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**University
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Education

**Coloniality, Knowledge and Identity in Colombia: An Educational
Perspective.**

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Educational Studies for Adult, Youth & Community Context MSc

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Degree of Master of Science at The University of Glasgow**

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is bringing to light how the legitimization of western discourses have had a significant effect in terms of identity and inclusion of students within the Educational context in Colombia. It seeks to explore how this phenomenon has led to a continuous disregard of indigenous people willing to participate and contribute to the Educational System. The paper explores and analyzes central subjects such as the development of social identities, the creation and impact of discourses, and some of the solutions the Colombian government has adopted to address the inequality issues that relate to indigenous peoples. Finally, it will provide an analysis of the phenomenon through the use of Social Identity Theory.

Key words: Social Identity Theory, Decolonialism, Cleansing of the Blood, Colombian Education, Traditional Knowledge, Ethnoeducation.

Coloniality, Knowledge and Identity in Colombia: An Educational Perspective

Chapter 1

Introduction

Dissertation Structure

This paper will be divided in 6 Chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Methodology, (3) Context and Background, (4) Theoretical Framework, (5) Analysis and Discussion, and (6) Conclusions.

The first chapter provides an overview of the core issues related to colonization in the educational context of Colombia. It includes a short historical summary of the colonial times, that exposes a fundamental discourse, which allegedly shaped the mental frameworks of Colombian folks. Additionally, a synopsis about the current situation regarding education and traditional knowledge, is provided.

Chapter 2 considers the reasons behind the suitability of an Integrative Review as a research method for this topic, emphasizing its usefulness in terms of the wideness and multiplicity of lenses it allows to use. Furtherly, it exposes the different steps that Whittemore and Knafl (2005) advise as the guidelines, and it explains the process carried to follow such scheme.

The third chapter is a literature review that focuses in two broad topics: Decoloniality and Traditional Knowledge. These two subjects are divided into four continuous subheadings that are implicitly connected to each but situated in two different historical moments: Coloniality and Modernity. The Coloniality section begins exploring the historical events that led to the adoption of colonized discourses such as ‘the cleansing of the blood’ and the ‘rational/scientific thought’ in Colombia. It then shows the theoretical frameworks this topic has been typically studied from. Subsequently, the Modernity segment presents some facts and data about the current

educational context of Colombia and finishes by introducing the concept of Traditional Knowledge and Ethnoeducation, bringing together these two moments by grasping the meaning of indigeneity for Colombia.

Chapter 4 is a theoretical review of Social Identity Theory. In this piece, some of the most prominent terminologies and ideas that represent this theory are examined and exhibited. Likewise, this chapter comprises some empirical evidence from experiments that have been carried to prove its accuracy. Additionally, this chapter finishes providing a general understanding of the applicability of Social Identity Theory to the Colombian Educational Context from a historical approach.

The fifth chapter focuses on analyzing and discussing the information that has been provided throughout the paper. It brings together the literature review and the theoretical framework by analyzing colonial discourses and educational practices through a Social Identity lens. It demonstrates the impact coloniality had over the development of the Colombian identity and the transformation it has faced, leading Colombians to adapt and accept mental frameworks that eventually translate into unequal educational policies. This chapter finalizes suggesting further empirical and non-empirical research, providing some examples of potential studies from which this topic could take advantage.

The last chapter, Conclusions, adds some final thoughts that help compile the main findings of the investigation. Likewise, it presents a positionality statement and recommends some potential alternatives to relief the inequality in the Colombian Educational Context.

Overview

The main purpose of this paper is trying to highlight the inequality behind the colonization of the curriculum in Colombia and the relationship it holds with the Identification process of Colombian people. This inequality is spotted in two ways: the first one is the inaccessibility to education and unequal conditions that indigenous and indigenous progeny have to face when trying to enter to formal education

settings. The second one is the delegitimization of the traditional knowledge originated in the indigenous communities of the country. Therefore, I present an explanation to this phenomenon by analyzing the colonization process in Colombian through the principles proposed by Social Identity Theory.

Colombia: indigeneity, decoloniality and education.

Colombia is a South American country recognized for its variety of landscapes, gastronomy and overall, for its ethnic diversity. Although it is a ‘common knowledge’ fact that indigenous peoples inhabited the American Continent before the arrival of Europeans, it is usually taken for granted that this ethnic multiplicity emerged as a consequence of the (often violent and oppressive) cross linking between aborigines and Iberians. Likewise, another unpopular fact is that the native people that inhabited the South American land (including Colombia) had developed their own civilizations and ways of existence prior to the advent of Spanish; however, native traditions, narratives and knowledge became less significant after this event (Arango, 2007; Hristov, 2009). As Arango (2007) suggests, Europeans did not only take the physical territory but they also used their power to impose what they considered to be a proper civilization. The use of different forceful mechanisms gave rise to a systematic exclusion and denigration of the indigenous epistemologies, resulting in the partial loss of their narratives, identities and overall knowledge (Arango, 2007). Ultimately, the continuous oppression led to the perpetuation of the *colonization* even after the countries emancipated from the Spanish crown.

Taking this into account, it is of great interest to understand that as consequence of the colonization process, Colombia had to accept western philosophies, traditions and even languages (Ward, 2017), through the imposition of discourses that disregarded the pre-colonial wisdom and beliefs. Strictly speaking, it is essential to study how the conceptual frameworks of the indigenous communities changed drastically after being forced to adopt a foreign idea of what *should and should not* be permitted, accepted or valued in society. The colonizers implicitly and explicitly

undermined the colonized' way of thinking, by conveying the general belief that the indigenous' identity was not as valuable as the European, leading to confusion and blurriness in the *identification process* of the upcoming generations.

Jasmin Histrov (2009) narrates this historic period and explains how the discourse of colonization is still present in the actuality of Colombia; she clarifies in what ways even nowadays indigeneity is denied through discrimination and inequality that favors the dominant classes. Similarly, Castro-Gomez (2005) exposes a phenomenon that he calls the 'blood cleansing' discourse, which he affirms has reigned the country since the times of colonization. Castro-Gomez (2005) also states that such terms and more specifically, the ideas that surround it, belong to the criollo elites from the XVIII century. Likewise, this philosopher goes beyond to suggest that such speech is now part of the Colombian identity and refers to the systematic rejection of the indigeneity that is a constant in the present and past of the Colombian folk. What is more, Losada-Cubillos (2018) analyzes how the discourse of repudiation to non-western traditions is still portrayed by the desire of being and becoming *whiter*. Broadly, he claims that the 'whiteness' concept is not necessarily related to the color of the skin, but to behaviors, attitudes and values that are considered western which, if observed from a socio-psychological perspective, could be understood as a *phenomenon of identification* with the social category of 'whiteness'.

Moreover, this is an excellent example of the oppressive discourses that have evolved through time, and therefore, one this research will be focusing on. 'La limpieza de la sangre' (in Spanish) or 'the cleansing of the blood' speech was used by the neo-Grenadian society since the XVI century. 'Cleansing the blood' used to be a term that referred to the process of marrying and mating with whiter people to gain a better social status (Pardo-Rojas, 2006); such ideal resulted in an implicit desire of the mestizos to achieve a whiter status to ultimately access the privileges that 'being white' permitted. Nonetheless, to achieve 'being whiter', mestizos had to escalate in their economical and overall social status. For instance, marrying a whiter partner

provided social recognition and other benefits such as expensive housing and political influence. However, to be accepted by a white partner (usually a Spaniard born in Colombia -also known as criollo-) and their family, the mestizo needed to prove their financial status by owning a well-known and successful business. What is more, education was also a prominent proof of ‘effective whitening of the blood’, given that in order to be admitted in a “Colegio Mayor” (college), mestizo students’ families would have to undergo various generations of whitening (Pardo-Rojas, 2006, Castro-Gómez, 2005). Taking that into account, the ‘whitening of the blood’ discourse is considered an essential point for this investigation due to its relevance and applicability when explaining Colombians’ quest for identity, their understanding of knowledge and the relationship these two hold within the educational context.

Currently, every primary and secondary education institution in the country is submitted to the “Ley General de Educacion de 1994” (General Law of Education of 1994), needing to follow the guidance it provides to develop the educational curriculums. This policy, which is notoriously influenced by the western ways of teaching and thinking, ensures that certain topics are taught in every school; such subjects include Biology, Social Sciences Artistic Education, Ethics, Physical Education, Religion, Humanities (Spanish, Foreign languages) Mathematics and Informational Technologies (El Espectador, 2018).

Additionally, the Colombian Ministry of Education performs an annual general assessment: the national exam ‘ICFES’ or ‘SABER’ (mostly multiple-choice tests) which pretends to evaluate abilities like Critical Reading, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Social and Citizen Skills, and English (El Espectador, 2018). Moreover, the Government has been enrolling Colombian students to participate of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), since 2006. In this respect, the Ministry of Education has affirmed that being part of PISA represents an advantage, as it is fundamental for the country to “know the levels of Reading, Scientific and Mathematical skills that the 15 years old students have acquired, and which are

necessary for living a full life in society” in comparison to top-class countries (MINEDUCACION, 2018). This affirmation leaves space to ask critical questions such as: ‘why are these particular subjects/methods chosen over others that could suit a bigger portion of the population?’ or ‘what parts of the Colombian society benefit from such skills?’

By analyzing these inquiries it is possible to recognize how the descriptions and explanations used by the Government are directed to just one segment of *the whole* Colombian society, relegating the typically oppressed: the country people/peasants (who are typically descendants of indigenous and have less opportunities to access education) and the indigenous themselves, who -usually- do not benefit of the western knowledges. Finally, this creates a loop in the ways in which knowledge is produced and reproduced, affecting the perception Colombian’s have of themselves.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The present study was carried using an exhaustive literature review. In particular, the chosen method was an *integrative review* due to two of its most prominent characteristics: the critical stance it promotes, and the wide scope it allows by the inclusion of different theories. As Knafl and Whitemore (2005) assert, “integrative reviews are the broadest type of research review methods allowing for the simultaneous inclusion of experimental and non-experimental research in order to more fully understand a phenomenon of concern” (p. 547). Additionally, it is considered that an integrative review is suitable for this paper because it incorporates both theoretical and empirical data, while having different purposes such as defining concepts, reviewing theories and analyzing evidence from multiple fields of study.

This research has been developed following what Knafl and Whitemore (2005), define as the steps integrative reviews should take to be considered a valid method of investigation; they are: (1) problem identification, (2) literature search, (3) data evaluation, (4) data analysis and (5) presentation.

Problem Identification

After consulting different sources from multiple disciplines around the topic of traditional knowledge and decolonization, it was not possible to find a study that explores the relationship between decolonialism and identity in the Colombian educational context. Moreover, the discriminatory roots such relationship has over the creation of knowledge and therefore, over education represents an important theme to explore due to its constant emergence in this era of globalization. In other words, there is a need to explore the circular nature (having knowledge – developing an identity – creating knowledge based on that identity) of this phenomenon. What is more, as Snyder (2019) suggests, an integrative review should aim to create new knowledge about a topic by observing and criticizing it from new perspectives,

therefore, this method is an excellent fit to look at decolonialist matters in Colombia, from a Social Identity Theory perspective.

Literature search

In order to explore the different dimensions of this wide subject, a literature review that included various lenses was chosen. Thus, the inclusion criteria involved searching in fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history and education. Likewise, for the study to be rigorous some exclusion criteria were arranged from the beginning, having only relevant sources and limiting the data collection to studies focusing in territories such as South America, Central America and occasionally, India, but placing an importance on Latin America and specifically on Colombia. This benchmark is explained by the ongoing presence of colonization in these countries and the notorious implications it has over their populations. The sample selected was mostly theoretical from social sciences with some examples sustained by concrete data from psychological empirical studies and public economic data support from the government sources. Amongst the databases that were used, J Store, ProQuest, News Papers and Governmental Webpages were the most prominent ones, using some books as additional help for the theoretical framework.

Given the specificity of the research context and the relevance language plays in it, the collection of data included two languages: Spanish and English. Finally, some of the key terms used were: Decoloniality in Latin America/Colombia, Social Identity Theory, Purity of the blood discourse/Cleansing of the blood discourse, Ley General de Educacion en Colombia (General Law of Education in Colombia), Indigeneity and Traditional Knowledge.

The initial search compiled a total of 64 texts relating to the ‘Limpieza de la Sangre’ discourse in Latin America, 365 regarding decolonial studies in Latin America, 43.837 combining Traditional Knowledge and Latin America, 1908 including Education, policy and Colombia, and over 32.000 about Social Identity Theory. Subsequently, this search was refined by the relevance tool, checking a

maximum of the first 40 results of each topic, to reduce the search from almost 70.000 texts to 200.

Data Evaluation

The final sample for this integrative review included empirical and theoretical reports that were selected after contrasting the abstract and keywords to a double parameter: does it have a relationship with Latin America? And if it does, in what level? Depending on the answer (ranging 1-5, when 1 is not related and 5 is very related), the articles were discarded (if rating 1-2), used as theoretical frame (3) or used as pragmatic examples (4-5). The theoretical texts had a major representation because of the abstraction of the topic, while the empirical ones helped grounding and creating examples to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

Given the majority of the data was not empirical or quantifiable, a qualitative approach was used. Hence, concepts, definitions, and comparisons were the lead tools to make an analysis and associate the different subjects that this study encompasses. The data were compared on two levels: coloniality and modernity (or past/present), so that according to the segment of the theoretical framework that was being addressed, there would be an integral understanding of the applicability of each paradigm.

Presentation

The findings were presented at the end of each section so that the analysis was easier to understand in its own context. Finally, the 'Analysis and Discussion' Chapter connected the different pillars of the study, bringing a new conceptual frame that suggests further investigation.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Context

Decolonial Studies in Latin America: Modernity/Coloniality

During the last decades of the XX century, various intellectuals have conducted continuous research in the post-colonial events that had happened in Latin America. This movement took place shortly after the Post-colonial theory in India was developed. However, although both theories seek to explain the ways in which colonization had an impact on the ways colonized countries relate to knowledge, the difference in experiences from one territory to another, led the Latin American academics to distinguish themselves from the post-colonial theorists, and to create what is now recognized as *decolonial studies*. Throughout such investigation, they have found that this phenomenon can be divided into two eras: modernity and coloniality (also known as M/C).

In this sense, Decolonial Studies focuses on trying to raise awareness about the ways in which Iberian coloniality still has an effect over the most economically and politically vulnerable peoples in Latin America. It also spotlights how this oppression is being exacerbated and perpetuated with the complicity of the United States, and the implementation of neoliberalism and the set of rules and policies surrounding their economic and political power (Harding, 2016). What is more, the main idea of the decolonial (M/C) studies is to explain the ways in which the colonizers did not only appropriate/misappropriate lands, cultures and traditions, but permeated the very core of folk's identity. By coaxing an unconscious embeddedness of the western beliefs that were once considered superior, they eventually translated such beliefs into a - westernized- mindset which was then fueled by the arrival of globalization and the neoliberal movement that came with it. As Escobar (1995) quotes, such complicity between the Eurocentric vision and the United States can be exposed in speeches as the one American president, Harry Truman held during the beginning of his office in 1949:

“More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is *inadequate*, they are *victims of disease*. Their economic life is *primitive and stagnant*. Their poverty is a *handicap* and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people. . . . I believe that **we should make available** to peace-loving peoples **the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them** realize *their aspirations for a better life*. . . . What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. . . . Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (Truman, 1949)” (p.3, my italics, my bolds).

As it can be appreciated, the head of state portrays an idea of *an underdeveloped, timeless, and stalled* third-world, which is compared to the *strong, progressed and enlightened-by-technical knowledge* attributes of the first world. However, it is also noticeable that Truman situates the economic value or the capacity of the territories to produce, as the determinant factors to being considered ‘prosperous’. Additionally, this speech can be considered a preliminary base for the upcoming neoliberalist wave, while dismantling the belief of being *helpful* to these countries by taking them out of the supposed *primitiveness* they belong to. Thus, it is through this kind of example that the colonial idea of superiority/inferiority can be recognized in the societal/economic model of Latin America, however, without acknowledging that all these ideas of *prosperity* and *development* are based on concepts brought from the West (and subsequently adopted by the United States), without even contemplating the possibility of different forms of understanding.

One of the most prominent exhibitors of the decolonial theoretical branch was Anibal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist who advocated for the oppressed groups of indigenous peoples through his academic discourse. In his work ‘*coloniality of power*’ (1997), he asserts that aboriginal people were subdued to a preexistent pattern of power that located Europe/ Europeans as the role model for every other society in terms of culture, religion, education, organization, knowledge and even architecture

(this concept can also be referred to as eurocentrism). The main problem with this idea is that the later societies that were developed in the American continent and all the pieces that composed them, had to be compared to a standard that was not applicable to them, but that nonetheless, was imposed on them. In other words, there was never a chance for natives to be validated by the West, because the starting point from the '*civilization*' was only considered in the terms of Europeans. Moreover, during Modernity in Europe and America, the instauration of the rational thought coming from thinkers like Descartes and Newton, converged into the idea of a supposed neutrality and a pursuit for objectivity. Likewise, this conception was akin to philosophers like Locke and Hume, who used to assert that aboriginal peoples were immerse in a *previous temporal state*. Such perception unveils a Eurocentric approach that considers the beginning of European Civilization as the reference for all other civilizations, without acknowledging the thousands of different mental frameworks that could consider their own starting points as the real ones (Pardo-Rojas, 2006).

In other words, as Castillo & Rojas (2005) assert, the coloniality includes not only the populations, but their knowledges,

“Neither the colonialist, modern and rational Occidental Europe, nor the white/mestizo criollo recognized in the *others* the ability to produce valid and universal knowledges. Therefore, they defended what they *should* know first, to save their soul and then to redeem their minds. From the first moments of the colonization process, the knowledge that should be learned by indigenous and black people were defined outside their interests. School -once it arrived- came to ‘normalize’, to guide the path of this civilizations into a ‘civilized’ society” (p. 138, my translation, my italics).

Similarly, the Spanish erased the indigenous identities by disowning the differences between tribes and cultures and labeling all of them into the category of ‘indios’, or as Quijano (1997) narrates:

“[...] from this perspective, the colonizers defined the new identity of the colonized aboriginal populations: ‘indios’ (Indians). For these peoples the colonial domination implied, therefore, the dispossession and repression of their original identities (Mayans, Aztecs, Incas, Aymaras, etc.) and, in

the long term, the loss of such identities and the admission to a communal negative identity” (p. 139, my translation).

Along the lines, an idea of *otherness*, can be perceived in the different terms Europeans used as an attempt to differentiate themselves and their knowledge to the Others (that did not ‘resemble’ them), and the Others’ knowledge (Beltran, 2017). Thus, as it can be deducted, this represents a form of dominance due to the legitimization that western knowledge has always received as the ‘default- winning party of the match’. Similarly, this idea is backed by another expositor of the decolonialist movement, Walter Mignolo, who introduced the term “Other” in his work to refer to a category the colonizers have used to reaffirm their identity as the predominant, right and civilized one, when compared to that one of the *other*, namely a person who is inferior and barbaric (Piedrahita- Rodriguez, 2020). Following Mignolo (1995), the idea of the Other from the colonial perspective is a narrative that establishes dominance structures. This means that the civilized person from the West looks at the Other with authority and will to govern them; equally, the stories that the Occidental tells and imposes over the Other, and that are assumed by the Other as their own’s, allow the creation and perpetuation of power structures that have been accepted and unquestioned for a long time, by covering under the premise of the reason and the objective truth.

Therefore, according to this logic, it is possible to comprehend how the oppressive rhetoric that was implemented during the times of colonization and that persevered until the modern age, has had an important impact on the identity formation of the Colombian subalterns and ergo, on the ways they have built the nation.

Colonization: The cleansing of the blood discourse

What is the cleansing of the blood discourse in Colombia?

According to historian Hering-Torres (2011b), the term “Cleansing of the Blood” (sometimes referred as “Purity of the Blood”) finds its roots in Spain, during

the times of the Inquisition, more specifically in the XIV and XV centuries. Throughout this time frame, the Jewish people that lived in Spain had to face a 'conversion' to Christianity in order to be recognized by the law. This process included leaving behind beliefs, traditional foods, costumes, homes and rituals to adapt to the 'normality' imposed by the Catholic Church. However, the former Spanish Christians had to face a problem that came along after some generations of such transitions: the Jewish descendants were no longer easy to spot due to the homogenization they had faced, and therefore, the need to differentiate them from the 'original' Christians, arose. To solve this issue, the original-Catholics created new legal terminologies that allowed them to indicate ethnical backgrounds. However, it was only useful for some years given the difficulty -at the time- of tracing somebody's origin. For this reason, the Spaniards started developing new imaginary categories such as 'impure', to differentiate themselves from the 'conversos' and Moors; eventually as a way to justify the segregation, they ended up establishing similitudes between illnesses (such as lepra) and 'impurity'. This idea progressively evolved to the point in which it led to the association of impurity with race and became embedded in the minds of the Iberians and expressed through their quotidian speech.

Similarly, in the times of the Colony in America, a variety of categorizations took a place to differentiate the social status that its inhabitants could pertain to. In this case, the caste was easier to spot due the multiplicity of skin colors and their obvious implications. But, with time the social status or "quality" of a person became not only dependent on their physical attributes, but also on their social performance (i.e. good behavior, sanity, secrecy, politeness) alongside some other features such as clothing, craft, finance and homing (Hering-Torres, 2011a). Eventually, the discourse surrounding 'whiteness' became popular and encouraged many of those who wanted to upgrade their position in the classes to assume 'white' mannerisms while enclosing, ignoring and even disowning their own indigenous/African roots (Hristov, 2009).

Through time, this rhetoric has transformed and reshaped in different ways, materializing itself in attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes which ultimately, as Garcia-Dussan (2016) denotes, created a division between the classes (and regions) exiling those who were not literate, who seemed ‘too mestizo’ and ‘too attached to the mythical world of the indigenous’ to be a part of the elite. Nowadays, the remains of this discourse can be frequently found in colloquial sentences/expressions that denigrate the indigenous ancestry and that most Colombians share; amongst them, phrases like “no sea Indio” (do not be “Indian” -meaning indigenous-), “hay que mejorar la raza” (you have to upgrade the race -meaning mixing with someone whiter-) or “no sea Campeche” (do not be such a peasant/country person) are relevant examples of how this supremacist thought is deeply rooted in the imagination of Colombian folks.

Santiago Castro-Gomez is a Colombian philosopher who has dedicated part of his career to study the ways in which the ‘cleansing of the blood’ discourse has developed and permeated the Colombian culture (Losada-Cubillos, 2018). In his work “La Hybris del Punto Cero” (“The Hubris of Point Zero”), Castro-Gomez presents a recapitulation of the historical moments Colombia was facing during the late XVII and the beginning of the XVIII centuries. He remarks the importance of language and the leading speeches that reigned the colony and shows how they played a role in the creation of a National Identity after the implementation of the Bourbonic Reforms of King Charles III in Hispanic America. The philosopher introduces some outlines of such writ (which parenthetically was influenced by the French *illustrated ideas* of universal rights), commenting it advocated for the benefit of natives, mestizos, African slaves and other mixed races. However, what is central to his argument is to present the fact that although it encouraged the overcoming of race categorization and stratification, it was also firmly criticized, daunted and unattended by the high-ranking intellectuals that were shaping the structure of what was to become the Republic of Colombia at the time.

Consequently, it is of special interest to highlight the fact that by this time, not only the criollos were opposed to the abolition of the elitist classification that privileged white folks, there were also some non-white influential thinkers (often upper-class mestizos) who supported this discrimination by shielding behind the argument not of *skin color* or *blood purity*, but of a presumed *intellectual inferiority* that those with African/indigenous ancestry were accountable of. In other words, with his methodical work, Castro-Gomez dismantles the means by which the “cleansing of the blood” reshaped into a more ‘acceptable’ discourse that invalidated the traditions and knowledges of those who were not part of the European Academia. In summary, the main argument Castro-Gomez exposes is that the European reasoning claimed an objective truth or neutral zone by ironically standing from their own point of view and understanding, ignoring the fact that the European intellectual frames did not correspond to the Native American ones and therefore, they could not be compared.

In this paper I attempt to explain some of the ways in which coloniality and the cleansing of the blood discourse had impacted the cognitive frameworks of Colombian people, and in parallel, how this can be traced through the educational context.

The Educational Context in Colombia

What has been happening in Colombia in terms of education during the past four decades?

During the 1980s and 1990s Colombia saw a series of changes around the ways Education was perceived and enforced, creating many structural transformations in the frame of the Educational System. This decisive moment led to a general reform of the constitution in 1991, giving teachers a voice through the representation they had in the Pedagogical Movement. Likewise, after the installment of the Children’s rights that recognized education as a pivotal force in the development of identity and preferences, the educational field in Colombia went through a legislative transformation that culminated in the approval of the General Law of Education in

1994 (Rincon-Verdugo & Triviño, 2017). This law organized the educational system by giving it full instruction from beginning to end. It includes its definitions, determining education is both a right and a service, and its aims specifying the ways in which the service should be provided. It has been guiding the development of educational policies by defining *education* in its headlines as “a personal, cultural, social and continuous learning process, that is founded in an integral understanding of the human person, their dignity, rights and duties” (Ley 115 de 1994, p.1, my translation). In this sense, Colombia uses the General Law of Education to determine the ways in which education should be carried in every institution.

Accordingly, such Law makes a division between the different levels of official education, having preschool, basic (primary and secondary) and middle school. What is more, some of the general goals from the Basic Education Level are worthwhile exploring for the western influence they show through their passages, for instance:

“[...] (A). Facilitate a general education through the critical and creative access to the **scientific knowledge, technology, arts and humanities** and their relationship with the social life and nature, so that it prepares the student for higher levels of the educational process and for their nexus to society and the workforce. [...] (C) Widen and deepen in **logical and analytical thinking for the resolution and interpretation of scientific**, technological and quotidian problems (Ley General de Educacion, 1994, my translation, my bolds).

Nonetheless, although one of the main purposes of this policy is to ensure that education is available to all the population in the country, this is unrealistic goal. Along the 1990s and early 2000s some of the initiatives proposed by this Law became detached from the real needs and situation of the country, emerging as an ideal that did not fit into the actuality of Colombia. Many of the ideas enshrined in it did not correspond to the particularities of each context, and instead advocated for the generality of a totalitarian republic in which ‘the city’ was the example. This meant that it did not overcome the inequality gap and the difficulties to enter/continue education; similarly the resources that were destined to the educational budget were

not enough and usually distributed into a segmented part of the Colombian population, segregating those who faced more difficulties in the access to scholarship (Rincon-Verdugo & Triviño, 2017).

As it was previously implied, the General Law of Education was created to warrant coverage and education of quality (Perez-Davila, 2018). Even so, due to the hardship to achieve these goals, the legislation has been undergoing different modifications by multiple decrees that seek to tackle its deficiencies. One of them is the Law 1804 of 2006 which urges the need to acknowledge the importance of education during the first years of existence to develop the cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of the individuals (Ley 1804, 2006). Moreover, it is for this reason that a special emphasis is placed on this Law (1804), due to the importance it gives to the formation of the individuality of each child, according to their situation and context. One of its pillars is the assurance of an *integral development* for the children; it maintains the following:

“The *integral development* as a right, according to what is stated in the Law 1098 of 2006 in its 29th article, is the aim and the core purpose of the present policy. *Integral Development* meaning the singular process of transformations and changes of quantitative and qualitative kinds, through which the subject is able to use their characteristics, abilities, qualities and potentialities to progressively **structure their identity** and autonomy. The *integral development* does not occur in a linear, sequential, accumulative, always-ascendant, homogenous, prescriptive and identical way for every girl and boy, instead, it is expressed in a particular way for each of them. **The interaction with a wide variety of actors, contexts and conditions is significant for the enhancement of skills and the progressive autonomy**” (Ley 1804, 2006, my translation, my bolds & my italics).

In this sense, the identity development (which considers the situational context the individual is placed in), takes a decisive role in the definition of what is understood as an exemplar *integral development*. Similarly, the need for a diverse interaction is also mentioned, which derives in a significant interest for the purposes

of this paper. As it could be appreciated in the past section, the formation of the identity is not only important from a socio-cultural point of view, or even from an individual point of view, but from a cognitive stance that is intrinsically related to the educational context, creating a retroactive loop of legitimizing knowledge- learning- producing knowledge according to the one that was previously legitimized.

Currently, all the formal education institutions in Colombia must be covered by the scope of the General Law of Education, having to develop and align their curriculums by using the guidelines it provides. However, the policy is notoriously influenced by the ways of teaching, thinking and knowing of the West, and the traces of such clout can be found in the standards it strives for. The 23rd article describing the fundamental and mandatory areas that have to be present in every school, states that

“The groups of mandatory and fundamental areas that will represent at least 80% of the Curriculum, are the following: (1) Natural Sciences and Environmental education, (2) Social Sciences, history, geography, political constitution and democracy, (3) Artistic education, (4) Ethical education and human values, (5) Physical education, recreation and sports, (6) Religious education, (7) Humanities, Spanish and foreign languages, (8) Mathematics, (9) Technology and Informatic Sciences” (Ley general de educacion, 1994, my translation)

This reality is summed to the use of western instruments/techniques to evaluate students, one outstanding example is the national exam ‘ICFES’ or ‘SABER’ (which is for the most part a multiple-choice test) that assesses the abilities that ‘should have been acquired’ during the Basic Cycle of formal Education; i.e. Critical Reading, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Social and Citizen Skills, and English (El Espectador, 2018). Moreover, the Colombian Educational frame takes not only the subjects/topics/assessment styles from the European models, but also relies on their standards to rate the performance of the educational institutions (and consequently, of the students per se). Since 2006 the Educational Department of Colombia enrolled the

country to be a participant of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), an initiative from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) created in the year 2000 to evaluate the skills of 15 year old youngsters in Math, Science and reading, to “know the levels [...] students have acquired, and which are necessary for living a full life in society (MINEDUCACION, 2018, my translation). It is worth mentioning that the OECD was the project that followed the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, which was created after the second world war to bring different European forces together and rebuild the continent. The OECD was born in order to include non-European economic giants like Canada and the United States in 1960, and eventually other world players started to join the association (OECD, 2020); Colombia is still in process of entering this organization given the socio-economic difficulties the country has faced and only recently has started to overcome. However, what catches attention is the focus this organization has on the economic development of its members, and therefore, the role this intrinsically plays when generating tools that evaluate the indicators of wealth, such as education.

Moreover, one could ask questions about the applicability of these models to the multi-faceted Colombian context, about who decides to stick to these parameters, who benefits from them and why does the Colombian government even want to be part of these organizations?

Traditional Knowledge/ Ethnoeducation

What is traditional knowledge? What is ethnoeducation? How do they speak to the colonial discourse?

During the last decades of the XIX century and after the integration of the neoliberal model in most of the Latin-American countries including Colombia, a plea for the rights of marginalized indigenous peoples was raised (Arango, 2007; Bedoya- Molina & Fernandez- Tabares, 2014; Hristov, 2005; Mallon, 2012), and with

it, many of the primary inequality issues that these peoples had shut for centuries, finally took a voice (Hristov, 2005). A mobilization of indigenous peoples towards the political leadership, raised awareness about the segregation, limitations and poor conditions they had been facing throughout the years. This resistance movement has affected different levels of their social life, thus, having a repercussion over the Educational System (Bedoya Molina & Fernandez Tabares, 2014). In this sense, the term '*ethnoeducation*' was born and became central to the ethnic minorities and their representatives, given its relevance for the socio-political world and the economic/cultural implications it holds. According to Ferrero-Botero (2015), *Ethnoeducation* refers to the "formal education for ethnic minorities". It is also referred as a body of knowledge that connects the specific education of each indigenous community to the marketed economy of the 'outside' (Tamayo-Osorio, 2018; Ferrero Botero, 2015), meaning it allows indigenous peoples to understand how the 'outside' world (specifically the market) works and how to interact with it by adapting some of their own produce/knowledge to fit in it. Finally, Ferrero-Botero (2015) describes it as "one of the key features defining Colombia as a multicultural nation. For the state and mainstream Colombian, it means the materialization of the push for modernity and inclusion, as 'other,' of indigenous peoples into a neoliberal multicultural nation" (p. 288).

On the other hand, the statistics regarding education enrollment and indigeneity are remarkable and should be given attention for the rates they represent. According to the National Ministry of Education (2018), as of 2018, 10.104.697 kids enrolled into Basic Education, from which 4.182.201 pertained to Primary School. Likewise, the National System for the Information of Higher Education (by its initial capital letters in Spanish, SNIES, 2018) 1.557.594 students had access to an undergraduate level of Higher Education. On the other hand, by September 2019, almost two million people in Colombia, identified themselves as indigenous from different ethnic groups (DANE, 2019). This represents 4% of the total population of the country (which

surrounds 50 million), however, only about 134.000 of them have an undergraduate level of scholarship (DANE, 2019) showing a gap in accessibility between civilians and indigenous students.

Furthermore, Nemogá-Soto (2017) stresses the ways in which native people have to face different obstacles when they manage to access Higher Education; among such difficulties, he distinguishes an education *for* and an education *with and from* the indigenous peoples, explaining how the first one (an education *for*) does not meet the needs of native students because the teaching methods/contents do not match their languages or relationship to knowledge, likewise the educational context is alienating because it is very distant to their realities and natural community. Equally, Nemoga-Soto (2017) exposes the machinery that the Colombian government uses in order to decrease the public rates of marginalization and inequality. In this sense, he asserts that the educational institutions focus on complying with quotas of indigenous students while ignoring the real needs, aspirations and possibilities of these peoples. However, this situation could be expected in a context like the Colombian one, because the knowledge and discourse that leads the majority of the country -including the elite most presidents and powerful people belong to- is typically westernized. In other words, the hegemony that privileges the occidentalization of knowledge and ways of living since the colonization is also perpetuated by the poor attempts of the government to address the issue of inclusion and equality in the classrooms.

Conversely, it is as important to recognize that there are different initiatives that some Colombian educational institutions have made and have actually been successful in terms of suiting the educational demands of the indigenous communities (Nemogá-Soto, 2017). In his paper, Nemogá-Soto (2017) presents three cases of 'indigenous higher education' within the country that -at least- partially represent the education *for* and/or *from* indigenous folks. The first case takes place in an emblematic institution for their attempts to stand for the rights of the less-favored people of the country: The National University of Colombia. However, although it

holds a reputation for procuring inclusion, the case of indigenous education could be considered a failure because of its approach towards them; instead of creating a safe and relatable environment for the indigenous community, the institution provided a ‘civic’ space where they expected this community to fit in, the language was an obstacle, the topics were far from their experience and understanding of the world, and even the size of the city that this students *had to move into* was a threaten to their mental health and academic performance, resulting in high rates of desertion. Nevertheless, the two other examples are worth exposing and could be considered fruitful; the first of them is the Intercultural Autonomous Indigenous University, an institution created *for* indigenous people, *from* indigenous knowledge and *with* indigenous pedagogues, *in* indigenous contexts, this is, a fully indigenous-focused approach that understands the real needs of their communities.

Finally, Nemoga-Soto referes to the existence of one program held at the University of Antioquia, the ‘Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra’ (Pedagogy of Mother Earth), which attracts special attention due to the intersection it makes between a ‘ordinary’ university with an indigenous curriculum. This course is provided in a university from one of the most thriving regions of the country, but it owes its success to the participation of the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia in its creation and goals. The Pedagogy of Mother Earth is a program that encourages the indigenous community to participate of education by legitimizing their *traditional knowledge* in the curriculum and overall by switching the roles that have been static and empowering the indigenous leaders to teach not only indigenous people about their own knowledge in a westernized setting (of a typical institution of formal education), but to teach civilians the valuable expertise from the *traditional knowledge* they have in innumerable subjects in an academically-approved context. Pedagogy of Mother Earth Bachelor’s Degree uses autochthonous languages and terms in its teaching forms, adding value to these classically subjugated oralities.

Furthermore, Traditional knowledge is defined by the UNESCO (2020) as the:

Knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment, traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It tends to be collectively owned and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds. Traditional knowledge is mainly of a practical nature, particularly in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, forestry and environmental management in general.

Traditional Knowledge and Western science are both systems that allow an understanding of the world and its events, however, they have many different characteristics and opposing perspectives. Whereas Western science stands by analytical and reductionist methods, Traditional Knowledge uses intuition and promotes a holistic view (Mazzochi, 2006). Mazzochi (2006), along the same lines cites Nakashima & Roué:

“Western science is positivist and materialist in contrast to traditional knowledge, which is spiritual and does not make distinctions between empirical and sacred. Western science is objective and quantitative as opposed to traditional knowledge, which is mainly subjective and qualitative. Western science is based on an academic and literate transmission, while traditional knowledge is often passed on orally from one generation to the next by the elders. Western science isolates its objects of study from their vital context by putting them in simplified and controllable experimental environments—which also means that scientists separate themselves from nature, the object of their studies;-by contrast, traditional knowledge always depends on its context and particular local conditions” (p. 464).

In general, traditional epistemologies do not conceive the world in a linear approach of cause-effect, instead, they consider it a complex, cyclic phenomenon that has multiple interacting dimensions linked in every possible way.

However, although it is important not to dichotomize or divide the category of knowledge into one or the other way of knowing, it is obvious that there are deep philosophical dissimilarities between the two of them that make it difficult to make comparisons. That is why there is no point in analyzing traditional knowledge under the lens of scientific scrutiny. It would be not only redundant but also disrespectful and dangerous for the culture to try to measure what is quantifiable by the scientific paradigm and ignore the rest of the context it belongs to, or to simply break down into more 'understandable' pieces the complexity of certain concepts in order to adjust them to the scientific system of beliefs (Mazzochi, 2006).

Chapter 4

Social Identity Theory

What is SIT and how does it relate to M/C in Colombia? How has identity shaped the way education is carried in Colombia?

Social Identity Theory (hereafter referred as SIT) is a metatheory within the field of Psychology that explores the identity developments that occur in both inter and intragroup dynamics. SIT places an emphasis on understanding such relations in linkage to processes such as stereotyping, conformity, leadership and organizational behavior (Davis, Love & Fares, 2019).

Conforming to SIT, people conceive their identity -partly- from the groups they belong to (this is, their social identity), for instance, one could identify as an engineer, an indigenous, as a man, as a right hander, or as a Beatles' fan. Social Identity also distinguishes two features, *strength* and *content*. *Strength* refers to the social identification one makes (i.e. I strongly identify myself as Colombian), and the *Content* is defined by the group's characteristics, (i.e., clothing styles like wearing a hijab or a kilt) and their rules (e.g., "women cannot show their hair"). Likewise, Social identity condition *emotions*, like feeling happy after a sports match that your team won; and it determines *behavior* like avoiding being related or mistreating someone from the political opposition (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019).

SIT was proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979 not only as an attempt to explain the reasons behind discrimination (Chen & Li, 2016), but also to address inter-group relations and, more broadly to present a general theory of Social Behavior (Lisbona, 2010). In this sense, Tajfel (1981) presented a way to link the self with the group, by analyzing how each individual was included in the social world. He based his theory in the idea that “at least in our kinds of societies the individual strives to achieve a satisfactory image of himself” (p.254) and he emphasized how these comparisons relate to a crucial factor: the membership to certain groups and the ways each of them contributes positively or negatively to the image one has of oneself (Tajfel, 1981). In other words, an important part of an individual’s identity depends on their *social identity*, namely, the knowledge one has pertaining to determined social groups and the valence/emotional value such membership represents for oneself.

In pursuance of understanding and explaining which were the minimal requirements for group formation and group favoritism, Tajfel carried out an experiment at the University of Bristol in 1970. This investigation consisted in presenting a group of kids two sets of images, one from the ‘foreign’ artist Wassily Kandinsky and the other one from the also ‘foreign’ artist Paul Klee, however, without telling them which image belonged to which artist. Eventually, the participants were told that they belonged to either the ‘Klee’ or the ‘Kandinsky’ group. They did not have any interaction with the other members, which meant they did not know who belonged to each group; additionally they were allocated a certain (small) amount of money which they had to distribute between the rest of the participants (excluding themselves). The only information they had to complete this task, was a number which referred to each individual and the painter they had preference for (i.e. participant #12- Kandinsky). The results of these money allocations showed that the kids favored those participants who belonged to the same group they were part of (Tajfel, 1970; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). This experiment

established the foundations for understanding how identification plays a fundamental role in the formation of groups and vice versa.

Typically, SIT differentiates two machineries humans use to identify themselves: self-categorization and social-comparison (Chen & Li, 2016 & Stets & Burke, 2010). The first one denotes the labelling process people make to classify themselves into certain social categories and outside others, namely attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, styles and other characteristics, culminating in the distinction of the in-group from the out-group. The second mechanism refers to the *reinforcement* of perceived *similarities* between oneself and the in-group, and the *accentuation* of the perceived *differences* from the out-group; this process results in a positive social identity, and ultimately, in the enhancing of self-esteem and acquisition of meaning (Nesdale & Flessler, 2001; Stets & Burke, 2010; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Moreover, these processes do not pertain only to the cognitive realm, but also to the social world. In this sense, the authors conclude that people do not only categorize and compare other people beyond themselves, but they also belong to a particular background, that automatically makes them part of certain groups or social categories from the moment they are born (Stets & Burke, 2010; Jenkins, 2008). Such sense of pertaining to specific categories also takes an important role when creating the different preferences one develops through life (Chen & Li, 2016).

In other words, Tajfel proposed that in order to form the identity, it was necessary to analyze various dimensions between an *in-group* and an *out-group*, establishing the differences between them and *accentuating* the inter-group differences, especially those in which the *in-group* is *salient* in a positive way. By comparing the in-group with the out-group in positively rated dimensions and establishing a superiority perception in such comparison, the subject acquires a positive distinctiveness and thus, generates a *positive social identity*. When the opposite happens and there is a negative evaluation about the in-group, the subject tends to experience a state of dissatisfaction that triggers different mechanisms to

counteract against it and eventually generates individual or group behaviors that seek to achieve a positive social identity.

Furthermore, this social psychology field has been studied largely by multiple theorists who have developed their own ideas around it. Ellemers (1993) and Mummendey et al (1999) describe the model SIT uses to predict group behaviors; to do so, they take into the three different Socio-Structural variables and conceive *status* as a determining factor, therefore having: (1) the relative *status* position of one's group; (2) the *permeability* of group boundaries; (3) the *stability* of group status; and (4) the *legitimacy* of personal status or group status. Each of them is important to identify the preferences individuals and groups show when trying to achieve a higher status, and they can help predict the actions individuals or groups will take in order to get a more positive perception. In this same order of ideas, Scheepers & Ellemers (2019) assert:

Because SIT predicts that people are generally motivated to achieve a positive social identity, members of low status groups should be motivated to improve the social standing of their group. By contrast, members of high-status groups should be particularly motivated to protect the social standing of their group. [...] How can they cope with this threat [of pertaining to a low status group]? Social identity theory describes three options. The first one, *individual mobility*, involves trying as an individual to seek entrance to a higher status group. [...] The second option, *collective action*, involves working as a group for status improvement. [...] The third option is to be *socially creative* and to change the comparison group [...] or the dimension of comparison. [...] SIT also specifies the factors determining which strategy is likely to be used. Classic SIT describes three socio-structural variables that determine which coping response is chosen: the *permeability* of group differences (is moving to another group possible?) and the *legitimacy* and *stability* of the status differences (are the status differences fair, and is change possible? (p. 133).

Likewise, SIT grounds its basis on the Socio-Structural variables of *status*, *power* and *hierarchy*, given the importance they represent when it comes to

developing identities based on inter-group comparisons (Lisbona, 2010).

Additionally, Operario and Fiske (1999) suggest that there are three pivotal characteristics which SIT relies on: (1) The effort people make to maintain a positive feedback from themselves, (2) The fact that such feedback is derived from the identification with the group and not only the individual one, and (3) the central role that group comparison plays in this whole process.

In this sense, relating SIT to the Colombian context opens a possibility to understand the colonial process this country has faced and the repercussion it has had over the Colombians' perceptions of themselves and their ancestors. However, in order to understand this relationship, it is worth enunciating some aspects about the sense of what Losada-Cubillos (2018) calls '*Colombianness*'. Even though defining what a Colombian 'should look or feel like' in terms of their identity is a highly complex task, historical and sociological research suggests that some characteristics such as prestigious, well-behaved and elegant, are linked to the category of whiteness, as opposed to ignorant, uncultured or rough, which are associated with the category of 'non-white', particularly of 'indigenous'. So, although Colombians are a broader group that encompasses both white and non-white people, the negative perception of the second one, encourages a significant part of the population to try to identify mostly with the first.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Discussion

In this section an analysis about the repercussions colonialism has had over the Colombian educational context is presented. It is divided in two different time frames: Modernity and Coloniality to allow a better understanding of the ways in which this phenomenon planted the seeds for what is happening in the Colombian Educational Context nowadays. To do so, the lens of Social Identity Theory is adopted, given it

allows to assume a more empirical approach than those that have been used - traditionally- to understand this topic.

Coloniality

According to SIT, it would be possible to think that there is a tendency from the 'typical Colombian' to identify themselves or try to be part of what they consider the 'white' category. As shown previously, Colombians mimic white costumes, preferences and behaviors to enhance their perception of being part of the historically powerful elite that whiteness represented.

In this sense, as Scheepers & Ellemers (2019) suggest, SIT predicts that since individuals are usually motivated to attain a positive social identity, the members of low-status groups seek to upgrade their social standing. Therefore, it could be thought that during the times of the colony, Colombian mestizos assumed unauthentic behaviors to identify themselves as 'whiter' and rejected traditions such as rituals, practices and ideologies from their ancestors. What is more, mestizos turned against their own group as a statement to stand out of it and be recognized as a member of a different group. This phenomenon could be appreciated when the intellectual mestizos of the XVIII century started discriminating other mestizos for their deeper connection to the indigenous roots they had. Although such thinkers originally pertained to the 'mestizo' group, they decided to reject that *in-group* by assigning negative value to characteristics like 'mystical', 'unreasonable' or 'from the countryside'. Ironically, the connotations of negative value these characteristics acquired did not come from the indigenous minds of those who possessed them, or even from their descendance. Instead, these value judgements came from the western scientific/positivist intellect, which assumed *their universal truth* as the *objective truth for everyone*. However, it is worth noting that such categories (namely those that referred to the indigenous) are not neutral or uninterested. They were created, in every

sense, by a European group that has favored their own perception and rejected the Others' characteristics in a basic cognitive attempt to preserve their *self-esteem*.

Conversely, as SIT suggests, those who belong to upper status groups are usually motivated to keep their social standing (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). This reasoning explains why the upper-class in the colony and those who achieved a better *social status* continuously adopted behaviors and beliefs from the Iberic world, but overall it helps to understand that in order to pertain to this upper class, they had to *legitimize the knowledge* that came from the powerful. Surely, such feat implied assuming thoughts that underestimated the outer-group (in this case, indigenous and lower-class mestizos, for instance) and helped establishing *differences by comparing* themselves to the Others.

In summary, the social categorization during the times of the colony could be considered a double-sided process: first, the mestizos had to escalate in the social standing by ignoring and rejecting their own indigenous-rooted culture and by adapting new mannerisms, and second, they had to emphasize the attributes that *differentiated* the two groups to create and maintain an obvious gap between them; while simultaneously, the characteristics that were *salient* in the 'whiter' group (i.e. well behaved, educated, proper, etc.) had to be *accentuated* to reinforce their belonging to this superior group.

Moreover, it is also believed that the cleansing of the blood discourse was so influential because it was a direct attack towards identity. It targeted primordial characteristics of a wide group of people, namely "the Others", by positioning themselves as the point of reference to every superior category and therefore, establishing not only the differences between groups, but the basement for the power structures that ruled the social realm at the time.

Modernity

In modernity, the ideas that surrounded the category of whiteness, started changing and reshaping into different qualities. For instance, nowadays the ability to

speaking foreign languages (usually European like English or French) is a symbol of prestige that is backed up by the educational curriculum (and the General Law of Education), which demands the teaching of these language courses in every Basic Education Institution. Likewise, wearing certain clothes brands, listening to determined types of music, or being able to travel to western countries and appreciate their culture could be some other examples of what is now considered to be 'white'. In this sense, it is pivotal to stress that these ideas, which are brought mainly by globalization and the United States, actually have a long past that is enrooted in the traces of the power of colonization, which still has an effect over Colombian's perception of themselves. Likewise, another important trait when trying to classify the mechanisms through which Colombians find their identity is the need for taking distance from their aboriginal roots, revealing a predominant coping mechanism: *individual mobility*. Moreover, in accordance to SIT it could also be considered that this intragroup discrimination appears because by adopting these attitudes towards the outside-group, the 'want-to-be white' Colombians magnify the distinctions they find between themselves and the indigenous by attributing negative connotations to being 'indio', (namely poor, uneducated, rough and mischievous) (Hristov, 2005).

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that such discrimination does not always appear in an explicit or aggressive way, it can also show up for instance, in the form of a supposedly innocent 'curiosity' that recognizes the other as inferior. One example of this kind of oppression is the situation presented in the National University of Colombia and the academic enrollment of aboriginal people who ended up deserting higher education because of the many difficulties they have to face once they enter it. Due to the institution not meeting their 'different' needs and not understanding their previous intellectual frameworks when developing the program or courses, these students are segregated and taught in ways that are not useful to them; their languages are not recognized and the baggage knowledge they carry is only

looked -at best- with curiosity. Similarly, this could be compared to the typical ‘anthropologist’ who is writing an autoethnography while supposedly trying to help and ‘enlighten’ the aboriginal with their *knowledge* or abilities, and for instance, teaches them new foreign languages, math and other sciences that do not correspond to the indigenous society or needs, instead of valuing and legitimizing the natives’ knowledges and languages by genuinely trying to learn from them.

Moreover, one could consider the implementation of ethnoeducation as an attempt to overcome this inequality breach. However, if it is analyzed deeply, one could consider it is still a way to segregate the indigenous population by “preserving” *their* identity, maintaining the idea of Otherness untouched, and segregating the indigenous population to their own spaces, instead of legitimizing traditional knowledge through its impartation in the national curriculum.

Finally, it is crucial to expose the injustice that validating traditional knowledge by using the scientific discourse represents. It was only after the 1980s (and many centuries of colonization) that traditional knowledge started being recognized and partially validated by Colombian society. However, it was only through the means of scientific discourse, that this cause started being taken into account by societies and governments. Particularly, one can find an academic interest surrounding this topic that increased during the second decade of the XXI century. Presumably, this augment is related to the need of finding alternatives in the field of environmental sciences, because of the emergence of this topic. However, the figuration of indigenous-related knowledge in the scientific world, has served as a catalyst to accept and adopt new perspectives regarding the validity of ancestral knowledges.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Traditional Knowledge is a concept that needs further exploration from the scientific discourse, in order to be fully recognized and legitimized by the western

(and westernized) world. Moreover, this paper focused on applying SIT as a tool to analyze the reasons behind discrimination and inequality in educational contexts like the Colombian one. Using this model, it was spotted that the lack of recognition of ancestral knowledges and aboriginal roots, disclose a systematic exclusion of the *'indigenous' social category* from the identity of Colombians' self-concept. Nonetheless, this situation does not only affect the self-perceptions of Colombian people, it also resonates in many aspects of the social life, like education.

It is for this reason that there is a need for an inclusive education directed to and guided by Indigenous People, because there is a notorious inequality problem regarding education in Colombia. The first one refers to the hardship natives have to face when trying to access education or the obstacles to understand and adapt to the almost-foreign contexts where the educational institutions are placed at. The second one is the fact that ancestral knowledge is constantly invalidated and not shared through legitimate sources, due to the lack of identification Colombians find with this side of their ancestry.

Moreover, to understand this situation, it is useful to track its roots and recall two significantly influential discourses: the *cleansing of the blood*, and its evolution into the *rational/scientific thought*. These Eurocentric mental framework is so enrooted in the minds of Colombians, that the categories it helped create have become an unconscious part of the daily narratives of Colombian people, representing a threaten to the indigenous origins and their unvalidated knowledge.

As it was suggested earlier, this phenomenon can be spotted in various contexts, including the educational one, and its scope has been so large, that the Colombian curriculum, guided by the General Law of Education (1994) includes Sciences, Technology, Foreign Languages, Arts and Math, but it does not reference ancestral knowledge at all.

Similarly, it is relevant to acknowledge that the typical ways of addressing these topics are starting to become obsolete because of the irony they represent. However,

theories like the decolonial studies, advocate for new ways to interpret the history by challenging the outdated narratives of the subalterns, and encouraging the re-creation and spreading of discourses in a way that the oppressed are able to get a voice to build their own memories, their own history and their own stories, instead of repeating their narratives from the oppressor's point of view.

Concluding, it is of great importance for this paper to stress that Ethnoeducation should be present not only in indigenous institutions, but also included in the Colombian basic curriculum, because this would represent a legitimization and valuing of the autochthonous knowledge Colombian people could favor from, creating a new dynamic that would break the cycle of having western knowledge – developing an identity based on it – creating knowledge based on that identity.

Recommendations and limitations

After examining this broad topic, it is considered that this is an emergent subject that deserves attention and it could benefit from an empirical approach like an ethnography, to understand deeper perspectives from the indigenous experiences. Likewise, although using SIT allows to understand some of the main motives behind the discrimination and inequality in a context like the one described by this paper, it is necessary to recognize it seems to be a limited theory to explore a topic with different edges like this one.

Positionality

As a born and raised Colombian who always lived in cities and had access to education in non-precarious conditions, I have had the chance to learn foreign languages and live in different countries that allowed me to explore and understand other cultures than the one I grew up with. Likewise, the choice I made of studying Psychology shaped my interests and intellectual frameworks, encouraging me to be critical about my learning processes, as well as challenging me to advocate for social

causes and marginalized people. However, this opportunities of getting to know other ways of thinking and existing, made me question myself about my own roots and the reasons behind decisions like coming to live in an English-speaking country or only validating knowledge through empirical evidences. Therefore, shortly after I started my master's degree at the University of Glasgow, I attended a talk about what it meant to be indigenous/Afro in Colombia and the relationship with environment these communities have. To my surprise, I noticed some things: first, there is a real and significant problem regarding the preservation of sacred (and necessary) spaces of Colombia, that directly affects the indigenous peoples who inhabit these territories; second, although two people were representing this cause (one of them was an indigenous woman), both of them spoke in Spanish and had -little- notions of words in English. Thirdly, I could perceive their excitement of being recognized in an international scene, and an admiration towards 'these kind of countries (like the United Kingdom)'. All of this made me wonder why it was necessary for them to come to such far destination just to be heard and raise awareness about the injustices and violations to the rights them and their communities were being submitted to. These questionings kept on resonating in my head and motivated my will to research the topic and try to understand the roots behind these inequalities.

Finally, during the development of this paper I noticed one main point that shaped the outlines of this study: it is paradoxical that a study like this paper, or any other academic statement has to be made, in order to raise awareness of the situation indigenous people face on a daily basis.

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