“Por el Color”: Primary School Teaching and the (Re)production of Anti-Black Imaginaries of Mexican National Identity

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Abstract

Dominant imaginaries, or shared ways of thinking, that conceive Mexico’s national identity as a purely Indigenous-Spanish mestizo merger remain harshly at odds with the significant historical and current contributions of afrodescendencia, Mexico’s African heritage. Existing literature has argued how the education system contributes to the discrimination and severe marginalisation of Afro-Mexicans by examining the role of the curriculum and experiences of racism by students. However, research has failed to explore whether, how and why teaching (re)produces or transforms these dominant anti-black imaginaries. Thus, in this thesis, I address this research gap through a comparative study that investigates how imaginaries, the formal curriculum, local contexts and teacher positionality shape the agency of the primary school teacher with respect to the (re)production and transformation of anti-black imaginaries across the states of Puebla and Guerrero. Drawing upon theories of social reproduction, this mixed methods study observes how imaginaries of national identity are transformed across the vertical (national, state, local) and horizontal axes (states, municipalities, schools), using a combination of semi-structured interviews, observations, content analysis, autoethnography and descriptive statistics.

Results show that while teachers at the local level perceive the level of curricular information about afrodescendencia as insufficient, attachment to dominant anti-black imaginaries is a major constraining factor to improving their own knowledge. This is in part due to national and state textbooks that fail to recognise the size, significance and contemporary existence of Afro-Mexicans in addition to the extensiveness of anti-black imaginaries through non-institutionalised education. However, the results also reveal how local contexts in the form of civic society activism, demographics and pedagogic resources can challenge understandings of mestizaje that underpin national identity. Nevertheless, in this thesis, I conclude that in the absence of significant changes to curriculum combined with the deeper incorporation of afrodescendencia into teacher training, existing dominant anti-black imaginaries will continue to run through the education system. Such conclusions bear relevance for decolonial initiatives, including the United Nations ‘International Decade for Peoples of African Descent’, that seek to challenge racism through the better recognition of Afro-descendant contributions. I thus argue that further research into how global and national anti-racism initiatives are enacted within education systems is warranted with greater consideration of institutional actors.

Keywords: Mexico, Imaginaries, Blackness, Afrodescendencia, Education, Social Reproduction
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I would like to thank my friends, old and new, in Europe and in Mexico, for being available for a healthy dose of escapism. I’m not known for my ability to express my emotions, but I am very much glad that I’ve been able to share so many experiences with you. Furthermore, I cannot continue without expressing my deep gratitude to my family, and especially my parents. Given the sacrifices that you have made, I know that you are sometimes confused by my career decisions, however, I am truly in admiration of your unconditional belief in my ability and character. Also, I would like to dedicate some words to Martina. You say life isn’t easy, but you’ve definitely made this period easier for me – thank you.

The reaction of the Mexican people after the September earthquakes was one of the most impressive things I have experienced. I sincerely believe that mobilising such collective spirit is the key to combatting many of the problems the country faces. I’d like to thank you for hosting me. Finally, I would like to dedicate this research to the many Afro-Mexicans who continue to be subjected to such challenges. May the future present a time when theses like this are obsolete.
Acronyms

- CATA - Computer-Aided Text Analysis
- CNTE - Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (National Coordinator of Education Workers)
- CSO - Civil society organisation
- EPN - Encuentro de Pueblos Negros (Encounter of Black Peoples)
- INEE - Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education)
- INEGI - Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)
- MMSI - Module of Intergenerational Social Mobility
- OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- QCA - Quantitative Content Analysis
- SEP - Secretaría Educación Pública (Secretary of Public Education)
- SNTE - Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (National Syndicate of Education Workers)
- UDLAP - Universidad de Las Americas Puebla
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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

“no (risas), por el color, es extranjero”¹ 4A-F
“si, por el color de piel (risas)”² 9A-F

The two contrasting quotations above represent the conflicting responses from my participants when asked if I, as a black man, could be considered Mexican if I spoke with the appropriate accent. While both participants found the question amusing, almost to say that the question is absurd, the question illuminates an alarming disconnect in imaginaries of Mexican national identity. The participant who agrees is from a location with a strong black and Afro-Mexican identity. However, the other participant’s views are more symbolic of dominant imaginaries of Mexican national identity. “Much of being a model ‘Mexican’ hinges on the hegemonic assumption that Mexico is a mestizo nation—the product of a straightforward ‘merger’ of Spanish and Indigenous people with little or no reference to its African heritage and contributions to Mexican society” (White, 2009, p.44). The resulting consequences of such invisibility include exclusion, discrimination, lack of representation and unequal access and opportunities (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2012; Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013; White, 2009). The fact that the groups today who are considered black and have managed to conserve many physical and cultural African traits through isolation are not generally considered as mestizos gives weight to the argument that a black Mexican identity today is unthinkable in general society (Vázquez Fernández, 2008).

Throughout the Latin American region, and also globally, there is renewed attention to the lowly social position of Afro-descendants. The United Nations is currently observing the International Decade for Peoples of African Descent (2015-2024) with one of the three key objectives being "to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies" (United Nations General Assembly, 2014, p.4). Nevertheless, the speed at which Mexico, as a signatory, has advanced the recognition of Afro-Mexicans remains sluggish. In 2015, 1.4 million people identified as Afro-Mexican, yet no constitutional recognition exists at the national level, and only the three federal entities of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Mexico City have recognised Afro-Mexicans as an ethnic group in their own constitutions (INEGI, 2015; Masferrer León, 2017). Furthermore, Afro-Mexicans and blackness in Mexico do not occupy a prominent position in academic research, philosophy or literature (Vázquez Fernández, 2008). Ultimately blackness has largely been made invisible, either blurred into the mestizaje or eliminated from the memory of any significant cultural or political contributions to the country (Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013).

¹ No (laughs), because of your colour, your foreign
² Yes, because of the colour of your skin (laughs)
Various scholars have argued that the coupling of dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad\(^3\) and narrow definitions of mestizaje has been central to the exclusion of blackness (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016; Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013a, 2013b; Zárate, 2017). The education system in Mexico, as a key mechanism in the promotion of the mestizo imaginary (Knight 1990), is positioned as a site of the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. On the one hand, teachers have been accused of racist practices towards their students (Masferrer León, 2016), while on the other hand, the formal curriculum is deemed to be inadequate in its representation of blackness (Masferrer León, 2011; Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013; White, 2009; Zárate, 2017). Using mixed-methods, I examine how the practice of teaching continues to (re)produce, or transforms, dominant anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad, at the national, state, municipal and school levels and across the different contexts of San Andrés Cholula\(^4\), Puebla and Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero.

In this thesis, I build upon the existing literature in providing a more nuanced analysis of the reasons why teaching (re)produces or transforms dominant anti-black imaginaries. I explore whether, how, and why the black Mexican is unimaginable for many of the teachers who contribute to the (re)production of imaginaries of Mexicanidad. These teachers are influenced by their own education but also anti-black imaginaries that are extensively (re)produced through families, the media, museums and everyday life. Secondly, I argue how attachment to the dominant mestizo identity causes teachers to disregard and disbelieve new information on afrodescendencia\(^5\). Teachers in Cholula, often burdened by time pressures, limited pedagogic resources, inadequate training and a lower perceived sense of autonomy, demonstrated little knowledge or desire to research afrodescendencia, with several implying that it was inconsequential or false. Thirdly, I contend that this ignorance towards afrodescendencia is supported by textbooks that fail to truly represent the size, duration and significance of the African and Afro-Mexican influence. The textbooks at the national and state level fail to mention the number of Afro-Mexicans either historically as slaves and free persons, or in the present-day population. Fourthly, while there are pockets of local transformation, it is limited geographically and heavily dependent on contextual factors. In Cuajinicuilapa, teachers who largely identified as black or afro, were supported by local organisations and a museum on afrodescendencia, while at the same time benefitting from the reduced supervision that results from their marginalisation. Ultimately, I conclude by recommending how significant changes to the curriculum together with diversity training are necessary to unshackle teachers from the dominant imaginaries they could be transforming.

Before continuing with this thesis, I want to elaborate on two conceptual tensions that emerge in the research questions, thesis title and the full document. Firstly, I have chosen to refer to teaching rather than the teacher in several places. The use of teaching is to represent the dialogue between the teaching and the formal curriculum. The second tension, is the

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\(^{3}\) Mexicanidad is used throughout this thesis to refer to Mexican national identity

\(^{4}\) Often this thesis will use Cholula as short-hand for San Andrés Cholula. However, note that Cholula normally comprises of the two adjacent municipalities of San Pedro and San Andrés

\(^{5}\) Afrodescendencia is used to refer to Mexico’s African heritage
choice of blackness over afrodescendencia. Although afrodescendencia is the more academically accepted term, I have opted to use blackness to highlight the racial aspects of discrimination, instead of a focus on ethnic heritage that afrodescendencia could be reduced to. Nevertheless, the acute nature of anti-black racism in Mexico means that much of the commentary on anti-blackness focuses on the exclusion of afrodescendencia.

In the following sections I further detail the personal, academic and historical relevance of this research. In Section 1.2, I explain how my personal interest in this research evolved. Then, Section 1.3 outlines the knowledge gaps in the existing literature. In Section 1.4, I summarise the historical dynamics of afrodescendencia from the colonial period through to the present day. Finally, the research questions are established in Section 1.5 before an outline of the thesis is provided in Section 1.6.

1.2. Personal Research Motive

“Are blacks at the bottom of society over there as well?”

Somewhat disheartening, this was one of the first questions my father asked me after I returned from a sabbatical year in Latin America. Sadly, my response to my father was ultimately a confirmation of what he suspected. The starkest aspect from my observations in Latin America was how determined the racialized social structures appeared to be. Politicians and the wealthy largely appeared to be dominated by whiter, more European-looking individuals whereas blacks, at least where I had encountered them, appeared mostly in positions of relative poverty and limited influence. The existence of a black middle class that I was so accustomed to during my British upbringing was never forthcoming. The discussion with my father was a simplified overview of my time in Latin America. What it did to some degree was homogenise the black experience across the region and obscured what are significant differences across and within the different countries. Nevertheless, the most pronounced similarity, especially outside of Brazil, was the lack of knowledge surrounding each country’s African heritage. I heard stories ranging from blacks all dying in wars and the mines, to countries not participating in slavery or a few blacks arriving only on shipwrecked boats.

From the initial moments of this Research Masters, I had been interested in studying the position of afro-descendants, but it was a matter of choosing the right country and the right topic. A discussion with my co-supervisor Enrique – who at the time had been my lecturer for a research methodology pre-course – stimulated my interest in Mexico. While my exposure had been limited during my time in Mexico, I had remembered a BBC (2016) article, *The black people ‘erased from history’*, that explored the revelation from the INEGI (2015) survey that more than a million people identified as Afro-Mexican. In my own mind I was

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6 Afro-Mexican and black Mexicans are used interchangeably or together to describe Mexicans of African descent
surprised by that number, but then thought from a logical perspective, considering the number of slaves in the US, Central America and the Caribbean, that there must have been significant Africans brought to Mexico.

The choice of the role of the education system, and history teaching in particular, was founded upon a personal gripe that I had. During my educational experience in the UK, I was always disappointed by the lack of consideration of the empire, colonialism and slavery in the history textbooks. In fact, the only significant exposure I recall was an A-Level essay on the abolition of UK slavery that I pursued independently. Since, I have often thought that the lack of their consideration in curriculum is a cause of much discrimination in the UK, with the British public generally proud of the country’s role in colonialism (Stone, 2016). Therefore, from a combined academic and social standpoint, I decided on researching the role of the education system in its consideration of afrodescendencia and the relationship with the seemingly racially stratified societies that I had observed during my sabbatical year.

1.3. Academic Relevance

Academic attention towards afrodescendencia in the education system is fairly limited from the perspective of published articles (Masferrer León, 2011, 2016; Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013; White, 2009; Zárate, 2017). Therefore, in this section, I complement this literature with a series of studies concerned with racism in education in Mexico in the broader sense (Aguilar Nery, 2012; Velasco Cruz, 2016; Velasco Cruz & Baronnet, 2016; Baronnet, 2013; Young, 2010).

Velasco Cruz (2016) alleges that the Mexican education system normalises and naturalises racism. The nature in which this process takes place is partly done through educational content but also through certain explicitly racist practices that permeate the education system. He argues that state sponsored imaginaries of national identity have been built on revolution-era nationalist ideas that imply the racial superiority of the mestizo. Termed ‘mestizofilia’ by Velasco Cruz and Baronnet (2016), such imaginaries of national identity contribute to racism and xenophobia to anyone who falls outside of the boundaries of this narrow understanding of Mexican society, including towards the indigenous and Afro-Mexicans. They argue that the concept of mestizofilia continues to be taught in primary schools in Mexico.

A mestizophile education is not just a contemporary phenomenon, but rather has been intertwined with the purpose of the education system since its establishment in the 19th century (Young, 2010). Young writes that the education system was conceived as a means to promote nationalism amongst the very diverse segments of the Mexican population, which was advanced through the distribution of obligatory textbooks that began in the 1950s. Through a discourse analysis of textbooks used between 1990 and 2010, he

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7 While the mestizo can be perceived as broader, in this case it refers to the product of the Spanish-Indigenous union
found that the teaching of many specific matters justify and maintain social inequalities. For example, where indigenous actors appear, they are applauded where they have absorbed mestizo cultural norms and aligned themselves to the interests of the dominant classes. However, more contentious and radical elements of indigenous unrest, especially in the contemporary period are ignored or neutralised. White (2009), looking more specifically at afrodescendencia, adds that the curriculum leaves little space for the needs of non-mainstream communities and identities.

Through an analysis of primary education and telesecundaria\textsuperscript{8} textbooks, Masferrer León (2011) argues that history books contain few appearances of Africans and their descendants, and where they do appear, they are mainly conceived as slaves, despite the fact that many were free in colonial period. Credit is due to a two-page segment dedicated to the lives of the Afro-descendent population in Nueva España. However, she also highlights that they are homogenised — differences are simplified, such as referring to different African languages as dialects (Masferrer León, 2011, p.140); they are stereotyped to certain physical traits; they are misrepresented — a 6th grade textbook refers to Afro-Mexicans merely as ‘negros’; and some references are incorrect and actively obscure their contributions — one textbook erroneously states that immigration policies stopped the arrival of Africans after the 16th century.

Alongside textbooks, teaching practices also (re)produce racism. Masferrer León (2016) found through a series of workshops that many teachers and principals harbour racist attitudes to black or darker skinned pupils. For example, the author describes how some educational actors have argued that black pupils were less intelligent and lazier than others. As well as these explicitly racist attitudes, she observes how the tension between afrodescendencia and national identity is played out in teacher practices. Citing student experiences, she recalls incidents that have included darker skinned Afro-Mexican students being excluded from carrying the Mexican flag at ceremonies, despite having the high grades that would normally warrant the opportunity (Masferrer León, 2016, p.7). In a study undertaken in two municipalities in the state of Baja California, Aguilar Nery (2012) investigates teacher views on racism. She argues that the majority of teachers maintained refuted views of race linked to scientific racism with ideas that certain races had different abilities and cultural tendencies. However, the many missing and inconsistent answers also indicated a lack of knowledge or high levels of ignorance around the concept of race.

The literature outlined in this section has looked at the different aspects of curriculum, teacher beliefs and practices. With respect to the ongoing ignorance on afrodescendencia, authors have noted how its omission from national identity construction in the education system (re)produces anti-black imaginaries (Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013; White, 2009). However, the literature fails to provide deeper analysis into how teaching, as the dialogue between teacher and curriculum, is influenced by the same imaginaries that teachers are positioned to transform. Furthermore, a more nuanced analysis would illuminate

\textsuperscript{8} Telesecundaria is a system of distance education for secondary school students
how local context and teacher positionality also influence the transformational role of the teacher. Therefore, this embedded mixed-methods study addresses this research gap by investigating how imaginaries, contexts and teacher positionality influence the teaching of blackness and afrodescendencia in Mexican primary education. In order to understand the contemporary positioning of blackness vis-à-vis imaginaries of Mexicanidad, it is vital to acknowledge its trajectory over time. In the next section I provide an overview of blackness in Mexican history.

1.4. Historical Context to Study - The Subordination of Afrodescendencia

### 1.4.1. Slavery and the Caste System

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<th>%</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>Indigenous Population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Euro-Mestizo Population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Afro-Mestizo Population</th>
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<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1646</td>
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<td>33,761</td>
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<td>35,368</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1,269,607</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>118,538</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>116,539</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>109,042</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1742</td>
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<td>9,814</td>
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<td>1,540,256</td>
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<td>391,512</td>
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<td>246,196</td>
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<td>2,339,741</td>
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<td>677,458</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,122,354</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15,000</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3,675,161</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>1,092,567</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>631,461</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>704,245</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Population by Caste - Source: Aguirre Beltrán (1946)

First documented as arriving with Hernan Cortes and the other conquistadores in the early 16th century, the analysis of historical records, census data and accounts elucidate the vast numbers of Africans brought to Colonial Mexico (Aguirre Beltrán, 1946). Estimates vary, yet it is broadly established that between 150,000 and 250,000 slaves were brought, through both legal and illegal avenues (Aguirre Beltrán, 1946; Carroll, 1991). The figures in Table 1 highlight how miscegenation could be perceived as a driver in the contemporary invisibility of Afro-Mexicans9, especially given that the largest number of slaves were brought during the early parts of the colonial period (Hoffman & Rinaudo, 2014). However, miscegenation alone does not necessarily reveal how the positioning of blackness within society affected its relationship to dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad, especially given the low numbers of Europeans during the colonial period. Colonial Mexico was structured socially on the basis of a caste system that ranked fourteen to twenty distinct castes depending on the amount of mixing of Spanish, Indigenous and/or African blood (Carrera, p.38). Yet, this caste system established blackness at the bottom of the hierarchy, and due to this undesirability, old African cultures were discouraged and interracial marriages with non-blacks were seen as a way for offspring to escape the negativity of being black (Rojas, 1996). Using birth and marriage certificates, Aguirre Beltrán (1946) and Castillo (2005) also uncovered numerous

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9 Afromestizos, euromestizos and indomestizos are classifications used by Aguirre Beltrán on the basis of census data. All were said to be of mixed heritage but classification depended on the degree to which parental heritage and phenotypical characteristics would be considered African, European or Indigenous. Thus, euromestizos and indomestizos could also contain individuals with African blood.
instances of euromestizo offspring being registered inconsistently with the African heritage of their parents.\footnote{José María Morelos, the revolutionary independence leader was situated in the caste euromestizo, but the castes of his parents would indicate he was in fact afromestizo (Aguirre Beltrán, 1946, p.270)}

1.4.2. Post-Independence

Despite its apparent undesirability, blackness was still a significant part of colonial imaginaries. However, upon Independence, all legal distinctions pertaining to race were terminated in 1821 (González Navarro, 1970). Several achievements followed: the armies and movements that had led the fight for independence were multi-ethnic and multiracial in nature; the second president of Mexico, Vicente Guerrero was afromestizo; and, slavery was abolished (Vázquez Fernández, 2008). However, legal and constitutional documents failed to recognise and visualise indigenous and Afro-Mexican populations (Alanis Hernández, 2016; Vázquez Fernández, 2008). Rather, racialisation of Mexican, and more broadly Latin American societies, developed during the 19th century as modernity was conceived as being European in all manners, including ethnically, culturally and socially (Knight, 1990; Pérez-Rodríguez, 2012; Vázquez Fernández, 2008). Thus, during the porfiriato\footnote{The porfiriato is the period of time when Mexico was under the control of Portfírio Diaz (1876-1911)}, notions of blanqueamiento, the idealised vision that white blood would dominate and improve any mixture of races, were reinforced in racialised imaginaries (Saldivar, 2014).

1.4.3. The Mexican Revolution, La raza cosmica, and the Centrality of Mestizaje

The emergence of mestizaje, has been described by Weltman-Cisneros and Mendez Tello (2013) as an imagined identity forged to create a homogenous community to reconcile cultural and social divisions. Vaughn (2013, p.228) argues that originally "a progressive response to 19th century anti-Indian, anti-black, and anti-Asian racism", mestizaje transcended into a cultural and racial assimilatory project that did not envision any part for blacks. By the end of the revolution, and reacting to the post-revolutionary need to promote imaginaries of national identity that incorporated the indigenous and mestizo peasant majorities, elites settled on Mexicanidad to be a modern mestizo identity resting on pre-Hispanic foundations (Gamio, 1916; Knight, 1990). However, the blanqueamiento inherent in mestizaje meant there was no place for blacks, who would be "absorbed by the superior type and redeemed gradually through voluntary extinction" (Vasconcelos, 1925, p22). Thus, supported by the public education system, the forging of this almost inseparable nexus between an exclusive mestizaje and Mexicanidad ultimately contributed to the intensification of anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad (Moreno Figueroa & Saldivar, 2016).
1.4.4. *La población negra en México* and *La Tercera Raíz*

From the post-revolutionary position of obscurity, attention towards blackness was revived locally and internationally after Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán published *La población negra en México* (1946), which argued that blacks were more numerous and influential in the national history than was previously thought (Vinson and Vaughn, 2004). This subsequently led to an ‘explosion’ of studies, albeit from an almost non-existent base, such as ‘Nuestra Tercera Raíz’ which started in 1990 (Vázquez Fernández, 2008). Furthermore, the first *Encuentro de Pueblos Negros*\(^{12}\) in El Ciruelo in 1997 was one of the first organised moments where political demands for the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexicans were heard. However, despite the growth in academic and social attention, blackness remains largely invisible in modern-day Mexico (Weltman-Cisneros and Mendez Tello, 2013).

1.5. Research Questions

The combination of social, personal, academic and historical relevance has thus led to the following research question which in turn guides the analysis contained within this thesis:

> “*What is the role of Primary Education teaching in the (re)production or transformation of anti-black imaginaries of Mexican national identity?*”

This research question is answered using the following sub-questions:

1. *How are dominant imaginaries of Mexican National Identity ‘anti-black’?*
2. *To what extent do textbooks recognise the historical and contemporary influence of afrodescendencia and blackness at the national and state scales in Puebla and Guerrero?*
3. *How do teachers perceive their agency, and the role of social sciences in the (re)production or transformation of a Mexican national identity at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?*
4. *How is the teaching of blackness in primary education influenced by dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad, job constraints and teacher positionality at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?*

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\(^{12}\) The *Encuentro de Pueblos Negros* (EPN: *Encounter of Black Peoples*) is an annual meeting of activists and scholars with the goal of obtaining constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexicans.
1.6. Thesis Structure

The epistemological, ontological and theoretical considerations that underpin this research will be elaborated in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will outline the mixed-methods research design, methodology and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I provide a brief overview of the research locations, at the national, state and municipal level, revealing important contextual features. The first empirical chapter is Chapter 5, which will discuss the relationship between the imaginaries of blackness and mestizaje in the context of the dominant imaginaries of mexicanidad. In Chapter 6, I explore the textbooks at the national and state levels. Then subsequently, Chapter 7 will observe how the context and teachers’ perceptions of constraints influence agency, before in Chapter 8, I discuss how dominant imaginaries are (re)produced and transformed through teaching at the local level. Finally, in Chapter 9, I dissect the main findings, develop conclusions, and make suggestions for future research.
2. Theoretical Approach

In this chapter, I provide an outline of the theoretical framework that this research adopts before developing the conceptual scheme that guides the analysis. Rather than ascribing to a particular theoretical lens or pre-existing framework, this research seeks to build upon and combine an ensemble of different theories, which are to some degree aligned with Critical Realism. This ‘cherry-picking’ approach is deemed legitimate for numerous reasons. One being that some theories offset weaknesses of others. Another being that the addition of elements from some theories are appropriate given the phenomena under control.

2.1. Epistemology and Ontology - Critical Realism

This research employs Critical Realism as its epistemological and ontological basis. A critical realist ontology posits that there is a real and objective social world that exists largely independent of our knowledge of it (Sayer, 2006). While something may be socially constructed, once it is already constructed it gains a degree of independence, and it continues to be (re)produced and transformed by many others (Sayer, 2006, p.99). Within critical realism, this becomes the ‘real’ which “refers to the structures, properties and powers of objects (objects defined here as physical, social theories, mental phenomena, and so on) that act as causal powers in the real world.” (Robertson & Dale, 2015, p.152). Despite the real ontology, the subjectivity of knowledge and experience is highly important (Sayer, 2006). Critical realism makes a distinction between the ‘real’ objects and the terms used to describe, account for, and understand them (Bryman, 2016, p.25). A three-tiered system separates the ‘real’ from the ‘actual’, being what happens if and when certain powers are activated; and the 'experiential', the empirical experiences of actors; which implies that an inability to observe or experience something does not preclude its existence (Robertson & Dale, 2015, p.151; Sayer, 2000).

Ultimately, Critical Realism entails a focus on causation (Sayer, 2006). The role of researchers is underpinned by generating a better understanding of the real mechanisms that produce beliefs and actions in the social world (Corson, 1991, Robertson & Dale, 2015). In this research’s limited scope of the social world, the key mechanisms observed are not exhaustive but entail domination, racial subordination and national identity construction. Each of these mechanisms has structures (such as hierarchies and institutions) and properties (such as imaginaries), that have causal powers to instigate exclusion and discrimination (Robertson & Dale, 2015). The consideration of context is fundamental to critical realist explanations “because it serves to shed light on the conditions that promote or impede the operation of the causal mechanism” (Bryman, 2016, p.25). Context is crucial in this study, not only across vertical spheres of influence at the national, state and local levels, but also horizontally.
comparing very different states, municipalities and schools. Furthermore, while this research is inherently sociological, it is also underpinned by emancipatory and normative ambitions (Corson, 1991).

2.2. Critical Race Theory as a Worldview

Building on a critical realist epistemology and ontology, this research adopts Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its worldview, in the sense that it views society as fundamentally racially stratified, and that race can over-determine an individual’s socio-economic and political outcomes (Hylton, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McKnight & Chandler, 2012). Racism as a concept is highly contested and, in many cases, reduced to extreme acts of discrimination by groups such as neo-Nazis and the extreme right (Essed, 2001). For critical race theorists, racism is not only restricted to such prejudiced actions but to wider forces that saturate society as a whole, through both institutional discrimination and everyday life (Essed, 2001; Gillborn, 2014, p.30). Ladson-Billings (1998, p.9) argues that CRT is compatible with critical realism because perceiving race as solely socially constructed denies the reality of a racialised society and its material impacts. In an article titled Racism as Policy, critical race theorist David Gillborn (2014) argues that education policy is one of the principle means by which racism is maintained and presented as normal in society. On the other hand, Ladson-Billings (1998) stresses that determining CRT as objective denies some of the problematic aspects of race, such as how to decide who fits into which racial categories. Although this research frequently uses labels such as black, white and mestizo, it is not seeking to essentialise groups and identities (Hylton, 2012), but rather to treat them as imaginaries.

2.3. Imaginaries

Taylor (2003) sees a social imaginary as a descriptive yet prescriptive framework of how things are. Social imaginaries are embedded in values, ideas and events which become a way of thinking shared in a community that gives everyday practices meaning and legitimacy (Rizvi, 2014). Social imaginaries can be seen present through images, myths, folklore, legends, music and mass media (Rizvi, 2006; Taylor, 2003). However, imaginaries are not fixed, but are rather reconstituted over periods of time to reflect shifting economic, political and cultural conditions (Rizvi, 2006). While imaginaries are attractive in societies due to their role of imagining a horizontally egalitarian society (Grant, 2014), they also serve to make policies more authoritative in the sense that they add legitimacy (Rizvi, 2006). In Anderson’s (1991) widely cited book about nationalism, he raises the importance of imagination by questioning how nations leverage emotional power on the part of their people through making them feel part of a collective project. Nationalism is imagined because even within the smallest countries, people will not know their compatriots but will still have some relationship with them within their own minds. It is “a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal

While many imaginaries start off as theories held by a small group of people, their success in establishing dominance requires the infiltration into wider society (Anderson, 1991; Taylor, 2003). Fanon (1965) argued that without the invention of a national imaginary it is difficult for any anticolonial struggle to succeed. The promotion of an imaginary that views the nation as a homogenous unit seeks to reduce conflicts along lines of difference, and the mestizaje imaginary emerged as a way to unify Mexico by re-imagining Mexicanidad (Weltman-Cisneros & Mendez Tello, 2013). Mestizaje provides a racialised image of the prototypical Mexican while simultaneously presenting itself as a path to post-racial harmony (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013a; Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016; Saldívar, 2014). Yet mestizaje’s representation as anti-racist is central to the limited public acknowledgement of racism within Mexico (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016). Moreover, Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar (2016, p.521) postulate that the hegemonic nature of mestizaje is founded upon “its promise of inclusion” and that theoretically, anyone can be included.

2.3.1. Alterity & Blackness

By dictating ‘who is in’ and ‘who is out’, ethnic forms of nationalism are often about difference and as such, imagined communities are rarely wholly inclusive13 (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). Through the emergence of imagined communities, nationalism can thus create and foster relationships with ‘othered’ out-groups (Hall, 1990; Korostelina, 2011). Wade (2005) asserts that that mestizaje does not only promote homogenisation but also differentiation as blackness and indigenousness are required as the necessary other. But while similarities can be drawn between blackness and indigeneousness to the extent that both are subaltern, othered and culturally distinct from the dominant groups; representations and experiences also differ widely (Wade, 2013). Blackness is marginalised across several spectrums. Blackness is heavily stigmatised (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013a), ridiculed (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013b), and perceived as incompatible to dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad (Vaughn, 2013; Zárate, 2016). Furthermore, Fanon (1952) argues that the asymmetries of power within racialised imaginaries become constitutive elements within othered identities such that ideas of racial superiority become self-inscribed. Such racialisation is also beset with a range of gendered elements too as black women finding themselves at the bottom of the racial hierarchy have often been portrayed as sexually loose and available (Hall, 1993; Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016; Wade, 2013)14.

While imaginaries are often dictated by dominant national formations, they have “different points of origin, different axes, travel through different routes and have different

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13 Well known exceptions may be Brazil (the racial democracy) and South Africa (the rainbow nation), but their levels of inclusivity in practice remain subject to debate
14 Gendered representations were investigated but do not emerge in this thesis to a great extent due to time, word limits and a greater focus on race and national identity construction.
relationships to institutional structures in different communities and nations" (Rizvi, 2006, p.197). Thus, it can be argued that Mexicanidad, blackness, and mestizaje have a fluidity that prevent them from being merely oppressive imaginaries (Wade, 2005). For example, authors have described how mestizaje can be transformed. The idea of mestizaje as a mosaic of difference implies that there is space for blackness and indigenousness, not only as candidates for future elimination (Wade, 2005, p.255). Cases exist where mestizaje has been expanded to include blacks, sometimes at the expense of whites (Hoffman & Rinaudo, 2014; Lewis, 2016; Wade, 2005). In other cases, it has been rejected completely (Hoffman & Rinaudo, 2014). However, at the level of the dominant national imaginary, a more inclusive notion of mestizaje would need to change the inherent characteristic of blanqueamiento, which favours whiteness and devalues blackness and indigenousness (Wade, 2005).

2.4. Social (Re)production in Education

2.4.1. Power and the Theory of Practice

The contested nature of imaginaries highlights the need for their constant (re)production to maintain dominance (Bourdieu, 2004; Rizvi, 2006). Education, particularly within the social sciences, is a fundamental tool in securing dominance alongside the imposition of ideas through the workplace, healthcare systems, the media, the army and everyday practices (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). This research positions Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice as a framework for understanding the power dynamics and struggles within educational systems (Burridge, 2014). Exploring the nature of social reproduction, Bourdieu argues that practices are largely mediated on the one hand by one’s habitus, being the recurring patterns of outlook such as beliefs, value, language, practices, that take place in everyday experiences (Mills, 2006), and on the other hand by fields, being the contested site of social practice. This thesis does not draw heavily on these notions but rather on Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2000) concept of pedagogic action.

2.4.2. Textbooks as Symbolic Violence

The value of the cultural capital that underpins the habitus and thus one’s practices is ultimately arbitrary15 (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Yet, cultural capital translates into power as the dominant group is able to determine what are the appropriate imaginaries to be inculcated in others through the education system (McKnight & Chandler, 2012, p.84). Such (re)production of imaginaries constitutes pedagogic action which "is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000, p.5). Pedagogic action is arbitrary in the sense that what is deemed as legitimate corresponds to the objective interests of dominant groups at the expense of the

15 The habitus is also underpinned by economic, political and social capital (Mills, 2006)
marginalised. Dominant groups establish the content of pedagogic action, the mode and the length of inculcation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Pedagogic action, such as the (re)production of dominant imaginaries takes place across three realms: diffuse education\(^{16}\), family education; and institutionalised education.

Bourdieu and Passeron (2000, p.31) note that pedagogic action entails pedagogic work, being "the process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a durable training...capable of perpetuating itself after pedagogic action has ceased." For certain imaginaries to retain their dominance it is necessary that the pedagogic work to (re)produce them is effective. The effectiveness of pedagogic work is measured to the degree at which it is durable, transposable and exhaustive (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Durability and transposability reflect the lasting and transferable nature of imaginaries beyond their temporal and spatial origins. Furthermore, in order for an imaginary to be exhaustive, the imposition of the imaginary needs to be complete, operating throughout institutionalised, diffuse and family education. Pedagogic work on the one hand imposes the recognition and legitimacy of dominant imaginaries on members of dominated groups, yet, at the same time delegitimises the dominated groups' own cultures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000, p.41). While the authors argue that exclusion is the main force of how the cultures of other groups are delegitimised, this can be extended to the devaluation of knowledge and practices.

Rather curiously, the idea that dominant imaginaries are a form of symbolic violence does not mean that they are widely contested. Instead dominant imaginaries become heavily internalised by the dominated groups. Central to this domination is that "the mechanisms through which they contribute to the reproduction of the established order and to the perpetuation of domination remain hidden" (Bourdieu, 2004, p.188). Bourdieu (2004) argues that these mechanisms and the arbitrariness of pedagogic action are euphemised, so that they can be seen as legitimate and are naturalised. Teaching, particularly in primary education, can be seen as highly representative of pedagogic work in the sense that it is presented as objective and neutral within society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). In the analysis of teaching, I have therefore assessed the extent to which racism is avoided or deemed insignificant by teachers and within the curriculum. Appreciating the wider conceptualisations of the curriculum, in this research I am focused on the formal curriculum, and textbooks in particular\(^{17}\). These textbooks are particularly relevant to this research given that they are perceived as the main tool provided by the Ministry of Education (SEP) (Ornelas, 2016).

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\(^{16}\) Diffuse education refers to all the education carried out by other ‘educated’ members of a social group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000), such as through everyday society, the media and museums. Diffuse education with family education can be perceived under the umbrella of informal education.

\(^{17}\) In this research, teachers frequently referred to the curriculum as being the Planes y Programas, in combination with the textbooks. As such in this thesis references to curriculum primarily refer to this combination.
2.5. Teacher Agency

2.5.1. Structuration Theory and Capability

Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) ultimately explain how such arbitrary dominant imaginaries are internalised within the habitus of individuals and consequently (re)produced in society. One of the main criticisms of this theory is that it is too deterministic and fails to acknowledge teacher agency, change and resistance (Collins, 2009). In this research, I discard the notion of the habitus and contend that it is important to acknowledge the transformative potential of teaching, in the sense that teachers can use their agency to transform as well as facilitate (re)production (Horner et al, 2015). To explore further how teaching is influenced by imaginaries, constraints and positionality, the final element of this theoretical framework draws on Giddens’ (1984) conceptualisation of agency within Structuration Theory. While there are similarities between Giddens’ and Bourdieu’s approaches, the key differences surround the depth of power and the knowledgeability towards such power (Ortner, 2006). Rather than Bourdieu’s determinism, Giddens (1979) uses the notion of the dialectic of control to argue that power relations are reciprocal and depend on actions of both oppressor and oppressed. For example, teachers may be subject to firm requirements placed by educational authorities, but the educational authorities ultimately rely on teachers to implement the curriculum as desired (Shilling, 1992).

Structuration Theory centralises the agency of teachers, students and policy makers as the main actors that (re)produce or transform society (Giddens, 1984; Shilling, 1992). Hypothetically, any pattern of social conduct can be changed by agents acting differently than they have done previously (Giddens, 1984, p.9). However, the agency of actors to change any pattern of social conduct is founded upon an agent’s capability in addition to knowledgeability (Giddens, 1984, p.14-15). Capability is subject to position and context, being the limits to the feasible options an agent can take whereas knowledgeability is defined by Giddens (1984, p.375) as "everything which actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others, drawn upon in the production and reproduction of that action”.

Expanding on the concept of capability, position refers to the positioning of actors in relation to social identities and structures. Therefore, this research has taken into account the position of participants relative to their own identities, within institutional hierarchies, unionisation, and belonging to social organisations. Regarding context, Giddens argues that it involves the time-space boundaries around interaction as well as the co-presence of actors. To this end, this study included detailed analysis of local contexts and consideration of the co-presence of other actors such as students. For the purposes of capability, these contexts manifest as material constraints, sanctions and structural constraints (Giddens, 1984). Material constraints are those imposed by the material world and the physical qualities of the body. On the one hand this entails observing infrastructure and didactic resources, but also taking into account the indivisibility of the body and the effect this has on teaching. Power,
as a source of constraint, is experienced in the form of sanctions, "ranging from the direct application of force or violence...to the mild expression of disapproval" (Giddens, 1984, p.175). Teacher evaluation and requirements around completing the textbooks are deemed as possible sanctions. Finally, structural constraints are often perceived as objective structural properties, and could incorporate aspects such as supervision, hierarchy and scheduling – in this thesis, I also contend that the textbooks are structural constraints. However, rather than fixed structural objects, the operation of structural constraints is contingent on context and a teacher’s knowledgeability (Jessop, 2012).

2.5.2. Knowledgeability

Knowledgeability consists of both discursive and practical consciousness (Shilling, 1992). Discursive consciousness recognises that agents routinely monitor their own activities, those of others, and the contexts they operate within (Giddens, 1984; Shilling, 1992). However, discursive consciousness alone is not sufficient in understanding why agents act in certain ways and is limited in the sense that different levels of cultural capital will affect how agents can articulate information (Shilling, 1992). Instead, practical consciousness reflects the actions of individuals, which even if individuals cannot explain upfront the reasons why they do particular things, their actions are deemed to be based on some tacit knowledge of their circumstances and surroundings (Giddens, 1984; Shilling, 1992). The practical consciousness contains the practices that individuals perform on a routine basis even though the reasons behind them are not immediately evident to be discussed.

Structuration Theory argues that social reproduction is embedded within the routine nature of the practical consciousness. However, the practical consciousness does not explain what teachers want by adhering to the routine. Instead, adherence to the routine is underpinned by the unconscious, which entails ‘gut feeling’ actions of individual agents (Burridge, 2014). Giddens (1984) argues that there is an unconscious motivation for ontological security, the confidence individuals have that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be. “Regularities in behaviour” represent stability and reliability in the social world (Giddens, 1979, p.123), and as such the appeal of predictability directs agents to (re)produce, and thus inhibits transformative change. Imaginaries are closely connected to the notion of ontological security. Jessop (2012) argues that without imaginaries, individuals struggle to make sense of the world, and collectively, actors cannot make decisions. An unconscious motivation for ontological security means many teachers would be reticent to challenge the same imaginaries that mediate their practices.

Therefore, Structuration theory argues that knowledgeability is bounded by the unconscious. However, the unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action also bind knowledgeability (Giddens, 1984). All actions carried out by individuals have both intended and unintended consequences on social structures and people (Burridge, 2014). Shilling (1992) argues that a tendency in research is to overemphasise the intentionality of a teacher in retaining certain norms and practices. While a teacher may
clearly have intentions in what they teach, the (re)production of social relations is often not intentional, but rather an unintended consequence. Furthermore, such unintended consequences of action systematically feed back into the unacknowledged conditions of further acts enabling the teacher to unknowingly perform the same practices. Here, position is key; Giddens (1984, p.11) notes that where teachers are further removed from the consequences of an act in time and space, the less likely that those consequences are to be intentional. However, it is awareness of the unacknowledged conditions and/or unintended consequences of action which is ultimately vital. Absent of changes to positionality, increased awareness can increase an individual’s knowledgeability and therefore agency for transformation (Burridge, 2014). Reflexivity, either internally, through socialisation or training, is deemed as key to increase awareness (Burridge, 2014; Giddens, 1984).

In this research study, I have been limited in my ability to observe the (re)production or transformation of anti-black imaginaries over long time periods. Instead, I argue that to be able to imagine differently is a precursor to be able to act differently. Giddens’ conceptualisation of agency is particularly suited to this. Teaching is limited by several aspects, most tangibly in the material constraints and sanctions. However, teaching is also constrained by the teacher’s knowledgeability of structural constraints and the circumstances and intentions of their actions – all of which are subject to the imagination of the teacher.

2.6. Conclusions on Theoretical Framework

Bourdieu’s and Giddens’ sociological frameworks are more frequently conceived in terms of class. Under a CRT worldview, race becomes the organising construct within the social world and the theories instead become helpful in explaining how marginalisation and racialised imaginaries are (re)produced and/or transformed (McKnight and Chandler, 2012; Rollock, 2012). It must be stressed that components, rather than the theories as a whole, have been combined to produce this theoretical framework. Combined with the concept of imaginaries, pedagogic action is adopted to explain how dominant groups use the education system as a means to sustain power. Dominant groups that hold the most economic, political and social capital are at times able to maintain cultural dominance that extends beyond the confines of political cycles and changes in wealth distribution, ultimately highlighting the importance of pedagogic work. Operating across institutionalised and non-institutionalised (family and diffuse) education, pedagogic work serves a fundamental role in legitimising the imaginaries of dominant groups while neglecting the beliefs and practices of the marginalised. Yet, this does not provide a complete account of how transformation comes about. Neither does it explain why certain individuals, particularly within dominant groups, are better positioned to purposely (re)produce or transform imaginaries.

Introducing Structuration Theory allows for a greater consideration of the agency of individual actors, and whether, how and why individual actors can either (re)produce or transform these imaginaries (Burridge, 2014). Position and context are key elements of transformative agency, however, differences in transformative agency can often emerge as a
result of the knowledgeability of structural constraints, motivations, and the consequences and conditions of actions (Giddens, 1984). Where there is a higher level of knowledgeability, the agent is said to have more power to make intentional transformational change; with lower levels of knowledgeability, it is understood that they will be more likely to (re)produce existing practices. Hypothetically, those in dominant groups who have benefitted from higher levels of education and socialisation are better positioned to make transformative change, or deliberately (re)produce structural inequalities. Nevertheless, increasing reflexivity of less knowledgeable individuals such as teachers, can increase knowledgeability such that the teacher has more transformative agency.

Ultimately, the mixture of the two sociological theories in this framework yields hybrid conclusions on the nature of (re)production and transformation. However, this combination provides a comprehensive basis for analysing the complex interplay between structure and agency across the Mexican educational fields and, more specifically, the primary education system.
2.6.1. Conceptual Model

Figure 1 - Conceptual Model
Starting from the bottom, this conceptual model uses Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2000) conceptualisation of structure through the notions of pedagogic action and work. Pedagogic action and work take place across the interrelated realms of institutionalised, family and diffuse education. Exploring institutionalised education in more detail, the top part emphasises the vertical axis of this research. Dominant imaginaries at the national and state scales often become embodied in their respective textbooks. At the local level, the model draws more heavily on Giddens’ (1984) conceptualisation of agency, to factor in the potential for transformation. Agency consists of capability (context and position) and knowledgability. A teacher receives the textbooks but the resulting teaching practices depend on the agency of the teacher. Hypothetically, the teacher can either (re)produce or transform the dominant national and state imaginaries embedded in the textbooks. Local imaginaries impact teaching at two points. Firstly, imaginaries are a source of unconscious motivation that shape teaching. Greater levels of knowledgability on how imaginaries motivate action reduce the impact of these imaginaries. Together with greater knowledgability on the unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions of action, the teacher is said to have greater agency to transform. However, increasing knowledgability is dependent on increasing reflexivity which is also inhibited by the same imaginaries. Ultimately, transformation requires increased reflexivity at the individual level which in turn alters which imaginaries are dominant through their legitimisation or delegitimisation.
3. Research Methods

The wide ranging nature of this research has necessitated a variety of methods. In this chapter, I begin by operationalising my main concepts and describing the unit of analysis. Subsequently, I outline the research design and the justifications behind the design before I provide details on the individual data collection and data analysis methods. Towards the end of this chapter, I discuss the ethical considerations and methodological limitations before a summary is given in Section 3.9.

3.1. Operationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogic Work</td>
<td>Imaginaries</td>
<td>Alterity</td>
<td>In what ways is racism experienced through extreme acts of discrimination?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How is institutional racism perceived and experienced?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How is everyday racism experienced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afrodescendencia/Blackness</td>
<td>What are the dominant imaginaries of blackness?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the gendered dimensions of these imaginaries?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the perceived differences between afrodescendencia and blackness?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexicanidad</td>
<td>What are the dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>What is the relationship between Mexicanidad and mestizaje?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mestizaje</td>
<td>What are the dominant imaginaries of mestizaje?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenousness</td>
<td>To what extent are indigenousness and blackness linked?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>What are the dominant imaginaries of whiteness?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Education</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>To what extent do museums, the media and everyday society reproduce dominant anti-black imaginaries?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Devaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Euphemising</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diffuse Education</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>To what extent do museums, the media and everyday society reproduce dominant anti-black imaginaries?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devaluation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Euphemising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutionalised Education (through Textbooks)</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>Mentions of blackness and afrodescendencia in textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devaluation</td>
<td>Representation of blackness and afrodescendencia in textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euphemising</td>
<td>Avoidance of discussions of racism within textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Agency</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Capability</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>How does the teachers characteristics influence knowledgeability?</td>
<td>How does unionisation influence knowledgeability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>How do material constraints influence teaching?</td>
<td>How do perceived sanctions influence teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How do structural constraints influence teaching?</td>
<td>How do textbooks behave as structural constraints?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeability</td>
<td>Discursive Consciousness</td>
<td>How do teachers perceive racism in Mexico?</td>
<td>How do teachers perceive the role of the social sciences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practical Consciousness</td>
<td>How do teachers reflect on their role in identity construction?</td>
<td>How do teachers reflect on imaginaries of mestizaje, mexicanidad and blackness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>How do imaginaries inhibit reflexivity?</td>
<td>How do teachers reflect on the conditions of their actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>In what ways do the teachers actions contribute to the reproduction of anti-black imaginaries?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>In what ways do the teachers actions contribute to the transformation of anti-black imaginaries?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Operationalisation: Green = Exploratory; Blue = Interim; Orange = Comparative
3.2. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis refers to what this research is examining. The research is ultimately two-fold. First, it seeks to identify the problematic relationship between blackness and dominant imaginaries of mexicanidad. In this manner, the first unit of analysis is imaginaries. Secondly, this research seeks to explore how this relationship is (re)produced. Thus, teaching as a mechanism of social reproduction is the second unit of analysis. Domination, national identity construction and racial subordination entail the forms of social reproduction being considered in this thesis.

3.3. Research Design

3.3.1. Justification

This research study uses a mixed-methods research design. Often used by researchers adopting a critical realist epistemology, the mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods offers opportunities to use the strength of some methods to counterbalance the weaknesses of other methods (Axinn & Pearce, 2006; Mertens, 2007). Similarly, mixed-methods is recommended within the CRT framework in the sense that the use of mixed-methods can be utilised to generate a multiplicity of perspectives (Hylton, 2012). Furthermore, with respect to theoretical gaps, the studies within the existing literature tend to be either confined to qualitative or quantitative methods – the use of mixed-methods facilitates a broader panorama. I have used an emergent embedded design in which quantitative data is embedded within a three-phase largely qualitative design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I believe that mixed-methods are justified on the basis of completeness (Bryman, 2006). The purpose of the supplemental quantitative data analysis included in the interim and comparative phases has provided more generalizable findings about the textbooks and constraints that limit the agency of a teacher. While the quantitative data is subservient to the wider qualitative analysis, it has several key benefits (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Firstly, it is a less resource intensive method of analysing textbooks and contexts. Second, insight from the quantitative data analysis of the interim phase has been used in instrument construction for the comparative phase. Finally, the different methods focus on different sub-questions – this potentially allows the different types of results to be published separately.

The research is heterarchical and multifaceted, and incorporates a vertical-horizontal comparative study. This vertical-horizontal comparative study design is based on the principles of the Comparative Case Study (CCS) by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). Critical of traditional case study methods, the authors argue that CCS facilitates seeing how processes unfold in unpredictable ways across space and time (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p.907). CCS proposes a comparison across three axes: the horizontal, the vertical and the transversal. The
horizontal enables a comparison of how certain policies and phenomena unfold in distinct locations, taking into consideration different contexts. The vertical requires paying attention to scale and is particularly useful in examining how power relations mediate and are mediated by multi-scalar political-economic forces, also demonstrating the impact of different institutions and social movements. Finally, the transversal postulates that it is important to analyse time. While logistical constraints prevent observing the transversal in this study, the historical processes that have formed particular local sites are taken into consideration and further elaborated in Chapter 4 (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992).

Figure 2 - Vertical/Horizontal Design

The above diagram illustrates the different vertical and horizontal axes considered in this research study. Across the vertical, the focus includes the national, state, municipal and school scales, whereas the horizontal incorporates different states, municipalities and schools. CCS is deemed appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it is appealing to studies focused on processes that seek to develop a better understanding of how certain mechanisms affect certain outcomes (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Secondly, context is central to both this study and CCS in the sense that locations are influenced by political, economic and social factors. Thirdly, CCS is informed by critical theories that have a strong focus on power and inequality, which align with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Finally, the use of cases creates richer theoretical insights that are transferable to other times and places (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

The combination of mixed-methods with the CCS approach does fashion additional complexity to the methodology but I believe this has been outweighed by the aforementioned benefits. In the following section a procedural diagram follows to untangle the methodological complexity inherent in this research design in line with the recommendations of Ivankova (2006) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).
3.3.2. Procedures & Integration

The above mixed-methods design is at times sequential and at other times concurrent. In this paragraph I briefly indicate the different points of integration within this design. Integration refers to the stage or stages in the research process where the mixing of methods occurs, ranging from the beginning of the study to the integration of the findings (Ivankova et al., 2006). The first phase is Exploratory and uses qualitative methods to highlight local understandings, experiences and conceptualisations of the relationship between blackness and dominant imaginaries of mexicanidad. These findings were used in the creation of instruments for the quantitative content analysis of the Interim phase. The findings of both the exploratory and interim phases then informed the main Comparative phase that explored the role of the teaching in the (re)production/transformation of dominant imaginaries. The final point of integration is the combined interpretation and the resulting inferences, also known as meta-inferences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The following section briefly discusses the sampling practices and gatekeepers before outlining the individual strands in more detail.

3.3.1. Sampling (Research Participants) & Gatekeepers

The selection of research participants and the gatekeepers who facilitated my access varied across the different phases. In the exploratory phase, sampling was done on the basis of convenience and snowballing. I had two types of research participants, academics solely focused on education and individuals familiar with afrodescendencia. For the former, I was
introduced to the head of the Education Department at the Universidad de Las Americas Puebla (UDLAP) by my co-supervisor, Enrique. The head of the Education Department acted as a gatekeeper in terms of granting me access to the other professors within the department. With regards to academics and human rights practitioners on afrodescendencia, I had contacted them by email whereas my access to civil society was facilitated by one of the academics, Cristina Masferrer León, who is also cited frequently in this thesis, and Olivia Bwalya, a one-year IDS student who was working on a similar topic.

For the main comparative phase, I wanted to ensure a broad range of participants. In Cholula (Puebla), I did not have a gatekeeper per se but benefitted from a research authorisation letter from the UDLAP. With this letter, I went alone and spoke to the principals at several schools, who then gave me access to teachers. In Cuajinicuilapa (Guerrero), I was assisted by the CSO, México Negro, who introduced me to the principals of each school. Given that I wanted to have a wide range of participants on the basis of gender, class taught, and school, I applied purposive sampling techniques. Similarly, I wanted to ensure a high level of comparability across the two municipalities as recommended for case study research by Bryman (2016). Therefore, 3 schools were chosen in both municipalities. Within each school, I did 4 interviews with teachers, one each from grade 3 to 6. Furthermore, stratified sampling was applied in the sense that the same gender balance was applied in both municipalities (not possible on a school basis), being 8 female teachers and 4 male teachers, on the basis of the national teacher gender statistics (SEP, 2017).

3.4. Exploratory Phase

The goal of this phase was to draw on the expertise and experiences of civil society leaders, academics and individuals in strengthening my knowledge on the Mexican education system, afrodescendencia, blackness, mestizaje and mexicanidad. Simultaneously, this phase sought to answer the first research question 18. My personal interpretations of imaginaries of race from a British background are very different to those found in Mexico. In response to this, I included this phase to highlight the experiences of those who would be considered Afro-Mexican or black. Using this population is supported by the argument that racialized others who occupy the positions towards the edges of society are somewhat advantaged in their ability to understand and conceptualise race and racism (Essed, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2008; Rollock, 2012). The vast majority of this data collection took place in the first six weeks of fieldwork.

3.4.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method as I was allowed a greater level of control. However, given the exploratory nature of this phase, many of the interviews had

18 “How are dominant imaginaries of Mexican national identity ‘anti-black’?”
significant unstructured periods. Nevertheless, I used interview schedules for each participant that had been based on prior research. A total of 13 semi-structured interviews were held with a mixture of academics, civil society leaders and a human rights practitioner. The interviews were transcribed and coded using Atlas.ti.

3.4.2. Focus Group (Secondary)

Given the focus on imaginaries, focus groups are particularly helpful in uncovering shared understandings. The fluid discussion can illuminate understandings that may not emerge in one-on-one interviews. This focus group in this research is classed as secondary as my access to it was by luck rather than through any planning of my own. While at the EPN, I was invited to take part in a focus group discussion on youth and afrodescendencia, with a segment dedicated to the role of the education system. That the discussion was so closely aligned to my fieldwork topic was highly advantageous and the other participants (mostly teenagers and young adults) agreed to the recording and transcribing of the discussion. The focus group was transcribed and coded in Atlas.ti alongside the semi-structured interviews.

3.4.3. Autoethnography

In this thesis, I have used autoethnography as a parallel exploration of the participants' and researcher's experiences while undertaking fieldwork (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I chose to use autoethnography as a research method to take advantage of my own positionality as a black researcher that to a degree represented shared experiences of alterity with local blacks and Afro-Mexicans who do not fit in with dominant imaginaries of mexicanidad (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016). Autoethnography enabled me to experience some of the anti-black racism that would not have been possible to observe without larger amounts of observation. Similarly, autoethnography enabled me to understand how blackness is perceived in relation to Mexicanidad in different geographical areas. Moreover, autoethnography demonstrated how my own knowledgeability expanded during the fieldwork period.

While I am in a position of relative privilege, consistent with CRT, autoethnography is an appropriate way in which stories and the positionality of the researcher can be combined as a method of privileging the experiences of marginalised ‘others’ (Chávez, 2012). Methodologically, the collected data has been in the form of field notes. However, autoethnography has several drawbacks. Firstly, autoethnography is limited by my ability to understand and reflect on my experiences (Chávez, 2012). Secondly, autoethnography suffers from an inability to claim generalisability from my sole account (Chávez, 2012). Finally, another challenge is balancing self-reflexivity and self-indulgence (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016; Méndez, 2013). In response to these challenges, autoethnography is used but has been positioned as a relatively small part of the overall methods.

19 I spent time in 10 of the 32 federal entities of Mexico
3.4.4. Analysis, Integration & Data Quality

The transcriptions from the interviews and the focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves the organising of codes and themes into thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2011). From a procedural perspective basic themes are generated from the text, which are then grouped into organising themes and subsequently the organising themes are grouped into global themes (Figure 4).

![Example Thematic Network](image)

**Figure 4 - Example Thematic Network**

In terms of mixed-methods integration, the themes developed through this process had two main results. Firstly, the themes were used to create dictionaries for the quantitative content analysis. Secondly, the themes helped the construction of interview schedules and observation guides for the comparative phase. From the perspective of data quality, I have sought to use triangulation of the different methods as a way to ensure higher levels of validity and reliability. Triangulation allows the cross-checking of findings from the different methods and participants (Bryman, 2016). That there were several participants, including myself, helps improve the accuracy of the collected data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). While there are limited criteria to evaluate autoethnography specifically (Méndez, 2013), one way of improving reliability is for clear and explicit information on the background and motives of the researcher (Hughes et al., 2012). In this research, I have sought to make clear my positionality and personal research motives.
3.5. Interim Phase – The ‘National’

As established in the Theoretical Framework, the textbooks are a fundamental tool in establishing dominant national imaginaries. While teachers mediate and transform the information within a textbook, and students do not uncritically process all the contained messages, the effect of textbooks remains pervasive (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). This phase aims to answer the second sub-question. Thus, this phase is orientated towards the appearances and representations of afrodescendencia and blackness within textbooks, focusing on the national scale. Guided by interviews in the exploratory phase and existing literature, the sample of books for consideration was limited to the social sciences, consisting of History, Geography and Civic and Ethic Formation. Furthermore, my interviewees and existing literature (Pérez Rodriguez, 2012) have determined that the most important years for identity construction are between the 3rd and 6th grade of primary school.

3.5.1. Quantitative Content Analysis

I used Quantitative Content Analysis (QCA) as the method for analysing textbooks in line with Neuendorf (2010) and Wallace and Allen (2008). Neuendorf (2010, p.277) defines QCA as a "summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method, including attention to objectivity/intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing". Given the large amount of information within the sample of textbooks, QCA was appealing to me as a fast and effective way of reviewing the textbooks. Furthermore, QCA is transparent, flexible, unobtrusive and can be done with relative ease (Bryman, 2016).

Neuendorf (2010) notes that for an adequately prepared QCA there must be theoretical backing, a review of past research, a clearly defined scope and population for investigation, and a decision of whether to use human coding and/or computer coding. The tests, dictionary of search terms, concepts, scope and population that underpinned this phase were supported by an extensive literature review, findings from the first stage and also immersion in the message pool which entailed a word count across all the books. I performed QCA using a computer-aided text analysis (CATA) programme called YoshiKoder. The sample resulted in a population of 10 books due to the fact that there are no History or Geography textbooks for the 3rd grade. I then undertook the analysis using four different tests: (1) the relative frequency and distribution of afrodescendencia; (2) the associated words that appeared with those terms; (3) the use of certain inappropriate words; and (4), the level of discussion of race and discrimination.

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20 “To what extent do textbooks recognise the historical and contemporary influence of afrodescendencia and blackness at the national and state scales in Puebla and Guerrero?”
3.5.2. Data Quality & Integration

Reliability is typically an issue with human coding where a sufficient level of training is often required. However, the use of CATA offers speed, standardization, and guaranteed reliability (Neuendorf, 2010, p.281). On the other hand, content validity is a concern particularly with custom dictionary development (Neuendorf, 2010). While the content validity remains a limitation, I tried to reduce its impact through the triangulation of different sources when constructing the dictionaries. Additional secondary data was used both in this phase and elsewhere in this study, including the Planes y Programas curricular documents (SEP, 2016b) and parameters regarding teacher evaluation (SEB, 2016).

3.6. Main Comparative Phase

The main comparative phase was the largest part of the research and took three months in total. In this phase I focused on the vertical and horizontal comparisons across the state, municipal and school levels. The aim of this phase was to investigate the agency of the teacher with respect to the (re)production and/or transformation of dominant anti-black imaginaries. This phase mainly sought to answer the final two sub-questions21. In contrast to the prior two phases, this phase contains both quantitative and qualitative methods that were undertaken in a concurrent manner before being integrated at the stage of interpretation.

3.6.1. QUAN-QUAL Content Analysis – The ‘State’

In this phase, I centred the research on the state textbooks. In the current curriculum there is limited state autonomy with respect to the textbooks. However, all states produce a single 3rd grade textbook called La entidad donde vivo22. Replicating the methods of the interim phase with the same dictionaries, I compared the frequency and distributions of appearances of afrodescendencia in the Puebla and Guerrero textbooks, as well as tests on the associated words. Subsequently, I analysed the textbooks using qualitative content analysis to provide a more subjective interpretation of the content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using a directed approach, I undertook the analysis using findings from the quantitative analysis in addition to the theory, specifically looking at the inclusion of Afro-Mexicans after the colonial period, representations, and pedagogical activities within the textbooks. Nevertheless, a criticism of directed content analysis is that researchers tend to approach the

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21 “How do teachers perceive their agency, and the role of social sciences in the (re)production or transformation of a Mexican national identity at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?” and “How is the teaching of blackness in primary education influenced by dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad, job constraints and teacher positionality at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?”
22 Translation – The entity that I live in
data with a strong bias meaning that they find evidence that is more confirmatory than contradictory to theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

3.6.2. Descriptive Statistics – The ‘Municipal’

Probably the smallest and simplest part of the methodology was the use of descriptive statistics. Using secondary data regarding municipalities, this information was analysed and included to help represent some of the structural and material constraints faced by teachers. The use of secondary data means that reliability and validity is subject to the sources of information (Bryman, 2016). However, in this research I have only used national accredited surveys from the SEP, INEE23 and CONEVAL24.

3.6.3. Semi-Structured Interviews and Participant Observation – The ‘School’

In this phase I undertook the bulk of the comparison across the horizontal axes. In addition to the interviews with teachers, three interviews were held with supervisors and principals as secondary participants. I used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of how teachers understood their own role, rationalised their actions, and how they perceived afrodescendencia, blackness and Mexicanidad. Interviews were transcribed and then analysed in Atlas.ti using thematic analysis. These interviews were also complimented by 4 hours of participant observation in each municipality. Participant observation involved the immersion within the classroom, observing and participating in activities before making field notes (Bryman, 2016). This participant observation sought to get a better understanding of constraints faced by teachers. However, perhaps the biggest flaw of this research surrounds the limited nature of the observations. Observations were limited due mainly to logistical issues, which meant that developing an understanding of practices over a long period of time was not feasible.

3.6.4. Mixed Methods Analysis and Data Quality

After the completion of the quantitative and qualitative analysis, I made comparisons at the point of interpretation, using side-by-side comparison for merged data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This involved presenting the separate strands together in discussion of the results and the conclusion, where I have compared the findings from the analysis of the textbooks with the responses of teachers. This combination of quantitative and qualitative findings has enabled the exploration of contradictions and similarities between the textbooks and the teacher. The other aspect of this research that has enhanced the mixed-methods data quality relates to the design quality (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

23 National Institute for the Evaluation of Education
24 National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy
While complex in design, I have sought to address mixed-methods validity through the creation of a clear, comprehensive and well-reasoned design.

3.7. Positionality & Ethical Considerations

My positionality as a black British-Ghanaian researcher impacted both my choices as a researcher and how I was perceived by my respondents. Underpinned by a CRT worldview, my positionality brings clear normative anti-racist aims which helped me gain access and credibility with some of participants. However, responses in other interviews were most likely moderated in my presence. For example, there were no explicit racist statements made by teachers about blackness, which contradicts past literature (Aguilar Nery, 2012; Masferrer Léon, 2016). My identity as a foreigner was also a key element of my positionality, which in combination with my blackness I used creatively at times. In some cases, I would stress my Britishness and position as a Westerner as a way of signalling credibility. However, on occasion I would emphasise my African heritage in a more political sense to combat negative stereotypes of Africans. My presence clearly influenced settings, in some cases there was resistance towards being interviewed by me or teachers would ask to make sure that I was not there on behalf of the SEP, but were comforted by my association with a Mexican university. Despite the use of my identity in a political manner, I avoided discussing the normative and political aims of my research until the end of interviews. Nevertheless, for many participants in the main comparative phase, the process of being interviewed was quite reflexive and often highlighted behaviour and concepts they rarely considered while also introducing more information about afrodescendencia.

From an ethical standpoint, there were several precautions that I took to minimise the potential detrimental impacts to my respondents – I was guided by the ‘Do No Harm’ principles (Bryman, 2016). Firstly, I obtained verbal consent at the start of each interview with teachers and civil society leaders, choosing not to do so for academics familiar with process of research25. With regards to confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the different schools and participants. Secondly, I tried to be largely upfront about the nature of my research, though at times was not specific about the study being about blackness but rather diversity. In this instance the intention was not to deceive the participants, but rather to elucidate unadulterated responses about mestizaje, before proceeding to questions about afrodescendencia. Furthermore, the information gleaned was not particularly personally sensitive. More specific to autoethnography, an ethical blind-spot occurs in the sense that participants may not be informed about forming part of the research, which is true in my own case (Méndez, 2013). Therefore, I have sought to write my personal accounts in an unambiguous and honest manner while also excluding the use of names of those I interacted with.

25 Pre-defined verbal consent statement can be found in the appendices
Despite the precautions I took, there are three primary ethical concerns that remained: the right to research, disruption and reciprocity. The right to research revolves around why I have the right to go to a foreign country that I initially had limited knowledge and exposure, but yet be able to be in a position to analyse and critique elements of their society. Citing Lewis (2012), Vaughn (2013) notes how research around blackness in Mexico is often criticised as a product of external indoctrination and agitation by foreign researchers with their own agendas. Furthermore, Corbridge (2007) adds that Development Studies at times has been regarded as neo-colonial and irrelevant. In response to these concerns, I position myself as using my privileged position to give voices to the disadvantaged Afro-Mexican community yet from a position with shared elements of otherness. Moreover, the exploratory phase sought to establish the foundations of this study together with local concerns and input.

While I did not spend considerable time in each school, my presence was always disruptive. Many interviews took place during class time, and my presence during observations often shifted the attention of students, and in some cases, teachers from their own responsibilities. In addition, I was constantly concerned with the concept of giving back, mainly to the civil society leaders and the Afro-Mexican community. In early interviews I had been told that many academics never shared their research with the community so I have made attempts to send some smaller elements of my research to these participants, and hope to translate an article into Spanish.

3.8. Methodological Reflection and Limitations

Methodologically-speaking there was one major change since the proposal. The original methodological design revolved around one case study (municipality) whereas very early on during the fieldwork, this was changed to a comparative study with two cases. This decision was taken after some initial brainstorming with my first co-supervisor (Enrique) where it appeared that a comparative could generate more interesting findings by highlighting how different contextual differences influence teaching. Beyond this, the individual strands remained largely intact but instead replicated across the horizontal axes. This research project was ambitious in terms of scope and in different circumstances could be undertaken as a multi-person multi-year research project. Therefore, given the range of methods used, dispersed location of the participants, and the need to cover several different concepts, I have had to sacrifice the depth of the analysis in favour of breadth. With more time, more researchers and funding, it would have been more feasible to observe more in each school, and interview more teachers.

While my level of Spanish is good, it still provided a limitation especially given my relative unfamiliarity with Mexican Spanish. I took 20 hours of Spanish classes to localise my language skills before I commenced my research. Interview questions were checked by my housemate and co-supervisor to ensure the language used was appropriate. Most teachers did not appear to have significant issues understanding me, though it is difficult to tell
whether they fully understood all of my questions. Furthermore, lower speed of thought inhibited me from probing to the same degree that I would have done in English. Safety was an ongoing concern during the research period. In the first five weeks, I had experienced three earthquakes and two hurricanes. The 19th September earthquake impacted myself and the research the most. It was just 25 minutes after a meeting in Mexico City that the 19th September earthquake struck. I was lucky that I was in traffic and remained unscathed but the area I was in, Colonia Roma, saw a lot of damage. The earthquake did put a pause on some of my early work and interviews. Fortunately, being a mixed-methods study allowed me to focus on some of the quantitative elements in the weeks after the earthquake. Additionally, during my second trip to Cuajinicuilapa, there was a drug-related assassination a few hundred metres from me. Given my sense of alarm in what was a fairly small town, I continued my research over the next two days before departing earlier than expected.

While primary education is largely centralised, the generalisability of the research is inhibited by the narrow geographic and temporal focus. With this the research design, statistical generalisability was not feasible. However, this did not preclude other forms of generalisation (Smaling, 2003). Rather, the comparative study draws transferable and generalizable theoretical insights. On the other hand, a lack of resources to fully consider other actors within the education system is arguably a drawback of this research. Furthermore, another limitation is the application of theories from the Global North, to explain social mechanisms within a different context.

### 3.9. Concluding Remarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Unit of Analysis</th>
<th>Phase(s)</th>
<th>Vertical Scale</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How are dominant imaginations of Mexican National Identity ‘anti-black’?</td>
<td>Imaginaries</td>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>National State</td>
<td>Semistructured Interviews, Focus Groups, Autointerviews</td>
<td>Safety, Logistics and Travel, Limited Generalisability, Secondary Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To what extent do textbooks recognise the historical and contemporary influence of afrodescendencia and blackness at the national and state scales in Puebla and Guerrero?</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>Interim</td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Content Analysis (QUAN + QUAL)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do teachers perceive their agency, and the role of social sciences in the (re)production or transformation of a Mexican national identity at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Municipal School</td>
<td>Semistructured Interviews, Participant Observation, Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>Limited Observation, Language Constraints, Logistics and Travel, Limited Generalisability, Validity of Autointerviews, Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How is the teaching of blackness in primary education influenced by dominant imaginations of Mexicanidad, job constraints and teacher positionality at the school level in Puebla and Guerrero?</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Municipal School</td>
<td>Semistructured Interviews, Participant Observation, Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>Limited Generalisability, Validity of Autointerviews, Safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Methods Matrix

In this chapter I have given a detailed account of the methods used during the research period. In the table above, a summary table is given connecting the research questions with the phases, the scales, the methods and the limitations.
4. Research Location

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research locations, across the national, state and municipal levels. This overview outlines the historical, socioeconomic, geographic and political dynamics that are pertinent to the findings in Chapters 5-8. To this end, Section 4.1 begins with a brief summary of Mexico and the Mexican Education system, before I give the reasons behind the selection of research locations in Section 4.2. The final section subsequently provides a comparison of the contexts at the state and municipal levels.

4.1. Mexico

One of three countries comprising North America yet often grouped with Latin America, Mexico has the second largest economy in Latin America and a population of 120 million (INEGI, 2015). Mexico is a member of the OECD and is classed as an ‘Upper Middle Income’ country. However, prosperity in Mexico is far from reachable to all groups of society. In recent decades, Mexico has experienced an extreme level of growth in inequality – there are 53.3 million people living in poverty, wages are stagnant but the fortune of a limited few continues to grow (Oxfam Mexico, 2015). The effects of such inequality can be severely detrimental to the well-being of marginalised communities such as the indigenous, Afro-Mexicans and women. The 2015 inter-census survey revealed there were 1.38 million citizens who self-identified as Afro-Mexicans in the whole of Mexico (INEGI, 2015). The Afro-Mexican population is largely concentrated in the southwestern states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, as well as Veracruz on the Caribbean coast (INEGI, 2017).

4.1.1. Education in Mexico

The SEP is responsible for education alongside several national and regional bodies. Mexico employs a national education system where the SEP has the right and obligation to set curricula for primary and junior secondary education (Educación Basica) in addition to teacher training programs (de Ibarrola, 2018). Educación Basica is free and obligatory for all Mexicans and is composed of three levels; Preescolar (3-5 years), Educación Primaria (6-12 years) and Educación Secundaria (12-15 years) (Universia, 2017). This research is only concerned with Educación Primaria and the social sciences, consisting of History, Geography and Civic and Ethic Formation. Mexico has experienced a series of educational reforms since the 1980s. While access to education for all has largely been accomplished, reforms have been predominately aimed at improving the quality of education and a more equitable education system (Ornelas, 2004). However, Mexico has not been insulated by supranational policy ideals and has sought to incorporate calls for liberalisation, privatisation, decentralisation and standardised testing (Ornelas, 2004). While much of Educación Basica is
managed from a national level, each state has its own Ministry of Education responsible for implementing national and local reforms.

Since the 1990’s and largely influenced by the Zapatista uprising in 1994, the education system has sought to implement a more multicultural and plural approach (Ornelas, 2004; Young, 2010). The constitution was amended to explicitly consider the needs of the Indigenous population and subsequently, there was the establishment of the Indigenous subsystem (Ornelas, 2016). Indigenous schools mainly serve the indigenous population and are aimed to preserve and strengthen customs, traditions and other cultural elements while also being bilingual and bi-cultural (SEP, 2009). Indigenous schools and ‘general’ schools, form the basis of Educación Primaria alongside community schools. Community schools are for students mainly located in isolated and marginalised rural and urban areas, with an aim of tailoring education more closely to the needs of those communities (SEP, 2009). While community schools could theoretically be used to attend the needs of Afro-Mexican communities, at present no specific school subsystem exists to preserve Afro-Mexican cultures. In this research, I only focused on general schools in urban areas. Urban areas were favoured for logistical reasons, whereas the general school subsystem was because I wanted to understand the teaching of blackness from a mainstream schooling perspective.

Teacher unions are particularly powerful in Mexico. The main Mexican teachers’ union, the SNTE, has been described as an “opaque, allegedly corrupt organisation that engages in clientelism and the politics of power” (Hecock, 2014, p.78), who had colonised the management of education for decades (Ornelas, 2012). However, the most recent reforms, launched in 2013 after a cross-party pact, did not include the SNTE as a principal actor (de Ibarrola, 2018). Rather these reforms have been supported by international organisations, such as the OECD, who had highlighted the need to limit the power of teachers’ unions (OECD, 2013; Sánchez Cerón et al, 2015). On the one hand, these reforms have had a centralist tendency in the sense that they have sought to recover political control within the education system from the SNTE (Ornelas, 2017). On the other hand, they are regarded as punitive towards teachers and teacher evaluation has been positioned as the silver bullet to Mexico’s education problems.

“In Mexico there is ample evidence of the very precarious material conditions of schools, the poor socioeconomic conditions of students and even of many teachers. This notwithstanding, evaluation of teacher performance and the supposedly consequent selection of ‘better teachers’, as well as the adequate training of teachers already in service, were readily accepted as the way to solve these problems” (de Ibarrola, 2018, p.12). While the SNTE has publicly accepted the reforms, the radical dissident wing of the union, the CNTE, has been strongly opposed. Rather unsurprisingly, the CNTE controls the SNTE’s chapters in the poorest Mexican states of Oaxaca, Michoacán, Chiapas and Guerrero often employing

26 In 2016-17, 94% of the 14.1 million primary school students attended general schools (SEP, 2017)
tactics such as wildcat strikes, road blockages and mass mobilisation (de Ibarrola, 2018; Ornelas, 2017).

4.2. Selection of Research Locations

![Map of Mexico](image)

The two research locations were chosen mainly due to their contextual differences with respect to blackness and afrodescendencia. Only 0.12% of the population, or 7,282 people, in Puebla self-identified as Afro-Mexicans in the 2015 inter-censal survey (INEGI, 2015). This apparent lack of contemporary presence is also evident in the constitution of Puebla which has no recognition of Afro-Mexicans as an ethnic group. Cholula was chosen mainly because it was the location of my supervisor Enrique, it was close to Mexico City, and that it was safe. Contrasting with Puebla, Guerrero has constitutionally recognised the Afro-Mexican population (Masferrer León, 2017), and has 229,514 people (6.5% of its population) who self-identify as Afro-Mexican. I chose Cuajinicuilapa predominately because one of the most influential CSOs for the recognition of Afro-Mexicans was based there; and also because Cuajinicuilapa is the location of the Museum of Afro-Mestizo Cultures. Recognising the importance of the temporal axis in the CCS methodology (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017), the historical political, social and economic forces that shaped the contemporary contexts are valid to this research. Therefore, the next section provides a brief history and present-day summary of each research location.

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27 Opened in 1995, this museum as the first on Afro-Mexican history. A second museum, the Museo Afromexicano (Afro-Mexican Museum) was established in July 2017 also in Guerrero.
4.3. Research Sites

4.3.1. Puebla – San Andrés Cholula

Despite the contemporary lack of Afro-Mexican presence in Puebla, there were a significant number during the colonial period (Davidson, 1981; Sierra Silva, 2015). As a distribution point for slaves within Mexico, Puebla, the capital of the state which lies adjacent to Cholula, "profited immeasurably from the transatlantic slave trade" (Sierra Silva, p.378). With respect to Cholula, Castillo (2005) notes that the arrival of blacks and afromestizos was in response to the significant reduction in the indigenous population. Both as slaves and free peoples, Afro-Mexicans in Puebla State undertook diverse roles in society and the economy including militiamen, blacksmiths, architects, domestic labourers and nurses (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2012). Castillo (2005) performed an analysis of historical documents such as tribute registers, marriage certificates, birth certificates and testimonies to understand why there was a ‘loss’ of the population. She argues that miscegenation became a method of social mobility and this was intensified by the co-habitation of wool manufacturing workshops by different ethnic groups.

With regards to education, both an OECD report (2013) and Hecock (2014) have noted the strong relations between the Puebla SEP and the SNTE. While at the national level some control has been wrested from the SNTE, they remain in a powerful position locally with members on state secretaries and undersecretaries (Ornelas, 2017). In Puebla, the SNTE has had a strong influence on education policies, with respect to promotions and appointments, and rules on career and working conditions (OECD, 2013). In Puebla, almost all teachers and leaders are members of SNTE, with it being mandatory for primary education teachers, and staff not affiliated to the SNTE face significant barriers in terms of access to equal career opportunities (OECD, 2013).

Three schools were selected in Cholula. San Andrés Cholula is located towards the centre-west of the State of Puebla. In 2015, the population was 115,976 (INEGI, 2015). The proportion of the population who identify as Afro-Mexican is negligible. More information on the municipality is contained in the comparison table at the end of this chapter.
4.3.2. Guerrero – Cuajinicuilapa

Guerrero is the state with the highest proportion of its population who identify as Afro-Mexican. The majority of the Afro-Mexican population in Guerrero are situated in the Costa Chica, which is on the Southern Pacific Coast of Mexico (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2012)\(^{28}\). In the late 16th century, fertile soils encouraged many Spanish conquistadores to resettle there along with their African and afrodescendant slaves and servants (Lewis, 2016). Over the course of time, many enslaved persons in the Costa Chica obtained their freedom and became cowboys, fisherman and farmers, finding themselves in more isolated areas with others who escaped slavery (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2012). There is a strong black identity in parts of the Costa Chica; Hoffman and Rinaudo (2014) describe how blackness as an identity is being used as a political tool in the Costa Chica, with there being a shift in the use of the term afromestizo towards negro.

Guerrero is one of the strongholds of the CNTE. Alongside the three other states, Guerrero was the location for major strikes in 2013 when the CNTE effectively paralysed teaching (Sánchez Cerón et al., 2015). CNTE protests against the reform remain and were reported in Guerrero as recently as April 2018 (Maya & Hernández, 2018). Three schools were selected in the municipality of Cuajinicuilapa. Cuajinicuilapa is in the region of the Costa Chica, to the south-east of the state capital Chilpancingo. In 2015, the population was 27,606 and 56.4% self-identified as Afro-Mexican (INEGI, 2017).

\(^{28}\) The Costa Chica covers both part of the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca
4.3.3. Context Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>San Andrés Cholula</th>
<th>Cuajinicuilapa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>115,976</td>
<td>27,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Poverty</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Poverty</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Inadequate Education</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Inadequate Housing</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Inadequate Access to Food</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>11,799</td>
<td>3,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students per School</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students per Class</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>18.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers per School</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Principals Teaching a Class</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>48.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff per School</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - Socio-Economic Statistics by Municipality

This section now provides a brief comparison of the socio-economic contexts between the two locations, before the final section gives a summary of the profile of the interviewed teachers. This comparison is on the basis of the information acquired during the Main Comparative Phase of the research which is summarised in the table above. From an economic standpoint we can see that there are higher levels of deprivation in Cuajinicuilapa across various indicators. The proportion of the population living in extreme poverty is more than double, whereas almost 40% have inadequate education levels and lack adequate housing. The impact of this economic marginalisation is also reflected in the education system, where many schools in Cuajinicuilapa are lacking basic facilities and technology. For a municipality that almost constantly endures temperatures between 25-35 Degrees Celsius, the lack of air conditioning in the classrooms was clearly problematic, a feature that I noted during observations. However, this is not to say that Cholula has a sufficient level of resources. In Cholula, there was a general concern with the quality of the internet connection and between schools there were significant differences in technological resources. One school, which had received particular funding from the state had an impressive level of computers while in another school, several participants complained about the lack of, or the poor maintenance of, computers. Nevertheless, I found there to be a greater level of working technology in Cholula compared to Cuajinicuilapa.

Class sizes in Cholula are larger, which was also an evident constraint from my observations. More students, and with great diversity in ability (including students with disabilities and learning difficulties) often place restrictions on the teacher’s ability to provide individual support for students. On the contrary, the drug-related violence in Cuajinicuilapa
appeared to permeate the walls of the classroom. In my observations, students were often more violent and confrontational. Furthermore, the statistics show how schools in Cuajinicuilapa tend to have a higher proportion of principals teaching a class and a lower number of administrative staff, which implies a lack of supervision and support for teaching staff.

4.3.4. Teacher Positionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>San Andrés Cholula</th>
<th>Cuajinicuilapa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>44.54</td>
<td>45.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Years of Experience</td>
<td>20.92</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% from Community</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% from State</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unionisation</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Social Organisation</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Non-Church Organisation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - Teacher Profile Comparison

The information within the table above was collected at the start of the semi-structured interviews with each of my teaching participants. As noted in Chapter 3, the sample was stratified on the basis of gender and purposive with respect to school grades. Coincidentally, the average age and years of experience between the two municipalities is very similar, with a slightly older cohort in Cuajinicuilapa being represented in the marginal extra level of experience. These averages highlight the long-tenured nature of the teaching staff in both locations, who almost exclusively had only ever undertaken that role in their professional careers. However, levels of motivation varied across individuals, schools and locations with no distinct patterns. In Cholula, most teachers were not from the community but rather were from the neighbouring city of Puebla. Given the interconnectedness of these two areas, I assumed a level of familiarity with the area and its people. On the contrary, I was told in an exploratory interview how many of the teachers in Cuajinicuilapa may not be familiar with the community. While 29% were from Cuajinicuilapa, and several others from the Costa Chica (of both Guerrero and Oaxaca), there were other participants who were from areas with very different demographics.

Almost all teachers in Puebla, were members of the SNTE union, and despite the CNTE stronghold in Guerrero, many teachers claimed they were also part of the SNTE. A key difference in social organisation membership in Cuajinicuilapa was that several teachers belonged to Afro-Mexican organisations such as México Negro. Finally, the charts below provide a breakdown of the self-described ethnicity of the participants. The teachers of Cholula identified mainly as mestizo/a whereas in Cuajinicuilapa, they predominately identified as Afro-Mexican\(^\text{29}\).

\(^\text{29}\) Includes negro, Afro-Indigenous and Afro-mestizo
Figure 8 - Graphs of ethnicity
5. Mestizaje and the Effectiveness of Dominant Anti-Black Imaginaries

Anti-black racism is enduring, systemic and fluid; manifesting and transforming itself in a myriad of ways (Gillborn, 2018). Several scholars reviewed earlier in this thesis have pointed towards an anti-blackness that is deeply intertwined with dominant mestizo-centred imaginaries of Mexicanidad (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016; Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013b; Zárate, 2016). On the one hand, these dominant imaginaries obscure the historical and contemporary contributions of Afro-Mexicans, and on the other hand they serve to subordinate, demote and ridicule blackness as a necessary other. In this chapter, I seek to answer the question “How are dominant imaginaries of Mexican national identity ‘anti-black’?” To this end, I first explore what is the connection between power, whiteness and mestizaje in Mexican society. Then, I examine how education reinforces dominant imaginaries that promote whiteness and mestizaje, while simultaneously denigrating blackness. Recognising the contested nature of imaginaries, I end this chapter with an analysis of localised and national forms of contestation and transformation of dominant imaginaries.

5.1. Power, Whiteness and Mestizaje

![Figure 8](image1.png)  
*Figure 8 - Level of education (left is none; right is university) by skin tone - Source: INEGI (2017)*

![Figure 9](image2.png)  
*Figure 9 - Occupational Class (left is professional; right is unskilled) by skin tone - Source: INEGI (2017)*
For the first time last year, INEGI (2017) published findings from the Module of Intergenerational Social Mobility (MMSI in Spanish), that took into account socio-economic differences on the basis of eleven different skin tones. Unsurprising to some, the results (see Figures 8 and 9) showed those with lighter skin tones to have disproportionately higher access to education and employment opportunities compared with those of darker skin tones. One civil society leader noted:

“Obviously the groups of power are the whites” 3G-F

Several participants positioned the power held by white Mexicans as a reason why blackness is invisible and subordinated in contemporary Mexico. Civil society leaders and academics argue that there has been resistance from the state to recognise Afro-Mexicans as an ethnic group, stating the blackness is not on the agenda of the white powerholders. At a conference I attended on Diversity and Inclusion in Mexican education organised by the Education Department at the UDLAP, the keynote speaker, who is a prominent figure in educational policymaking, gave a presentation detailing the extensive ethnic diversity in Mexico that is often underappreciated. Disappointed by the lack of mention of Afro-Mexicans, I asked how they should be considered in the framework. The response was brief, superficial and largely dismissive of the topic30. Similarly, I was somewhat surprised by the very little knowledge of afrodescendencia by some of the education experts I spoke with. Highlighting how discursive activity can increase reflexivity (Burridge, 2014), the introduction of my topic caused one of the experts to do extra research on the topic before providing me additional information. On the contrary, another expert said that it was an issue for Guerrero and Oaxaca, implying that it is not of national importance.

During my time in Mexico, many people that I spoke to on a casual basis were interested in my research, often admitting that they had no knowledge of afrodescendencia. However, on some occasions, the interest was instead on the reasons why I was doing my research. In one encounter with a friend of a friend, he came across very strongly in saying that such a study is not important. While I would doubt the intentionality behind his arguments, I feel it did represent an implicit aversion to blackness. On the other hand, whiteness can be seen “the location of privilege in a context where racial dynamics are not explicitly or publicly acknowledged” (Moreno Figueroa, 2010, p.387). Moreno Figueroa argues that mestizaje in Mexico can be seen as a form of whiteness. Writing in El Universal, Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva (2017) noted that the most surprising aspect of the MMSI findings was their widespread rejection, concurring with the imaginary that mestizaje precludes racism (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016; Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013a). Similarly, several individuals that I spoke with, including one principal in Cholula of a school that did not take part, thought

30 The full question I asked was “how should diversity be considered in education beyond the indigenous, such as for Afro-Mexicans, international migrants and refugees” which was answered along the lines of “they will be considered in the same way as I have commented”
that the research was not necessary as racism was not an issue in Mexico. Such lack of awareness of racism is ultimately a key driver in the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries.

5.2. Power and Pedagogic Work

This thesis is most heavily focused on the role of primary education teaching in the (re)production and/or transformation of anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. However, recognising the limitations of (1) a narrow focus on institutionalised education, and (2) not analysing the perspectives of the students, this section provides a broader analysis on the (re)production and/or transformation that operates through folklore, song, music and mass media (Fanon, 1952; Rizvi, 2006). Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) describe three types of education where pedagogic work is situated: institutionalised education, family education and diffuse education. As such, this section analyses the role of the education system, the family, museums, the media, and everyday society.

5.2.1. Institutionalised Education

Afro-Mexican participants were categorical that the education system fails to appropriately mention the African influence in Mexico. The state-sanctioned view of mestizaje has thus narrowly defined imaginaries of Mexicanidad in the education system, which often permeate teaching practices. One civil society leader recalled:

“I remember years ago when I was an elementary school student, a teacher says, the teacher is indigenous, says all Mexicans, we are indigenous. When he said that word, in my town all the blacks went to that class, then I looked at everyone and I looked at myself, and I said that I am not indigenous, I am black” 3I-M

In his forties, it could be suspected that this experience does not happen today. However, the younger participants of the focus group supported this, expressing that the lack of inclusion of black and Afro-Mexican history in the textbooks has had them feeling a lack of belonging to Mexican society. Furthermore, my participants also lamented that where Afro-Mexicans do appear in the education system, they are mainly portrayed as slaves. Such negative representations of blackness in the education system can be internalised and lead to a rejection of blackness. A human rights practitioner described:

“I’ve been to see schools where there are girls and boys who say ‘I’m not black because the black man is something that is bad’” 2M-M

With a lack of knowledge of their history, there is a fissure between blackness and Afro-Mexican/Afrodescendencia. As a relatively new term, afrodescendencia is still not widely used outside of academia. Often perceived as the source of blackness, Africa carries its own
set of connotations and an academic showed me racist images contained within geography textbooks that portrayed Africans as uncivilised, savage, and only poor. The pervasive nature of such texts was experienced when I visited Cuajinicuilapa for the first time. After telling some students that I was African, one promptly asked me if “they eat each other over there like it says in the books”.

5.2.2. Family Education

Despite the fundamental role of institutionalised education in the establishment of imaginaries, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) note that the family is the first point of the inculcation of beliefs. One academic with African heritage said:

“Interestingly, one of the reasons why I decided to study Afro-Mexican and Afro-Oaxacan communities was because of the fact that in my family they speak very little [about my Afro-Mexican grandparents]” 2H-F

Akin to the deliberate suppressing of African heritage in the colonial era (Aguirre Beltrán, 1946; Castillo, 2005), the avoidance and aversion to blackness within a family highlights how anti-black imaginaries can be produced from early teaching, even in the subtlest forms. Similarly, I asked another academic, who this time did not have African heritage, why she became interested in the topic of afrodescendencia. One of the factors that she explained was:

“I had relatives in Acapulco, Guerrero, which is an area with a large afrodescendant population, and since I was a girl when I went to spend holidays with them I was intrigued why there were a lot of black people, but what intrigued me more was that [my relatives] did not know how to explain why there were people with darker skin” 2L-F

Unlike 2H-F where there was a deliberate attempt to obscure one’s own African heritage, the above quotation illustrates how the lack of knowledge on afrodescendencia can be inadvertently transmitted across generations. While in the case of this academic, it encouraged her to research more, it is likely that for many others it promoted and continued the exclusion of blackness from their imaginaries of Mexicanidad.
5.2.3. Diffuse Education: Museums, the Media and Everyday Society

Diffuse education, is seen as the least effective in establishing imaginaries by Bourdieu and Passeron (2000), who argue that semi-learned representations only work to the extent that they reinforce imaginaries learned elsewhere. Nevertheless, they also argue how diffuse education performs a vital role in reproducing and reaffirming imaginaries after institutionalised and family education have ceased. Anderson (1991) says museums and the museumizing imagination, are profoundly political. I went to a range of museums during my time in Mexico, including the two most visited; the National Museum of Anthropology and the National Museum of History, with 2.3 and 2.1 million visitors in 2017 respectively (INAH, 2018). While both these museums make reference to Africans and slaves, as well as the mixing of cultures, such mentions are limited. Particularly given the size and importance of these museums, it is surprising that across either, Afro-Mexicans do not receive a single panel or section.
Particularly disappointing was the National Museum of Tolerance and Memory. While the museum does well in explaining genocides, war and the fallacies of racial supremacy, an opportunity was missed in recognising racism within Mexico. Discussions of racism focused on global incidents and towards Mexicans, and the existence of Afro-Mexicans was not evident anywhere within the museum. The main reference to racism in Mexico was limited to “the indigenous are the groups that mainly suffer from racism in Mexico” (National Museum of Tolerance, 2017).

The media, through commercials, television and film also play a role in the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries. One civil society leader argued that:

“Television is like a classroom, no? We always see whites...these powerful groups are not interested in the image of blacks” 3G-F

Here lies a concern across several of my participants; that the television seeks to promote whiteness while at the same time disregarding or denigrating blackness. Highlighted by academics and civil society leaders, was an incident in 2010 when the South Africa Football World Cup was being televised in Mexico. Rather than the media using it as an opportunity to provide more nuanced views of Africa, the presenters and their assistants used blackface make-up to ridicule Africans. Civil society groups complained and lawsuits followed but as noted by Sue and Golash-Boza (2013b), racial humour against blacks and the indigenous is a fixture of Mexican society, yet is not perceived as malicious. Furthermore, racialised imaginaries continue to be heavily gendered and sexualised (Wade, 2013). The below quote
from a female civil society leader is emblematic of the gendered nature of representations of blacks in the few occasions when they do appear:

“On television, whenever there are indigenous or black characters, they are exclusively there to be insulted, to be degraded as characters. So in that case, whenever black women are seen on TV they are always portraying prostitutes” 3G-F

This participant continued to say how these representations make it difficult for Afro-Mexican women to be considered beyond sexual partners and mothers. Such anti-black imaginaries within the media also permeate everyday society. I was told of the verbal abuse towards blacks and Afro-Mexicans with one young female focus group participant recalling the name-calling she received:

“Pinche negra, vende pescados”31 FGP1-F

From my own experiences, extreme acts of discrimination were limited – on only a handful of occasions did I experience someone shout negro at me. On the contrary, the use of negra/o and negrita/o in my presence often appeared to lack the intentionality of being racist. Nevertheless, manifestations of anti-black racism have been more keenly felt by members of the Afro-Mexican community and other blacks in Mexico. My participants had told me of individuals who had been troubled by the police and immigration officials who refused to believe that they were Mexican. There have been occasions where some have been deported to Haiti and Guatemala, only to be returned after intervention from those countries, as well as those who have had to recite the national anthem to prove their Mexicanidad. A civil society leader explained:

“Most of the time when they see me in Mexico City and Puebla, they ask me where am I from, whether I am from Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, but never whether I am Mexican... [In Huatulco, Oaxaca] one student, not very young, asked me, ‘teacher, where are you from? Because you are not from here in Mexico’... I have to give them all the explanation when time allows, for example in the City of Mexico, I take a taxi at the airport to go to the hotel, and [the driver] asks me, ‘where do you come from? From Cuba, Honduras, or Venezuela’, I say no, ‘I’m Mexican’... And when I say ‘I’m black, I’m Afro-Mexican black’ and they still tell me, ‘you’re not black, you’re more a caramel colour’”, 3G-F

Although states like Puebla have limited Afro-Mexicans, the fact that the participant experiences such ignorance in the state of Oaxaca, where constitutional recognition exists and there are almost 200,000 self-identified Afro-Mexicans, is alarming. Furthermore, the final part of the above quotation illuminates another angle – having accepted my participant

31 Swearing left in Spanish for effect, but loosely translates to “Fucking nigger, go sell fish”
as Mexican, they proceeded to reject her blackness. This is something well established in the literature; the seeming incompatibility of blackness and Mexicanidad (Sue and Golash-Boza, 2013a; Vaughn, 2013). During my time living in Puebla, one of the most common features was that people would constantly stare at me. These stares did not bother me so much given the lack of blacks in the area, but what was particularly discomforting was that on many of those occasions, there were groserias\textsuperscript{32}, crude jokes and laughter that I was not privy to. Yet, this staring was not only limited to Puebla but also across many other areas. The only areas that I felt I could walk around and people were not alerted by my presence were in the Costa Chica, the more tourist-filled and cosmopolitan areas of Mexico City, and the Yucatán Peninsula, which further represents how an incompatibility between blackness and Mexicanidad is imagined on a wider geographical scale.

5.3. Contestation and Transformation

While anti-black imaginaries appear to be dominant on a national level, participants told me of pockets of contestation within government agencies\textsuperscript{33}, CSOs, in regional locations and across alternative forms of media. Despite disagreements, many of the approximately fifteen pro-black/Afro-Mexican movements are organised around the fight for constitutional recognition (SGIA, 2016, p.28). I spent time with the leaders of two organisations, AMCO (Association of Women of the Costa Chica) and México Negro; the latter being regarded as the head of a network of several organisations (SGIA, 2016). México Negro was founded in 1997 and the work that they do varies from educational workshops, to national lobbying and awareness campaigns. Nevertheless, while their work utilises alternative media such as the internet, their impact on dominant national imaginaries is limited to some degree by their geographic concentration mainly in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Both CSOs receive some level of institutional support within the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Better relations with the state governments and state institutions provides a reason why CSOs have been better positioned to challenge dominant anti-black imaginaries, especially when contrasted against Veracruz that has a similar proportion of the population identifying as Afro-Mexican. Guerrero and Oaxaca constitutionally recognised Afro-Mexicans as an ethnic group in 2014 and 2013 respectively (Masferrer León, 2017). At this time both states were governed by the left-leaning PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution), and it is not particularly surprising that some participants expressed hope that the election of the left-leaning presidential candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, may benefit their aims for national recognition. Nevertheless, there appears to be growing momentum for recognition,

\textsuperscript{32} Several of my friends or participants explained this was likely the case
\textsuperscript{33} CONAPRED (National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination), CNDH (National Council for Human Rights), INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History) and INEGI in particular
especially considering the UN Decade. CSOs have been working closely with CONAPRED\textsuperscript{34}, INEGI and the CNDH at the national level which has resulted in educational materials and inclusion in the inter-census survey. While several of my respondents cast doubt on the effectiveness of the 2015 inter-census survey, it is recognised as a major milestone in contesting the imaginary that black Mexicans do not exist.

These organisations are also gaining traction across different states. In November 2017, I visited the annual EPN in Mata Clara, Veracruz, which for the first time was being held outside the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Organised by México Negro and other organisations, the event received institutional support from several government agencies, but also by the State of Veracruz. The event typically includes a combination of cultural events and academic debates, however, state officials attended and spoke of how they would push for a change to the constitution in Veracruz. Given that the next EPN is scheduled to be in the state of Coahuila in Northern Mexico, it demonstrates how organisations like México Negro are using the EPN in a more political sense to push for recognition through engagement with individual yet geographically dispersed states. One intriguing insight from the EPN was that it was often repeated that “to be black means that you are Afro-Mexican, but you can be Afro-Mexican and not be black”. From an awareness and mobilisation perspective, I can see this as a particularly appealing strategy as it expands the number of people who are aligned with the movement, particularly as many attendants were 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} generation Afro-Mexican. On the other hand, an over-reliance on afrodescendencia against blackness fails to counter the undesirability of blackness and also does not challenge imaginaries that may recognise historical African contributions but still obscure the presence of a contemporary black Mexican.

\textsuperscript{34} México Negro was recognised by CONAPRED with a prize for campaigning for ‘Inclusion and No Discrimination’ in 2015 (CONAPRED, 2015)
In contrast to the lack of attention that mainstream museums gave to afrodescendencia, in Cuajinicuilapa there is the first museum dedicated to Afro-Mexican history\(^\text{35}\). Rather than only the colonial period, this museum includes fairly comprehensive information about history, from the various African tribes that slaves belonged to, through to present-day Afro-Mexicans. While the museum is fairly extensive for its small size, its transformational potential is limited by its isolated location from much of Mexico, and its lack of central funding which restricts its opening hours and long-term sustainability\(^\text{36}\). Given the lack of avenues for institutionally funded projects such as museums, many educational initiatives find themselves using alternative methods, such as dances and documentaries.

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\(^{35}\) I had not visited the other Afro-Mexican Museum that had recently opened.

\(^{36}\) On three occasions that I tried to visit the museum it was closed, and the manager told me that a reliance on donations meant serving the advertised opening hours was challenging.
Drawing on the notions of reflexivity and knowledgeability, autoethnography proves valuable in documenting the potential for transformative change through my own experiences. Despite all the research I had done previously, my initial visit to the Costa Chica was a surreal moment – seeing darker skinned Mexicans disrupted my own imaginaries of Mexicanidad. Often blackness in the Global North is reduced to skin colour, yet from my discussions, blackness often emerged from a more cultural angle. For example, many teachers who I may have assumed would identify as mestizo, identified as black, yet others who looked more ‘black’ would rather identify as mestizo. Furthermore, talking with Afro-Mexicans and experts caused me to reflect further of the consequences of their invisibility. Moreover, my own experiences of anti-black racism also caused me to reflect on and be more cognisant of my own ethnicity and skin colour in a more active way than I have become accustomed to. Discussions, experiences and events such as the EPN, often motivated me to be a little more political and teach within my later interviews. Thus, after many of my interviews I ended up explaining to teachers in Puebla more details on my research and Afrodescendencia. Furthermore, I redistributed many of the educational materials (books, DVDs, magazines) to the schools in Puebla that I had been previously given in earlier encounters.

5.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have drawn most heavily on the concept of imaginaries and Bourdieu and Passeron’s notion of pedagogic work (2000). I have discussed some of the prevailing racialised dominant imaginaries that I have encountered through a combination of conversations with participants, personal experiences and observations. I have described how dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad continue to be bound to narrow definitions of
mestizaje, positioning blackness as a necessary other. The necessary delegitimisation of blackness appears through its exclusion from, and devaluation within, representations of national identity. Furthermore, in its deceptive positioning as post-racial; I have demonstrated how mestizaje’s promise of inclusion enables it to obscure the racialised nature of Mexican society. With respect to the effectiveness, or the extent of dominance, of these dominant imaginaries, I have shown that they are widely embedded beyond institutionalised education and across images, artefacts, historical representations and the mass media. Furthermore, from my autoethnographic findings, I have been able to demonstrate the geographic spread of anti-black imaginaries. Ultimately, despite local forms of contestation, I argue that anti-black imaginaries permeate all levels of society.
6. Textbooks as Symbolic Violence

Education systems present curriculum as rational, neutral and colour-blind which in essence is a form of symbolic violence that serves the interests of the dominant groups in society (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). Past research has argued that the Mexican curriculum, and more specifically the textbooks, leave little room for the acknowledgement of Afro-Mexicans while at the same time over-emphasizing the role of the mestizo (Masferrer León, 2011; Velasco Cruz & Baronnet, 2016; Young, 2010). The main reference to afrodescendencia in the Planes y Programas is under fourth grade history where it says “Describe the cultural contributions of the Indigenous, Spanish, Africans and Asians” (SEP, 2016b, p.141). Building on existing qualitative research, this section analyses how the ‘contributions’ of Africans are represented in the textbooks by applying mixed-methods content analysis at the national and state levels. Not only is the interest with respect to the in/exclusion of afrodescendencia and blackness within social science textbooks, but also referencing representations and discussions of racism. Thus, this chapter first explores the findings of a quantitative content analysis of the national textbooks. Next, this chapter examines the state textbook for both Puebla and Guerrero using quantitative-qualitative content analysis.

6.1. Afrodescendencia, the Nation and Racism

6.1.1. Excluding: ‘There are no Blacks in Mexico’

Exclusion is the main mechanism of how the cultures of others are delegitimised in pedagogic work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). The analysis of the textbooks shows that Africans and Afro-Mexicans appear relatively little throughout. Collectively, there are only 48 references in the seven textbooks analysed. In comparison, Asians are mentioned 23 times, the Spanish 172 times, Europeans 28 times, and the Indigenous 220 times (283 including Mesoamericans). While each of these groups is not easily comparable in terms of influence and contribution, the difference in Africans and Afro-Mexicans against the Spanish and Indigenous is stark. Further, Africans and Afro-Mexicans only appear on 20 pages, approximately 1.5% of the 1,270 pages under consideration. This compares against the Spanish who appear in 6.5% of pages and the Indigenous in 8.5% of pages. On the other hand, the prominence of the mestizo was lower than expected, with only 16 mentions. Without further analysis it is difficult to observe whether the prominence of the mestizo has been reduced in recent textbook editions. However, several interviewees from the exploratory phase noted that textbooks had overly focused on the mestizo. A possible explanation is that prior complaints have seen explicit mentions of the mestizo reduced in favour of more implicit references.

More interesting is the distribution of the mentions in the different books that show strong tendencies. In the analysis, I separated terms that related to Africans in the historical
context and Afro-Mexicans presently. With respect to Africans, of the 43 total mentions, 41 are in the fourth grade history textbook. This textbook contains Mexican history from the Mesoamerican period through to the end of the colonial period. To some extent, the amount of mentions in this book is adequate, and does not compare adversely against other groups. Africans are on almost 10% of pages, compared to 6% of pages for Asians, 30% of pages for Europeans and 22% of pages for Indigenous (+17% of pages for Mesoamericans). Rather, the more striking finding is that in the 5th grade history textbook which deals with Independence through to the present day, there is only one single mention (the only other reference is in the 6th grade Civic and Ethic Formation textbook). Across all subjects, most references to Africans and Afro-Mexicans (45 of 48 mentions) are in the 4th grade textbooks. This lack of inclusion, and the lack of contemporary references to Afro-Mexicans in the textbooks reinforces an imaginary that Africans either disappeared completely or were never in significant number. This vastly contrasts with the 200,000 slaves brought to Mexico throughout the colonial period (Aguirre Beltrán, 1946); the contributions of Afro-Mexican groups in the fights for Independence and the Revolution (Alanis Hernández, 2016); and, the contemporary presence of 1.4 million Afro-Mexicans (INEGI, 2015). Furthermore, teachers who do not teach the 4th grade may be blind to the existence of Afro-Mexicans.

Curiously, Afro-Mexicans are mentioned only once in the four Civic and Ethic Formation textbooks. These textbooks were regarded as particularly important for the cultivation of beliefs and imaginaries about Mexican society in my exploratory interviews with academics. With a single mention, these textbooks fail to sufficiently consider present-day Afro-Mexicans (the indigenous are mentioned 50 times and the Spanish 22 times across the books), thus contributing to the notion that there are no blacks in Mexico.

### 6.1.2. Devaluing: ‘We are only seen as slaves’

In observing the different ways of representation, I looked at the co-present words when Africans and Afro-Mexicans appeared, as well as identifying the use of inappropriate words. The word that co-appears the most is ‘culture’, appearing in 9 of the 48 concurrences. This suggests that the focus was mainly on the cultural features and contributions of Africans, as per the reference in the *Planes y Programas*. Without the aid of a more comprehensive qualitative analysis, it is difficult to explain the nature of such uses, but perhaps this result indicates a lack of consideration of the socio-economic and political contributions of Africans. The next most popular word is slaves, with 7 appearances. In contrast there are no mentions of ‘free’ and only one of ‘freedom’ despite the fact that many Africans and Afro-Mexicans were free in the colonial period (Velázquez & Iturralde, 2012). This corroborates arguments that the textbooks present Africans only as slaves and not as individuals with much agency (Masferrer León, 2011).

Contrary to discussions in my exploratory phase, the analysis shows that the SEP must have changed the use of more inappropriate words, such as *negrita/o*, from earlier versions of the textbooks. For example, the only occasion when the term negro is used is in reference
to the slave rebellion of Gaspar Yanga and there appears to be no derogatory uses of the term. Elsewhere, there is an explanation that is unclear in the textbook for Sixth Grade Geography – the broad term 'African-American' is used. After further analysis, this term is used in a section entitled 'Ethnic Minorities' where it describes indigenous groups and also other groups of foreign origin. The passage includes the following: “...like some groups of foreign origin, such as Mennonites, Jews, African-Americans and Asians, who do not comprise more than 1% of Mexicans” (SEP, 2016a, p.105). This statement is problematic for several reasons. First, there is no indication of when these groups arrived, whether they are recent immigrants or from the colonial era. Secondly, the term African-American suggests that they are from the United States, though it may refer to Afro-descendants from all countries in the Americas. Finally, the number does not agree with the INEGI (2015) estimate that recognises 1.2% of the population as Afro-descendant.

6.1.3. Euphemising: ‘There is no racism in Mexico’

Analysis in the final test was focused only on the Civic and Ethnic formation textbooks to see the extent to which racism is discussed in the curriculum. Past research (Masferrer León, 2011) and exploratory interviews have noted that mentions of racism are limited and have often been in reference to global rather than national contexts. This adds to the findings in Chapter 5 from the Museum of Tolerance where much of the discussion is about contexts external to Mexico. Another argument is that mestizaje has led people to believe that racism does not exist in Mexico but rather it is class-based discrimination (Moreno Figueroa & Saldívar, 2016, p.523). In the analysis, it is unsurprising the extent to which discrimination appears, particularly as its width allows it to encompass classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism etc. Discrimination appears 186 times in the four textbooks that range from the third grade through to the sixth grade. More compelling is the lack of mentions of terms relating to race, ethnicity and skin colour. Racism only appears 16 times in the textbooks, skin 12 times and ethnicity 19 times.

6.2. Transposing Imaginaries at the State Level

6.2.1. A Quantitative Comparison

As detailed more comprehensively in Chapter 4, the two states of Puebla and Guerrero have very different contexts with respect to the historic and contemporary contributions of Afro-Mexicans. Although both states had large amounts of slaves in the colonial period, in the modern era the situations are distinct. These geographical contextual differences can transform and shape dominant imaginaries (Rizvi, 2006).
As per Table 6, there are 10 appearances of Africans in the book for Puebla compared to 7 in the Guerrero textbook. In terms of pages, there are mentions in 6 and 8 pages respectively. Although there are mentions in both books, these numbers are relatively low. This contrasts sharply with the figures for Spanish and indigenous people. For Guerrero, Spaniards appear 35 times in 19 pages, and 51 times in 19 pages for Puebla. In addition, Indigenous people appear 38 times in 23 pages for Guerrero, and 82 times in 35 pages for Puebla. The more contemporary terms of Afro-Mexicans or Afro-descendants appear 6 times in the book for Guerrero, but not in the Puebla book. In the case of Puebla, a concern is the extent to which the disappearance of Afro-Mexicans is discussed, but this is not feasible merely with quantitative analysis. Thus, the next section outlines the qualitative findings with respect to Puebla.

### 6.2.2. Puebla

The Puebla textbook (SEPP, 2016) contains 5 sections, each with 4 or 5 themes, broadly covering geography, history, economy and demographics. The first focus of my analysis was about the demographic changes and how Puebla represents its diversity. Page 39 of the textbook contains figures on the ethnic groups of Puebla. However, as is often the case...
case in Mexican discussions of ethnic groups (Masferrer León, 2014), the four groups are identified only by language. This type of counting is perhaps a reason why Afro-Mexicans have been hidden as an ethnic group given they generally speak Spanish. A broader definition of counting ethnic groups would create the possibility of recognizing the 7,282 people who recognize themselves as Afro-descendants in the state. Nevertheless, credit must be given to the manner in which the textbook discusses the population’s African heritage. For example, on page 43, the book declares that "its inhabitants have strong Indigenous, Spanish and African roots." Furthermore, the concept of mestizaje appears broader in page 93 than a merely Indigenous-Spanish merger. Rather it says that it is "the result of the mixture of two or more cultures". Within the same passage, the book also describes the combinations of European, Indigenous and African roots in the arts, food, music and religious ceremonies. On the other hand, the book fails to elaborate on the socioeconomic contributions of Afro-Mexicans save for brief mentions of jobs and roles undertaken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castas</th>
<th>Padres</th>
<th>Hiyo</th>
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<tr>
<td>Español e indígena</td>
<td>Mestizo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mestiza y español</td>
<td>Castizo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Español y africana</td>
<td>Mulato</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indígena y mestiza</td>
<td>Coyote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indígena y chino</td>
<td>Salta atrás</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mulato con española</td>
<td>Morisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Español con albina</td>
<td>Cambujo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calpamulato y cambuja</td>
<td>Tente en el aire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tente en el aire y mulata</td>
<td>No te entiendo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No te entiendo e indígena</td>
<td>Torna atrás</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torna atrás y mulato</td>
<td>Lobo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobo y africana</td>
<td>Chino</td>
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Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) suggest that pedagogic work needs to be exhaustive in order to be extensive. For new imaginaries to challenge dominant anti-black imaginaries, the information provided in textbooks should be complete with limited contradictions. Despite the progressive explanations of mestizaje that are highlighted in the prior paragraph, in other areas afrodescendencia is excluded and devalued: "In the beginning, the only inhabitants of America were Spaniards and Indians, but over time both groups were mixed together, giving rise to new settlers. Castes were the name by which descendants of unions of different groups

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38 Before the inter-census survey of 2015, the measure of counting ethnic groups was by indigenous languages spoken
were known. There were many castes and each had a particular name. The most numerous was that of the mestizos, sons of unions between Spanish and Indigenous" (p.90). Not only does this phrase contradict descriptions of mestizaje elsewhere but also the table that follows (Figure 9). Furthermore, like the national textbooks, there are no occurrences of Afro-Mexicans in post-independence history. Ultimately the failure to problematize where the Afro-Mexicans went, again creates the false idea that black Mexicans do not exist today, and that they did not form such a big part in the history of the state.

Elaborating on the argument that the education system only represents Africans as slaves in the colonial period despite the fact that many were free (Masferrer León, 2011), I also looked at representation. In this book, Africans are largely only described as "African slaves" (p.91). They are never represented as free, or with agency. However, a positive outcome of this analysis was that the only image used with an African did not contain discriminatory inferences or particularly negative gendered illustrations (Figure 10). On the contrary, the book generally treats Africans as a homogenous group, contrasting the treatment of the Indigenous and Europeans. This treatment is in spite of research outlining the ethnic groups of Afro-Mexicans that were brought to Puebla as Biafro, Congo and Bran (Castillo, 2005).

A more encouraging aspect of the textbook is the use of history about the different castes to refute old pseudoscience ideas about races with different inherent abilities: "this social division, in addition to unfair, was based on false assumptions. The only element that differentiated the Spaniards from the rest of the population was their place of birth. The Spaniards were born in Europe, unlike the other inhabitants, who were originally from America or Africa. This simple and unique distinction was used by the Spaniards to justify their power over the other groups" (SEPP, 2016). Moreover, more critical teaching of history is evident in other areas. For example, on page 87, two accounts are given about the same conquest-related story from the Spanish and Indigenous perspectives. Students are asked to read and compare the two stories to highlight the contested nature of history. Fundamentally, such activities can help contest dominant imaginaries. However, another drawback of the consideration of afrodescendencia, is the lack of activities which could stimulate further investigation by the teacher and students.
6.2.3. Guerrero

Guerrero's (SEPG, 2016) book also contains the same 5 sections that appear in the book for Puebla. Akin to the Puebla textbook, the concept of diversity is reduced to Indigenous language-speaking groups. Instead, a broader concept of diversity would present a good opportunity to acknowledge the existence of the vast number of people who recognise themselves as Afro-Mexicans in the state. Nevertheless, demographics within the state are elaborated further in discussions of each of the seven regions. The textbook describes the contemporary existence of people of African descent, under the heading of diversity in the section on the Costa Chica. On page 40, it notes that "the Costa Chica presents a cultural mosaic made up of diverse populations and ethnicities: the Mixtecos of the coast; the Afro-Mexicans, descendants of the ancient Africans brought as slaves; the Amuzgos; the Chatinos, and the whole group of peoples considered as Mestizos" (SEPG, 2016). While the information in this section is relatively comprehensive, only conceiving Afro-Mexicans as belonging to the Costa Chica fails to recognise people of African descent in other areas, such as Acapulco. Furthermore, Afro-Mexicans are separated from the group of Mestizos.

With respect to history, page 83 explains how African slaves were brought in after the demographic decline of the native population. The book continues to describe societal structures as being the Spaniards in positions of power whilst the Indigenous and Africans performed "the heaviest jobs" (p.83). In a less extensive manner as Puebla, the book talks about the caste system, mentioning "mestizos, sons of Spaniards and Indians, and mulattos, sons of Spaniards and Africans" (p.83) who played different roles. Furthermore, the main paragraph of the section on the Independence movement mentions participation of different groups such as "Indigenous, African, mestizo and mulatto". Ultimately, this is particularly encouraging given other books often fail to acknowledge the participation of Afro-descendants in the independence movement. However, the fact that Vicente Guerrero was Afro-Mexican, presents a great opportunity to represent Afro-Mexicans as people with agency and influence rather than just as workers and slaves. Unfortunately, the book does not recognise the African descent of the President who gave his name to the state.
While there are no mentions of free Africans in the colonial era, it does not use 'African slaves' constantly, but rather Africans and mulattos. The inclusion of photographs of Afro-Mexican children is a highlight. This allows students to recognize the phenotypical differences across the state. However, while the photograph in Figure 12 is titled ‘Children of the Costa Chica’ it could also be construed as a young mother and a child. A female civil society leader (3G-F) told me that teenage motherhood is high in the Costa Chica, where females are not expected to study or participate politically, but only to serve as daughters, mothers and wives. Although including such an image highlights a key societal issue, it also (re)produces the gendered imaginaries highlighted by my participant. On the other hand, and contrary to the Puebla textbook, this textbook provides activities where students are required to investigate more about Afro-Mexicans. On page 40 for example, it asks students to investigate why there is a large Afro-descendant population on the Costa Chica.

6.3. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have discussed how the national and state textbooks (re)produce dominant anti-black imaginaries. At the national level, I have argued how the combined exclusion and devaluation of blacks and Afro-Mexicans from textbooks serves to (re)produce an imaginary that blackness does not exist in contemporary Mexico, and where it does exist, it is of lower value than the culture of more dominant groups. For example, mentions of Afro-Mexicans are minimal after Independence which either suggests that they disappeared, or they did not comprise any sizeable portion of contributions to Mexico’s history. Furthermore,
the failure to conceive Afro-Mexicans as more than slaves precipitates negative connotations of blackness. Moreover, I have demonstrated that an apparent lack of discussion of racism within the Civic and Ethic Formation textbooks arguably represents Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2000) notion that the curriculum euphemises structural inequalities.

At the state level I have compared quantitatively and qualitatively the 3rd grade textbooks for both Puebla and Guerrero. To some degree, I have demonstrated that both replicate some of the anti-black tendencies of the national textbooks. For example, both textbooks fail to represent Afro-Mexicans as being individuals with much agency, and fail to number them as an ethnic group in discussions of diversity. However, the state contexts appear to have played a major part in how anti-black imaginaries are transformed. With Puebla, I have noted how discussions of mestizaje and Puebla’s heritage have sought, rather inconsistently to afford greater recognition to the African elements. Yet, contemporary discussion of Afro-Mexicans is absent. On the other hand, I have recognised how Guerrero has incorporated activities that prompt further investigation into afrodescendencia and has illustrated the contemporary existence of Afro-Mexicans but has still failed to mention that Vicente Guerrero, former President and the name-giver of the state, was Afro-Mexican.
7. The Teacher and the Capability to Transform Anti-Black Imaginaries

Solely focusing on the textbooks as symbolic violence ignores the complexities of enactment. Teachers as the frontline agents of the education system play a pivotal role in whether the anti-black imaginaries contained within the textbooks are (re)produced or whether they are transformed. However, the agency of teachers to transform the textbooks that they are authorised to teach is subject to their knowledgeable and capability (Giddens, 1984). Capability, the focus of this chapter, looks at how positionality and context influence the actions that a teacher can take. Therefore, in this chapter, I am focused on the factors that constrain or enable a teacher’s ability to transform these dominant imaginaries across the two distinct municipalities of Cholula and Cuajinicuilapa. Firstly, I build on Chapter 6 by looking at the relationship between the teacher and the curriculum. Next, I compare how local contexts influence the possibility for transformation. Finally, I look at how students, as a co-present actor, can constrain the teacher’s capability to transform anti-black imaginaries.

7.1. The Teacher-Curriculum Dialogue

In this research, textbooks are perceived as a structural constraint in the sense that context and knowledgeable influence their potency (Jessop, 2012). One of the fundamental similarities across both locations and between the many schools was a feeling that the textbooks are insufficient in terms of content. From one perspective, a focus on activities within the textbooks could be perceived as an enabling factor for transformation, as teachers are pushed to research to supplement the textbooks. However, in both locations teachers told me how their poor economic positions often restricted their class preparation, as they were pressured into working second jobs. Nevertheless, during observations in both locations teachers demonstrated autonomy over which subjects they would dedicate more time towards as they often deviated from the scheduled allocations. Despite these similarities, I observed differences in the extent to which teachers in the municipalities would deviate from the textbooks and the formal curriculum.

7.1.1. San Andrés Cholula

In each interview I indirectly asked my participants whether they consider the textbooks to be a bible to gauge the extent to which they followed what it contained. Five of the twelve teachers interviewed in Cholula agreed with this idea, though with differing reasons why. While a few teachers felt that the textbook was a useful manual, the more pronounced factor was the fear of sanctions for not completing them:
“It is true, that is a pity, but it is true, our textbooks have obliged us to cover them as a bible, what they say is done, without opening, they are square without giving the children the opportunity to explore something else because the book must be covered” 5D-F

“The SEP, they mention that they are flexible, that they are a guide, but at the moment of assessment they take them very seriously, all the questions are based exactly as in the book” 4D-M

The first quote represents a common theme which emerged from my participants in Cholula, who felt that there was an obligation to follow the textbook39. Given that the textbooks provide little incentive for further research on afrodescendencia, such as through activities, feeling obliged to follow the textbook could cause teachers to undertake extra research only where necessary. Even when teachers said that they disagreed with the textbook, many reported that they still taught it due to the same fear of repercussions. However, this did vary based on different perceptions of supervision. One distinction between the schools within the municipality was the level of staffing. In one school in particular, where the amount of administrative staff was high, teachers appeared more inclined to believe that they were obliged to follow the textbook and curriculum with little space for change, whereas in a poorly staffed school, teachers appeared to have more freedom:

“There is obsolete content, old stuff that is no longer useful, but you are obliged to deliver them” 5D-F

“Each teacher decides, let’s be honest there is no vigilance as such, everyone decides in their room if they finish the books or not” 4B-F

Nevertheless, most teachers implied that they felt this obligation to complete the textbook. Giddens (1984) notes that sanctions can be felt from merely expressions of disapproval to punishments and violence. Participants cited the reactions of their supervisors, the need for students to be prepared for assessments, and also their own evaluation as reasons why they don’t contest the textbook. Regarding the latter, one of the key imaginaries present amongst these participants was that the recent reforms were punitive, particularly to the experienced teacher. In this thesis I do not dedicate substantial amounts of time to discuss the reform, however it is pertinent to note how much of a constraint it presented to the participants in Cholula.

39 Textbooks are not supposed to be mandatory but rather a tool for teachers
“The reform is one of the weak points [of the education system] that are partly beneficial, but in part they damage us, they damage those teachers who already have a career, in my case I have 20 years” 5A-F

Teacher evaluation was at the forefront of many teachers’ minds in Cholula. Teachers are required to take evaluations every four years, and if they fail examinations on three occasions they are removed from teaching positions (de Ibarrola, 2018). Examinations include “multiple choice questions, a portfolio of student work submitted as evidence of teaching procedures, and the design of a teaching class to be written directly on a computer” (de Ibarrola, 2018, p.19). While the evaluation indicators for teachers do include reference to the diversity of their students, the main focus is on pedagogy and teaching practices (SEB, 2016). Assuming that afrodescendencia is not a feature of multiple choice questions, it is more likely that teachers would be preoccupied with revising strategies and pedagogies rather than researching content that may better position them to transform dominant anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad.

7.1.2. Cuajinicuilapa

When I asked the same question about the textbooks being a bible in Cuajinicuilapa, the general response was much more negative; only one of twelve teachers agreed with the statement. Through additional questions I gauged several reasons why teachers were more critical of the textbooks than they were in Cholula. Most simply, textbooks often did not arrive from the SEP. One teacher explained that:

“Study programs do not reach us and neither the materials they offer, sometimes the textbooks do not reach us” 9A-F

Hypothetically, the lack of textbooks prevents national and state imaginaries from influencing teaching practices, yet this is dependent on how teachers react. Some teachers reported that they learned to live without them whereas others used older version. Given the literature on prior textbooks (Masferrer León, 2011; White, 2009), the use of older textbooks that included more explicitly racist content would typically (re)produce anti-black imaginaries. However, even where textbooks were received, more teachers in Cuajinicuilapa were explicit about how they actively transformed the information contained. For example, one teacher commented:

“Well sometimes what I do if I do not agree with the content, I substitute it and look for another way where the child has a way of learning the same content” 7B-M

Furthermore, several participants appeared open to the idea of adding themes that were not necessarily included. In contrast to Cholula, the reform was much less mentioned
by my participants in Cuajinicuilapa which may point towards its limited implementation within the state. This combined with high levels of understaffing and a lower level of supervision appeared to give teachers more freedom than in Cholula. One teacher explained:

“Nobody tells me that I cannot take away [some content]” 9D-F

In this respect, a lack of supervision increases the capability of teachers to transform the dominant anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad by somewhat freeing them to challenge, ignore and replace parts of the textbook when teaching.

7.2. Resources beyond the Textbooks

The content-light textbooks ultimately require that teachers supplement their classes and knowledge using additional resources, such as library books, museums and the internet. Especially given the limited amount of information on afrodescendencia and blackness within the textbooks, locally available resources play a key role in determining the capability for teachers to transform anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. One common feature across both locations was how the spaces on the walls of the classrooms enabled teachers, and therefore their students, to highlight certain aspects. In many cases, the displays featured grammar, mathematical functions and values, but on some occasions they were used to foment national identity with flags and the words of the national anthem. However, in neither location did I necessarily see the walls being used to highlight afrodescendencia.

Given that much of the information about afrodescendencia and blackness in Mexico is online, good internet access is vital in increasing the capability to transform. However, in both locations, teachers cited poor internet access. In Cuajinicuilapa, the internet was particularly unreliable; at times during my stay, all communication networks would break down for hours at a time. Furthermore, while not necessarily stating a direct relationship between age and technological expertise, teachers in both locations averaged above 20 years in experience. Many teachers indicated that either themselves, or many of their colleagues were inadequately trained with technology which would limit their ability to research new information and prepare for class. Teachers from both municipalities noted:

“There are many teachers who have no idea how to even use a smartphone for example, not only is infrastructure important but also teacher training” 5D-F

“But I, as a teacher of advanced age, am challenged with ICT” 9C-F

Teachers did not only note that technology training was limited but also reported a lack of training on diversity, with several noting that the theory leaves them unprepared for when they teach outside their own communities. This corroborated with findings from the exploratory phase that highlighted the insufficiency of teacher training. While schools in
Cholula appeared to benefit from greater access to library books, these books can only help teachers transform dominant anti-black imaginaries if they cover afrodescendencia. On the contrary, teachers in Cuajinicuilapa were enabled by the Museum of Afro-Mestizo Cultures. The proximity of the museum to the schools, combined with higher levels of perceived autonomy, increases the capability for teachers to transform. For example, a teacher in Cholula complained to me about the authorisations required to take students to museums, whereas teachers in Cuajinicuilapa noted how they would often take the students to the museum.

7.3. Students as Co-Present Actors

Students are not discussed in great detail within this thesis but are an important factor in the capability for teachers to transform. Teaching practices can be both constrained and enabled by the students. In Cholula, one of the biggest challenges for teachers was the larger class sizes and diverse range of student abilities. One teacher commented:

“[a] child is still unable to read...the first one affected is the child because the one who does not learn is him, but also the rest because we can no give [them enough time]”

In one school, a teacher had two students who could not read and one who had a degenerative condition. In my observation, almost all of her time was dedicated to these three students, with other students only given passing comments. While this does not necessarily limit the activities and classes that the teacher delivers, it does reduce their ability to address any questions from other students; which is pertinent given two teachers in Cholula noted how their students had had prompted investigation on afrodescendencia. On the contrary, in Cuajinicuilapa, illdiscipline, students fatigued by outside employment and no air conditioning, in addition to poor attendance were significant constraints for the teacher. In one observation, there was a notable amount of disorder in the classroom; the children were continuously noisy, confrontational towards each other and appeared reluctant to undertake the work that the teacher was putting on the whiteboard.

7.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have discussed how local contexts and teacher positionality influence the capability for teachers to transform anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad using a combination of data from interviews, observations and secondary statistical analysis. I have described how teachers in both municipalities are constrained by time pressures, limited

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40 This was not a feature across all observations in Cuajinicuilapa where some teachers had good levels of control. Nevertheless, such behaviour was notable also in playgrounds and when teachers had left their rooms at a greater extent than Cholula.
training and technological expertise. I have countered by arguing how teachers are enabled within their classrooms by how they leverage the space on the walls and control class schedules. Despite several similarities, many differences were evident which emerge partly through the different geographical positions and economic resources of each municipality (Giddens, 1984). For example, in Cholula, better infrastructure and access to technology enhanced the capability of teachers to undertake additional research in comparison to teachers in Cuajinicuilapa.

Many of the constraints in this chapter are structural constraints, and as noted by Jessop (2012), the operation of structural constraints is not absolute but rather contingent on time-space boundaries as well as the individual’s knowledgeability of them. With respect to the teacher-curriculum dialogue, I observed that in Cholula, teachers perceive less autonomy. Factors that I have discussed include fear of sanctions, such as the reform-imposed evaluations, higher levels of supervision and perhaps unionisation in the more compliant SNTE. From a spatial perspective, Cholula’s proximity to the political and institutional centres of Mexico benefit it through better infrastructure but also imply a greater level of state control. On the other hand, teachers in Cuajinicuilapa appeared to show more autonomy and a greater level of deviance. I have argued how this lack of supervision has somewhat released teachers in Cuajinicuilapa to better transform dominant anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad, despite the weaker infrastructure.
8. The Knowledgeable Teacher and the Local Transformation of Dominant Anti-Black Imaginaries of Mexicanidad

Given the relatively static nature of capability, the teacher’s ability to transform anti-black imaginaries arguably depends on the intentions behind their actions. However, an overemphasis on intentionality can firstly obscure the notion that much of action is not directly motivated, and secondly that much action often results in unintended consequences (Giddens 1984). Scholars have previously noted that anti-black imaginaries are (re)produced and normalised through teaching practices within the education system (Masferrer León, 2016; Velasco Cruz & Baronnet, 2016; Zarate, 2016). However, existing research fails to address the reasons how, whether and why teaching (re)produces or transforms anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. In this chapter, I am focused on the knowledgeability of teachers towards blackness, and the imaginaries that motivate how teachers address blackness in the construction of national identity across Cholula and Cuajinicuilapa. This chapter begins by discussing the teachers’ perceptions of their role in identity construction, before the two case studies are outlined.

8.1. The Teacher and Mexicanidad

Common across both locations was the intentionality that teachers described when talking about national identity construction. The need to inculcate a feeling of Mexicanidad and values such as tolerance and equality in the children was deemed important to almost all teachers. The flag and other patriotic symbols, songs and the national anthem, festivals and commemorative days41 were regarded as particularly relevant, with many teachers opting to use the walls of their classrooms and various activities to promote them. Interestingly, teachers believed that national identity was threatened from three different angles. Firstly, parents were seen as unhelpful in fostering feelings of national identity. One participant in Cholula described:

“There is no time at home, there is no time even for talks, previously with our grandparents we had those pleasant hours of listening to stories, legends, things that they talked about, but what happens today, there is no time, the parents have to go to work, the children are left alone at home, they watch on the television, pure silly programs” 6E-F

Similarly, some argued that popular culture, and by association, the U.S. was threatening Mexicanidad. A teacher from Cuajinicuilapa explained how she had to tell her students not to celebrate the U.S. holiday of Halloween but instead only Day of the Dead.

41 Such days included Independence Day, Day of the Dead, Mother’s Day and Revolution Day.
Furthermore, it was seen that the SEP was reducing the time that could be devoted to national identity construction, partly through cutting back on extra-curricular activities but also given the limited time for the social sciences. Civic and Ethic Formation was often recalled when teachers would discuss how they teach values of inclusion and tolerance, whereas some highlighted the importance of History teaching in combatting racism. One teacher in Cholula explained:

“[the children] no longer remember the things that formed us Mexicans; if you told them before we were indigenous, they say ‘I am not’ but really as Mexicans we are, we belong to that of being indigenous, and [the children] see it as ugly, bad” 4C-F

One would expect that such a strong belief in the need to inculcate a sense of national identity would translate into deeper understandings of Mexico’s heritage, including afrodescendencia. Yet, this was not always the case. Starting with Cholula, the next section begins with the teachers’ awareness of afrodescendencia and how they teach it, followed by the factors underpinning their knowledge and actions.

8.2. San Andrés Cholula

8.2.1. Awareness (or lack of)

My participants in Cholula appeared to have little knowledge of Mexico’s African heritage or the possibility of black Mexicans in contemporary Mexico. For some teachers, their knowledge was only limited to the scant information found within the textbooks. These teachers could talk about the Africans who came as slaves during the colonial period, but beyond that, most teachers struggled to recall any details or rather, told inaccurate legends. One teacher, when explaining whether her students would have problems if a dark-skinned pupil entered their class, noted that:

“In my group I think that 50% would accept the child well and the other 50% not so much because they would be rooted in what we know in history, you see they were slaves and brought diseases and all that” 4C-F

That these folkloric stories continue within society present another challenge in reducing anti-black racism. Rather worryingly, there were several teachers who had less knowledge on afrodescendencia than what was in the textbooks they teach, which suggests that they most likely disregard those references. When I asked one third grade teacher about afrodescendencia, she first started to refer to Africa as a continent where there is much poverty and hunger. When I further explained about those in the colonial period, she explained:
“Our ancestors were following the animals to the mammoth-populated American continent and crossed the Bering Strait, which means that some of those could be Africans as well as Asians” 5B-F

At the end of the interview, this participant asked me more about my research. However, after outlining and elaborating further on afrodescendencia and contemporary Afro-Mexicans, the teacher remained somewhat inhibited from acknowledging what I said, responding:

“Africans could have passed the Bering Strait and populated [Mexico], but now there are no longer many Africans” 5B-F

Conversely, most teachers argued that what was contained in the textbook was not enough and some went further to say that they felt the role of Afro-Mexicans was likely understated in the books. In some cases, I was told about the actions which have been taken to learn more about afrodescendencia, sometimes prompted by student questions, and on two occasions by teachers themselves. One teacher commented:

“Because in a book [they read], there is a legend that speaks of the marimba, and in Chiapas there were free Africans who had fled and settled in a part of Chiapas and from there they went to look for firewood and when they hit the tree they heard the sound it made, it was something special [and invented the marimba]” 6A-F

However, both teachers who had appeared to have been more proactive in researching afrodescendencia had mainly improved their knowledge on the colonial period. No teachers were able to talk about Afro-Mexicans beyond the colonial period towards the contemporary era. Furthermore, I asked each participant whether myself could be considered Mexican if I spoke with the correct accent. Below are two representative responses:

“No, due to the skin type, because we Mexicans have a feature, not that kind of skin, there are also people with dark skin, but not brown like yours, I would say no, you're not Mexican you nationalised Mexican, but originally you are not Mexican, though we'd accept you” 5A-F

“no (laughs) no, because of your physical characteristics, that is, your physique distinguishes you. That is, if I would believe you ah well, but your parents where are they from, you are not so Mexican, where do you come from?” 5D-F

Not a single teacher believed I could be Mexican other than through naturalisation. Although the vast majority of Afro-Mexicans are mixed, I had observed and interviewed some who were darker skinned with me. However, the teachers in Cholula had very different perspectives. Ultimately, two key aspects stand out from these findings: firstly, most teachers
do not appear to have tried to increase their knowledge of afrodescendencia beyond the textbooks; and secondly, the contemporary Afro-Mexican is outside of the imagination of many.

Beyond the limitations of the textbooks, the most straightforward reason for why knowledgeability is low is the geographic location of the teacher. Recalling the information in Chapter 4, Cholula has no known Afro-Mexican population despite the many who were there historically. Furthermore, as per Chapter 5, there are limited sources of mainstream information locally and nationally that provide wider explanations of Mexico’s African heritage. Therefore, it can be argued that the conditions within which these teachers act are unacknowledged. Subsequently, these unacknowledged conditions feed into actions which have unintended consequences. When constructing a national identity that excludes blackness and afrodescendencia, these teachers are detached from the consequences, being the discrimination and exclusion faced by Afro-Mexicans. Unawareness of these consequences feeds back into the (re)production of the same actions. However, while valid, this explanation does not give reasons as to why teachers fail to reflect and investigate beyond the information in their textbooks that may broaden their awareness.

8.2.2. Dominant Imaginaries at Play?

Imaginaries can be key to the motivation of action. Despite the constraints faced by teachers, different imaginaries may motivate whether extra investigation is undertaken or not. Velasco Cruz and Baronnet (2016) argue how people in Mexico do not see themselves as part of the (re)production of racism. To a large extent teachers were aware of some racialised imaginaries, particularly with regards to whiteness as the site of beauty and power, yet explicitly racist statements were almost non-existent in interviews. However, I found it interesting how certain teachers would identify their own ethnicity. Two contrasting responses were:

“I am totally mestizo” 4D-M (own emphasis added)

“I have indigenous blood, although my dad is from Puebla, and I love it” 6A-F

That 4D-M, was so emphatic about being ‘totally mestizo’ carries undertones of the notion that the mestizo is seen as a new race, detached from its indigenous roots (Vasconcelos, 1925). On the contrary, the pride explicitly expressed by 6A-F towards her indigenous roots implicitly indicates that indigenous heritage has not been valued so highly in society such that she needs to proclaim her pride. Nevertheless, I would argue that many of my participants acknowledged the existence of sexism and racism in Mexican society. One teacher told me:
“If you pass my group you will listen as they self-describe; most of us are mestizos, indigenous then our skin is moreno and you ask them ‘Who is moreno? No one raises their hand... [they say] ’I’m güero’, no! You are brown-skinned, moreno.”  5D-F

From one angle, the teachers’ acknowledgement of racism would seem to challenge literature that says that people are largely unaware of racism. However, the media and parents were often blamed as the source of any racist values, and unsurprisingly, teachers did not acknowledge their own potential role in racism. Furthermore, the racism acknowledged was typically from whites towards mestizos. Instead, racism towards darker-skinned Mexicans and the indigenous was often conflated with class-based discrimination in the sense that a lack of knowledge or money was the determining factor of any discrimination. This corresponds with Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar’s (2016, p.523) assertion that mestizaje carries a “belief that Mexico’s deep social injustice is solely rooted in class stratification”.

My participants appeared to be very attached to the dominant mestizo imaginary where it is merely the merger of the Indigenous and Spanish. In response to my question “What is mestizaje?” 70% of teachers described it as the combination of two races, explicitly noting Europeans/Spanish and the Indigenous. In fact, two participants explained how the French also contributed to the process of mestizaje. However, not one teacher included Africans (or Asians and Jews) in their conceptualisation of mestizaje, which perhaps explains why further research has been limited and the imaginary of contemporary black Mexicans is implausible. This is despite the broader fashion in which the Puebla textbook outlines mestizaje. Interestingly, this question on mestizaje was always asked immediately before I started to talk about afrodescendencia, to avoid influencing what the teachers would respond. Nonetheless, several participants who had excluded African’s from their definition of mestizaje, were able to demonstrate their knowledgeability about Africans during the colonial period. Two responses to the mestizaje question were:

“Mestizaje is a mixture of two races, the white with the indigenous that occurred when the Spaniards arrived here” 4D-M

“Mestizaje here is a cross of foreigners, in this case Spanish with indigenous” 6A-

However, when the discussion centred on afrodescendencia, both teachers showed their knowledge, albeit limited:

“[Africans are] mentioned as people who were brought by the Spaniards as slaves, being workers and young people” 4D-M

42 Güero means light-skinned
“Mexicans are part of a combination of Africans with people from Puebla...many slaves came to be liberated once they entered Mexico and they came to settle down here because for them they were the African slaves they brought because they performed well at work” 6A-F

The contrast between the conceptualisations of mestizaje and their historical knowledge is illuminating. From 4D-M, it could be implied that slavery is acknowledged but the number of Africans was so insignificant that they did not form part of the mestizaje. This reinforces an anti-black imaginary that devalues the significance of the contributions of afrodescendencia. 6A-F provides a more curious example. Her knowledge is rather extensive and she talks about the contributions of Africans to the mestizaje but when earlier asked, they were excluded. Even where awareness of history is better, this contradiction shows how attachment to dominant mestizo imaginaries can cause teachers to disregard afrodescendencia and treat the curricular information with scepticism. The omission of afrodescendencia from imaginaries of mestizaje, and the disbelief of the contemporary black Mexican highlights another racialised imaginary, that blackness is deemed incompatible with Mexicanidad.

For those participants who had very limited awareness of the history of Afro-Mexicans, they most often conceived the discussion as being about foreign countries or Africa as a continent. Another imaginary that perhaps points towards the influence of the unions is that many teachers held a suspicion of international organisations and foreign influence. Foreign influence was blamed for creating racist stereotypes in the media, for exacerbating class-based discrimination and corruption, and for imposing punitive reforms. One teacher highlighted how the imaginary of oppressive international forces can contribute to the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. When questioned why there is more information on afrodescendencia in the textbooks now compared to before, the teacher replied:

“Because we all know that the rulers who are in power try to inculcate content that is also imposed on them by the international bank and if they agree with certain contents they are the ones that should be given and we are unfortunately receiving contents which sometimes are not real, but as we must follow a program we have to give them because they are orders” 4D-M

8.3. Cuajinicuilapa

8.3.1. Varied Awareness

Unexpectedly, the level of awareness regarding the historical and contemporary existence of black and Afro-Mexicans is hugely different in Cuajinicuilapa. Like Cholula, the teachers recognise that the information in the textbook is limited. However, the difference is
that many teachers have knowledge of afrodescendencia that is more extensive than what the textbooks explain. Furthermore, teachers described how traditionally Afro-Mexican dances\textsuperscript{43} were taught and practiced during celebrations such as Day of the Dead. Such a combination of Afro-Mexican heritage with a widely celebrated Mexican holiday is a constructive way of fostering imaginaries of national identity which value blackness and afrodescendencia. Teachers also told me how they would use the internet, when it worked, to research and would also set investigations for their pupils to stimulate their own identity formation. In addition, one teacher explained actions taken at a more institutional level:

“In a workshop that we had in the port of Acapulco in multi-grade groups when I was as a technical advisor...I commented and argued that there are no topics about the black people, there are white people in the texts, they make mention of historical characters, but of indigenous and white, but the black people are omitted” 9A-F

Nevertheless, it is not as simple as teachers in Cholula reproducing anti-black imaginaries and those in Cuajinicuilapa contesting and transforming them. There were several instances where teachers in Cuajinicuilapa were also reproducing anti-black imaginaries, largely in the sense that they diminish the historical presence of Afro-Mexicans. For example, several teachers recounted a legend that rather humorously I had heard across Latin America:

“In Mexico they had a ship and the ship sank and the Africans came here and that is why we have a black race, it is said, but in reality it is not something specific, it is like a hypothesis” 7A-M

Like others, this teacher’s knowledge was somewhat pinned to false stories. This demonstrates that even within a community that self-describes as Afro-Mexican, knowledge of the scale of the African influence in Mexico remains limited for some. While census data shows that Afro-Mexicans are spread beyond merely the Costa Chica, it would appear that information of their existence is limited even in nearby localities. One teacher who had recently moved from a town less than a 100km away from Cuajinicuilapa claimed:

“I only came to know about the black people here, because over there in my town, I did not know anything about the blacks, or in [State of] Mexico because I was also in Mexico and there is nothing like that, I only heard it when I arrived here, it’s the only place” 7D-F

Not only are information flows limited outside of the geographical area but it appears that they are fairly new. One principal from the area told me how her discovery of being Afro-Mexican was a recent phenomenon. Self-recognising as “proudly Afro-Mexican” (8E-F), she described how her membership in an Afro-Mexican women’s organisation had helped her

\textsuperscript{43} Such as the Danza de los diablos and the Danza de la Tortuga
learn more about her heritage, which she tries to instil in her students. As outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, local dynamics and activism provide valuable information flows, such as through the Museum of Afro-Mestizo Cultures. CSOs also appeared to play a significant role in providing information to schools about Afrodescendencia, particularly given that several teachers were part of these same organisations. In fact, the two principals that I interviewed were part of Afro-Mexican CSOs. Networks appeared vital; teachers told me about the existence of social media groups, such as on WhatsApp, where information would be passed around between members. In addition, Cuajinicuilapa finds itself as a magnet for researchers, filmmakers and journalists, whose products have subsequently provided additional information. In contrast to Cholula, almost all teachers believed I could have been Mexican when I asked them.

Clearly, the teachers are closer to the conditions and consequences of their actions when anti-black imaginaries are (re)produced. Experiences and observations of extreme acts of racism were recalled by some teachers whereas others stressed the importance of students being comfortable in their own skin. One teacher commented:

“In children who have the vision, self-esteem or the importance of belonging to an ethnic group, where we are not different from others, we are equal, we have the same abilities, the fact of being black or white does not limit or enable them, that I have tried to work it with children” 9A-F

8.3.2. Dominant National Vs Localised Imaginaries

Unlike Cholula, the imaginaries expressed in the interviews appeared to be heterogeneous and conflicting. Part of these variations are down to positionality. For example, some of the most vocal teachers about racism were also ones who were in CSOs. Hoffman and Rinaudo (2014) state how debates around blackness in the Costa Chica centralise racism as the driver of regional inequalities, and this was evident in discussions with some participants. On the other hand, there were some teachers who were more critical of CSOs. One believed that the aims of the CSOs were skewed for their own monetary gain. The other saw the aims for constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexicans as a form of separatism. This participant, who described as mestizo but recognised his black, European and indigenous roots, was light-skinned and I had earlier observed a heated discussion between him and another participant who was a member of a CSO. He explained later in an interview that:

“For me I feel that society is not as racist as the difference I see is between the one who knows and the one who doesn’t” 7E-M

This reinforces the imaginary described by Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar (2016) that was more evident in Puebla; that class-based discrimination is the main driver of inequalities. Arguably, that this participant was lighter-skinned and unlikely to be subject to the same level of discrimination as darker-skinned colleagues, obscured his perceptions of racism. Rather
than classifying Afro-Mexicans as a separate ethnic group, this participant argued that it was more important to reinvigorate knowledge of the role that they played in mestizaje. This sentiment was repeated in several interviews where mestizaje was given broader definitions. In response to my question about mestizaje, one teacher responded:

“Mestizaje is a mixture, let’s say, it’s a mixture, it’s a coexistence of several cultures practically, we’re not going to talk about the difference of castes and all that, it is a variety of adopted cultures, that is, we are practically mestizos” 8B-F

There were three main local definitions of mestizaje consistent with the literature (Hoffman & Rinaudo, 2014; Lewis, 2016; Wade, 2005). Firstly, there were occasions where mestizaje had been expanded to include blacks. This type of transformation on the one hand leaves the nexus between mestizaje and Mexicanidad intact, but on the other hand creates space for the acknowledgement of blacks. Secondly, there were teachers who left mestizaje untouched. Of these two teachers, one did not ascribe to an ethnicity and the other described himself as mestizo and was not from the Costa Chica, but rather from the Costa Grande of Guerrero which perhaps explains why he was attached to the dominant national mestizo imaginary. Thirdly, mestizaje was presented as a mixture of just blacks and the indigenous at the expense of whites. This final conceptualisation highlights an imaginary exhibited by several participants; that whites were the source of oppression. Two teachers explained:

“Even if we say that we are already free and independent, we are still dominated by whites and as long as that exists they will not allow a black to occupy a high level place” 8C-M

“I speak in educational policy issues such as the curriculum that the secretary sends us, it is a curriculum in which white people send us” 9A-F

Interestingly, where the ‘international’ was the oppressor in Cholula, the ‘whites’ were seen as the oppressors in Cuajinicuilapa. This corresponds strongly with the findings of Lewis (2012) who describes how whites are portrayed common antagonists for Afro-Mexicans and the Indigenous in the Costa Chica. With regards to blackness, different and conflicting arguments were present. For some, blackness largely did not exist as everyone was mestizo. For the majority, as described by Hoffman and Rinaudo (2014, p.147), blackness was a positioned as a “political mechanism for the emancipation of the populations claiming it”. Teachers demonstrated pride, often explicitly in being black or having black heritage, while simultaneously arguing that black identity was under threat. One teacher remarked:

“There should be put content specifically of our essence of each municipality and the heritage we have as Afro, that should come in now and not be something that is thinking in the future, the identity will be lost” 8B-F
8.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have discussed the knowledgeability of teachers with respect to national identity construction, blackness and afrodescendencia using data from interviews and participant observations. Across both locations, teachers have been vocal about the importance of their own role and the role of primary education in national identity construction. However, I have shown that this does not translate to accurate understandings of history and demographics. In Cholula, I have explained how knowledge of afrodescendencia is limited and that the idea of a contemporary black Mexican is unimaginable. On the other hand, I have demonstrated how in Cuajinicuilapa, knowledgeability is higher and the idea of a contemporary black Mexican is blatant. For both locations, positionality, contexts and imaginaries have influenced how the teacher interacts with the textbooks. Local demographics, better information flows and teacher membership to certain CSOs are key determinants of the differences.

Burridge argues that knowledgeability is on the one hand bounded by the unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action, and on the other hand by imaginaries, being unconscious motivations of action (Burridge, 2014). Arguably, teachers in Cholula are unintentionally reproducing anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad simply as a result of being unaware of their existence. Giddens (1984, p.11) states that “in general it is true that the further removed the consequences of an act are in time and space from the original context of the act, the less likely those consequences are to be intentional”. Therefore, the proximity of teachers in Cuajinicuilapa to the consequences of their actions should increase their agency to transform. However, Giddens (1984, p.11) adds that “but this is, of course influenced by both the scope of the knowledgeability that actors have and the power they have to mobilise”. The textbooks, while limited, do create an incentive for teachers unaware of afrodescendencia to research more. Nonetheless, I have shown how in Cholula and occasionally in Cuajinicuilapa, teachers have disregarded the importance of afrodescendencia. I have attributed this tendency to the attachment to the dominant mestizaje imaginary, in the sense that an unconscious motivation for ontological security means teachers are reluctant to depart from deeply held views and beliefs. This further demonstrates how the two bounds of knowledgeability interact given that unconscious motivations inhibit the increasing of awareness of conditions and consequences of actions.

Ultimately, I have implied that Cholula is more representative of the dominant view in Mexico. While only looking at two municipalities restricts the generalisability, some interesting insights emerge from the minority of teachers in Cuajinicuilapa who were either attached to the dominant mestizo imaginary or were critics of the fight for recognition. These teachers generally described themselves as mestizo and were not from the Costa Chica but rather elsewhere in the state. Furthermore, access to the museum and the activity of CSOs is often limited to the Costa Chica. Thus, it can be implied that local transformation is viable but it is limited geographically.
9. Conclusion

In this research I have sought to investigate the role of Mexican primary education teaching in the (re)production/transformation of dominant anti-black imaginaries of Mexicanidad. Motivated by my own experiences and observations of anti-black racism in Latin America, I have aimed to contribute to existing debates of afrodescendencia in one of the lesser-researched countries in the region. Contrary to the likes of Brazil, Colombia and Cuba, blackness in Mexico is often perceived as non-existent internationally and locally. Grounded by a critical realist epistemology and ontology, I have aimed to provide an analysis of the ‘real’ mechanisms that (re)produce an anti-black racism that almost completely excludes blackness from imaginaries of Mexicanidad. Underpinned by a Critical Race Theory worldview, I draw on the concept of imaginaries, and embed it in a framework that combines Giddens’ and Bourdieu’s sociological theories, to give a more nuanced exploration of the teaching process. Furthermore, using a mixed-methods vertical-horizontal case study, I have been able to provide a broad examination of reasons why teachers, as frontline actors in the education system, may either (re)produce or transform these imaginaries.

In this final chapter, I firstly in Section 9.1, outline the main empirical findings of my research in response to the main research question, weaving in insights from the theoretical framework. In Section 9.2, I further develop the theoretical implications of this study, looking both at the Giddens-Bourdieu combination, but also more closely at the regional and global level. Subsequently, I establish the practical implications and policy recommendations that emerge from my findings in Section 9.3, before I outline limitations of this study and suggestions for future research in Section 9.4.

9.1. Response to Main Research Question

What is the role of the Primary Education teaching in the (re)production or transformation of anti-black imaginaries of Mexican national identity?

Drawing on the concept of imaginaries, I argue that dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad at the national level leave no place for blackness by conceiving Mexican racial heritage as a false combination between the Indigenous and the Spanish. Furthermore, these dominant imaginaries discriminate, devalue and ridicule blackness. Anti-black imaginaries are extensive; in the media, museums, families, daily life and education. Mexican Primary Education teaching ultimately plays a major role in reproducing these imaginaries. In the following sub-sections, I outline the reasons that underpin this concluding response:
9.1.1. Knowledgeability is low

The role that the education system and teachers play in the construction of national identity is key (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). If broader knowledge on afrodescendencia is to change, teachers should be at the forefront of inculcating more accurate and profound information. However, as I describe in Chapter 8, the knowledgeability that teachers had towards afrodescendencia was low. In Cholula, where there is no known contemporary Afro-Mexican presence, the knowledge teachers had was very limited. At the most, teachers had expanded colonial era knowledge of afrodescendencia, while some teachers had zero awareness. Furthermore, teachers in Cholula were unable to imagine a contemporary black Mexican. Without necessarily observing how national identity is taught, a lack of knowledgeability presents a major barrier to transformative action (Giddens, 1984). On the other hand, in Cuajinicuilapa, knowledgeability of afrodescendencia was higher, largely due to particular local dynamics. Some teachers were able to demonstrate extensive knowledge beyond just the colonial period and had found ways such as through song and dance to tie blackness to national identity construction. However, several other teachers still held inaccurate views on history and contemporary demographics. Such inaccuracies also diminish the role of afrodescendencia in the formation of contemporary Mexico and therefore devalue blackness.

9.1.2. The curriculum remains insufficient

Bourdieu and Passeron, (2000, p.5) argue that all pedagogic action is symbolic violence. In this context, this manifests itself in the textbooks through the exclusion and delegitimisation of blackness and afrodescendencia (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). In Chapter 6, I argue that while the national textbooks have incorporated information on afrodescendencia in the colonial period, they fail to indicate the size of the Afro-Mexican population, the heterogeneity amongst the Africans brought as slaves, or the extent to which they played a role in Mexico. At the same time, I also describe how discussions of racism are limited within Civic and Ethic Formation in a manner that euphemises the racialised inequalities in Mexican society. The state textbooks (re)produce some of the same imaginaries as the national textbooks. They fail to coherently connect Afro-Mexicans in the colonial era to the present-day and Afro-Mexicans are mainly presented as individuals lacking agency. However, the Guerrero state textbook does highlights how state contexts can transform the imaginaries, and although limited, provides greater recognition of Afro-Mexicans today.

44 The reality is many residents could have some distant African heritage but in terms of self-identification, there are few Afro-Mexicans
9.1.3. Ontological Security and Attachment to Imaginaries

To some degree, teachers’ ignorance of afrodescendencia is involuntary, a result of their spatial and temporal positioning. However, even with inadequate textbooks, mentions of afrodescendencia should theoretically encourage teachers to use other resources to learn more on the topic. Yet, this was not the case, particularly in Cholula but also with some individuals in Cuajinicuilapa. As discussed in Chapter 8, teachers would often exclude blackness and afrodescendencia from their conceptualisations of mestizaje, even when they could later talk about afrodescendencia. Given the manner in which mestizaje was tied to imaginaries of Mexicanidad, this illustrates how teachers themselves devalue and exclude blackness.

Recalling Giddens’ (1984) notion of ontological security, the confidence individuals have that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, provides an interesting insight into the teachers’ voluntary ignorance of afrodescendencia. Imaginaries, such as dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad, would have informed and mediated the actions and beliefs of teachers for most of their lives. Information that challenges these imaginaries could theoretically be disregarded due to unconscious motivations for ontological security and stability in teachers’ perceptions of their social surroundings. Thus, unconscious motivation bounds knowledgeable, reduces agency to transform and continues the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries. Burridge (2014) argues that awareness of unconscious motivations of action can increase knowledgeable, though this requires a degree of reflexivity. However, in Chapter 7, I have discussed how training, particularly diversity training is limited. An extra constraint to reflexivity is time. Teachers are also burdened with extra jobs, administrative tasks and in some cases the fear of repercussions from failing the reform-imposed evaluations. All of these aspects, combined with the constant exposure to the anti-black imaginaries portrayed in the media and popular culture contribute to a lack of reflexivity from teachers on how they construct national identity.

9.1.4. Dominant Imaginaries Remain Too Effective

Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) state that the effectiveness of the pedagogic work required in maintaining dominant imaginaries can be measured by durability, transposability and exhaustibility. In Chapter 5, I describe how anti-black imaginaries are (re)produced far beyond the confines of institutionalised education, but also within the family, media, museums and everyday society. I conclude that the effectiveness of such imaginaries make it difficult for teachers to depart from them even with the changes made to the textbooks, which ultimately suggests that changes to the education alone, even if more significant, cannot be a silver bullet to anti-black racism.
9.1.5. Localised Contestation Possible but Limited

To finish on a semi-positive note, in Chapters 5 and 8, I have also explored rather successful forms of contestation. That teachers openly ascribe to being black or Afro-Mexican represents progress. Local activists, academics and certain practitioners deserve credit for the seemingly growing appeal of blackness. On the contrary, I have also demonstrated that much of local contestation is limited geographically and much of it is due to the context-driven proximity of teachers to the consequences of their actions. Particularly intriguing was how different some of the views in Cuajinicuilapa were of the teachers who were from the Costa Chica versus teachers from elsewhere in the state who were more attached to the dominant imaginaries. This highlights the fragility of local contestation that is pitted against such dominant imaginaries.

9.2. Theoretical Implications

9.2.1. The CRT-Bourdieu-Giddens Framework

One of the unique features of this research study was the combination of Critical Race Theory, Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice\textsuperscript{45} and Giddens’ Structuration Theory. While there are examples where two of the three frameworks have been combined (Burridge, 2014; McKnight & Chandler, 2012), I am not aware of instances where all three have been combined. Most simply, CRT was used to add a racial perspective to two class-based theories. The notion of pedagogic work has been vital to this research as it helps explain why some imaginaries are so effective. Bourdieu (and Passeron’s) theories have been used mainly in Chapters 5 and 6 to demonstrate the width and depth of the (re)production of anti-black imaginaries inside and outside of institutionalised education. However, this theory was not considered sufficient enough in explaining why individual agents (re)produce or transform such imaginaries. Instead, capability, knowledgeability, and in particular the bounds of knowledgeability have proved useful in understanding the reasons for (re)production or transformation.

The two bounds of knowledgeability are (1) the unconscious motivations of action and (2) the unintended consequences/unacknowledged conditions of action. While it is argued that increased awareness of the unintended consequences/unacknowledged conditions of action can increase knowledgeability, I have also demonstrated how the two bounds are connected, in the sense that unconscious motivation for ontological security inhibits reflexivity on the consequences and conditions of action. This is where the combination of Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) becomes helpful again. Arguably, the pedagogic work that maintains some imaginaries means some are more deeply internalised than others. In this research, a hypothetical argument is that the effectiveness of the pedagogic work of

\textsuperscript{45} Operating primarily through Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2000) pedagogic action
reproducing dominant imaginaries of Mexicanidad is extensive enough to prevent teachers from increasing their awareness.

9.2.2. Blackness and Afrodescendencia

Much of this thesis has focused on the exclusion of afrodescendencia as the main element of anti-black racism in Mexico. This is in part due to the methodological nature of the thesis in the sense that observing other forms of discrimination was more difficult to observe or find within interviews where the opportunities for trust building were limited. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that an over-focus on afrodescendencia, in the purely historical sense, can be a mechanism of perpetuating anti-blackness. Perhaps akin to indigenousness, valuing the historical contributions does not directly lead to improvements in discrimination and inequality, but can sustain Social Darwinist ideas of the mestizo being a superior race. Neither does it necessarily challenge the idea that there are no blacks in Mexico presently (Sue, 2010).

9.2.3. Decolonisation and the Regional and Global Fields

The decolonisation of education has not been explicitly mentioned in this thesis but is implicit throughout. Racial dynamics in Mexico are repeated, in different ways, across the Latin American region (Knight, 1990). Academia has historically obscured blackness from debates within Latin American studies (Rosa, 1996), and Afro-descendant populations in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to live in situations of vulnerability and poverty (Campoalegre, 2017). This research, on the one hand contributes to existing regional debates by shedding light on some of the idiosyncratic features of anti-black racism in Mexico, and on the other hand, provides a research design that can be implemented in different countries. From a more global perspective, this research contributes to wider decolonisation movements. I have demonstrated how teaching can leave gaps, make contradictions and inaccuracies as ways to exclude and devalue blackness. Equally, I have argued how small changes to textbooks alone are insufficient to challenge deeply held imaginaries.

9.3. Summary of Policy Recommendations

While some of these suggestions would have been outlined elsewhere (Masferrer León, 2017), below I provide policy recommendations that add weight to existing calls:

- Changes to curriculum, and particularly the textbooks, that are significant enough to disrupt imaginaries that minimise the role of blackness and afrodescendencia, such as:
  - Explicitly stating the number of slaves brought to Mexico and the number of Afro-Mexicans presently in discussions of diversity
Providing historical information that connects Afro-Mexicans in the colonial period to the present day in an uninterrupted fashion

Portraying Afro-Mexicans as individuals of agency and importance, highlighting their socio-economic and political contributions, recognising important historical Afro-Mexican figures of both genders, and noting contributions to independence and revolutionary movements

- **Improvements to training and evaluation:**
  - Supplementing the new diversity reforms with greater consideration of afrodescendencia and blackness
  - Adding sufficient content on afrodescendencia to the continual training scheme
  - Ensuring that questions on afrodescendencia enter evaluations

- **Initiatives to ease the structural constraints faced by teachers:**
  - Increasing and allocating paid working time for lesson preparation
  - Ensuring an adequate level of technology and internet access in each school
  - Increasing the diversity of pedagogic resources (books, online resources, media) available to the teacher

- **Make use of the media to create alternative methods of highlighting the existence of Afro-Mexicans, such as fiction, television programmes and cartoons**

- **Museums** to include a greater consideration of the history and current contributions of Afro-Mexicans. Similarly, central funding should be provided to initiatives like the Museum of Afro-Mestizo Cultures.

9.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The scope of this thesis was broad but resources were limited leaving several aspects that warrant more attention. Some of the limitations of this thesis include: the inability to look at the transversal scale and perform the research over a period of several years; generalisability which is somewhat constrained by the choice of methods; an insufficient consideration of other institutional actors such as policy makers and unions; and, the limited consideration of intersectionality with gender and class. In this light, suggestions for future research could include:

- **The replication of the research design in different countries, particularly in Latin America, or across countries. Such a study could facilitate comparisons that highlight further differences between areas, countries and regions.**

- **A quantitative research study performed across all states in Mexico, and for many more teachers. This would increase the statistical generalisability of the research and**
enable a better understanding to see where dominant imaginaries are stronger than others.

- A policy trajectory study into the enactment of the United Nation Decade for Peoples of African Descent in Mexican education policy. This would provide feedback on the effectiveness of the decade and areas of resistance, which would facilitate better consideration of the role of policy-makers, the unions, universities and teacher training colleges.

- An investigation on approaches to alternative education carried out by the different Afro-Mexican CSOs, taking into account the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity and race.  

46 For example, some groups are focused on women, some groups are focused on Afro-Indigenous issues, and others are more orientated around rural issues and extreme poverty.
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School names are pseudonyms

### Secondary Data Sources

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Translated Verbal Consent Statement

My name is Kafui Adjogatse, and I am a master’s student in international development at the University of Amsterdam. I am doing research on the educational system, the role of the teacher, national identity and diversity. If it is ok, may I record this conversation? I advise you that this conversation is voluntary and if at any time you do not want to continue, we can finish and delete the recording. Access to this information will only be available to my supervisors, assistants and myself. I will also keep your anonymity in my notes and when I write.

QCA Dictionaries

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