

INDIGENOUS MEXICANS' EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE, AND  
INEQUALITY IN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

by

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Indigenous Mexicans' Experiences with Discrimination, Prejudice, and Inequality in Mexico and the  
United States: A Quantitative Approach

Thesis directed by Professor Fernando Riosmena

Since the arrival of the Spanish over five centuries ago, Indigenous people in Mexico have been marginalized and relegated to the bottom of a social hierarchy rooted in the coloniality of power. Now two centuries post-independence, while there are increased government-led efforts to better address the needs of Indigenous communities and remedy the problems they experience, ranging from poverty to discrimination to limited educational and occupational opportunities, Indigenous communities still face many barriers to upward mobility, including significant structural and interpersonal discrimination. The objective of this dissertation is to understand the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans on both sides of the US – Mexico border and the demographic factors that influence perceptions of racial difference by non-Indigenous people and perceptions of discrimination by Indigenous people. To achieve this goal, I use three nationally representative data sources with Indigenous representation – two in Mexico and one in the US – and a variety of multivariable statistical techniques. This research uses datasets from Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), and the US Labor Department's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS). Results show *mestizaje* and multiculturalism appear to coexist in Mexico, potentially in a mutually constitutive manner, highlighted by a greater appreciation of multiculturalism and recognition of the needs of marginalized racial and ethnic populations, while some stereotypical beliefs and discriminatory attitudes persist. Despite the endurance of these attitudes, large majorities of people, including Indigenous Mexicans, say they have not been targeted by skin color, linguistic, economic, and gender

discrimination, although economic discrimination is most common. These results are likely not a reflection of there being little discrimination in Mexico, but instead that people may not have the vocabulary to describe the discrimination they experience. While dominant racial ideologies continue to be brought to the US by Mexican immigrants, results show inequality in health care and health outcomes are not dictated by racial and ethnic identity, but by gender, legal status, poverty status, and geographic location. Together, these findings contribute an improved understanding of the nuance and heterogeneity of the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans.

## DEDICATION

To my grandparents, Robert and Holly Eng

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of the Spanish over five centuries ago, Indigenous people across Latin America have been marginalized and relegated to the bottom of a social hierarchy rooted in the coloniality of power. While we can point to evidence of social inequality, rigid social classes, and practices like slavery and indentured servitude in pre-colonial societies, including the Aztecs for example (Smith and Hicks, 2016), the treatment of Indigenous people during Spanish colonial rule was marked by multiple attempts to erase, literally and figuratively, Indigenous communities and peoples in the region, including the spatial segregation of much of the Indigenous population to rural areas away from colonial population centers. Within a century of the arrival of Europeans to Latin America, the size of the Indigenous population shrunk by up to 90% – with high excess mortality induced through disease, forced labor, enslavement, or violence (Green & Branford, 2013). During Spanish rule, the extensive mixture of Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous peoples led to a complex ethnoracial structure across Latin America that privileged Europeans and lighter skinned people while marginalizing darker skinned populations, like the Indigenous and Afro-descendants. This resulted in *pigmentocracies* – societies where inequality is based on skin color and ethnoracial categories (Telles & The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America, 2014). Although the legal hierarchy implemented by the Spanish was eliminated once colonial rule ended, the informal social structure remains as a persistent legacy of ethnoracial hierarchization.

Now two centuries post-independence, there are increased government-led efforts to better address the needs of Indigenous communities and remedy the problems they experience, ranging from poverty to discrimination to limited educational and occupational opportunities. Despite this progress, Indigenous communities continue to face significant social and economic problems. Today, there are nearly 50 million Indigenous people in Latin America – the largest populations are found in Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. While poverty has improved overall across the region over the past few decades, poverty remains especially high among the Indigenous population and wages are often significantly lower than those of non-Indigenous people (Cruz-Saco, 2018). Illiteracy rates are high among Indigenous Mexicans – 27.2% are illiterate, compared to 5.4% of non-Indigenous Mexicans, with Indigenous women having even higher illiteracy rates of around 40% (Camp, 2017). There continue to be many barriers to upward mobility for Indigenous people, particularly regarding educational attainment and the labor market.

Structural and interpersonal discrimination remain significant challenges and the persistence of negative stereotypes and prejudice continue to impact the lives of Indigenous Mexicans. As one response to these barriers, rural Indigenous Mexicans often migrate to the US in search of better economic opportunities than are available to them in Mexico. However, despite a different geographic context, they continue to experience the same prejudicial attitudes from other (non-Indigenous) Mexican migrants, in addition to new forms of discrimination from Americans. Whether in Mexico or the US, the poverty and discrimination that Indigenous Mexicans face over the long-term takes a physical and mental toll, resulting in significant negative health impacts.

The objective of this dissertation is to understand the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans on both sides of the US – Mexico border and the demographic factors that influence perceptions of racial difference by non-Indigenous people and perceptions of discrimination by Indigenous people. To achieve this goal, I use three nationally representative data sources with

Indigenous representation – two in Mexico and one in the United States – and a variety of multivariable statistical techniques. As part of this research, I focus on themes that include the broader social attitudes about race and indigeneity in Mexico, lived experiences with discrimination, and inequities Indigenous Mexicans face in particular sites and situations, including those related to health care and health outcomes. Previous research on these topics has often missed the nuanced characteristics of these populations, thus obscuring the diversity of opinions and experiences that exist. Each of the following chapters addresses this gap in a different way, ranging from an exploration of geographical differences of opinion within Mexico to an intersectional approach of understanding Indigenous Mexicans’ experiences with discrimination to a focus on the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Indigenous Mexican farmworkers in the US. Together, these chapters contribute a more refined and nuanced understanding of these themes.

Chapter 2 explores attitudes and opinions about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico to understand the dominant beliefs Mexicans have about issues related to racial mixture and Indigenous difference. This discussion of social attitudes about race is grounded in an understanding of the official Mexican racial ideologies of past and present – *mestizaje* and multiculturalism.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Latin American countries were championing the idea of *mestizaje* or “race mixture”. *Mestizaje* was thought to improve the quality of the national population, helping Latin American countries become “civilized” and “modern” states under the idea of national progress and development (Loveman, 2014). In Mexico, *mestizaje* was a foundation for national pride and identity. Racial mixture was thought to make Mexicans culturally and biologically superior to all other people – this is the idea of the “cosmic race” or the blending of European, Indigenous, and (to a lesser extent) African ancestry and culture (Sue, 2013). Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ideology of *mestizaje* began to weaken across Latin America. With Indigenous demands for autonomy rapidly increasing in response to the negative effects of neoliberal economic reforms, Latin

American governments felt pressured to act to assuage their Indigenous populations. As most Latin American countries shifted toward a stronger recognition and appreciation of multiculturalism, there was stronger awareness of the importance of recognizing racial and ethnic distinctions in addition to improved understanding of the challenges and discrimination that ethnic minorities (i.e., Indigenous and Afro-descendants) continue to face (Telles & The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America, 2014). It is within this context of the transition from *mestizaje* to multiculturalism that I explore attitudes about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico to understand the extent to which a multicultural perspective influences the beliefs of Mexicans on these issues.

Chapter 2 relies on 2010 data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) – two prominent sources of survey data on race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Latin America. The LAPOP and PERLA surveys are particularly well-suited to international comparisons with PERLA covering four countries and LAPOP covering about twenty countries around Latin America. However, this means the focus of analyses using LAPOP and PERLA data is typically on differences between countries, rather than the internal dynamics of any one country. Given the significant political, economic, and social differences between regions (e.g., north and south) and between urban and rural communities in Mexico, more detailed examinations of geographical disparities within Mexico are necessary to better capture the complexity of opinion throughout the country.

Chapter 3 shifts the perspective from the prevailing perceptions of racial difference by Mexico's dominant social groups to the experiences of the marginalized by exploring perceptions and experiences of discrimination in Mexico, with a focus on Indigenous Mexicans. The analyses in Chapter 3 use the same LAPOP and PERLA data used in Chapter 2, while engaging more deeply with the multiple overlapping identities of Indigenous people and the ways these intersectional identities may differentially impact experiences of discrimination – a focus typically missing from

quantitative studies of discrimination. In particular, I focus on intersections between indigeneity and gender, socioeconomic status, and geography. These intersections with indigeneity are important to examine as they help to capture a large amount of the diversity of the Indigenous population, particularly in terms of their experiences with discrimination. While research has examined the related issue of whether and how Indigenous Mexicans perceive discrimination (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014), little work has examined the ways perceptions of discrimination intersect with other important and overlapping forms of oppression like gender and socioeconomic status (Crenshaw, 1989).

While not a typical intersectional category in this body of literature dominated by sociology and anthropology, little work has examined how outcomes related to discrimination are structured by geography, an important consideration given the colonial legacies of exclusion (i.e., formal legislation and informal practices of discrimination) that kept Indigenous people out of cities and relegated to rural and often remote areas with high levels of deprivation (Martínez Novo, 2006). Given this “racialization of space” (Martínez Novo, 2006: 256) that treats Indigenous people as an inherent part of the rural Mexican landscape, Indigenous people are often treated as outsiders to Mexican cities, incompatible with “modern” urban Mexico. The geographic diversity of Mexico, both in terms of urban-rural and regional differences, is also expected to influence the opinions, attitudes, and lived experiences. An understanding of the unique economic, political, and social forces at play in different regions of Mexico and the vast disparities between rapidly developing urban centers and the increasingly deprived rural communities yields important insights into the variations of attitudes and experiences between different communities.

Chapter 4 continues the exploration of the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans, but in a different geographic context – the United States – using data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) and with a focus on inequities in health outcomes and health care access.

Given the migration flows from Mexico and increasingly permanent settlement of Indigenous Mexicans in the US, it is important to make sense of the insertion of this population into American society where they experience both familiar and new barriers to their upward mobility.

Indeed, experiences of discrimination and Indigenous disadvantage are not limited to Mexico. With the acceleration of structural economic change, particularly in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rural Indigenous peasants have relied upon internal and international migration to help support themselves and their families while their traditional agricultural livelihoods have become less feasible as “development” across rural Mexico has served to dispossess the peasant class of their land while forcing their dislocation from their home communities. Increasingly, since the 1970s and 1980s, the United States has been a common destination for Indigenous Mexican migrants, particularly along the West Coast and in large urban areas, like New York City and Chicago. Cohen (2004) finds that Indigenous Oaxacan migrants are more likely to choose international destinations over internal destinations – he points to the continued discrimination that Indigenous people experience in Mexico as a motivation for international migration, albeit secondary to the primary socioeconomic motivations of (e.g.) finding employment, improving their family’s living conditions, or saving for the future. However, despite the potential for increased employment opportunities and wages, rural Indigenous Mexicans experience discrimination, racism, and prejudice in their destination communities where their social standing continues to be penalized based on factors like their appearance, language use, education, national origin, and legal status (Stephen, 2007; Holmes, 2013; Blackwell, et al., 2018).

While Indigenous migrants may hope to blend in with the broader Mexican migrant community in the US and experience less discrimination because of their indigeneity, dominant Mexican racial attitudes accompany all migrants across the border where the Mexican ethnoracial hierarchy is reproduced, often on a highly localized scale (Stephen, 2007). For example, Holmes’

(2006) work with Indigenous Triqui farmworkers in Washington state identifies a rigid workplace hierarchy on a single farm that is strongly influenced by citizenship, national origin, language usage, and indigeneity. These structures are further compounded by the US social hierarchy that treats Mexicans, non-English speakers, many immigrant groups, and people with darker skin tones as an underclass. While studies using NAWS data sometimes include indigeneity, they often lack appropriate comparisons that would make sense of different disadvantages faced by farmworkers depending on their identity. While often treated as a homogenous group in quantitative research, Indigenous Mexican immigrants to the US are highly diverse, consisting of many distinct ethnic groups and language speakers. Within these groups, particular segments of the population are even more vulnerable, including women and undocumented people. An understanding of the diversity of Indigenous Mexicans in the US is typically missing from research using NAWS data. Since NAWS is a key and influential source of our understanding of US farmworkers, this gap is significant. To address this gap, this chapter compares Indigenous language speakers, Indigenous-identifying Spanish-speaking Mexican farmworkers, non-Indigenous Mexican farmworkers, and US-born farmworkers to identify the role that ethnic identity, language use, and national origin may influence health inequities, in addition to other factors like gender and legal status. This approach speaks to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Indigenous Mexican farmworkers in the US. The structural violence of the socioeconomic structures that exploit and abuse Indigenous migrants, on top of the trauma of international (and often undocumented) labor migration, has significant negative impacts on the physical and mental health of this migrant group and leaves them with few resources to look after their health care needs.

Taken together, these three research threads paint a wide-ranging and nuanced picture of the dominant racial attitudes that shape Indigenous Mexicans' lives within Mexico and beyond and their experiences with discrimination and unequal treatment. Underlying these questions is a theoretical



foundation built around the fields of racial and ethnic geography, Latinx geographies, and migration studies. This dissertation contributes to the growing subfield of Latinx geographies, which offers a promising future for critical racial and ethnic studies in geography, particularly as it engages in new dialogues for geographers surrounding issues of racialization and the construction and formation of race. The focus on Latinx geographies cuts across all three research threads in this dissertation as they each explore the ethnic diversity of Mexican identity across regional, national, and international scales. Indeed, this dissertation draws from Latinx geographies scholarship within and between Mexico and the United States (Herrera, 2016; Saldaña-Portillo, 2016; Muñoz & Ybarra, 2019; Ybarra, 2019), while contributing to the field a nuanced analysis of Indigenous-non-Indigenous disparities using quantitative data.

In examining the situation of Indigenous Mexican migrants in the United States, this dissertation also explores the Critical Latinx Indigenities analytic proposed by Blackwell, et al. (2017) as it foregrounds the experiences of Indigenous migrants using a transnational and hemispheric analytic to make sense of the ways migrants and migration works to reshape understandings of indigeneity and race in the United States (Blackwell, et al., 2017).

While the Latinx geographies scholarship mentioned above is grounded in qualitative methodologies, quantitative datasets like the ones used in this dissertation make meaningful contributions to our understandings of Latinx geographies, racial and ethnic geography, and migration studies. The power of the data, even if limited in some ways, has not been fully harnessed, mainly due to a lack of engagement with key literature and debates in these fields. For example, PERLA's robust engagement with matters of race and ethnicity across Latin America would fit well with Latinx geographies' interest in critical race theory and the production of Latinx identities.

## CHAPTER II

### ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ABOUT RACE, ETHNICITY, SKIN COLOR, AND INDIGENEITY IN MEXICO

#### I. Introduction

Contemporary attitudes and opinions among the general Mexican population about race and ethnicity are strongly rooted in Mexico's colonial past and its decades-long post-revolutionary national identity project of *mestizaje* (racial mixture) during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the Mexican government's purported support for multiculturalism over the past couple decades as part of a broader multicultural turn throughout Latin America, discrimination and prejudice toward Indigenous people remain common. As deeply entrenched colonial attitudes endure, negative stereotypes and attitudes about Indigenous people remain stubbornly persistent in Mexican society. This chapter examines the determinants of people's opinions and beliefs about Indigenous people, race, and ethnicity in Mexico.

The foundations of present-day attitudes and opinions about indigeneity and skin color in Mexico are found in the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule over present-day Mexico and the creation of a social hierarchy where Indigenous and Afro-descendant people were relegated to the bottom (Vinson, 2017). Increasingly, in the decades post-independence, Indigenous people were viewed as a hindrance to Mexico's economic development – they were merely seen as relics of the past (Krauze and Heifetz, 1998).

For Mexican elites after the revolution, *mestizaje* was rooted in opposition to Eurocentric forms of racism, represented racial harmony, and gave them a heightened sense of moral superiority over segregated societies in other countries, particularly the United States (Knight, 1990; Telles and Paschel, 2014). However, even though nonracism and an appreciation of race mixture were part of the national narrative and remain popular ideas, the lived experiences of Indigenous people in Mexico suggests otherwise. Many perceptions of the Indigenous population are shaped not by face-to-face, personal interactions, but by stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous people in popular media as (e.g.) poor, closed-minded, and backward (Sue, 2013). These long-lasting discourses influence the ways the Indigenous population view themselves and present themselves to non-Indigenous people.

These stereotypes not only influence the lives of Indigenous people in Mexico, but also across the Mexican diaspora, including in the United States. Although settling in predominantly Mexican communities once in the US, they continue to face discrimination because Mexican racial hierarchies and dominant beliefs about race and indigeneity are imported by other migrants (Holmes, 2013). Indigenous migrants may believe they can escape the prejudice they experience locally in Mexico by moving to the US and blending in with the broader Mexican migrant community, but instead find that prejudice is arguably inescapable for them given the way many attitudes about race and indigeneity are deeply ingrained in the collective Mexican imaginary.

Even amidst a broader Latin American turn away from a strict ideology of *mestizaje* and toward a multicultural ideology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the gaps between official, state-promoted understandings of race and indigeneity and popular attitudes and beliefs continue to exist. Although the state advocated for stronger awareness of the importance of recognizing racial and ethnic distinctions and improved understanding of the challenges and discrimination that ethnic minorities (i.e., Indigenous and Afro-descendants) face, racist beliefs persist.

For example, related to the issue of persistent Indigenous poverty and disadvantage in Mexico, it is not uncommon to hear people point to individualist explanations that blame Indigenous people for their poverty, including arguments that Indigenous people don't work hard enough or lack intelligence (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014). Gradually, however, explanations that recognize the structural disadvantage that Indigenous communities face are becoming increasingly widespread (Telles and Bailey, 2013).

While the official national racial ideology may still differ from the lived experiences of the Mexican people, the evolution of Mexico's national ideology over the past century highlights one of the state's efforts to influence its population. Despite efforts to eliminate and erase indigeneity from the landscape, those communities continue to challenge and push back against the state ideology, even in a supposedly multicultural society.

Using survey data collected in Mexico by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), I examine the factors that influence opinions and attitudes about Indigenous people and, more broadly, race, ethnicity, and skin color in Mexico. Specifically, I focus on opinions about social issues such as support for racial mixture, intermarriage, and strengthened anti-discrimination laws, and beliefs about the causes of the disproportionate poverty of Indigenous people. This set of opinions provides a wide-ranging overview of the predominant attitudes about race and its attendant issues in Mexico using two well-regarded surveys – LAPOP, a preeminent survey of public opinion in Latin America, and PERLA, an innovative survey asking previously unexplored questions about race, ethnicity, skin color, and identity in Latin America.

LAPOP and PERLA's multinational data collection makes these surveys well-suited to international comparisons (for example, Telles and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America, 2014; Dixon, 2019). However, this means the internal dynamics within Latin American

countries often go unexplored. This gap in the research using LAPOP and PERLA data is especially noticeable for Mexico, which Camp (2020: 89) characterizes as a highly “geographically fragmented” country. The political, economic, and social differences between Mexican regions, especially between the north and south, can be stark – the north is more economically developed and industrialized, and has stronger connections with the US and its economy. The south has a larger Indigenous population and is generally more rural and isolated, with relatively higher levels of poverty. Identity is tightly linked with geography – 87% of Mexicans say they strongly or somewhat identify with their city and 83% say the same about their region (Camp, 2020). These local and regional, rather than strictly national, identities play an important role in determining people’s attitudes as their attention, interests, and loyalty are focused on a smaller and perhaps more intimate geographic area.

Economic growth in the post-NAFTA period has been concentrated in northern Mexico along the US border and in the *Bajío* region of north-central Mexico where increased industrialization and foreign direct investment have contributed to growth levels above the national average (Graizbord & Aguilar, 2006). Growth along the US border and the *Bajío* region is primarily due to proximity to the US, while a lack of industrialization and foreign direct investment in southern Mexico has led to below average levels of economic growth there. However, these north-south differences are not a recent phenomenon. López-Alonso (2007) identifies regional differences in living standards as early as the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century – people in northern Mexico tended to have better health outcomes because of relatively stronger economic conditions, improved diets, and lower population densities, which meant less exposure to epidemic diseases. Industrialization and economic growth during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876 – 1911) was not equally distributed around the country with rural Mexicans and small-scale farmers being particularly hurt by land redistribution and dispossession (Joseph & Buchenau, 2013). Regional inequality persisted throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century even amidst drastic economic changes, including the import substitution

industrialization (ISI) era and the shift toward neoliberal economic policies in the 1980s (Rey & Sastré-Gutiérrez, 2010).

In an attempt to fill this gap in understanding of the internal dynamics of Mexican opinions on race, these regional variations in attitudes, along with differences in opinion between urban and rural residents, are explored in this chapter to better capture the intranational patterns of beliefs about race and Indigenous people in Mexico than in other research using these data. The use of other less explored analytical categories will further bolster this research, such as an examination of the role regular contact with and exposure to Indigenous people (in the form of having close Indigenous friends or living in a community with a significant Indigenous population) will influence attitudes and beliefs about race.

The LAPOP and PERLA data used in this chapter were collected in 2010, thus capturing a particular moment in Mexico's multicultural turn which had started around a decade earlier. This chapter joins the conversation about race and ethnicity by exploring one aspect of discrimination in a multicultural Mexico, namely popular perceptions of a racialized and marginalized Other – Indigenous people. While dominant attitudes about race, indigeneity, and skin color are explored in this chapter, the following chapter examines the ways these opinions translate into the lived experiences of discrimination and unequal treatment for marginalized groups, particularly Indigenous people. Together, these two chapters move between the gaze of the dominant group – through their perceptions of racial difference – and the gaze of the marginalized – through their perceptions of discrimination. Foregrounding both perspectives offers the opportunity to highlight the contradictions that exist in a Mexico that claims to celebrate multiculturalism.

## **II. Background and Literature Review**

### **i. The Development of Political Opinions and Attitudes in Mexico**

The outcomes explored in this chapter focus on public opinion and attitudes about topics related to race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico. I begin by providing an overview of the factors that influence the development of these opinions, attitudes, and beliefs and the challenges of collecting public opinion data in Mexico.

Over the past three decades, the use of polls to understand public opinion and attitudes in Mexico has rapidly increased. The topics covered by these polls have also widened, moving beyond political attitudes and beliefs to cover social issues, including discrimination, violence, and food insecurity (Basáñez and Parás, 2012). Camp (2020) describes three important and trusted institutions in Mexico that most help determine people's political attitudes and beliefs: family, school, and religion. Family is the most influential – about half of Mexicans surveyed say family is the source of their political beliefs, but one-third say family plays no role in determining their political attitudes. Other relevant factors that contribute to the development of political beliefs include educational attainment, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, occupation, and geographic region (Camp, 2020).

Despite the increase in public opinion research, there are notable challenges to conducting this research in Mexico. Notably, the safety of interviewers in the field is a concern, especially when interviewing respondents in their homes or other private spaces. With increased violence in parts of the country, data may be collected in those regions through telephone interviews (which have their own limitations and challenges), or those areas may be excluded completely and that can limit the usefulness and comprehensiveness of the data as part of a nationally representative sample (Basáñez

and Parás, 2012). Indeed, having a nationally representative sample is important given the high geographical variation within Mexico between regions and between rural and urban communities.

Beyond geography, race, ethnicity, and skin color are other relevant factors in the development of political attitudes. Diving deeper into the role of race and ethnicity in determining political attitudes, Sanchez, et al. (2021) find little evidence that people with darker skin colors in Latin America have less favorable attitudes toward the political systems in their countries. The expectation might be that people with darker skin tones, who may also experience more discrimination, face fewer educational and occupational opportunities, and may be more likely to live in poverty, would be more dissatisfied with the political system. Using data from eighteen Latin American countries, Sanchez, et al. (2021) show that, despite widespread socioeconomic inequality based on skin color, people with darker skin colors do not necessarily fault governments and the political system for their lower socioeconomic status. Rather, the researchers find evidence that darker skin color may be associated with slightly more positive attitudes toward the political system, yet the hypotheses they test, including the possibility that the skin color of national leaders influences political attitudes, fail to explain this finding. They suggest future research should try to understand the country-specific factors that may contribute to this unexpected phenomenon.

## **ii. Mexican Racial Ideology and Indigeneity**

Given the focus in this chapter on attitudes and opinions about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color, it is necessary to first introduce the unique historical context underlying today's understandings of race and indigeneity in Mexico. While there are some commonalities among Latin American countries regarding racial ideology, dominant racial discourses and stereotypes, and the resulting ethnoracial hierarchies, each country has evolved differently over time given their various racial compositions.



Indigenous groups in Mexico have faced oppression since the arrival of the Spanish five centuries ago and have largely been relegated to the margins of Mexican society. An important instrument of power and control during colonial rule was a rigid caste system that afforded different rights and privileges to people based on perceived race and skin color. While the colonial caste system and its corresponding racial divisions legally ended after independence, an informal social hierarchy remained deeply ingrained in Mexican society, even as class became an increasingly salient marker of social status. Knight (1990: 72) argues that, as early as the late eighteenth century, class was becoming the most important aspect of one's identity to the point where "the term 'Indian'... meant more as a fiscal category than as an ethnic one". In other words, indigeneity became more associated with lower class, wealth, and social standing than any specific cultural characteristics. However, it has always been difficult to separate the effects of class and race. Given the cumulative effects of racism, discrimination, and privilege over many generations, class has a strong basis in race and skin color. To further that point, Telles, et al. (2015) rely on the term *pigmentocracy* – a concept first named by Chilean anthropologist Alejandro Lipschutz – to describe Latin American societies that are organized around a color-based hierarchy that located lighter-skinned (white) people at the top and darker-skinned (Indigenous and Afro-descendants) people at the bottom, creating a racist system without “race”. While in the past, in Knight (1990) for example, this hierarchy has been characterized as being a result of class-based differences instead of entrenched structural racism, discrimination, and exclusion, this explanation fails to recognize the historical processes of exclusion and discrimination that led to this class hierarchy by skin color in the first place. Indeed, there has been more focus recently on making sense of racial and ethnic inequality in Latin America as more than a result of class and exploring the creation and perpetuation of this ethnoracial hierarchy (Martínez Novo, 2006; López Caballero, et al., 2018).

The construction of the national geography of Mexico revolves centrally around race and cannot be understood without an understanding of the colonial forms of treatment each country uses against their Indigenous populations (Saldaña-Portillo, 2016). Spanish colonialism of Mexico is a project of producing racialized space, partly through the displacement of Indigenous peoples. However, Indigenous communities have been engaged in a constant struggle to maintain their agency and autonomy. State-sanctioned policies such as the use of Indigenous forced labor during colonial rule to the confiscation of communal land holdings in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century to attempts to assimilate Indigenous Mexicans in the post-revolutionary era are indicative of the challenges they have faced in preserving their livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Indeed, post-revolutionary attempts to develop a coherent Mexican national identity and delineate who belonged to the Mexican nation involved the incorporation (Vaughan and Lewis, 2006), assimilation (Fitting, 2011), or erasure (Bonfil Batalla, 1996) of Indigenous people from Mexico's national identity. I highlight multiple terminologies to reflect different understandings of what the goals of Mexico's national project both meant to and did accomplish. Mexico's state-supported racial ideology throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was based on the concept of *mestizaje* or race mixture. The state's push for *mestizaje* was based on the belief that Mexican culture is formed through a blend of Indigenous and Spanish heritage (Davenport, 2020). According to this ideology, the Mexican people are neither fully Indigenous nor Spanish, but instead a unique mixture of both cultures, thus creating a distinct culture and people: in other words, "a single people with a double heritage" (Friedlander, 1975: xiii). The official racial ideology in Mexico championed the idealized image of the hybrid or *mestizo* man who is influenced by this double heritage. However, the notion of a blended culture was not new at the time – the syncretism of Spanish and Indigenous culture during colonization led to the labeling of some European beliefs and practices as Indigenous and vice versa. What is now characterized as "Indigenous" is made up of a blend of European and

Indigenous influences because Knight (1990: 76) believes “the “pure” Indian was as rare culturally as biologically”. In other words, our contemporary understandings of indigeneity assume colonized Indigenous culture as the authentic marker of indigeneity.

Saldívar (2014) describes the post-revolutionary ideologies of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* (a movement in Mexico and other Latin American countries to help assimilate the Indigenous population to become proper members of a “modern” state) as “racial projects”. A term borrowed from Omi and Winant (2014), looking at racial projects helps to make sense of how abstract racial ideologies are translated into real, concrete representations in everyday life. Racial projects help to define and give meaning to race. They can take place at any scale and compete and interact with each other to “reproduce, extend, subvert, or directly challenge” understandings of race in our social structure (Omi and Winant, 2014: 125). This is how *mestizaje* serves as a racial project despite being based primarily around culture and not recognizing the existence of race and racism in society.

Wade (2005) highlights the contradiction inherent to the *mestizaje* ideology. While *mestizaje* was lauded for its inclusivity – supposedly every person was able to become *mestizo*, regardless of their racial or ethnic identity – the reality was quite different. Whiteness and lighter skin were prized, while indigeneity and blackness were marginalized or outright erased. To underscore this idea, Wade (2005: 241) points to Stutzman’s (1981) pithy definition of *mestizaje* as an “all-inclusive ideology of exclusion”. The project of developing a national identity around the ideology of *mestizaje* involved the gradual incorporation (or assimilation) of Indigenous people into “mainstream”, dominant *mestizo* culture (Martínez Novo, 2006). After the Mexican Revolution, while the Indigenous population was officially recognized by the state, they were only viewed as a group in transition – on their way to “full nationality”, which was considered to require a *mestizo* identity (de la Peña, 2006). As such, the expectation was that the Indigenous population would change the ways they viewed themselves within the national framework (with the assistance of the government) to fit into this

national narrative of *mestizaje*. There was no expectation that change would happen the other way around – that is, *mestizos* were not expected to change the ways they perceived the Indigenous population or how *mestizos* thought of themselves in relation to the broader Mexican nation. The transition from Indigenous to *mestizo*, whether it be on an individual level over one’s lifetime or on a group level across generations, was viewed as crucial to Mexican development. Knight (1990: 73) argues that *mestizo* was viewed as “an achieved as well as an ascribed status”. In his view, it is possible for an individual, but more realistically a collective, to make the transition from Indigenous to *mestizo* over time. Through increased educational attainment and occupational status and migration from rural to urban areas, Indigenous people can move into the *mestizo* category as part of the national development project. Indeed, this changing of Indigenous people’s identities in favor of the idealized hybrid Mexican was an important aspect of Mexico’s post-revolutionary racial ideology (Knight, 1990). Wade (2005: 255) argues that *mestizaje* and the notion of the ideal *mestizo* person are not merely about viewing them as a fusion or mosaic of cultures. Rather, it is important to recognize the role of power dynamics and value judgments in creating a hierarchy within the fusion of cultures where whiteness is privileged and indigeneity and blackness are minimized.

These power dynamics are evident in the *indigenismo* projects that attempted to move Indigenous people toward the *mestizo* category – there was no corresponding move for lighter-skinned people. The state tried to spur this transition for Indigenous people through government programs specifically designed to alleviate the poverty and marginalization experienced in their communities. A series of government agencies were tasked with “Mexicanizing” and “acculturating” Indigenous people, the longest lasting of these being the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* or INI (English: National Indigenist Institute), which existed from 1948 to 2002 (de la Peña, 2006: 282). In rural Indigenous communities, the INI oversaw the implementation of all government projects from education to infrastructure. However, in many cases, the INI was ineffective at alleviating the

poverty of the Indigenous population as those communities continued to be among the poorest in the country.

Indeed, the hardships experienced by Indigenous communities are not only historical. More recently, beginning in the 1980s, Indigenous Mexicans felt the effect of global economic forces in their communities. Neoliberal reforms and increased economic globalization, particularly in the form of free trade (e.g., the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)), reduced government support, and the privatization of communal land, have led to the dislocation and migration (internal and transborder) of Indigenous small-scale farmers who struggle to compete with cheap imports of (e.g.) corn (Eakin, 2016; Fitting, 2011; Holmes, 2013). Beyond these economic struggles, Indigenous Mexicans face challenges in the social, cultural, and political spheres as well, frequently being the objects of discrimination, racism, and prejudice, particularly being portrayed in the popular imaginary as being poor, closed-minded, inept, and backward (Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Martínez Novo, 2006; López Caballero, et al., 2018). The struggle for Indigenous rights (e.g., the Zapatistas in Chiapas) grew as the social and economic costs of neoliberal reforms became more apparent and the disproportionate negative impacts on the livelihoods of Indigenous people in rural communities were realized (Harvey, 1998).

### **iii. The “Multicultural Turn” in Mexico**

Among the earliest critics of a Mexican nation based on *mestizaje* were young, college-educated Indigenous people who believed non-*mestizo* ethnic identities were being suppressed in this nation-building project which they argued was built on a foundation of racism, not inclusiveness (de la Peña, 2006). These young people had “benefit” by being educated in primary and secondary schools funded and built by the INI. Many later became teachers, civil servants, and professionals and began

their activism as part of the Mexican student movement of 1968 with other teachers and peasants (de la Peña, 2006).

Their efforts foreshadowed the “multicultural turn” in Mexico at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the post-revolutionary racial ideology that championed *mestizaje* and nonracism – the idea that racism does not and cannot exist in a racially mixed society like Mexico’s – began to weaken. The “multicultural turn” recognizes a shift in Latin America toward the official recognition of ethnoracial differences and an acknowledgement of the discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of ethnoracial minorities as part of increased efforts to reform understandings of each country’s national identity and its components (Telles and the Project on Race and Ethnicity in Latin America, 2014; Telles, 2017).

Telles and the Project on Race and Ethnicity in Latin America (2014) point to multiple reasons to explain why this shift occurred when it did. Dictatorship, authoritarianism, and military rule gave way to representative democracies across nearly all of Latin America by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ushering in an increased recognition of the existence and rights of Afrodescendants and Indigenous people, sometimes as part of broader constitutional changes. The so-called “pink tide” of left-wing governments across the region in the early 2000s also contributed to these changes. Increased scrutiny of Latin American economies and political systems as part of neoliberalization, structural adjustment, and globalization has contributed to international pressure over human rights issues. Grassroots movements by racial and ethnic minorities have brought more attention to the socioeconomic inequality they face, while truth and reconciliation commissions in countries like Peru, El Salvador, and Guatemala have revealed the atrocities committed against Indigenous communities during each country’s period of civil war or armed conflict.

In Mexico, constitutional recognition of indigeneity and multiculturalism was non-existent until the early 2000s. According to de la Peña (2006), the current constitution, written in 1917, did

not mention the words “Indian”, “Indigenous”, nor specific Indigenous groups. Some multicultural ideals are written into the Mexican constitution through recent revisions to key articles. For example, Article 2, which defines the characteristics of the Mexican nation, was revised in 2001 to note that Mexico was a multicultural state and further ensured the right of Indigenous people to maintain their own languages, cultures, and political independence.

In 2003, soon after the changes to the Constitution, the INI was replaced by the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* or CDI (English: National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples). Among the goals of the CDI is to ensure the recognition and representation of Indigenous peoples and communities at all levels of government. Regardless of the official constitutional recognition of indigeneity, the Mexican government has done little to respond to the demands of the Indigenous population beyond cultural recognition and improved resources for education (Martínez Casas et al., 2014). A critique of the federal government’s approach to dealing with the Indigenous population is that federal and state governments are frequently disconnected from the reality on the ground in Indigenous communities when making policy decisions and local groups struggle to have their voices heard. Another critical flaw with the CDI, as de la Peña (2006) notes, is that the concerns of Indigenous migrants (whether internally or internationally) are not a focus. The CDI generally only deals with “traditional” Indigenous communities in predominantly rural areas and not with the broader Indigenous population.

While a regional shift toward multiculturalism seems transformational and significant, Hale (2002: 491) argued early on in this shift that multiculturalism was merely the “*mestizaje* discourse for a new millennium” since, as with *mestizaje*, multiculturalism is a state-sponsored discourse about race and ethnicity without input from racial and ethnic minorities. Using Hale’s (2002) understanding of the relationship between neoliberalism and multiculturalism, Yoshioka (2010) argues multicultural policies and perspectives hurt the continued maintenance of Indigenous languages and indigeneity

more broadly. In the era of the neoliberal multicultural state, they argue that while multicultural reforms supposedly provide Indigenous groups with increased rights and recognition, they do little to alleviate their poor socioeconomic situation, which is exacerbated by neoliberal economic reforms. State-endorsed multiculturalism encourages increased interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, while economic reforms that perpetuate inequality may motivate Indigenous people to migrate from their traditional communities to improve the economic situation for themselves and their families. Together, multicultural and neoliberal reforms may cause Indigenous people to leave behind their Indigenous identities and cultural practices and incorporate into a *mestizo* way of life.

However, data now show younger people are less likely than older people to identify as white – this perhaps further exemplifies the multicultural shift happening across Latin America, especially in politics. Telles and Flores (2013) argue that people on the boundaries of “whiteness” may now feel increasingly comfortable identifying as (e.g.) *mestizo*, Indigenous, or black. This may also reflect the fluidity of racial identity in contemporary Latin American society. The general pattern across the region in terms of education is somewhat related – college-educated people are less likely to identify as white relative to those with a primary school education, but this pattern varies greatly across Latin America. This runs contrary to the idea that status can “whiten”, although class and social status generally do not have a significant influence on one’s racial identification in this study.

In terms of the national context, Telles and Flores (2013) expected that people would be less likely to identify as white in countries that have a strong history of promoting and supporting an ideology of *mestizaje*. This hypothesis was accurate in Mexico where it was more likely than in other countries for people with light or light-brown skin tones to identify as *mestizo* than white. However, also important here is the “type” of *mestizaje* in each country. In countries where the racial mixture is predominantly with Afro-descendants, rather than Indigenous people, the likelihood of identifying



as white is higher – Telles and Flores (2013) suggest this could reflect a desire by the dominant racial group for more distance in the social hierarchy from the Afro-descendant community which has long been, and continues to be, heavily stigmatized.

#### iv. Contemporary Attitudes about *Mestizaje*

Despite a shift away from *mestizaje* and toward multiculturalism across Latin America, Telles and Garcia (2013) find that most Latin Americans surveyed support the ideology of *mestizaje* – defining *mestizaje* broadly as both a national development goal of racial mixture (i.e., testing the belief that racial mixture is good for the country) and as support for intermarriage (i.e., respondents support their child marrying a black or Indigenous person). Based on these measures, support for *mestizaje* varies greatly based on the respondents’ country and ethnicity, particularly given that *mestizaje* has been implemented differently in each country, which in turn has been influenced by countries’ ethnoracial composition, their institutional capability to develop a strong nation-building ideology, and how strongly the elite class has felt the need for such projects (Telles and Garcia, 2013). Support for *mestizaje* is highest in Brazil and Colombia, while Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru showed moderate levels of support. While Telles and Garcia (2013) expected support for *mestizaje* to be higher in Mexico, given the country’s history of championing the ideology of *mestizaje*, they also recognize that support for *mestizaje* may be lower because of a relative lack of policies and initiatives designed to support racial and ethnic minorities in Mexico. Generally, they find that the implementation of robust multicultural policies strengthens support for *mestizaje*, especially in countries that historically made *mestizaje* a key part of national identity. Telles and Garcia (2013) argue that while multiculturalism is often viewed in opposition to *mestizaje*, having stronger multicultural policies may make people more aware and conscious of ethnoracial inequality. In turn, this greater social

awareness could lead people to support *mestizaje* as a way to reduce inequality and improve relations between racial and ethnic groups.

Telles and Garcia (2013) also measure support for intermarriage (either with an Indigenous or Afro-descendant person, depending on the country) as a way of understanding a possibly different dimension of support for *mestizaje*. Given studies conducted in the US that showed more liberal attitudes about abstract ideas of race, such as opposition to laws banning intermarriage, but more conservative attitudes about having a family member marry somebody of a different racial identity, Telles and Garcia (2013) focus on the potential difference in attitudes between support for the abstract ideal of *mestizaje* and the concrete realities of intermarriage in one's own family. Looking at seven countries across Latin America, they find moderate support for intermarriage (averaging 5.1 to 5.8 on a scale of one to seven, with seven representing the most support) – Brazil was most supportive of intermarriage, while Bolivia was least supportive. Mexican support for intermarriage was in the middle of this group of countries – whites were significantly less likely to support intermarriage compared to *mestizos*. Overall, Telles and Garcia (2013) found support for *mestizaje* as a principle and intermarriage were about the same across the seven countries, while people who were more supportive of *mestizaje* were also more supportive of intermarriage on average.

Cohen (2012) examined support for interethnic marriage (i.e., Indigenous-white/mestizo) in four countries with significant Indigenous communities (Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru). Asking whether respondents would approve if one of their children were to marry an Indigenous person, there was a relatively high non-response rate to this question – 19.5% overall, but this varies significantly by country (2.5% in Mexico, 4.2% in Peru, 7.7% in Bolivia, and 76.1% in Guatemala) (Cohen, 2012). We can infer something about the attitudes people hold toward Indigenous people based upon an unwillingness to answer this question, especially in Guatemala, but the analysis cannot rely on just this one question.

Attitudes toward interethnic marriage vary across the four countries. In Mexico, 61.7% of those who responded to the question had high support for interethnic marriage, while 24.2% had medium support, and 11.1% had low support (Cohen, 2012). The proportion of responses is similar for Guatemala, but there is greater uncertainty given the high non-response rate. In the South American countries (Bolivia and Peru), while the plurality of people surveyed have high support for interethnic marriages, there are substantial proportions of people with medium support.

In terms of the factors that most influence people's attitudes on interethnic marriages, education and geography are meaningful – people with higher educational attainment and people who live in urban areas tend to show higher levels of support for interethnic marriage (Cohen, 2012). Race and ethnicity are also relevant indicators of (a lack of) support – relative to Indigenous people, members of every other racial or ethnic group are less likely to support interethnic marriage, all else being equal.

Another opinion measured in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys is a desire for lighter skin. Whiteness is privileged in Mexico, as evidenced by the standards of beauty and attractiveness conveyed in television, movies, magazines, and billboards across the country (Winders, et al., 2005). The social hierarchy organized by race, ethnicity, and skin color that was established during Spanish colonial rule continues to influence what skin tones are viewed as desirable today. Much research about the desirability of lighter skin among Latinos focuses on the gendered aspect (Winders, et al., 2005; Nakano Glenn, 2008; Stephens and Fernández, 2012), including the ways whiteness is portrayed as an ideal for women. Winders, et al. (2005) highlights the influence of American beauty standards and marketing strategies on Mexican advertising of skin lighteners and the disconnect of using ads featuring young, financially successful, cosmopolitan women to sell skin lighteners to women living in poor, rural, and predominantly Indigenous communities. Nakano Glenn (2008) highlights multiple strategies used in Mexico to gain the status and privilege of lighter skin, such as

physically changing one's appearance using the above-mentioned skin lighteners or marrying a lighter-skinned partner to whiten the family tree or changing one's social context and visibility through migration from a rural, Indigenous community to an urban area to help cultivate a more cosmopolitan identity.

However, through interviews with Latino women in the US, Stephens and Fernández (2012) found tan skin (thought of as the midpoint between pale and dark skin) was preferable; white or pale skin was viewed as unattractive. Interestingly, having a tan skin tone (or “some color”) was viewed as part of an “authentic” Latino identity (Stephens and Fernández, 2012: 85). Having skin that was viewed as too pale or too dark decreased some women's sense of belonging and inclusion in the broader Latino community. While none of the women interviewed reported experiences with skin color discrimination, many did acknowledge that they likely would experience discrimination if their skin were darker and they were mistaken as belonging to another race. While these interviews only capture a limited subgroup of Latino women's experiences, they do highlight the complexity and diversity of opinion about skin color and the ways these attitudes are related to questions of identity and belonging.

#### **v. Beliefs about the Reasons for Indigenous Poverty and Disadvantage**

While there is continued support for *mestizaje* ideologies around Latin America, most people surveyed in the region believe in structural explanations for the widespread poverty and disadvantage that Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities experience (Telles and Bailey, 2013). The researchers rely on a LAPOP survey question that asks respondents what the main explanation is for the poverty of Indigenous, black, or darker skinned people in their country. Respondents could choose from five responses: (1) they do not work hard enough, (2) they are less intelligent, (3) they are treated unfairly, (4) they have a low educational level, and (5) they do not

want to change their culture. Option (3) offers a structural explanation for poverty and options (1), (2), and (5) provide individualist explanations that place the blame on people for their poverty. Telles and Bailey (2013) consider option (4) a structural explanation, but it could plausibly also be individualist viewpoint that associates low educational attainment with some racial deficiency.

Given these structural and individualist explanations, a critique of *mestizaje* is that the ideology can serve to hide ethnoracial discrimination in the form of individual blame for a population's marginalization under the guise of nonracism, but, in a study of eight Latin American countries, Telles and Bailey (2013) found that large majorities of people in all eight countries support structural explanations for Indigenous poverty and the majority of people in seven of the countries generally understood and acknowledged the discrimination that ethnoracial minorities experience. They also highlight a puzzling finding from Mexico. Larger proportions of whites and *mestizos* recognized discrimination against ethnoracial minorities compared to Indigenous people. To be clear, large majorities of both groups recognize discrimination exists, but there has not been other evidence of ethnoracial minorities being less likely than the majority group to acknowledge the existence of discrimination. In models controlling for schooling, gender, age, urban/rural status, and support for *mestizaje*, there was also a positive relationship between educational attainment and the preference for structural explanations for poverty in Mexico. People with more schooling were also more likely to acknowledge the existence of discrimination against ethnoracial minorities. This highlights the possibility of more education mitigating the individualist and racist understandings of poverty that people often hold.

Martínez Casas, et al. (2014) present somewhat different findings about explanations for Indigenous poverty in Mexico, with important methodological differences. Where Telles and Bailey's (2013) data only allowed for one response, Martínez Casas, et al. (2014) used data where respondents could choose multiple responses. Martínez Casas, et al. (2014) also provided more possible

responses (seven – the five previously mentioned plus “schools are bad or deficient” and “they don’t speak Spanish well”). While a structural explanation was most commonly agreed to (over 60% believed Indigenous people are treated unfairly), individualist explanations were also common – 60% blamed little schooling (different from the deficient schools option), 40% chose adherence to Indigenous culture and refusal to change, and 35% chose not speaking Spanish. A smaller proportion (20% and 15%, respectively) said Indigenous people don’t work hard enough or are less intelligent (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014). Since respondents could choose multiple responses, both structural and individualist explanations were likely identified by respondents. Despite reasonably robust support for stereotypical and racist explanations for Indigenous poverty, support for multicultural policies is relatively high in Mexico. This may reflect the stubborn and continued legacy of nonracism – one of the core tenets of *mestizaje* – even as recognition grows of the structural and societal-level factors that influence Indigenous disadvantage in Mexico. Over 90% support affirmative action policies for the Indigenous population and nearly 90% are in favor of anti-discrimination laws (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014).

Telles and Bailey (2013) expected the attitudes and beliefs of Latin Americans about poverty and discrimination would follow those of people in the US, but this hypothesis did not hold true. Where the majority group (whites) in the US tends to support individualist explanations for poverty and minoritized groups more often agree with structural explanations, there was generally strong universal support in the Latin American countries surveyed for structural explanations. It is also true, however, that decades of support for *mestizaje* ideologies have caused harm to ethnoracial minoritized communities. Nonracism hid the reality of rampant racist and discriminatory practices, the forceful push for minorities to deny and abandon their ethnic heritage, including language and traditions, led to the erasure of nondominant cultures and belief systems, and even the erasure of blackness from the nation. The dominance of *mestizaje* beliefs may have served to slow the

development of ethnoracial organizing and mobilization and limited the possibility of challenging the social hierarchy that placed lighter skinned people on top (Telles and Bailey, 2013).

**vi. Contemporary Discourses about Race, Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Skin Color in Mexico**

Despite this recognition of the discrimination against ethnic minorities and although Mexico's *mestizaje* ideology celebrates Indigenous people as the ancestors of the modern Mexican state and espouses an official belief of nonracism, there are indeed institutionalized and interpersonal racist beliefs and practices in contemporary Mexican society as highlighted previously in this chapter (Knight, 1990). Even though an appreciation of race mixture and nonracism are part of the national narrative, the lived experiences of Indigenous people in Mexico suggests otherwise.

Contemporary discourses about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and blackness in Mexico have been strongly influenced by these interconnected racial projects of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*. Official state ideologies of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity influence other institutional and structural forces promoting racism in Mexico. For example, many perceptions of the Indigenous population are shaped not by face-to-face, personal interactions, but by portrayals of Indigenous people in popular media (Sue, 2013). For example, Sue (2013: 59) cites the example of the popular comedic film series *La India Maria*, which portrays a young Indigenous woman as being poor, inept, and backward as she tries to navigate urban Mexico – a complete contrast to what is seen as the rural “natural habitat” of Mexico's Indigenous population. These popular depictions of Indigenous people become a part of the national consciousness. Even if many non-Indigenous Mexicans do not interact regularly with the Indigenous population, they are still marked as being poor, closed-minded, and backward, with their culture seen as a reason for their poverty (Sue, 2013).

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the multicultural turn, indigeneity had historically been framed as being part of the past, a way of life that no longer had a place in Mexico's present or future. Indigenous people and culture have been commonly romanticized and celebrated as the historical foundation of modern Mexico. This romanticized imaginary of indigeneity is a social construction conflating race and ethnicity dating back to the Spanish conquest (Knight, 1990). Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, there was no collective Indigenous identity. The Spanish simply grouped together all people who were not Spanish, *mestizo*, or African into a collective Indigenous category. While this abstract idea of indigeneity was romanticized, Indigenous perspectives and knowledge were viewed as not being compatible with forward progress and modernity. Bonfil Batalla (1996) describes two visions of the country – an imaginary Mexico and a deep (or profound) Mexico. On one hand, there is an imaginary vision of the country controlled by mestizos who are attempting a project of Westernization (i.e., *mestizaje*) and help to perpetuate, using Quijano's (2000) words, the coloniality of power. The other vision Bonfil Batalla (1996) calls *profundo*, where marginalized Indigenous groups are actively resisting the imaginary vision of their country to recapture their Mesoamerican roots. This vision resembles the multicultural turn in Mexico as the voices of Indigenous communities become more prominent. These two visions pit a more powerful Western civilization against a subjugated and repressed Mesoamerican civilization.

While this thinking about indigeneity in Mexican may seem abstract, popular imaginaries of Indigenous people do damage in the real world. In the Mexican agricultural industry, for example, indigeneity is used as an excuse for discrimination and poor treatment as Martínez Novo (2006) notes in her study of Indigenous day laborers in Baja California. Employers think of their Indigenous workers as backward, primitive, and simple, drawing strongly on the portrayals of this population in the media. These cultural explanations of Indigenous backwardness are used as excuses for excluding and marginalizing them. For example, a union representative who argues that



Indigenous laborers do not need bathrooms, showers, or toilets because they “do not have the culture to keep clean” (Martínez Novo, 2006: 34). These notions of the cultural deficiencies of Indigenous people segment the labor force. Non-Indigenous people from Sinaloa are preferred for packing jobs as they are seen as “cleaner” than Indigenous people from Oaxaca. Similarly, since Indigenous people are stereotyped as being shorter, they are assigned the lowest status and lowest-paid jobs in the fields because they are “closer to the earth” and therefore seen as better suited for working the land (Martínez Novo, 2006: 36). Ultimately, these physical and cultural stereotypes are part of a process of belittling and racializing the Indigenous Mexican population.

Saldívar (2014) argues the traditional markers of indigeneity, like language and customs have become increasingly blurred, as more and more Indigenous Mexicans inhabit cities and urban areas. Certainly, much of this movement from rural to urban areas is not necessarily by choice, but rather the result of the dislocation and dispossession of Indigenous people in a capitalist and neoliberal system (Hesketh, 2017; Castellanos, 2021). The increasing urbanization of Indigenous Mexicans challenges the traditional stereotype of them as rural peasants, but they are still seen as being out of place in the city and not belonging to an urban environment (Acharya & Barragán Codina, 2012; Gracia & Horbath, 2019).

#### **vii. Anti-Discrimination Laws and Public Policy**

Given the significant levels of discrimination and prejudice that continue to exist, the Mexican state has undertaken efforts over the past three decades to address discrimination with a variety of abstract and concrete policies, beginning with constitutional recognition of multiculturalism and the rights of Indigenous people. Mexico’s National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) is a federal organization established in 2003 to develop policies addressing social and cultural development and inclusion and to guarantee the constitutional right to equality for all Mexicans. In

2019, Mexico's senate ratified the Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Tolerance and the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Related Forms of Intolerance. Both are legally binding agreements put forward by the Organization of American States (OAS). While all 35 countries in the Americas are members of the OAS, Mexico is one of only two countries to have ratified both conventions. Although these agreements are legally binding in that violations may be reported to the Inter-American Commission in Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights may have legal jurisdiction over these violations, it remains to be seen what the practical benefit will be for people who are the targets of structural and interpersonal discrimination.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's (CERD) most recent report on Mexico's progress in this area was compiled in 2019 and highlighted multiple improvements in terms of legislation, public policy, and institutional support, including constitutional recognition of Afro-descendants, improved national data collection on discrimination, the development of a six-year National Program for Indigenous Peoples, and the establishment of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (a renaming of the previous National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), itself an overhaul of the former National Indigenist Institute (INI) established in 1948) (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2019).

The CERD report, however, reports many more concerns about the situation of racial discrimination in Mexico. Among the issues are concerns over the reliability of data collection on race and ethnicity in national censuses and surveys, a lack of legislation that criminalizes acts of racial discrimination, a lack of resources to allow CONAPRED to better address racial discrimination in state institutions, a lack of concrete measures to address the deeply rooted historical and structural discrimination against Indigenous people and Afro-descendants, and continuing issues with labor exploitation, intersectional discrimination for women of color, discrimination in the justice system,

and a lack of protection mechanisms for Indigenous lands (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2019).

Since the LAPOP and PERLA data used in this research date to 2010, before the recent improvements to anti-discrimination policy, it will be interesting to see the proportion of people who supported strengthening of anti-discrimination laws and who favored even fewer anti-discrimination laws, given the many long-standing issues related to racial discrimination that persist today with little to no improvement over time.

Anti-discrimination laws are a top-down approach to dealing with discrimination – attitudes may differ for grassroots activism from below. Attitudes about Indigenous people’s organization and activism may be colored by past events, media coverage, the strategies used, occasional violence, and the potential disruption that results. Rural Indigenous communities have a long tradition of organization, but their mobilization became increasingly prominent on the national stage in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting most famously in the Zapatista uprising in 1994 (Harvey, 1998; Hayden, 2002). Fearing the destructive impacts of globalization on their livelihoods, including the loss of communal lands and the influx of cheap agricultural imports from the United States, Indigenous people in the southern state of Chiapas mobilized in defiance of the Mexican government to gain Indigenous autonomy over their communities’ natural resources. While the Mexican government did not give in to their demands, the Zapatistas did succeed in bringing the issue of Indigenous rights to the attention of a worldwide audience and their efforts continue today.

While the Zapatista uprising is one of the more prominent cases of Indigenous mobilization in Mexico, Indigenous activism can be seen elsewhere in the country, including in the state of Oaxaca with its large Indigenous population. For example, the Movement for Triqui Unification and Liberation (MULT) began in the late 1970s as part of the Triqui community’s demands for the return of their communal lands and has contributed to the strengthening of Triqui ethnic identity

(Pye & Jolley, 2011). In the following decades, similar Indigenous organizations were created around the state to the point where it is difficult to find Indigenous communities without such groups.

With the continued evolution of the multicultural ideology in Mexico, this chapter contributes to the growing body of literature exploring these changes within the context of perceptions and attitudes about race, ethnicity, racial ideology, and skin color. Combined with the following chapter, this chapter provides a nuanced view of those perspectives, in addition to perceptions of discrimination by those who experience it. Where research typically focuses on one set of perspectives or the other, these two chapters explore each set of perceptions in the context of the other. In doing so, I draw a contrast between people's stated beliefs about race and racial difference and lived experiences of discrimination, while situating these findings within the literature on racial ideology and multiculturalism in Mexico.

### **III. Data and Methods**

#### **i. Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)**

Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project is one of two data sources for this chapter. LAPOP is a research institute focused on collecting and analyzing public opinion data in Latin America and the Caribbean. Their core survey, AmericasBarometer, began in 2004 and has been conducted every two years since then. While LAPOP surveys have been conducted in various countries around the region since the first survey in Costa Rica in 1973, these surveys were not conducted regularly nor with a consistent topical focus as the AmericasBarometer is today. The latest round of AmericasBarometer surveys from 2020-21 collected data from twenty countries in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and the United States and Canada.

The broad goal of AmericasBarometer is to “measure democratic values and behaviors” across Latin America. AmericasBarometer is a nationally-representative survey of voting-age adults in each country. Until the 2020-21 survey round, which used telephone interviewing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were surveyed face-to-face in their homes. In recent rounds of the survey, about 35,000 to 50,000 interviews have been conducted across the region.

LAPOP data has been used to study a variety of topics in Mexico including electoral participation (Trelles & Carreras, 2012), social stratification (Flores & Telles, 2012), crime and trust in institutions (Blanco, 2013), corruption and public trust in government (Morris & Klesner, 2010), the ethnic politics of social assistance programs (Yörük, Öker, & Sarlak, 2019), and gender stereotypes of political leaders (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2015).

In the 2010 round of AmericasBarometer surveys, 1,562 people were interviewed in Mexico. The surveys were conducted in Spanish. Participants were sampled from four geographic areas of Mexico: North, Central-West, Central, and South. Participants were then sampled from urban and

rural areas within those four regions. In urban areas, 1,201 people were surveyed; in rural areas, 361 people were surveyed.

The AmericasBarometer surveys are broadly comparable across countries, although the survey for each may be slightly modified with additional questions or changes to the wording of questions to best fit the local context. The 2010 round of AmericasBarometer surveys included a set of questions on ethnicity and discrimination from PERLA (Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America) which are not typically included in Mexican AmericasBarometer surveys. In particular, questions about skin color, respondents' specific Indigenous identification, and attitudes and beliefs about Indigenous people are relevant to the goals of this research.

## **ii. The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA)**

The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America is the second data source used in this chapter. PERLA is a multinational and interdisciplinary effort to gather in-depth data on ethnoracial issues in Latin America not found in existing data sources, including national censuses. Led by Dr. Edward Telles, now professor of sociology at the University of California, Irvine, the PERLA team began designing nationally representative surveys of ethnoracial conditions in 2008, focusing on four Latin American countries – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Where national censuses typically include one or two questions on race and ethnicity – for example, Mexico's 2015 intercensal survey had two race/ethnicity questions: one about indigeneity and one about Afrodescendant status – the PERLA surveys ask in-depth questions on ethnoracial identity, inequality, perceived discrimination, social policies, and social movements. Compared to other surveys, the PERLA survey contains more nuanced information on respondents' ethnic self-identification. Through these questions we can get more specific data about specific Indigenous communities, including Mixteco, Zapoteco, Maya, and Náhuatl, in order to better capture the ethnic diversity of Mexico's Indigenous people. In the

absence of qualitative data, the PERLA survey allows for more exploration of topics not found in other quantitative data sets, like ethnic pride, the divide between national and ethnic identity, and respondents' contact or affinity with minoritized ethnoracial groups. Like the AmericasBarometer survey, the PERLA survey asks public opinion questions, but ones more specific to ethnoracial matters like *mestizaje*, explanations of Indigenous poverty and inequality, and Indigenous political and social organizations. PERLA data has been used in studies about topics like discrimination and disparities in self-rated health (Perreira & Telles, 2014), racial mixing ideologies (Moraes Silva & Saldívar, 2018), and ethnoracial classification measures (Telles, 2017).

PERLA began amidst a shift in many Latin American countries toward a recognition and appreciation of multiculturalism. As the region began to acknowledge the inequalities and discrimination experienced by Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities, there was then a more pressing need for more nuanced data about them. PERLA aimed to contribute to this data collection and to the formation of policies to address the challenges faced by ethnoracial minorities.

The four chosen countries represent more than half of Latin America's Indigenous population (Mexico and Peru) and a large portion of the region's Afrodescendant population (Brazil and Colombia). In Mexico, the PERLA team conducted a nationally representative survey with a random sample of 1000 Mexicans and an oversample survey of 500 Indigenous Mexicans to ensure a sufficient sample size for analysis since self-identified Indigenous people made up less than 15% of the total Mexican population at the time. Although the researchers acknowledge the moderate size of the samples (and corresponding margin of error of +/- 3%), they argue that the uniqueness and novelty outweigh these minor limitations (Telles and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America, 2014).

While there is some overlap in the questions in LAPOP and PERLA, the additional sample is expected to validate the findings of the other sample, given that both surveys are nationally representative and were conducted in the same period. In a case where results are significantly different between surveys, there is an opportunity to explore the survey design more carefully to understand why these differences might exist.

The LAPOP and PERLA surveys primarily overlap on questions related to public opinion on race, ethnicity, and skin color. LAPOP adds a unique question about intermarriage, while PERLA includes a question about whether respondents believe people in Mexico are treated unequally based on skin color. This goes beyond a question asked in both surveys about the unequal treatment of Indigenous people. PERLA is unique in including questions about people's explanations for Indigenous poverty, as well as asking about support for anti-discrimination laws and Indigenous organizing.

### **iii. Methodological Approach**

This research uses multiple regression to model the relationship between the dependent variables (listed in table 2.1) and key demographic predictor variables (listed in table 2.2) including age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, skin color, educational attainment, geographic location, and income. In doing so, I measure the effects of the demographic variables on the outcomes of the survey questions. Given that the responses for most of the dependent variables are offered as ordered categories (e.g., very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied), I use ordered logistic regression models. While the default output gives regression coefficients, I instead compute odds ratios which provide the odds of a particular outcome for a specific group if all other variables are held constant – for example, the odds of an Indigenous person frequently experiencing



skin color discrimination. Including odds ratios may give more intuitive and easier to interpret results.

Given the likelihood that skin color and racial/ethnic identification are highly correlated with each other, I include skin color and racial/ethnic identification in separate models for each outcome as a means of independently exploring the influence of each variable on a given outcome.

The predictor variables overlap significantly between LAPOP and PERLA, most often with the same answer choices, with a few key differences. From LAPOP, I also include variables on political leaning and economic situation. Political leaning may have an important influence on public opinion given the increasing politicization of racial ideology and attitudes, while economic situation adds more context to data on monthly household income. From PERLA, I include variables about whether respondents have Indigenous people as close friends and neighbors to see what impact those may have on attitudes and beliefs about Indigenous people.

For the predictor variables I've chosen specific reference groups (marked by \* in table 2.2) for ease of analysis and comparison. For some variables the reference group is either the first or last category (e.g., less than primary education for educational attainment). For other variables I've been more deliberate in selecting a "dominant" group as the reference. For example, *mestizos* are the largest group in Mexico and, given the country's history of championing *mestizaje*, it makes sense to set *mestizos* as the reference by which other racial and ethnic groups are compared in this analysis. This does not, however, signal a belief that *mestizos* should be the societal norm.

Table 2.1: Dependent Variables for Chapter 2

Survey Question	Response Choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP - Race Mixture:</b> The mixture of races is good for Mexico</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>(1) Disagree very much:</b> 5.16%</li> <li>● <b>(2):</b> 3.62%</li> <li>● <b>(3):</b> 4.49%</li> <li>● <b>(4):</b> 12.73%</li> <li>● <b>(5):</b> 20.23%</li> <li>● <b>(6):</b> 18.96%</li> <li>● <b>(7) Agree very much:</b> 34.83%</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Race Mixture:</b> The mix of people of different origins or races is good for Mexico</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 3.22%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 6.71%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 14.90%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 42.73%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 32.45%</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP – Intermarriage:</b> You would agree to one of your daughters or sons marrying an Indigenous person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>(1) Disagree very much:</b> 7.35%</li> <li>● <b>(2):</b> 3.74%</li> <li>● <b>(3):</b> 3.81%</li> <li>● <b>(4):</b> 7.42%</li> <li>● <b>(5):</b> 12.93%</li> <li>● <b>(6):</b> 18.78%</li> <li>● <b>(7) Agree very much:</b> 45.96%</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP - Desire for Lighter Skin:</b> You would like your skin to be of lighter color</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>(1) Disagree very much:</b> 45.01%</li> <li>● <b>(2):</b> 12.56%</li> <li>● <b>(3):</b> 9.26%</li> <li>● <b>(4):</b> 12.44%</li> <li>● <b>(5):</b> 8.10%</li> <li>● <b>(6):</b> 6.15%</li> <li>● <b>(7) Agree very much:</b> 6.48%</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA: Desire to Change Skin Color:</b> If you could change the color of your skin, would you like your skin to be the same tone, darker, or lighter?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Same:</b> 84.32%</li> <li>● <b>Darker:</b> 4.36%</li> <li>● <b>Lighter:</b> 11.32%</li> </ul>

- **LAPOP - Perceived Treatment of Indigenous People:** Do you believe that Indigenous persons are treated much better, better, the same, worse, or much worse than white people?

- **Much better:** 1.34%
- **Better:** 4.62%
- **The same:** 13.86%
- **Worse:** 56.66%
- **Much worse:** 23.51%

- **PERLA - Treatment of Indigenous People:** In Mexico, do you think Indigenous people are treated better, the same, or worse than white people?

- **Better:** 3.50%
- **Same:** 32.36%
- **Worse:** 64.24%

- **PERLA: Unequal Treatment by Skin Color:** Among Mexicans, do you think that people with brown skin are treated the same, better, or worse than people with white skin?

- **Same:** 54.37%
- **Better:** 4.79%
- **Worse:** 40.85%

According to data from the Population Census, Indigenous people are poorer. Using this scale, how strongly do you agree with each of the following reasons?

- **PERLA - Work Ethic:** They don't work hard enough

- **PERLA - Perceived Intelligence:** They are less intelligent

- **Disagree very much:** 31.03%
- **Disagree:** 33.60%
- **Neither agree nor disagree:** 11.65%
- **Agree:** 17.28%
- **Agree very much:** 6.44%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Unjust Treatment:</b> They are treated unjustly</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Unwillingness to Change:</b> They don't want to change their cultures or customs</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Spanish Language Ability:</b> They don't speak Spanish well</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Lower Educational Attainment:</b> They have less schooling</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Poor Quality Schools:</b> Schools are bad or deficient</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Anti-Discrimination Laws:</b> The government should establish more strict laws to prevent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 36.70%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 35.20%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 9.28%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 14.32%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 4.50%</li>   <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 10.37%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 15.82%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 10.37%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 37.04%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 26.40%</li>   <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 13.43%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 26.45%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 18.46%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 29.13%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 12.53%</li>   <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 16.64%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 29.01%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 13.72%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 30.23%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 10.39%</li>   <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 10.34%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 16.57%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 10.55%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 42.93%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 19.61%</li>   <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 14.45%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 29.66%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 18.28%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 26.10%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 11.51%</li> </ul>
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<p>Indigenous people from being treated unjustly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA: Indigenous Organizing:</b> How much do you agree with Indigenous people organizing themselves as a political force to claim their rights?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 1.82%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 3.37%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 4.65%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 36.79%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 53.37%</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Disagree very much:</b> 13.00%</li> <li>● <b>Disagree:</b> 10.03%</li> <li>● <b>Neither agree nor disagree:</b> 7.88%</li> <li>● <b>Agree:</b> 42.81%</li> <li>● <b>Agree very much:</b> 26.28%</li> </ul>
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**Table 2.2: Predictor Variables for Chapter 2**  
 (\* Reference groups)

		<b>LAPOP</b>	<b>PERLA</b>
<b>Skin color (identified by interviewer)</b>	LAPOP: 1 (lighter) – 9 (darker) PERLA: 1 (lighter) – 10 (darker)  Collapsed into three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White* (1 – 2)</li> <li>• Light brown (3 – 4)</li> <li>• Dark brown (5+)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.12, <b>standard error:</b> 0.074</li> <li>• <b>White (1 – 2):</b> 13.45%</li> <li>• <b>Light brown (3 – 4):</b> 49.52%</li> <li>• <b>Dark brown (5+):</b> 37.03%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.65, <b>standard error:</b> 0.075</li> <li>• <b>White (1 – 2):</b> 4.02%</li> <li>• <b>Light brown (3 – 4):</b> 43.91%</li> <li>• <b>Dark brown (5+):</b> 52.07%</li> </ul>
<b>Racial/ethnic identity (self-identification)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mestiza*</i></li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Indigenous</li> <li>• Black</li> <li>• <i>Mulata</i></li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Mestiza:</i></b> 72.84%</li> <li>• <b>White:</b> 17.01%</li> <li>• <b>Indigenous:</b> 5.69%</li> <li>• <b>Black:</b> 1.17%</li> <li>• <b><i>Mulata:</i></b> 1.17%</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> 2.13%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Mestiza:</i></b> 51.89%</li> <li>• <b>White:</b> 10.63%</li> <li>• <b>Indigenous:</b> 29.02%</li> <li>• <b>Black:</b> 1.33%</li> <li>• <b><i>Mulata:</i></b> 1.82%</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> 5.31%</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	LAPOP: 18 – 87 PERLA: 18 – 91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 39.42, <b>standard error:</b> 0.230</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 40.59, <b>standard error:</b> 0.325</li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men*</li> <li>• Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Men:</b> 49.74%</li> <li>• <b>Women:</b> 50.26%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Men:</b> 49.20%</li> <li>• <b>Women:</b> 50.80%</li> </ul>
<b>Educational attainment</b>	0 – 18 years  Collapsed into five categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than primary* (0 – 5 years)</li> <li>• Primary (6 – 8 years)</li> <li>• Intermediate (9 – 11 years)</li> <li>• Secondary (12 – 15 years)</li> <li>• University+ (16+ years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 8.95, <b>standard error:</b> 0.169</li> <li>• <b>Less than primary (0 – 5 years):</b> 17.77%</li> <li>• <b>Primary (6 – 8 years):</b> 19.76%</li> <li>• <b>Intermediate (9 – 11 years):</b> 30.47%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 7.80, <b>standard error:</b> 0.211</li> <li>• <b>Less than primary (0 – 5 years):</b> 27.55%</li> <li>• <b>Primary (6 – 8 years):</b> 22.62%</li> <li>• <b>Intermediate (9 – 11 years):</b> 24.68%</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary (12 – 15 years):</b> 21.94%</li> <li>• <b>University+ (16+ years):</b> 10.07%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary (12 – 15 years):</b> 17.88%</li> <li>• <b>University+ (16+ years):</b> 7.27%</li> </ul>
<b>Region<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central*</li> <li>• North</li> <li>• Central-West</li> <li>• South</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Central:</b> 33.16%</li> <li>• <b>North:</b> 22.28%</li> <li>• <b>Central-West:</b> 23.05%</li> <li>• <b>South:</b> 21.51%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Central:</b> 13.33%</li> <li>• <b>North:</b> 22.00%</li> <li>• <b>Central-West:</b> 26.00%</li> <li>• <b>South:</b> 38.67%</li> </ul>
<b>Urban/rural<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban*</li> <li>• Rural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urban:</b> 79.00%</li> <li>• <b>Rural:</b> 21.00%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urban:</b> 63.67%</li> <li>• <b>Rural:</b> 36.33%</li> </ul>
<b>Household income (monthly in pesos)</b>	<p>LAPOP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0*</li> <li>• 1: 1 – 800</li> <li>• 2: 801 – 1600</li> <li>• 3: 1601 – 2400</li> <li>• 4: 2401 – 3200</li> <li>• 5: 3201 – 4000</li> <li>• 6: 4001 – 5400</li> <li>• 7: 5401 – 6800</li> <li>• 8: 6801 – 10000</li> <li>• 9: 10001 – 13500</li> <li>• 10: 13501+</li> </ul> <p>PERLA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 – 54,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.284 (2401 – 3200), <b>standard error:</b> 2.478</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4,243.39, <b>standard error:</b> 199.081</li> </ul>
<b>Political Leaning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) Furthest left to (10) Furthest right in one step increments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 5.60, <b>standard error:</b> 0.081</li> </ul>	N/A
<b>Economic Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very bad*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Very bad:</b> 5.02%</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> **Central:** Distrito Federal, Hidalgo, México, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala

**North:** Baja California, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas

**Central-West:** Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas

**South:** Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, Yucatán

<sup>2</sup> Based on the INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography) definition: communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants are considered 'rural'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bad</li> <li>• Neither good nor bad</li> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Very good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bad:</b> 23.54%</li> <li>• <b>Neither good nor bad:</b> 52.54%</li> <li>• <b>Good:</b> 17.94%</li> <li>• <b>Very good:</b> 0.96%</li> </ul>	N/A
<b>Indigenous People as Neighbors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None*</li> <li>• Almost none</li> <li>• Very few</li> <li>• Less than half</li> <li>• About half</li> <li>• More than half</li> </ul>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>None:</b> 30.71%</li> <li>• <b>Almost none:</b> 11.74%</li> <li>• <b>Very few:</b> 16.03%</li> <li>• <b>Less than half:</b> 6.59%</li> <li>• <b>About half:</b> 6.73%</li> <li>• <b>More than half:</b> 28.20%</li> </ul>
<b>Close Indigenous Friends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No*</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No:</b> 47.50%</li> <li>• <b>Yes:</b> 52.50%</li> </ul>



## IV. Results and Discussion

### i. Opinions and Attitudes about Race, Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Skin Color

This series of questions asks respondents their opinions about various topics related to race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico. I chose a subset of these questions to look more closely at opinions about government policy (specifically anti-discrimination laws that better support Indigenous people), *mestizaje* and race mixture (including support for *mestizaje* and intermarriage), the treatment of Indigenous people and people with darker skin color, and support for the organization of Indigenous people as a political force. I first summarize key findings from this set of questions before providing an in-depth discussion for each question.

Exploring differences in attitudes by geography was a focus of this chapter, given the predominant focus of LAPOP and PERLA research on international, rather than internal, comparisons and the expected diversity of opinion based on the notable political, economic, and social differences between Mexican regions. Largely speaking, geography had little noticeable impact on people's likelihood of supporting the opinions asked about in these surveys, although there are some examples where northern and/or southern Mexico were outliers compared to the rest of the country as seen in Tables 2.3 and 2.4. Support for intermarriage with Indigenous people was significantly less in northern Mexico where there is also less of an Indigenous population. Recognition of the poorer treatment of people with darker skin colors and Indigenous people was also significantly less in southern Mexico. This is interesting given that the Indigenous and Afro-descendant population is larger in southern Mexico than in other regions and that there should otherwise be more awareness of the unequal treatment of these communities. It is also true, however, that the exploitation and marginalization of Indigenous people has been much more severe in southern Mexico, and it may not be surprising for the general population to continue having

Table 2.3: Odds Ratios of Variables on Opinions and Attitudes about Race, Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Skin Color

	Race Mixture (LAPOP)		Race Mixture (PERLA)		Intermarriage (LAPOP)		Desire for Lighter Skin (LAPOP)		Desire for Lighter Skin (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)									
	Light Brown	0.627***	0.789	0.801	1.053	1.620				
		(0.100)	(0.237)	(0.152)	(0.181)	(0.789)				
	Dark Brown	0.608***	0.922	0.966	1.001	1.449				
		(0.111)	(0.284)	(0.189)	(0.183)	(0.710)				
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)									
	White	1.198	0.929	0.900	1.279	1.502				
		(0.189)	(0.215)	(0.147)	(0.193)	(0.418)				
	Indigenous	1.406	1.189	2.107***	0.668	0.786				
		(0.363)	(0.220)	(0.552)	(0.183)	(0.174)				
	Black	1.481	0.709	1.249	1.906	1.809				
		(0.751)	(0.316)	(0.547)	(0.913)	(1.139)				
	<i>Mulata</i>	1.271	0.950	0.567	1.504	1.125				
		(0.648)	(0.294)	(0.286)	(0.651)	(0.629)				
	Other	1.248	1.854**	0.551*	1.173	0.871				
	(0.465)	(0.520)	(0.196)	(0.559)	(0.315)					
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)									
	Women	1.092	1.055	0.892	0.930	1.036				
		(0.113)	(0.105)	(0.0905)	(0.0869)	(0.173)				
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)									
	Primary	0.959	0.863	1.225	0.841	0.738				

	(0.208)	(0.176)	(0.186)	(0.178)	(0.268)	(0.239)	(0.183)	(0.159)	(0.188)	(0.202)
Intermediate	1.013 (0.220)	0.890 (0.182)	1.078 (0.177)	1.081 (0.172)	1.939*** (0.459)	1.816*** (0.392)	0.576*** (0.115)	0.514*** (0.0961)	0.771 (0.193)	0.834 (0.191)
Secondary	1.159 (0.260)	1.022 (0.214)	1.060 (0.187)	1.024 (0.183)	2.197*** (0.592)	2.081*** (0.520)	0.464*** (0.108)	0.405*** (0.0895)	0.489** (0.151)	0.539** (0.160)
University+	0.917 (0.237)	0.831 (0.212)	1.044 (0.283)	1.096 (0.297)	2.214*** (0.651)	2.165*** (0.600)	0.509** (0.147)	0.440*** (0.127)	0.749 (0.315)	0.793 (0.330)
<b>Region</b>										
North	0.861 (0.190)	0.821 (0.178)	0.955 (0.296)	0.926 (0.279)	0.546*** (0.126)	0.513*** (0.112)	1.112 (0.216)	1.115 (0.212)	0.798 (0.293)	0.851 (0.320)
Central-West	1.078 (0.197)	1.027 (0.189)	1.430* (0.275)	1.468* (0.287)	1.028 (0.177)	0.991 (0.170)	0.705 (0.162)	0.666* (0.153)	0.756 (0.196)	0.721 (0.194)
South	1.183 (0.175)	1.208 (0.188)	1.037 (0.232)	1.054 (0.227)	0.886 (0.152)	0.888 (0.153)	1.021 (0.190)	1.002 (0.184)	1.085 (0.262)	0.994 (0.252)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>										
Rural (base)										
Urban	1.138 (0.159)	1.166 (0.171)	1.337 (0.254)	1.327 (0.253)	1.088 (0.166)	1.098 (0.168)	1.228 (0.260)	1.295 (0.264)	0.666* (0.145)	0.668* (0.149)
<b>Observations</b>	1,106	1,157	1,049	1,082	1,122	1,177	1,129	1,182	1,074	1,112

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 2.4: Odds Ratios of Variables on Opinions and Attitudes about Race, Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Skin Color

	Treatment of Indigenous People (LAPOP)		Treatment of Indigenous People (PERLA)		Unequal Treatment by Skin Color (PERLA)		Anti-Discrimination Laws (PERLA)		Indigenous Organization (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)									
	Light Brown	0.965	0.618	0.791	0.761	0.769				
		(0.186)	(0.218)	(0.285)	(0.234)	(0.246)				
	Dark Brown	0.967	0.560	0.862	0.891	0.613				
		(0.210)	(0.216)	(0.338)	(0.302)	(0.206)				
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)									
	White	0.896	0.731	0.849	0.625	1.001				
		(0.151)	(0.169)	(0.202)	(0.180)	(0.196)				
	Indigenous	0.925	1.019	1.161	0.965	1.070				
		(0.316)	(0.208)	(0.199)	(0.169)	(0.227)				
	Black	1.462	0.483	0.468	0.906	0.488				
		(0.613)	(0.285)	(0.363)	(0.412)	(0.247)				
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Mulata</i>	1.180	1.478	1.164	1.292	0.805				
		(0.339)	(0.748)	(0.604)	(0.445)	(0.370)				
	Other	0.384**	1.297	1.312	1.177	0.851				
		(0.151)	(0.598)	(0.438)	(0.307)	(0.338)				
	Men (base)									
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Women	0.967	1.119	1.148	0.905	0.951				
		(0.111)	(0.164)	(0.153)	(0.0990)	(0.105)				
	<Primary (base)									
	Primary	0.817	1.353	1.330*	1.211	1.344*				
		0.866	1.292	1.191	1.191	1.325				

		(0.157)	(0.163)	(0.282)	(0.267)	(0.217)	(0.190)	(0.241)	(0.232)	(0.237)	(0.245)
	Intermediate	1.244 (0.273)	1.346 (0.292)	1.409* (0.253)	1.441** (0.261)	1.829*** (0.385)	1.717*** (0.339)	1.207 (0.265)	1.228 (0.243)	1.227 (0.280)	1.214 (0.277)
	Secondary	1.485 (0.364)	1.633** (0.389)	2.436*** (0.616)	2.433*** (0.632)	1.907*** (0.458)	1.792** (0.417)	1.227 (0.379)	1.254 (0.352)	1.370 (0.347)	1.386 (0.352)
	University+	1.008 (0.281)	1.103 (0.310)	2.966*** (1.010)	3.043*** (1.042)	2.023** (0.581)	2.009** (0.562)	1.401 (0.446)	1.464 (0.439)	1.440 (0.439)	1.443 (0.449)
	Central (base)										
	North	0.900 (0.285)	0.870 (0.264)	0.701 (0.185)	0.664* (0.162)	0.382*** (0.102)	0.360*** (0.0978)	0.833 (0.249)	0.760 (0.238)	0.529 (0.206)	0.525* (0.197)
	Central-West	0.709 (0.148)	0.713 (0.147)	0.688 (0.168)	0.695 (0.164)	0.632* (0.174)	0.657 (0.177)	1.178 (0.336)	1.253 (0.348)	0.706 (0.186)	0.729 (0.194)
	South	0.597** (0.141)	0.596** (0.139)	0.419*** (0.0976)	0.427*** (0.0976)	0.526*** (0.108)	0.507*** (0.0959)	0.815 (0.185)	0.796 (0.176)	0.714 (0.173)	0.767 (0.185)
	Rural (base)										
	Urban	1.129 (0.293)	1.115 (0.278)	1.234 (0.258)	1.269 (0.254)	0.921 (0.198)	0.918 (0.190)	1.705** (0.414)	1.717** (0.407)	1.020 (0.259)	1.011 (0.252)
	More than half (base)										
	About half			0.783 (0.230)	0.731 (0.211)	1.190 (0.294)	1.193 (0.298)	1.694 (0.625)	1.708 (0.615)	0.671 (0.200)	0.648 (0.192)
	Less than half			1.138 (0.367)	1.137 (0.380)	1.623* (0.439)	1.675* (0.480)	1.051 (0.265)	1.042 (0.270)	0.640** (0.141)	0.598** (0.132)
	Very few			0.842 (0.208)	0.854 (0.200)	1.041 (0.258)	1.102 (0.267)	1.216 (0.326)	1.208 (0.321)	0.678 (0.166)	0.610** (0.145)
	Almost none			1.487 (0.449)	1.596 (0.493)	0.863 (0.271)	0.836 (0.264)	0.987 (0.269)	0.918 (0.247)	0.461** (0.140)	0.421*** (0.118)
	None			1.644* (0.449)	1.555 (0.493)	0.947 (0.271)	0.919 (0.264)	0.877 (0.269)	0.820 (0.247)	0.607 (0.140)	0.574** (0.118)

<b>Close Indigenous Friends</b>	No (base)				(0.473)	(0.426)	(0.275)	(0.266)	(0.282)	(0.254)	(0.187)	(0.159)
	Yes			1.169 (0.214)	1.280 (0.223)	1.150 (0.230)	1.219 (0.243)	1.486** (0.245)	1.454** (0.234)	1.341* (0.207)	1.348* (0.207)	
<b>Observations</b>		1,109	1,157	1,052	1,086	1,091	1,083	1,084	1,121	1,064	1,098	

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

negative attitudes or to be less likely to acknowledge the poor treatment of these groups. As another measure of geographical differences, the comparison of attitudes between rural and urban respondents revealed almost no statistically significant differences in the likelihood of supporting these opinions, except for urban residents' higher support for increased anti-discrimination laws compared to rural residents.

The factor that most often had a strong influence over these attitudes was educational attainment. Higher educational attainment was associated with some attitudes that were more inclusive, more accepting, or more cognizant of the challenges faced by people with darker skin colors or Indigenous people, including support for intermarriage, a lower desire for lighter skin, and recognition of the unequal treatment of Indigenous people and those with darker skin. This finding highlights the importance of education in possibly teaching people about inclusivity and the challenges faced by minoritized communities. Even having an intermediate education (six to eight years of schooling) makes a notable difference, so this is not a pattern restricted to people who pursue higher education.

Having contact and relationship with Indigenous people, in the form of having close Indigenous friends or living in a community with many Indigenous people, did not make respondents more likely to agree with attitudes that were more supportive of Indigenous people. There are a few notable cases where having a close Indigenous friend was associated with more supportive attitudes, potentially highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships with people of different backgrounds on positively influencing people's attitudes. For example, people with close Indigenous friends were significantly more likely to support anti-discrimination laws and Indigenous organization.

### **a) Race Mixture**

When looking at opinions about whether race mixture is good for Mexico, one finding jumps out. As seen in Table 2.3, in the LAPOP data, people with light brown or dark brown skin colors are significantly less likely than light skinned people to say race mixture is good – both groups are about 40% less likely to support race mixture. The PERLA data shown in Table 2.3 do show that people with light brown and dark brown skin colors are slightly less likely than light skinned people to say race mixture is good, but these differences are not statistically significant. On the other hand, racial and ethnic identity does not appear to predict opinions about race mixture, even in a different model that does not include skin color. Increased age and gender, in the PERLA data, is associated with a decreased likelihood of supporting race mixture. With each additional year, support for race mixture decreases by about 3%, while women were about 20% less likely to support it. Increased income, in the LAPOP data, is associated with an increased likelihood of supporting race mixture – this relationship is most apparent at the highest income levels. Other variables did not have a significant relationship with a belief that race mixture was good for Mexico.

### **b) Intermarriage**

The question from the LAPOP survey about whether respondents would agree with their child marrying an Indigenous person yields more interesting results as seen in Table 2.3. It's perhaps not surprising that Indigenous respondents were much more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to accept their child marrying another Indigenous person. Other groups don't exhibit significantly different odds than the dominant *mestizo* group in agreeing to such a marriage.

Educational attainment and geographical location are both important here. While respondents with all levels of education have higher odds of agreeing to this kind of marriage compared to those with less than a primary education, the odds are significantly higher for those



with more educational attainment, specifically intermediate and above – they are about twice as likely to support this theoretical marriage. In terms of geography, people in northern Mexico, which has a smaller Indigenous population than other regions, had about 50% lower odds of agreeing to such a marriage compared to people living in central Mexico.

I expected political leaning to potentially have an impact on support for intermarriage, but there is no statistically significant difference between left-leaning and right-leaning respondents. There is some evidence that one's economic situation is related to support for intermarriage – people with self-described “good” economic situations are 50% less likely to support it than people with “bad” economic situations. This relationship does not appear when looking at income, however.

### **c) Desire for Lighter Skin**

Understanding opinions and attitudes about skin color helps make sense of how respondents see and think about themselves and others. It also sheds light on societal norms and standards about which skin tones are desirable or undesirable. Note that the framing of the question differs slightly between the LAPOP and PERLA datasets. In LAPOP they ask whether respondents agree with the statement “You would like your skin to be of lighter color”, while PERLA asks if respondents could change the color of their skin, whether they would like their skin to be the same tone, lighter, or darker.

When asking people in the LAPOP survey whether they would like their skin color to be lighter, we might expect there to be some relationship with racial and ethnic identity and skin color. However, as shown in Table 2.3, there was no relationship between skin color and a desire for lighter skin color. People with light and dark brown skin colors were not significantly more likely than people who are white to say they would like their skin color to be lighter. People of most racial

and ethnic groups were also not significantly more or less likely than *mestizo* people to prefer a lighter skin color. It is interesting, however, to look at the direction of the relationship for different racial groups. People who identified racially as white were more likely (28% higher odds) and people identifying as Indigenous were less likely (33% lower odds) of wanting lighter skin color compared to *mestizos*. Again, these differences were not statistically significant, but the direction of the relationship between race and skin color is unexpected.

The differences between self-classification and classification by others, even while recognizing that skin color and racial/ethnic identity are not synonymous, may highlight people that identify racially as white, but are not necessarily seen by others as white. People that “aspire” to be white may be more likely to want a lighter skin color. Educational attainment was again a significant predictor of responses to this question.

People with higher levels of education were significantly less likely than people with less than a primary education to say they would prefer lighter skin. Women and older people were also less likely to prefer lighter skin. Compared to men, women were about 25% less likely to want lighter skin, while each additional year of life is associated with a slight, but statistically significant decrease, in wanting lighter skin.

In terms of the PERLA framing of the question, the vast majority (84%) said they would like their skin to be the same tone. For those people that said they would like to change their skin color, Table 2.3 shows there were few indicators of who was more likely want to do so. In terms of racial and ethnic identity, there was a similar pattern to the LAPOP survey where people identifying as white were more likely to say they wanted lighter skin, while Indigenous people were less likely to say so, but these differences were not significant. Likewise, skin color was not a significant predictor of responses to this question. Education showed less of a clear relationship with a desire for

different skin color than in the LAPOP framing of the question – only people with a secondary (but not college) education were significantly less likely to want to change their skin color.

#### **d) Treatment of People with Darker Skin Colors**

Racial and ethnic identity and skin color do not have a significant influence on the odds that somebody would think people with brown skin are treated worse than people with white skin. Table 2.4 shows higher educational attainment does significantly increase those odds, however. Compared to respondents with less than a primary education, people with at least intermediate education have about 70% to 100% higher odds of saying that people with brown skin are treated worse than people with white skin. Geographic region also appears to have an influence on this opinion. Compared to people in central Mexico, respondents living in the north and the south had significantly lower odds of saying that people with brown skin are treated worse (50% - 65% lower).

#### **e) Treatment of Indigenous People**

No racial or ethnic group, including Indigenous people, have significantly different odds of saying that Indigenous people are treated either the same or worse than white people as shown in Table 2.4. Common to both the LAPOP and PERLA surveys, in southern Mexico, also the part of the country with the largest proportions of Indigenous people, respondents are actually significantly less likely to say Indigenous people are treated the same or worse than white people. Compared to people in central Mexico, the odds are about 50% lower of saying this in southern Mexico. In the LAPOP dataset, people who identify as right-leaning are significantly less likely to say that Indigenous people are treated worse. Given a scale of 1 (furthest left) to 10 (furthest right), the odds of saying Indigenous people are treated worse decrease by about 7% for each step one moves further to the right. In the PERLA survey, higher levels of education (secondary and college) are

associated with a significantly higher likelihood of saying Indigenous people are treated the same or worse than white people.

#### **f) Anti-Discrimination Laws**

The question focuses on the government's efforts to prevent Indigenous discrimination through policy and legislation. Table 2.4 shows that people living in urban parts of Mexico have significantly higher odds (about 70% higher) of strongly agreeing that the government should establish more strict laws to prevent Indigenous people from being treated unjustly compared to people living in rural communities. Other variables that we might expect to have an impact on support for more anti-discrimination laws, including race and ethnicity, skin color, and educational attainment, do not show a significant relationship with opinions on this issue. However, people who said they had a close Indigenous friend were significantly more likely (about 45% to 50% higher) to support increased anti-discrimination laws than people who did not have a close Indigenous friend.

#### **g) Indigenous Organization**

The final question in this section asks respondents whether they agree with Indigenous people organizing themselves as a political force to claim their rights. Like the previous questions asking about support for more anti-discrimination laws, Table 2.4 shows that people with any close Indigenous friends were significantly more likely to support the organization of Indigenous people – their odds of support were about 35% higher than for people without close Indigenous friends. Likewise, people with few (less than half) Indigenous neighbors were significantly less likely (about 40% to 55% lower odds) to support Indigenous organization compared with people who said more than half their neighbors were Indigenous.

As this and the previous question show, having close friendships or otherwise having a significant number of Indigenous people in the community can potentially provide a more in-depth

and accurate understanding of Indigenous people and the challenges they face. If people don't have close friendships or live in a community with few to no Indigenous people, their knowledge and understanding of indigeneity may be solely influenced by popular media and could be grounded in stereotypes or even racist imaginaries.

## **ii. Explanations for Indigenous Poverty**

This set of questions asks respondents their opinions about a series of explanations for why Indigenous people are poorer. The seven possible explanations are: (1) they don't work hard enough, (2) they are less intelligent, (3) they are treated unjustly, (4) they don't want to change their culture or customs, (5) they don't speak Spanish well, (6) they have less schooling, and (7) schools are bad or deficient. Options (3) and (7) offer structural explanations for poverty while options (1), (2), (4), (5), and (6) provide individualist explanations that place the blame on people for their poverty.

As with the previous set of questions covering attitudes about race and skin color, this set of questions largely does not show a significant relationship between geography and the likelihood of supporting certain explanations for Indigenous poverty. A larger north-south difference was expected given the geographic variations in where Indigenous communities are located throughout the country. In the south, where there are larger concentrations of Indigenous people and possibly a greater understanding of the actual challenges they face, structural explanations might be more common. In the north, where knowledge about the challenges of Indigenous Mexicans might be based more on stereotype than on first-hand knowledge, individualist explanations of poverty might be most common. However, as tables 2.5 and 2.6 show, these expected patterns do not exist and some findings are counterintuitive. For example, in southern Mexico, some individualist explanations for Indigenous poverty, including Indigenous people are less intelligent and unwilling

Table 2.5: Odds Ratios of Variables on Opinions about Explanations for Indigenous Poverty

		Work Ethic (PERLA)		Perceived Intelligence (PERLA)		Unjust Treatment (LAPOP)		Unwillingness to Change (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)								
	Light Brown		0.876		0.840		0.882		0.802
			(0.258)		(0.209)		(0.342)		(0.266)
	Dark Brown		0.805		0.841		0.940		0.991
			(0.229)		(0.207)		(0.364)		(0.347)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)								
	White	1.315		1.266		0.785		1.149	
		(0.301)		(0.265)		(0.169)		(0.269)	
	Indigenous	0.819		0.929		1.071		0.776*	
		(0.142)		(0.164)		(0.170)		(0.112)	
	Black	2.184**		2.376***		1.146		0.776	
	(0.821)		(0.745)		(0.459)		(0.345)		
	<i>Mulata</i>	0.896		1.674		1.102		1.048	
		(0.398)		(0.788)		(0.448)		(0.260)	
	Other	0.939		0.714		1.199		1.044	
		(0.298)		(0.246)		(0.306)		(0.240)	
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)								
	Women	0.869	0.860	0.963	0.923	0.948	0.917	1.062	1.060
		(0.0917)	(0.0920)	(0.110)	(0.103)	(0.108)	(0.101)	(0.115)	(0.114)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)								
	Primary	0.797	0.812	0.543***	0.575***	0.888	0.874	0.808	0.833
		(0.128)	(0.131)	(0.0873)	(0.0946)	(0.153)	(0.145)	(0.129)	(0.127)

	Intermediate	0.576*** (0.102)	0.576*** (0.103)	0.395*** (0.0714)	0.414*** (0.0780)	0.876 (0.155)	0.902 (0.155)	0.545*** (0.0974)	0.574*** (0.0955)
	Secondary	0.455*** (0.0918)	0.448*** (0.0927)	0.306*** (0.0708)	0.317*** (0.0757)	0.821 (0.163)	0.816 (0.155)	0.556*** (0.113)	0.566*** (0.106)
	University+	0.447*** (0.114)	0.428*** (0.108)	0.327*** (0.0888)	0.322*** (0.0868)	1.185 (0.285)	1.161 (0.279)	0.285*** (0.0825)	0.289*** (0.0811)
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)								
	North	1.254 (0.320)	1.286 (0.318)	0.985 (0.210)	1.037 (0.222)	0.739 (0.165)	0.734 (0.159)	1.589* (0.420)	1.612* (0.419)
	Central-West	1.136 (0.239)	1.020 (0.209)	1.032 (0.220)	0.929 (0.190)	1.012 (0.200)	0.996 (0.197)	1.174 (0.227)	1.135 (0.212)
	South	1.206 (0.223)	1.190 (0.212)	1.474** (0.254)	1.465** (0.242)	0.785 (0.156)	0.799 (0.163)	1.435** (0.244)	1.364* (0.230)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)								
	Urban	1.088 (0.174)	1.057 (0.174)	1.011 (0.172)	1.003 (0.170)	1.669*** (0.234)	1.744*** (0.249)	1.064 (0.163)	1.058 (0.156)
<b>Monthly Household Income (natural log)</b>		0.889* (0.0534)	0.909 (0.0544)	0.844** (0.0638)	0.865* (0.0641)	0.851*** (0.0497)	0.869** (0.0506)	0.950 (0.0645)	0.977 (0.0639)
<b>Close Indigenous Friends</b>	No (base)								
	Yes	0.779 (0.121)	0.743* (0.118)	0.701** (0.0968)	0.686*** (0.0935)	1.189 (0.174)	1.169 (0.170)	0.917 (0.126)	0.858 (0.116)
<b>Observations</b>		1,083	1,120	1,076	1,113	1,087	1,123	1,075	1,110

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 2.6: Odds Ratios of Variables on Opinions about Explanations for Indigenous Poverty

	Spanish Language Ability (PERLA)		Less Schooling (PERLA)		Poor Quality Schooling (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)					
	Light Brown	1.096	1.340			0.866
		(0.290)	(0.396)			(0.232)
	Dark Brown	1.240	1.447			0.801
		(0.342)	(0.445)			(0.232)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)					
	White	1.014	0.927			1.396*
		(0.203)	(0.213)			(0.279)
	Indigenous	1.138	1.019			1.225
		(0.187)	(0.140)			(0.198)
	Black	0.887	1.416			1.994**
		(0.301)	(0.507)			(0.641)
	<i>Mulata</i>	0.941	1.194			1.349
		(0.262)	(0.257)			(0.377)
	Other	1.526*	1.357			1.725**
	(0.341)	(0.342)			(0.455)	
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)					
	Women	0.933	0.764**	0.773**		0.745**
		(0.110)	(0.0812)	(0.0806)		(0.0845)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)					
	Primary	0.783	0.771	0.806		0.762*
		(0.137)	(0.122)	(0.128)		(0.123)
						0.722***
						(0.0781)



	Intermediate	0.604*** (0.102)	0.587*** (0.0956)	0.676** (0.108)	0.690** (0.107)	0.616*** (0.113)	0.593*** (0.112)
	Secondary	0.503*** (0.103)	0.460*** (0.0934)	0.656** (0.133)	0.654** (0.126)	0.525*** (0.0971)	0.468*** (0.0883)
	University+	0.307*** (0.0840)	0.290*** (0.0777)	0.551** (0.157)	0.537** (0.151)	0.445*** (0.115)	0.397*** (0.101)
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)						
	North	0.705* (0.138)	0.687* (0.131)	0.921 (0.225)	0.954 (0.233)	0.589* (0.160)	0.632* (0.172)
	Central-West	0.838 (0.183)	0.833 (0.171)	1.102 (0.214)	1.115 (0.209)	1.007 (0.196)	0.972 (0.181)
	South	0.946 (0.160)	0.892 (0.144)	1.014 (0.185)	1.041 (0.182)	1.154 (0.191)	1.214 (0.198)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)						
	Urban	1.305* (0.208)	1.296* (0.193)	1.266* (0.165)	1.233 (0.162)	1.090 (0.160)	1.099 (0.161)
<b>Monthly Household Income (natural log)</b>		0.987 (0.0697)	0.984 (0.0659)	0.918 (0.0787)	0.918 (0.0741)	1.068 (0.0644)	1.046 (0.0585)
<b>Close Indigenous Friends</b>	No (base)						
	Yes	0.979 (0.143)	0.994 (0.143)	0.822 (0.112)	0.806 (0.111)	0.860 (0.116)	0.893 (0.116)
<b>Observations</b>		1,081	1,117	1,083	1,119	1,056	1,089

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

to change, are significantly more likely there than in other regions. As with regional differences, urban and rural residents were generally not significantly different in their likelihood of supporting any given explanation, except for the opinion that Indigenous poverty is caused by unjust treatment (a structural explanation). People in urban areas were significantly more likely to support this explanation than rural residents.

Educational attainment was, however, the most significant predictor of all the individualist explanations of Indigenous poverty. People with higher levels of education (intermediate or above) were significantly less likely to support those explanations compared with people with less than a primary education. As with the previous section covering attitudes about race and skin color, even modestly higher levels of education are associated with more inclusive understandings of racial difference.

#### **a) Work Ethic**

Exploring each of the explanations for Indigenous poverty individually, the first question asks respondents what they think about the opinion that Indigenous people are poorer because they don't work hard enough. Table 2.5 shows that educational attainment stands out here as an important predictor of this opinion. People with higher levels of education (intermediate and above) have significantly lower odds (about 40% to 55% lower) of saying they strongly agree with this statement compared to people with less than a primary education, with those with the highest educational attainment being the least likely to agree with this statement.

In terms of race and ethnicity, whites did not have significantly higher odds and Indigenous people did not have significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with this opinion. Black respondents in the survey did have significantly higher odds of agreeing with the statement – twice as likely as *mestizos* to agree – but the very small size of the black sample in this dataset makes it

difficult to draw conclusions from this finding. People who identify as Indigenous did not have significantly different odds of agreeing with this statement compared with *mestizo*-identifying people, although the odds were slightly lower (~20% lower). While people with darker skin colors have slightly lower odds than lighter skinned people of strongly agreeing with this explanation, the difference is not significant.

In the model that includes racial and ethnic identity, higher income was associated with a lower likelihood of agreeing with this statement, while in the model including skin color, those people with a close Indigenous friend were about 25% less likely to agree with this statement than people without close Indigenous friends.

### **b) Intelligence**

Turning to the explanation that Indigenous people are poorer because they are less intelligent, educational attainment is again a significant predictor of this opinion as seen in Table 2.5. All levels of education from primary and above had significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with this explanation than people with less than a primary education. Respondents with intermediate, secondary, or a university education had about 60% to 70% lower odds. A similar pattern to the previous question emerges for the race, ethnicity, and skin color variables. Most racial and ethnic groups do not have significantly lower or higher odds of strongly agreeing with this explanation for Indigenous poverty relative to *mestizos*, although the small number of black respondents did have significantly higher odds of doing so. Skin color did not appear to have a significant effect – people with light brown and dark brown skin colors did not have significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with this opinion. Also like the previous question, as income increases, the odds of strongly agreeing with this statement do decrease significantly.

In terms of geography, people living in southern Mexico, previously discussed as the region with the largest proportions of Indigenous people, were significantly more likely to strongly agree with this explanation for Indigenous poverty. However, people that have close Indigenous friends, were significantly less likely (about 30% lower odds) to agree with this statement compared to people without close Indigenous friends.

### **c) Unjust Treatment**

The third opinion offered in the survey is a structural explanation for Indigenous poverty – that Indigenous people are poorer because they are treated unjustly. Interestingly, Table 2.5 shows educational attainment is not a significant predictor of strongly agreeing with this opinion, unlike with the previous two explanations. Based on the higher education levels having significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with the two previous individualist opinions, we could expect people with higher educational attainment to have significantly higher odds of agreeing with this structural opinion, but that is not the case. Race, ethnicity, and skin color are also not significant predictors. People living in urban areas of Mexico are significantly more likely (the odds are about 65% to 75% higher) to strongly agree with this statement than people in rural Mexico. Income is also significant, but the odds of strongly agreeing with this opinion decrease as income increases – a similar pattern to the two previous individualist explanations for Indigenous poverty.

### **d) Unwilling to Change Culture or Customs**

The fourth explanation for Indigenous poverty is another individualist opinion – that Indigenous people are poorer because they do not want to change their culture or customs. Indigenous people do have lower odds (about 25% lower) of strongly agreeing with this statement compared to *mestizos* as seen in Table 2.5. This finding is not significant at the 95% confidence interval but is significant at

the 90% confidence interval. Other racial and ethnic groups do not have significantly different odds of strongly agreeing with this opinion. Skin color also does not appear to have a strong influence.

Educational attainment is an important predictor of this opinion. As with other individualist explanations, people with higher levels of educational attainment have significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with this explanation. While respondents with intermediate and secondary educations had about 45% lower odds compared to those with less than a primary education, people with a university education had over 70% lower odds of strongly agreeing that Indigenous people were poorer because they didn't want to change their culture or customs.

There is some relationship between geography and support for this explanation. Respondents from both northern and southern Mexico were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than people in central Mexico – an interesting similarity given the large differences in racial and ethnic makeup and socioeconomic status between the relatively more Indigenous and impoverished south and the more *mestizo* and affluent north.

#### **e) Lack of Spanish Language Ability**

When looking at the explanation that Indigenous people are poorer because they don't speak Spanish well, educational attainment again stands out as a significant predictor of this opinion. Table 2.6 shows that people with at least an intermediate education have significantly lower odds (about 40% lower) of strongly agreeing the statement compared to people with less than a primary education and the odds decrease further for those with a secondary (about 50% lower) or university education (about 70% lower). Like with the previous question, there is a relationship between geography and support for this statement. People in northern Mexico are significantly less likely to strongly agree with this statement than people in central Mexico. The differing patterns in support

for individualist explanations in northern Mexico are interesting in their highlighting of the nuanced opinions about these explanations of Indigenous poverty.

#### **f) Lack of Schooling**

The next explanation – Indigenous people are poorer because they have less schooling – may be considered either a structural or individualist explanation, depending on the reasoning behind this option. However, as Table 2.6 shows, the results are similar to other individualist explanations for Indigenous poverty in that higher educational attainment is associated with a significantly lower likelihood of strongly agreeing with this statement. Gender is another significant predictor. Women have about 25% lower odds of strongly agreeing with this statement compared to men.

#### **g) Low-Quality Schools**

The last explanation of Indigenous poverty offered to respondents is a structural one – Indigenous people are poorer because schools are bad or deficient. In terms of educational attainment, respondents with higher levels of education (intermediate and above) have significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with this explanation compared with people who have less than a primary education as the results in Table 2.6 show. For people with a secondary or university education, the odds of strongly agreeing are about 50% to 60% lower than for those at the lowest schooling level. As with the previous question, gender is also significant – women’s odds of strongly agreeing with this explanation are about 35% less than for those of men.

Overall, educational attainment is frequently a strong indicator of which explanations of Indigenous poverty people most strongly support, especially for the individualistic explanations (e.g., they don’t work hard enough, they are less intelligent, they don’t want to change their culture or customs, they don’t speak Spanish well, and they have less schooling). Higher levels of educational

attainment are associated with significantly lower odds of strongly agreeing with those explanations. Based on these patterns of support (or lack of support) for certain types of explanations, more education may lead to increased knowledge about the structural and historical barriers that Indigenous people have experienced, rather than a reliance on stereotypical and biased portrayals of Indigenous people in the popular media. Interestingly, higher education is not associated with higher odds of supporting one of the structural explanations (Indigenous people are treated unjustly), but higher education is associated with higher odds of supporting the other structural explanation (schools are bad or deficient).

## V. Conclusions

This chapter has explored a variety of attitudes and opinions about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico using 2010 data from the LAPOP and PERLA surveys to examine dominant perceptions about racial difference. Descriptive statistics show strong support for racial mixture, intermarriage, improved anti-discrimination laws, and Indigenous organization, as well as recognition of the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans and people with darker skin colors. There is also support for structural explanations of Indigenous poverty, such as unjust treatment, but there is still a significant proportion of people that support individualist and often stereotypical explanations of Indigenous poverty that focus on, for example, a lack of work ethic or unwillingness to change their customs.

Exploring geographic differences in opinion was a key focus of this chapter, with the expectation that regions with larger proportions of Indigenous people would have more inclusive or accepting opinions of racial difference. These expected regional differences were largely non-existent as were differences between rural and urban respondents, although there were a few examples of regional outliers, such as the north's lack of support for intermarriage and the south's increased likelihood of support stereotypical explanations of Indigenous poverty. While Indigenous people do make up a larger proportion of the population in southern Mexico than in other regions, the resulting increased contact with Indigenous people may not translate into more inclusive or positive attitudes toward them. Given long-lasting marginalization of Indigenous people, negative or stereotypical attitudes may be hardened and more difficult to change.

A common link between many of these attitudes and opinions is that higher levels of education are associated with more inclusive attitudes and belief in structural, rather than individualist, explanations for Indigenous poverty. Education was the strongest predictor and there was less evidence of other variables having a significant influence on whether people hold a certain



opinion or belief, including racial and ethnic identity and skin color. It is especially interesting that Indigenous people were not significantly different from the dominant *mestizo* group in their likelihood of agreeing with many of these opinions, particularly relating to explanations of Indigenous poverty.

Given the expected geographic fragmentation in opinion is not as apparent as expected, national, rather than regional or local, policies that further push forward the country's multicultural approach may still be influential. As Telles and Garcia's (2013) international analysis showed, these results do show generally strong support for racial mixture in Mexico, although this chapter shows there are still some notable groups where support is less likely, including among people with darker skin colors and women. While descriptive statistics show strong overall support for inclusive policies and a recognition of the unequal treatment that Indigenous people and darker-skinned Mexicans experience, these results still show a notable minority of people support stereotypical explanations of Indigenous poverty – a finding supported by Telles and Bailey (2013) and Martínez Casas, et al. (2014). While certainly an indicator of progress that a majority understand that Indigenous inequality is not a result of any individual fault, but instead a result of structural factors, it remains important for these attitudes to turn into tangible actions that reduce inequality.

Continued research on the multicultural turn in Mexico and its potential impacts on racial and ethnic attitudes is necessary. Given the length of time *mestizaje* was the official and popular racial ideology in Mexico, its persistence, and the relative newness of an official multicultural ideology, it is important to recognize the tangible social changes that have occurred due in part to the multicultural ideology. Considering the time that has passed since the PERLA survey was conducted and since LAPOP has included so many questions about this topic in their surveys, new research exploring the ways attitudes and opinions about race and skin color have changed (if at all) in Mexico would help us understand the evolution of these social factors.

The following chapter will continue to explore data from the LAPOP and PERLA surveys while shifting focus away from attitudes and opinions about race and skin color and toward people's lived experiences with discrimination and unequal treatment. In doing so, I highlight the possible contradictions between people's stated attitudes about race and the lived experiences of members of marginalized communities.

## CHAPTER III

### PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION IN MEXICO

#### I. Introduction

Indigenous Mexicans encounter multiple forms of discrimination and prejudice in their daily lives. Institutional and structural discrimination, such as the frequently low quality of schooling (Hernandez-Zavala, et al., 2006) and limited access to employment opportunities in predominantly Indigenous communities (Robson, et al., 2018), hinders the potential for upward intergenerational mobility. Interpersonal discrimination, often manifesting itself in daily life in the form of implicit bias and microaggressions, has significant psychological and physical health impacts on marginalized groups including Indigenous people (Selvarajah, et al., 2022). This chapter explores the factors that influence Mexicans' perceptions of discrimination, both witnessed and personally experienced, with a focus on the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans and people with darker skin colors.

Despite a century of policies devoted, in theory, to improving their social, economic, and political exclusion, Indigenous Mexicans remain substantially disadvantaged relative to non-Indigenous individuals (Muñoz, 2004; Martínez Casas, et al., 2014). These inequalities are wide-ranging and inescapable and rooted in structural and interpersonal racism and discrimination. Indigenous people experience disadvantage in areas such as educational access and attainment (Rea Ángeles, 2011; Hernández Rosete & Maya, 2016; Villarreal, 2016); the type of employment and occupations they can pursue (Martinez Novo, 2006; Cano-Urbina & Mason, 2016; Eakin, 2016); the

wages they earn, even after controlling for schooling and occupational differences (Aguilar-Rodriguez, et al., 2018; Canedo, 2019); access to and quality of housing (Audefroy, 2005; Gissi, 2012; Sandoval-Cervantes, 2017); and in other related measures of wellbeing like health (Pinedo, et al., 2016; León-Pérez, 2019). These disparities persist despite recent efforts by the state to increase support for multiculturalism, improve official political and cultural recognition of Indigenous communities, and launch campaigns to fight discrimination. The state is trying to improve the socioeconomic condition of Indigenous Mexicans while attempting to address certain forms of institutional and interpersonal racism (de la Peña, 2006; Solís & Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación, 2017).

These policies are limited, however, in their ability to deal with the day-to-day interpersonal discrimination and prejudice that many Indigenous people experience. In interpersonal interactions, discrimination is typically based on physical characteristics like skin color or cultural traits like language usage, accent, and dress. Interpersonal discrimination against Indigenous Mexicans or people with darker skin colors is not uniform and is instead highly dependent on the intersection between race, ethnicity, and skin color and other social identities, such as gender, class, and geographic location.

Indigenous women are particularly targeted with racialized stereotypes that often get tied to the continued expectation of Mexican women to fulfill traditional gender roles as wife and mother. For example, Molyneux (2006) argues Mexico's conditional cash transfer program *Oportunidades* (now *Prospera*) effectively makes transfers dependent on whether women can perform the role of the 'good mother' whose primary social role is to "reproduce and cultivate appropriate offspring for the nation" (Smith-Oka, 2015: 10). On the other hand, Indigenous women are often characterized as 'bad mothers' when they try to provide for their children in ways viewed as deviant, such as through begging or the use of child labor (Martínez Novo, 2006).

These racialized and gendered stereotypes of Indigenous women are often bound to expectations of where Indigenous people belong or do not belong in Mexico's geography. Indigenous Mexicans, while living in urban areas in increasingly larger numbers, continue to be viewed as 'out of place' in Mexican cities (Negrín, 2019). This perception that Indigenous people belong in rural communities is rooted in colonial-era policies that excluded them from cities and relegated them to the margins of society and highlights the role of geography in influencing their experiences with discrimination in urban and rural spaces (Martínez Novo, 2006).

Indigenous migration from rural to urban communities is associated with a desire for upward social mobility, particularly through increased employment and educational opportunities. The barriers to higher education (and a higher-status occupation) remain high, however. Only about 1% to 3% of young Indigenous Mexicans pursue higher education, but despite the professionalization of a growing number of young Indigenous people through higher education, Indigenous people still struggle to enter high-status occupations and experience discrimination in the labor market (Oyarzún, et al., 2017). Even when they do find employment, Indigenous professionals earn approximately one-third that of non-Indigenous professionals (Martínez Casas, 2011). The intersection between race, ethnicity, and class highlights the unique experiences with discrimination faced by people of different class identities.

Building off the explanations for attitudes and opinions about Indigenous people, race, and ethnicity that were discussed in the previous chapter, in this chapter I turn to the experiences of people on the receiving end of discriminatory and prejudicial beliefs about Indigenous people and skin color. From the same LAPOP and PERLA surveys used in chapter 2, I explore a different set of outcomes relating to both witnessing and experiencing discrimination – specifically, skin color, class (economic situation), linguistic, and sex- or gender-based discrimination. I focus on the ways people with darker skin colors and Indigenous Mexicans of different identities and socioeconomic

backgrounds experience and perceive discrimination in disparate ways. Additionally, I look at outcomes related to the potential consequences of discrimination – life satisfaction and the perceived impact of skin color on respondents’ lives.

The intersections between different categories of difference, such as those described earlier in this chapter, have been less commonly explored in quantitative research, particularly outside of public health and epidemiological research (Bauer, et al., 2021). While this lack of engagement is starting to change, it leaves a gap in our understanding of the nuances in marginalized communities’ lived experiences with discrimination. The data analysis in this chapter uses interaction modeling as a method of quantitatively measuring intersectionality, but this is only one possible approach to exploring intersectionality in these data. Another method would be to stratify outcomes based on cross-coded categories – for example, Indigenous women or darker-skinned people living in southern Mexico (Bauer and Scheim, 2019).

As discussed in Chapter 2, analysis of LAPOP and PERLA data has often focused on international, rather than internal, comparisons. A focus on internal geographical differences between regions and between urban and rural communities within Mexico remains in this chapter. Additionally, while life satisfaction has been a common theme of research using LAPOP data (e.g., Corral, 2011), it has not been explored in the context of discrimination. I examine life satisfaction and life evaluation LAPOP data to see how lower levels of life satisfaction may be a consequence of experiencing discrimination.

Taken together with Chapter 2, this chapter offers a new perspective on the study of race and ethnicity in Mexico through an exploration of two sides of the issue of discrimination – the perceptions of racial difference by the dominant group and the marginalized group’s perceptions of their treatment in society. Looking at both perspectives shows the inconsistencies between people’s

opinions about race and the lived experiences of the people impacted by those sometimes discriminatory and prejudicial opinions.

## II. Background and Literature Review

The outcomes explored in this chapter fall into three categories: (1) experiences witnessing another person being discriminated against, (2) first-hand experiences of being discriminated against, and (3) potential consequences of discrimination, with a focus on life satisfaction and the perceived impact of skin color on life.

### i. Witnessing Discrimination

Looking at those who report witnessing discrimination tells us about the people that can and cannot recognize discrimination when they see it and the social context they inhabit. Discrimination of all kinds is far too common, yet in LAPOP and PERLA survey questions that ask people if they've ever seen somebody be discriminated against or treated unfairly based on different characteristics, a plurality of people say they have never seen that happen (compared to a few times, some times, or many times).

In terms of who witnesses discrimination and who acts upon it, Sue, et al. (2019) distinguish between “allies” and “bystanders”. Allies belong to a dominant social group (e.g., white, men, straight) and actively support members of nondominant groups while working to end prejudice and discrimination they witness. Bystanders are less attuned to issues of bias, discrimination, and inequality and are less likely to recognize discrimination when it happens or more likely to justify or explain it away (Sue, et al., 2019). In a study of anti-Asian discrimination in the US during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lui, et al. (2022) do not distinguish between “allies” and “bystanders”, but characterize all people who witness discrimination as “bystanders”. They do, however, distinguish between different responses to discrimination – reactive and proactive antiracist bystander behaviors. Reactive behaviors are higher risk, such as interrupting a



discriminatory attack before it happens or while it's happening, physically defending the targets, reporting the incident to authorities, or supporting the victim. Proactive behaviors are lower risk and may involve volunteer or advocacy work or talking to others about injustice (Lui, et al., 2022). They found people who experienced discrimination more frequently were more likely to engage in reactive behaviors, perhaps reflecting greater empathy for victims of discrimination or greater preparation for how to deal with discrimination when they experience or witness it. Timing also matters – people who experienced discrimination very recently (within the previous week) were less likely to engage in these reactive behaviors, possibly because the trauma of their own encounter with discrimination was fresh in their minds (Lui, et al., 2022). What these data don't capture, however, is the situational context that may make intervention more or less likely depending on the perpetrator's, victim's, and bystander's social identities. For example, white Americans have been shown to be less likely to help black Americans in these situations and gender role expectations have led some women to not intervene (Nelson, et al., 2010).

Witnessing discrimination, like with experiencing discrimination, might be expected to have negative physical and mental health impacts. However, for people that experience discrimination personally, witnessing discrimination can actually be a buffer for the poor physical health outcomes that result from being targeted by discrimination (Dhanani, et al., 2022). This may be caused by the realization that one is not alone in experiencing discrimination and they are not to blame for being targeted. The same research showed that witnessing discrimination on its own did not have a significant physical health impact.

There has been less research focusing on people's second-hand experiences witnessing discrimination in the Latin American context where racial and ethnic dynamics and societal power structures are different than in (e.g.) the United States. Given the data on the relatively high prevalence of interpersonal and structural discrimination in Mexico and Latin America described in

this and the previous chapter, it is surprising that roughly 35% to 50% of respondents surveyed in LAPOP and PERLA have never in their lives witnessed each of the forms of discrimination asked about.

Exploring the people's likelihood of witnessing discrimination offers some compelling lines of inquiry. For example, are the populations that are more likely to experience discrimination also more likely to witness others with the same social identity being discriminated against, potentially because they are more attuned to the forms that discrimination can take? Conversely, are people in relatively more privileged social positions less likely to witness discrimination? How do factors like geography (differences between urban and rural or between regions) influence the likelihood of witnessing discrimination? Relating to outcomes discussed in chapter 2, these findings may also connect to prevailing attitudes about the treatment of Indigenous people or the need for more anti-discrimination laws in Mexico.

## **ii. Perceptions of Discrimination**

Witnessing discrimination can be a troubling and upsetting experience, but first-hand encounters with being the target of discrimination are traumatic episodes that cause significant mental and physical health effects, especially when they occur repeatedly throughout daily life (Selvarajah, et al., 2022). Making sense of the ways people perceive themselves as being on the receiving end of discrimination are important in understanding their lived experiences and how people from marginalized communities view their position within society. LAPOP and PERLA together collect data on perceptions of discrimination based on skin color, economic situation, language, and gender and sex, but people with multiple marginalized identities often have difficulty pinpointing which dimension of their identity was the target of that discrimination.

In a study of perceived discrimination among marginalized communities in Brazil, about one-third of Brazilians surveyed said they had experienced discrimination in the previous five years (Layton and Smith, 2017). More specifically, 26.1% of those surveyed reported class discrimination, while much fewer reported racial discrimination (11.1%) or gender discrimination (9.9%), with an unspecified proportion experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. (Another study using the same dataset notes 8% of Brazilians experienced dual (race- and class-based) discrimination – among the lowest in Latin America (Dixon, 2019)). While class discrimination was the most reported, Layton and Smith (2017) find that skin color was the most significant determinant of whether somebody reported an experience with discrimination, regardless of the type (race, class, or gender). Measures of wealth and educational attainment do not show a strong relationship with perceived discrimination of any kind, which contradicts the idea that Brazil suffers predominantly from class-based and not race-based discrimination. People with lower schooling or less wealth (measured by ownership of common household possessions) are not more likely to have experiences discrimination (Layton and Smith, 2017). Despite the pervasiveness of race-based discrimination, people may mischaracterize it as being class-based, but they indeed further highlight a need to focus on intersecting dimensions of difference, like race and class or race and gender, in quantitative research. Canache, et al. (2014) point to the complexities of intersectionality. For example, somebody who is poor and Indigenous may be unable to distinguish upon which axis of difference (class or race) they were being targeted.

To understand perceived discrimination, Canache, et al. (2014: 509) used 2010 LAPOP data from six countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru – each with *mestizo* pluralities and significant numbers of ethnoracial minorities (primarily Indigenous and smaller numbers of Afro-descendants). They examined both demographic (i.e., gender, age, wealth, education, and area of residence) and psychological (i.e., “openness to experience, conscientiousness,

extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability”) characteristics. These psychological characteristics are meant to tease out more information about whether and how discrimination is perceived – Canache, et al. (2014) argue that people who are more extroverted and/or agreeable would be less likely to perceive themselves as the targets of discrimination. Unlike Layton and Smith (2017), Canache, et al. (2014) find that wealth (using the same definition as Layton and Smith (2017)) is a significant predictor of whether one perceives themselves as the recipients of discrimination – people from wealthier households are less likely to perceive themselves as the victims of race-based discrimination. Canache, et al. (2014: 513) argue that wealth may “insulate” people from perceiving discrimination, but this assumes a similar likelihood of actual discrimination regardless of wealth in the first place.

Based on LAPOP data, Dixon (2019) argues most people do not perceive themselves as being the recipients of discrimination at all. She points to some possible reasons for there not being higher levels of discrimination reported in the survey: (1) given the trauma associated with discrimination, people may not want to acknowledge or recall that experience, (2) previous studies have shown that people are more likely to perceive discrimination against the general demographic they belong to rather than they perceive discrimination individually targeted at them, and (3) people in Latin America may lack a robust vocabulary for making sense of and explaining discrimination. When people do perceive discrimination, they most commonly perceive class-based discrimination. Dual discrimination (skin color- and class-based) is second most common, followed by color-only discrimination (Dixon, 2019). When people do perceive skin color-based discrimination, they frequently also perceive class-based discrimination. It is less likely for people to only recognize color-based discrimination.

Dixon (2019) finds that people in Latin America that experience dual discrimination often have a difficult time recognizing the role that each form of discrimination plays in their experiences.

People with darker skin colors tend to perceive class-based discrimination more strongly, even if wealth is held constant, so when both forms of discrimination may be at play, people are more likely to associate it with class than skin color. That is not to say that skin color-based understandings of discrimination are not meaningful in Latin America. Rather, class and skin color are seen as operating in tandem and people draw upon both explanations to understand discrimination. Untangling the causes of skin color discrimination is difficult because both race and class are usually at play. For example, in Brazil, 27% of people with dark skin say they experience discrimination because of their skin color, while 30% say they experience discrimination because of their socioeconomic status (Dias, 2020).

#### **a) Gender- and Sex-Based Discrimination**

While the primary focus of this chapter is on skin color or racial discrimination, as discussed previously in this section, different forms of discrimination do intersect with each other resulting in the amplification or compounding of discrimination. I turn now to focusing on the other types of discrimination addressed in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys, starting with gender- and sex-based discrimination.

Gender inequality varies to some extent across Mexico, as shown by Frias (2008) in a state-level gender equality index. Using 36 indicators, including metrics measuring economic, educational, political, and legal equality, Frias (2008) shows Oaxaca, the state with the largest proportion of Indigenous people, is the second most egalitarian state in Mexico, after Mexico City (the Federal District at the time this article was published). Yet, on a scale of 0 to 100 (100 representing perfect equality between men and women), Oaxaca still only scored 51.6, highlighting the significant gender equality gap that still exists.

This equality gap is arguably most evident for Indigenous women, who across Mexico frequently face problems that men do not, especially relating to negative discourses and stereotypes. For example, Martínez Novo's (2006) research on Indigenous women who make their living as street vendors in Tijuana highlights the connections between gender and indigeneity, while providing further evidence of the negative discourses surrounding Mexico's Indigenous population. The women described here are generally from Mixteca communities in Oaxaca and speak limited Spanish. Often called "marías", Martínez Novo (2006) argues Indigenous women in Tijuana have been made anonymous by discourses that negatively stereotype them as criminals, outsiders, and beggars, despite these women's varied educational and labor market experiences. These women are also portrayed as bad mothers for allegedly exploiting their children for financial gain by using them to gain sympathy, especially from American tourists. Martínez Novo (2006: 264) argues that deviating from mestizo gender norms of what a good mother and woman should be leads to Indigenous women being stereotyped as "undeserving poor".

The experiences of Indigenous women in local governance also highlights the significant gender equality gap. Danielson and Eisenstadt (2009) describe the exclusion of Indigenous women in Oaxaca through the traditional governance structure of *usos y costumbres* (customs and traditions) – a system of semi-autonomous governance for many rural Indigenous communities in Mexico (Cohen, 2004). This system is grounded in communal governance, collective work, and a social obligation toward each other and the community (Robson, et al., 2018). Given this autonomy, communities were allowed to exclude women from full participation in the voting process to choose leaders – women were excluded from voting in over 20% of communities using *usos y costumbres* (Danielson and Eisenstadt, 2009). In these and other communities, women may be excluded from holding higher-level positions, including mayor, or may be banned from speaking at community assemblies. Practically, *usos y costumbres* governance structures are fluid and flexible and women

frequently do challenge these rules limiting their participation. In other cases, women say they do not want to participate in community governance in the first place. Since they must maintain their household and familial responsibilities, an increased role in the community would simply add to their workload. Noting, however, the gender-based discrimination and inequality present within these governance structures, the perspective of “feminist defenders of Indigenous autonomy” is that gender discrimination in Indigenous communities can and should be addressed by those communities and not by any outsiders, including the Mexican state (Danielson and Eisenstadt, 2009: 155).

#### **b) Economic or Class-Based Discrimination**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, class- and skin color-based discrimination often overlap with each other (Dixon, 2019). This intersection between class and skin color is evident for Indigenous people in Mexico. Data from Mexico’s National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) in 2018 reported 69.5% of the Indigenous population were living in poverty compared with 41.9% of the total population (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2019).

Drawing connections between discrimination and poverty, discrimination against Indigenous Mexicans may be based more on their low socioeconomic status and less on skin color and cultural factors, such as their use of an Indigenous language (Martínez Casas et al., 2014). This finding is supported by Vargas Becerra and Flores Dávila (2002) who found that members of relatively poorer Indigenous migrant communities living in Mexico City (e.g., Mazahua, Otomí, and Triqui) perceived discrimination much more strongly than somewhat wealthier Indigenous groups, like Zapotecos or Mayans. Data on discrimination in the school system adds further evidence to this argument. Relatively few Indigenous people in Mexico City said they experienced problems in school because

they were Indigenous – only 5.8% (Vargas Becerra and Flores Dávila, 2002). However, this figure differs greatly based on the person’s ethnic identity. For example, nearly 15% of Triquis (among the poorest Indigenous groups in Mexico City) surveyed said they had problems in school because of their indigeneity, while just 0.3% of Zapotecos (among the wealthiest) said the same. These relative differences in socioeconomic status may have an impact on the levels of discrimination each group faces. These perceptions of discrimination, however, depend strongly on how people from different Indigenous communities are viewed by other members of society, particularly relating to previously mentioned characteristics, like speaking an Indigenous language or certain phenotypical factors like skin color or stature.

Overall, perceived discrimination, regardless of Indigenous community, decreases in the second and third generations living in Mexico City – by the third generation “high” and “very high” perceived discrimination is virtually non-existent (Vargas Becerra and Flores Dávila, 2002). There are opposing forces in the second generation – some work to maintain their Indigenous language usage and cultural heritage, while others have gradually incorporated into *mestizo* society. Increased usage of Spanish among the second generation may also be associated with lower labor force participation in the informal sector in favor of greater employment in the formal sector, along with increased SES and job security. By the third generation, the forces of assimilation mean people have generally lost any Indigenous language ability and most links to their Indigenous heritage. This suggests that Indigenous people do gradually incorporate into the dominant *mestizo* Mexican society, albeit through a process of what Alba (2005) calls “boundary blurring”. In other words, by the second and third generations of these Indigenous migrants in Mexico City, the boundary between Indigenous and *mestizo* becomes increasingly ambiguous, and these people may be viewed by others as members of both groups, rather than as solely Indigenous.



### c) Linguistic Discrimination

The last type of discrimination addressed in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys is linguistic discrimination – a form of discrimination primarily impacting Indigenous people in Mexico. Certain markers of indigeneity, like language usage, may be less outwardly obvious than skin color, but they still influence people’s lived experiences and their opinions and perceptions of the world around them. Linguistic differences have been less studied, even though, Indigenous language use is one of the primary measures of indigeneity in quantitative datasets and is a frequent reason for discrimination, exclusion, and oppression.

The proportion of Mexicans speaking an Indigenous language has gradually decreased over the past century – from over 15% in the 1930 census to about 6.6% in 2010 (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014). Maintaining Indigenous language usage, however, is generally well-supported among the Mexican population. While nearly 80% of respondents in the PERLA dataset support the teaching of Indigenous languages to all children, this is stratified by ethnicity and educational attainment – Indigenous respondents (91% support) were much more likely to support Indigenous language instruction than those who were *mestizo* (78%) or white (73%); people with a high school degree were 45% less likely to support Indigenous language instruction than people without (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014).

One of the most salient markers of indigeneity is the use of an Indigenous language, which is often a specific source of shame and embarrassment. Children frequently face more intense pressure to assimilate into a non-Indigenous lifestyle and may steadfastly refuse to speak their native language despite parental encouragement to maintain that link to their heritage. For example, for Oaxacan child migrants in other parts of Mexico, speaking an Indigenous language or certain phenotypical characteristics like skin color or stature marks them as *Oaxaquito*, or being from Oaxaca, an identity they may want to disassociate themselves from in an effort to assimilate (Stephen, 2007).

In being the recipients of this discrimination and prejudice, many Indigenous Mexicans inhabit the fracture between mainstream *mestizo* culture and a marginalized Indigenous culture. Having detached themselves from their Indigenous heritage by, for example, stopping the usage of an Indigenous language or encouraging their children to adopt mainstream, rather than Indigenous, customs, they may try to incorporate themselves into the dominant *mestizo* culture but continue to be marked as Indigenous and not fully accepted into that social sphere.

Although Hernández Rosete and Maya (2016) acknowledge evidence to support a relationship between linguistic discrimination and poor educational outcomes in Mexico is still limited, they show that linguistic discrimination can be a factor in early school dropout. While it is not uncommon for Mexican, and especially Indigenous, youth to leave school by the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade (around age 15) and enter the workforce full time, leaving formal schooling early, whether because of discrimination or an overall lack of support at school, limits the earnings potential of Indigenous people and leaves low-wage, low-skilled jobs the only options.

Throughout this overview of the forms of discrimination that are captured in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys, it is clear that none of them stand alone. Skin color, gender, class, and linguistic discrimination each impact Indigenous Mexicans in different ways. While all Indigenous Mexicans are not marginalized in all four of these dimensions, the potential interaction of any or all these forms of discrimination is important to understand. The LAPOP and PERLA surveys offer a unique opportunity to explore all four types of discrimination and the role multiple demographic factors may play in influencing the likelihood of somebody experiencing each form of discrimination.

#### **d) Intersectional Discrimination**

Focusing on the ways a group's experiences are shaped simultaneously by multiple intersecting dimensions of difference shows us the ways the concurrent influence of these identities results in

differing experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Recognizing these intersections has us understand the relationships between inequality and societal power structures, as well as the ways people understand and negotiate their multiple identities. Mexican Indigenous women experience “triple oppression” based on their gender, ethnicity, and class (Bonfil-Sánchez, et al., 2017: 101). The intersection of these three forms of difference compounds the challenges faced by either Indigenous people, women, or people of a lower socioeconomic status. To these three intersecting forms of discrimination, I would add linguistic discrimination as another manifestation of discrimination based on ethnicity and indigeneity. The disadvantages that Indigenous women face in Mexico are numerous. Rural Indigenous women have historically had among the lowest levels of educational attainment in Mexico, influenced by early marriage and pregnancy, poverty, and discrimination (De La Rocha & Escobar Latapí, 2016). This pattern is starting to change, however, with Mexico’s cash transfer programs, which are conditional, in part, on school attendance. Indigenous women experience high levels of interpersonal violence (including emotional, physical, sexual, partner, and family violence) in multiple sites, such as in the workplace, at school, and in other places in the community (Bonfil-Sánchez, et al., 2017). Research in Mexico shows they are also more vulnerable to human trafficking – made more likely by their social exclusion, marginalization, and poverty (Gutiérrez Chong, 2014; Acharya, 2019). Recognizing the “triple oppression” that Indigenous women encounter across multiple sites and contexts helps us understand their lived experiences with inequality and social exclusion.

### **iii. Sites of Discrimination**

Beyond specific types of discrimination, the PERLA survey also collects data on the sites and situations where people feel they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly. Specifically, the survey focuses on discrimination in the labor market, in public places (such as on the street or in the

market), in police encounters, and in health care settings. These sites represent different opportunities for discrimination to occur – for example, somebody may not be seeking employment, but they do shop in public or go to the doctor. The sites can also represent different societal power structures. Doctors, police officers, and hiring managers may all exert a certain level of power and authority over somebody in a position of vulnerability – these power dynamics may be especially noticeable in doctors’ offices or encounters with the police. In day-to-day interactions in public places, on the other hand, such unequal power dynamics are less likely to exist. While not a comprehensive set of sites, discrimination in any of these situations can have a significant impact. Discrimination in the labor market may result in not getting a job or being paid less than peers, further contributing to economic inequality. Frequent interpersonal discrimination, such as in public places, can have short- and long-term physical and psychological impacts. Discrimination in vulnerable situations, like in police encounters or health care settings, can result in physical harm or a person’s basic needs of safety and care going unmet.

#### **a) Discrimination in the Labor Market**

The first site of discrimination addressed in the PERLA survey is the labor market. The labor market is a key area to examine the potential impact of discrimination, both implicit and explicit, on socioeconomic inequality – hiring practices perpetuate inequality and privilege. Dias (2020) argues that discrimination based on skin color is gendered – it negatively impacts women more than men, particularly in the labor market. Skin color did not have a significant impact on men in the hiring process, but women with darker skin were more likely than other women to experience negative outcomes when searching for work (Dias, 2020). Arceo-Gómez and Campos-Vázquez (2014) also find that women with darker skin color were less likely to be called back when applying for jobs compared to applicant with lighter skin tones. Their study consisted of applying for jobs and

including one of three photographs of either a white, mestizo, or Indigenous woman with the applications. (In Mexico, it is common to include a photograph in job applications.) They argue this provides evidence of discrimination against Indigenous people in the labor market – in particular, they show that Indigenous women must submit 18% more applications than white women in order to get a callback. Here it is important to remember the role of intersectionality in the hiring process, especially when considering the role of stereotypes in determining what positions people are hired into. For example, women may be stereotyped as being more appropriate for administrative or clerical work or certain sales positions but may be seen as unqualified for a managerial role – these stereotypes may be amplified by other dimensions of difference, like race or ability. Regardless of these stereotypes and an aversion to hiring darker skinned women, status can help to ameliorate these factors – signaling higher status on a resume can improve the likelihood that these women would get hired (Dias, 2020). These multiple intersecting identities show the complexity of skin color discrimination as each identity, not just skin color, plays a significant role in the result (i.e., not being hired for a job). For example, 82% of Brazilians say racial discrimination makes it more difficult for Afro-descendants to get a job, about 60% say Afro-descendants are not discriminated against because of the skin color, but because they are poor (Dias, 2020).

#### **b) Discrimination by Police**

The direct role of skin color or racial discrimination in police encounters in Mexico has largely been unstudied. What is known is that there is a high distrust of police in Mexico, despite several attempts at police reform in recent years (Baek, et al., 2022). Prevailing opinions about Mexican police forces frame them as ineffective and corrupt, while being involved with organized crime and abusing people's human rights (LaRose and Maddan, 2009). According to 2008 data from Mexico City, only 26% of people surveyed said they felt safer when a police officer was around; 17% said they felt less

safe in the presence of a police officer (Tello, 2012). For some subpopulations in Mexico, I would expect some of these deep-seated attitudes against police to be rooted in perceptions of discrimination or unequal treatment based on some aspect of their identity. While there has been research into trust in policing as an institution, less work has addressed perceptions of discrimination by police. In a study of perceptions of police response time in Latin America, the most significant predictor of response time perception was skin color – people with darker skin color believed the police would take longer to respond to their call about a burglary than did people with lighter skin color (Cohen, et al., 2015). This perception of longer response times may reflect not only a lack of confidence in the police, but a broader lack of trust with the state and its response to people from minoritized ethnoracial communities.

Beyond race and skin color, Lanham, et al. (2019) highlight transgender women's experiences with gender-based violence in Latin America and the Caribbean with police encounters being one of the situations they explore. Those surveyed describe experiences where police refused to help them, blamed them for being victims of a crime, or mistreated them. Theft, physical and sexual assault and harassment, and demands for sex or payment were also reported.

### **c) Discrimination in Health Care Settings**

As in police encounters, discrimination in health care settings is especially troubling because of the vulnerable position that patients are in and the frequently unequal power structures that exist between medical staff and patients. Mexican regulations require health care institutions to provide special care to protect the human rights of people belonging to vulnerable groups, including Indigenous people (Colmenares-Roa & Peláez-Ballestas, 2020). Practically, however, the care Indigenous people receive is often substandard. The life expectancy at birth of Indigenous Mexicans is about nine years less than the national average, Indigenous infant mortality rates are twice as high,

and Indigenous women have a three times higher risk of dying in childbirth (Pelcastre-Villafuerte, 2014). There are many causes of these significant health inequities, mainly involving the social determinants of health, the conditions and environments in which people live that influence their health outcomes.

Paulino, et al. (2019) show Indigenous language-speaking women across Latin America have poorer maternal health outcomes, including a higher likelihood of dying during pregnancy or childbirth, and have lower odds of benefitting from the health care services available to them. A lack of medical staff that speak Indigenous languages is a significant barrier to accessing health care (Loewenberg, 2010). Some patients perceive discriminatory or unfair treatment in hospitals and other health care facilities because they do not speak Spanish (Pelcastre-Villafuerte, 2014). In a study of maternal health care for Indigenous women in Oaxaca, Pintado, et al. (2015) noted significant problems these patients experienced, including long wait times at public clinics, an inability to get emergency care (because clinics were closed or their health problem was deemed not urgent enough), and a lack of Indigenous language speakers on staff.

Language barriers in health care settings can have a significant negative impact on the care received. In the absence of a family member or staff member that can translate, patients may be unable to fully communicate their symptoms and only understand a portion of what a doctor or nurse tells them, especially when health care providers use complicated medical jargon (Cerón, et al., 2016). Patients who speak Indigenous languages are thought of as a “challenge” by health care workers, which frames them as problems to be dealt with, instead of patients in need of care (Colmenares-Roa & Peláez-Ballestas, 2020: 131). Castro, et al. (2015) argue that these language barriers are forms of discrimination because they make it more difficult for a health care provider to respond to a patient’s needs and they reinforce an unequal power structure between doctor and patient.

Castro, et al. (2015) and Cerón, et al. (2016) cite other discriminatory practices that Indigenous people in Latin America face when seeking out health care, including unequal treatment, verbal abuse (like yelling, scolding, or patient blaming), physical abuse (including performing unnecessary procedures or hitting or slapping), and deliberate neglect or denial of medical care.

#### **iv. Potential Consequences of Discrimination**

Throughout the previous discussion of the types and sites of discrimination covered in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys, I have alluded to many consequences of discrimination. I now focus on a few specific consequences that are particularly impactful, including socioeconomic inequality, limited intergenerational upward mobility, poor health outcomes, and poor life satisfaction.

##### **a) The Impact of Discrimination on Socioeconomic Inequality and Upward Mobility**

Scholars continue to untangle the root causes of socioeconomic stratification based on skin color in Latin America (Dias, 2020). While darker skin color is associated with lower income, occupational status, and educational attainment across Latin America, the causes of these patterns are less clear. Direct discrimination now and throughout history and the corresponding accumulation of white privilege and minoritized groups' disadvantage across generations play a significant role in influencing key determinants of socioeconomic status.

Educational attainment, especially higher education, can be a barrier to being hired in high-paying and high-status jobs. Skin color is a strong indicator of educational attainment in Latin America (Telles, et al., 2015). Skin color has a significant negative relationship with educational attainment and the likelihood of finishing primary and secondary education. On the other hand, when using racial/ethnic self-identification as a predictor for educational attainment, results were



mixed. While indigeneity had a consistently negative relationship with educational attainment, black identity only had a negative relationship with education in one out of eight countries studied – Brazil (Telles, et al., 2015). Class, too, is a strong predictor of educational attainment – specifically, class origins as measured by parental occupation. However, it is difficult to separate the effects of class and race. Given the cumulative effects of racism, discrimination, and privilege over many generations, class has a strong basis in race and skin color.

Torche and Spilerman (2009) and Camp (2020) identify generational (i.e., parental) wealth as another key determinant of educational attainment in Mexico. The higher the parental income, the more likely it is for a person to complete college. With these higher qualifications, people can get more prestigious and higher-paying jobs, which further perpetuates this generational advantage and inequality. Parental wealth also strongly influences the economic well-being of their adult children in at least two ways: consumption level and asset holdings. While parental wealth has an indirect influence on their children's consumption levels – this is most directly determined by the children's human capital and educational attainment, which is in turn influenced by parental wealth – there is commonly a direct transfer of resources and assets from parents to children (Torche and Spilerman, 2009). Economic inequality and disparities in access to educational, occupational, and economic opportunity remains a critical issue in Mexico. Generational wealth (or lack thereof) plays a significant role in determining socioeconomic inequality along racial and ethnic lines.

Monroy-Gómez-Franco and Vélez Grajales (2020) find a significant relationship between skin color and upward intergenerational mobility in Mexico. People with darker skin color tend to experience lower levels of upward social mobility. Reeskens and Velasco Aguilar's (2021) research on wage inequality by skin color in Mexico does not necessarily find a wage penalty for those with the darkest skin tones, but rather a significant wage advantage for those with the two lightest skin

tones. When they control for education, skill level, and region, they do not find any significant differences in income.

This does not, however, minimize the importance of skin color as a determinant of socioeconomic inequality in Mexico (Villarreal, 2010; 2014). In studies of stratification between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans, the focus generally lies on culture and language use. Villarreal (2010) argues in favor of studying Indigenous – non-Indigenous disparities with a focus on skin color. Using skin color and socioeconomic data from the Mexico 2006 Panel Study, Villarreal (2010) finds evidence of significant socioeconomic disparities by skin color – those with darker skin color are much more likely to be impoverished, have low educational attainment, and low occupational status.

While Flores and Telles (2012) appreciate the attention Villarreal (2010) gives to the relationship between skin color and socioeconomic stratification in Mexico, they aim to improve on his analysis by utilizing what they consider to be an improved measure of skin color. PERLA created a scale of eleven skin tones, designed to be matched with survey respondents' skin color, while they argue the skin color measure used by Villarreal is less nuanced because it only utilized four different color options (white, light brown, dark brown, and other) (Flores and Telles, 2012). While the findings of Flores and Telles (2012) generally correspond with those of Villarreal (2010), they show the strong influence of skin color and class on educational attainment, while occupational status is most strongly dictated by parental occupation status and class. Based on this finding, Flores and Telles (2012) argue socioeconomic stratification by skin color has already been determined by educational attainment and parental background before people even enter into the labor force.

Interestingly, Flores and Telles (2012) indigeneity (whether defined through self-identification or language use) is not a predictor of educational attainment and occupational status. They show the socioeconomic disadvantage facing Indigenous communities is fully explained by

three factors: (1) the social class one is born into, (2) the high levels of discrimination facing those with darker skin tones, and (3) living in predominantly rural communities. Given these three factors, the intergenerational impacts of the discrimination and marginalization of Indigenous communities across centuries is clear. The relegation of Indigenous people to rural areas on the margins of society during colonial rule shows how their geographic marginalization has fed into their socioeconomic marginalization. Upward mobility across generations has been difficult, which is underscored by a throughline of continued discrimination against people with darker skin.

Discrimination and prejudice against Indigenous people in Mexico is one of many motivations for international, as opposed to internal, migration in an attempt to alleviate the socioeconomic disadvantage they face at home. Migrants believe they can escape the prejudice they experience locally by moving to the United States and blending in with the broader Mexican migrant community (Cohen, 2004). That does not necessarily happen. Given that Indigenous Mexicans settle in the same communities as non-Indigenous Mexicans, this prejudice is arguably inescapable for them. The incorrect beliefs and stereotypes that non-Indigenous Mexicans have of the Indigenous population do not disappear upon migration to the United States. However, migration can strengthen the bonds between Indigenous people of the same origin as they build upon existing structures of social support and solidarity to help each other adapt to live in a new environment. In this way, indigeneity could be initially strengthened in the short term, despite a long history of policies and attitudes that both explicitly and implicitly expected the abandonment of Indigenous culture and customs.

#### **b) Consequences of Discrimination on Health Outcomes**

These issues of socioeconomic inequality, persistent poverty, and discrimination are also important social determinants of health. Self-rated health is, in turn, a key determinant of life satisfaction

(discussed in the following section) (López-Ortega, et al., 2016; Camacho, et al., 2019). Exploring the influence of discrimination on health highlights another pathway through which discrimination impacts life satisfaction. Ortiz-Hernandez, et al. (2020: 73) use the concept of socioeconomic position (SEP), which addresses “the hierarchies produced by differences in access to and control of economic resources, which are associated with disparities in power and prestige” to understand impacts on health. In Mexico, they find a clear skin color gradient of self-rated health. Afro-descendants had the lowest self-rated health, followed by people with dark brown and then light brown skin colors. Darker skinned people also reported lower satisfaction of their needs, lower capacity to save, and less perceived control of their life overall (Ortiz-Hernandez, et al., 2020). There was a close relationship between skin color and SEP – people with lighter skin colors tended to live in medium- or high-SEP neighborhoods, while people with darker skin colors more often lived in low-SEP areas. Combined with the previously mentioned psychological stressors, such as less control over one’s life, one’s surroundings and living conditions have a significant impact on mental and physical health. These environmental and psychological factors that contribute to lower self-rated health don’t include the other stressors that people with darker skin colors may experience, including racism and discrimination, that can further exacerbate physical and psychological health issues. It is important then to understand who most often perceives themselves as the recipients of discrimination. While it is crucial to understand the skin color gradient of self-rated health, examining perceived discrimination more broadly among various populations allows us to see the intersectionality of skin color and (e.g.) gender or socioeconomic status and understand who is most likely to be impacted by the stress of discrimination.

### **c) The Impact of Discrimination on Life Satisfaction**

Constant experiences of institutional and interpersonal discrimination in the sites and situations described so far in this chapter have a significant impact on the life satisfaction of ethnic minorities, including Indigenous people. While an idea as abstract as “life satisfaction” may be difficult to assess, it is a useful measure of physical and mental well-being. People who report higher life satisfaction and happiness also have better self-rated health and fewer chronic health issues (Siahpush, et al., 2008).

Research from Europe (Verkuyten, 2008; Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent, 2014; Knies, et al., 2016) and Israel (Kushnirovich and Sherman, 2017) shows that immigrant groups and ethnic minorities do generally have lower levels of life satisfaction, even when controlling for other factors like income, education, and health. In these communities, there are multiple opposing factors at play that influence life satisfaction. While structural and interpersonal racism and discrimination tend to decrease life satisfaction, increased levels of ethnic solidarity and stronger identification with an ethnic group can increase life satisfaction even if they cannot fully counteract the damage done by racism and discrimination (Verkuyten, 2008). Within these communities, women and married people tend to have higher life satisfaction as do people with higher levels of education, but this trend may be more associated with the higher incomes frequently earned by those with higher educational attainment (Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent, 2014). Factors like good self-reported health and well-being, higher religiosity, and identifying on the right of the political spectrum are also associated with higher life satisfaction (Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent, 2014).

In the migration studies literature, looking at life satisfaction can provide another way of understanding the incorporation or adaptation of migrants into a destination community. In Europe, Safi (2009) finds the second generation (children of immigrants) to be no less dissatisfied with their lives than the first generation. The classic theory of straight-line assimilation does not fit here as the second generation may in fact be more aware of and attuned to the injustices they and their parents

face as minorities in the community. Perceptions of discrimination may have a greater influence on life satisfaction than the psychological and mental health impacts of immigration and the assimilation process. Indeed, Safi (2009) points to perceived discrimination as the most notable determinant of lower life satisfaction within immigrant communities – a finding further supported by Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent (2014) who show that members of minoritized groups that perceive high levels of ethnic discrimination experience lower levels of life satisfaction.

In analyses of data from the European Social Survey, Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent (2014) do find significant differences in life satisfaction between the first and second generations. They find members of the second generation have levels of life satisfaction closer to those of the native-born, but caution that, since first- and second-generation immigrants live through different socialization processes, that does not mean the factors impacting life satisfaction are necessarily the same between the two groups.

Patterns of life satisfaction found in Europe don't necessarily hold elsewhere. Calvo, et al. (2016), Ramos, et al. (2017), and Ramos, et al. (2020) all look at the life satisfaction of Latino immigrants in the United States. They all find high levels of life satisfaction in the immigrant communities they studied – Ramos, et al. (2017) and Ramos, et al. (2020) focused on the Midwest, but Calvo, et al. (2017) uses a nationally representative dataset. Life satisfaction for these Latino immigrants was high when they had high levels of social support, feelings of community and safety, good health, and were socially engaged. Life satisfaction was often lower when they experienced discrimination. Ramos, et al. (2017: 309) highlights sense of community (defined here as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together”) as an important predictor of life satisfaction. “Community” goes beyond merely inhabiting the same geographic space, but involves community participation, reciprocity, volunteering, and donating time

and resources to the common good. While Ramos, et al.'s (2017) study does not focus specifically on the experiences of Indigenous migrants, rather Mexican and Central American migrants more broadly, these are salient characteristics of many Indigenous communities in Mexico (Robson, et al., 2018).

It is true, however, that these immigrant communities often do experience significant challenges in their lives, even though they report high life satisfaction. Ramos, et al. (2020) argues that immigrants may use their home countries as a reference – they see their lives in the US as indeed being better than where they came from. This seems to show up in Calvo, et al.'s (2017) finding that older Latino immigrants have higher life satisfaction than comparable native-born Latino or non-Latino whites, even though the immigrants had the fewest socioeconomic resources – the immigrants may be comparing their lives to peers living in their home countries.

There are many ways to measure well-being and life satisfaction, ranging from judgements of life, such as a life evaluation, to judgments of feelings, like one's daily affect (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser, 2013). It's important to note that "life satisfaction" is not synonymous with "happiness", although the two measures are closely related. A common method of making a judgement of one's life, including in the LAPOP surveys, is the Cantril ladder. Respondents are asked to think of a ladder with rungs ranging from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. They are then asked to place themselves on this ladder where the bottom rung (zero) represents their worst possible life and the top rung (ten) represents their best possible life. Life judgments often show a close positive correlation with income, but they are not perfect correlates (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser, 2013).

Research on life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being have found notable geographic and regional differences. On various measures of happiness and well-being, Latin Americans consistently score higher, including when compared to countries in other world regions with similar levels of economic development. Indeed, Latin Americans report higher subjective well-being, despite

indicators that might otherwise show high levels of poor well-being and unhappiness, such as elevated rates of poverty, corruption, income inequality, and crime. Rojas (2018) argues this apparent disconnect between socioeconomic measures of development and the relatively high levels of happiness reported in Latin America is because commonly utilized indicators of development do not take into account most relevant determinants of people's well-being. While it is difficult to make generalizations about a singular "Latin American culture", Rojas (2018) points to the importance of interpersonal connections and strong family and community bonds across the region – attitudes that date to before colonial rule as an important element of many Indigenous communities. More than simply interpersonal connections, these relationships are noted as being especially warm and tight knit.

Indeed, Krysa, et al. (2022: 118) argue that our "emotional environment" – the emotions and feelings expressed by the people surrounding us in our daily lives – have a strong influence on our emotional well-being. A preference for the frequent expression of positive emotions like excitement and elation in many Latin American communities may be having a positive impact on measures of happiness across the region. In this study, for example, El Salvador ranked highly for its "positive societal emotional environment" (Krysa, et al., 2022; 122) where respondents reported they outwardly expressed positive emotions at least a couple times a day, as opposed to low-ranked countries where respondents expressed positive emotions a couple times a week. Countries that rank higher on the expression of emotion tend to have higher reported levels of happiness and well-being. While frequently experiencing positive emotions is an important indicator of individual well-being, so is infrequently experiencing negative emotions. While Latin American countries generally rank highly for their positive societal emotional environment, some (e.g., Guatemala) also have a high rank for their negative societal emotional environment (Krysa, et al., 2022). This indicates that many Latin



American societies may be more likely to outwardly express any emotion, positive or negative, although positive tends to outweigh the negative.

Ojeda and Piña-Watson (2013) explore the key predictors of life satisfaction for Latino day laborer men in the US, most of whom are undocumented. While they show that discrimination, particularly recent discrimination, has a significant negative impact on mental health, there are multiple positive factors that can help to mitigate some of these impacts. *Familismo*, spirituality, religion, and a strong connection to a higher power are also important in promoting mental health – spirituality can be an important coping mechanism for the trauma of (undocumented) migration, family separation, and discrimination (Ojeda and Piña Watson, 2013). For men in particular, employment and work have an impact on mental health. Being unemployed or not having a stable job can harm mental health because of a frequently rigid adherence to traditional gender roles that highlight men's role as the family's breadwinner.

Frequently absent or under discussed in analyses of life satisfaction is a nuanced discussion of race, ethnicity, and skin color. More specifically, indigeneity has often been neglected when discussing life satisfaction in Latin America, despite the significant social and cultural role indigeneity plays throughout the region (Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Taylor, 2013). The existing social, economic, and political marginalization of Indigenous people, combined with this gap in the literature, makes it compelling to explore the relationship between life satisfaction and experiences of discrimination.

#### **v. Racial and Ethnic Identification Challenges**

Given the focus on the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans in this chapter, it is important to recognize the challenges of capturing complete and representative data about them. The persistent negative discourses and stereotypes discussed in Chapter 2 influence not only how Indigenous people are seen and treated by others, but also the ways the Indigenous population view and present

themselves to non-Indigenous people. Indigenous Mexicans are sometimes embarrassed by their Indigenous heritage because indigeneity in Mexican society has come to be defined by lack or inability – for example, Indigenous Mexicans are defined by their inability to speak Spanish fluently, their lack of education, or their lack of “culture” as seen by outsiders to Indigenous communities. When indigeneity is defined through inability, Indigenous people can become ashamed of their heritage and traditions (Stephen, 2007). While any Indigenous person can have these feelings, they are particularly evident in young people where there is significant peer pressure to conform and abandon any markers of difference in an effort to fit into the mainstream. These feelings of shame can influence how one identifies themselves ethnically or culturally, especially to an outsider of their community. This reticence to identify outwardly as Indigenous has important implications for the collection of accurate and complete data about Indigenous communities in (e.g.) censuses or surveys where undercounting already occurs for many reasons (Huizar Murillo and Cerda, 2004).

Properly identifying Indigenous people in survey research can be challenging. The PERLA survey includes two types of racial identification: self-identification and identification by the interviewer. Collecting data on both measures is uncommon in survey research. When both are collected, it can expose inconsistencies in expressed and observed identity. In surveys where the respondent’s race is identified by the interviewer, Hill (2002: 104) critiques the notion that interviewers are “neutral and accurate recorders of objective information about respondents”. He finds the race of the interviewer matters when it comes to identifying the race of respondents – white interviewers classified black respondents’ skin color as being significantly darker compared to black interviewers. The opposite occurred with white respondents – black interviewers characterized their skin tone as being lighter than did white interviewers. Hill (2002) argues that these findings show the interviewers in this survey (both black and white) struggle to detect differences in the physical attributes of people belonging to another race. That is, people tend to recognize differences

within their own racial group better than with other groups – Hill (2002) points to the differences between “insiders” and “outsiders” in recognizing subtle physical and phenotypical differences. This points to the challenges of relying on racial and ethnic identification by others in survey data.

The issue of racial misclassification by observers, including in surveys and censuses, is significant. Campbell and Troyer (2007) argue that people who identify as members of one racial/ethnic group, but are also frequently misidentified as being part of another racial/ethnic group, are more likely to experience multiple indicators of psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts, and increased use of counseling services. This psychological distress is also more common when being misclassified as part of a lower-status, rather than higher-status, racial group since lower-status racial groups are more likely to experience discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion (Campbell and Troyer, 2007). With multiracial identification becoming more common in recent decades and national censuses and surveys increasingly allowing for people to identify their multiracial heritage, the resulting racial heterogeneity may make the issue of racial misclassification more apparent. This concern is lessened somewhat in the PERLA dataset used in this chapter since it captures both self-identification and external classification by the interviewer, so potential inconsistencies between the two measures can be seen. Broadly speaking, however, it is important to remember that everybody experiences race differently, even those who check the same box on a survey, so racial self-classification by itself cannot tell us how a person is socially perceived or how they perceive other people’s treatment of them. Interpersonal discrimination is based on external classification by others and perceptions of discrimination are based in part on the combination of self-identification and external classification – these multiple dimensions of racial identity highlight the complexity of understanding the psychological impacts of discrimination.

Campbell and Troyer (2007) describe three dimensions of racial identity: (1) internal (the identity we ascribe to ourselves), (2) expressed (how we explain our identities to others), and (3)

observed (the identity ascribed to us by others based on our outward appearance). The constant need to explain one's racial identity to others can cause people to change their expressed identity to fit in to "standard" racial categories which causes further internal conflict.

Although Campbell and Troyer (2007) focus their research on Indigenous people in the United States, their analysis can help with understanding how these processes of misclassification impact Indigenous Mexicans, given a common history of erasure and societal invisibility, particularly in urban communities and other locations where they are seen as "outsiders" in spaces they are not expected to live in. Research on racial misclassification complicates our understanding of racial categorization in censuses and surveys and highlights the limitations of these data, particularly when considering the distinction between self-identification and identification by others. Even more complicated are the boundaries between "internal" and "expressed" identity which cannot be properly measured through censuses and surveys and is even challenging to capture through interviews.

Cheng and Powell (2011) point out the limitations of Campbell and Troyer's (2007) research on racial misclassification and argue that much of the "misclassification" they found is due to changes in questions and response choices and corresponding inconsistencies in respondents' self-identifications across survey waves. Nonetheless, these issues further underscore the challenges of accurately capturing ethnoracial identity in survey data, particularly across time, given that identity can both be fluid and constrained by the available options in surveys.

There can be challenges with self-identification as well, especially surrounding the fluidity of racial and ethnic identity. Telles and Paschel (2014) classify four kinds of racial fluidity: temporal, contextual, referential, and categorical. In other words, racial identity can vary (1) across time, (2) across contexts or conditions, (3) based on ambiguity about who fits into which racial categories,

and (4) due to uncertainty about where one is situated among shifting racial boundaries, particularly for mixed race people who may struggle to navigate the fluidity of racial classification.

Specific geographic, historical, and social contexts and conditions mean each Latin American country has their own understandings of race, skin color, identification, and classification. Telles and Paschel (2014) illustrate this in their study of four Latin American countries (Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Panama). While they find that interviewer-reported skin color is the most significant predictor of racial self-identification, the relationship varies between countries. For example, 50% of Dominicans and 90% of Colombians with the darkest skin tones identified as black, illustrating the spectrum of racial identification in the region.

Telles and Paschel (2014) use Roth's (2012) concept of *racial schemas* to understand these patterns in racial classification. Roth (2012) defines a racial schema as a set of racial categories and the rules on how to apply them. She uses the idea to make sense of the experiences of Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants to the mainland United States regarding issues of race and identity and argues that these migrants take advantage of schemas from both their origin and destination communities to strategically "perform" race and place themselves at different levels of the racial hierarchy as their physical appearance and situational context allows. This strategic deployment of racial identity and meaning highlights the influence on the migration process in making sense of the fluidity of racial and ethnic identities. Telles and Paschel (2014) pull from Roth's (2012) discussion of racial and ethnic fluidity to understand the variations in racial classification across Latin America. Indeed, Telles and Paschel (2014) argue that each of the countries they study has a unique racial schema. While each country's racial schema is strongly influenced by skin color and phenotype, each one is also impacted by class, the presence (or relative absence) of racially mixed categories or a *mestizaje* ideology, and the amount of racial fluidity in their societies.

Flores and Sulmont (2021) offer one example of racial/ethnic fluidity when they explore the ways that social policy may influence Indigenous self-identification in Mexico. Specifically, they focus on how race-conscious policies, which provide resources and benefits to Indigenous people, might lead some to identify as Indigenous when they otherwise would not, reflecting the possibility of identity changing across contexts or conditions, using Telles and Paschel's (2014) classification of racial fluidity. This research was conducted in part as a response to critics of ethnic-based redistributive policies who argued that these programs incentivized people to identify as Indigenous. They used a survey experiment question where respondents were asked the same question about whether they identified as Indigenous, but the question was prefaced by one of two randomly chosen short explanatory paragraphs. One paragraph was neutral, merely mentioning the existence of different Indigenous groups in Mexico, while the second paragraph highlighted the special programs and material benefits afforded to Indigenous people, such as food aid, health assistance, scholarships, and community funding. Given that additional information, the likelihood of identifying as Indigenous decreases, potentially due to the stigma around relying on social and economic assistance (Flores and Sulmont, 2021). When considering the existing stigmatization of Indigenous people in Mexico, it appears the benefits provided by state programs do not outweigh the stigma of being viewed as "needy" or "dependent" on the state – a stereotype of Indigenous people. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these negative perceptions of Indigenous people do real damage in terms of feelings of self-worth and self-esteem and the maintenance of cultural heritage. This research further adds to our understanding about self-identification, ethnic boundaries, and fluidity, particularly in terms of making sense of the factors that could motivate or disincentivize people to self-identify in different ways depending on the context and the perceived benefits or consequences.

Indeed, the fluidity of racial identification and classification is key to understand, particularly in making sense of the complex ways race and ethnicity are perceived differently in the US and Latin America. Davenport (2020) contrasts these two geographic contexts by arguing that racial identity in the US has traditionally been viewed as fixed and unmalleable and determined solely by ancestry, while racial identity in parts of Latin America has broadly been defined by fluid and unstable classification boundaries and a strong belief in racial mixture (*mestizaje*). However, she further argues that these traditional understandings of racial identity and classification are changing as racial identity in the US becomes more fluid and contextually dependent, while in Latin America, racial classification boundaries are becoming more fixed. Of course, for many Americans, their racial identity is relatively fixed and stable – Davenport (2020) identifies Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Latinos as being more likely to have fluid and malleable racial identities, particularly because these communities may have increased rates of racial mixture and identities constructed around culture and language instead of ancestry and skin color. To add evidence to this, only about one-third of people who identified as Native American in either the 2000 or 2010 census identified their race consistently across the two censuses and only about 40% of those who identified ethnically as Latino identified their race consistently in 2000 and 2010 (Davenport, 2020). These inconsistencies further highlight the ways that the usual racial categories used in surveys can serve to obscure our understanding of racial and ethnic diversity.

While the PERLA dataset is not longitudinal and does not allow us to compare self-identification of respondents over time, its use of both a self-identification and an external classification measure does allow for an exploration of expressed and observed racial identities (but not necessarily respondents' internal racial identities). This is nonetheless more information on racial identity than usually provided since most surveys only measure expressed or observed identities, not both. The issues of misclassification, fluidity, and the multiple dimensions of racial identity identified

in this section do complicate any research related to ethnoracial identity and, by extension, research on discrimination, perceived or otherwise. While the social exclusion and discrimination against Indigenous peoples could decrease the number of people who outwardly express their Indigenous self-identification, the PERLA dataset from Mexico does include an Indigenous oversample of 500 respondents, beyond the original sample of 1000 respondents. Fluidity in racial identity may also impact how people perceive discrimination – they may attribute the discrimination to other non-racial factors – or whether they decide to report it in a survey in the first place.

Despite the wealth of research described in this chapter that address various dimensions of discrimination, there remain important gaps, particularly relating to the witnessing of discrimination and perceptions of discrimination in certain sites and situations in Mexico, like in public places or in police encounters. This chapter helps to fill those specific gaps, but also locates the themes discussed so far within a broader framing of the attitudes and opinions about race and racial difference discussed in Chapter 2. In focusing on the differences between lived experiences of discrimination addressed in this chapter and the beliefs explored in the previous chapter, I contribute to the literature on discrimination in Mexico a stronger understanding of the relationship between perceived discrimination and the dominant attitudes that may contribute to that discrimination.



### III. Data and Methods

This chapter uses the same two datasets used in Chapter 2 – 2010 data from LAPOP and PERLA – and the same methodological approach. For a more detailed description of these datasets and methodology, refer to pages 36 to 39 in the previous chapter. While there is some overlap in the questions in LAPOP and PERLA, the additional sample is expected to validate the findings of the other sample, given that both surveys are nationally representative and were conducted in the same period. In a case where results are significantly different between surveys, there is an opportunity to explore the survey design more carefully to understand why these differences might exist.

The LAPOP and PERLA surveys overlap primarily on questions relating to witnessing and experiencing discrimination based on certain identities (i.e., skin color, class, and language). The LAPOP survey, however, also adds the important dimension of gender- and sex-based discrimination. PERLA is unique in asking questions about the sites and situations where perceived discrimination took place, while LAPOP adds questions on life satisfaction and life evaluation, which will be explored as potential outcomes of discrimination.

As in Chapter 2, this research uses multiple regression to model the relationship between the dependent variables (listed in table 3.1) and key demographic predictor variables (listed in table 3.2). Given that the responses for most of the dependent variables are offered as ordered categories (e.g., very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied), I use ordered logistic regression models. While the default output gives regression coefficients, I instead compute odds ratios which provide the odds of a particular outcome for a specific group if all other variables are held constant. Specific reference groups (marked by \* in table 3.2) are included for the predictor variables for ease of analysis and comparison.

Given this chapter's focus on perceptions of discrimination by marginalized groups, I also include regression models that use interaction terms to help make sense of the role of

intersectionality in the outcomes. The application of an intersectional lens has been relatively uncommon in quantitative research, although its use has been increasing over the past decade, particularly in public health and epidemiology studies (Bauer, et al., 2021). In the past, quantitative methods have been critiqued as being inadequate and incompatible with feminist approaches, but there is increasingly a strong defense of these methods in the literature (Scott, 2010; Bauer, et al., 2021). Scott (2010) highlights the importance of “inter-categorical” quantitative analysis because it sheds light on the ways different dimensions of inequality and discrimination interact with each other. In an assessment of the use of regression analysis to explore intersectionality, Scott and Siltanen (2017) find multiple regression to be widely accepted as an appropriate quantitative method. Most commonly, interaction terms between multiple identities or social positions are used in regression analysis and allows us to see how the effects of those identities vary between different intersections (Bauer, et al., 2021). Interaction terms are necessary because they show us the multiplicative, rather than additive, effects of multiple independent variables (e.g., gender and geographical location) on an outcome. This approach helps to capture how marginalized identities and social positions can compound each other.

Table 3.1: Dependent Variables for Chapter 3

Category	Question	Response Choices
<p><b>Skin Color</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Impact of Skin Color on Life:</b> How has your skin color affected your life? Positively, negatively, or not at all?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Positively:</b> 9.04%</li> <li>● <b>Not at all:</b> 83.60%</li> <li>● <b>Negatively:</b> 7.35%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Witnessing Discrimination</b></p>	<p>Have you witnessed situations in which another person has been discriminated against, treated badly or unfairly because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Witnessed Skin Color Discrimination:</b> Their skin color</li>   <li>● <b>LAPOP - Witnessed Skin Color Discrimination:</b> Their skin color</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Witnessed Class Discrimination:</b> Their economic situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Never:</b> 44.88%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 18.02%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 26.86%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 10.25%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 45.92%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 16.98%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 25.98%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 11.13%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 34.83%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 17.99%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 30.54%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 16.64%</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP - Witnessed Class Discrimination:</b> Their economic situation</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Witnessed Linguistic Discrimination:</b> Speaking an Indigenous language</li>   <li>● <b>LAPOP - Witnessed Linguistic Discrimination:</b> Their accent or way they speak</li>   <li>● <b>LAPOP - Witnessed Gender- or Sex-Based Discrimination:</b> Their gender or sex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Never:</b> 35.30%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 19.38%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 27.21%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 18.10%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 43.60%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 16.31%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 25.27%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 14.82%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 41.66%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 18.16%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 27.79%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 12.39%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 52.28%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 16.33%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 19.94%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 11.45%</li> </ul>
<b>Experiencing Discrimination</b>	<p>In the last five years, have you ever felt discriminated against or been treated badly or unfairly because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Skin Color Discrimination:</b> Your skin color</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Never:</b> 83.56%</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAIPOP – Perceived Skin Color</b> <b>Discrimination:</b> Your skin color</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Economic</b> <b>Discrimination:</b> Your economic situation</li>   <li>● <b>LAIPOP – Perceived Economic</b> <b>Discrimination:</b> Your economic situation</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Linguistic</b> <b>Discrimination:</b> Your manner of speaking or accent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 8.96%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 5.48%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 2.01%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 86.09%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 7.18%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 5.45%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.28%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 67.49%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 14.95%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 14.81%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 2.75%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 70.03%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 14.31%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 13.09%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 2.57%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 76.06%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 10.66%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 10.26%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 3.02%</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP – Perceived Linguistic Discrimination:</b> The way you speak or your accent</li>   <li>● <b>LAPOP – Perceived Gender- or Sex-Based Discrimination:</b> Your gender or sex?</li>   <p>In the last 5 years at some point you have felt discriminated against or treated unfairly because of your skin color in the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Discrimination in the Labor Market:</b> When looking for work in a company or business</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Discrimination in Public Places:</b> In public places (such as in the street, squares, shopping centers or market)</li> </ul> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Never:</b> 91.01%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 4.24%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 3.47%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.28%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 83.95%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 7.64%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 6.74%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.67%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 79.74%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 8.75%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 9.03%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 2.48%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 84.98%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 7.91%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 5.57%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.54%</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Discrimination by Police:</b> In encounters with the police</li>   <li>● <b>PERLA - Perceived Discrimination in Health Care Settings:</b> In health centers, clinics, or hospitals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Never:</b> 86.61%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 6.08%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 5.87%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.43%</li>   <li>● <b>Never:</b> 84.46%</li> <li>● <b>Few times:</b> 7.64%</li> <li>● <b>Some times:</b> 6.70%</li> <li>● <b>Many times:</b> 1.21%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Satisfaction with Life</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>LAPOP - Life Satisfaction:</b> How satisfied are you with your life?</li>   <li>● <b>LAPOP - Life Evaluation:</b> Here is a ladder with steps numbered 0 to 10. 0 is the lowest step and represents the worst possible life for you. 10 is the highest step and represents the best life possible for you. On what step of the ladder do you feel <b>at this moment</b>?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Very dissatisfied:</b> 2.83%</li> <li>● <b>Somewhat dissatisfied:</b> 10.22%</li> <li>● <b>Somewhat satisfied:</b> 44.34%</li> <li>● <b>Very satisfied:</b> 42.61%</li>   <li>● <b>Mean:</b> 6.16, <b>standard error:</b> 0.077</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2: Predictor Variables for Chapter 3**  
(\* Reference groups)

		<b>LAPOP</b>	<b>PERLA</b>
<b>Skin color (identified by interviewer)</b>	LAPOP: 1 (lighter) – 9 (darker) PERLA: 1 (lighter) – 10 (darker)  Collapsed into three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White* (1 – 2)</li> <li>• Light brown (3 – 4)</li> <li>• Dark brown (5+)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.12, <b>standard error:</b> 0.074</li> <li>• <b>White (1 – 2):</b> 13.45%</li> <li>• <b>Light brown (3 – 4):</b> 49.52%</li> <li>• <b>Dark brown (5+):</b> 37.03%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.65, <b>standard error:</b> 0.075</li> <li>• <b>White (1 – 2):</b> 4.02%</li> <li>• <b>Light brown (3 – 4):</b> 43.91%</li> <li>• <b>Dark brown (5+):</b> 52.07%</li> </ul>
<b>Racial/ethnic identity (self-identification)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mestiza</i>*</li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Indigenous</li> <li>• Black</li> <li>• <i>Mulata</i></li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Mestiza</i>:</b> 72.84%</li> <li>• <b>White:</b> 17.01%</li> <li>• <b>Indigenous:</b> 5.69%</li> <li>• <b>Black:</b> 1.17%</li> <li>• <b><i>Mulata</i>:</b> 1.17%</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> 2.13%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Mestiza</i>:</b> 51.89%</li> <li>• <b>White:</b> 10.63%</li> <li>• <b>Indigenous:</b> 29.02%</li> <li>• <b>Black:</b> 1.33%</li> <li>• <b><i>Mulata</i>:</b> 1.82%</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> 5.31%</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	LAPOP: 18 – 87 PERLA: 18 – 91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 39.42, <b>standard error:</b> 0.230</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 40.59, <b>standard error:</b> 0.325</li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men*</li> <li>• Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Men:</b> 49.74%</li> <li>• <b>Women:</b> 50.26%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Men:</b> 49.20%</li> <li>• <b>Women:</b> 50.80%</li> </ul>
<b>Educational attainment</b>	0 – 18 years  Collapsed into five categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than primary* (0 – 5 years)</li> <li>• Primary (6 – 8 years)</li> <li>• Intermediate (9 – 11 years)</li> <li>• Secondary (12 – 15 years)</li> <li>• University+ (16+ years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 8.95, <b>standard error:</b> 0.169</li> <li>• <b>Less than primary (0 – 5 years):</b> 17.77%</li> <li>• <b>Primary (6 – 8 years):</b> 19.76%</li> <li>• <b>Intermediate (9 – 11 years):</b> 30.47%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 7.80, <b>standard error:</b> 0.211</li> <li>• <b>Less than primary (0 – 5 years):</b> 27.55%</li> <li>• <b>Primary (6 – 8 years):</b> 22.62%</li> <li>• <b>Intermediate (9 – 11</b></li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary (12 – 15 years):</b> 21.94%</li> <li>• <b>University+ (16+ years):</b> 10.07%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>years):</b> 24.68%</li> <li>• <b>Secondary (12 – 15 years):</b> 17.88%</li> <li>• <b>University+ (16+ years):</b> 7.27%</li> </ul>
<b>Region<sup>3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central*</li> <li>• North</li> <li>• Central-West</li> <li>• South</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Central:</b> 33.16%</li> <li>• <b>North:</b> 22.28%</li> <li>• <b>Central-West:</b> 23.05%</li> <li>• <b>South:</b> 21.51%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Central:</b> 13.33%</li> <li>• <b>North:</b> 22.00%</li> <li>• <b>Central-West:</b> 26.00%</li> <li>• <b>South:</b> 38.67%</li> </ul>
<b>Urban/rural<sup>4</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban*</li> <li>• Rural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urban:</b> 79.00%</li> <li>• <b>Rural:</b> 21.00%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urban:</b> 63.67%</li> <li>• <b>Rural:</b> 36.33%</li> </ul>
<b>Household income (monthly in pesos)</b>	<p>LAPOP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0*</li> <li>• 1: 1 – 800</li> <li>• 2: 801 – 1600</li> <li>• 3: 1601 – 2400</li> <li>• 4: 2401 – 3200</li> <li>• 5: 3201 – 4000</li> <li>• 6: 4001 – 5400</li> <li>• 7: 5401 – 6800</li> <li>• 8: 6801 – 10000</li> <li>• 9: 10001 – 13500</li> <li>• 10: 13501+</li> </ul> <p>PERLA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 – 54,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4.284 (2401 – 3200), <b>standard error:</b> 2.478</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 4,243.39, <b>standard error:</b> 199.081</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> **Central:** Distrito Federal, Hidalgo, México, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala

**North:** Baja California, Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas

**Central-West:** Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas

**South:** Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, Yucatán

<sup>4</sup> Based on the INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography) definition: communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants are considered 'rural'

<p><b>Economic Situation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Very bad*</li> <li>● Bad</li> <li>● Neither good nor bad</li> <li>● Good</li> <li>● Very good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Very bad:</b> 5.02%</li> <li>● <b>Bad:</b> 23.54%</li> <li>● <b>Neither good nor bad:</b> 52.54%</li> <li>● <b>Good:</b> 17.94%</li> <li>● <b>Very good:</b> 0.96%</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p>
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## **IV. Results and Discussion**

### **i. Witnessing Discrimination**

This set of questions asks respondents about situations where they have seen somebody being discriminated against, or treated badly or unfairly because of their skin color, economic situation, sex or gender, or use of an Indigenous language. Where people may be hesitant to report their own experiences with discrimination (see, for example, Dixon's (2019) argument that lower than expected reports of discrimination may reflect people's trauma and unwillingness to recall that experience), they may be more likely to report witnessing discrimination that was not targeted at them. Looking at discrimination from this angle may allow us to learn more about the ways people see or are aware of different forms of discrimination.

Exploring differences in experiences with discrimination by geography was one focus of this chapter. There are certainly regional differences in where people are less likely to witness each type of discrimination, as seen in Tables 3.3 and 3.4, but these differences are not consistent between datasets. For example, people in central-western Mexico are less likely to witness discrimination in the LAPOP survey, while the same is true for people in northern Mexico in the PERLA survey. These patterns are consistent within each survey and both surveys sampled approximately the same proportion of people from northern and central-western Mexico. Looking at differences between rural and urban respondents offers another geographical perspective. People in urban areas were significantly more likely to have witnessed all types of discrimination, except gender discrimination, compared to people living in rural communities. Living in a city may simply mean there are more interpersonal encounters and, thus, more opportunities for people to witness discrimination.

Other key predictors of witnessing discrimination include educational attainment and racial/ethnic identity. People with more education have significantly higher odds of saying they have

Table 3.3: Odds Ratios of Variables on Witnessing Discrimination

	Witnessing Skin Color Discrimination (LAPOP)		Witnessing Skin Color Discrimination (PERLA)		Witnessing Economic Discrimination (LAPOP)		Witnessing Economic Discrimination (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)							
	Light Brown	0.937	0.932	1.009	1.067			
		(0.155)	(0.292)	(0.179)	(0.410)			
	Dark Brown	0.898	0.861	1.115	0.905			
		(0.151)	(0.278)	(0.195)	(0.356)			
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)							
	White	0.767*	0.978	0.688**	0.687*			
		(0.121)	(0.196)	(0.107)	(0.132)			
	Indigenous	0.823	0.964	1.115	1.019			
		(0.205)	(0.157)	(0.219)	(0.150)			
	Black	0.301	0.781	1.096	0.570			
		(0.249)	(0.507)	(0.610)	(0.294)			
	<i>Mulata</i>	2.026	1.495	1.117	0.687			
		(1.122)	(0.526)	(0.476)	(0.282)			
	Other	0.550*	0.892	0.459**	0.741			
	(0.173)	(0.256)	(0.168)	(0.172)				
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)							
	Women	0.858	0.943	0.988	1.004	0.947		
		(0.0907)	(0.116)	(0.100)	(0.108)	(0.0980)		
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)							
	Primary	1.223	1.051	1.048	0.980	1.024		
		(0.266)	(0.189)	(0.190)	(0.164)	(0.171)		
	Intermediate	1.775***	1.760***	1.923***	1.786***	1.854***		
			1.824***	1.925***	1.786***	1.854***		

		(0.371)	(0.362)	(0.361)	(0.350)	(0.373)	(0.334)	(0.349)	(0.337)
	Secondary	1.883*** (0.425)	1.995*** (0.430)	2.336*** (0.531)	2.382*** (0.516)	1.954*** (0.366)	2.046*** (0.362)	1.916*** (0.385)	1.992*** (0.374)
	University+	2.701*** (0.640)	2.867*** (0.661)	1.915** (0.576)	1.952** (0.558)	2.443*** (0.590)	2.516*** (0.582)	2.186*** (0.497)	2.265*** (0.502)
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)								
	North	0.814 (0.198)	0.788 (0.182)	0.601* (0.156)	0.597** (0.148)	1.043 (0.226)	0.983 (0.202)	0.612* (0.180)	0.612* (0.175)
	Central-West	0.638** (0.122)	0.656** (0.121)	0.905 (0.187)	0.861 (0.174)	0.524*** (0.101)	0.567*** (0.106)	0.907 (0.165)	0.892 (0.156)
	South	0.804 (0.165)	0.765 (0.156)	0.759 (0.147)	0.734 (0.139)	0.968 (0.175)	0.916 (0.160)	0.572*** (0.106)	0.601*** (0.103)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)								
	Urban	1.524** (0.293)	1.500** (0.278)	1.448** (0.259)	1.443** (0.250)	1.469** (0.223)	1.399** (0.199)	1.436** (0.221)	1.431** (0.211)
<b>Economic Situation</b>	Very bad (base)								
	Bad	0.437*** (0.119)	0.432*** (0.111)			0.660* (0.165)	0.597** (0.133)		
	Neither good nor bad	0.385*** (0.104)	0.372*** (0.0927)			0.490*** (0.115)	0.453*** (0.0927)		
	Good	0.369*** (0.112)	0.351*** (0.100)			0.445*** (0.118)	0.401*** (0.0971)		
	Very good	0.753 (0.517)	0.535 (0.348)			0.491 (0.304)	0.272* (0.187)		
<b>Observations</b>		1,296	1,376	1,164	1,206	1,299	1,379	1,162	1,204

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 3.4: Odds Ratios of Variables on Witnessing Discrimination**

		Witnessing Linguistic Discrimination (LAPOP)		Witnessing Linguistic Discrimination (PERLA)		Witnessing Gender Discrimination (LAPOP)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)						
	Light Brown		0.975		0.874		1.283
			(0.181)		(0.290)		(0.214)
	Dark Brown		1.086		0.793		1.341*
			(0.201)		(0.286)		(0.224)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)						
	White	0.624***		0.792		0.638***	
		(0.105)		(0.143)		(0.104)	
	Indigenous	1.114		1.473***		1.233	
		(0.251)		(0.204)		(0.245)	
	Black	0.553		0.246**		0.512	
		(0.255)		(0.164)		(0.220)	
	<i>Mulata</i>	2.472***		1.221		2.579*	
	(0.773)		(0.424)		(1.425)		
	Other	0.421**		0.987		0.387**	
		(0.150)		(0.264)		(0.163)	
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)						
	Women	0.873	0.838	0.916	0.880	1.007	0.971
		(0.0963)	(0.0913)	(0.112)	(0.103)	(0.106)	(0.105)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)						
	Primary	1.176	1.261	1.273	1.241	1.059	1.175
		(0.216)	(0.231)	(0.201)	(0.199)	(0.193)	(0.210)
	Intermediate	1.595**	1.690***	1.901***	1.760***	1.449*	1.670***
		(0.315)	(0.320)	(0.356)	(0.325)	(0.275)	(0.305)
	Secondary	1.499*	1.700**	1.918***	1.767***	1.742**	2.042***
		(0.320)	(0.360)	(0.377)	(0.337)	(0.397)	(0.440)
University+	2.115***	2.314***	2.096***	1.949***	2.214***	2.573***	
	(0.509)	(0.555)	(0.535)	(0.486)	(0.557)	(0.626)	
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)						
	North	0.908	0.866	0.484***	0.471***	0.969	0.919
		(0.221)	(0.194)	(0.115)	(0.111)	(0.249)	(0.220)
	Central-West	0.529***	0.531***	1.036	1.014	0.586***	0.589***
		(0.0954)	(0.0940)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.115)	(0.112)
	South	0.841	0.780	0.917	1.010	0.926	0.864
		(0.154)	(0.137)	(0.184)	(0.193)	(0.192)	(0.162)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)						

	Urban	1.429**	1.404**	1.672***	1.554***	1.282	1.219
		(0.227)	(0.207)	(0.250)	(0.240)	(0.236)	(0.199)
<b>Economic Situation</b>	Very bad (base)						
	Bad	0.525***	0.476***			0.994	0.789
		(0.117)	(0.109)			(0.239)	(0.195)
	Neither good nor bad	0.474***	0.439***			0.761	0.624*
		(0.101)	(0.0954)			(0.184)	(0.153)
	Good	0.462***	0.411***			0.706	0.566**
		(0.119)	(0.106)			(0.190)	(0.154)
	Very good	0.447	0.311			1.382	1.111
		(0.335)	(0.221)			(1.034)	(0.672)
<b>Observations</b>		1,300	1,379	1,155	1,197	1,298	1,377

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

frequently witnessed discrimination, regardless of the type. Does this mean people with more education are more likely to be in sites and situations where discrimination is more likely to occur? Not necessarily – it seems more plausible that people with higher education may have increased knowledge of the many forms discrimination can take. The frequency of witnessing discrimination is associated with the ability to recognize discrimination when it occurs. Identifying as white is often associated with significantly lower odds of frequently witnessing any of the forms of discrimination. It's less clear, however, whether this reflects a lower ability for this group to recognize discrimination when it happens.

#### a) Witnessing Skin Color Discrimination

I now focus on each example of witnessing discrimination individually. Beginning with skin color discrimination, the results in Table 3.3 show that people with higher educational attainment (intermediate and above) have significantly higher odds (more than twice as high) of witnessing this

type of discrimination very frequently than respondents with lower levels of education. This finding is consistent in both the LAPOP and PERLA datasets.

Geographically, people in urban areas of Mexico are also more likely to witness this type of discrimination – the odds are about 50% higher compared to people in rural Mexico. Other variables including racial and ethnic identity and skin color do not appear to influence the likelihood of frequently witnessing skin color discrimination. In terms of regional differences, PERLA and LAPOP offer different results as Table 3.3 shows. In the LAPOP survey, people in central-western Mexico were least likely to have witnessed skin color discrimination, while in the PERLA survey, respondents in northern Mexico were the least likely. This is even though both surveys use the same regional definitions.

LAPOP also offers an interesting finding related to respondents' self-described economic situations. People with “very bad” economic situations are significantly more likely to say they've witnessed skin color discrimination compared to respondents with better economic situations.

### **b) Witnessing Economic Discrimination**

Frequently witnessing economic discrimination is again most likely for people with at least an intermediate education – the odds for them are 75% to 100% higher than for people with lower levels of education. As seen in Table 3.3, seeing this type of discrimination is also significantly more likely for people in urban communities in Mexico where the odds are about 40% to 45% higher than for people living in rural communities. Similarly, in the PERLA dataset, people living in southern Mexico have significantly lower odds of witnessing this discrimination frequently compared with people living in other regions. In the LAPOP survey, it is people living in central-western Mexico that are least likely to witness economic discrimination.



In terms of race, ethnicity, and skin color, it is significantly less likely that a person identifying as white would say they have witnessed economic discrimination many times – they are about 30% less likely than *mestizos* to report this. People belonging to other racial and ethnic groups do not have significantly different odds than the dominant *mestizo* group. Skin color is also not a significant predictor – people of all skin colors have about the same likelihood of witnessing economic discrimination.

### c) Witnessing Linguistic Discrimination

The third example of witnessing discrimination in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys is related to language. The two surveys frame this question differently – LAPOP asks about discrimination caused by a person’s accent or the way they speak; PERLA asks directly about discrimination of people speaking an Indigenous language. The results in Table 3.4 show that educational attainment is a clear predictor of witnessing linguistic discrimination. People with at least an intermediate education are nearly twice as likely to report seeing this kind of discrimination compared to people with less than a primary education.

In the LAPOP survey, white people are about 40% less likely than *mestizos* to say they have witnessed linguistic discrimination, while people identifying as *mulata* are significantly more likely to say so – more than double the odds of *mestizos*. In the PERLA framing of this question, it is not surprising that Indigenous people are significantly more likely to have witnessed somebody being discriminated against for speaking an Indigenous language.

There is also evidence of geographic differences in terms of the likelihood of witnessing linguistic discrimination. In the PERLA survey, people in northern Mexico are about 50% less likely to witness linguistic discrimination compared to people in central Mexico – likely linked to the fact that there are fewer Indigenous language speakers in northern Mexico. The LAPOP survey reports a

similar pattern for people living in central-western Mexico. People living in southern Mexico, where there are larger numbers of Indigenous language speakers, are not significantly more or less likely to witness linguistic discrimination compared with people in central Mexico. Going along with this finding, urban residents are more likely than rural residents to see this type of discrimination.

The LAPOP data show that people with better economic situations are significantly less likely to witness linguistic discrimination compared to people with “very bad” economic situations.

#### **d) Witnessing Gender Discrimination**

In terms of gender discrimination, LAPOP is the only survey that addresses this form of discrimination. The results in Table 3.4 show that witnessing gender discrimination is most clearly predicted by educational attainment. In particular, people with intermediate education or above are significantly more likely to say they have witnessed gender discrimination than people with less than a primary education. In terms of race and ethnicity, people who identify as white are significantly less likely to have witnessed gender discrimination – their odds of doing so are about 40% less than for *mestizos*. Similar to other questions about witnessing discrimination, people in central-western Mexico are significantly less likely to report seeing gender discrimination. There is some evidence that people with the highest income levels are more likely to witness gender discrimination than people with the lowest incomes. Women are not any more likely than men to say they have witnessed gender discrimination.

#### **ii. Impact of Skin Color on Life**

As I move from discussing the witnessing of discrimination to actual experiences of discrimination, it is relevant to look at how people broadly perceive their skin color has impacted their lives (whether positively, negatively, or not all). Unsurprisingly, people with darker skin colors are

significantly more likely to say that skin color has had a negative impact on their lives as seen in Table 3.5. Respondents with light brown skin tones were nearly three times more likely and respondents with dark brown skin tones were 3.6 times more likely than white people to say skin color had a negative impact on their lives.

This finding is interesting given that, in a question in Chapter 2, people with darker skin colors did not have higher odds of saying people with brown skin were treated worse than people with white skin, but here it seems very clear that skin color has had negative impacts for people with darker skin. While the two questions can be interpreted differently, the disconnect in the results between the questions highlights the difference between individual and group experiences. “How has skin color affected *your* life?” (emphasis mine) is more personal than “do you think that people with brown skin are treated the same, better, or worse than people with white skin?”. People may be feeling individually targeted for their skin color and thinking more about interpersonal experiences of skin color discrimination and thinking less about the broader treatment of people of color.

Additionally, educational attainment was strong predictor of responses to this question. People with a college education were significantly less likely to say that skin color had a negative impact on their lives, showing there may be some status-related factor that protects people from feeling that skin color has had a negative impact on their lives. However, household income did not predict people’s responses to this question.

### **iii. Experiencing Discrimination**

This set of questions asks respondents about situations where they have felt discriminated against in the past five years. Perhaps different from witnessing discrimination, people may be more hesitant to report their own experiences being the target of discrimination, possibly not wanting to relive the traumatic experience or wanting to downplay the experience as being something other than

Table 3.5: Odds Ratios of Variables on Experiencing Discrimination

Skin Color	Impact of Skin Color on Life (PERLA)	Skin Color Discrimination (LAPOP)		Skin Color Discrimination (PERLA)		Economic Discrimination (LAPOP)	Economic Discrimination (PERLA)
White (base)							
Light Brown	2.850***		1.681*	0.638		1.007	1.224
	(1.114)		(0.454)	(0.223)		(0.234)	(0.456)
Dark Brown	3.592***		2.877***	1.097		1.403	1.331
	(1.510)		(0.840)	(0.371)		(0.320)	(0.519)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>							
<i>Mestizo</i> (base)							
White	1.008	0.400***		0.752		0.740	0.823
	(0.275)	(0.111)		(0.199)		(0.139)	(0.177)
Indigenous	1.035	1.836*		1.480		1.882**	0.981
	(0.280)	(0.571)		(0.383)		(0.509)	(0.176)
Black	2.346	0.848		1.517		1.494	0.555
	(1.363)	(0.700)		(1.166)		(0.760)	(0.423)
<i>Mulata</i>	1.914	4.372**		2.192**		1.219	0.718
	(0.995)	(2.745)		(0.834)		(0.707)	(0.297)
Other	0.764	1.019		0.700		0.768	0.492**
	(0.265)	(0.452)		(0.305)		(0.373)	(0.168)
<b>Gender</b>							
Men (base)							
Women	1.095	0.827	0.817	0.918	0.944	0.955	1.050
	(0.185)	(0.181)	(0.134)	(0.146)	(0.152)	(0.113)	(0.109)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>							
<Primary (base)							
Primary	0.770	0.795	1.491	1.002	1.017	0.825	0.934
	(0.216)	(0.192)	(0.426)	(0.196)	(0.194)	(0.187)	(0.168)
Intermediate	0.628*	0.661*	1.186	0.947	0.941	0.744	1.151
						0.813	1.184

	(0.165)	(0.142)	(0.294)	(0.316)	(0.245)	(0.226)	(0.159)	(0.167)	(0.239)	(0.239)
Secondary	0.709 (0.239)	0.728 (0.217)	0.787 (0.264)	0.980 (0.321)	1.214 (0.333)	1.187 (0.305)	0.656* (0.144)	0.748 (0.160)	1.016 (0.236)	1.026 (0.231)
University+	0.406** (0.166)	0.426** (0.166)	1.144 (0.402)	1.587 (0.539)	1.887** (0.522)	1.932** (0.514)	0.611* (0.175)	0.745 (0.215)	1.290 (0.362)	1.352 (0.362)
<b>Region</b>										
Central (base)										
North	0.929 (0.266)	0.971 (0.267)	0.879 (0.292)	0.843 (0.244)	1.311 (0.353)	1.326 (0.353)	0.853 (0.208)	0.800 (0.188)	0.750 (0.254)	0.771 (0.257)
Central-West	0.930 (0.251)	0.885 (0.224)	0.486*** (0.125)	0.465*** (0.122)	1.057 (0.275)	1.105 (0.288)	0.556*** (0.106)	0.565*** (0.107)	0.925 (0.238)	0.953 (0.239)
South	1.095 (0.300)	0.916 (0.223)	0.785 (0.208)	0.658 (0.186)	1.170 (0.303)	1.215 (0.263)	0.990 (0.185)	0.869 (0.164)	0.774 (0.164)	0.760 (0.156)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>										
Rural (base)										
Urban	1.045 (0.215)	1.037 (0.216)	1.294 (0.364)	1.217 (0.352)	1.064 (0.297)	1.035 (0.253)	1.542** (0.296)	1.414* (0.263)	1.021 (0.215)	1.007 (0.208)
<b>Economic Situation</b>										
Very bad (base)										
Bad			0.633 (0.199)	0.506** (0.154)			0.617* (0.156)	0.541** (0.139)		
Neither good nor bad			0.492** (0.154)	0.400*** (0.121)			0.320*** (0.0755)	0.297*** (0.0732)		
Good			0.284*** (0.0960)	0.231*** (0.0747)			0.204*** (0.0609)	0.199*** (0.0578)		
Very good			6.24e-07*** (2.85e-07)	3.48e-07*** (1.60e-07)			4.68e-07*** (1.93e-07)	0.0794** (0.0930)		
<b>Observations</b>	1,154	1,196	1,302	1,381	1,165	1,207	1,303	1,383	1,166	1,207

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

discrimination. I focus on the same set of circumstances as for the previous questions looking at people's experiences witnessing discrimination (their skin color, economic situation, language, and gender). In this set of questions, respondents do not identify the source of the discrimination they report, so the discrimination may be interpersonal or institutional in nature.

Beyond a focus on geographical differences, another goal of this chapter was to explore the interactions of different identities to better understand the potential intersectionality that influences people's experiences with discrimination. Here, I analyze the interactions between racial and ethnic identity and skin color and variables including gender, region, and economic status.

Another interesting finding from this series of questions on perceptions of discrimination is that Indigenous people have significantly higher odds of frequently experiencing all four types of discrimination in the LAPOP data, but not in the PERLA data as seen in Tables 3.5 and 3.6. It does appear that indigeneity amplifies and compounds some forms of discrimination like gender and economic discrimination. For example, income on its own does not have a significant influence on the odds of experiencing economic discrimination, but indigeneity does, highlighting the intersecting nature of discrimination's causes and contributors.

Looking at the intersection between gender and Indigenous identity shows that Indigenous women are indeed more likely to experience certain types of discrimination. As seen in Table 3.7, Indigenous women are significantly more likely to experience economic and linguistic discrimination than the reference group (*mestizo* men) in the PERLA dataset. They are also more likely to experience skin color discrimination, although the difference in likelihood between them and *mestizo* men is not statistically significant. However, white-identifying women are also significantly more likely to report economic discrimination compared to *mestizo* men – even more so than for Indigenous women. In the LAPOP dataset, Indigenous women are significantly more likely to experience gender discrimination, while white-identifying women are significantly less likely to

Table 3.6: Odds Ratios of Variables on Experiencing Discrimination

		Linguistic Discrimination (LAPOP)	Linguistic Discrimination (PERLA)	Gender Discrimination (LAPOP)
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)			
	Light Brown	0.901	0.985	0.769
		(0.209)	(0.349)	(0.221)
	Dark Brown	1.538*	1.295	0.915
		(0.395)	(0.488)	(0.268)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)			
	White	1.036	0.899	0.813
		(0.255)	(0.190)	(0.280)
	Indigenous	2.527***	1.768***	2.533***
		(0.863)	(0.360)	(0.812)
	Black	2.426	1.143	0.635
		(1.503)	(0.612)	(0.633)
	<i>Mulata</i>	2.604*	0.543	2.734*
		(1.445)	(0.346)	(1.630)
	Other	1.073	1.314	1.37e-06***
		(0.632)	(0.534)	(4.06e-07)
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)			
	Women	0.580***	0.799	2.636***
		(0.0828)	(0.119)	(0.618)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)			
	Primary	1.309	0.979	0.718
		(0.323)	(0.210)	(0.233)
		1.254	0.939	0.894
		(0.301)	(0.186)	(0.289)

	Intermediate	0.768 (0.200)	0.757 (0.185)	0.935 (0.184)	0.841 (0.148)	1.042 (0.300)	1.276 (0.364)
	Secondary	0.647 (0.208)	0.678 (0.209)	0.956 (0.233)	0.834 (0.191)	0.727 (0.282)	0.883 (0.337)
	University+	0.560 (0.211)	0.604 (0.215)	1.078 (0.373)	1.005 (0.331)	1.592 (0.710)	1.906 (0.840)
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)						
	North	1.498 (0.430)	1.377 (0.374)	0.956 (0.286)	0.943 (0.273)	0.766 (0.309)	0.719 (0.272)
	Central-West	0.679 (0.162)	0.602** (0.149)	0.945 (0.228)	1.029 (0.247)	0.481** (0.152)	0.501** (0.147)
	South	1.154 (0.296)	0.975 (0.252)	1.160 (0.236)	1.313 (0.259)	0.483** (0.158)	0.454** (0.154)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)						
	Urban	0.951 (0.213)	0.923 (0.216)	0.897 (0.191)	0.892 (0.173)	0.937 (0.258)	0.704 (0.184)
<b>Economic Situation</b>	Very bad (base)						
	Bad	0.598* (0.183)	0.535** (0.154)			1.754 (0.871)	1.311 (0.548)
	Neither good nor bad	0.530** (0.154)	0.500** (0.137)			0.991 (0.523)	0.783 (0.349)
	Good	0.368*** (0.139)	0.380*** (0.131)			0.836 (0.486)	0.645 (0.331)
	Very good	0.385 (0.437)	0.262 (0.304)			2.13e-06*** (1.63e-06)	1.37e-06*** (8.63e-07)
<b>Observations</b>		1,300	1,380	1,163	1,205	1,300	1,379

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1



Table 3.7: Odds Ratios of Variables on Experiencing Discrimination – Interactions

		Skin Color Discrimination (PERLA)		Economic Discrimination (PERLA)		Linguistic Discrimination (PERLA)		Gender Discrimination (LAPOP)	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Gender</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> + Man (base)								
	White + Woman	0.882		2.840**		1.913		0.217**	
		(0.565)		(1.299)		(0.978)		(0.135)	
	Indigenous + Woman	1.340		1.691*		1.861**		4.040*	
		(0.517)		(0.497)		(0.575)		(3.175)	
	Other + Woman	1.295		2.124		2.507*		0.788	
		(0.848)		(1.072)		(1.243)		(1.434)	
<b>Skin Color + Gender</b>	White + Man (base)								
	Light Brown + Woman		1.298		0.876		0.336		0.704
			(1.049)		(0.475)		(0.302)		(0.482)
	Dark Brown + Woman		1.323		0.655		0.353		1.057
			(1.112)		(0.389)		(0.345)		(0.707)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Region</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> + Central (base)								
	White + North		7.742**		0.999		2.675		0.361

		(6.354)		(0.524)		(1.635)		(0.322)	
	White + Central-West	0.652 (0.886)		0.206** (0.152)		0.246 (0.276)		0.846 (0.726)	
	White + South	1.963 (1.736)		0.985 (0.584)		1.939 (1.264)		0.315 (0.412)	
	Indigenous + North	0.748 (0.465)		0.507 (0.381)		0.767 (0.442)		1.22e-07*** (1.46e-07)	
	Indigenous + Central-West	0.304** (0.178)		0.488 (0.271)		0.620 (0.423)		0.623 (1.220)	
	Indigenous + South	0.410* (0.206)		0.820 (0.341)		0.706 (0.336)		0.344 (0.330)	
	Other + North	6.182** (5.576)		1.95e-06*** (1.37e-06)		0.461 (0.590)		4.607 (10.22)	
	Other + Central-West	0.844 (1.239)		1.014 (1.049)		1.251 (1.317)		7.00e-07*** (9.52e-07)	
	Other + South	0.885 (0.850)		2.543 (1.587)		0.813 (0.564)		4.955 (9.151)	
<b>Skin Color + Region</b>	<i>White</i> + Central (base)								
	Light Brown + North		0.318		0.601		1.697		1.841

			(0.564)			(0.779)		(2.304)		(1.368)
	Light Brown + Central-West		0.175			0.535		0.872		1.780
			(0.296)			(0.565)		(1.082)		(1.460)
	Light Brown + South		0.170			186,468***		395,601***		0.412
			(0.327)			(219,806)		(505,461)		(0.453)
	Dark Brown + North		0.427			0.278		1.186		0.724
			(0.733)			(0.376)		(1.589)		(0.491)
	Dark Brown + Central-West		0.204			0.203		0.513		0.544
			(0.339)			(0.227)		(0.665)		(0.480)
	Dark Brown + South		0.447			210,296***		592,750***		0.300
			(0.766)			(238,702)		(734,032)		(0.307)
<b>Observations</b>		1,165	1,207	1,166	1,163	1,207	1,163	1,205	1,300	1,379

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

experience it. The stereotyping of Indigenous women in the informal labor sector (as seen in Martínez Novo's (2006) research on Indigenous women working as street vendors) highlights the possibility of them experiencing multiple forms of discrimination in their daily lives. This discrimination can be based on (perceived) class as seen in the stereotype that Indigenous women are beggars, or it can be based on language, since many of those women who migrate to cities for employment may have limited Spanish ability.

The link between discrimination and class is also apparent when looking at intersections between skin color and economic situation. These linkages are most obvious for people with “very bad” economic situations. For example, people with light or dark brown skin and have a “very bad” economic situation have significantly higher odds of experiencing skin color discrimination and linguistic discrimination, but not economic or gender discrimination.

Looking at the intersection of geography and race or skin color shows some interesting patterns. Skin color discrimination against Indigenous people is significantly less likely in northern or southern Mexico compared to central Mexico according to the PERLA data. LAPOP data shows significantly lower odds of skin color discrimination for people with light brown and dark brown skin in southern Mexico compared to central Mexico. PERLA data, on the other hand, show a significantly higher likelihood of people with light brown or dark brown skin experiencing linguistic discrimination in southern Mexico. As discussed previously, southern Mexico generally has a larger proportion of Indigenous people and Indigenous language speakers. Linguistic discrimination may be more common in southern Mexico simply because more people speak Indigenous language, leading to more opportunities for that discrimination to occur. With the significant Indigenous and Afro-descendant population in southern Mexico, skin color discrimination may be less common because people with darker skin colors make up a larger proportion of the population and could be viewed less as outsiders or the Other.

### a) Skin Color Discrimination

Focusing on the individual examples of discrimination, starting first with skin color discrimination, it is not surprising that some racial and ethnic groups are significantly more or less likely than *mestizos* to have experienced this type of discrimination as data in Table 3.5 show. While there is a small number of people who identify in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys as *mulata*, they had significantly higher odds of experiencing skin color discrimination – twice as high as *mestizos* in the PERLA survey and about four times higher than *mestizos* in the LAPOP survey. Black respondents likewise make up a small number of people in both surveys. With this caveat in mind, they were not significantly more likely to say they had experienced this type of discrimination frequently. White respondents in the LAPOP survey had significantly lower odds of reporting frequent skin color discrimination – about 60% lower than those of *mestizos*. Indigenous people in the LAPOP survey had significantly higher odds of reporting they have frequently experienced skin color discrimination – the likelihood was about 84% higher for them compared to *mestizos*.

Skin color was only a significant predictor of skin color discrimination in the LAPOP survey. The odds of people with dark brown skin colors reporting frequent skin color discrimination were nearly three times higher than for people with the lightest skin colors. For people with light brown skin colors, the odds were about 70% higher than for those with the lightest skin colors.

Data from PERLA show that having a university education is associated with significantly higher odds (about 88% higher) of experiencing skin color discrimination compared to people with less than a primary or a primary education. Data from LAPOP show that economic situation is a significant predictor of skin color discrimination – people with “very bad” economic situations are significantly more likely to report experiencing this type of discrimination. Higher income is not associated, however, with a lower likelihood of skin color discrimination.

### **b) Economic Discrimination**

Moving on to economic discrimination, there are multiple significant predictors of this type of discrimination in the LAPOP survey, but not in the PERLA dataset as Table 3.5 shows. Indigenous-identifying people were about 88% more likely than *mestizos* to report experiencing this discrimination. These odds are much higher than for any other racial or ethnic group. People with higher levels of educational attainment (secondary or college), but not people with higher incomes, were significantly less likely to experience discrimination based on their economic situation. Like the last question on skin color discrimination, people with “very bad” personal economic situations were significantly more likely to encounter this form of discrimination. People living in urban areas and younger people were also more likely to experience economic discrimination.

### **c) Linguistic Discrimination**

In terms of linguistic discrimination, the LAPOP and PERLA surveys both ask about discrimination based on one’s accent or the way they speak. This is relevant to note because, in the section on witnessing discrimination in PERLA, they asked specifically about discrimination against people speaking an Indigenous language. Table 3.6 shows people in both surveys who identified as Indigenous had significantly higher odds of frequently experiencing this type of discrimination compared to the reference *mestizo* group – their odds were about 75% higher in the PERLA survey and over two and half times higher in the LAPOP survey. Also, from the LAPOP dataset, women were significantly less likely than men and younger people were significantly more likely than older people to report experiencing linguistic discrimination. A similar pattern related to economic

situation appears here as well – people with “very bad” personal economic situations were significantly more likely to encounter this form of discrimination.

#### **d) Gender Discrimination**

It is expected that gender- or sex-based discrimination occurs more frequently for women. Table 3.6 shows the odds of a woman reporting she had experienced frequent discrimination based on gender or sex was about 2.5 times higher compared to men. Notably, Indigenous respondents had significantly higher odds of reporting frequent gender discrimination – the odds are about two-and-a-half times higher than for *mestizos*. Gender discrimination appears to be most common in central Mexico. Respondents in central-west and southern Mexico had significantly lower odds of saying this type of discrimination had occurred frequently for them. Unlike the other examples of discrimination explored in this section, one’s personal economic situation did not have a clear relationship with gender discrimination.

#### **iv. Experiencing Skin Color Discrimination – Sites and Situations**

The PERLA survey narrows its focus from people’s broader experiences of discrimination to the specific sites and situations where they have experienced skin color discrimination, reflecting a mix of interpersonal and institutional sources of discrimination, specifically (1) when looking for work in a company or business, (2) in public places (such as in the street, squares, shopping centers, or market), (3) in encounters with the police, and (4) in health centers, clinics, or hospitals.

There are few clear patterns to show who is more likely to experience skin color discrimination in these four sites and situations as seen in Table 3.8. These limited findings point to the challenges people experience in identifying the source of their discrimination. Skin color

**Table 3.8: Odds Ratios of Variables on Sites and Situations of Discrimination**

		Labor Market (PERLA)		Public Places (PERLA)		Police Encounters (PERLA)		Health Care Settings (PERLA)	
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)								
	Light Brown		1.135 (0.523)		0.757 (0.325)		0.686 (0.351)		1.293 (0.579)
	Dark Brown		1.313 (0.612)		1.093 (0.525)		1.209 (0.604)		1.554 (0.786)
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)								
	White	1.207 (0.250)		0.934 (0.275)		0.893 (0.265)		0.604 (0.193)	
	Indigenous	1.211 (0.297)		1.315 (0.335)		1.074 (0.337)		1.308 (0.331)	
	Black	2.165 (1.487)		1.640 (1.299)		1.435 (0.976)		0.756 (0.642)	
	<i>Mulata</i>	0.829 (0.398)		1.653 (0.676)		1.063 (0.655)		0.897 (0.570)	
	Other	0.953 (0.421)		0.760 (0.360)		1.170 (0.544)		0.771 (0.352)	
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)								
	Women	0.755 (0.128)	0.735* (0.130)	0.903 (0.155)	0.925 (0.159)	0.375*** (0.0779)	0.389*** (0.0826)	1.035 (0.195)	1.017 (0.190)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)								
	Primary	1.025 (0.219)	0.972 (0.212)	0.896 (0.194)	0.857 (0.180)	0.883 (0.239)	0.817 (0.220)	0.695* (0.150)	0.712 (0.153)
	Intermediate	1.126 (0.241)	1.073 (0.226)	0.756 (0.211)	0.788 (0.203)	1.218 (0.334)	1.297 (0.345)	0.882 (0.225)	0.935 (0.227)
	Secondary	1.140 (0.313)	1.079 (0.316)	0.894 (0.265)	0.906 (0.256)	1.311 (0.444)	1.331 (0.439)	0.701 (0.232)	0.725 (0.232)
	University+	1.677 (0.599)	1.607 (0.576)	1.326 (0.446)	1.345 (0.461)	0.806 (0.330)	0.858 (0.357)	0.869 (0.296)	0.923 (0.314)
<b>Region</b>	Central (base)								
	North	1.088 (0.360)	1.102 (0.371)	0.877 (0.329)	0.890 (0.317)	1.601 (0.691)	1.569 (0.692)	0.955 (0.453)	0.915 (0.427)
	Central- West	0.908	0.911	1.494	1.471	2.186**	2.278**	1.186	1.238



		(0.256)	(0.260)	(0.475)	(0.463)	(0.706)	(0.764)	(0.376)	(0.387)
	South	0.926	0.909	1.342	1.244	2.149**	1.831*	1.045	1.033
		(0.272)	(0.244)	(0.355)	(0.303)	(0.749)	(0.588)	(0.295)	(0.265)
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Rural (base)								
	Urban	0.974	0.975	0.896	0.880	0.752	0.764	0.592**	0.576**
		(0.256)	(0.240)	(0.254)	(0.226)	(0.259)	(0.230)	(0.154)	(0.141)
<b>Observations</b>		1,142	1,181	1,164	1,206	1,145	1,187	1,163	1,206

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

discrimination may be occurring more frequently in these contexts, but people could perceive themselves as being targeted based on some other aspect of their identity.

There is no evidence of Indigenous women being disproportionately more likely to experience skin color discrimination in these sites and situations, despite, for example, previously discussed research about their negative experiences in health care settings, although there is evidence that higher income for Indigenous people is associated with a lower likelihood of experiencing discrimination in health care settings. With the caveat that their sample size is low, women with “other” racial identities (including Black and *mulata*) did have significantly higher odds of experiencing discrimination in police encounters and health care settings as seen in Table 3.9.

In terms of geographical differences, there were multiple instances of discrimination being significantly more likely for people with light brown and dark brown skin in northern and southern Mexico compared to light-skinned people in central Mexico. Labor market discrimination was significantly more likely for people with light brown and dark brown skin in northern Mexico. Discrimination in public places was significantly more likely for people with light brown and dark brown skin in both northern and southern Mexico. People with light brown or dark brown skin had significantly higher odds of encountering police discrimination in southern Mexico, while police discrimination was only significantly more likely for people with dark brown skin in northern Mexico. These findings are interesting given that previous analyses looking at skin color

Table 3.9: Odds Ratios of Variables on Sites and Situations of Discrimination – Interactions

		Labor Market (PERLA)		Public Places (PERLA)		Police Encounters (PERLA)		Health Care Settings (PERLA)	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Gender</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> + Man (base)								
	White + Woman	0.706 (0.415)		1.356 (0.768)		2.780 (2.433)		1.846 (1.431)	
	Indigenous + Woman	0.818 (0.277)		1.738 (0.695)		1.329 (0.597)		1.036 (0.449)	
	Other + Woman	0.683 (0.408)		2.203 (1.529)		4.805*** (2.510)		7.203** (5.570)	
	White + Man (base)								
<b>Skin Color + Gender</b>	Light Brown + Woman		3.350 (3.485)		1.164 (1.537)		1.705 (2.192)		1.459 (2.325)
	Dark Brown + Woman		3.122 (3.196)		1.065 (1.484)		1.638 (2.137)		1.719 (2.763)
	<i>Mestizo</i> + Central (base)								
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Region</b>	White + North	1.895		1.523		0.692		0.215*	

		(1.121)		(1.054)		(0.548)		(0.190)	
	White + Central-West	1.318		0.362		0.149		0.450	
		(0.887)		(0.325)		(0.171)		(0.402)	
	White + South	0.998		0.888		0.314		0.267	
		(0.639)		(0.520)		(0.233)		(0.243)	
	Indigenous + North	0.691		2.606		1.262		0.881	
		(0.613)		(1.844)		(1.406)		(0.778)	
	Indigenous + Central-West	0.937		0.448		0.749		1.470	
		(0.598)		(0.329)		(0.709)		(1.029)	
	Indigenous + South	0.954		0.569		0.509		0.837	
		(0.552)		(0.330)		(0.422)		(0.541)	
	Other + North	7.776*		4.901		589,012***		0.900	
		(8.763)		(5.266)		(791,444)		(0.745)	
	Other + Central-West	6.685*		3.581		290,410***		738,299***	
		(6.803)		(3.908)		(333,547)		(966,272)	
	Other + South	2.530		1.099		916,242***		3.802e+06***	
		(2.163)		(0.810)		(478,302)		(2.373e+06)	
<b>Skin Color + Region</b>	<i>White</i> + Central (base)								
	Light Brown + North		1.007e+07***		232,104***		5,996		569,969***

						(351,493)				(9.468)		(1.206e+06)
	Light Brown + Central-West					0.215				1.754		0.249
						(0.278)				(2.351)		(0.528)
	Light Brown + South					190,725***				3.027e+06***		382,475***
						(269,960)				(3.949e+06)		(613,432)
	Dark Brown + North					246,649***				32.91**		1.595e+06***
						(367,717)				(49.36)		(3.484e+06)
	Dark Brown + Central-West					0.0755*				2.822		0.187
						(0.0995)				(3.555)		(0.413)
	Dark Brown + South					332,695***				1.104e+07***		1.484e+06***
						(457,581)				(1.394e+07)		(2.413e+06)
<b>Observations</b>		1,142	1,181	1,164	1,206	1,145	1,163	1,187	1,163	1,187	1,163	1,206

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

discrimination showed that this form of discrimination was significantly less likely in southern Mexico in the first place. However, these perceptions of where skin color discrimination is most likely to happen highlights the specific barriers for people in each region. The labor market discrimination in northern Mexico can be a barrier to finding higher-paying, stable, and reliable employment for people with darker skin colors, while the discrimination in public places in both northern and southern Mexico can be regular, traumatic experiences.

#### **a) Skin Color Discrimination in the Labor Market**

Focusing now on each site and situation in more detail, racial and ethnic identity and skin color do not appear to be strong predictors of skin color discrimination in the job search process, as Table 3.8 shows. While other racial and ethnic groups have higher odds than *mestizos* of experiencing this discrimination, the difference in odds is not significant. Likewise for skin color, where people with dark brown and light brown skin colors have higher odds than lighter skinned people, but the differences are not significant. Higher income is associated with a significantly lower likelihood of experiencing skin color discrimination in the job search process, possibly indicating that this type of discrimination is more likely (or more likely to be perceived) for people in lower-skilled or lower-status occupations.

#### **b) Skin Color Discrimination in Public Places**

Skin color discrimination in public places is not predicted by any of the variables modeled, including skin color and racial and ethnic identity as seen in Table 3.8. While people identifying as *mulata*, Black, or Indigenous are more likely to report this type of discrimination than *mestizos* and whites are less likely, the differences between racial and ethnic groups are not statistically significant. Similarly

for skin color, people with dark brown skin colors are slightly more likely than people with light skin to report skin color discrimination in public places and people with light brown skin colors are slightly less likely, but these differences are not significant.

### **c) Skin Color Discrimination in Police Encounters**

Table 3.8 shows that race, ethnicity, and skin color also do not appear to influence the likelihood of experiencing skin color discrimination in police encounters. As in other questions covering the sites and situations where discrimination occur, there are slightly higher odds of people identifying as *mulata*, Black, or Indigenous experiencing this type of discrimination compared to *mestizos* (and whites are less likely to experience it), but the differences are not significant. There is a similar pattern for skin color where people with dark brown skin are more likely and people with light brown skin are less likely to experience skin color discrimination in police encounters compared to people with light skin, but the differences are not significant. Skin color discrimination by the police does appear to be more likely in certain parts of Mexico – namely, the south and central-west where the odds are about twice as high as in central Mexico. Women are significantly less likely to frequently experience this type of discrimination – their odds are about 60% lower than for men.

### **d) Skin Color Discrimination in Health Care Settings**

In terms of skin color discrimination in health care settings, urban/rural residence is the only significant predictor. As seen in Table 3.8, people living in urban communities are about 40% less likely to experience this type of discrimination compared to people in rural communities. Indigenous people have higher, but not significant, odds of perceiving skin color discrimination in health care settings than all other racial and ethnic group. The same pattern occurs for people with light and

dark brown skin colors – they are slightly more likely than light-skinned people to report experiencing this discrimination, but the differences between skin colors are not significant.

#### **v. Life Satisfaction**

I first explore the predictors of life satisfaction and life evaluation using the same controls as for other topics in this chapter relating to discrimination. Life satisfaction and life evaluation, while seeming like very similar measures, are largely predicted by different variables as seen in Table 3.10. Darker skin color is associated with a lower life satisfaction. Having a higher income, living in northern Mexico, and being a woman makes somebody more likely to have a higher life evaluation. Higher educational attainment and a better economic situation are associated with both higher life satisfaction and life evaluation.

For life satisfaction, educational attainment is the variable with the clearest relationship. For each additional level of education reached beyond less than primary, the odds of reporting the highest level of life satisfaction increases. This relationship is most significant once people reach intermediate education (65% higher odds of having the highest life satisfaction compared to people with less than primary education) and higher. For people who completed secondary school, the odds are about 110% higher; for people with at least a university education, the odds are about 158% higher.

Interestingly, while the relationship between educational attainment and life satisfaction is very clear, there is no apparent relationship between income and life satisfaction, even after controlling for education. Given the correlation between education and income, it is surprising, especially at higher income levels, that more income does not translate into higher life satisfaction.

However, one's self-defined economic situation is another significant predictor of life satisfaction. Compared to people with "very bad" personal economic situations, people with

Table 3.10: Odds Ratios of Variables on Life Satisfaction

		Life Satisfaction (LAPOP)				Life Evaluation (LAPOP)				
<b>Skin Color Discrimination</b>	Never (base)									
	Few Times	1.383	1.523*	1.354	1.227	1.262	1.161			
		(0.347)	(0.363)	(0.312)	(0.216)	(0.212)	(0.192)			
	Some Times	1.098	1.114	1.174	0.957	0.974	0.954			
		(0.252)	(0.250)	(0.259)	(0.193)	(0.192)	(0.200)			
	Many Times	1.738	1.665	1.733	1.055	1.033	1.009			
		(1.140)	(1.037)	(0.911)	(0.415)	(0.400)	(0.403)			
<b>Economic Discrimination</b>	Never (base)									
	Few Times	0.418***	0.448***	0.416***	0.617***	0.637***	0.613***			
		(0.0730)	(0.0766)	(0.0710)	(0.101)	(0.0982)	(0.0900)			
	Some Times	0.807	0.851	0.769	0.640***	0.631***	0.564***			
		(0.156)	(0.159)	(0.137)	(0.0994)	(0.0935)	(0.0885)			
	Many Times	0.364***	0.432**	0.332***	0.276***	0.275***	0.132***			
		(0.140)	(0.178)	(0.122)	(0.1000)	(0.0956)	(0.0413)			
<b>Linguistic Discrimination</b>	Never (base)									
	Few Times	0.853	0.797	0.865	1.034	0.940	1.110			
		(0.205)	(0.190)	(0.180)	(0.182)	(0.169)	(0.219)			
	Some Times	0.417***	0.412***	0.409***	0.972	0.915	0.767			
		(0.103)	(0.0995)	(0.0932)	(0.206)	(0.189)	(0.150)			
	Many Times	0.936	0.871	0.735	1.318	1.109	1.377			
		(0.493)	(0.460)	(0.376)	(0.554)	(0.442)	(0.539)			
<b>Gender Discrimination</b>	Never (base)									



	Few Times				0.860	0.767	0.785			0.997	1.130	0.968
					(0.294)	(0.237)	(0.219)			(0.213)	(0.240)	(0.208)
	Some Times				0.756	0.696	0.580*			1.221	1.187	1.114
					(0.229)	(0.197)	(0.166)			(0.397)	(0.359)	(0.324)
	Many Times				0.764	0.749	1.065			1.176	1.199	1.094
					(0.414)	(0.410)	(0.672)			(1.017)	(0.969)	(0.535)
<b>Skin Color</b>	White (base)											
	Light Brown		0.825			0.841			0.779		0.774	
			(0.142)			(0.138)			(0.121)		(0.121)	
	Dark Brown		0.680**			0.726*			0.842		0.882	
			(0.132)			(0.137)			(0.136)		(0.144)	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> (base)											
	White	1.013			0.944			0.952		0.899		
		(0.156)			(0.148)			(0.156)		(0.147)		
	Indigenous	0.754			0.849			0.674		0.693		
		(0.160)			(0.199)			(0.164)		(0.168)		
	Black	0.574*			0.589			0.309*		0.315*		
		(0.173)			(0.201)			(0.190)		(0.216)		
	<i>Mulata</i>	0.288*			0.297			0.881		0.851		
		(0.201)			(0.219)			(0.300)		(0.282)		
	Other	1.064			0.949			0.886		0.872		
		(0.327)			(0.291)			(0.282)		(0.292)		
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)											
	Women	0.951	0.932	0.939	0.929			1.280**	1.301**	1.279**	1.294**	
		(0.0996)	(0.0979)	(0.0983)	(0.0981)			(0.134)	(0.132)	(0.137)	(0.134)	
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<Primary (base)											
	Primary	1.429*	1.392*	1.373	1.320			1.065	1.138	1.048	1.101	
		(0.273)	(0.255)	(0.273)	(0.254)			(0.198)	(0.213)	(0.203)	(0.212)	

	Intermediate	1.653*** (0.310)	1.638*** (0.293)	1.555** (0.300)	1.541** (0.287)	1.140 (0.232)	1.155 (0.236)	1.113 (0.232)	1.112 (0.232)
	Secondary	2.074*** (0.437)	2.070*** (0.422)	1.972*** (0.432)	1.962*** (0.416)	1.602** (0.352)	1.708** (0.376)	1.547* (0.352)	1.616** (0.367)
	University+	2.592*** (0.681)	2.547*** (0.645)	2.429*** (0.644)	2.416*** (0.620)	1.693** (0.395)	1.695** (0.401)	1.601** (0.378)	1.587* (0.376)
	Central (base)								
	North	0.937 (0.213)	0.902 (0.198)	0.964 (0.212)	0.912 (0.194)	1.637*** (0.291)	1.597*** (0.285)	1.608** (0.294)	1.560** (0.281)
	Central-West	1.436** (0.259)	1.466** (0.257)	1.357 (0.251)	1.373* (0.246)	0.931 (0.134)	0.995 (0.137)	0.890 (0.128)	0.944 (0.131)
	South	1.295 (0.250)	1.382* (0.261)	1.278 (0.250)	1.331 (0.256)	1.079 (0.164)	1.079 (0.152)	1.103 (0.166)	1.087 (0.155)
	Rural (base)								
	Urban	1.096 (0.173)	1.129 (0.171)	1.104 (0.187)	1.128 (0.182)	1.176 (0.166)	1.186 (0.162)	1.235 (0.176)	1.256 (0.178)
	Monthly Household Income (pesos)								
	0 (base)								
	1 – 800	0.562 (0.221)	0.662 (0.242)	0.575 (0.236)	0.683 (0.266)	1.450 (0.686)	1.394 (0.661)	1.462 (0.701)	1.398 (0.666)
	801 – 1600	0.765 (0.277)	0.905 (0.304)	0.810 (0.310)	0.986 (0.353)	1.783 (0.872)	1.760 (0.846)	1.809 (0.901)	1.811 (0.883)
	1601 – 2400	0.669 (0.256)	0.805 (0.284)	0.674 (0.269)	0.842 (0.311)	1.766 (0.826)	1.795 (0.828)	1.736 (0.840)	1.789 (0.843)
	2401 – 3200	0.859 (0.332)	1.066 (0.391)	0.813 (0.327)	1.042 (0.399)	2.184* (1.029)	2.195* (1.002)	2.069 (1.002)	2.114 (0.987)
	3201 – 4000	0.516* (0.206)	0.640 (0.236)	0.498* (0.209)	0.642 (0.248)	2.698** (1.255)	2.694** (1.227)	2.508* (1.213)	2.558** (1.198)

	4001 – 5400	0.577	0.698	0.561	0.688		2.882**	2.897**	2.981**	3.038**
		(0.228)	(0.258)	(0.232)	(0.267)		(1.428)	(1.396)	(1.518)	(1.493)
	5401 – 6800	0.537	0.653	0.508	0.654		3.455**	3.393**	3.458**	3.434**
		(0.214)	(0.247)	(0.212)	(0.257)		(1.704)	(1.623)	(1.759)	(1.669)
	6801 – 10000	0.450*	0.563	0.432*	0.561		3.432**	3.411**	3.437**	3.438**
		(0.201)	(0.237)	(0.193)	(0.235)		(1.686)	(1.656)	(1.737)	(1.704)
	10001 – 13500	0.791	1.095	0.722	1.024		6.283***	6.079***	5.892***	5.690***
		(0.394)	(0.544)	(0.371)	(0.518)		(3.372)	(3.256)	(3.225)	(3.090)
	13501 +	0.655	0.779	0.600	0.750		3.123**	3.245**	2.772**	2.943**
		(0.342)	(0.394)	(0.311)	(0.378)		(1.553)	(1.611)	(1.422)	(1.503)
<b>Economic Situation</b>	Very bad (base)									
	Bad	1.077	1.226	0.938	1.037		2.551***	2.868***	2.440***	2.701***
		(0.295)	(0.332)	(0.271)	(0.300)		(0.636)	(0.680)	(0.620)	(0.664)
	Neither good nor bad	2.513***	2.725***	2.025**	2.209***		6.889***	7.139***	6.063***	6.331***
		(0.680)	(0.724)	(0.586)	(0.640)		(1.720)	(1.731)	(1.575)	(1.601)
	Good	3.535***	3.595***	2.670***	2.761***		11.84***	12.41***	10.56***	11.10***
		(0.990)	(0.996)	(0.806)	(0.835)		(3.184)	(3.287)	(2.988)	(3.082)
	Very good	5.565**	5.696***	3.907**	3.984**		37.53***	28.60***	30.81***	24.04***
		(3.665)	(3.508)	(2.619)	(2.535)		(13.11)	(11.22)	(11.52)	(9.813)
<b>Observations</b>		1,299	1,379	1,292	1,370	1,542	1,298	1,377	1,291	1,368
										1,538

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

“neither good nor bad”, “good”, or “very good” economic situations are significantly more likely to report having the highest level of life satisfaction, ranging from 2.5 times to over 5.5 times higher odds.

There are some differences in life satisfaction based on geographic region. Relative to people living in the central region (which includes Mexico City and its bordering states), those living in Mexico’s central-west region had 45% higher odds of reporting high life satisfaction. While people living in southern Mexico also had higher odds of having high life satisfaction, these odds were not statistically significantly different from those of people living in the central region.

There is some evidence of racial and ethnic identity and skin color having an impact on life satisfaction. People identifying as Black or *mulata* have significantly lower odds of reporting the highest level of life satisfaction compared to *mestizos* – 40% lower for Blacks and 70% lower for *mulatas*. Indigenous people have about 25% lower odds of having high life satisfaction, but this difference is not statistically significant from *mestizos*. People with dark brown skin colors have significantly lower odds of high life satisfaction (about 30% lower) compared to people with the lightest skin colors.

Looking at the second measure of life satisfaction – respondents’ life evaluation – yields different results as seen in Table 3.10. Here, the importance of income in influencing people’s life evaluation becomes more apparent. While with general life satisfaction there was no apparent relationship with income, people at higher income levels are living closer to their “best possible lives”. Relative to people with the lowest income level (i.e., no income), people earning over 3,200 pesos per month (about US\$245 in mid-2010) have significantly higher odds of evaluating their lives as a ten on the provided scale, with higher income brackets generally having even higher odds of a high life evaluation.

Educational attainment is again a significant predictor of a high life evaluation, but only at higher educational levels (secondary and university). The odds of reporting a high life evaluation are roughly the same for people who only completed secondary education and those who completed university (about 70% higher odds compared to people with a less than primary education).

The geographic variables offered some interesting results. In terms of region, people living in the north had 60% higher odds of ranking their lives at the highest level compared to people living in central Mexico, even when controlling for monthly income. Given that the north has higher wages on average than other parts of the country, this is not surprising, especially considering the relationship between income and life evaluation discussed earlier.

Race, ethnicity, and skin color have a more limited influence on life evaluation as they do for life satisfaction. Skin color is not a significant predictor of life evaluation, although people with darker skin colors have lower odds of having the highest life evaluation than people with the lightest skin colors. While all racial and ethnic groups have lower odds of having the highest life evaluation compared to *mestizos*, only for identifying as Black was this difference statistically significant – their odds of a high life evaluation were about 70% lower.

Although I explored the interactions between racial and ethnic identity and skin color and gender, region, and economic status, Table 3.11 shows there were few significant interactions for life satisfaction and life evaluation. Women with light brown and dark brown skin were significantly less likely than the reference group (*mestizo* men) to have the highest life satisfaction. People with light brown skin were more likely to have high life satisfaction in northern or central-western Mexico than in central Mexico.

**Table 3.11: Odds Ratios of Variables on Life Satisfaction – Interactions**

		Life Satisfaction (LAPOP)		Life Evaluation (LAPOP)	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Gender</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> + Man (base)				
	White + Woman	0.884		1.545	
		(0.290)		(0.458)	
	Indigenous + Woman	1.648		0.985	
		(0.703)		(0.378)	
	Other + Woman	0.918		0.377**	
		(0.487)		(0.164)	
<b>Skin Color + Gender</b>	White + Man (base)				
	Light Brown + Woman		0.520*		0.628
			(0.185)		(0.181)
	Dark Brown + Woman		0.434**		0.591*
				(0.178)	
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identity + Region</b>	<i>Mestizo</i> + Central (base)				
	White + North	1.218		1.016	
		(0.536)		(0.455)	
	White + Central-West	0.924		1.196	
		(0.422)		(0.511)	
	White + South	1.110		1.637	
		(0.415)		(0.921)	
	Indigenous + North	1.184		2.394	
	(0.807)		(1.928)		
	Indigenous + Central-West	0.813		0.855	

		(0.527)		(0.892)	
	Indigenous + South	1.873		0.812	
		(0.877)		(0.393)	
	Other + North	0.973		0.567	
		(0.737)		(0.385)	
	Other + Central-West	0.541		0.705	
		(0.660)		(0.769)	
	Other + South	1.640		1.126	
		(0.895)		(0.643)	
<b>Skin Color + Region</b>	<i>White</i> + Central (base)				
	Light Brown + North		2.730**		1.643
			(1.271)		(0.691)
	Light Brown + Central-West		2.325**		1.110
			(0.973)		(0.413)
	Light Brown + South		0.814		0.533
			(0.679)		(0.272)
	Dark Brown + North		2.177		1.219
			(1.208)		(0.502)
	Dark Brown + Central-West		1.835		1.137
			(0.981)		(0.515)
	Dark Brown + South		0.364		0.480
			(0.315)		(0.228)
<b>Observations</b>		1,299	1,379	1,298	1,377

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

### a) The Impact of Discrimination on Life Satisfaction

To better identify the potential impact of discrimination on life satisfaction, I add experiences of discrimination as predictor variables to the existing models, as well as look at discrimination's impact on life satisfaction on its own. Higher education and a better personal economic situation continue to be the most significant predictors of high life satisfaction in Mexico as seen in Table 3.10. There is little clear evidence in these models of experiences with discrimination being a significant influence on life satisfaction. Some people who report economic discrimination are more likely to have lower life satisfaction. These differences are only significant for people who have experienced economic discrimination "few times" or "many times", but not "some times". For people that have encountered economic discrimination "few times" or "many times", they were about 55% less likely to have the highest life satisfaction compared to people who have never experienced economic discrimination. Additionally, people who have experienced linguistic discrimination "some times" are about 60% less likely to have high life satisfaction than people who have not experienced it. However, people who reported linguistic discrimination "few times" or "many times" do not have significantly different odds of high life satisfaction compared to people have never experienced linguistic discrimination.

Although the differences are not significant, people who have experienced skin color discrimination have higher odds and people who have experienced gender discrimination have lower odds of having the highest life satisfaction compared to people who have never experienced skin color and gender discrimination respectively.

A model that only includes experiences with discrimination as predictor variables yields very similar results. There is no evidence of skin color discrimination by itself having a negative impact on life satisfaction with some evidence of economic and linguistic discrimination being associated with a lower likelihood of having high life satisfaction. In this model, people who have experienced



gender discrimination “some times” have significantly lower odds (about 40% lower) of having high life satisfaction compared to people who have not experienced. However, people who have experienced gender discrimination “many times” have slightly higher, but statistically insignificant, odds of having high life satisfaction.

Turning to life evaluation, people with higher levels of education, higher income, and better economic situations are significantly more likely to evaluate their lives highly. Experiencing discrimination does not seem to have a significant impact on one’s life evaluation, with the notable exception of economic discrimination. People experiencing any kind of economic discrimination are significantly less likely to have a high life evaluation. People that have experienced economic discrimination “few times” or “some times” are about 40% less likely, while people experiencing it “many times” are about 75% less likely, to have a high life evaluation compared to people who have never experienced it. The model including only experiences with discrimination has similar results with economic discrimination being the only significant predictor of life evaluation out of the four types of discrimination surveyed.

Given the association between one’s economic situation and both life satisfaction and life evaluation, it is not surprising that economic discrimination would be associated with lower odds of having high life satisfaction and life evaluation. Economic factors, like income, employment, and inequality, are described as the most influential for determining life satisfaction in Latin America (Corral, 2011). It is interesting that other types of discrimination do not have a strong relationship with life satisfaction, although these other forms of discrimination can be influenced by one’s economic situation or people may perceive discrimination as being based on their economic status instead of on other factors, like skin color, gender, or language use.

## V. Conclusions

This chapter used PERLA and LAPOP survey data to examine people's perceptions and experiences with multiple types of discrimination in Mexico, with a particular focus on the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans and the ways they may experience and perceive discrimination in disparate ways based on their different intersecting identities.

Descriptive statistics show most people have witnessed discrimination at some point in their lives, but that still leaves a sizeable (~35% to 52% depending on the type of discrimination) proportion of people that have yet to witness at least one of the given types of discrimination ever. Significant majorities of those surveyed have not experienced the four types of discrimination measured in these surveys over the previous five years. Economic discrimination is most common, with about 30% of respondents having experienced it. Other types of discrimination are less common – only about 15% have experienced skin color or gender discrimination. There is a large difference between the two surveys regarding linguistic discrimination. Less than 10% have experienced it in the LAPOP sample, while nearly 25% have reported it in the PERLA survey – this is likely evidence of the Indigenous oversample in PERLA. Given the relatively small numbers of people reporting skin color discrimination, a small proportion of those surveyed (~15% to 20%) have experienced skin color discrimination in the specific sites and situations surveyed, although it is slightly more common for people to report skin color discrimination in the labor market than in other situations (i.e., in public places, in police encounters, or in health care settings).

Examining the role of intersectionality, as well as geographic differences, in influencing people's experiences with discrimination yielded interesting results. There is evidence of Indigenous women having a higher likelihood of experiencing certain types of discrimination, including economic, linguistic, and gender discrimination. Previous research on the racialized stereotypes

Indigenous women face (e.g., Martínez Novo, 2006) support these findings. Class, in the form of people's economic situations, has an influence on the likelihood of people with darker skin colors – people with darker skin and the worst economic situations are more likely to encounter skin color and linguistic discrimination.

These data do not show significant regional differences in people's experiences of discrimination. Although differences were expected given each region's unique economic, social, and demographic context, geographic region was largely not a clear determinant of whether somebody was more or less likely to be discriminated against. The two datasets each showed a different region where discrimination was significantly less likely – northern Mexico in the PERLA data and central-western Mexico in the LAPOP data. More research is needed to evaluate the causes of these differences.

The expectation of rural-urban differences in people's likelihood of experiencing discrimination is not proven in these data. While Indigenous people are often viewed as being 'out of place' in Mexican cities, they are living in urban areas in larger numbers, potentially starting to shift this characterization of them as being outsiders. It was much more likely for people to witness discrimination in cities compared to rural areas, however. This apparent contradiction may support Dixon's (2019) argument that most people don't perceive themselves as being targeted by discrimination in the first place because they don't want to relive that trauma or they perceive discrimination is not targeted individually at them, but toward the demographic they belong to.

It is expected that people who are marginalized (based on race, ethnicity, skin color, gender, or economic situation) would be more likely to report experiencing the type of discrimination related to their marginalization. In these data, that is mostly true. People with darker skin colors are significantly more likely to experience skin color discrimination. Indigenous people are more likely to report linguistic discrimination, but not skin color discrimination. People with lower income or

educational attainment were not more likely to report economic discrimination, but people with worse economic situations were more likely to experience it. People with the worst economic situations were more likely to experience all types of discrimination, except gender discrimination.

Higher educational attainment appears associated with a greater awareness or knowledge about the forms discrimination can take and, therefore, an increased likelihood of being able to recognize discrimination when they see it. The likelihood of witnessing discrimination may also depend on the environments where people live and work and the specific contexts of their day-to-day lives. These data are not captured well in these surveys and would likely be difficult to collect in a quantitative survey. What these data can show is that people are always more likely to witness discrimination in urban settings – likely because there are more opportunities for discrimination to occur in a city – and are less likely to witness it in certain regions of the country, although this seems to vary based on the type of discrimination.

Research has explored the difficulty of pinpointing why somebody has been discriminated against (Canache, et al., 2014). Dixon (2019) argues people in Latin America may experience dual forms of discrimination (i.e., class and skin color), but tend to attribute any experience with discrimination to their class, rather than their skin color. This may explain the limited findings on questions about the sites and situations where people encounter skin color discrimination. People may be experiencing discrimination in those contexts, but not attributing it to their skin color.

This chapter also explored the most important factors in determining life satisfaction in Mexico, with a particular focus on life satisfaction as a potential consequence of discrimination. There is little evidence that discrimination has a consistent negative impact on life satisfaction, although experiencing economic discrimination is associated with lower life satisfaction and evaluation. This may be a factor of income and/or economic situation where having lower income

or a worse economic situation is the primary cause of worse life satisfaction. Economic discrimination is simply another consequence of these worse economic factors.

Some of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction are expected – more education and a better economic situation are predictive of greater life satisfaction – other expected significant influences, like racial and ethnic identity, were not strong predictors of life satisfaction. When looking at life evaluation, however, income becomes a significant predictor, along with educational attainment, while race and skin color continue to not have a strong influence. While skin color and racial and ethnic identity do not appear to be significant predictors of life satisfaction and evaluation in these models, these variables do influence the factors that influence life satisfaction and evaluation, such as educational attainment and economic situation.

Future research on these topics using LAPOP survey data would be bolstered with additional data on Indigenous people, perhaps through an Indigenous oversample as done in the PERLA survey. The continued collection of skin color data in the LAPOP survey is also important and necessary to help us make sense of an ocular dimension of discrimination (i.e., classification by others) that overlaps, but is not synonymous, with racial and ethnic identity. Having robust data on skin color and racial and ethnic identity, particularly for the most marginalized groups (e.g., people identifying as Indigenous or Afro-descendants) are necessary to understand the complexity of discrimination more fully, particularly when the motivations of discrimination can be perceived differently, depending on the situational context in which it occurs.

More nuanced data on life satisfaction would also be useful to provide more background about why people judge their lives the way they do. For example, Ramos, et al.'s (2020) research on the life satisfaction of Latino immigrants in the US argues that immigrants may use their home countries as a reference when judging their life satisfaction – they see their lives in the US as being relatively better than where they came from. Better understanding the references people use when

evaluating their lives adds needed context about ways low life satisfaction can be addressed if possible. For example, whether people compare their lives to their neighbors, people they see in popular media, people in other countries, their life in the past, etc., any of these references would tell us more about the sources of particularly high or low life satisfaction. While life satisfaction is a tricky concept to define, the more tangible information we can learn increases the possibility of interventions at all scales to practically improve the quality of life for people.

There is also a need for future research to disentangle multiple forms of discrimination in the Mexican context (e.g., discrimination based on race and ethnicity, indigeneity, skin color, class, and gender), particularly as these types of discrimination intersect. Statistical modeling can only capture so much of the intersections between multiple forms of discrimination and more inquiry into the ways people interpret the sources of the discrimination they experience helps strengthen our understanding of social marginalization and exclusion.

The following chapter will continue to explore the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans, but in a different geographic context – the United States. Given the significant migration flows of Indigenous Mexicans to the United States, it is compelling to look at the ways the ideological perspectives and lived experiences of race and indigeneity in Mexico, which were introduced in this chapter and Chapter 2, may help us understand the lives of Indigenous Mexican immigrants. Combining those perspectives with an understanding of dominant attitudes about race and national origin in the US can provide a transnational context for making sense of the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans. Using the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), Chapter 4 will look at the experiences of Indigenous Mexican farmworkers in the US, particularly regarding inequities in health outcomes, difficulties accessing health care, and unequal treatment in health care settings – a topic explored earlier in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HEALTH INEQUITIES OF INDIGENOUS MEXICAN FARMWORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

#### I. Introduction

The previous two chapters explored predominant attitudes about race and skin color and perceptions and experiences of discrimination in Mexico. Both chapters focus on Indigenous Mexicans, including the perceptions that nationally representative samples of Mexicans hold about them and their experiences with discrimination in Mexican society. With the foundation laid in those chapters, this chapter continues the focus on the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans with the geographic context shifting the United States – the dominant international destination for Indigenous Mexican migrants over the past several decades (Asad and Hwang, 2019). At least 1.5 million Indigenous-identifying Mexicans live in the US (Mesinas and Perez, 2016), although accurate nationwide statistics are hard to come by given the imprecision of Census Bureau estimates. With about 10.7 million Mexican-born people in the US as of 2021 (Rosenbloom and Batalova, 2022), Indigenous people make up a similar share of the Mexican-born population in the US as they do the total population in Mexico. A sizeable proportion work in the agricultural industry, mainly in Western states – a 2010 study estimated there were about 165,000 Indigenous farmworkers in California alone (Mines, et al., 2010).

Farmworkers play a critical role in the American food system yet occupy a particularly vulnerable location in our labor hierarchy with no or limited labor protections, low pay, and exposure to a variety of occupational hazards, ranging from pesticide exposure to record heat to sexual assault to COVID-19 (Farquhar, et al., 2009; Murphy, et al., 2015; Méndez, et al., 2020; Quandt, et al., 2020). The identities of US farmworkers are often located at the intersection of multiple dimensions of difference: for example, national origin, migration status, legal status, language ability, race/ethnicity, and gender. Many of these identities are individually associated with socioeconomic exclusion and marginalization. The oppression is compounded by these intersecting marginalized identities.

Data from the most recent round of the US Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 show nearly two-thirds of farmworkers were born in Mexico – Mexicans make up the vast majority (about 90%) of foreign-born farmworkers in the US (Gold, et al., 2022). Women are one-third of the farmworker population. About 44% of all farmworkers are undocumented, a statistic highlighting the precarity and vulnerability of this essential segment of the US labor force.

Farmworkers who identify as Indigenous (of any national origin) make up about 10% of farmworkers (Gold, et al., 2022). This is a notable segment of the farmworker population and almost certainly an undercount given the challenges of counting and measuring Indigenous populations identified in Chapter 3. Indigenous farmworkers from Mexico and Central America are frequently lumped together with all farmworkers from those countries, despite centuries-long prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion of Indigenous communities by groups higher on the social hierarchy.

Indeed, it is not ideal to treat Indigenous Mexican farmworkers as a singular group given the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples and communities, so it is important to be conscious of the diversity of identities located under the broad label of



“Indigenous”. Among the most common identities of Indigenous Mexicans in the US include Mixteco, Zapoteco, Triqui, Maya, and Purépecha with many maintaining fluency in their Indigenous language, being either monolingual, bilingual with Spanish, and increasingly, trilingual with Spanish and English (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Perez, et al., 2016). Identity and language usage matter in the communities Indigenous farmworkers live and work where workplace hierarchies are strongly influenced by citizenship, national origin, language usage, Indigenous identity, and gender. Being undocumented or speaking an Indigenous language can lead to a lower position on the social hierarchy – even certain languages have a lower social status – resulting in lower wages and more precarious and physically demanding work, which can have significant physical and mental health consequences (Holmes, 2013). Indigenous women are even more vulnerable to unstable employment and hostile working conditions, frequently experiencing physical, verbal, and sexual harassment and assault in the male-dominated agricultural industry (Reid and Schenker, 2016). Out of fear of losing their jobs, women farmworkers often continue to work in the fields even while pregnant and may not receive adequate prenatal care (Pacheco, et al., 2022).

While increasingly more attention is being paid to the unique experiences of Indigenous Mexican farmworkers (and migrants, more broadly) (Young, et al., 2019; Méndez, et al., 2020; Pacheco, et al., 2022), more work is needed to shed light on the challenges these communities face, particularly relating to their health outcomes and access to necessary health care. Agricultural labor is physically demanding and the stress of poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, possibly along with lingering trauma from the migration process, are mentally and psychologically draining (Holmes, 2006). Limited access to health insurance and affordable, accessible, and quality health care exacerbate the health inequities farmworkers face. These barriers to good health are even more concerning for undocumented farmworkers, who may have even fewer options for health insurance as they often barred from many federal programs, and Indigenous farmworkers, who may face an

additional language barrier to accessing care (Maxwell, et al., 2018; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022a).

While robust quantitative data about migrant farmworkers, particularly those identifying as Indigenous, are often lacking, the previously mentioned NAWS offers some of the most detailed data available on farmworkers in the US. I use data from NAWS to understand the health and socioeconomic disparities that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexican farm laborers in the United States and the factors that determine these disparities. This research question builds off existing research about migrant farmworkers in the US, their physical and mental health outcomes, and the occupational hazards they experience (Kandel & Donato, 2009; Grzywacz, et al., 2014; Reid & Schenker, 2016), while incorporating a more robust discussion of race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and legal status and comparing health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous and documented and undocumented agricultural workers.

Research using NAWS data does not typically engage with Indigenous farmworkers in-depth nor is that research grounded in a nuanced understanding of the difficulties facing Indigenous farmworkers in the US related to their language use, discrimination, and social exclusion. The diversity of Indigenous migrant farmworkers that was discussed earlier in this chapter is frequently absent from those studies in favor of looking at them as a single group. Without a large body of research focused on Indigenous farmworkers, we lack insight into the differences between Indigenous-identified farmworkers (including those that speak an Indigenous language), non-Indigenous Mexican farmworkers, and US-born farmworker and the additional inequities that more marginalized segments of the Indigenous population, like women or undocumented people, experience. These disparities are explored in this chapter with the goal of shedding light on the diversity of the Indigenous Mexican farmworker experience in the US.

## II. Background and Literature Review

### i. Indigenous Mexican International Migration

The long-standing economic, social, and political exclusion of rural Indigenous communities in Mexico have led an increasing number of their residents to migrate, both internally and internationally, to pursue a wider variety of opportunities than are available in their home communities. These migrants typically move to help support themselves, their families, and communities financially. While migration may appear to be a “choice”, the broader economic, political, and social contexts beyond the individual level have a strong influence on the decision to migrate. As the Mexican state has largely been unable to address the economic hardships experienced in Indigenous communities and rural communities (which frequently overlap) and provide an adequate social safety net to these marginalized areas, residents of these communities view migration as the best option to alleviate their poverty (Cohen, 2004; Minian, 2018).

The increasing dislocation of rural Indigenous farmers over the past several decades has left migration as their only feasible option. The economic and social disruptions of neoliberalization since the 1980s, including the privatization of communal (*ejido*) lands and natural resources and the disastrous impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have made small-scale farming unsustainable and stimulated migration for the peasant class. While NAFTA forced the Mexican government to remove all tariffs, including those on the crops Indigenous peasants relied on for their livelihoods, government subsidies were allowed to continue. The US has the means to continually increase corn subsidies, giving American farmers a competitive advantage that the Mexican state (and farmers) cannot compete with – Holmes (2013: 25) calls this an “inverse tariff”

on Mexican corn. In the years after the implementation of NAFTA, Mexican corn prices fell by 35%, making an already precarious livelihood untenable (Eakin, 2006).

Given these dislocations, rural Indigenous farmers have been forced to migrate in search of opportunities domestically and internationally. Indigenous Mexicans' motivations for migration are not necessarily different than those of non-Indigenous Mexicans. Economic factors (e.g., more jobs or higher wages in the destination) remain the most common motivations for migration, but these driving factors may be more apparent in rural, predominantly Indigenous communities that are more likely to experience higher levels of economic deprivation (Cornelius, et al., 2009). For example, the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, among the poorest regions in one of the poorest states in Mexico, has a history of internal and international migration dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century motivated by persistent economic disadvantage in the region.

The poor economic sending conditions for Indigenous migrants also has negative impacts on their health which may be exacerbated by the physical and psychological ordeal of migration. Although there have been improvements in recent decades, there remain significant health inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Mexico, particularly relating to higher levels of stunting and infant mortality and lower levels of health insurance coverage and health care utilization (León-Pérez, 2019). In a study of the health of internal Indigenous migrants, Indigenous people (migrants and non-migrants) had poorer self-rated health than non-Indigenous people. Within the surveyed group of Indigenous people, migrants had significantly better self-rated health than non-migrants. Within the migrant group, Indigenous migrants had better self-rated health than non-Indigenous migrants (León-Pérez, 2019). All these measurements of self-rated health were taken pre-migration. Given the occupations for Indigenous internal migrants tend to be more physically intensive than for non-Indigenous migrants, Indigenous migrants may be positively selected based on their pre-existing good health. When self-rated health was measured post-migration, the health of

Indigenous migrants deteriorated significantly to the point where their health was worse than non-migrants' health. The health of non-Indigenous migrants improved post-migration. León-Pérez (2019) cites many possible explanations for the decline in health for Indigenous migrants, ranging from the physical intensity of their occupations to poverty to a change in diet to discrimination. While the dynamics of internal migration are different than for international migration, many of these patterns may hold true for international Indigenous migrants. Given the difficulty of international migration (and undocumented migration especially), international Indigenous migrants may be even more likely to be selected on the basis of their good health and more likely to experience a decline in health after the journey.

While economic reasons are typically the primary motivation, language and ethnicity is a motivating factor specific to Indigenous Mexicans, with Cohen (2004) finding that those who speak an Indigenous language were more likely to migrate to the US (instead of internally). Cohen argues that an Indigenous person migrating internally will continue to be identified by others as being Indigenous and the resulting discrimination will negatively impact their economic opportunity, while when migrating internationally, Indigenous people will be viewed as just “another Mexican”. Being Mexican in the US comes with its own discrimination, but being Indigenous is no longer an obstacle. However, Cohen’s interpretation misses the fact that non-Indigenous Mexican migrants will still have the same attitudes about Indigenous people, meaning Indigenous migrants face dual forms of ethnoracial discrimination. They are viewed as Mexican by the general US population and as Indigenous by the Mexican population, both identities carrying their own forms of discrimination and prejudice.

Despite Cohen’s (2004) finding that Indigenous language speakers were more likely to migrate to the US, there remain significant internal migration flows for Indigenous people. Domestically, the growing agro-export industry of northwestern Mexico (e.g., San Quintín in Baja

California) has been a common destination as border regions have benefitted from the elimination of trade barriers with the US (Martínez Novo, 2006). Although Indigenous migration flows from Mexico to the US have existed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the 1980s that farming communities along the US West Coast began attracting large numbers of Indigenous migrants as continued high demand for low-cost, foreign labor has been a hallmark of the American agricultural industry. Early migrants settled in California's Central Valley (Kearney, 2000; Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Hernández-Díaz & Keyes, 2013), but migration flows have gradually moved northward to Oregon's Willamette Valley (Kissam, 2007; Stephen, 2007) and Washington's Skagit and Yakima Valleys (Holmes, 2013) in a migratory circuit Stavenhagen (2015) calls the "Ruta Mixteca". There are at least 1.5 million Indigenous Mexican migrants (out of a total of 10.7 million Mexican immigrants) living in the US – many are undocumented and most engage in manual labor, particularly in the agricultural sector (Mesinas & Perez, 2016; Andrews, 2018; Rosenbloom & Batalova, 2022).

Several Indigenous groups in Oaxaca have experience with migration to the US – some groups, such as Zapotecs or Mixtecs, have decades of experience stretching back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while for others, such as Triquis or Mixes, international migration is a more recent phenomenon dating to the 1980s and 1990s (Holmes, 2013; Robson, 2019). The strong influence of social networks has led to the concentration of certain Indigenous groups in certain US communities. Zapotecs (generally from the central and southern areas of Oaxaca) have tended to settle in urban areas with a sizeable community in Los Angeles with others moving to agricultural communities in (e.g.) Ventura County, California; Mixtecs and Triquis (concentrated in the western part of Oaxaca) tend to migrate to rural farmworker communities along the US West Coast (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Stephen, 2007; Maxwell, et al., 2015). Of the specific Indigenous languages measured in NAWS, Mixteco and Zapoteco are the most commonly spoken.

## ii. The Incorporation of Indigenous Mexican Migrants into US Racial Hierarchies

Indigenous Mexican migrants to the US merit special attention because they experience additional challenges beyond those already experienced by Mexican migrants, including racism, discrimination, prejudice, legal uncertainty, limited economic opportunity, and difficulty incorporating into American society (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Blackwell, et al., 2017). Although settling in predominantly Mexican communities once in the US, Indigenous migrants are not insulated from discrimination because Mexican racial hierarchies that located Indigenous people lower on the social ladder are imported along with other migrants (Holmes, 2013), even though migrant settlement within a strong co-ethnic community often provides some protection from discrimination, especially when that community is defined by common national origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Existing ethno-racial hierarchies in the US that treat immigrants, especially those of Latino descent, as an underclass further compound the complex ethno-racial social structures from Mexican society (Cobas, Duany, & Feagin, 2009). Blackwell (2010) has described this as a system of “hybrid hegemonies” where Indigenous migrants must learn to navigate the US and Mexican racial hierarchies that locate them at or near the bottom.

This understanding of the construction of indigeneity across different countries and colonialities of power is a focus of the Critical Latinx Indigeneities analytic, which examines in part the ways that Indigenous migrants are reshaping understandings of indigeneity and race in the US (Blackwell, et al., 2018). The hybridization of coloniality is an important concept in thinking about the experiences of Indigenous migrants. Indigenous Mexicans living in the US inhabit a borderlands space on multiple dimensions. They exist in the fracture between Mexico and the US – they are part of Mexico, but not living within it, while living within the US, but not part of it. They are not accepted as being part of the United States based on citizenship, race, and language. They are instead

framed as outsiders, foreigners, and aliens in this country, while they may be hundreds or thousands of miles away from their homes in Mexico and thus disconnected from that part of themselves. *Critical Latinx Indigeneities* allows us to keep the fractured existence of Indigenous migrants in mind as they work to navigate the contemporary colonial structures of Latin American countries and the US. While borderland spaces can often be sites of violence and struggle, the borderlands cannot always be framed as negative and harmful places. They may also be sites of solidarity and resistance.

Nonetheless, inhabiting such an “in-between” space often leads Indigenous migrants to have conflicting ideas about their identities, influenced by their experiences in Mexico and the US. When situating Indigenous Mexicans within US understandings of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity, it is important to consider the ways our predominant demographic categories serve to dispossess people of their indigeneity. The population of Indigenous Mexicans, and Indigenous Latin Americans more broadly, in the United States is rendered largely invisible to policymakers given how challenging it is to reliably count this population and gather any meaningful demographic data on them.

Making sense of the insertion of the Indigenous migrant population into the ethno-racial hierarchies underlying American society helps us to understand this community’s incorporation into the US. While research on the racialization and incorporation (or lack thereof) of the Latino population in the United States is relatively common (e.g., Cobas, et al., 2009; Telles & Ortiz, 2009), similar research on Indigenous Mexicans has been limited. This focus yields insights on the dual form of racial discrimination they experience (i.e., racialized as “Mexican” by stereotypical narratives in American society and as an inferior Indigenous other by *mestizo* Mexicans) and the ways that prejudice contributes to this group’s exclusion. Because of this racialization, Indigenous Mexican migrants face marginalization in the US above and beyond that experienced by other immigrant groups, including non-Indigenous Mexicans (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004).



Seth Holmes' (2013) ethnography of Oaxacan migrant farmworkers in Washington's Skagit Valley illustrates the racialized hierarchies, organized by citizenship, language, and ethnicity, that Indigenous Mexican migrants are forced into in the US, and their daily experiences with discrimination. The farm Holmes focuses on is owned by a third-generation Japanese American family, which complicates the hierarchy that Holmes describes, but also highlights an assimilation trajectory available to this family that may be not available to the (Indigenous) Mexican migrant farmworkers they now employ. These Japanese American owners and white, English-speaking US citizens are at the top of the hierarchy – they have jobs that are not physically demanding, nor which expose them to environmental hazards, like pesticides. Spanish-speaking, US citizen Latinos and documented Mexican *mestizo* migrants are next on the hierarchy. Undocumented Indigenous Mexicans are located at the bottom and are given the most physically demanding and lowest paid jobs. However, even at the bottom of the hierarchy, there are subcategories of perceived indigeneity, where Triqui people are considered “more Indigenous” because they maintain their native language more than Mixtec migrants. Even though Mixtecs and Triquis originate from the same remote region of western Oaxaca, known as *La Mixteca*, these seemingly small perceived differences have a large impact on the lives of Triqui laborers as they are considered to be “more simple”, justifying their poor treatment and position at the very bottom of the labor and social hierarchy in these farming communities (Holmes, 2013: 97).

In this hierarchy, the racialization of Indigenous Mexicans provides an incentive for US-born Latinos and *mestizo* Mexicans to distinguish themselves from Indigenous Mexicans by focusing on their differences. Treitler's (2013: 4) concept of an “ethnic project” is useful here – a “concerted social action” by marginalized ethnic groups “to foster a perception of themselves as ‘different’ from the bottom and ‘similar’ to the top of the hierarchy”. In Holmes' (2013) discussion of this specific hierarchy, we see multiple levels at which a marginalized group is attempting to separate itself from a

“lesser” group. *Mestizo* Mexican immigrants and US-born Latinos may be motivated to subjugate Indigenous Mexicans out of a desire to gain an elevated status by distancing themselves from the bottom of the hierarchy. Even among Indigenous Mexicans, there are attempts to distinguish between the very bottom (i.e., Triquis) and one step above the bottom (i.e., Mixtecs). Instead of engaging in some form of solidarity and coalition to challenge their location at the bottom of the social structure, lower-status groups are instead sacrificed by groups higher up in the hierarchy.

Here, we can see the production of racialized space on individual farms with these informal, yet quite rigid, social hierarchies. These microgeographies of inclusion and exclusion reflect the broader geography of race and indigeneity within and between the US and Mexico that excludes Indigenous people. Herrera (2016) has interrogated production of racialized space in the context of immigration, labor, illegality, and indigeneity. Indigenous Mayan day laborers from Guatemala in Oakland, California were excluded from certain hiring zones by non-Indigenous laborers based on racial and linguistic differences. Such racialized differences thus manifested themselves in spatial segregation – Indigenous laborers were told which spaces they could and could not occupy.

This hierarchization of Mexican immigrants in the US and, more specifically, the persistent exclusion of Indigenous migrants, suggests challenges for the successful incorporation of Indigenous migrants, yet there has been little research on the adaptation of this group in the US, despite the maturation of the migration flow and increasing permanence of these migrants (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004). In the past, seasonal migration to the US corresponding to annual crop calendars was most common with migrants returning home to Mexico in off-seasons – these circular labor migration patterns may have made research into their adaptation trajectories less relevant. Now, while increased border enforcement may have blocked some of these migrants from entering the US, it has also dissuaded or prevented many from returning to Mexico – an example of the “caging effect” (Massey, Durand, & Pren, 2016). As a substitute for return trips, transnational connections

between migrant communities in the US and home communities in Mexico have gained greater importance. Economic and cultural links between the US and Mexico have been enhanced through the creation of organizations such as hometown associations which help to develop and strengthen social networks both in the US and transnationally and help advocate for home communities in Mexico. Despite the growth of their population in the US and their increasing likelihood of permanent settlement, it remains difficult for Indigenous migrants to gain a higher social status outside the scope of their social networks because of the barriers of discrimination and prejudice.

The use of NAWS data in this project yields further insight into the socioeconomic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous and documented and undocumented farmworkers, especially as studies using NAWS data frequently do not engage with indigeneity in their analyses. While agricultural workers represent only a segment of the Indigenous Mexican population in the US, albeit a sizeable one, they occupy an especially precarious and vulnerable position in the agricultural industry.

### **iii. The Health Determinants of Migrant Farmworkers in the US**

Migrant farmworkers are a particularly underserved and marginalized community across the rural US. However, even among migrant farmworkers, Indigenous workers, particularly those who are undocumented, have a more precarious labor situation, are paid less, more likely to be paid by the piece, and have access to few resources that higher status farmworkers have (Reid and Schenker, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the essential role that migrant farmworkers play in the US economy and food system while highlighting the many ways migrant laborers are exploited and sacrificed. Despite being considered “essential workers” throughout the pandemic, farm labor remains a precarious occupation, particularly in terms of occupational hazards, health, and health

care. Indeed, past research on the impacts of pandemic flu on farmworkers has documented the high risk and vulnerability they face (Steege, et al., 2009). While farmworkers who work with livestock may be exposed to flu viruses from (e.g.) birds or pigs, the structural issues common to migrant farmworkers – crowded and sometimes unsanitary living conditions, lack of healthcare access, and language and communication barriers – highlight their disproportionate risk for severe health outcomes during a pandemic. The lack of timely and culturally appropriate information during public health emergencies is a serious concern for Indigenous migrants when life-saving information from government agencies may only be communicated in English or Spanish (Méndez, et al., 2020).

The physical demands of farm labor and the corresponding lack of health care exacerbates health inequities, as Holmes' (2006) shows. There was a clear hierarchy of health inequities organized by ethnicity and citizenship. The group with the worst health outcomes were undocumented Indigenous Mexicans – facing a double disadvantage because of their ethnicity and citizenship. Although we can point to the structural barriers to good health, such as a lack of access to health insurance or high-quality affordable health care, medical professionals blamed these people for their own poor health. Moving down this social hierarchy, starting with white American citizens at the top and undocumented Indigenous Mexicans at the bottom, the worse the working conditions are, the more physically demanding the work is, and the poorer treatment laborers receive from their supervisors (Holmes, 2006). The physical demands of the labor, the exposure to weather and pesticides, and the stress of poverty and poor treatment by superiors and colleagues all combine to negatively influence the health of Indigenous migrant workers. Holmes (2006) points to issues of substance use among Indigenous migrant laborers as they search for an escape from the mental anguish and stress that often manifest themselves in physical symptoms. The trauma of migration and the border crossing experience also results in physical and mental health issues that often go

unaddressed, including post-traumatic stress disorder (Peña, et al., 2017; Sidamon-Eristoff, et al., 2022) and chronic pain (Garcini, et al., 2021).

Beyond preexisting health conditions and those newly acquired or exacerbated by the migration experience, migrant farmworkers encounter an array of occupational hazards and often have little to no safety equipment or training. For example, given the frequent lack of proper pesticide safety training and protective equipment and the serious health consequences of pesticide misuse, there is concern that the most vulnerable agricultural workers are being disproportionately exposed to pesticides. In a study analyzing the relationship between legal status and pesticide exposure, Kandel and Donato (2009) find pesticide exposure is indeed the most common occupational hazard for farmworkers. While undocumented agricultural workers, having less power and agency to protest and resist hazardous working conditions, might be expected to be more likely to handle and be exposed to pesticides, undocumented workers are less likely to handle pesticides as part of their regular responsibilities. Workers who are older, more experienced, have resided in the US longer, and speak English are most likely to handle pesticides and be trained in proper pesticide usage. Women and Indigenous farmworkers are much less likely to use pesticides as part of their responsibilities (Kandel and Donato, 2009). Ultimately, argue that higher-skilled workers, who are also more highly compensated, are most likely to be exposed to pesticides. The potential cost of crop failure or employee illness are too high for growers to risk using less skilled or untrained workers.

While Kandel and Donato (2009) find Indigenous farmworkers are less likely to use pesticides, a lack of adequate training and resources for these workers remains a concern, particularly when trainings on pesticide use are often only given in English and/or Spanish. Farquhar, et al. (2009) found about 30% of Indigenous farmworkers surveyed in Oregon said they worked in areas treated with pesticides. While this is significantly lower than for non-Indigenous Latino workers

(65%), it's possible that Indigenous farmworkers are less informed about pesticide practices in their workplaces and may not know to what extent they do work around pesticides. While in-person workshops are preferred over written information for Indigenous farmworkers, Samples, et al. (2009) highlight the gaps in these trainings. Workers who primarily speak an Indigenous language may feel uncomfortable asking questions or otherwise engaging with a trainer that doesn't speak their language. Farquhar, et al.'s (2009) survey of Indigenous farmworkers shows 13% of those surveyed would not be able to understand a training or video given in Spanish and 60% do not understand Spanish well enough to read a training pamphlet. While trainings on proper pesticide use may be available, those trainings are not accessible to all workers. The same applies to all workplace safety trainings – resources are frequently not provided in languages that all workers understand and interpreters are usually not available.

Arcury, et al. (2010) points to cultural differences in understanding human health as another possible barrier for effective workplace safety training – specifically a belief of some Latino farmworkers that their health and wellbeing isn't controlled by them as individuals, but instead by a supernatural or spiritual force. Beliefs like this can negatively impact farmworkers' reception of safety trainings. A key method of addressing these beliefs is to include farmworkers in developing safety trainings to ensure they are culturally relevant and appropriate (Arcury, et al., 2010).

Beyond cultural differences, another key determinant of health in these communities is legal status and farmworkers' corresponding position in the socioeconomic. In terms of the relationship between legalization, wages, and health insurance, agricultural workers who are legal permanent residents (LPR) gain a 3% to 5% wage increase compared to being undocumented (Kandilov and Kandilov, 2010). While legal status impacts physical and mental health, it may not have a strong influence on whether one decides to access health care services. Undocumented migrants are often hesitant or afraid to access certain government and community services because their legal status

may be reported to immigration authorities, possibly resulting in their deportation. However, López-Cevallos, et al., (2014) find that only 6% of Oregon farmworkers surveyed said they were worried that accessing health care services would lead to problems with immigration authorities, even though 20% surveyed were undocumented – it's possible this is because the health care centers available to this community (mostly federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) which provide health care services regardless of ability to pay or health insurance status) are considered trustworthy. Considering the high level of fear of deportation among the study population in general (87%), trusted health care providers are an asset for the undocumented migrant community (López-Cevallos, et al., 2014). LPRs are also significantly more likely to receive health insurance and a bonus from their employers, thus legalization helps increase the total compensation for agricultural workers and not just their wages. Indeed, the overlap between health insurance access and immigration policy, two highly contentious issues in this country, demand increased attention, especially considering about 69% of farmworkers do not have health insurance, but this varies by legal status, national origin, ethnicity, and gender. US-born workers are most likely to have health insurance, followed by documented migrant workers; undocumented Indigenous workers are least likely to have health insurance. Undocumented workers are also least likely to receive workers' compensation or even be aware that it exists (Reid and Schenker, 2016).

In addition to pesticide exposure, overexertion and musculoskeletal conditions are the most common among agricultural workers (Tonozzi and Layne, 2016). Heavy lifting and falls are the most common causes of musculoskeletal problems among these workers. Older workers are at higher risk for severe musculoskeletal injuries (Tonozzi and Layne, 2016). In terms of self-reported health, Grzywacz, et al. (2013) found that over 22% of surveyed farmworkers reported fair or poor health. This is higher than the 15.8% of foreign-born Latino who reported fair or poor health in National

Health Interview Survey data – this shows an elevated likelihood of poorer health among the farmworker population, which is predominantly Latino (Grzywacz, et al., 2013).

There are significant disparities among agricultural workers based on country of origin, documentation status, indigeneity, and gender in terms of wages, occupational hazards, workplace conditions, and access to health insurance. US-born agricultural workers are more likely to be paid a consistent salary and receive a bonus than migrant workers (Reid and Schenker, 2016). When migrant workers are paid by the hour, which is less likely than for US-born farmworkers, they make less than the US-born, even after controlling for variables like age and length of employment (Reid and Schenker, 2016). Migrant women, regardless of ethnicity, are more likely to be paid by the piece instead of by the hour. When farmworkers are paid by how much they harvest, this often pushes them to work faster and take fewer breaks while taking less care of their own needs and health, such as working through injuries, skipping meals, not drinking water, and not stopping to use the restroom. Injuries and accidents are more common among those who are paid by the piece (Reid and Schenker, 2016).

Given the lack of health insurance, health care utilization among farmworkers is generally lower than for the general population, despite farmworkers having higher prevalence and mortality rates from certain diseases, including tuberculosis and some cancers (Hoerster, et al., 2010; Hoerster, et al., 2011). The availability of community-based federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) is important in providing health care access to rural communities and may be the only facilities providing low-cost care and health outreach to migrants (Hoerster, et al., 2011). A key health determinant is access to care – in the US, people with access to regular and reliable healthcare are more likely to receive higher quality preventive care and more specialized care for chronic illnesses (Young, et al., 2019). “Access to care” means more than being able to physically get to a healthcare facility – it encompasses financial, linguistic, and cultural access. If one cannot pay for healthcare,



communicate with a healthcare professional, or find a doctor that treats them with cultural sensitivity, they do not have access to care.

#### **iv. The Health Determinants of Indigenous Mexican Farmworkers**

Indigenous migrants are often located in the most vulnerable and precarious positions in American society, where the intersections of racial and ethnic identity, national origin, skin color, language usage, legal status, and socioeconomic status amplify the disadvantages associated with any one of these dimensions of difference and compound the existing precarity of agricultural labor. Méndez, et al. (2020) highlight the need to understand the “contextual vulnerability” of Indigenous migrant communities. While Méndez, et al. (2020) focus foremost on environmental injustice and the relationships between human society and the physical environment that expose this population to greater risk and harm, their discussions of contextual vulnerability and “slow violence” – occurring over years or decades – reminds us that the structural violence Indigenous migrant communities face socially, economically, legally, politically, and environmentally is often incremental and cumulative. These forms of “violence” are not always easily visible nor immediate in impact, like a natural disaster, but they do place these migrants and their communities in harm’s way.

The social and linguistic isolation Indigenous migrants face can be ameliorated through community outreach efforts. One common way of reaching and connecting Indigenous communities on both sides of the US – Mexico border is through community radio stations and programs (Jimenez, 2019). Programs like *La Hora Mixteca* air on community radio stations along the US West Coast and in Mexico in communities with large Indigenous populations. Online streaming makes these programs available to wider audiences. While individual programs can have a limited reach because they can’t fully engage with the breadth and diversity of Indigenous communities,

community radio stations like Radio Índigena in Oxnard/Ventura, California have greater flexibility to engage with the populations and language in their area (Jimenez, 2019). For example, Radio Índigena has 25 hours of live programming each week in seven Mixtec languages, Zapoteco, and Purépecha (Radio Índigena, 2022). Community radio fills a vacuum of news and information for underserved Indigenous communities and offers listeners a stronger sense of belonging and engagement. While Indigenous groups may face financial and regulatory barriers to getting their stations and programs on the air, radio offers the opportunity for communities previously rendered socially invisible to have their voices heard.

While targeted outreach to educate migrant farmworkers about health care services and bringing healthcare to farmworkers where they live and work are important tools to increase their health care utilization, so is outreach and education for medical providers (Hoerster, et al., 2010). A key reason why migrant farmworkers don't seek out health care is the concern that doctors don't understand their health problems – working to improve the cultural sensitivity and understanding of medical providers can help migrant farmworkers be more comfortable accessing health care. These questions of migrant health matter in terms of educating doctors and medical staff about providing adequate care to migrant communities with a recognition of the unique physical and mental health challenges migrants face during the migration and settlement process and in the labor force.

Holmes (2006) applies Michel Foucault's concept of the "clinical gaze" to the health care experiences of Indigenous migrants. As doctors focus on the body and its organs in isolation in order to "cure" disease, they only see the patient as an object rather than as a human being in the context of their surroundings. In other words, doctors often fail to acknowledge the social determinants of health – "the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Thus, the factors that

most lead to poor physical and mental health for these farmworkers – poor living and working conditions, stress, trauma, and anxiety, and the daily experiences with racism and discrimination – go undiscussed in doctors’ offices as they try to treat the body separate from its social environment (Holmes, 2006). This often means the blame for any health conditions is often placed solely on the patient and their (e.g.) poor diet, exercise routines, sleep habits, and ignorance of workplace safety guidelines. Placing the blame on the individual ignores the many structural and societal barriers to good health and health behaviors, results in frustration for the patient, and may mean they avoid seeking out health care in the future.

While research on the health of Indigenous migrants often discusses them as a single group, different Indigenous communities often experience unique challenges when navigating health and healthcare issues in the US. These differences are sometimes related to the length of time each group has spent in the US. For example, in Washington’s Skagit Valley, Mixtecos from Oaxaca were the first arrivals, followed closely by Triquis, with Awakatekos from Guatemala arriving more recently (Pacheco, et al., 2022). The length of time spent in the US influences the language barrier – since Mixtecos have lived in the community the longest, there are more interpretation services available to help them navigate the healthcare system. The longer a community has lived in the US also influences the amount of knowledge about community resources they gain through their social networks and their wages and employment opportunities.

The provision of health education and resources to Indigenous Mexican communities in the US is often limited, primarily due to language and communication barriers (Young, et al., 2019). Many Indigenous migrants have limited proficiency in Spanish, most existing health education materials use complicated medical jargon not tailored to specific cultural understandings of health and the human body, and Indigenous languages are often more oral than written. These factors further limit the communication of important health information and healthcare resources to a

particularly vulnerable community when an inability to pay and a lack of access to health insurance are already limiting circumstances.

Traditional forms of communicating health information, like pamphlets, are ineffective at adequately reaching Indigenous migrant communities. Instead, outreach opportunities like in-person workshops or public service announcements on community radio stations are likely to be more effective. At the community level, organizations like MICOP (Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project) in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties in California have trained more than 200 Indigenous community health workers (*promotoras*) to lead workshops in the community to meet their health care needs (Young, et al., 2019).

Indeed, the basic needs of Indigenous farmworkers are frequently going unmet. Maxwell, et al. (2015) focus their research on Ventura County, California where they surveyed nearly 1,000 Indigenous farmworkers and their family members. About three-quarters said there were not adequate jobs in the community, while around 60% did not have sufficient food to feed their families and half had inadequate housing. These basic needs are all important social determinants of health. Factors like employment opportunities, food security, and housing quality have a strong influence on physical and mental health.

There is a significant diversity of health outcomes among Indigenous migrant farmworker communities. Although earlier Indigenous migration flows to the US primarily consisted of men, it has become more common for families to migrate together. This highlights the need to address healthcare access for women and children – both especially vulnerable groups (Maxwell, et al., 2018). Pregnant women, who often continue working in the fields throughout their pregnancies, are of particular concern. Pacheco, et al. (2022) focus on the barriers to prenatal care for Indigenous Mexican and Guatemalan women in Washington’s Skagit Valley – a population they note as being more likely to use home remedies and traditional healers before (or instead of) using Western

healthcare approaches. This is important because research shows that women who receive adequate prenatal care are more likely to have improved pregnancy outcomes and have lower rates of maternal and infant mortality (Pacheco, et al., 2022).

Pacheco, et al. (2022) point out the many structural and cultural barriers to accessing prenatal care for these Indigenous women. Common themes appear here: a lack of money to pay for care, concerns about the language barrier and their ability to communicate at the doctor's office, a lack of transportation to their appointments, limited knowledge of where to go for care, and an inability to get time off work. However, there are also cultural expectations around prenatal care that further explain why some choose to not seek it out. Many surveyed point out that pregnant women back home in Mexico and Guatemala don't get prenatal care and neither do many of the women they know here in the US. Importantly, they also believe doctors in the US don't understand their cultural customs and beliefs around childbirth. Like other research about healthcare communication and access for Indigenous migrants, Pacheco, et al. (2022) argue that workshops are the best way to reach these communities.

Migrant women, regardless of documentation status or ethnicity, are more likely to be employed by a contractor, making their employment less stable and reliable. Women are also exposed to hostile working conditions with high risk for physical, verbal, and sexual harassment and assault (Reid and Schenker, 2016). The intersection of indigeneity and gender places Indigenous migrant women in an even more precarious position. Surveys of migrant farmworkers highlight the frequency of sexual assault and harassment on farms (Murphy, et al., 2015; Kim, et al., 2016). While all women farmworkers can experience sexual harassment in the male-dominated agricultural industry, Indigenous women are often more vulnerable because of their relative social isolation, low social status, lack of English and/or Spanish fluency, and poverty. They may avoid reporting assault and harassment out of fear of losing their jobs – this is a particular concern for single mothers who

may be the only source of income for their families. The consequences of reporting sexual harassment and intimidation, including physical threats and job loss, are real deterrents for speaking up for many of the women surveyed (Kim, et al., 2016). Depending on the strength of their social networks and English/Spanish abilities, it may also be hard for them to access resources and information. Workplace protections are usually nonexistent or not enforced and women often say they don't know who to report harassment to in the first place. Even if they did, they think they wouldn't be believed or supported. If there are sexual harassment trainings, they are usually not given in a language Indigenous migrant women can understand (Murphy, et al., 2015).

Migrant children similarly occupy an especially vulnerable position in society. About one-third of farmworkers' children are uninsured – they are three times more likely to be uninsured than all children nationally and 1.5 times more likely than Latino children or children in poverty nationally (Rodríguez, et al., 2008). Parents who have lower levels of schooling, are migrants, and have spent less time in the United States are more likely to have uninsured children (Rodríguez, et al., 2008). Given that these migrant children are two to three times more likely to be rated in poor or fair health by their parents/caregivers and since older children frequently participate in farm work with their parents, understanding this population's access to health insurance and health care is important.

Children are particularly impacted by the poor quality of farmworker housing, which is often overly crowded and poor quality. Migrant farmworkers and their families are frequently exposed to excessive heat and cold and to dangerous substances like lead, mold, and pesticides, leading to serious consequences for their physical and mental health (Quandt, et al., 2015). On-site housing also geographically isolates migrant farmworkers, making it more difficult to access food, education, and healthcare because of the need to travel long distances without access to reliable transportation.

Mental health is a significant concern for Indigenous migrants in the US, given the trauma of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, which is compounded by the stress of international, sometimes undocumented, migration and incorporation into a new country. While workplace safety practices, particularly related to pesticide exposure, are lacking for Indigenous farmworkers and can have a significant impact on physical health, also concerning are the high levels of workplace discrimination they regularly experience that negatively influence their mental wellbeing. Mental health concerns further highlight the weaknesses of migrant health care. “Folk illnesses” or “culture-bound syndromes” like *susto* (“fright”) or *nervios* (“nerves”) may be more common among some members of immigrant communities. While these types of health concerns may be dismissed by healthcare providers, understanding them provides important insight into the mental health of Indigenous migrants. For example, people reporting suffering from *nervios* are often diagnosed with mood disorders (Donlan and Lee, 2010). However, the dismissal of these health conditions by doctors who don’t understand the cultural context of Indigenous migrants can further encourage their reluctance to seek out medical care.

Donlan and Lee (2010) find that Indigenous migrants are more likely to have higher stress levels than non-Indigenous (*mestizo*) migrants, with Indigenous women having particularly high stress levels. Indigenous women were also more likely to report experiencing a culture-bound syndrome. Indigenous migrants who were literate in Spanish were less likely to experience culture-bound syndromes and Indigenous migrants with higher levels of educational attainment were less likely to report having a depressive syndrome. Research from California by Alderete, et al. (1999) also shows Indigenous migrants to have higher rates of depressive and mood disorders than *mestizos* – this is also notable given the healthcare access gaps for Indigenous migrants that may make a formal diagnosis harder to obtain. Donlan and Lee (2010) argue the cultural belief systems of Indigenous migrants combine with their marginalization and exclusion in American society to create an

environment that discourages and prevents them from accessing healthcare. These mental health trends are especially noticeable during the initial years of settlement in the US, highlighting the need for social and emotional support for new arrivals. Indeed, literacy and adult education programs have shown promise in alleviating some of the mental health challenges faced by newly arrived Indigenous migrants (Donlan and Lee, 2010). Not only do higher levels of literacy and education reduce the likelihood of mental health conditions, but the social and community aspects of these programs can encourage the development of expanded social networks that provide further emotional and instrumental support.

**v. Social Determinants of Health and Immigrant Incorporation for US Migrant Farmworkers**

Immigrant communities do recognize the social determinants of health at play in the areas they live. In a study of an Oregon Latino immigrant community, those surveyed understood how their neighborhood characteristics positively and negatively impacted their health – encouraging the maintenance of traditional cultural activities and ensuring tight-knit families and communities were seen as positive for health, while poverty, discrimination, and a lack of community safety and resources were viewed as barriers to good health (Mendez-Luck, et al., 2015). While people surveyed in this community also recognized the most prevalent physical health problems among their population (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, and obesity), their understandings of “health” were much broader, encompassing physical, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing (Mendez-Luck, et al., 2015).

Indeed, an understanding of the role social determinants play in migrant health outcomes sheds light on the many barriers they face to good health. The social gradient of health describes the phenomenon where people lower in the socioeconomic hierarchy have shorter life expectancies and poorer health outcomes than more advantaged people (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003). Hamilton, et



al. (2019) find a similar health gradient for migrant farmworkers in the US by legal status. Relative to documented farmworkers, undocumented farmworkers had lower rates of musculoskeletal pain and chronic health conditions. Using NAWS data, naturalized US citizens had worse health than legal permanent residents, who in turn had poorer health outcomes than undocumented migrants (Hamilton, et al., 2019). Given the disadvantage, marginalization, and legal uncertainty undocumented people face in the US, this health gradient by legal status is unexpected. Length of time spent in the US could explain this phenomenon – increased acculturation through more time lived in the US can lead to poorer health outcomes and behaviors (undocumented migrants are expected to have spent less time in the US compared to naturalized citizens and legal permanent residents). However, even after controlling for factors like years spent in the US and English language ability, Hamilton, et al. (2019) continue to see these health inequities by legal status, suggesting there are unobserved characteristics that result in these differences, possibly because migrants who come to the US undocumented are positively selected based on their health, wellbeing, and physical ability to migrate.

It's important to consider, however, that these findings depend on self-reporting of chronic health conditions and pain. Given that undocumented migrants especially have challenges accessing health care, it's possible for chronic conditions to go undiagnosed. While the reporting of pain is independent of whether one has access to healthcare, there may be reasons for farmworkers to downplay or dismiss their pain, perhaps worrying about their job security.

Despite these health inequities, Latin American immigrants to the US and US-born Latinos often exhibit improved health outcomes and behaviors relative to other racial and ethnic groups, even though Latinos, whether foreign-born or US-born, tend to have below average socioeconomic status (SES), which is associated with worse health outcomes (Link and Phelan, 1995). This apparent contradiction between SES and health outcomes is known as the Latino Health Paradox. In the

strongest interpretations of this paradox, first-generation Latino migrants have higher survival rates than all other racial and ethnic groups in the US, including second- and third-generation Latino (Abraído-Lanza, et al., 1999; Palloni and Arias, 2004). However, weaker interpretations of the paradox show that while Latino immigrants have relatively better health outcomes than expected in some domains, particularly considering their lower SES levels, these outcomes are not necessarily better than other ethnic and racial groups, especially those of non-Latino whites (Markides and Eschbach, 2005). For example, CDC data from 2009 – 2013 show that Latino had lower death rates than non-Latino whites for nine out of the top fifteen causes of death in the US, including cancer and heart disease (Dominguez, et al., 2015). Latinos had significantly higher death rates from diabetes, chronic liver disease, and homicide compared to non-Latino whites, along with a significantly higher prevalence of diabetes and obesity. This more nuanced understanding of the Latino Health Paradox better reflects the reality that Latino health outcomes are highly variable and contingent on multiple social determinants of health.

Creighton, et al. (2012) show the Latino Health Paradox varies between different health behaviors and outcomes. For example, Latino migrants have a weaker advantage relative to other racial and ethnic groups in nutrition, exercise, substance abuse, and smoking. When controlling for sociodemographic factors (such as age or SES), Latinos are less likely to drink alcohol and smoke, but also less likely to exercise and more likely to have a higher body mass index (Abraído-Lanza, et al., 2005). Contrary to some conclusions of the Latino Health Paradox, longer time lived in the US results in some improvements in self-rated health and health care usage among Latinos (Creighton, et al., 2012). This may be associated with a higher likelihood of better working conditions, wages, and SES the longer a person lives in the US. However, cross-sectional measures in many acculturation studies do not take into account earlier periods of poverty in the lives of these immigrants and thus may not account for the accumulative stress and disadvantage from these earlier episodes

(Riosmena, et al., 2015). Given that a primary motivation of international migration is often to improve one's economic situation (Massey, et al., 1998) and the migration process can be traumatic, the health impacts of accumulative stress can be significant. With greater acculturation and longer time lived in the US, the general trend is for health to worsen and for health behaviors to gradually match those of native-born US citizens (Finch, et al., 2004). The assumption being that US health behaviors, like diet and physical activity, are worse than those in migrants' origin communities. One basic argument around diet and acculturation is that with increasing acculturation, immigrants adopt less healthy diets and behaviors, but Ayala (2008) argues the relationship is significantly more complex and less conclusive than that. Indeed, it is difficult to generalize the relationship between acculturation and diet because of the specificity and uniqueness of the acculturation process across different places. The history of migration to a specific neighborhood, the size and density of the Latino migrant population, and the role of social networks in advancing or slowing acculturation all play a role in changing the acculturation process such that it is a challenge to generalize the acculturation experience of one neighborhood to the entire Latino community in the US (Ayala, 2008).

Using data from the National Health Interview Survey, Abraído-Lanza, et al. (2005) find mixed results about the impact of acculturation on health behaviors – higher acculturation among Latinos led to an increase in some unhealthy behaviors, including alcohol consumption, smoking, and BMI, but it also led to an increase in healthy behaviors like exercise and physical activity. Focusing only on acculturation can obscure many of the structural factors that can lead to worse health outcomes and behaviors. For example, acculturation models tend to ignore or downplay the role the social and political context (i.e., social determinants of health), including social acceptability, racial discrimination, and housing segregation, that impact the process of acculturation (Arcia, et al., 2001). Indeed, Finch, et al. (2004) show that it's not only the length of time lived in the US that

contributes to worsening health and health behaviors, but also English language usage and the amount of acculturation stressors a person experiences, including stress about legal status, discrimination, and English language ability. With greater time lived in the US, the cumulative exposure to each of these stressors has different impacts on one's health – stress about legal status and discrimination have a clear relationship with poorer mental health, while lower fluency in English may create barriers to accessing preventative health care services (Finch, et al., 2004; McClure, et al., 2015). Of course, mental health problems impact one's physical health and vice versa, so each of these stressors negatively influences a person's entire wellbeing.

### III. Data and Methods

The US Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) is a nationally representative, random-sample survey of agricultural workers. Cross-sections of the NAWS have been conducted annually since 1989; the most recent public dataset is from 2020. This research combines data collected from 2016 to 2020 in order to provide a more statistically robust sample size. NAWS documentation states at least two consecutive years of data should be combined to conduct robust analyses – a sampling weight variable is included with the dataset and is used whenever multiple years of data are combined for analysis.

NAWS was originally designed in response to the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act to understand if this legislation resulted in a shortage of agricultural workers in the US (Kandilov & Kandilov, 2010). Over 70,000 agricultural workers have been interviewed since the survey began. The number of agricultural workers surveyed each year varies – typical sample sizes range from 3,000 to 5,000, although recent sample sizes have been smaller (2,000 to 2,500). Each survey year is divided into three survey cycles to capture seasonal variations in agricultural work – this makes it more likely that migrant/seasonal laborers are captured. NAWS uses a multi-stage random sample to identify respondents and ensure a representative sample across twelve US regions and farm labor areas (FLAs), counties, ZIP codes, and employers within those regions. The core NAWS questionnaire collects data on worker and household demographics, employment history, migration and legal status, earnings and benefits, workplace environment, health and safety, housing, and usage of social services. Particularly relevant to this study, NAWS asks questions on Indigenous self-identification and Indigenous language usage (specifically including Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers). The questionnaire, however, is only provided in English and Spanish. Supplemental questions are also administered – in the past, these have included more in-depth questions on health, such as occupational injuries, pesticide exposure, and mental health. NAWS

does not include workers who do not engage in crop-related work (even if they work for an employer that is otherwise part of the survey) nor does it include agricultural workers in the US on an H-2A visa (for temporary agricultural work).

NAWS data has been used to analyze a variety of themes: agricultural labor markets (Li & Reimer, 2020), the relationships between legal status and occupational hazards (Kandel & Donato, 2009) and wages and health insurance (Kandilov & Kandilov, 2010; Chung & Leigh, 2015), labor migration (Alves Pena, 2009; 2014; Fan, et al., 2015), worker injuries and adverse health outcomes (Reid & Schenker, 2016; Tonozzi & Layne, 2016), and the psychological demands of agricultural work (Grzywacz, et al., 2014). There is a clear focus on health outcomes in the scholarship using NAWS data. While data on indigeneity is available in NAWS, indigeneity or other ethnic difference is not typically acknowledged in the above-mentioned studies, even with there being large numbers of Indigenous farmworkers, particularly on the West Coast. Rather, legal status is the most studied variable. When race and ethnicity are considered, the focus is on the broad category of Latino, which does not capture the complexity of the migrant agricultural worker community.

This research uses multiple regression to model the relationship between the dependent variables (shown in Table 4.1) and key demographic predictor variables including geographic region, legal status, educational attainment, age, gender, English language usage (speaking or reading English), poverty status, and years spent in the US. I also create categories of comparison for Indigenous identity, language usage, and national origin: (1) Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers, (2) Indigenous Mexicans who speak another Indigenous language, (3) Indigenous Mexicans who do not speak an Indigenous language, (4) non-Indigenous Mexican-born, and (5) US-born. These categories highlight the heterogeneity of the Mexican farmworker population along multiple dimensions.

In modeling the relationships between these variables, I measure the effects of the demographic variables on the outcomes of the survey questions. Given that the responses for the dependent variables are binary outcomes (yes or no), I use logistic regression models. While the default output gives regression coefficients, I instead compute odds ratios which provide the odds of a particular outcome for a specific group if all other variables are held constant – for example, the odds of a farmworker who identifies as Indigenous having health insurance. Including odds ratios may give more intuitive and easier to interpret results.

For the predictor variables I've chosen specific reference groups (marked by \* in table 4.2) for ease of analysis and comparison. For many variables the reference group is the largest group (e.g., farmworkers from California) or either the first or last category (e.g., less than primary education for educational attainment).

**Table 4.1: Dependent Variables for Chapter 4**

Category	Question	Response Choices
<p><b>Health Conditions</b></p>	<p>Have you ever in your whole life been told by a doctor or nurse that you have the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Asthma</b></li> <li>● <b>Diabetes</b></li> <li>● <b>High Blood Pressure</b></li> <li>● <b>Tuberculosis</b></li> <li>● <b>Heart Disease</b></li> <li>● <b>Urinary Tract Infections</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No: 96.04%</li> <li>● Yes: 3.96%</li> <li>● No: 90.36%</li> <li>● Yes: 9.64%</li> <li>● No: 85.08%</li> <li>● Yes: 14.92%</li> <li>● No: 98.15%</li> <li>● Yes: 1.85%</li> <li>● No: 98.09%</li> <li>● Yes: 1.91%</li> <li>● No: 96.89%</li> <li>● Yes: 3.11%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health Care Access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Health Insurance:</b> Does the farmworker have health insurance?</li> <li>● <b>US Health Care Usage:</b> In the last two years have you used any type of health care services from doctors, nurses, dentists, clinics, or hospitals in the U.S.?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No: 50.57%</li> <li>● Yes: 49.43%</li> <li>● No: 33.70%</li> <li>● Yes: 66.30%</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Foreign Health Care Usage:</b> How about in a foreign country (e.g., Mexico) have you used any type of health services in the last two years?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No: 90.27%</li> <li>● Yes: 9.73%</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health Care Facilities and Payment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Community Health Center / Migrant Health Clinic:</b> The last time you used a health care provider, where did you go (what kind of place was it)?</li> <li>● <b>Private Doctor:</b> The last time you used a health care provider, where did you go (what kind of place was it)?</li> <li>● <b>Hospital or ER:</b> The last time you used a health care provider, where did you go (what kind of place was it)?</li> <li>● <b>Out of Pocket:</b> The last time you got attention from a healthcare provider who paid the majority of the cost?</li> <li>● <b>Medicaid/Medicare:</b> The last time you got attention from a healthcare provider who paid the majority of the cost?</li> <li>● <b>Employer Provided Plan:</b> The last time you got attention from a healthcare provider who paid the majority of the cost?</li> <li>● <b>Self-Purchased Plan:</b> The last time you got attention from a healthcare provider who paid the majority of the cost?</li> <li>● <b>Public Clinic:</b> The last time you got attention from a healthcare provider who paid the majority of the cost?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No: 67.54%</li> <li>● Yes: 32.46%</li> <li>● No: 57.82%</li> <li>● Yes: 42.18%</li> <li>● No: 89.63%</li> <li>● Yes: 10.37%</li> <li>● No: 67.18%</li> <li>● Yes: 32.82%</li> <li>● No: 82.66%</li> <li>● Yes: 17.34%</li> <li>● No: 84.44%</li> <li>● Yes: 15.56%</li> <li>● No: 86.58%</li> <li>● Yes: 13.42%</li> <li>● No: 89.09%</li> <li>● Yes: 10.91%</li> </ul>

<p><b>Barriers to Health Care Access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Too Expensive:</b> When you want to get health care in the U.S. what are the main difficulties you face?</li>   <li>● <b>Any Difficulty (Besides Cost):</b> When you want to get health care in the U.S. what are the main difficulties you face?</li>   <li>● <b>No Need for Health Care:</b> When you want to get health care in the U.S. what are the main difficulties you face? (I don't know. I've never needed it.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No: 75.73%</li> <li>● Yes: 24.27%</li>   <li>● No: 95.94%</li> <li>● Yes: 4.06%</li>   <li>● No: 87.11%</li> <li>● Yes: 12.89%</li> </ul>
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**Table 4.2: Predictor Variables for Chapter 4**  
 (\* Reference groups)

<b>Language/Identity/National Origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers</li> <li>• Other Mexican Indigenous language speakers</li> <li>• Indigenous Mexican migrants – Spanish or English speakers</li> <li>• Non-Indigenous Mexican migrants*</li> <li>• US-born farmworkers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers: 4.53%</b></li> <li>• <b>Other Mexican Indigenous language speakers: 1.73%</b></li> <li>• <b>Indigenous Mexican migrants – Spanish or English speakers: 0.51%</b></li> <li>• <b>Non-Indigenous Mexican migrants: 66.90%</b></li> <li>• <b>US-born farmworkers: 26.32%</b></li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	14 - 94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean: 40.37, Standard Error: 0.342</b></li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male*</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Male: 74.81%</b></li> <li>• <b>Female: 25.19%</b></li> </ul>
<b>Educational attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than primary* (0 – 5 years)</li> <li>• Primary (6 – 8 years)</li> <li>• Intermediate (9 – 11 years)</li> <li>• Secondary (12 – 15 years)</li> <li>• University+ (16+ years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Less than primary (0 – 5 years): 20.82%</b></li> <li>• <b>Primary (6 – 8 years): 25.95%</b></li> <li>• <b>Intermediate (9 – 11 years): 22.17%</b></li> <li>• <b>Secondary (12 – 15 years): 27.59%</b></li> <li>• <b>University+ (16+ years): 3.47%</b></li> </ul>
<b>Region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East</li> <li>• Southeast</li> <li>• Midwest</li> <li>• Southwest</li> <li>• Northwest</li> <li>• California*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>East: 12.25%</b></li> <li>• <b>Southeast: 11.49%</b></li> <li>• <b>Midwest: 8.68%</b></li> <li>• <b>Southwest: 8.24%</b></li> <li>• <b>Northwest: 16.38%</b></li> <li>• <b>California: 42.95%</b></li> </ul>
<b>Poverty Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above Poverty Level*</li> <li>• Below Poverty Level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Above Poverty Level: 81.52%</b></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Below Poverty Level:</b> 18.48%</li> </ul>
<b>Time Spent in the US</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 – 63 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mean:</b> 20.90, <b>Standard Error:</b> 0.310</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen*</li> <li>• Green Card</li> <li>• Other Work Authorization</li> <li>• Unauthorized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Citizen:</b> 31.80%</li> <li>• <b>Green Card:</b> 21.26%</li> <li>• <b>Other Work Authorization:</b> 1.60%</li> <li>• <b>Unauthorized:</b> 45.34%</li> </ul>
<b>Speaks English</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not at All*</li> <li>• A Little</li> <li>• Somewhat</li> <li>• Well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not at All:</b> 26.70%</li> <li>• <b>A Little:</b> 31.31%</li> <li>• <b>Somewhat:</b> 13.09%</li> <li>• <b>Well:</b> 28.90%</li> </ul>
<b>Reads English</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not at All*</li> <li>• A Little</li> <li>• Somewhat</li> <li>• Well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not at All:</b> 38.47%</li> <li>• <b>A Little:</b> 24.16%</li> <li>• <b>Somewhat:</b> 9.33%</li> <li>• <b>Well:</b> 28.03%</li> </ul>

## **IV. Results and Discussion**

### **i. Health Issues**

Overall, most of the health issues asked about in NAWS are relatively uncommon. The lower reported prevalence of some of these health issues is likely associated with limited access to health care, especially for people with fewer financial resources, which describes many of the people captured in this survey. People below the poverty line are significantly less likely to report having high blood pressure, heart disease, tuberculosis, and urinary tract infections than people above the poverty line as seen in Table 4.3. This mix of chronic and infectious disease may reflect lower access to health care overall. Women are more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure (and urinary tract infections, but this is more biologically determined than socially determined) – these specific diseases may be more commonly diagnosed as part of prenatal care as they are associated with high-risk pregnancies. Overall, ethnic identity, language use, and national origin do not appear to have a significant influence on disease prevalence.

Focusing on the individual diseases in more detail, nobody who identified as Indigenous in the 2016 – 2020 survey rounds said they had been diagnosed with asthma. As discussed in the previous paragraph, this could be a reflection of limited access to health care to receive a diagnosis or a lack of awareness of the disease and symptoms. Among the rest of the population, other variables, such as age, poverty status, and time spent in the US have no significant association with asthma diagnosis.

Age and gender are significant predictors of a diabetes diagnosis – each additional year of life increases one's odds of being diagnosed by about 6%, while women have about 70% higher odds of being diagnosed compared to men as shown in Table 4.3. This may reflect a higher prevalence of diabetes in women, but more likely shows that women are more likely to seek out health care or are

**Table 4.3: Odds Ratios of Variables on Health Conditions**

		Asthma	Diabetes	High Blood Pressure	Tuberculosis	Heart Disease	Urinary Tract Infections
<b>Language/Identity/National Origin</b>	Mexican-Born (Non-Indigenous) (base)						
	Mixtec and Zapotec Speakers	N/A	0.516* (0.196)	0.673 (0.226)	1.150 (0.677)	1.044 (0.659)	0.848 (0.523)
	Other Mexican Indigenous Language Speakers	N/A	1.236 (0.852)	2.628 (1.556)	0.257 (0.271)	N/A	0.909 (0.866)
	Indigenous Mexican (Spanish- or English-speakers)	N/A	0.132** (0.118)	0.0186*** (0.0217)	0.189 (0.243)	0.183 (0.229)	6.140** (5.612)
	US-Born	0.815 (1.089)	0.318 (0.278)	0.673 (0.545)	N/A	N/A	3.739 (4.706)
<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)						
	Women	1.509 (0.558)	1.559** (0.321)	1.651*** (0.303)	1.726 (0.573)	1.279 (0.437)	2.563** (0.941)
	California (base)						
<b>Region</b>	East	0.402 (0.396)	1.414 (0.428)	0.975 (0.271)	2.587* (1.451)	1.829 (1.002)	0.692 (0.344)
	Southeast	0.721 (0.497)	0.983 (0.332)	1.078 (0.268)	0.616 (0.321)	1.321 (0.901)	0.695 (0.329)
	Midwest	N/A	1.888 (0.833)	1.320 (0.520)	0.254 (0.270)	0.365 (0.387)	0.557 (0.510)
	Southwest	0.790 (0.490)	1.046 (0.343)	0.943 (0.281)	1.369 (0.937)	0.396* (0.217)	2.665 (1.701)
	Northwest	0.840 (0.336)	1.089 (0.237)	0.836 (0.164)	1.319 (0.539)	0.877 (0.405)	1.550 (0.626)
	Above Poverty Level (base)						
	<b>Poverty Status</b>						

	Below Poverty Level	1.829 (0.804)	1.135 (0.277)	0.617** (0.140)	0.497* (0.193)	0.263*** (0.112)	0.256*** (0.124)
<b>Legal Status</b>	Citizen (base)						
	Green Card	1.853 (0.895)	1.197 (0.352)	1.280 (0.312)	0.541 (0.235)	0.694 (0.420)	1.070 (0.683)
	Other Work Auth.	2.564 (2.758)	0.529 (0.387)	0.639 (0.423)	0.126*** (0.0949)	1.954 (2.252)	2.300 (2.031)
	Unauthorized	1.519 (0.990)	0.575* (0.189)	0.869 (0.219)	0.0925*** (0.0515)	1.065 (0.788)	1.664 (1.090)
	Not at All (base)						
	A Little	0.840 (0.709)	1.338 (0.397)	2.181*** (0.538)	3.767** (2.447)	1.254 (0.644)	0.894 (0.471)
	Somewhat	1.192 (1.304)	1.276 (0.634)	1.938* (0.713)	3.424* (2.242)	0.865 (0.436)	1.642 (1.095)
<b>Speak English</b>	Well	2.509 (2.834)	1.698 (1.074)	2.083 (1.293)	0.204 (0.308)	0.841 (0.577)	0.175 (0.231)
	Not at All (base)						
	A Little	2.103 (1.627)	0.914 (0.257)	0.647* (0.149)	1.755 (0.914)	0.898 (0.470)	1.103 (0.553)
	Somewhat	2.011 (2.302)	0.794 (0.463)	0.539 (0.234)	1.029 (0.582)	0.594 (0.343)	0.341 (0.250)
	Well	4.434 (4.538)	1.253 (0.838)	0.722 (0.448)	28.16*** (36.18)	1.558 (1.095)	1.393 (1.504)
	<b>Time Spent in US</b>	0.979 (0.0346)	0.994 (0.0121)	0.999 (0.0102)	0.983 (0.0274)	1.033 (0.0244)	1.005 (0.0271)
	<b>Observations</b>	4,335	4,961	4,962	4,928	4,817	4,960

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

receiving diagnoses as part of prenatal care. Variables associated with increased stress levels or mental health concerns, which can influence the development of diabetes are not associated with a higher likelihood of being diagnosed, such as poverty status, educational attainment, English language ability, and legal status. Time spent in the US is also not a significant predictor of a diabetes diagnosis – one’s odds of being diagnosed are relatively the same regardless of the number of years a farmworker has lived in the US.

Like with diabetes, age and gender are significant predictors of being diagnosed with high blood pressure – each additional year lived increases one’s odds of being diagnosed by about 8%, while women have about 65% higher odds of being diagnosed compared to men. Living below the poverty line is associated with about 35% lower odds of being diagnosed compared to those living above the poverty line. Respondents that can speak English, even limited amounts, have significantly higher odds (two to three times higher) of being diagnosed with high blood pressure compared to people that speak no English. This may reflect the role language barriers play in preventing people from getting an accurate diagnosis or from getting their diagnosis accurately communicated to them.

The case of tuberculosis highlights a clear economic inequity between people living above and below the poverty line. Those living below the poverty line have significantly lower odds of being diagnosed. Their odds are about 60% lower than for those above the poverty line, showing the potential obstacle of health care costs. Respondents who were living in the US undocumented or with some kind of work authorization have much lower odds of being diagnosed with tuberculosis – about 90% lower than those of an American citizen.

As with the other chronic health issues surveyed (diabetes and high blood pressure) increased age is associated with higher odds of being diagnosed with heart disease. People living below the poverty line have about 80% lower odds of being diagnosed compared to those above the poverty line, which may again highlight the financial barriers to accessing health care and receiving a



diagnosis. Like with diabetes and high blood pressure, the number of years spent in the US is not associated with significantly different odds of being diagnosed with heart disease.

## **ii. Health Care Access**

About half of farmworkers in the survey are covered by health insurance, with about two-thirds having used any type of US health care in the previous two years. Less than 10% have used health care services in another country over the same period. This still leaves a sizeable proportion of farmworkers that haven't recently used any health care services. In terms of the types of health care providers most recently used, farmworkers utilize a variety – primarily community health centers, migrant health clinics, and private doctors, with a smaller proportion using a hospital or ER. Payment methods for health care are likewise diverse with out-of-pocket payments being the most common (about one-third of surveyed farmworkers). Medicaid or Medicare, employer-provided or self-purchased insurance plans, and free public clinics are also common sources of payment.

There are several notable findings from this set of questions. Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers are significantly less likely than non-Indigenous Mexican farmworkers to have health insurance and significantly more likely to have last sought health care at a hospital or ER as seen in Table 4.4. Women are more likely than men to have health insurance, specifically Medicaid, and they are also more likely to use US health care services – these findings are related to their need for pregnancy-related care and the associated coverage from state Medicaid programs. Given concerns over health care costs, farmworkers living below the poverty line are about half as likely as those above the poverty line to access health care. Additionally, non-citizens, but especially undocumented people, are significantly less likely to have health insurance, which means they are also more likely to pay out-of-pocket for health care and utilize free public clinics as seen in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4: Odds Ratios of Variables on Health Care Access and Health Care Facilities

		Health Insurance	US Health Care Usage	Foreign Health Care Usage	Community Health Center / Migrant Health Clinic	Private Doctor	Hospital / ER
<b>Language/Identity/National Origin</b>	Mexican-Born (Non-Indigenous) (base)						
	Mixtec and Zapotec Speakers	0.581** (0.148)	0.863 (0.324)	0.933 (0.513)	0.440* (0.189)	1.601 (0.635)	2.662* (1.408)
	Other Mexican Indigenous Language Speakers	1.153 (0.448)	1.526 (0.754)	0.578 (0.433)	1.866 (1.143)	0.715 (0.456)	0.932 (0.833)
	Indigenous Mexican (Spanish- or English-speakers)	1.813 (1.311)	0.634 (0.898)	0.357 (0.398)	N/A	0.346 (0.364)	16.63* (25.74)
	US-Born	1.707 (1.131)	0.421 (0.341)	0.326 (0.313)	2.666 (2.713)	0.720 (0.701)	2.763 (3.453)
	Men (base)						
<b>Gender</b>	Women	1.361** (0.197)	3.811*** (0.908)	0.391*** (0.123)	1.084 (0.234)	0.910 (0.216)	1.062 (0.319)
	California (base)						
<b>Region</b>	East	0.248*** (0.0791)	1.270 (0.450)	2.022 (1.020)	1.921* (0.722)	0.361** (0.163)	0.954 (0.530)
	Southeast	0.133***	0.827	0.854	1.157	1.424	0.661
	Midwest	(0.0350)	(0.237)	(0.403)	(0.417)	(0.572)	(0.387)
		0.281***	0.479*	4.491***	0.702	1.469	3.460*
		(0.0895)	(0.197)	(2.459)	(0.385)	(0.789)	(2.247)
	Southwest	0.231***	0.322***	3.245***	1.084	0.650	2.674
		(0.0501)	(0.0976)	(1.149)	(0.489)	(0.229)	(1.601)
	Northwest	0.246***	0.863	1.489	1.330	0.582*	3.623***
		(0.0390)	(0.205)	(0.545)	(0.345)	(0.161)	(1.337)

<b>Poverty Status</b>	Above Poverty Level (base)								
	Below Poverty Level	0.731*	0.597**	2.799***	1.312	0.664	1.658*	(0.129)	(0.503)
<b>Legal Status</b>	Citizen (base)								
	Green Card	0.627*	0.786	0.683	1.703	0.963	0.662	(0.166)	(0.350)
	Other Work Auth.	0.167***	0.391	0.280	6.042**	0.287*	0.0830**	(0.0790)	(0.0991)
	Unauthorized	0.129***	0.513*	0.0860***	2.451**	0.555	1.261	(0.0349)	(0.710)
	Not at All (base)		(0.207)	(0.0388)	(1.066)	(0.215)			
	A Little	1.462**	1.824***	0.559	1.035	0.952	1.102	(0.253)	(0.442)
<b>Speak English</b>	Somewhat	1.016	4.165***	0.398**	1.128	0.969	0.610	(0.254)	(0.382)
	Well	2.016	1.850	0.198*	0.770	0.393	0.472	(1.252)	(1.983)
	Not at All (base)		(1.181)	(0.164)	(0.594)	(0.360)			
	A Little	0.934	0.742	1.774	1.409	0.723	0.942	(0.166)	(0.442)
	Somewhat	1.043	0.711	2.181	1.566	0.587	0.844	(0.277)	(0.609)
<b>Read English</b>	Well	0.524	0.835	0.543	2.166	1.002	0.804	(0.345)	(3.391)
	Not at All (base)		(0.568)	(0.462)	(1.656)	(0.925)			
	A Little	1.034***	1.032**	0.945***	0.956***	1.033**	1.048*	(0.0101)	(0.0288)
<b>Time Spent in US</b>		(0.0150)	(0.0182)	(0.0158)	(0.0164)				
<b>Observations</b>		4,949	2,592	2,596	1,633	1,643	1,631		

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.5: Odds Ratios of Variables on Health Care Payment**

		Out of Pocket	Medicaid / Medicare	Employer Provided Plan	Self-Purchased Plan	Public Clinic	
<b>Language/Identity/National Origin</b>	Mexican-Born (Non-Indigenous) (base)						
	Mixtec and Zapotec Speakers	1.568 (0.840)	1.360 (0.895)	0.431 (0.406)	0.0287*** (0.0314)	0.638 (0.373)	
		Other Mexican Indigenous Language Speakers	2.866* (1.599)	0.285 (0.288)	0.452 (0.435)	1.795 (1.600)	0.519 (0.379)
	Indigenous Mexican (Spanish- or English-speakers)		1.848 (1.894)	N/A	3.057 (2.946)	0.0811* (0.113)	N/A
		US-Born	0.807 (0.842)	0.397 (0.482)	1.392 (1.815)	0.368 (0.531)	41.50*** (46.26)
	<b>Gender</b>		Men (base)				
		Women	1.205 (0.293)	1.973** (0.523)	0.408*** (0.110)	1.423 (0.563)	0.604 (0.191)
			California (base)				
		East		2.302**	0.375	0.146***	0.741
		<b>Region</b>	Southeast	(0.894)	(0.231)	(0.105)	(0.528)
2.083**				0.0689***	1.282	0.374	2.203
Midwest			(0.704)	(0.0427)	(0.600)	(0.256)	(1.143)
			2.088	0.103**	0.745	1.323	2.549
Southwest			(1.167)	(0.108)	(0.485)	(1.235)	(1.661)
			4.998***	0.166***	0.0220***	0.845	0.938
Northwest	(2.046)	(0.0909)	(0.0129)	(0.464)	(0.602)		
	1.711**	0.506*	0.720	0.762	1.346		
		(0.464)	(0.208)	(0.292)	(0.332)	(0.501)	

<b>Poverty Status</b>	Above Poverty Level (base)								
	Below Poverty Level	0.908 (0.236)	4.976*** (1.447)	0.224*** (0.0980)	0.163*** (0.0789)	0.697 (0.263)			
<b>Legal Status</b>	Citizen (base)								
	Green Card	1.713 (0.641)	1.028 (0.367)	0.583 (0.225)	1.255 (0.478)	4.354*** (2.453)			
	Other Work Auth.	18.48*** (12.33)	0.0405*** (0.0415)	0.186** (0.157)	0.0191*** (0.0228)	10.68*** (8.505)			
	Unauthorized	4.926*** (1.770)	0.327** (0.146)	0.199*** (0.0907)	0.357* (0.211)	17.54*** (9.156)			
	Not at All (base)								
	A Little	0.844 (0.278)	2.203* (0.890)	0.315*** (0.119)	2.097 (1.184)	0.767 (0.274)			
<b>Speak English</b>	Somewhat	0.928 (0.369)	1.571 (0.739)	0.456 (0.239)	1.423 (0.811)	1.021 (0.547)			
	Well	1.500 (1.120)	0.339 (0.386)	1.353 (1.200)	1.583 (1.494)	0.472 (0.380)			
	Not at All (base)								
	A Little	1.818** (0.496)	0.335*** (0.130)	1.289 (0.464)	0.876 (0.473)	1.092 (0.396)			
<b>Read English</b>	Somewhat	1.318 (0.607)	0.674 (0.323)	0.870 (0.505)	0.345* (0.191)	1.263 (0.731)			
	Well	1.055 (0.786)	2.569 (2.811)	0.240 (0.235)	2.059 (1.869)	0.923 (0.773)			
	Not at All (base)								
<b>Time Spent in US</b>		1.013 (0.0168)	1.013 (0.0212)	0.972 (0.0218)	0.971 (0.0290)	0.987 (0.0213)			
	<b>Observations</b>	1,648	1,638	1,648	1,636	1,638			

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Geography is another key determinant of health care access. California farmworkers are significantly more likely than farmworkers in any other region to have health insurance. Therefore, farmworkers in most other regions are more likely to pay for health care out-of-pocket. Farmworkers in two regions – the Midwest and southwest – are more likely to have received health care recently in another country and not in the US. This highlights the possibility of farmworkers from both regions either being more likely to be recent arrivals to the US or more likely to engage in circular migration to their home community where they receive their health care.

More specifically, in terms of whether a farmworker has used any kind of health care services in the US over the previous two years, women have about four times higher odds of doing so compared to men as seen in Table 4.4. Given their increased likelihood of having health insurance in the first place and potential need for care before, during, and after childbirth, this is unsurprising. Farmworkers in some regions have a significantly lower likelihood of using health care services relative to the largest farmworker population in California. Farmworkers in the Midwest and southwest have about 50% to 70% lower odds. Longer time spent in the US is associated with increased odds of using health care services – odds increase by about 3% with each additional year lived in this country.

Given the possibility of circular migration and the number of recent arrivals, it is useful to also look at whether migrant farmworkers are using health care services in their home countries in the previous two years. Women, who were significantly more likely to access health care services in the US, are significantly less likely than men to do so outside the US – their odds are about 60% lower than for men.

Interestingly, in the regions where farmworkers have low odds of using health care services in the US (the Midwest and Southwest), they have significantly higher odds of accessing health care in another country. Relative to California farmworkers, farmworkers in the Southwest are over three

times more likely and farmworkers in the Midwest are four times more likely to use health care services outside the US. As mentioned earlier, this could reflect many recent arrivals who have sought out medical care before leaving their countries or migrant farmworkers engaged in circular migration who find health care easier to access at home. Thinking about the possibility of health care being accessed in home countries, farmworkers living below the poverty level have significantly higher odds of doing so – about three times higher – compared to those living above the poverty line, perhaps representing the financial barriers to utilizing health care services in the US. The uncertainties of circular migration and possibility of not being able to come back to the US after returning home are apparent in the fact that undocumented farmworkers are about significantly less likely to use health care services outside the US. Longer time spent in the US is also associated with lower odds of accessing health care outside the US – the odds decrease by about 5% with each additional year lived in this country as farmworkers become more familiarized with the American health care system or as the likelihood of return to their home countries decreases with time.

Where farmworkers receive medical care sheds light on the types of resources available and accessible to them. Here I focus on three of the most common sources of health care for farmworkers: (1) community health centers or migrant health clinics, (2) private doctors, and (3) hospitals and emergency rooms. Undocumented farmworkers and those in the US on a work authorization are also significantly more likely to use community health centers or migrant health clinics compared to US citizens or legal permanent residents. Farmworkers who have spent more time in the US are less likely to use community health centers or migrant health clinics as time goes on, perhaps reflecting greater access to other forms of health care as they incorporate themselves into the US. In the Pacific Northwest, and to a lesser extent the Midwest, farmworkers are more likely to access health care through a hospital or emergency room setting instead of through private doctors which may reflect regional differences in the resources accessible to farmworkers.

How farmworkers pay for their health care is important to understand the potential barriers to accessing care. Women farmworkers have significantly higher odds of having health insurance than men – women’s odds are about 35% higher. This is most likely due to a larger proportion of all adult women in the US being Medicaid recipients, perhaps because they are pregnant or a mother of a child under age 18 (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022a). Non-citizens have significantly lower odds of having health insurance. Relative to citizens, legal permanent residents have over 50% lower odds and those with work authorization or those who are undocumented have 90% lower odds of being insured. Undocumented immigrants are not eligible to enroll in Medicaid or CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program) nor are they able to purchase insurance through ACA (Affordable Care Act) Marketplaces. Lawfully present immigrants are eligible for Medicaid, CHIP, and ACA coverage in many cases, but fear related to immigration policy and a lack of trust prevent many from accessing these options (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022b).

Geographically, farmworkers across the country have significantly lower odds (about 75% to 85%) of having health insurance than farmworkers in California. Medi-Cal, California’s Medicaid program, has gradually expanded since 2016 to cover all low-income people under age 19, then all low-income people under age 26, and, in 2022, all low-income people over age 50, regardless of immigration status (Cha, 2022). Documented farmworkers meeting income requirements have been eligible to enroll in Medi-Cal since the initial expansion in 2014. Limited Medi-Cal coverage for emergency care is also available regardless of immigration status. Longer time spent living in the US is also associated with higher odds of having health insurance – odds increase by about 3% with each additional year lived in this country. This may reflect increased familiarity with health insurance options or an increased likelihood of meeting eligibility requirements over time. Given California’s emphasis on increasing Medicare eligibility, particularly for the undocumented population, farmworkers around the country are more likely than California farmworkers to pay for their health



care out of pocket. With nationwide variations in how states have chosen to expand their Medicaid programs, Medicaid coverage for farmworkers is significantly less likely around the US, particularly in the Southwest, Southeast, and Midwest. Employer-provided health insurance plans are relatively uncommon for farmworkers in parts of country, including the East Coast and Midwest, while being more common in California and the Southeast. The likelihood of using self-purchased health insurance plans, through ACA marketplaces, is not significantly different between California and other regions of the US. Overall, farmworkers living below the poverty line are much less likely to have either employer-provided or self-purchased insurance plans, in favor of Medicaid.

Lacking health insurance options, undocumented farmworkers (and to a lesser extent, farmworkers with a work authorization) around the country are significantly more likely to say they used a public clinic for their healthcare or that they paid out of pocket for medical services. Compared to citizens, those on a work authorization were nearly five times more likely and undocumented farmworkers were six times more likely to say their most recent health care experience was covered by a public clinic. In terms of paying for health care out of pocket, undocumented farmworkers were over four times more likely and those on a work authorization were over twelve times more likely than citizens to pay for their health care out of pocket. These findings highlight the gaps in access and coverage for the undocumented community and for those with temporary legal status.

### **iii. Barriers to Accessing Health Care in the US**

NAWS asks about ten specific challenges that may prevent farmworkers from accessing health care in the US, plus an eleventh “other” option. These financial, linguistic, cultural, societal, and physical barriers have been well-documented by academic research (Hoerster, et al., 2011; Young, et al., 2019; Pacheco, et al., 2022). Given those findings, it is surprising that very few respondents identified most

of these barriers as being issues for them – in most cases, fewer than 1% of respondents acknowledged that these factors made it difficult for them to access health care. In terms of physical access to health care, NAWS asks about a lack of access to transportation, long distances, a lack of knowledge of where health care services are available, and health centers not having the relevant services or not being open at accessible times. None of these factors presented difficulty for most respondents. Likewise, questions about cultural and linguistic barriers, such as health care workers not speaking patients' languages, patients feeling unwelcome, and concerns over health care workers not understanding patients' problems, were not reasons why the vast majority of people had difficulty accessing health care.

When looking at health care barriers overall, there are few factors that reliably show who is more likely to encounter these obstacles to accessing health care as seen in Table 4.6. However, gender, language use, and legal status stand out as notable. While these various barriers are each unique, they do broadly represent the structural and interpersonal obstacles to accessing health care. Pooling these barriers together into a general category of difficulty shows that women's odds of having any of these challenges are more than twice as high as for men. Women are more likely than men to access health care in the first place, but this inequity also reflects the barriers women face that men don't necessarily experience.

Beyond these obstacles, cost is understandably a significant barrier to accessing health care for many respondents. All Indigenous language speakers had significantly higher odds of naming health care costs as a barrier. People who are undocumented are over twice as likely as US citizens to say cost is an obstacle to accessing health care. Given the previous finding that undocumented people are least likely to have health insurance and more likely to pay for health care costs out-of-pocket, this finding is understandable.

**Table 4.6: Odds Ratios of Variables on Barriers to Health Care Access**

		<b>Too Expensive</b>	<b>Any Difficulty (Besides Cost)</b>	<b>No Need for Health Care</b>	
<b>Language/Identity/National Origin</b>	Mexican-Born (Non-Indigenous) (base)				
	Mixtec and Zapotec Speakers	2.195** (0.754)	0.949 (0.562)	0.496* (0.182)	
	Other Mexican Indigenous Language Speakers	2.758** (1.260)	0.416 (0.276)	0.807 (0.433)	
	Indigenous Mexican (Spanish- or English-speakers)	0.797 (0.716)	0.967 (1.154)	0.219* (0.182)	
	US-Born	4.588 (4.959)	N/A	0.763 (0.945)	
	<b>Gender</b>	Men (base)			
Women		1.052 (0.217)	2.352** (0.870)	0.269*** (0.0799)	
<b>Region</b>		California (base)			
	East	0.337*** (0.109)	0.369 (0.232)	1.180 (0.552)	
	Southeast	1.380 (0.394)	2.332* (1.020)	0.489 (0.239)	
	Midwest	1.032 (0.534)	0.259* (0.211)	1.997 (1.046)	
	Southwest	0.699 (0.220)	0.499 (0.378)	1.138 (0.546)	
	Northwest	0.885 (0.206)	0.525 (0.318)	0.557* (0.171)	
	<b>Poverty Status</b>	Above Poverty Level (base)			
		Below Poverty Level	0.792 (0.201)	1.242 (0.547)	1.263 (0.348)
		<b>Legal Status</b>	Citizen (base)		
	Green Card		0.564 (0.223)	0.906 (1.114)	1.301 (1.060)
Other Work Auth.	2.168 (1.378)		0.239 (0.326)	0.861 (1.042)	
Unauthorized	2.217** (0.889)		2.502 (2.897)	0.938 (0.751)	

<b>Speak English</b>	Not at All (base)			
	A Little	0.991	0.635	0.613
		(0.271)	(0.296)	(0.199)
	Somewhat	0.569*	0.603	0.301**
		(0.189)	(0.401)	(0.141)
	Well	0.460	6.025	0.532
	(0.288)	(7.140)	(0.329)	
<b>Read English</b>	Not at All (base)			
	A Little	2.952***	1.124	0.680
		(0.755)	(0.511)	(0.247)
	Somewhat	2.111*	0.655	0.799
		(0.855)	(0.537)	(0.421)
	Well	6.054***	0.167	0.399
	(3.869)	(0.258)	(0.276)	
<b>Time Spent in US</b>		1.005	0.985	0.934***
		(0.0163)	(0.0268)	(0.0194)
<b>Observations</b>		2,589	2,568	2,589

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Many respondents responded that they didn't know what difficulties they would face accessing health care because they never needed it in the first place. Understanding more about this population helps shed light on a population that could be relatively healthy and believes they don't "need" health care (even though preventive care is still necessary) or a group of people that don't even seek out health care, potentially in favor of using alternative health care solutions. Women have about 75% lower odds of responding this way than men – childbirth and the need for pre- and post-natal care could contribute to this difference. Age is not a significant predictor, even though we might expect younger people to be more likely to say they hadn't needed health care. Longer time spent in the US makes a person less likely to respond that they've never needed health care in the first place, which could indicate that some respondents haven't been in the country long enough to require health care.

Overall, it is understandable that cost would be the primary obstacle to accessing health care for the farmworker community. Given only about half of them are covered by health insurance (and health care costs can still be a burden even with insurance), this highlights the need for affordable and accessible health care, especially for people who are undocumented or otherwise have legal statuses that may limit their ability to get (affordable) health insurance. It is interesting, however, that the other potential barriers to accessing health care are so uncommon in the survey, particularly interpersonal or intercultural obstacles related to language barriers or feelings of being unwelcome.

## V. Conclusions

This research uses data from NAWS to understand the health and socioeconomic disparities that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexican farm laborers in the United States and the factors that determine these disparities. Overall, there are a few notable inequities in health outcomes or health care access based on ethnicity, language usage, and national origin. Generally, people who identify as Indigenous or speak an Indigenous language are less likely to have health insurance and more likely to say that cost is a barrier to health care. These inequities in health care access for Indigenous language speakers are significant given that a lack of preventive care can lead to more serious health conditions later. However, the social hierarchization of Mexican migrant farmworkers (as discussed in Holmes (2013)) is largely not borne out in these data, especially as it relates to disease burden or discrimination and exclusion in health care settings. There is largely no significant difference in the likelihood of Indigenous people being diagnosed with the health conditions asked about in this survey. This raises the possibility, however, that Indigenous people are not being diagnosed with these conditions or the diagnosis is not being effectively communicated in a culturally or linguistically appropriate manner.

The factors that tend to be most important in influencing health care access are gender, legal status, regional location, and poverty status. Being undocumented, below the poverty level, or living in most regions outside of California are associated with lower levels of health insurance coverage. While people who are undocumented are less likely to have health insurance coverage, they are more likely to seek out health care from community health centers, migrant health clinics, and public clinics – a finding supported by research on Oregon farmworkers by López-Cevallos, et al. (2014). These particular health care providers, beyond being affordable to people without health insurance, may also be trusted providers in the community. That is important given the high level of fear of deportation that undocumented farmworkers are likely to have. Women are more likely to have

health insurance coverage and to have sought out health care in the previous two years. While other research (e.g., Pacheco, et al., 2022) has highlighted the barriers that Indigenous women face to accessing health care, especially prenatal care, many of those barriers were not especially apparent in this chapter's findings. Cost remains a significant obstacle, but other expected issues, like the language barrier, a lack of transportation to appointments, or a lack of knowledge of where to seek out health care were not found in this research. However, other issues related to women's health, including the pervasiveness of harassment and assault in the agricultural industry, are not captured in this survey and would likely be underreported.

US farmworkers would be expected to face multiple barriers to accessing health care given that obstacles to health care access appear to be the norm and not the exception in the US. It is surprising then that when provided with eleven possible difficulties of accessing health care, relatively few chose any option besides cost. It is also interesting to note the large number of people that say they haven't accessed health care in the US because they haven't needed to – it's possible there is some implicit barrier that leads some of the people to deny a need for health care when they actually need it.

While NAWS covers a wide-ranging set of issues, there are still important gaps in its coverage. NAWS addresses a subset of health issues, but does not capture many relevant health problems, including chronic pain and musculoskeletal pain or mental health issues, like chronic stress or depression (Donlan and Lee, 2010). Mental health is certainly stigmatized and there may not be a robust vocabulary for migrant farmworkers to describe the challenges they are facing, but mental health research remains a critical need in immigrant communities. Future research should also continue to focus on the unique experiences of Indigenous migrant farm laborers in the US. Since NAWS is among the most prominent data sources for US farmworkers, the survey plays a significant role in providing data about a marginalized and vulnerable segment of the US labor force,

with Indigenous people being an especially marginalized piece of the farmworker population. With a recognition of the diversity of Indigenous farmworkers living in the US (e.g., identifying as Mixtec, Zapotec, Triqui, etc.), more detailed data collection about members of these various groups would help shed light on their different experiences in the US. Socially oriented questions related to (e.g.) witnessing or perceptions of discrimination like those seen in the LAPOP and PERLA surveys would provide useful information about all farmworkers and the social context in which they are living and working in. Future rounds of NAWS should also consider how the survey captures data on race and ethnicity. Given the large proportion of “other” responses, the current categorization of race in the survey does not reflect the ways that most farmworkers identify themselves. This divide between the reality of Indigenous farmworkers’ lives and identities and the ways the survey categorizes farmworkers leaves a consequential gap in our understanding of this population.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation explored multiple dimensions of the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans in Mexico and the United States. Using datasets with nationally representative samples of Mexicans on both sides of the border, I focused on two sides of the issue of Indigenous inequality in Mexico. First, I examined the prevailing attitudes about race and skin color to understand where public opinion stood in the context of significant social change at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Taking that understanding of public opinion as a baseline, I investigated Indigenous people's experiences with multiple forms of discrimination to see the ways public opinion about race and skin color translated into lived experiences of discrimination and unequal treatment. With the social context of Indigenous inequality in Mexico in mind, I shifted my geographic perspective to the US, a common migratory destination for Indigenous Mexicans, and narrowed my focus to a specific set of circumstances related to health inequities and health care access – sites and situations where discrimination and unequal treatment can have significant life-changing consequences.

Chapter 2's focus was on an examination of perceptions of racial difference in Mexico – the set of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that nationally representative samples of Mexicans hold about race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and skin color in their country. Mexico (and much of Latin America) has been undergoing a political shift toward the greater appreciation of multiculturalism and recognition of the needs of marginalized racial and ethnic populations, including Indigenous people and Afro-descendants (Telles and the Project on Race and Ethnicity in Latin America, 2014). While the

official political shift is happening, in the realm of public discourse Martínez Casas, et al. (2014) argue strong public support for policies to address ethnic and racial inequality may be rooted in beliefs of social justice and equality dating back to the post-revolutionary period. Despite the shift toward an official multicultural national ideology, some stereotypical beliefs and discriminatory attitudes persist. Sizeable minorities of people continue to assign individual blame to Indigenous people for their poverty, highlighting a perspective where Indigenous people are the victims of their own shortcomings, rather than victims of a social, economic, and political structure that marginalizes them and hinders opportunities for upward mobility (Orozco López & González Torres, 2021; Monroy-Gómez-Franco, 2022). One-fifth to one-quarter of those surveyed still argue that Indigenous people are poorer on average because they do not work hard enough or are less intelligent. That being said, nearly two-thirds blame Indigenous poverty on unjust treatment and over 90% believe there should be more strict laws to prevent Indigenous people from being treated unjustly. With one aspect of the multicultural turn being an increased recognition and acknowledgement of the discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of ethnoracial minorities, these findings highlight that some key multicultural beliefs have robust support in Mexico, although more data would help establish a clear trend.

The potential impact of social desirability bias on these data is worth acknowledging. People may respond to question in such a way that makes them look better to others or feel better about themselves when being asked about sensitive topics, like racist attitudes for example (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007; Larson, 2019). Social desirability bias is not easily addressed outside of the processes of survey design and the collection of survey data. If social desirability bias does significantly impact these data, support for multicultural and inclusive attitudes may be overstated, which negatively impacts our understanding of the social progress made and the effectiveness of the Mexican government's multicultural policies.

Considering the development of people's attitudes and beliefs, Camp (2020) argued that political attitudes in Mexico are determined foremost by family, school, and religion. Given the significance of these three influences, the question is whether government-led initiatives to support multiculturalism make a notable difference in the general population's attitudes on social issues or whether government-led efforts targeted toward educational and religious institutions would be more likely to shift opinion more strongly in support of multicultural policies and beliefs. Thinking about the question of whether and to what extent government policies matter in changing popular attitudes in the first place, we can also consider whether multicultural policies can serve to reinforce discriminatory ideas or harden opposition to efforts to develop a multicultural society. For example, opposition to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies by members of dominant social groups who view such policies as a threat to the status quo that keeps them in a privileged position (Iyer, 2022). Discriminatory and racist ideas that took decades and centuries to become firmly established in the popular imaginary are not easily undone over the course of a few years. Indeed, the undoing of *mestizaje* as a racial project that tried to downplay race and racism in Mexican society (Saldívar, 2014) may be difficult to accomplish, while scholars like Hale (2002) would argue *mestizaje* and multiculturalism are merely two sides of the same coin – both are state-sponsored discourses about race and ethnicity without input from minoritized racial and ethnic groups.

The datasets used in Chapters 2 and 3 – LAPOP and PERLA – have most often been used for international comparisons of Latin American countries. For that purpose, these surveys are especially useful. However, more so than with other Latin American countries, Mexico has been considered a geographically fragmented country with considerable political, economic, and social differences between the north, center, and south of the country (Camp, 2020). Beyond a rural-urban divide, which is also evident throughout Latin America, these regional differences within Mexico make it necessary to look beyond national averages if we want to best understand the nuances of

public opinion to the extent possible given the sample size available in these datasets. Where international comparative research using LAPOP and PERLA data has been most common, these data have been used less often to explore the internal dynamics within countries.

Contrary to what was expected, there were not as many significant differences in attitudes about race and skin color between Mexican regions. Southern Mexico with its larger proportion of Indigenous people did not necessarily have more accepting or inclusive attitudes about racial difference or toward Indigenous people. Given the lengthy history of Indigenous disadvantage in the region (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2019), there may be more hardened beliefs and stereotypes about Indigenous poverty. With a few exceptions, differences between regions and between rural and urban residents largely did not exist in these data. At least in terms of public opinion about these topics, the expected geographic variability was not apparent here, highlighting the fact that geography is not a significant predictor of these attitudes. There is no mistaking that Mexico is socially, economically, and politically diverse (Camp, 2020), but public opinion about race and skin color may not be as fragmented as this high level of diversity suggests. Given the relative national consistencies in opinion, further research should explore the ways national racial ideologies and discourses have been effective in creating a coherent national narrative about race and race mixture in Mexico.

It is perhaps more interesting that Indigenous people generally do not have significantly different odds of agreeing or disagreeing with opinions about race, skin color, and indigeneity compared to the *mestizo* majority, especially support for individualist, rather than structural, explanations for Indigenous poverty. While Indigenous activism and pushback against stereotypical beliefs about Indigenous people may be strong, it is possible for these attitudes to be so pervasive as to be deeply engrained in people's minds, even among Indigenous people. This can point to the potential persuasiveness and effectiveness of *mestizaje* as a national racial ideology.

As with many topics throughout this dissertation, educational attainment was the strongest predictor of the likelihood of supporting the opinions asked about in these surveys. Higher levels of education are associated with a higher likelihood of supporting beliefs that recognize the challenges faced by racial and ethnic minorities in Mexico and, more generally, the vision for a multicultural Mexico. As previously discussed, social desirability bias may be playing some role in these results – people with higher educational attainment could be trying to present themselves more positively or be trying to respond in ways they feel they are expected too, regardless of their actual beliefs. A more optimistic reading of this relationship between schooling and more inclusive attitudes refers back to Camp’s (2020) discussion of schools as important sites where political beliefs are formed.

Overall, this analysis of public opinion in Mexico highlights the blend of racial ideologies that may be influencing opinion. Beliefs that exemplify *mestizaje* and multiculturalism appear to coexist when these data were collected. As Telles and Garcia (2013) argue, *mestizaje* continues to enjoy popular support across Latin America. It is also true that a majority in Mexico and across Latin America recognize the structural challenges and obstacles facing indigenous people (Telles and Bailey, 2013), but exclusionary attitudes and stereotypes about them persist among a significant minority. *Mestizaje* and multiculturalism are not necessarily in opposition to each other, however (Hale, 2002). Indeed, Telles and Garcia (2013) contend that multicultural policies strengthen support for *mestizaje*, so this blend of support for *mestizaje* and multiculturalism may not be surprising.

Missing from these data is a clear sense of the path forward. There is recognition of the barriers to full inclusion (not assimilation) for Indigenous people, along with widespread support for more strict anti-discrimination laws and high (but less) support for indigenous people organizing to claim their rights. Approaches like these may help address the structural discrimination that Indigenous people encounter, but interpersonal discrimination will be harder to deal with.

With Chapter 2 laying a foundation for understanding attitudes about race, indigeneity, and skin color in Mexico, Chapter 3 shifts from the general population's perspective to an exploration of marginalized communities' lived experiences with discrimination. While Chapter 2's results show most people recognize the structural challenges that Indigenous people face, this does not necessarily mean they can also recognize the ways those social structures manifest themselves in real life in the form of interpersonal discrimination. While most people have reported witnessing somebody else be discriminated or treated unfairly at least once in their lives, there is still a large minority that say they have not. There are multiple possibilities of explaining this finding. Perhaps people really are not encountering discrimination in the environments they inhabit – discrimination may not be so pervasive as to be highly visible. These questions about discrimination are based on perceptions – some people may not be recognizing discrimination when they see it or, less likely, they deny its existence. If they perceive discrimination to not be a problem because they don't witness it in their daily lives, that may impact the attitudes they have about the unequal treatment of people with darker skin colors or Indigenous people, like some of the opinions asked about in Chapter 2, such as beliefs that structural barriers are not a major problem for these communities or that poverty is due to individual characteristics. However, Telles & The Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (2014) argue that the rates of witnessing discrimination in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America are actually higher than expected given the history of *mestizaje* and the past denial of the existence of racial discrimination. It may be counterintuitive to say that a higher rate of witnessing (skin color) discrimination is good, but this reflects social change in understanding and recognizing discrimination, given that a key tenet of the *mestizaje* ideology was that racism and racial categories did not exist in Mexico (Martínez Casas et al., 2014). Analyses from Chapter 2 show that people generally recognize (or claim to recognize) the structural challenges that Indigenous people and people with darker skin colors face, but it is less clear from these data to what extent

people recognize different forms of interpersonal discrimination. Indeed, there is limited research on witnessing discrimination in Latin America overall. More research is needed to delve deeper into the possible explanations of these patterns to better understand how people recognize discrimination and the vocabulary they use to define discrimination.

In general, large majorities of those surveyed have not been targeted by the types of discrimination asked about in the surveys (skin color, linguistic, economic, and gender), although economic discrimination is the most reported. Research has shown multiple forms of discrimination are common throughout Mexico (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2019). These results are most likely not a reflection of there being little to no discrimination, but instead that people may not have the vocabulary to describe the discrimination they experience (Dixon, 2019).

Frequently missing from analyses of these datasets is an exploration of intersectionality – an analytical framework originating in Black feminist thought and critical race studies that speaks to the ways an individual's or group's experiences are shaped simultaneously by multiple intersecting identities that confer different types of marginalization and exclusion or opportunity and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). It is particularly important to look at intersectionality in this chapter to better understand how multiple marginalized identities may overlap to increasing somebody's likelihood of experiencing discrimination. More specifically, I was interested in seeing how these data captured the experiences of Indigenous women – previous research has shown that their two (or more) marginalized identities may lead to them experiencing more discrimination (Bonfil-Sánchez, et al., 2017). This research has shown Indigenous women are more likely to experience economic, linguistic, and gender discrimination and possibly multiple types of discrimination at the same time.

It is, of course, difficult to fully measure people's experiences with discrimination. People may be hesitant to say they have been the target of discrimination because they do not want to relive

the trauma. This again points back to the concerns of social desirability bias identified for Chapter 2 – people may not wish to present themselves as “victims” of discrimination and may instead deny having these experiences (Dixon, 2019). They may misidentify discrimination or unequal treatment as something else entirely or be unable to pinpoint the exact reason why they were discriminated against. With these caveats in mind, exploring people’s perceptions of discrimination is meaningful, even if discrimination may be underreported. Understanding who is more likely to experience discrimination is key in developing methods of addressing it, especially subtler forms of discrimination, like microaggressions or implicit bias.

To look at one potential consequence of discrimination, I use LAPOP’s data on life satisfaction with the expectation that being the target of discrimination would lower one’s life satisfaction and decrease the odds of a positive life evaluation. The data presented in Chapter 3 contribute a nuanced discussion of race, ethnicity, and skin color to existing research on life satisfaction. Indigeneity is particularly neglected when discussing life satisfaction in Latin America, even though Indigenous people experience widespread discrimination (Martínez Casas, et al., 2014) and discrimination can have a negative impact in life satisfaction (Verkuyten, 2008). However, results show that while people are experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, discrimination generally does not have a significant negative influence on life satisfaction by itself. The only form of discrimination that had a clear relationship with life satisfaction was economic discrimination. People who were targeted by economic discrimination had significantly lower odds of having a high level of life satisfaction or life evaluation. Experiencing other types of discrimination (skin color, language, or gender) were generally not associated with an increased likelihood of having lower life satisfaction. It is true, however, that economic factors, including income and employment, are the most important in influencing one’s life satisfaction in Latin America (Rojas, 2018). It is also important to consider the ways other forms of discrimination are influenced by one’s economic



status and social standing and, given the predominant focus on economic situation, people may be misperceiving the source of the discrimination they experience as being grounded in their economic status, rather than based on their skin color, language use, or gender. Indeed, the intersectionality of discrimination (e.g., the “triple oppression” of Indigenous women discussed in Chapter 3) does make it difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to identify the specific axis of difference upon which somebody is being targeted. These complexities in perceiving discrimination have been well-documented in past research (Canache, et al., 2014; Dixon, 2019). In reality, all of the relevant dimensions of inequality play simultaneous roles in influencing how the ways that discrimination and unequal treatment manifest themselves, but it is difficult to clearly disentangle these axes of inequality. However, analyzing life satisfaction and race, ethnicity, and skin color together in Latin America offers a starting point for continued work in this area. As mentioned previously, the influence of these factors on life satisfaction have not been carefully studied in the Latin American context. Future research on the connections between life satisfaction and race, ethnicity, skin color, and indigeneity would continue to improve our understanding of the intersectionality of discrimination with a focus on the power dynamics and structures contributing to discrimination. Another line of inquiry should examine the factors that protect or buffer against people’s feelings of discrimination which thus limit the negative impacts of discrimination on life satisfaction.

Chapter 4 explores the unequal treatment of Indigenous Mexicans in a different geographic and social context – the United States. Given the migration flows of Indigenous people from Mexico to the US, this shift in location offers a look at the insertion of these people into the racial/ethnic hierarchy in the US. While farmworkers are only one segment of the Indigenous Mexican migrant community in the US, albeit a historically and numerically significant segment, NAWS offers some of the best survey data any members of this population in the US. I focused on a comparison of Mixtec and Zapotec language speakers, Indigenous people who do not speak an

Indigenous language, non-Indigenous Mexican-born farmworkers, and US-born farmworkers. In doing so, I aimed to capture the ways language use, identity, and national origin served to advantage or disadvantage members of each group. An understanding of these divisions within farmworker communities matters because of the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of US farmworkers. Stigma is attached to members of certain ethnic groups or speakers of Indigenous languages based on perceived difference, which locates those groups lower on the social hierarchy. These hierarchies, which may operate at a community-level or even down to the scale of individual farms, influences the jobs people have and, therefore, the precarity of their employment, their exposure to environmental hazards, workplace exploitation, and health outcomes (Holmes, 2013).

Exploring inequities in health outcomes and health care access provides a specific context to understand the ways multiple factors, including racial and ethnic identity, gender, language, legal status, location, and poverty status, might influence the treatment of farmworkers. Several of these factors relate to the types of discrimination discussed in Chapter 3 – including discrimination based on class or economic situation, gender, and language use. While data on skin color is not captured in NAWS, data on identity contributes to our understanding of racial and ethnic discrimination among farmworkers. With the expectation that health care access may be more limited to Indigenous Mexican migrants, whether because of language barriers, perceived discrimination, or cost, lack of access may, in turn, lead to a higher prevalence of certain health issues. However, the factors that most influenced health care access did not have to do with racial and ethnic identity and language use, but were instead gender, legal status, poverty status, and regional location. Indeed, gender (Pacheco, et al., 2022) and legal status (Hamilton, et al., 2019) have been shown to have a strong influence on health outcomes among farmworkers, with the role of geographic location getting limited attention. The expected barriers to accessing health care were generally not found in this research, except for cost. Language barriers and discrimination, among other obstacles, were not

nearly as common as expected, given other research showing these to be notable issues related to health care access (Hoerster, et al. 2010; Young et al. 2019).

As discussed in Chapter 3, people may not be able to identify the axis of difference upon which they are discriminated against since the reality is that multiple marginalized identities typically intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination. People may also characterize their experience as not being discrimination at all, given that they sometimes lack the vocabulary to fully make sense of and explain discrimination (Dixon, 2019), although NAWS attempts to capture feelings of exclusion by asking about, for example, patients not feeling welcome in health care settings or health care professionals not understanding patients' problems. The lack of vocabulary to make sense of discrimination can be a contributing factor to the lower-than-expected reporting of discrimination by Indigenous farmworkers. Chapter 3 also identified economic or class-based discrimination as the type of discrimination most experienced. While cost as a barrier to health care access may not necessarily be synonymous with economic discrimination, this finding does highlight the role of economic status in influencing one's social standing and access to resources.

It is also important to remember that these data only capture experiences of unequal treatment in health care settings. In the PERLA data used in Chapter 3, over 84% of respondents had reported never experiencing discrimination in health care settings and, while Indigenous people and people with darker skin colors were more likely to report experiencing discrimination in this setting, it was not a statistically significant difference from other groups. Looking at the unequal treatment of Indigenous farmworkers in the US in other sites and situations would help illustrate a clearer pattern of where and to what extent they experience discrimination of any kind.

As the NAWS data used in Chapter 4 focuses on the experiences and perceptions of a marginalized and vulnerable community (i.e., farmworkers), we cannot glean information about how they are perceived by more privileged people in their communities. These data, like those analyzed in

Chapter 2, would help situate Indigenous farmworkers' perceptions of unequal treatment within the broader social context of the communities they inhabit.

These analyses on inequities in health outcomes and health care access for Indigenous Mexican migrants offer a compelling contribution to migration studies, specifically research on immigrant incorporation and adaptation (e.g., Creighton, et al., 2012; Maxwell, et al., 2015) and the racialization of Mexican immigrants (e.g., Cobas, et al., 2009; Roth, 2012). With two racial hierarchies (from Mexico and the US) working in tandem to influence the incorporation of Indigenous Mexicans, it is important to consider the challenges they encounter in the US that could hinder their ability to successfully adapt in the US. The findings of this chapter do highlight different concerns for the Indigenous migrant farmworker population, but not necessarily along the lines of ethnicity and language usage. Rather, farmworkers in different regions of the country can expect highly variable experiences when it comes to health care access, with California standing out for its offering of health insurance to many age groups regardless of immigration status. Following from that, being undocumented or even having some kind of work authorization represents a barrier to health insurance coverage and health care access for farmworkers in other parts of the US, which underscores the impact of multiple dimensions of marginalization on health care inequities.

Overall, this dissertation contributes an improved understanding of the nuance and heterogeneity of the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans. There is a tendency toward the homogenization of Indigenous people in previous research using these datasets, which conceals the diversity of opinions and experiences that exist. Certainly, some of this has to do with the limitations of quantitative data, especially dealing with issues, like discrimination, that are particularly complex and challenging to capture in surveys. Likewise, a limited sample size can make it difficult to effectively analyze the effects of multiple intersecting identities. However, exploring the processes of racialization within and between Mexico and the US highlights the importance of understanding the

construction of race in different geographies (regional, national, and transnational) (Saldaña-Portillo, 2016). Examining the specific regional and national geographies of the Mexico and the US as they relate to the experiences of Indigenous Mexicans helps to refine our understanding of the gradual improvement of their social standing and the inequities they continue to face.

This dissertation also highlights the complex nature of racial ideology in Mexico and the meaning of such ideology for Mexican immigrants in the United States. While *mestizaje* is no longer the official ideology of the Mexican state, now replaced by a multicultural ideology, by no means has *mestizaje* been relegated to history. Indeed, *mestizaje* and multiculturalism appear to coexist, potentially in a mutually constitutive manner. Moving beyond arguments from (e.g.) Hale (2002) that *mestizaje* and multiculturalism are merely different names for state-sponsored discourse on race and ethnicity without popular input, the core tenets of both ideologies may inform and influence each other. For example, more robust multicultural policies may make people more conscious of ethnic and racial inequality, while the ideals of racial mixture and “racial harmony” espoused by *mestizaje* may be part of a multicultural ideology’s efforts to reduce inequality and improve relations between racial and ethnic groups (Telles and Garcia, 2013). As Mexico continues down its path toward multiculturalism, the treatment of Indigenous people is slowly improving in both structural and interpersonal terms, but significant inequities remain in all aspects of life for Indigenous Mexicans – from educational attainment to job opportunities to health outcomes. International migration to the US remains a method of attempting to leave behind the economic and social inequality that often hinders Indigenous people. Exactly how Mexico’s evolving racial ideology impacts life for Mexicans living in the US remains to be seen. Inequality may be rooted less in racial and ethnic identity and indigeneity and instead based on other factors like gender, legal status, and poverty status. However, racial ideology continues to be brought from Mexico to the US and the power of these attitudes to influence life for minoritized groups, like Indigenous Mexicans, may change as Mexico’s relationship

with *mestizaje* and multiculturalism changes over time and as these ideologies blend with dominant US understandings of race and ethnicity. With family reunification and permanent settlement in the US becoming increasingly common for Indigenous Mexicans, an understanding of the unique challenges they experience in this country is made even more critical by the relative lack of robust data about them. In exploring these issues, this dissertation contributes improved insight about the diversity of Indigenous Mexicans' experiences and perceptions to the existing body of research on the lives of Indigenous Mexicans in Mexico and the US.

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