2017). Ultimately, the selection of inter-ethnoracial dating and marriage varies widely not only among racial groups but

[42] For more information on this, please see Chapter 3: Unstable Whiteness.

also among gender, indicating that inter-ethnoracial dating and marriage formations are not only racialized but also heavily gendered.

Maintaining racial boundaries and reproducing racial hierarchies is a heavily gendered process. Specifically, I argue that women's bodies and the regulation of women's wombs have been, and continue to be, instrumental in Mexican American race making projects.[43] Previous feminist scholars have conceptualized women's bodies as a part of nation-building projects (Peterson 1999) and have contended that women's bodies have been controlled and manipulated to reproduce nations and nationalisms. This process of reproduction has taken place quite literally through biological reproduction and child rearing practices. It follows, then, that conceptualizing women as a central aspect of the racial re-production process follows heavily on gendered sexual boundaries.[44]

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis (1989) conceptualize five different ways women constitute the national project. For the purposes of this chapter, only the first two are relevant: "1. As biological reproducers of national collectives" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989) and "2. As reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations)" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989).[45] As an extension of this argument, and as briefly mentioned previously by Nira Yuval-Davis (1996), women are responsible for not only reproducing the nation but also what

[43] My definition of the term racial projects is aligned with Omi & Winant's definition of racial projects: "A racial project is simultaneously and interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experience are racially organized, based upon that meaning" (1986).

[44] The scope of this project is limited to heterosexual relationships due to the limitations of the existing literature. The existing literature on Latina and Latino dating preferences precludes any non-heterosexual relationships.

[45] Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias identify 5 major ways that women have been implication in nationalism. First as biological reproducers of the members of the national collective. Second, as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions of sexual or marital relations). Third, as active transmitters and producers of the national culture. Fourth, as symbolic signifiers of national difference. Finally, as active participants in national struggles. For more on this, please see Yuva-Davis and Anthias, 1989.

she terms "the ethnic collective" (Yuval-Davis 1996). The ethnic collective, according to Yuval-Davis, refers to the "specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectives that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways" (Yuval-Davis 2006). Within the bounds of this project, I aim to understand the racial and gendered positioning of Chicana, and more broadly Mexican American women, and their position as race-makers. I am interested in uncovering how Mexican American women are not only reproducing "the ethnic collective" but also maintaining anti-Blackness in these relationships.

The conception of mestizaje as a racial identity is rooted in the exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous and Black Latin Americans.[46] Furthermore, the notion of the Mexican (American) as a *mestizx*[47] is due to specific historical circumstances that have allowed for, and facilitated, the insistence of Indigenous and African roots as a historical fiction placing them in the past. In the creation and maintenance of the mestizx racial identity, I argue that practices of inter-ethnoracial intimacies; both relationships and marriage, are central to the project of race making for Mexican Americans. Further, by distancing themselves from Black people, both politically and personally, they are recreating mestizo identity as whiteness, or as non-Black.

The concept of Mestizaje has been, and continues to be heavily used, not only in understanding the racial status and racial identity of Latinx people, but also in terms of empowering racial groups (*La Raza*)[48] and establishing a shared ideology or even "racial" consciousness. For instance, in "*La conciencia de la mestiza:* Toward a New

[46] For more on this please see Chapter 2.
[47] I use the term "Mestizx" rather than "mestizo/a" in alignment with Critical Latinx Indigeneities, which prioritizes gender inclusivity and subverting gendered language.
[48] For more information on how *La Raza* was created through the Mexican Revolution please see Chapter 2.

Consciousness", Gloria Anzaldua theorized about the racial positioning and in-between-ness, *ni de aqui/ni de alla* (neither from here/ nor from there) that plagues Mexican American and Latinx group consciousness. She writes "Because I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time, *alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro*" (99). She argues that this mixed race and place of in-between-ness, will allow her to better understand her own identity and therefore will pave the way for creating a "new" group consciousness. Furthermore, building on Jose Vasconcelos' theory of la raza cosmica, Anzaldua writes:

> Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over," this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollination, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making – a new mestiza consciousness, una conciencia de mujer. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands (Anzaldua 1987, 99).

Embedded in this new empowering identity – the figure of the mestiza – is the requirement of racial mixture. This form of racial mixture, while relatively new to the United States, remains implicitly racist, with the founding theorist, Vasconcelos himself, implying that in order to *mejorar la raza* (better the race) the African roots of Mexicans can and should be bred out.

In discussions of racial projects, identity, and relations, the intimate sexual and marital relationship between ethnic groups is often overlooked and left out. This, by nature, forecloses conversations of Mexican American, or Chicana, women as essential

to race-making projects. In a patriarchy, *machismo* culture,[49] women's bodies and lives remain highly regulated and controlled by the family. Additionally, women (daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins) within family structures are expected to make life-choices that consider the broader family and not just the individual. The Mexican concept of *blanquiamiento* or the desire to *mejorar la raza* oftentimes falls on the responsibilities of daughters and other female family members (Morales 2012).

Women's bodies remain heavily policed and controlled because of their capacity to biologically reproduce. Oftentimes, the importance of controlling who women date and/or marry is couched in the fear of having undesirable mixed race children (Morales 2012). Additionally, the actions and decisions of women are considered reflective of the broader family rather than just the individual's desires in a machismo culture.

If the end goal of racial liberation Movements and theories is indeed the end of oppression, engaging in anti-Blackness and marginalization within intimate relationships and family structures must be disrupted. This chapter directly addresses the intimate aspects of coalition building that remain undertheorized. In this chapter I argue that inter-ethnoracial and inter-ethnoracial relationships are an application of the broader anti-Blackness that is present in Mexican American racial projects. I begin by interrogating key concepts like mestizaje and racial purity and move to understanding the literature surrounding inter-ethnoracial relationships and the family dynamics that shape and sustain these racial boundaries.

[49] Yolanda Mayo notes that machismo… "while linguistically derived from the Spanish word which signifies a male animal, or iron tools most often related to husbandry, bears only a limited relationship to the Spanish language definition for a man, or to manly behavior as depicted by the more appropriate word varon (male) [Diccionario de La Real Academia Espanola 1985]. In American popular culture, machismo has become a term to depict rugged aggressive male behavior, most often for Latinos, but rooted historically in the tradition of male superiority found within most old and new world cultures" (Mayo 2000, 51).

II. Is Mestizaje Racial Whitening?

To adequately understand racial boundaries and Mexican American race making projects, a deep dive into the racial identity of mestizaje is necessary. Mestizaje is a legacy of colonialism and directly derived from Spanish colonial practices of inter-ethnoracial marriages and sexual mixing of settlers and Indigenous populations. For instance, in colonial Mexico, low-ranking Spanish settlers were encouraged to not only marry Indigenous women but also to form nuclear families, noting that a Spanish father would help ensure loyalty to the Spanish crown (Menchaca 2001). In Colonial Mexico racial mixing was not only allowed but encouraged. This resulted in the creation of a caste system (*Casta)* that can be understood as a racial hierarchy based on lineage and ancestry. "In Spanish colonial society, these visible differences in a population that was rapidly mixing became indices of social status and racial superiority/inferiority" (70).

Not only did inter-ethnoracial marriages in colonial Mexico serve to eliminate native cultures and forge a loyalty to both the Catholic church and the Spanish crown, but it also left a legacy that continues long after Mexico's independence. This mestizaje, or mixed-race identity, became institutionalized through the government of Mexico and the increasing association of Mexican national identity and mixed racial heritage, forming a quasi-*color-blind* system long before United States' conceptions of color-blind racism.[50]

The fundamental difference between the United States' later-formed, color-blind or post-racial ideology and Mexico's version of color-blindness is the emphasis of

[50] Eduardo Bonilla Silva contends that Latin America is a three-tiered racial order in which whiteness remains on top and Blackness at the bottom. However, he argues that there is a third, middle tier, he names this "Honorary Whites" in which mestizos and mixed-race (mixed with whiteness) exist and are present in the racial order.

mixed heritage and the delusion that race doesn't exist in Mexico because of this mixed-race. If everyone is of mixed race or descent, how could anyone be racist? Whereas in the United States, anti-miscegenation and strict segregation laws prohibited the institutionalization of a mixed-race identity.

Until relatively recently, scholars posited that there was no racial order in Mexico. Instead, they argued that Mexico is a class system. More recently, scholars have systematically uncovered the insidious nature of race in Mexico and have begun writing about the discrimination faced by Afro- and Indigenous- Mexicans, not only in Mexico and Latin America, but also abroad. However, the government of Mexico does not make this easy, noting that upon declaring independence from Spain in 1821, the government "legislated the prohibition of the classifications of persons by race in all official government documents" (42). However, Hernandez aptly points out that "while many Spanish American countries were omitting questions about race or color on the census, they often included questions about indigenous ancestry as was the case in Chile, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela" (42). For Hernandez, this decision to omit racial information but maintain a commitment to collecting information about Indigenous populations signaled that Blackness "was no longer salient" (44) to the national imaginary.

Ultimately, Mexico's commitment to formal equality, through the negation of race uncritically reproduces racial hierarchies. De La Cadena notes that the reproduction of Mexican culture as "race-less" has enabled the "denied reproduction of racist practices" (2001). Noting that inter-ethnoracial marriage and dating resulted in high percentages of Afro-mestizos. As __ writes, "Mexico's case is illustrative of the result: marriage between Spaniards, Indians, and Blacks resulted in a quarter-million

free *Afro-mestizos* in the 1742 census, very likely an underestimate of a growing population" (17).

The motivation for becoming a nation of mestizos is complicated and rooted deeply in remaining colonial hierarchies and an overwhelming desire for the privileges and rights associated with white-ness. Under colonial rule, or the very foundation of Mexico and many other Latin American countries, is that the standard of European whiteness was set and remains the standard of excellence.

The idolization of mestizaje and "proper" racial mixing (the whiter the better) continues to impact not only the experience of Black-Mexicans but also insidiously presents itself in the dating and marriage practices and choices of Mexican Americans. In short, racial hierarchies and racial boundaries are beyond political opinions and lie in everyday intimacies. For instance, Moreno Figueroa analyzes "*how whiteness is a core structuring motif obscured by the homogenizing racial logic of mestizaje*" [original emphasis] (Moreno Figueroa 2010, 388). She notes that broader conversations about race and ethnicity are hidden behind more "polite" conversations about "cultural differences" thereby obscuring every day, mundane racism. In Mexico, particularly, the natural discourse on race and ethnicity is overwhelmingly silent.

Discussions of mestizaje cannot also be separated from broader conversations of nationalism and colonialism due to the intimate ties and connections formed between mestizaje and Mexican national identity.

> "Overall, racial discourses have throughout time, up to this contemporary period faded away behind national, cultural, and economic explanations of social hierarchies and, as a consequence, their effects have been somehow masked. What we are facing in contemporary Mexico is a complex social organization that has hidden and grown different forms of racisms. In this

> context, old colonial racial categories remain and 'passing' toward 'whiteness' – in its peculiar Mexican version – is still a goal for the inhabitants, a problematic area in terms of identity and a non-spoken rule of social stratification" (Moreno Figueroa 2010, 391).

Racial Purity and Blanquiamiento

Those who are obsessed with "racial purity" must be invested in prohibiting inter-ethnoracial intimate relationships. The conception of racial purity assumes biological reproduction of race, or race as a product of biological reproduction rather than a social construction. By thinking of race as biological, the stakes of inter-ethnoracial and inter-ethnoracial relationships increase through possible (re)production of mixed-race children.

To be clear, in the case of Mexican Americans, only a *particular* mixed-race child is desirable. That is, the entire racial identity of Mexican Americans as a mestizx race assumes that they are of mixed-race and mixed blood. However, even in colonial Spain, choosing a white partner was a vehicle of social mobility. This conception is culturally known as a phenomenon entitled *blanquiamiento* which literally translates to whitening. Tanya Kateri Hernandez writes, "At the individual level *blanquiamiento* revolves around the desire for white appearance through the vehicle of inter-ethnoracial intimacy" (Hernandez 2003). Inter-ethnoracial intimacy, therefore, is not simply a relationship between two people but serves as a tool for racial whitening among the larger community. Just as skin bleaching and other whitening techniques, *blanquiamiento* as considered through inter-ethnoracial intimacies is a tool of white supremacy *and* anti-Blackness.

The desire for whiteness cannot be separated apart from the desire to distance oneself from Blackness. Selectively choosing partners based on skin-tone and with the

intention of whitening is not only a desire to acquire social capital. It must also be understood as a desire to maintain *and reproduce* anti-Black social structures. The decision to rear children with someone of darker, or Black, skin, then, can be taken as an act of treason against the familial bloodline. Some scholars argue that this process is a survival tactic among the Latinx community in the United States.

> Many Hispanic Americans realize that to become assimilated into the larger culture, it is necessary to pass for White to access greater resources and acceptance. For many, this includes making sure the familial unit becomes as fair-skinned as possible. (Stephans et al. 2012)

While contemporary literature surrounding intimacy and dating patterns describe the choice of intimate partner as a "personal preference," this is not necessarily the case.

Instead, the myth of personal preference in dating and marriage habits become a means of obscuring sexual racism and racist partner preferences. Curington, Lundquist and Lin, in their book identifying the role of race in online romance, posit that "the birth of individual preference and the modern notion of romance were deeply imprinted with racialized desire calculus" (2021, 3-4). Their data indicates that "race is the most important predictor" (5) of dating preferences in the United States.

Therefore, it is important to note that mestizaje is the national ideology of Mexico, and this notion of "racelessness" based on mixed racial heritage (mestizaje) was institutionalized through the Mexican government and brought to the United States through immigration and racial projects. In addition, "racelessness" is deeply rooted within family structures, resulting in preferences for dating partners that come from and through familial socialization. Finally, "racelessness" has been codified by

law; Mexico formally declared Mexico a nation of mestizos, while the racial project in the United States worked through codifying anti-miscegenation laws into legislation.

III. History of Miscegenation in the United States

The practice of choosing acceptable women as partners versus unacceptable partners is not limited to the present notions and ideas of race-making. Instead, the practice has a complex and insidious history *both* in the United State and Mexico. The United States and Mexico took different approaches but both affirmed whiteness as the goal and rendered Blackness to be undesirable. Unlike the previous section that focused on the production and legacy of mestizaje in Mexico, this section outlines the legacy of miscegenation in the United States.

Anti-miscegenation laws were codified into law during slavery but took a stronghold during the period of reconstruction. Wallenstein (2002) notes that between 1874 and 1913 the number of states passing anti-miscegenation laws nearly doubled. Aptly noting the consequences of anti-miscegenation laws, Currington, Lundquist and Lin (2021) note "Jim Crow policies were so effective in preventing Black-White racial integration that architects of the Third Reich in Germany and the apartheid regime in South Africa would draw inspiration from the United States in construction their own antiassimilationist laws and policies" (12).

The stakes for breaking anti-miscegenation laws were high. Many Black men were lynched – and often publicly tortured – for *allegedly* engaging in sexual intercourse with a White woman. All intimate relationships between white women and Black men, therefore, were socially understood through the framework of rape. Restrictions on inter-ethnoracial marriage in the United States often extended to free Black people and prohibited the relationship between free white and Black citizens.

> Following emancipation and the collapse of Reconstruction reforms that saw, for instance, the rise of Black elected public officials in the South, the scrutiny of Black men's interactions with White women reached new heights. After about 1877 regional anti-miscegenation laws proliferated, and any perceived breach of the social code could – and often did – result in the torture and murder of Black people. The trauma of slavey carried forward: Black women were systematically terrorized through sexual assault. Black men lynching victims were frequently castrated/ The sexual specificity of White violence and control in the postbellum United States was innovative in its brutality.

Ida B. Wells astutely argues that "it was only once Black men gained freedom that the sexualization of race politics began in earnest" (Currington, Lundquit, Lin 2021) thereby extending to the systematic, public lynching of men for perceived sexual indiscretions. The Supreme Court formally overturned anti-miscegenation laws in 1967, with the ruling in *Loving v. Virginia.* However, many of these laws remained on the books until 1998 (South Carolina) and 2000 (Alabama).

Scholars argue that racial distancing and segregation, although formally illegal are "self-sustaining" noting that "Their legacy is now self-enforcing, perpetuating the centrality of race in intimacy and family formation" (Currington, Lundquist & Lin 2021, 12). Although preventing the marriage between Black and White people is formally illegal, the practice lives on and has taken on a new life through sexual racism[51] and sexual boundary policing.

While anti-miscegenation laws are often discussed only in terms of Black and white, they also inform the racial positioning of non-Black ethnoracial groups in the United States. For instance, Nevada became the first state to explicitly prohibit inter-

[51] Sexual Racism is a term coined by Charles Sttember in 1976 in his analysis of Black and White heterosexual relations. Recently, it has resurfaced in popular discourse about dating preferences, particularly with the rise of online dating. Black feminist scholars have argued for many years that sexual preferences are inherently racial and that the pronouncement of preferences as personal obscures the underlying racial projects of desirability.

ethnoracial marriage between whites and Asians (Sohoni 2007). While the verbiage varied between Chinese and Mongolian, generally it was assumed that these laws prohibited the marriage of any Asian to a white partner, with California formalizing the segregation of Mongolians, Blacks from whites.

Nevertheless, Mexican Americans were able to leverage their position as white-by-law to avoid explicitly being barred from marrying and cohabitating with white peoples. In fact, in some cases in the West it was politically and economically advantageous for white male settlers to marry Mexican women to access their money and lands (Acosta 2016; Sohoni 2007). This was advantageous for both parties because, while the settlers were able to access the lands, the Mexican families were able to gain better social standings through their association with whiteness.

Not only did Mexican Americans in New Mexico support and enact slave codes (Gomez 2000), but they also supported anti-miscegenation laws. Laura Gomez, a legal scholar writes,

> The law also banned marriage and cohabitation between black men and white women. We can presume that Mexican men would have intended to include Mexican women within the category of "white women." The latter move is especially interesting given the widespread historic marriage, cohabitation, and/or reproduction between Indians and Spanish descendants. In other words, "miscegenation" between Mexicans and Indians was widespread and a least implicitly condoned by the Movement of descendants of Indian-Spanish unions into the general mestizo category. Yet the law specifically banned another kind of mestizo union: black/Mexican (102)

While the law explicitly prohibited the union of white and Black couples through formal legislation, Mexican Americans were able to leverage their white-by-law status to prohibit Mexican women from marrying Black men, including free Black men.

For example, inter-ethnoracial marriage for land-owning Mexican elites became a means of elevating their familial status and linking their fate to that of the white population in the Southwest. In this way, wealthy men would often marry their daughters to white men to improve their familial status (Acosta 2016). At the same time, they leveraged anti-miscegenation laws to prevent their daughters from marrying or becoming involved with Black men. In other words, Acosta (2016) argues that "it was politically expedient to define Mexican citizens (regardless of skin color) as White, and thus miscegenation laws never came to include Mexicans." The desire for Mexican Americans to include themselves as "white" under the anti-miscegenation statutes indicates that whitening the Mexican population was expedient while distancing themselves from Blackness remained a priority.

IV. Gendered Racial Reproduction

Feminist theories of nationalism indicate that the role of women in reproducing nations revolves heavily around biological reproduction and child rearing practices. Gender became a means of articulating colonialism and the spread of empires. Cedillo (2021) writes,

> In the nineteenth century during the peak of global colonial activity, sexuality became a potent metaphorical wellspring, with colonial notions of land, home, and citizenship corresponding culturally to a feminine corporeality that required protection from threats of invasion even as colonized nations were allegorized as receptive women's bodies.

This need for protection, however, only extended to white women, as women of color were sexually exploited for labor and given for marriage for peacebuilding between colonizers and colonized. Therefore, legacies of women as essential in nation-building projects remains critical for theorizing how race has been structured and continues to be reproduced.

Drawing on Marxist theory, some feminist scholars argue that social reproduction indicates that women are responsible for the unpaid labor in society, providing food, shelter, and nourishment, including, but not limited to the reproduction and child rearing practices. “Feminists would agree that procreation is a social, not merely a biological event, but they argue that while procreation is a key component of it, the work of social reproduction is more than procreation” (Laslett & Brenner, 1989; 383).

The sexual policing of women then becomes not a matter of just individual women but a matter of the reproduction of the ethnic collective. Sociologist Nagel (1994) argues that sexual and ethnic boundaries are intrinsically linked, writing that

> “Ethnicity and Sexuality are strained but not strange, bedfellows. Ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries – erotic intersections where people make intimate connections across ethnic, racial, or national borders. The borderlands that lie at the intersections of ethnic boundaries are “ethnosexual frontiers” that are surveilled and supervised, patrolled, and policed, regulated and restricted, but that are constantly penetrated by individuals forging sexual links with ethnic “others”” (Nagel 1994, 113).

The surveillance, patrolling, policing, and regulation of ethnosexual intimacies plays out in heavily gendered ways. Women’s bodies often become the sites of this policing because of their capacity to birth and literally reproduce the ethnic collective. The

responsibility of finding a suitable mate for procreation is not just a matter of individual preference but rather a collective decision that links the fate of the ethnic group to women's wombs.

Regulation of sexual behaviors are heavily enforced in heterosexual relationship due to the potential for offspring. Nagel writes,

> "Across a wide variety of ethnic groups appropriate enactments of heterosexuality are perhaps the most regulated and enforced norms. In particular, correct heterosexual masculine and feminine behavior constitutes gender regimes that often lie at the core of ethnic cultures. Our women (often depicted as virgins, mothers, pure) v. their women (sluts, whores, soiled). Our men (virile, strong, brave) v. their men (degenerate, weak, cowardly)."

Women in this instance, become property of the collective and their actions reflect on the entire ethnic collective. Essentially, under colonialism, heterosexuality became the foundation of family structures and therefore upheld the entire family structure.

Women in the family structure are more heavily policed with respect to their sexual boundaries in Mexican American culture. Chicana feminists note that within the Mexican community there is a virgin-whore continuum that entraps women's sexual experiences. Not limited to just the Mexican American community, "…research has found that White women receive some of the harshest messages of disapproval from their families regarding inter-racial relationships before they start to date" (Rosenblatt et al. 1995). The same may be true for Latina women, given that many Latino parents attempt to control their daughter's dating lives (Morales 2012).

V. Understanding Latinx Dating and Marriage Preferences

Much of the literature focused on inter-ethnoracial dating and marriage practices focuses on marriage patterns between white and Black Americans. It was only

recently that scholars began to investigate the significance of inter-ethnoracial intimate relationships attitudes and preferences for Latinx Americans. Unfortunately, most of this literature homogenizes Latinx Americans and assumes a shared identity and understanding. There is very little research available that directly speaks to the dating and marriage preferences among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Available research on Latinx exogamy and dating practices demonstrates that there are two common themes: (1) that Latina women's dating, marriage, and intimate lives are heavily regulated as compared to men, and (2) that Latinx people have an explicit preference for white partners, couched in fear for Black mixed-race children.

Latina Inter-ethnoracial Dating

Latina women receive some of the strongest messages from parents and family members discouraging inter-ethnoracial dating and marriage. Jessica Vasquez-Tokos calls the phenomena "Disciplined Preferences" she further explains:

> "Disciplined preferences are internalized romantic tastes that are produced through racialized social practices – including violence, threats, censure, and advice – that condition Latinos to date and marry inter-racially. Heather Dalmage (2000) uses the term "border policing" to denote meso-level actors such as families, peers, and the community affect individual choices" (Vasquez 2015, 456)

In fact, research shows that Latinx parents have been found to have a significant influence over their daughters' marital and dating relationships (Hovell, Sipan et al. 1994; Raffaelli 2005; Stephens, Fernandez et al. 2012). Cruz Janzen's research in particular finds that Latinx families experience feelings of shame and/or humiliation when a white-Latinx daughter marries a Black partner (Cruz-Janzen 2001, 11). In an interview with a Latina woman, she recalls the words of her father: "If you ever bring

home a Black guy home don't expect to have this as your home or me as your father" (Prather 1990, 52). This signals how deep anti-blackness runs in the familial structure and particularly illuminates the role that women play in race-making projects.

Women represent more than just themselves; they also reflect the values and status of her family members. They are subjected to harsher policing of their dating lives and stronger messages of disapproval from their family members.

On the other hand, many scholars note that men, sons in contrast to daughters, are allowed more freedom and their social activities are not as policed. "In contrast, sons are allowed more freedom to socialize with peers and exhibit rambunctious behavior without parental sanctioning" (Zhou & Bankston 1998). This signals that while sons are not seen as reflections of the parents, the actions of the daughters reflect back on the family unit. As such, it is of little surprise that Gowan and Trevino (1998) found that Latino men, in general, are more likely than Latina women to hold more traditional sex-role attitudes, even when controlling for variables like acculturation.

Role of Skin Color in Dating and Marriage Preferences

The dating and marriage preferences of Latinos are not only heavily gendered but also rely heavily on perceptions of skin color. Prior research has demonstrated that Latinos are heavily preoccupied with skin tone and view themselves as more akin to white people than to Black people (McClain et al. 2006; Lee & Bean 2010). The importance of skin tone is reflected in the concept of *blanquiamiento*, but also illustrates how dating and marital preferences are heavily racialized (Shiao & Tuan 2008).

In fact, McClain et al. (2006) demonstrate that harmful stereotypes about Black Americans are increasingly prevalent in Latino immigrant communities. Their research shows "…The stereotypes of Blacks by Latinos are more negative than those of white respondents" (McClain et al. 2006). Similarly, Ditanto, Lau and Sears (2013) find that "In terms of negative affect toward Blacks, acceptance of Black stereotypes, and implicit prejudice, Latinos [oversampled in 2008 ANES] score higher than non-Hispanic Whites." Together, their research indicates that anti-Black sentiments and prejudice are widespread among the Latinx community, even at higher rates than their white counterparts.

In regard to dating or marital preferences, Garcia, Riggio, Palavinelu, Culpepper (2012) find that "Latino men in our study reported feeling more negative emotions toward the Latina-Black couple compared to the intraethnic or Latina-White couple, a pattern that was not found for Latina women" (35). This indicates that Latino men feel the need to police and are negatively affected when Latina women are acting in a way that they perceive as undesirable whereas Latina women do not respond the same way. In other words, Latino inter-ethnoracial intimacies are not only anti-Black, but also increasingly gendered.

Moreover, harmful stereotypes about Black men bleed over into dating and marital preferences with Stephans, Fernandez & Richman (2012) noting that "While darker skinned women are also stigmatized, the fears about Black male sexuality are framed as more problematic" (11). In addition, Black, and darker skinned men are believed to have "uncontrollable desire" (Stephans, Fernandez & Richman 2012) further entrenching the already problematic belief that Latina women, especially lighter-skinned Latina women need to be protected from dangerous dark-skinned men.

The desire of Mexican – and broadly Latinx communities – to date and/or marry white or Latino individuals does not simply reflect the desire to whiten or just the concept of blanquiamiento. Instead, as I have demonstrated it specifically speaks to the insidious anti-Black sentiments present within Latinx communities.

VI. Findings

The dating and marriage preferences of Mexican Americans obviously reflects understandings of Blackness and similarly reflects preferences for whiteness. One interesting finding is that for Mexican Americans, and Latinx Americans more broadly, is that the dating and marriage preferences of daughters are seen as reflections of the family. Meaning that women's bodies become vehicles for social mobility should they choose to marry a white man. Women then face family pressures to make the "right" decision because the stakes are higher than simply personal romantic preferences.

This is then reflected in the large share of Mexican Americans who favor whites over Black Americans. It is tremendously difficult to find data disaggregated by national heritage. For this reason, I have pooled 20 years of General Social Survey data from 2000 to 2020 resulting in a sample of about 1,000. The patterns in the graph reflected below have been consistent over the past 20 years. Finally, all the results are dichotomized from scales that measure marital preferences, closeness, and stereotypes separately for both Black Americans and white Americans.

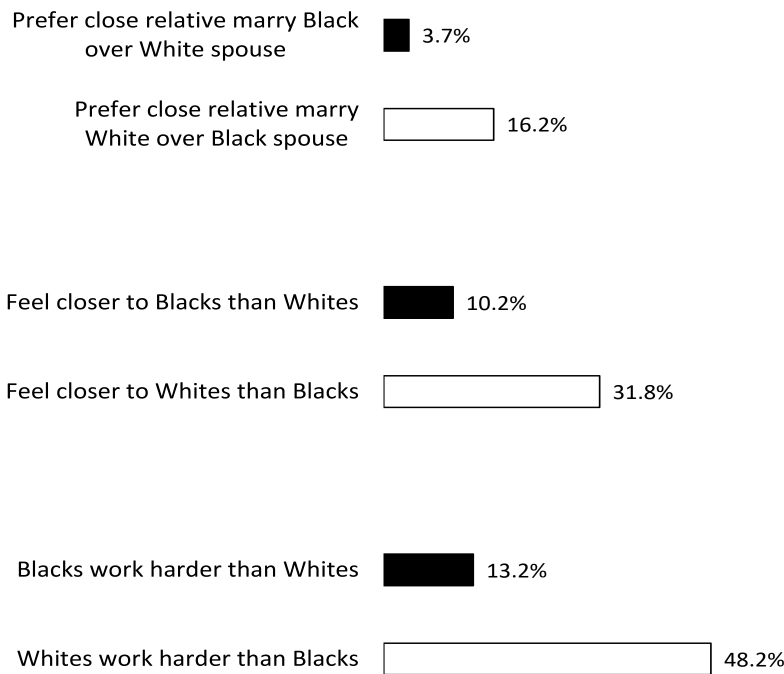

Table 5.1 Mexican Americans' Relative Attitudes about Black and White People (2000 to 2020 General Social Survey).

According to the findings represented in Figure 1, over the past 20 years Mexican Americans prefer that a close relative marry a white spouse at 16.2% compared to 3.2% who prefer that their close relative marry a Black spouse over a white spouse. This is consistent with other findings that Latinx Americans prefer their daughters to marry a white person over a Black person. The point difference here, of 12.5%, indicates that while not a significant number of Mexicans prefer that their close relative marry white people, they would still prefer it over them marrying a Black spouse.

At a 21.6% difference, Mexican Americans report that they "Feel closer to whites than Blacks" which brings us full circle to group consciousness and coalition building.

Feelings of closeness indicate that Mexican Americans, within the confines of the data, indicate that Mexican Americans feel closer to and are therefore more likely to identify with White Americans over Black Americans. This has important consequences for coalition building because feelings of closeness are necessary for formulate a sense of linked fate or group consciousness that would lead Mexican Americans and Black Americans to feel that the best way out of oppression would be to work together.

This matters because attitudes towards Black and white Americans are inextricably intertwined with American identity. Data in Figure 2 is from the 2012 American National Election Survey oversample. The ANES data included nearly 600 Hispanics who identified as either Mexican or Mexican American.

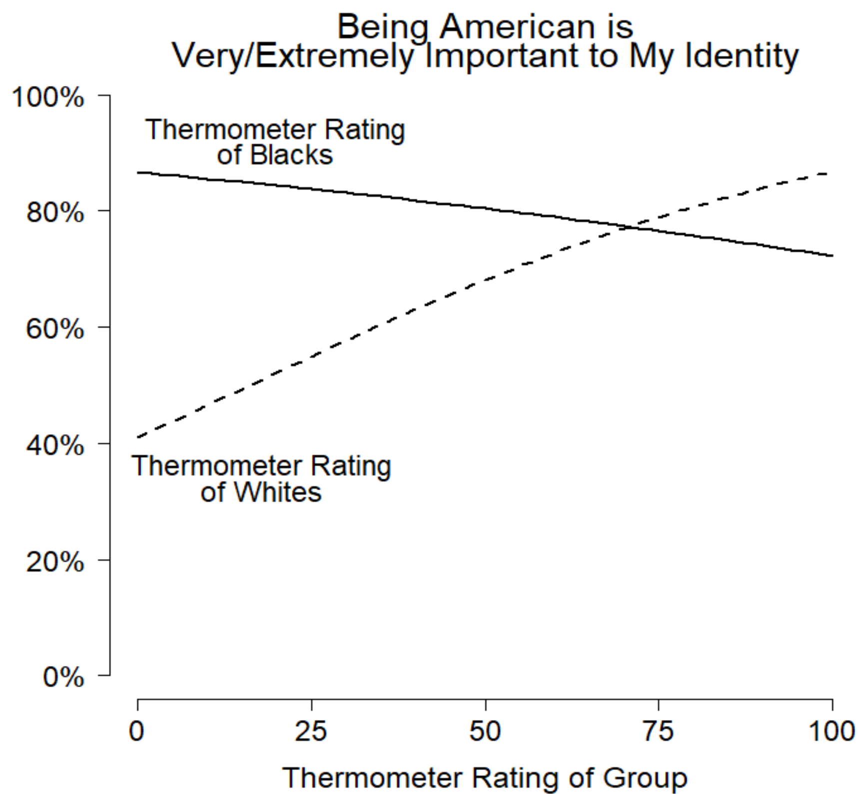

Table 5.2 Racial Attitudes and American Identity among Mexican Americans (2012 American National Election Survey).

The data represented in Figure 2 represent a strong and highly significant positive relationship between warmer feelings toward white people and stronger American identity. Whereas it represents a marginally significant negative relationship between warmer feelings towards Black Americans and American identity. These findings indicate that for Mexicans and Mexican Americans, American identity and whiteness are still linked. Demonstrating that the connection with American identity and whiteness endure.

VII. Conclusion

Latinos and Mexican Americans are quite capable of anti-Black attitudes. As Ditanto, Lau and Sears note, “in terms of negative affect toward Blacks, acceptance of Black stereotypes, and implicit prejudice, Latinos [oversampled in 2008 ANES] score higher than non-Hispanic whites” (Ditanto, Lau, and Sears 2013). Many Latinos, including a large share of Mexican Americans harbor anti-Black attitudes and favor whites over Black Americans. Evidently, Mexican Americans, and Latinx more broadly, harbor anti-Black attitudes and sentiments that even pass those harbored by white Americans.

It is precisely these attitudes that manifest themselves in precisely the type of sentiments that would lead Zimmerman to profile Trayvon Martin. As Tesler (2016) demonstrates, relative views of Black and white Americans are increasingly important for Latinx politics with positive views of Black Americans pushing them toward the Democratic Party and positive views of white Americans pushing them towards the Republican Party.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: #LatinosforBlackLives

In 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic, George Floyd was brutally murdered as the world watched from quarantine. Nearly immediately, Americans took to the street, protesting and expressing outrage at the death of Floyd at the hands of police. Perhaps due to the coronavirus, which kept most people home, or the brutality of Floyd's death, Americans were faced with a racial reckoning.[52] Despite the heightened risk of illness and the spread of the corona virus, many Americans took to the street to protest police brutality and call for immediate policy reform.

But the 2020 protests went beyond calling for policy reform and an end to police brutality. It had many Americans reckoning with white privilege and coming to terms with the reality of race in the United States. For many, this meant buying books about race and getting educated on the subject. For instance, Forbes released a "20 Books for 2020: A Reading List on Race in America" quickly selling out popular titles like *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin DiAngelo and *How To Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. Meanwhile, social media spearheaded the way of having difficult conversations with white friends and colleagues.

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[52] Initially, the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 were referred to as a moment of "racial reckoning" and demanded that particularly white Americans contend with structural racism and white privilege. However, Political Scientists like Hakeem Jefferson and Jennifer Chuddy in an episode of NPR's Code Switch "The Reckoning That Wasn't" which debuted on June 9, 2021 the scholars note that attitudes reverse quickly following the 2020 protests with less support for the Black Lives Matter Movement by October than at the height of the protests in July of 2020. This is important to note because while many may argue that racial attitudes have changed since the protests of 2020 research tells us this moment was short lived.

The same opportunity presented itself for the Latinx community, with Latinx public intellectuals like Alan Pelaez Lopez (@kiefgasm on Instagram), Ruben Angel (@queerxichisme on Instagram and Twitter) and Ariana Brown (@arianathepoet on Twitter) speaking out about the racism that they have faced as afro-Latinx identified individuals. A number of articles published in the Washington Post, Huffington Post and even the New York Times called for Latinx people to have difficult conversations with their families and friends. As a result, the hashtag, #LatinosforBlackLives began trending, and similar signs began to pop up in demonstrations on the streets.

On its face, #LatinosforBlackLives appears to be a moment of solidarity with the Latino community expressly supporting and rallying behind Black lives and protesting police brutality. Instead, however, it affirms the racist dynamics of Latinx people precluding Afro- or Black- Latinx identifying individuals from being *both* Latinx *and* Black. The verbiage of #LatinosforBlackLives implies that Latinos are in solidarity and support the pressing issues that face the Black community but are not impacted by the issues themselves.

While it is true that some non-Black Latinx folks are not subjected to the realities of Blackness in the United States, it is also true that Black Latinx folks exist at the intersection of Blackness and Latinidad and feel erased by the implications of #LatinosforBlackLives. Instead, it would be expedient for the Latinx community to stand in solidarity by expressing support for the Black Lives Matter Movement rather than further distancing themselves from Blackness by implying that Latinos cannot be both Black and Latinx. Some forms of support might include checking family member's bias and challenging narratives that are anti-Black. For instance, narratives that may

frame the Black Lives Matter protests as thugs or dangerous and reframing it to think about the lives lost as more valuable than property damaged.

The hashtag also signals a difference between the communities. Yes, Latinx folks and their experiences in the United States have been and continue to be distinct from the Black community but in every effort of solidarity, they have made clear that its “us” and “them” and not a united front. Research tells us that Latinx folks in the United States do not feel that they have much in common with the Black community despite their experiences of racism in the United States. For example, the data presented in Chapter 5, “Inter-ethnoracial Intimacies” demonstrates that, Mexican Americans, feel closer to white people at 31.8 percent compared to those who reported feeling closer to Black people at 10.2 percent. This 21.6 percent difference indicates that a mass of Mexican Americans feel that they have more in common with white Americans than they do Black Americans, which is precisely the anti-Black sentiment that can lead to dangerous encounters like that between Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman.

This example of #LatinosforBlackLives highlights the deep and insidious problems that Latinx and Black communities face when trying to form coalitions and build together toward an anti-racist world. Ture and Hamilton (1992) identify basic requirements for any coalition building: (1) recognition of each party’s self-interest; (2) that self-interests must benefit by aligning; (3) that each group has an independent base of support; and (4) that the coalitional efforts deal with specific and identifiable goals. Coalition building then requires that groups come together temporarily in order to achieve a common goal, which requires the understanding that the best way to advance their own group’s self-interest is by joining together.

At this point, Latinx Americans might not feel that their interests will be best served by coming together with Black Americans, because it has been traditional within the communities to distance themselves from Blackness and aspire to whiteness. Consider, for example, the legal strategy utilized by Mexican American elites in litigating for civil rights: white-by-law. As explained in Chapter 3: Unstable Whiteness, the decision to claim whiteness in order to access civil rights and legal protections was a not only politically expedient because it granted them access to things like naturalization and citizenship (*Re: Ricardo Rodriguez*), school desegregation (*Mendez v. Westminster*) and the right to serve on juries (*Hernandez v. Texas*). It was also a survival tactic. Considering the history of Blackness not only in the United States, but also in Mexico, it may appear that the best negotiating chip would be distance from Blackness.

Building on Ture and Hamilton's argument that the coalitional efforts must deal with specific and identifiable goals, one potential avenue for political coalition might be the connection between mass incarceration, the prison industrial complex and "crimmigration" or the criminalization of immigration. Alvaro Corral (2020) notes that while prior research has shown that Latinos harbor anti-Black sentiments (McClain et al. 2006) foreign born Latinx folk are more likely to support the Black Lives Matter Movement, due to perceived similarities regarding criminal justice reform and the immigration system. This suggests that in order to build coalitions, focusing on pressing political concerns that are related to the Black community might be a bridge to solidarity. However, this is surely not enough to overcome deep-rooted anti-Black prejudice that is rampant in the Latinx community.

For Latinx and Black communities to come together and truly form what Fred Hampton strived for in the “rainbow coalition” the Latinx communities needs to reckon with their racism and truly engage with their past. I posit that Ture and Hamilton are right in that Black Americans have a strong foundation and sense of linked fate and group consciousness. The inability to form coalitions, I argue, is due to the racial ambiguity of Latinidad. Mexican Americans have thrived off of an ambiguous racial identity by curtailing discrimination through the law and having legal whiteness as a shield. Discrimination against Latinx communities, and Mexican Americans in particular, is rampant in the United States and cannot be understated. This is evident in the racist rhetoric about immigrants and President Trump arguing that Mexico is sending their worst and naming Mexicans rapists. There is no denying the struggles that Mexicans and Latinos face in the United States. However, I argue that because they do not have a clear racial status, they have been able to leverage their racial ambiguity to distance themselves from Black Americans.

This project has been an homage to coalition building in hopes that laying out all the various ways in which Mexican Americans have negotiated their racialization will change the trajectory. Beginning with the colonization and the very inception of Mexico and the United States as nation-states it is clear that Blackness and understandings of Blackness informed and constructed the racial order not only in the United States but also in Mexico. Evidently, these understandings of Blackness matriculated into a strategy of negation in the United States in that Mexican Americans understand Blackness to be at the bottom of the racial hierarchy and actively distance themselves from Blackness in order to maintain their “superior” status and ambiguous racial identity.

I propose that a move to name the anti-Black prejudice in the Latinx community racism is a fertile starting ground. Many scholars have noted that colorism is persistent among Latinx folks, however few have regarded this as racism. For instance, research has shown that skin color affect life chances for Latinx individuals. As Jasmine Hayward (2017) writes, "While light-skinned Latinos do not benefit from *all* of the privileges associated with whiteness, empirical studies have shown that they are better off educationally and socioeconomically in comparison to darker skinned individuals" (Arce, Murguia & Frisbie 1987; Espino & Franz 2002; Gomez 2000; Hayward 2017; Murguia & Telles 1996; Telles & Murguia 1990). Evidently, skin pigment impacts non-Black Latinx life chances and their access to education and other material resources. Having darker skin in the Latinx community remains heavily stigmatized and those with darker skin report more instances of discrimination or unfair treatment than those with lighter skin.

In a May 2022 report, Luis Noe-Bustamante, from the Pew Research Center, reported that "Latinos experience discrimination from other Latinos about as much as from non-Latinos." Noe-Bustamante found that "About four-in-ten Latinos with darker skin (41%) say they have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment by another Latino, while 25% with lighter skin color say the same."

Having darker skin impacts day-to-day lived experiences. For Black Latinx folks, the stakes are much higher. Black Latinx folks face the same skin color discrimination within the Latinx community *and* anti-Black discrimination from both inside and outside the Latinx community. In addition, they are also figured to be foreigners among the Latinx community, literally outsiders and not an actual valued part of the Latinx identity, with Latinidad privileging the mestizo and highlighting their selective

"racial mixing" of only Spanish and Indian blood. This conception of Afro-Latinx or Black Latinx folks as outside of the configuration of Latinidad or outside of the conception of "Mexican" further divides the Black and Latinx communities that would have much more to gain if they worked together to dismantle both white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

Challenging both anti-Blackness and white supremacy requires non-Black racial groups to reckon with their privilege. Especially with regards to anti-Blackness and their ability to negotiate their positioning in the United States so long as Blackness remains stigmatized and at the bottom of the hierarchy. As I have demonstrated, for Mexican Americans understandings of Blackness from both the United States and Mexico have allowed them to leverage a liminal position (not quite white but definitely not Black) in order to secure rights and privileges that are not available to other racial groups.

More work needs to be done with regards to the past and present racialization of other non-Black racial groups and their relationships not only to whiteness but also Blackness. I believe that different Latinx subgroups have specific relationships to both whiteness and Blackness that need to be grounded in their histories. I believe this is a fertile area for future development. I also believe that more work regarding the current attitudes of non-Black Mexican Americans and their racial identity need to be further examined to assess how Mexican Americans continue to not only negotiate their racial experiences but to assess fertile areas for potential coalition building.

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