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# **Embodying *la Latina*, *la Mestiza* and the *Förort*: Narratives of Anti-Racist Resistance of Latin American Migrant Women in Sweden.**

By Kruskaya Cristina Hidalgo Cordero

Submitted to Central European University – Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfilment for the ERASMUS MUNDUS MA in Women's and Gender Studies  
(GEMMA)

Main supervisor: Nadia Jones-Gailani, PhD (Central European University)

Second reader: Gerardo Rodríguez-Salas, PhD (University of Granada)

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Approval signed by the main supervisor



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## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the identity negotiations that women with Latin American origin articulate to resist in response to the everyday racism that they face in Sweden. My reflections are based on an archive of thirty-three oral histories that I have conducted in the Swedish cities of Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala. By addressing identity through the focus on racism and intermeshed oppressions, I propose three categories to explore the tensions between the self-identification and the external representation in which these women are involved: *la latina*, *la mestiza*, and the *förort*. Through these three categories of identification I explore the construction of specific forms of gendered racism that women from Latin America are subjected to. Also, I study how those women forge hybrid identities in liminal spaces beyond racial mixture. Finally, I analyze women's re-appropriation of the stigma that marginalized migrant-populated suburbs face in order to articulate a coalitional identity among other people of color. I draw upon theoretical, methodological and analytical frameworks developed within the fields of oral history, intersectionality, black feminism, decolonial feminism, Chicana feminism, and borderlands theory to position my study as an embodied research that addresses embodied experiences of gendered racism. I engage with shifting boundaries between academic and creative writing in order to transgress the borders of poetic and scholarly. Through my project I aim to reveal how identity is a battleground for articulating both exclusion and resistance. Thus, I argue that *mestiza* (hybrid) identity provides a powerful conceptual framework to understand how racialized women reclaim spaces and re-signify their existence. Moreover, I also show how *mestiza* consciousness gives rise to the creation of coalitional identities without homogenization of the multiple positions inside the matrix of domination.

**KEYWORDS:** Identity; *la latina*; *mestiza* consciousness; transnational migration; anti-racist resistance; modern/colonial gender system; coalitional identity; decolonial feminism; gendered racism.

## RESUMEN

Esta investigación se enfoca en las negociaciones de identidad que mujeres de origen latinoamericano realizan para resistir el racismo cotidiano que enfrentan en Suecia. Las reflexiones se basan en un archivo de treinta y tres historias orales que se realizaron en las ciudades suecas de Gotemburgo, Estocolmo y Upsala. Tomando en cuenta el racismo y la imbricación de opresiones para estudiar la identidad, la autora propone tres categorías para explorar las tensiones entre la auto identificación y la representación externa que envuelve a estas mujeres: *la latina*, *la mestiza*, y *la förort*. A través de estas tres categorías de identificación se explora las formas específicas de racismo engenerizado que las mujeres provenientes de América Latina son sujeto. También, se estudia como esas mujeres forjan identidades híbridas en espacios liminales. Por último, se analiza la reapropiación que las mujeres hacen del estigma que los suburbios migrantes marginalizados enfrentan, y que estas mujeres la realizan para revalorizar su existencia y articular coaliciones entre otras mujeres de color. Se toma como referencia los marcos teóricos, metodológicos y analíticos desarrollados en los campos de la historia oral, el feminismo negro, el feminismo decolonial, el feminismo chicano y la teoría de las fronteras para posicionar este trabajo como una investigación encarnada que trata de experiencias encarnadas de racismo engenerizado. De esta manera, esta investigación se propone sobrepasar las barreras entre el lenguaje académico y creativo para transgredir las fronteras entre lo poético y lo formal. A través de la investigación se quiere revelar como la identidad es un campo de batalla donde se articula la exclusión y la resistencia. De esta manera se sostiene que la *identidad mestiza* es un marco conceptual poderoso para entender como las mujeres racializadas reclaman espacio y resignifican su existencia. Además, se muestra como la *conciencia mestiza* conduce a la creación de identidades de coalición sin homogenizar las múltiples posiciones dentro de la matriz de dominación.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Identidad; la latina; *conciencia mestiza*; migración transnacional; resistencia anti-racista; Sistema Moderno/Colonial de Género; identidad de coalición, feminismo decolonial; racismo engenerizado.

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL CONTENT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 31,014 words

Entire manuscript: 35,833 words

Signed \_\_\_\_Kruskaya Cristina Hidalgo Cordero\_\_\_\_

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Para mi abuela,  
Tú mi fuerza,  
Olga Ramos

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## Introduction

“‘Ah, eres latina’ he said it with a big smile  
 ‘And what?’ I responded very quick  
 ‘Well, you know what they say, *latinas* are great in bed’  
 And winked his eye.”<sup>1</sup>

As my eyes pierced this small fragment of the page of my diary, I realized that I felt nothing but silence; emptiness. When I consider what has brought me to the topic and focus of my research, it is clear to me in hindsight that my path to this topic has been far from a linear. From the very first time I traveled to Europe, I have consistently experienced a process of being racialized and of feeling racism as part of my subaltern position. The research has become for me an active process that helps me to understand my lived experience in this place that is not ‘home.’ Over the years, I have given voice to my past encounters with the sexist and racist white gaze; encounters at airport checkpoint, trains, academic institutions, conferences, supermarkets, bars and streets corners. As a “theory in the flesh,” I am living and embodying the everyday racism that my women migrant informants narrated as they communicated to me the process of being eroticized, exoticized, and sexualized in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Like the informants whose words I record and analyze in this thesis, I am also *la latina*. My experiences of migrating between the United States, Italy, Germany, Spain and Hungary have all been shaped by my place of origin, or, in many cases, by the imagined place of my origin, in Latin America. In this way, as Anzaldúa and Moraga – among others – argue, my embodied positionality was central to developing the feminist praxis that I bring to the study of these migrant women.<sup>3</sup> And as Lugones demands, I am speaking ‘as one’ for - instead of ‘about’ - women of color.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s diary entry, Turin September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2nd ed. (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back*.

<sup>4</sup> Yuderlys Espinosa et al., “REFLEXIONES PEDAGÓGICAS EN TORNO AL FEMINISMO DESCOLONIAL: Una Conversa En Cuatro Voces,” in *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas Insurgentes de Resistir, (Re)Existir y (Re)Vivir*. TOMO I, ed. Catherine Walsh, 1st ed. (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2013), 421.

My thesis follows a similar model to other feminist qualitative studies that adopt a reflexive and ethnographic focus to conducting in-depth interviews, in my case, women migrants from Latin America who are now settled in Sweden.<sup>5</sup> This study seeks to understand, reconstruct and recover the experiences of thirty-three first- and second-generation women from various countries Latin America who have experienced racism. The focus of my interest is on the multiple ways in which they resist their racialization in a Swedish white patriarchal society. My main research questions seek to engage with the following: what are the everyday practices that women with Latin American origins develop to establish coalitions that resist racism? How do those women negotiate their self-identity while facing the stereotype of *la latina* identities? How does that context of borderlands enrich their capacity of resistance/agency? My reflections are based on an archive of thirty-three women's oral histories that I conducted between November 2017 and March 2018 in the Swedish cities of Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala. The methodological chapter of the thesis will discuss further the criteria for my selection of the migrant subjects.

Latin America faced a period of great unrest and repression during the second half of the twentieth century. The region suffered a systematic and strategic militarization process with the rise of authoritarian regimes (and dictatorships) throughout the region. Paraguay inaugurated the era of the dictatorships in 1954, when General Stroessner seized power through an armed coup, and maintained his position until 1989. In Brazil in 1964, activists on the left went into hiding to try and escape death and exile at the hands of the state. Mexico suffered the massacre in the renamed Plaza de Las Tres Culturas in October 1968.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, the Southern Cone suffered the onslaught of tyrannies: a dictatorship was established in Bolivia in 1971, Pinochet's dictatorial regime in Chile took over after the coup d'état against Allende on 11 September 1973. Furthermore,

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth Behar, "The Vulnerable Observer," *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, 1997, doi:10.1002/ltl.148; Ochy Curiel, "Rethinking Radical Anti-Racist Feminist Politics in a Global Neoliberal Context," *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 46, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.2.04; Diana Mulinari, "Gendered Spaces: Women of Latin American Origin in Sweden," *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* 3, no. 3 (2008): 4–12.

<sup>6</sup> The police-military intervention of the government of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz in Mexico claimed the lives of a number of students - not yet assembled - in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in Tlatelolco, in 1968.

dictatorships arose in Uruguay 1973, Peru in 1975 and Argentina in 1976, in addition to several illiberal regimes throughout Central America.<sup>7</sup> The well-known Operation Condor of anti-communist struggle was the ultimate expression of US tyranny and military brutality (that continues to this day, though in a different form).<sup>8</sup> The political shift towards the right coupled by the instability, caused millions to flee their homes in search of resettlement in the United States and Europe.

In the European context, Sweden was one of the countries to receive the greatest numbers of Latin American refugees, with Chileans being the largest group to be resettled.<sup>9</sup> Sweden has a long history of accepting greater numbers of refugees than any neighboring countries.<sup>10</sup> Approximately twenty percent of the Swedish population has immigrant origins, and one in eight is foreign-born.<sup>11</sup> According to the 2006 Census, there were 126,997 people living in Sweden from Latin America or whose descendants originated in Latin America.<sup>12</sup> In the particular case of Chile, the Swedish diplomat Gustav Harald Edelstam played a very important role.<sup>13</sup> Edelstam was stationed in Santiago de Chile in 1970 and after the 1973 coup d'état he helped over 1200 Chilean diplomats and civilians to escape persecution by taking them to his embassy and transporting them to Sweden.<sup>14</sup> In addition, it is important to mention that during the seventies, the Swedish statesman Sven Olof Palme had close relations both with the governments of both Fidel Castro and Salvador

<sup>7</sup> Felipe Victoriano, "Estado, Golpes de Estado y Militarización En América Latina: Una Reflexión Histórico Política," *NUEVA ÉPOCA* 23, no. 64 (2010): 175–93.

<sup>8</sup> Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (New York, Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2005); Alejandro Paredes, "La Operación Cóndor y La Guerra Fría," *Revista Universum* 1, no. 19 (2004): 122–37.

<sup>9</sup> The biggest Chilean community in the world after Argentina and the United States is located in Sweden.

Luis Roniger et al., *Exile, Diaspora, and Return: Changing Cultural Landscapes in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay*. (Oxford University Press, 2018). The print publication version of this book is for 2018. The work that I refer in this essay is based on the online version through Oxford Scholarship Online.

<sup>10</sup> In his book *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, 2010), Joseph Sassoon documented who Sweden accepted more Iraqi refugees than any other European country including Canada and the United States.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Andersson, "Exploring Social and Geographical Trajectories of Latin Americans in Sweden," *International Migration* 53, no. 4 (2015): 176–203, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2435.2010.00679.x.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. . The data presented is until 2006, updates will be available by the end of March 2018. That data is about individuals born in South and Central America who have lived in Sweden for at least one year during the period 1990–2006 and children born in Sweden that are descendants of Latin American immigrants.

<sup>13</sup> I focus in the particular case of Chile because the majority of my informants were Chileans or had Chilean descent.

<sup>14</sup> The movie "The Black Pimpernel" (Swedish: Svarta nejlikan; Spanish: El Clavel negro) is a Swedish film about Harald Edelstam. The Edelstam Foundation nowadays works in promoting human rights with representation in Chile and Uruguay. During those years, Edelstam also helped Uruguayan and Cuban politicians who were on Chilean territory.

Allende. He assumed a very strong critical position about Pinochet's regime and supported the arrival of Chilean and Latin American political refugees in Sweden.

Immigration has played a central role in the formation of the Swedish welfare state.<sup>15</sup> A first migration flow, from the 1940s to the 1960s, was characterized by labor-force demand mostly from neighboring countries.<sup>16</sup> However, since the 1970s, there has been a new wave of migration for political or religious reasons from the so-called 'Third World' in an attempt to find safety and stability.<sup>17</sup> The migrant population has largely occupied specific sectors and segments in the labor market, regardless of the often high educational qualifications of the new immigrants. What was a common observation that I recorded was "Doctors as taxi drivers are often examples."<sup>18</sup> Thus the contours of the labor market are to a certain extent constituted through ethnic and racial differentiation.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, critical-race scholars have established that the legitimacy of the Swedish nation-state is built upon rejecting and invisibilizing Sámi/Saami people, denying Sweden's colonial history in the form of its participation in the Atlantic slave trade, and even conducting compulsory sterilization on Romani women. The indigenous national minority, the Sámi people, have faced centuries of assimilation, stigmatization and discrimination. Even today, they are fighting for more representation in education, political life, economy and for their rights over land.<sup>20</sup> In reckoning

<sup>15</sup> In the Swedish context, the sociologist Wuokko Knoke was the first to talk about integration process with a gender perspective. With her book 'Invandrade kvinnor i lönearbete och fack' (Immigrant women in wage labor and trade unions) published in 1986, Knoke pointed out how the racist paradox pictured the migrant woman in public debates as a passive subject and as a victim of the patriarchal system of her culture of origin. However, at the beginning of the 1970's migrant women had more participation in the labor market than Swedish 'white' women.

<sup>16</sup> Veronica Riniolo, "Sweden: A Country of Opportunities and Constraints for Migrant Integration," *Paper Ismu*, 2016, [http://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Riniolo\\_Paper\\_2016\\_en.pdf](http://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Riniolo_Paper_2016_en.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Diana Mulinari and Irene Molina, "Explorando La Herencia Colonial Del Feminismo Igualdad de Género y Racismo En Los Países Nórdicos," in *Resonancias de Género. Investigación, Políticas y Estrategias Transformadoras*, ed. Gloria Bonder (FLACSO, 2011), 233–53.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Literature related with the situation of Saami people: Charlotta Svonni, "At the Margin of Educational Policy: Sámi/Indigenous Peoples in the Swedish National Curriculum 2011" (Umeå universitet, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2015.69091>. This is an study of the lack of Sámi thematic in the national curricula and syllabi; Zach Zorich, "Native Sweden," *Archaeology* 61, no. 4 (2008): 30–35. This article focuses in the difficulties of the Saami people to have land rights. Gudrun Ros Arnadottir, "Who Is Sami? : A

with the ‘dark side’ of Swedish colonial history, several of my informants mention how this topic was not addressed in elementary or high school syllabi, as Sweden has been “living in denial.”<sup>21</sup> In the few cases where my informants recalled that this history was mentioned, there was a very superficial focus. The concept of colonial complicity unveils the location of Sweden within the larger white colonial project. The country had an active involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, where their activities date back to 1646, when a Swedish slave trade expedition sailed to what is today Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> Not long after, the Swedish expedition built a slave fort in what is today Ghana. Sweden controlled a large portion of the Gulf of Guinea, in fact, and the area was called the Swedish Gold Coast until 1663.<sup>23</sup> During the sixteenth century, Sweden exported more iron than any other country, especially to Great Britain, which used the iron for slave trade for chains, handcuffs and ships.<sup>24</sup> Regarding violence perpetrated on Romani women, forced sterilization operations took place until 1976. The human rights violations also included taking into custody of children, a ban on immigration, and mapping the Roma population.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that Sweden, as Anzaldúa claims in the case of white US society, has used various cultural and social institution to erase a history of complicity and a legacy of guilt.<sup>26</sup> The erasure of this

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Case Study on the Implementation of Indigenous Rights in Sweden” (Central European University, 2014). This MA thesis explores the tensions between self-representation among Saami leaders and Swedish government imagery. The research has a particular focus on the efforts of Saami leaders to revitalize Saami culture.

<sup>21</sup> As the Afro-Swedish activist Charlene Rosander refers in her pieces of writing. See more: <https://bit.ly/2HHxBcT>

<sup>22</sup> Robert Aman, “Swedish Colonialism, Exotic Africans and Romantic Anti-Capitalism: Notes on the Comic Series Johan Vilde,” *Third Text* 30, no. 1–2 (2016): 60–75.

<sup>23</sup> Klas Ronnback, “The Price of Salt: Swedish Slaves in North Africa and the Trade in the Mediterranean 1650-1770,” *HISTORISK TIDSKRIFT* 135, no. 3 (2015): 551–53.

<sup>24</sup> Aman, “Swedish Colonialism, Exotic Africans and Romantic Anti-Capitalism: Notes on the Comic Series Johan Vilde.”

<sup>25</sup> Several reports, human rights organizations and an official investigation by the Swedish Government have denounced the sterilization laws between 1934-1974. Information related can be found at: European Roma Right Centre <http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/report-reveals-that-romani-women-were-sterilised-against-their-will-in-sweden>; The Government Offices of Sweden published a ‘White Paper’ on abuses and rights violations of Roma population during the 1990s <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/03/white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-of-roma-during-the-1990s/>; and some research based newspaper’s articles related with the topic: <https://wapo.st/2KshNvB>; “A ban of Romani immigration was introduced in 1914 and remained in effect until 1954. Romani people seeking to escape the industrialized genocide campaigns in fascist Europe were denied entry. When the Swedish Red Cross sent the White Buses to rescue Scandinavians and Jewish people from the Nazi concentration camps, Romani people were excluded. Some Romani people saved their lives by claiming Jewish identity, some by claiming to be Polish. Romani families, at the time typically named “tattare” (Tatars, lowlives), “zigenare” (Egyptians/Gypsies) or “resande” (Travelers), living inside Sweden’s closed borders became of increasing concern to the state and the good-and-decent citizens. In the 1923 government official report Tattare och zigenare (Tatars and Gypsies), the commissioner saw the integration of Romani people as an “unsolvable problem”. Therefore, the “only solution is to have them out of the country, one way or another”, possibly by “imposing such strict limitations on their freedom of movement that that they themselves find it to their own advantage to leave the country” Mattias Gardel, Open Society <https://bit.ly/2wGfCSV>

<sup>26</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987), 86.

particular history allows Sweden to imagine itself as white and homogenous, denying the existence of Sami and Roma population who had been on the territory before the migration of the second part of the twentieth century. Thus, Sweden's whiteness is a colonial fantasy rooted in the negation of the 'other's' existence and history. This is particularly true of Sweden, given the history provided above that helps to 'map' how the colonial fantasy translates to the self in an imaginary that creates the boundaries of the nation-state that is realized legally.

The racial encounters in which I am exoticized or eroticized as part of a fantasy of the 'other' are most often ones in which I am framed as being *la latina*. When I started the research, I was driven to explore how the category of *la latina* is constructed within the context of Sweden. In starting to interview women migrants about their practices of resistance, I soon found that the articulation of *la latina* was a common form of racializing these women. However, the notion of *la latina* does not capture all aspects of their experiences. The women I spoke with imagine themselves as a coalition of resistance that includes other marginalized and excluded women of color. Thus, addressing the multiple ways in which identity is described, perceived, lived, and embodied, I will explore in this thesis the three primary ways of expressing identity as *la latina*, *la mestiza*, and *la förort*.

*La latina* hints to a racist essentialization that hypersexualizes and exoticizes women with Latin American origins. This is a category imposed by Swedish society, but also, from a neocolonial modernity in which those women will be always considered the racial other female body.<sup>27</sup> The idea of *la mestiza* means something different in different geographic locations and temporalities. The term *mestiza* originally came from the context of the racial mixture after the conquest of the *Abya Yala*.<sup>28</sup> *La mestiza* in Latin America addresses 'mixed-race' that historically has had privileges over

<sup>27</sup> Maria Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise* 2, no. 2 (2008): 1–17.

<sup>28</sup> Abya Yala was the name that the indigenous group Kuna gave to the continent before the Europeans conquer called 'the Americas' Jorge Ventocilla, Heraclio Herrera, and Valerio Núñez, *El Espíritu de La Tierra : Plantas y Animales En La Vida Del Pueblo Kuna* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1999), 17.

indigenous and black communities.<sup>29</sup> However, when I am addressing *mestiza* in this research I am not doing it just in terms of racial background. I use the theoretical proposal of Gloria Anzaldúa, who introduced the idea of ‘mestiza’ to talk about the intersection of many kind of borders within the concept of identity.<sup>30</sup> Thus, *mestiza* addresses identity hybridity and liminal spaces. Rather than racial identities, this thesis proposes an understanding of identities as impure, hybrid, contextual and temporal. Finally, *förort* is the Swedish word for suburb, but as my informants argued it is commonly used to refer to migrant populated neighborhoods in a negative way. My informants appropriate the term as a political category to re-signify their lives and their communities. Thus, *la förort* refers to a coalitional identity with other people of color through an articulation of a neighborhood identification to resist racism and structural violence.

In this way, *la latina*, *la mestiza*, and *la förort* are all self-representations and imposed categories of identification that are temporally and spatially imagined. The three intersect, but also – and importantly – forge their own paths since they are all three distinct ways of expressing the complex, changing, and diverse realities of racialized women migrants. These three features offer dimensions for a sensitive and vulnerable observation; they are three tentative methods of understanding the corporeal and lived intersections of oppression. Thus, I see these identities as fluid, in which their differences are not fixed.<sup>31</sup> These identities are at the borders and they are interconnected, and as an informant described it during our interview: “my identity is a plasticine, which is modeled through the experiences I have. It is not fixed, and it is very intimate. My identity took me inside, in my body, in my spirit, in my being.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ochy Curiel, “EL REGIMEN HETEROSEXUAL DE LA NACION. Un análisis antropológico lesbico-feminista de la Constitución Política de Colombia de 1991” (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Interview with the author, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

As the conceptualization of borderland identity is a very important axis of my analysis, in the literature review section, I will develop upon the evolution of this concept by connecting my research to debates that engage with racialization, identity and the identification process. My theoretical analysis on racism is informed by the epistemic decolonial turn – thus – in the theoretical section, I will articulate how coloniality is a key element to understand race, gender and power on the *modern/colonial gender system* that we live in. In my methodological chapter, I establish a reflexive and decolonial framework through which to analyze the lives and experiences of these women. Since I wanted to give women an active role in the research, and to make the voices heard in the text, I allow their text to appear as it is written or submitted. Thus, I have borrowed from the works of authors who develop embodied, intersectional and reflexive methodologies used in the fields of black feminism, decolonial feminism, Chicana feminism and borderlands theory.

In Chapter Two, I will explore how the mark of exile and the history of a common struggle shape the identification and self-representation of my Latin American women informants, and also how the racist category of *la latina* is constructed in Sweden. I will illustrate the tension between how my informants perceived themselves and how Swedish ‘white society’ portrays them.<sup>33</sup> In Chapter Three, I will analyse my informants’ identity using Anzaldúa’s framework of *la mestiza* to explore how my informants demonstrate their *mestiza consciousness*, and how they articulate their practices of resistance against everyday racism through that hybrid identity.<sup>34</sup> The fourth and final chapter will conceptualize the *fjörort* identity in order to understand how my informants create coalitions

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<sup>33</sup> The main bodies of literature that I draw upon in my analysis are from the fields of diaspora, and transnational migration studies, and Chicana and decolonial feminist theory for the second section. Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*; Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, eds., *This Bridge We Call Home. Radical Visions for Transformation* (Routledge, 2002); Espinosa et al., “REFLEXIONES PEDAGÓGICAS EN TORNO AL FEMINISMO DESCOLONIAL: Una Conversa En Cuatro Voces.”

<sup>34</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982); Maria Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 458–79.



with other women of color within the multiplicity of positionalities possible within the matrix of domination.<sup>35</sup>

## Literature Review

Debates around identity, identification and racialization have contributed to a larger and deeper understanding of the processes of transnational migration. In addition, the feminist intervention in the field of migration studies has showed how human mobility is a gendered experience. In this way, gender and race have become essential for this conversation. In this literature review, I will explore how by the incorporation of the analytical categories of race and gender the theorization of borderland identity has changed over time. I will trace the evolution of the concept from debates on race with W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, culture with Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy, and an intersection of race, culture and gender with Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones. First, I will explore how the idea of *double consciousness* is carry out holding hands with the idea hybridity, both concepts separate from an initial context of race and racial-mixed to problematize the identity articulated at liminal spaces more broadly.<sup>36</sup> And second, I will draw how the gender perspective arrives with the theoretical concept of *mestiza* as a particular women's embodied position arguing that race and gender are not just categories of analysis but intermeshed lived experiences.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I will draw debates about intersectionality from Black feminism and Decolonial feminism to reflect on the position of privilege and oppression among the *fjörort*. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (1998): 917–38, doi:10.1080/014198798329720; Patricia Hill Collins, "On Violence, Intersectionality and Transversal Politics," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (2017): 1460–73, doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1317827; Maria Lugones, "Structure/Anti-Structure and Agency under Oppression," in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes. Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2003), 53–63; Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso, Diana Gómez Correal, and Karina Ochoa Muñoz, *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales En Abya Yala, Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales En Abya Yala*, 2014, doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004; Curiel, "Rethinking Radical Anti-Racist Feminist Politics in a Global Neoliberal Context."

<sup>36</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, New York: Verso, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes. Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2003).

In his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. B. Du Bois made a groundbreaking contribution to the sociology of race in the US from the perspective of non-white scholars. He made visible how black people had – and still have – been forced to read their own existence through the gaze of the oppressor. Through his concept *double consciousness*, he described the state of internal conflict experienced by subordinated and oppressed groups that are struggling against a colonial power that defined themselves as the otherness.<sup>38</sup> In this way, Du Bois argued that the experience of black people was not just under theorized, but it was entirely filtered and ‘experienced’ by white intellectuals.<sup>39</sup> He was influenced by the work of the abolitionist and writer Frederick Douglass from whom he borrowed the term *color line* to address racial segregation in the United States.<sup>40</sup> His contemporaries, early black feminist scholars such as Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells working on the topic of race and gender by advocating for black women rights.<sup>41</sup> Feminist scholars recently point out how Du Bois was also influenced by them and in his later work the support for women's rights had become evident.<sup>42</sup> However, with the concept *double consciousness* he does not interrogate gender in any meaningful way.<sup>43</sup> Du Bois’ theoretical proposal has traveled throughout these decades and it has significantly influenced racial critical studies, cultural studies and postcolonial theories.

<sup>38</sup> “... looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45. The first edition of his book was in 1903.

<sup>39</sup> According to authors as Lewis Gordon, the discussion of double consciousness was beneath in philosophical debates since the nineteenth century. Specific in the production of G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Ralph Waldo Emerson. However, Du Bois proposed a dialectical movement outside the imposed philosophical structure until his time. Lewis R Gordon, “Review of Frantz Fanon: *De l’anticolonialisme à La Critique Postcoloniale* by Matthieu Renault (Review),” *A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 4, no. 2 (2015): 212. I find relevant to mention these European authors to see how materialism and dialectic entered to the conversation around race. In addition, the influence of the German Philosophers Kant and Hegel in Du Bois’ production helps us to see how the national imaginary post-eighteen century in Europe were framing the conversations on citizen, foreigner, race and human mobility. The understanding of location was consolidated on the idea of “in land” and the idea of nation was incorporated on discourses around “space” and “time”. Elena Delgado and Rolando Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Dignolo,” *Discourse* 3, no. 22 (2000): 15.

<sup>40</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The Color Line,” *The North American Review* 132, no. 295 (1881): 567–77. In 1881 Frederick Douglass published an article called “The Color Line”. Twenty years later, W.E.B. Du Bois used the term and made it famous.

<sup>41</sup> In the case of the philosopher, activist and educator Anna Julia Cooper, a lot of her work had remained unknown or overlooked under the shadow of her contemporaneous W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James. Feminist scholars as Vivian May recovers Anna Julia Cooper’s varied body of scholarship and argued that W.E.B. Du Bois was strongly influenced by her radical thinking. In Cooper’s work, we find a “socially located, embodied, and historicized model of knowing” that is presented – a posterior – in a lot of the feminist production of women of color. Vivian May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> For example, his essay “The Damnation of Women” published in 1920 there is an attempt of revaluating black women experience.

<sup>43</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*; Sylvanna M. Falcón, “Mestiza Double Consciousness: The Voices of Afro-Peruvian Women on Gendered Racism,” *Gender and Society* 22, no. 5 (2008): 660–80, doi:10.1177/0891243208321274.

The emancipatory processes of decolonization in Asian and African territories started with the emerge of so-called *Third World* nationalism(s).<sup>44</sup> The war for Independence broke out in Algeria in 1954; a struggle that had tremendous influence on the postcolonial and decolonial production of one of the greatest voices of African intellectualism of his time, Frantz Fanon. In his milestone book *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952) in which Fanon presented his own experience with dehumanization and racism.<sup>45</sup> Years later, with *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) Fanon introduced for first time the concept of ‘racialization’ to explain how colonialism affected the experience of colonized people.<sup>46</sup> As Fanon claimed, the colonized are forced to assimilate the culture of the colonizer and by doing so, to internalize the colonial bourgeoisie thinking.<sup>47</sup> Thus, his work continues to enrich our reading of the early literature on race theories by Du Bois, and to illustrate the performance of the Black subject as a white fantasy.<sup>48</sup>

In Fanon’s perspective of colonialism is incorporated the ideas of borderlands, hybridity and race to problematize the understanding of people of color’s experiences – a borderland identity marked by the on-going colonialism and global capitalism.<sup>49</sup> There is a genealogy of feminist scholars that recover Fanon’s phenomenology of race and his intervention on studies of the body. In my research, I draw upon the work of race and gender feminist scholars Grada Kilomba and Sara Ahmed who closely work with Fanonian theoretical traditions.<sup>50</sup> Also, Fanon has provided

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<sup>44</sup> Ochy Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial,” in *Otras Formas de (Re)Conocer. Reflexiones, Herramientas y Aplicaciones Desde La Investigación Feminista*, ed. Irantzu Mendia et al. (Bilbao: Edicio Zubiria Etxea, 2014), 46. Temporarily talking, there is a general agreement that postcolonialism started with the India’s independence in 1947.

<sup>45</sup> The English version *Black Skin, White Masks* was published in 1986.

<sup>46</sup> The English version *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1963.

<sup>47</sup> Fanon Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1st ed. (Grove Press, 1963), 43. His clearly stand against imperialism and capitalism is showed as the following: “Colonialism and imperialism have not paid their score when they withdraw their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the capitalists have behaved in the underdeveloped world like nothing more than war criminals.”

<sup>48</sup> Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 2nd ed. (Munster: UNRAST, 2010). Frantz Fanon extensively addressed the problematic of colonialism, knowledge and race through his embodied experience, Negritude poetics, Marxist thought, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and Hegelian phenomenology. Fanon’s work has influenced the debates on African philosophy, political theory, literary theory and postcolonial theory. Gordon, “Review of Frantz Fanon: De l’anticolonialisme à La Critique Postcoloniale by Matthieu Renault (Review).”

<sup>49</sup> Authors working on the epistemic decolonial turn recover Fanon’s thought to bring coloniality to the center of the understanding of modernity, race and gender.

<sup>50</sup> Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*; Sara Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 149–67, doi:10.1177/1464700107078139.

epistemic bases for the using of poetics on racialization experience. Throughout his production, Fanon called for writing in the first person, as a writing of the body. This idea is given voice through the Chicana interpretation of “Theory in the Flesh.”<sup>51</sup> For my own methodological proposal, I am incorporating these political and aesthetics practices to my academic writing.

A decade later, Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* in 1978 opened up the production of postcolonial interpretation and critique within the US context. Thus, postcolonialism emerged as a category, concept and perspective to analyze how the West represented ‘The East’ through imperial logics. With the work of the scholars Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, Ranahid Guha, and Chandra Mohanty – to mention a few – postcolonial theories expanded to fields of cultural studies, feminist theory, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, etc.<sup>52</sup> In this way, the construction of ‘other’ enriched the understanding of how identity in postcolonial context has been shaped by the romanticized ideas of the European imperial companies.<sup>53</sup> Parallel to this theoretical process was a period of great upheaval that included the Cold War arms race, the rise of dictatorships across South and Central America, in addition to the ongoing struggles of ex-colonies fighting for their freedom. Shifting political and economic regimes gave rise to new waves of migration from the global south to Europe and North (North) America. A large part of the literature on transnational migration and post-colonial immigration since the 1980’s has taken up these postcolonial theories and epistemic proposals.

With the Cultural Turn in intellectual development in the 1990’s, the work of Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall influenced new perspectives on borderlands and hybridity by shifting the focus to identification processes. Hall, Bhabha, Gilroy, among others, initiated a paradigmatic shift in

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<sup>51</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.

<sup>52</sup> Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial,” 46.

<sup>53</sup> For some scholars as Arlik Dirlik, postcolonial theories are articulated on post structural debates that understand the notion of identity from a discursive rather than structural point of view. Sandro Mezzadra and Federico Rahola, “La Condición Postcolonial,” in *Estudios Postcoloniales. Ensayos Fundamentales*, ed. Sandro Mezzadra (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2008), 261–78.

interdisciplinary perspectives that have had lasting implications for studies of identity, race and hybridity that are no longer conceived as territorially bound.<sup>54</sup> Homi Bhabha highlights the complexity of hybridity by arguing that it allows us to see an everyday fluidity where cultures collide and collude.<sup>55</sup> The Jamaica black scholar Stuart Hall addresses identity and identification through the lens of colonialization and diaspora. He argues that there is a transnational and transcultural global process in which traditions interact and coexist with recent hybrid cultural forms.<sup>56</sup> In 1993 with his book *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy argues that there are interconnections that reshape community identities and, at the same time, develop identities beyond national borders.<sup>57</sup> The author suggests that 'Black Atlantic' is a culture that is not particularly African, Caribbean, British or American, but all those cultures at once. Thus, Gilroy proposes a location "in-water" to address territorial dis-location.<sup>58</sup> Through this, Gilroy states that black culture is a historical experience that transcends ethnicity and nation-states. In this way, Gilroy goes beyond debates on time-memory, and gives us elements to rethink identity configuration between and outside borders.<sup>59</sup>

A central argument of my thesis is that race and gender are inseparable in a study of the processes of identification, and of how race is constructed in modernity. In this sense, I am indebted in my work to Chela Sandoval's notion 'U.S. third world feminism' which has tremendously contributed

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Hall, "Whose Heritage? Un-settling 'the Heritage', Re-imagining the Post-nation.," *Third Text* 13, no. 49 (1999): 3–13; Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990); Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

<sup>55</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. In Bhabha's words, "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." Bhabha, "The Third Space," 211.

<sup>56</sup> In Hall's words "traditions coexist with the emergence of new, hybrid and cross-over cultural forms of tremendous vitality and innovation. These communities are in touch with their differences, without being saturated by tradition; they are actively involved with every aspect of life around them, without the illusion of assimilation and identity." Hall, "Whose Heritage? Un-settling 'the Heritage', Re-imagining the Post-nation.," 9.

<sup>57</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

<sup>58</sup> Delgado and Romero, "Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Dignolo," 15. In this way, Gilroy's work influenced directly to studies of exile, nation, empire, Cultural Studies and Black Atlantic diasporic culture. With his 1998 article "Race ends here", Paul Gilroy established a new way to consider hybridity as separate from "mixed race." Hybridity emphasizes the multiple and fluid natures of the very conceptions of culture and race, rather than simply considering the histories of race and culture. P. Gilroy, "Race Ends Here," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (1998): 838–47, doi:10.1080/014198798329676. Contemporary to his work, feminist scholars also working with (dis)location and transnational migration drew links between race, sexuality, and nation – for example: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

to the analysis of gender and racialization within the context of identity and politics of identity.<sup>60</sup>

One of the most important books of this anti-racist feminism was *This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color* (1981) co-edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga.<sup>61</sup> The book discusses racism and racialization through women's bodies and embodied writing by forging a "Theory in the Flesh," in which borderlands and hybridity are illuminated by the testimonies of women of color in a diversity of modes of writing.<sup>62</sup> As Moraga puts it, "the complex confluence of identities—race, class, gender, and sexuality—systemic to women of color oppression and liberation."<sup>63</sup>

In the context of the border of 3.140 km that separates the United States from Latin America as "an open wound", Gloria Anzaldúa uses the metaphor of that geographic border to talk about gender, cultural, sexual, linguistic borders, etc.<sup>64</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* published in 1987 serves as the basis for the analysis, which can be articulated in terms of border identities (Borderlands Theory) and embodied experience (Theory in the Flesh). Anzaldúa's work makes a personal, embodied theoretical and political statement using her

<sup>60</sup> Chela Sandoval described the US Third World feminism as a "feminism represents the political alliance made during the 1960s and 1970s between a generation of feminists of color who were separated by culture, race, class, sex, or gender identifications but who became allied through their similar positioning in relation to race, gender, sex, and culture subordinations." Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed, Methodology of the Oppressed* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 192, doi:10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2.

<sup>61</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. The book is a collection of autobiographies and stories in the first person and poetic texts by Chicanas, Chinese Americans, Latin Americans and the Caribbean women writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, María Saucedo, Iris Hernández, Sonia Rivera-Valdés, Cherrie Moraga or Nellie Wong. They nurtured anti-racist feminist positions, radically questioned the idea of a situation of subordination, oppression or shared domination of "women" based solely on gender, or on the construction of the biological difference of sex in history. They argued for an intersectional analysis where race, sexuality, class, etc. and not only gender constituted the struggle. The same year, another important anthology that gave an account of racism and classism present the narratives, interests and agendas of the feminist movement of white women and sexism of the Afro-descendant and antiracist movements is the book Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave, Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1981). From these political and embodied positions authors such as Kimberly Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, conceptualized these thoughts under the terms of 'intersectionality of oppression' or the 'matrix of domination' that unmask "the experience of women" as the experience of some women, with social privileges and listening, middle class, white and Europocentric. That is, the experience of the so-called women varies according to their class, race, the exercise of their sexuality and other patterns of oppression. These two books became fundamental pieces for the articulation of the anti-racist feminism and both works influenced a posteriori decolonial feminist production that I employ throughout this research. For example, María Lugones and Ochy Curiel.

<sup>62</sup> Twenty years later, in 2002, Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridg. We Call Home. Radic. Visions Transform*. Was published. This book shows the legacy of the powerful anthology of radical women of color *This bridge called my back* and how the topics around identity politics are still very important.

<sup>63</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Rocío Medina Martín, "FEMINISMOS PERIFÉRICOS, FEMINISMOS-OTROS: UNA GENEALOGÍA FEMINISTA DECOLONIAL POR REIVINDICAR," *Revista Internacional de Pensamiento Político* 8 (2013): 53–79.

geographical location of birth as a basis for building a theoretical framework. In this way, she uses her own Chicana experience to denounce the under theorization and marginalization of Chicanas.<sup>65</sup> In her book, she conceptualizes a particular kind of identity that emerges from the crossings of lands, cultures, religions, spiritualities, languages, bodies, desires. She claims that the people who live in the borderlands and on the margins articulate a hybrid identity that she called *mestiza* identity.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Anzaldúa refers to *mestiza* outside the frame of racial mixture to talk about intersections of multiple identities and oppressions.

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* has a unique form of consciousness – *mestiza consciousness* – that comes from the ambiguity and contradictions of borderlands. In this way, Anzaldúa returned to Du Bois' *double consciousness* by rethinking the Chicana experience as a border stage where Chicano people have been forced to understand their lives through the white American society. However, Anzaldúa gives particular focus to the experiences of women in those borderlands. Ultimately, women suffering from racial marginalization, cultural invisibility, and class discrimination experience violence because they are women. That consciousness is traversed by both gender and race, both by white supremacy and patriarchy. Anzaldúa's work will be central for this research because she provides an epistemic conception to articulate liminal identities, racialization and gender. Moreover, she conceives symbolic borders as imaginary spaces that influence the construction of identity. So, her work illustrates how migrant women are inserted in a categorial logic that is impossible in the context of their multidimensional lived experiences.<sup>67</sup> Anzaldúa's work helps me to rethink discourses around migrant women and their identity negotiation.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> (Mexican descendent people in South Texas)

<sup>66</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 194-195. During this chapter I will use the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* to quote or paraphrase Anzaldúa's work. However, I will use 2nd, 3rd and 4th edition to refer to the preface section. The preface sections of each edition have given me the possibility of a deeply understanding of Anzaldúa's work.

<sup>67</sup> Paola Contreras and Macarena Trujillo, "Desde Las Epistemologías Feministas a Los Feminismos Decoloniales: Aportes a Los Estudios Sobre Migración," *Athena Digital* 17, no. 1 (2017): 159.

<sup>68</sup> Anzaldúa's and Moraga's work are in conversation with contemporaneous production on Transnational Feminist Practices and the Politics of Representation broadly talking (in research, institution, teaching, activism, etc). Books such as Trinh T Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989). Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will

In 1994, the Argentinian US scholar Maria Lugones conceptualized *la mestiza* as “a metaphor for both impurity and resistance.”<sup>69</sup> Lugones provides a reading of the purity-impurity dichotomy as a hybrid imaginary. She argues that the policies linked to the ideal of 'identity-based purity' separate the pure from the impure, forming structures of discrimination. Therefore, that 'identity' camouflages unstable concepts through the naturalization of the existence of said identity. It is here that the hybrid/*mestiza* modes/identities constitute forms of resistance to the politics of purity. In this way, Lugones adds to the debate of hybridity and borderlands in the context of identity the potentiality of hybridity. *La mestiza* in Lugones' words “is unclassifiable, unmanageable - she has no pure parts to be ‘had’, or controlled.”<sup>70</sup> *La mestiza* – as a person and a stage – implies the possibility of transgressing the limitation of the colonial modernity.<sup>71</sup> With her later work on the colonality of gender, Lugones provides new insights to these debates through a decolonial perspective that accepts that “race” and “gender” are fictions established since the colonization of the Americas.<sup>72</sup> The creation of race and the establishment of heterosexuality since 1492 made possible the expansion of global capitalism.

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Never Dismantle the Master's House,” in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg: The Crossing Press, 1984). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “‘Criticism, Feminism and the Institution’ Interview with Elizabeth Grosz,” *Thesis Eleven*, 1984, 175–87.

<sup>69</sup> Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” 459.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>71</sup> Lugones draws from decolonial authors from different latitudes within Latin America: Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social,” *Journal of World Systems Research* VI, no. 2 (2000): 342–86; Walter Dignolo and Freya Schiwy, “Transculturation and the Colonial Difference. Double Translation,” in *Translation and Ethnography*, ed. Tullio Maranhão and Bernard Streck (The University of Arizona Press, 2003); Ramon Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking and Global Coloniality,” *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–38; Caterina Walsh, “Interculturalidad y Colonialidad Del Poder. Un Pensamiento y Posicionamiento ‘Otro’ Desde La Diferencia Colonial,” in *El Giro Decolonial. Reflexiones Para Una Diversidad Epistémica Más Allá Del Capitalismo Global*, ed. Santiago Castro-Gómez and Ramon Grosfoguel (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre, 2007), 47–62. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: Una Reflexión Sobre Prácticas y Discursos Descolonizadores*, 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.” This is the genealogy of thinking which with I have an active conversation in this research. On the Theoretical framework through these authors I conceptualize racism and modernity.

For her 2008 ‘coloniality of gender’ concept, Lugones recovered feminist production on nationalism(s) studies, critical racial studies and African studies – previous mentioned: McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*; Oyeronke Oyewumi, “Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies,” *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Woman Studies* 2 (2002): 1; Hill Collins, “The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence.”



By bringing decolonial feminist frameworks to the debates on identity, we can have a deeper understanding of the intersection of oppression – and hence – of intersectionality. In 1989 the black legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality to address black women's specific location at the intersection of multiple systems of subordination. Crenshaw claimed that black women's subordination had to be understood as the intersection of race and sex in the context of the applicability of black feminism to anti-discrimination laws in the United States. Intersectionality has become one of the most commonly employed approaches within feminist scholarship to study oppressions. However, as the black feminist Kathy Davis claims, there is plenty of confusion around the term and its limitations, to the extent that intersectionality has become a buzzword.<sup>73</sup> The decolonial feminist Ochy Curiel argues that there is a political and theoretical problem in Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, because through the metaphor of crossroads as points of intersection, Crenshaw pictures gender and race as they were in certain point separate.<sup>74</sup> Thus, there is a lack of analysis of the historical situations that produce those intersected categories. As Lugones argues, there is a lack of analysis of coloniality. From a decolonial feminist perspective, in the core of the analysis we must understand that the categories of race and gender have been created by a colonial modernity. That means, that they are not just simple axes of differences, they were the pillars of global capitalism and they hold contemporary coloniality. In this way, we must establish a relationship between oppressed realities and the global capitalist colonial modernity.<sup>75</sup> And for instance, identity is directly affected for the inseparability of race and gender.

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<sup>73</sup> Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful," *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 67–85, doi:10.1177/1464700108086364.

<sup>74</sup> Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial," 54–55. The metaphor that Curiel elucidated can be found in Crenshaw's 2003 essay "multiple intersections that often cross each other, creating complex crossroads where two, three, or more of these routes may meet in overlapping dimensions." Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Traffic at the Crossroads: Multiple Oppressions," in *Sisterhood Is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003), 47. Without the risk of taking it out of context, Crenshaw herself has mentioned in several interviews that she wanted to "come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use." Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality By Bim Adewunmi. <https://quinnae.com/2010/08/10/at-the-crossroads-and-other-mixed-metaphors-intersectionality/>

<sup>75</sup> Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial," 54–56.

Ultimately, the authors explored and contextualized in this section have helped me formulate a methodology of border exclusion, and in particular have helped me frame my study of intermeshed and intersectional oppressions. A border can be the color line, as is introduced through the works of Du Bois and Fanon. Whereas later cultural theorists Hall, Bhabha and Gilroy advance ideas of hybridity that go far beyond simply racial mixing and begin to interrogate a broader process of identification at the site of migrant bodies. In this sense, Anzaldúa and Lugones provide in their work the theoretical and methodological framing of a gender analysis of migrant and hybridized bodies and subjectivities. But also, Anzaldúa and Lugones develop theoretical proposals within their social movements that commit to bridging activism and academia. Their work is both a political and intellectual praxis that calls for embodied research, a commitment that I carry on within my own methodological and analytical framework for this research.

### **Theoretical framework: Theorizing modern racism by *the epistemic decolonial turn***

The decolonial epistemic turn was introduced in the early twentieth century by, among others, W.E.B. Du Bois, who gave rise to a genealogy of thought that would later influence the most important race theorists of the century such as Aimée Césaire and Frantz Fanon. These authors made explicit a decolonial thinking that existed since the very inception of modern forms of colonization, that have existed since at least the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>76</sup> Within this epistemic turn, racism is understood as the product of the colonization of the peripheries by European colonial powers. Thereby, racism is the social classification of populations created by modern-colonial-capitalist-Eurocentric power. In this sense, decolonial studies oppose the classical imaginary within the Social Sciences view of racism as exclusively a social problem derived from biological pseudoscientific and philosophical discourses.

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<sup>76</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique-An Introduction," *Transmodernity*, 2011, 1–3.

Anibal Quijano develops a historical theory of social classification by introducing the framework of the ‘coloniality of power’ to understand global, Eurocentric, capitalist power. Quijano argues that with the conquest of the Americas, European forces introduced a social classification through the coloniality of power. Thus, the idea of ‘race’ was a social construction derived from, and imposed by, the European colonizers in the Americas to differentiate, classify and hierarchize people within a capitalist society. Subsequently, it was imposed on a global scale. In this sense, the study of race prior to the mid-nineteenth century was not a product of the racial biologist science, it was a historical and social legacy of the European colonialism.<sup>77</sup> With the incorporation of ‘race’ into the Eurocentric colonial capitalist<sup>78</sup> system, skin color was the most important racial marker since race was primarily calculated through visible phenotypic attributes.<sup>79</sup> Such classification is the fundamental axis of power patterns, hierarchizing human groups between “inferior and superior, irrational and rational, primitive and civilized, traditional and modern.”<sup>80</sup>

According to Quijano, the coloniality of power is not just a racial classification, “it is an encompassing phenomenon, since it is one of the axes of the system of power and as such it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/inter-subjectivity and the production of knowledge from within these inter-subjective relations.”<sup>81</sup> That is to say, that the control of sex, authority, labor, subjectivity and knowledge are articulated around the coloniality of power. For instance, it is not just to say that European forces dominated and enslaved most of the

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<sup>77</sup> Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social,” 367.

<sup>78</sup> I think it is pertinent to explain how Quijano understands world capitalism: “[C]apitalism refers to the structural articulation of all historically known forms of control of labor or exploitation, slavery, servitude, small independent mercantile production, wage labor, and reciprocity under the hegemony of the capital-wage labor relation.” The original Quijano’s text is written in Spanish and the quotation is the following: El capitalismo mundial el trabajo existe actualmente, como hace 500 años, en todas y cada una de sus formas históricamente conocidas (salario, esclavitud, servidumbre, pequeña producción mercantil, reciprocidad), pero todas ellas al servicio del capital y articulándose en torno de su forma salarial. Ibid., 348. The English quotation that I am using in my chapter comes from Maria Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” 3.

<sup>79</sup> Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social,” 372–74. Ramon Grosfoguel argues, nowadays religion – specific Muslim- is a racial marker as well.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>81</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” 3.

world's population by imposing a racial division of labor, where native populations and African slaves fared the worst. But also, that neocolonial elites were created among the groups of the oppressed themselves, and as a result they became complicit in the enforcement of the oppressive power dynamics inherent in coloniality.<sup>82</sup> Racism and colonization were internalized by the colonized or subaltern. As Fanon claimed, the colonized are forced to assimilate the culture of the colonizer, and in so doing, internalized colonial bourgeoisie thinking.<sup>83</sup>

Knowledge itself is hierarchical, and as such non-Western knowledge is classified as inferior, barbaric and belonging to the past, while Western science is considered superior and exclusive of modernity.<sup>84</sup> As Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro Gomez argues, such classification constitutes an epistemic domain strategy that is still in force within the Academy. In this way, the geopolitical matrix of knowledge and power creates positions of subalterity according to Eurocentric criterion.<sup>85</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos states that the Western/European production of knowledge creates a "non-existence" of non-Western knowledge through what he calls the 'sociology of absences'. Since the conquest of the Americas, Europe imposed a single way – monoculture – of knowledge, linear time, classification, the notion of the universal, and criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency that erases conceptualizations and understandings of colonized cultures. Quijano understands modernity as “the fusing of the experiences of colonialism and coloniality with the necessities of capitalism, creating a specific universe of intersubjective relations of domination under a Eurocentred hegemony.”<sup>86</sup> The erasure of native knowledges is thus realized through modernity.

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<sup>82</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique- An Introduction,” 2–3.

<sup>83</sup> Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social.”

<sup>85</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez, “El Lado Oscuro de La ‘Época Clásica’. Filosofía, Ilustración y Colonialidad En El Siglo XVIII,” in *El Color de La Razón: Racismo Epistemológico y Razón Imperial*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Siglo, 2008), 150.

<sup>86</sup> The original quotation in Spanish is “las relaciones intersubjetivas correspondientes, en las cuales se fueron fundiendo las experiencias del colonialismo y de la colonialidad con las necesidades del capitalismo, se fueron configurando como un nuevo universo de relaciones intersubjetivas de dominación bajo hegemonía eurocentrada.” Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social,” 342–43. The English quotation that I am using in my chapter comes from María Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” 3.

Maria Lugones expands Quijano's 'coloniality of power' to argue that there is a *modern/colonial gender system* in which gender – and not only race – has been constructed through the European conquest of the Americas. According with Quijano, through the coloniality of power there was imposed a “coloniality of gender relations”.<sup>87</sup> On the one hand, ideal “European” patterns of sexual behavior and familial organization constructed the model of the bourgeois family where men were allowed sexual freedom and women were expected to be chaste or monogamous.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, free access of “white” men to “black”, “indias”, “color” women in the rest of the world and the continued disintegration of the parent-children units in the “non-white races.”<sup>89</sup> However, Lugones argues that there are “the light side” and the “dark side” of the colonial/modern gender system, where Quijano's “coloniality of gender relations” was just “the light side”.<sup>90</sup> She develops this distinction, by claiming that there were different understanding of sexuality and ‘gender’ relations through all the Americas before the European force arrived. In the Americas and in Africa there were egalitarianism, non-gendered and gynecentric forms of organization and identity.<sup>91</sup>

Lugones reminds us that “[u]nderstanding the place of gender in pre-colonial societies is pivotal to understanding the nature and scope of changes in the social structure that the processes

<sup>87</sup> Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social.”

<sup>88</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

<sup>89</sup> Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social.” Quijano points out that the children of people of color were distributed as property not just as merchandise but as “animals.” This was particularly the case among “black” slaves, since this form of domination over them was more explicit, immediate, and prolonged.

<sup>90</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

<sup>91</sup> Lugones refers to Gunn Allen's work (1986) that is based in North American native peoples. Talking about the Latin American context, I will add the work of Rita Segato argues that in the precolonial world patriarchy did exist. There was a hierarchy of gender in which there was a greater prestige of men and male tasks onto women. However, that patriarchy was of low impact or low intensity (2016). Lucia Guerra explains that indigenous women suffered a double domination: domination from the colonizing group and domination from the colonized group, because patriarchal notions existed in both cultures (2008). That is what Julieta Paredes calls ‘entronque patriarcal’ (patriarchal junction) (2008). From the Andean indigenous parity feminism, the Peruvian feminist Rosalía Paiva claims that “... the concept of gender is the heritage of the social sciences as a category of analysis and its theoretical construction is part of a social and academic process distant from the Andes” (2007). Lugones refers to Oyèrónké Oyewùmí's work (1997) about how the gender category as well as the nuclear family institution were exported from Europe to Africa. In the Yoruba communities, the binary idea of masculinity and femininity didn't exist; in fact, there still exist neutral gender words in different African ethnical groups. I will add the work of Ifi Amadiume (2000). Gunn Allen, Paula. [1986] 1992. *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Boston: Beacon Press; Segato, Rita. 2016. *La guerra contra las mujeres*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.; Guerra, Lucia. 2008. *Mujer y escritura: fundamentos teóricos de la crítica feminista*. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio; Paredes, Julieta. 2008. Hilando fino desde el feminismo comunitario. *Lesbianas independientes: feminismo socialista*.; Paiva, Rosalía. 2007. Feminismo paritario indígena andino. [http://www.ecoportat.net/Temas-Especiales/Pueblos-Indigenas/Feminismo\\_Paritario\\_Indigena\\_Andino](http://www.ecoportat.net/Temas-Especiales/Pueblos-Indigenas/Feminismo_Paritario_Indigena_Andino); Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 2002. “Conceptualizing gender: the eurocentric foundations of feminist concepts and the challenge of African epistemologies.” *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Woman Studies*, 2 (1); Amadiume, I., & Rutherford, B. 2000. “Reinventing Africa: matriarchy, religion and culture.” *Anthropologica* 42(2): 243.

constituting colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism imposed.”<sup>92</sup> This has come about partly through a violent interiorizing of the colonized women and a forced disintegration of communal relations. In this sense, the imposition of “this gender system was as constitutive of the coloniality of power as the coloniality of power was constitutive of it,” were/are both intertwined.<sup>93</sup> The notion of ‘the coloniality of gender’ unveils how coloniality reshaped gender structures in specific ways around all the colonial territories. There was a violent imposition of heterosexuality, so the Eurocentered global capitalism is heterosexual.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Western heteronormativity and heterosexist regimes consolidated settlement narrative of a binary gendered construction of colonialism. And also, a gender role imposition in which women were placed in a subordinate place to men. And so, for colonized women the colonization was double: racial inferiority and gender subordination.

Intersectional analysis is not a contribution only of decolonial feminism. In fact, there is a long feminist tradition of dismantling the essentialism behind the category of woman and of making visible the countless oppressions that go through us individually and in groups.<sup>95</sup> However,

<sup>92</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” 12.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Maria Lugones stress the interlocking nature of coloniality of power and gender “the colonial, modern, gender system cannot exist without the coloniality of power, since the classification of the population in terms of race is a necessary condition of its possibility”. Ibid. Maria Lugones’ use of the terms interweaving, intertwining and intermeshing to show the inseparability of oppression; terms that refer to the action of the art of weaving. It is important to say that even if those terms can be seen as the presupposition of the separation, what is being tried to express is precisely the inseparability, fusion, coalescence.

<sup>94</sup> Lugones based her argument in Paula Gunn Allen’s, Pete Sigal’s and Michael J. Horswell’s work around in one hand, no heterosexual practices in different American and African indigenous cultures and, on the other hand, who Spaniards – and Europeans in general – banned and criminalized sodomy practices in the colonies associated them to the animal nature of natives. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).; Pete Sigal, “Gendered Power, the Hybrid Self, and Homosexual Desire in Late Colonial Yucatan,” in *Infamous Desire. Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Pete Sigal (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).; Michael Horswell, “Toward and Andean Theory of Ritual Same-Sex Sexuality and Third-Gender Subjectivity,” in *Infamous Desire. Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Pete Sigal (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 25–69.

<sup>95</sup> Black feminism dismantled the very idea of ‘woman’ (Sojourner Truth’s speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” 1827. Following by a genealogy of scholars, activists and thinkers such as Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Combahee River Collective, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Ochy Curiel, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberly Crenshaw), postcolonial feminism addressed the essentialism of ‘the third world women’ (Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), indigenous and mestiza feminist in Latin America production made visible the invisibility under the colonial matrix of indigenous identities through the paradox of the ‘noble savage’ or mestizaje (María Luisa Femenías, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Aida Hernandez, Rosalia Paiva, Julieta Paredes, Rita Segato, Ochy Curiel). Thus, the purpose of employing these feminism(S) is to de-universalize the subject ‘woman’, because they account the multiple ways in which some feminized bodies are traversed by different systems of power that work simultaneously and are configured around gender, race, class and sexuality (Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins 1998). As I understand it, essentialism is a macabre tool of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy that makes differences invisible and exercises oppression from symbolic to material. In this sense, the essentialism under la latina racist stereotypes shapes an identity and erases the diversity under the community mostly in terms of intersectionality of oppressions. I understand ‘intersectionality’ not just the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion, but as Patricia Hill Collins argues – those of race, gender, social class, nationality/citizenship status, sexual

decolonial perspective reveals the importance of historicizing racial and gendered classifications, in order to understand racial and gender hierarchies, arises in the context of colonial / modern capitalism with the hegemony of the Eurocentric world. The colonial/modern gender system constructed non-white bodies as animals – in particular non-white women. In contrast, white women were constructed as the reproducer of the white race, and of the bourgeois class. Non-white women were seen as female, but not as women. European colonialism created a whole narrative of the sexuality of colonized women.<sup>96</sup> Black women were portrayed as sexually aggressive and indigenous women as savages or animals full of sexual aberration and excess. As McClintock argues, colonization of the Americas evokes "long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment."<sup>97</sup> As native women were seen as animals, as uncivilized, by rape the colonizer inseminated the male seed of civilization. By the nineteenth century, "sexual purity emerged as a controlling metaphor for racial, economic and political power."<sup>98</sup> In this way, a reading of the colonality of power and gender it is clear that race is gendered, and gender is racialized in different ways between Europeans and the colonized. So, there was – and still is – an interweaving/interlocking of race, gender, labor; an intermeshing of oppressions.<sup>99</sup>

Decolonial feminism incorporates the concept of a 'modern/colonial gender system' to understand that race and gender are fictions constructed since the European conquest of the Americas. Race is inseparably united by the controlling systems of power implicated in the oppression of racialized women. As such "[t]his history is crossed by a denial of the humanity of non-white, indigenous and Afro-diasporic women."<sup>100</sup> Zora Neale Hurston in her book *Mules and Men* illustrates how

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orientation and age – violence may be equally important in structuring intersections among these social hierarchies. They cannot be separate. Patricia Hill Collins. „The tie that binds: race, gender and US violence”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (1998). pp. 917-938.

<sup>96</sup> Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," 13–15.

<sup>97</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, 22.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>99</sup> Using Lugones' terminology of intermeshing instead of intersection, because by intersectionality the idea of separation is still present. I will expand this debate in Chapter 3.

<sup>100</sup> Espinosa et al., "REFLEXIONES PEDAGÓGICAS EN TORNO AL FEMINISMO DESCOLONIAL: Una Conversa En Cuatro Voces," 404.

Afro-diasporic women were “the mules of the world” and as the Kichwa scholar Luz María de la Torre Amaguaña says “indigenous women are historical residues.”<sup>101</sup> Therefore, race and gender are interlocked and inseparable. Colonial modernity and global capitalism have benefited – and still do – from the double subalternization of non-white women. Thereby, in this heterosexual capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial World System in which we live, where some women matter, and others do not. According to the Afro-Dominican, lesbian, decolonial feminist Yuderkys Espinosa, decolonial feminism is “a movement in full growth and maturation that proclaims itself revisionist of the theory and political proposal of feminism, because of its western, white and bourgeois bias.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, as Ochy Curiel argues, decolonial feminism is a radical rereading of history and histories in which colonialism is transversal and oppressions are an intrinsic element of modernity.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (NY, 1935); Luz María De la Torre Amaguaña, “¿Qué Significa Ser Mujer Indígena En La Contemporaneidad?,” *Mester* 39, no. 1 (2010): 1–25.

<sup>102</sup> Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial,” 51. Espinosa is cited by Curiel. The original quote is in Spanish.

<sup>103</sup> Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial.”



## Chapter 1 - Methodology

At the heart of this research lies a commitment to decolonial feminism(s), by which I mean that my theoretical framework and my methodology focus specifically on decolonial knowledge-production. Decolonial thinking implies a new intervention of texts, a new construction of history, and a new way of writing inside academic research that includes introspection of our own colonialized knowledge and praxis by understanding that we live in a ‘modern/colonial gender system.’<sup>104</sup> In other words, in order to understand the inseparability of race and gender we must center the historical denial of subjectivity and humanity to Indigenous, Afro and non-white women since the European colonization of the Americas. For me, engaging with decoloniality is a political proposal which informs the questioning of the matrix of power and domination. That implies rethinking my role as a researcher and how I want to produce knowledge from a subaltern position of ‘other.’ My research aims to give space to those voices that have been silenced or have been used appropriated outside of the context of their politicization and activism. The works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Maria Lugones, Ochy Curriel, Grada Kilomba, Cherrie Moraga, Yuderlys Espinosa, Chela Sandoval, Karina Bidasca, Diana Gómez, Ruth Behar, Karina Ochoa will be discussed in this chapter as a core of texts that have both inspired and informed my methodology.<sup>105</sup> My point of departure is my own embodied experience of gendered racialization as a woman of color studying in Europe. Consequently, my methodology is embodied, messy, hybrid, and impure. It is grounded at the crossroads of oral history through life narratives, subject-oriented research, ethnographic fieldwork, standpoint and positionality debates, collaborative work, and ‘in the flesh’ writing. This methodology chapter traces my own path towards a decolonial feminist practice.

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<sup>104</sup> Boaventura De Sousa Santos, “Más Allá Del Pensamiento Abismal : De Las Líneas Globales a Una Ecología de Saberes \*,” 2006, 31–84; Medina Martín, “FEMINISMOS PERIFÉRICOS, FEMINISMOS-OTROS: UNA GENEALOGÍA FEMINISTA DECOLONIAL POR REIVINDICAR.”

<sup>105</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

This research focuses on the practices of resistance against everyday gendered racism that are developed by multi-generation Latin American women.<sup>106</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will refer to an archive of thirty-three life narratives of multigenerational Latin American migrant women from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Mexico in Sweden. However, in total, I have recollected thirty-four oral histories, which also include one transgender neutral person.<sup>107</sup> In the summer of 2017, I traveled to Gothenburg and I established my first connections. In November 2017, I started to contact potential informants that I had met a few months earlier, asking for participation in this research. Subsequently, I arranged Skype meetings with some informants to discuss and evaluate possible interview topics and questions. In early January 2018, I arrived in Sweden and I conducted my field work for two months. I got to know most women I interviewed by writing a short announcement referring to my research project in social networks; in particular Facebook groups for Latin American women in the cities of Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala. In addition, my informants after every interview session offered to help me to find more women interested in participating. I want to underline this fact, because my informants actively helped me to contact more women; to enter certain social circles; attend to social events such as religious masses, political parties' meetings, artistic shows, house parties, university, NGOs, and family houses. Some participants even hosted me in their houses. All these interactions have been a fundamental part of this research, since the care, availability, time and trust that my participants afforded to me were fundamental to the success of this research.

This is a study of oral history through life narratives, where experience is a central epistemic category. When we talk about our past experiences, we are interpreting them. As Joan Scott argues,

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<sup>106</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, Mexico and the Caribbean will be included in the notion of Latin America.

<sup>107</sup> Make this clarification is part of an ethical practices against Trans people invisibility. I do not want this person's voice to be assumed as part of the category "women with Latin American origins". I interviewed this person because I found relevant to get closer to the experience of racism within non-binary/queer genders. And they made meaningful contributions regarding the current situation of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers in Sweden. However, their story is not included in this text, because my research is focusing on people that recognize as women in particular.

“[e]xperience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political.”<sup>108</sup> An analysis of the production of knowledge is fundamental, and as a result, I consider it essential to position ourselves *in* the research and develop a methodology based upon exercising of positionality and reflexivity. But also, if we place “memory itself the subject of study,”<sup>109</sup> we must contextualize who is speaking, what kind of event that person is telling, and how the informant positions herself in terms of her personal, political, social values/analysis/agendas to make visible the framework through which the testimony is being narrated.<sup>110</sup> Stephen High argues for the use of the personal, “I am convinced that an ethic of sharing is at the heart of oral history practice.”<sup>111</sup> For me, sharing is a two-ways street in which informants make you part of their intimate sharing, and we as researchers should in turn bring the personal to our embodied research by sharing with participants. By following this method, we can create discursive spaces that problematize not only what we have collected, but also the affective and material conditions of the collection.

The anthropologist Ruth Behar argues that life histories are rich resources that provide pieces of information that general studies often obscure: “a life history should allow one to see how an actor makes culturally meaningful history, how history is produced in action and in the actor’s retrospective reflections on that action.”<sup>112</sup> If the use of the personal is political, the embodied narrative delivers elements that other practices do not, and oral history deals with the act of remembering and the interpretation processes behind it. The Italian historian Luisa Passerini said of oral history that “[t]o respect memory also means letting it organize the story.”<sup>113</sup> Considered

<sup>108</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Sandoval, *Methodol. Oppressed*; Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Frisch, “The Memory of History,” *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 16.

<sup>110</sup> Joan Sangster, “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,” *Women’s History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994): 7.

<sup>111</sup> Joan W Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 797.

<sup>112</sup> Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Igarss 2014, 2005, 16.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in: Steven High, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 23.

one of the founders of the field of oral history, Passerini called upon historians to break away from a linear and chronological logic of storytelling, encouraging a new generation to develop non-linear historical narratives that more-closely emulated the ways in which memories are produced and remembered. Moreover, she advises us to reflect about what and why people remember, and how they interpret those memories because the act of remembering is anything but linear.

I approach memory, personal narrative and past experience inside the debates of identity, race, hybridity and borderlands. I propose studying my informants' experiences of racism and practices of resistance through their identity construction and negotiation. My work closely communes with Gloria Anzaldúa's theoretical proposal of *mestiza* as a concept to talk about hybridity beyond its association with race. She is using it to talk of the intersection of many kind of borders within the conception of identity. 'Thus, those thirty-three women have, in Anzaldúa's words, a 'mestiza consciousness,' or, in Sandoval's words, a 'differential consciousness,' – both of which are built upon the idea put forward by DuBois of and 'double consciousness'.<sup>114</sup> Hybrid bodies forge identities at the border and disrupt fixed categories of identity, culture, and locationality.

For this reason, my methodology engages with shifting boundaries between academic and creative writing. My mode of writing combines poetry, interview transcripts and theoretical analysis in an effort to explore ways to draw intersections of poetic and scholarly writing as a political and academic practice. The tension at the heart of my work is one that has been extensively addressed by feminist academics of color such as bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Nawal El Saadawi, Mariana Alvarado and Alejandro De Oto, Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso, Diana Gómez Correal and Karina

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<sup>114</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home. Radic. Visions Transform.*; Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial"; Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*; Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*; Espinosa et al., "REFLEXIONES PEDAGÓGICAS EN TORNO AL FEMINISMO DESCOLONIAL: Una Conversa En Cuatro Voces"; Sandoval, *Methodol. Oppressed*; Karina Bidaseca, "LOS FEMINISMOS DEL SUR Apresentação" 22, no. 1987 (2014): 585–91; Behar, "The Vulnerable Observer"; Espinosa Miñoso, Correal, and Muñoz, *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales En Abya Yala*.

Ochoa Muñoz, among many others.<sup>115</sup> As bell hooks reminds us, “I have been working to change the way I speak and write, to incorporate in the manner of telling a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me [...] I refer to that personal struggle to name that location which I come to voice – that space of my theorizing.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, literary practices and writing style are useful and powerful tools for articulate our positionality, our history, our struggle. Decolonizing our writing means that we make visible our intellectual genealogy and make visible in our writing practices our commitment to community and collective within the text.

As part of this decolonial writing that I am proposing, Gloria Anzaldúa’s multilingual writing is a source of inspiration and political reflection. In her writing, Anzaldúa constantly switches from English to Spanish. By using Chicano Spanish, she gives context to the locationality of her voice.<sup>117</sup> As she tells us, “Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without always having to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and

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<sup>115</sup> bell hooks has different books, articles and essays where she argues the important to challenge our way of writing in academic practices in order to theorize from the personal experiences. Among her work, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Hooks, Bell, and Tanya McKinnon. “Sisterhood: Beyond Public and Private.” *Signs* 21, no. 4 (1996): 814-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175025> and *Teaching to Transgress: Education As the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Gloria Anzaldúa employed the term ‘linguistic terrorism’ in her essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” to speak about the connection between language and identity. She pointed that the accent is battleground where the ‘other’ is constructed. She calls for transgress what it is acceptable as a way for liberation. In *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 53-64. The Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi highlights the intimate synergies between creative thought and dissident action. She argues that creative writing is a dangerous activity because it is capable of destabilizing the status quo. She urges us to engage with alternative epistemologies through writing. Mariana Alvarado and Alejandro De Oto are the editors of the book *Metodologías en Contexto. Intervenciones en Perspectiva Feminista/Postcolonial/Latinoamericana* (Methodologies in Context. Interventions in Feminist / Postcolonial / Latin American Perspective) (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2017) in which eight feminist researchers propose situated investigations, where the style of writing is a fundamental part of the methodological construction. It is a decision like writing, a postcolonial decision in this case. Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso, Diana Gómez Correal and Karina Ochoa Muñoz are the editors of the book *Tejiendo de otro modo: Feminismo, epistemología y apuestas descoloniales en Abya Yala* (Weaving differently: Feminism, epistemology and decolonial commitment in Abya Yala) (Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, 2014). The book is a shared space that is carved and woven from reflections on a great diversity of experiences of women in a continent that is reconciled, from a multiplicity of epistemes and other knowledge, such as Abya Yala. The book collects essays, poetry and manifests that show the multiple ways in which hegemony is challenged from subaltern writings. Also, I incorporate some elements from the work of the white feminist scholars Elizabeth Grosz and Nina Lykke who engage with creative writing. Grosz in her book *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) argues that the body is a cultural product. In her deeply and densely philosophical review, she calls for rethinking the body and rethinking desire in order to ‘rescue’ the body. A rescue that articulates through theory and through writing. In the book ed. Nina Lykke *Writing Academic Texts Differently. Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2014), Nina Lykke, Kathy Davis, Redi Koobak, Susanne Gannon and other feminist scholars and writers engage with the politics of writing differently as a real articulation of the embodied knowledge. They propose an experimental writing as a way of rethinking and reimagining the world.

<sup>116</sup> Bell Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: MA: South End Press, 1990), 146.

<sup>117</sup> Florentien Verhage, “Reprint of ‘Living with(out) Borders: The Intimacy of Oppression,’” *Emotion, Space and Society* 13 (2014): 112, doi:10.1016/j.emospa.2014.06.001.

as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.”<sup>118</sup> I can empathize with this agitating and provocative phrase and note that Anzaldúa makes a strong point about the hierarchies among languages as well as the geopolitics of language. To me, this is a call for switching and shifting among languages as a political practice. Thus, rather than a mere showcase of bilingualism, I want to employ Spanish-English code-switching as a rhetorical device of linguistic resistance.<sup>119</sup> Besides, this research’s text is a journey between English and Spanish in which Spanish – my mother tongue and the mother tongue of several of my informants – intrudes into the text, tills the land of the words, and traces routes of possibilities with its own sonority. I provide English translation in most of the cases, but where I do not, those sections can be interpreted in context. This adds a dimension of difficulty for the reader and makes the text escape from one’s full grasp.<sup>120</sup> The thesis is my attempt at “having them accommodate me”, my informants, bilingual and *mestiza* people. I reflect in this thesis a *mestiza* writing to build a decolonial genealogy of – and for- *mestiza* women. *Trazar de dónde vengo y como entiendo de donde vienen las mestizas entrevistadas.*<sup>121</sup>

I want to construct knowledge without reproducing what Silva Rivera Cusicanqui denounced ‘internal-external colonialism,’ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak named ‘epistemic violence,’ and Chandra Talpade Mohanty called ‘discursive colonization.’<sup>122</sup> Developing decolonial and postcolonial perspectives and theoretical frameworks, all three scholars severely criticize the role that intellectuals play in reinforcing, maintaining, reproducing the heterosexual capitalist,

<sup>118</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 59.

<sup>119</sup> AnaLouise Keating, ed., *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009); María Lugones, “On Complex Communication,” *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 75–85; María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’ - Traveling, and Loving Perception,” in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes. Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2003), 77–102.; Grimm, Erika. 2018. *Call and Response: On Decolonial Frameworks and Loving, Knowing Ignorance*, May 25-26, 2018. Brno.

<sup>120</sup> Verhage, “Reprint of ‘Living with(out) Borders: The Intimacy of Oppression,’” 112.

<sup>121</sup> To trace where I come from and how I understand where the mestizas interviewed come from.

<sup>122</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch’ixinakax Utxiwa : Una Reflexión Sobre Prácticas y Discursos Descolonizadores*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 66–111; Chandra Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles,” *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2003): 499–535.

patriarchal, Judeo-Christian-centric, modern/colonial world system. Even if this criticism applies to the Academy at large, their particular focus was to unveil colonial and racist practices among white feminist scholarly. A very rich amalgam of critical, anti-racist, postcolonial, decolonial, indigenous, Islamic feminist – all non-Western feminist scholars – have put on the table the importance of intersectional approaches in which gender is not the only category of analysis. Because “women are not only women, but also black, white, rich, poor, heterosexual, homosexual,” – and, as I will add – Muslim, Trans, disable, migrant, indigenous, elder, etc.<sup>123</sup> During the last decades, feminist scholars have claimed the overriding duty of redefying concepts such as colonialism, race, gender, class, ‘woman’, human rights, etc. through an analysis of global capitalism and world systems.<sup>124</sup> And at the same time, feminist intervention has been fighting against the discursive fallacy of neutrality, objectivity, impartiality by claiming that non-knowledge production would avoid researcher bias. In fact, all production is embedded in structures of power, discourses and ideologies.<sup>125</sup> “[T]heory is always placed somewhere and always written by someone.”<sup>126</sup> In this sense, knowledge location is imperative, because situated knowledge dismantles positivist fallacies and allows a “embodied objectivity” by “partial perspectives.”<sup>127</sup>

Coming to the debate with all these elements, as a researcher and an academic, I have the responsibility to avoid contributing further to “the rejuvenation of this domination.”<sup>128</sup> So, the main questions that guide my methodology construction have been: how can I avoid reproducing the extractivist academic practices? How can I do a collective piece of work within the limits of an individual author thesis format? How much do I reproduce the colonality of power and knowledge with my research? How can I be aware of the multiple positions inside the matrix of domination

<sup>123</sup> Lena Gunnarsson, “A Defence of the Category ‘Women,’” *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 1 (2011): 25.

<sup>124</sup> Medina Martín, “FEMINISMOS PERIFÉRICOS, FEMINISMOS-OTROS: UNA GENEALOGÍA FEMINISTA DECOLONIAL POR REIVINDICAR.”

<sup>125</sup> Sangster, “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History.”

<sup>126</sup> Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 32.

<sup>127</sup> Donna Jeanne Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99, doi:10.2307/3178066.

<sup>128</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa : Una Reflexión Sobre Prácticas y Discursos Descolonizadores*, 63.

without employing gender, race, class, sexuality as solely descriptive categories?<sup>129</sup> I will try to answer these questions in the context of myself as an embodied researcher; my informants as subjects of knowledge; the interview as a collaborative space; and the text as a *mestiza* journey.

I engage with reflexivity through a decolonial view. That means that it is not enough to show the place of articulation as researchers. Instead, it means to take a position in the construction of knowledge that must consider gender, geopolitics, class, race, generation, sexuality, and age. With this, I mean that I am not ‘positioning’ myself simply by saying I am a middle-class bisexual Ecuadorian woman of color who is studying for a Masters’ degree in Europe. Or by saying, I am a woman of color with disability who is racialized in the European context. Part of my place of enunciation in the production of knowledge comes from those positions that I just mentioned, but from what material privileges, social capital, race, sexuality and class do I speak? And what does it mean to have that certain position inside the matrix of domination? Which theoretical and methodological frameworks do I use? What are my citation politics? Do I have epistemic privilege in this topic?<sup>130</sup> So, reflexivity with a decolonial perspective means that I must clearly expose which methodological and political decisions I make. And it demands that I create spaces of articulation for my own personal experiences in order to theorize and politicize them discursively.

Conceptualizing my specific position within this research leads me to recognize the shifting positionality within the matrix of domination. In Europe I am ‘read’ as *la latina*, whereas at ‘home’ I am not *la latina* anymore. All individuals implicated within the modern world system are in some respect affected by the heterosexual capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric model. Importantly, I am subject to an everyday racism in Europe that I do not experience in Ecuador because I am not black, and I am not indigenous. *Eso me ubica en un lugar privilegiado. Clase social, color*

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<sup>129</sup> Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial.”

<sup>130</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa : Una Reflexión Sobre Prácticas y Discursos Descolonizadores*, 63. The aforementioned texts have given me fundamental elements to develop these questions.



*de piel, lugar de nacimiento*.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, here in Europe the category of *la latina* is imposed upon me. I have experienced racialization in my own flesh, and from this position I develop a dialogue with my informants.

I do not speak only about the racialization of migrant women of color in Europe, but also as a migrant woman who is racialized.<sup>132</sup> With this, it is not my intension to focus exclusively on my own experiences of racism, much less to place myself on the side of victimhood. My objective here is not to be rid or to overlook my complicity within the position of privilege I can return to in Ecuador. There is a certain kind of commonality between my informants and my own racialized experience that I attempt here to make visible. Part of my methodological reflection here is upon the process of transcription and translation in an embodied analysis of women's interviews, texts and stories.

I have compiled an archive of life narratives with Latin American women and women of Latin American descent who recall their experiences with racism. The selection of these subjects was based solely on their identification as women, their identification with Latin America as a region rather than with any particular country of origin, and their willingness to talk about racism. Before conducting the fieldwork, I planned to interview only women connected with the history of exile. Even if my topic was not particularly focused on political refugees and diasporic studies, I considered diaspora a very important element to analyze inside the debates of identity and identification. However, when I started my field work, I had access to different groups inside the so-called Latin American communities in Sweden. Having explored that rich environment, I decided to open my target to any woman migrant of Latin American origin. Not all of the women

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<sup>131</sup> That places myself in a privilege place. Social class, color of the skin, place of birth.

<sup>132</sup> Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial"; Espinosa et al., "REFLEXIONES PEDAGÓGICAS EN TORNO AL FEMINISMO DESCOLONIAL: Una Conversa En Cuatro Voces"; Hill Collins, "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence." I structured this reflection of speaking "as one" instead of "about" inspired from Maria Lugones argument on page 421 of the text aforementioned.

had direct experiences of migration, and so as I explain below, I make a distinction in the thesis between ‘first-generation’ and ‘second-generation’ migrants. However, it is important to note that this is a conceptual distinction, and that this identification process is also part of the way in which populism in current nationalisms within Europe seeks to separate those who ‘belong’ from those who do not belong to the nation as citizens.<sup>133</sup> From the thirty-three informants, twenty-two women have a history of migration as political asylum seekers – thirteen first-generation migrants and nine second-generation.

Maria Lugones advocates for a complex understanding of identity politics where there is a compound conception of groups that has the potential to revitalize debates around the political significance of groups and resolve postmodern critiques. In this sense, groups are conceived where the members are not understood as fragmented, rather as heterogeneous themselves.<sup>134</sup> Groups in which the affiliated histories reveal the interlocking nature of the differences of race, gender, culture, and class.<sup>135</sup> I work with the problem of identity politics given the fact that I problematize those categories by showing their limits and fissures. Identity politics has served to homogenize subaltern groups erasing their different positions within the matrix of domination. As Walsh denounces "[a]n integration of concepts conceived by the subalternized groups as indicators of the colonial difference within the hegemonic paradigms, emptying them of their political, ethical and epistemic position," there is an instrumentalization and depoliticization of difference and identity.<sup>136</sup> Whereas, identity politics can be useful to enhance political action and generate a visible identity as a pole of multiple identifications. As Maria Luisa Femenías argues, identity politics can be useful as long as it articulates a ‘political fiction’ and a ‘negotiated identity.’<sup>137</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>134</sup> Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.”

<sup>135</sup> Kimberly Springer, “Being the Bridge: A Solitary Black Woman’s Poition in the Women’s Studies Classroom as a Feminist Student and Professor,” in *This Bridge We Call Home. Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 388.

<sup>136</sup> Walsh, “Interculturalidad y Colonialidad Del Poder. Un Pensamiento y Posicionamiento ‘Otro’ Desde La Diferencia Colonial,” 55.

<sup>137</sup> María Luisa Femenías, “Esbozo de Un Feminismo Lationamericano,” *Revista Estudos Feministas* 15, no. 1 (2007): 11–25.

The category of 'Latin American women,' it itself problematic because it presents a fallacy that all women from Latin America are part of the same group; a monolithic group that is part of the exotic 'Other.' The category of 'Latin America' hides the differences, homologizing, only in a fictional way, characteristics and particularities that are the vehicles of oppression. Undertaking research under the limiting essentialism of a category such as "woman" or "woman of the third world", limits and excludes a situated and methodological analysis of the intersectionality of race, sex, class and gender from the perspective of being a Latin American woman. Instead, by problematizing the category "Latin American women," we can create an unexpected locus that transform the space that is given to us and allows us to place ourselves in a place where we are not supposed to be.<sup>138</sup> It is, therefore, a self-designation of "Latin American women" as an imaginary community that overcomes differences and devaluations. It becomes a self-designed construct that admits other perspectives and makes visible critical, dislocated, marginal and peripheral experiences. A fictional strategic invention that allows a generating, channeling and defending of efforts and energies.<sup>139</sup> As part of a different academic research practice, and in my attempt to decolonize the politics of citation (to avoid at much as possible my unilateral power of designate categories to those women), I decided to ask each of my informants to choose how they wanted to be named in the text. They were given the option of using their names or a pseudonym of their choice. In this way, I allow for the potential for accountability, because they know how they are cited inside the text.

Categorizing migrants is also a key tension within national studies of immigration and emigration more broadly. Related to the conceptual choices that I made in the thesis, are how I determined which women would be considered as 'migrants' in my study, since out of thirty-three informants, eleven did not have first-hand experiences of migration but can be considered according to

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<sup>138</sup> Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness."

<sup>139</sup> Femenías, "Esbozo de Un Feminismo Lationamericano."

sociological inquiry as ‘second-generation’ migrants. Theoretical reflections of this issue have been infused into a new discourse in which it is generally agreed that ‘second-generation’ is determined as individuals who are born outside of their ‘home’ nation, or migrant who accompanied their families to migrate at a young age (generally accepted as twelve years of age).<sup>140</sup> The “1.5 generation” designation is used to describe people who migrate during the period considered to be the ‘formative years of adolescent development.’<sup>141</sup> These are not fixed categories, since there is a fluid movement back and forth between home and host countries within transnational communities that require concepts that illustrate those journeys, networks and interactions. In the particular case of my informants, there were no ‘1.5 generation’ migrants since none of these informants arrived in Sweden as adolescents.<sup>142</sup> My intention in not employing these categories except when necessary as identifiers of the women as individuals, was to avoid reproducing the same logic of the white gaze by placing them outside of the nation.

As part of the epistemological disengagement, the decolonial option proposes the recognition and legitimization of subaltern knowledge.<sup>143</sup> I recognize my informants as subjects that actively produce knowledge. They create concepts, categories, theories, practices that oppose the universalization, fragmentation and essentialization - they create community. Furthermore, in this case, they appropriate a term of oppression as a communal identity. In their words, they describe their conceptualization and embodiment of the *förort* as a “... pro-positive leap that makes us go from pain to demand and, often, to the construction of alternatives.”<sup>144</sup> In this way, I see the identity mark of the *förort* as a powerful category, concept and practice that they ‘knead’ in order to

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<sup>140</sup> Alejandro Portes, *The New Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996); Diane Wolf, “There’s No Place Like ‘Home’: Emotional Transnationalism and the Struggles of Second-Generation Filipinos,” in *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, ed. Peggy Levitt and M Waters (New York, 2002).

<sup>141</sup> C Asher, “The Progressive Past. How History Can Help Us Serve Generation 1.5,” *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2011): 43–48. More recently literature has conceptualized the “2.5”, “1.75” and “1.25” generation. Karthick Ramakrishnan, “Second-Generation Immigrants? The ‘2.5 Generation’ in the United States,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2004): 380–99.

<sup>142</sup> They either arrived after their twenties, were born in Sweden or they arrived before the age of 4 years old In this sense, I use the terminology ‘first’ and ‘second’ generation of Latin American women.

<sup>143</sup> Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.”

<sup>144</sup> Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial,” 57.

address difference within commonality, and commonality within difference. They are the ones that give meaning to this transgressional understanding of the *förort*, it is their contribution highlighting their legitimate place of knowledge production.<sup>145</sup> Thus, I want to make it clear throughout this research that those women are subjects of knowledge, they are the ones that conceptualize their existence. As I doubted my decisions, I corresponded back and forth with my informants to ask them individually how they felt about how I was building my decolonial methodology. I made it a part of my method to listen to them, create active space and a personal, intimate forum for their voices, and to challenge – communally – my text.

Most of my interviews lasted between one and two hours, and most were conducted individually with only a few in groups of informants of two to three people. The interviews took place at spaces chosen by the informants; typically, in cafeterias or in their houses. With an awareness that establishing contact before the interview contributes to building a relation between the informant and the researcher, I arranged preliminary meetings whenever possible.<sup>146</sup> Due to time constraints for some women, it was not possible to have preliminary meetings, but we often met in bus station and walked together either to the cafeterias or houses. In doing so, I used what I call ‘transition moments’ – the 5 minutes walking to a cafeteria, the 2 minutes waiting on the line for buy coffee, the 1 minute inside the elevator to arrive to the apartment – to create intimacy between us, to talk about ourselves in a different format, and to share information about myself.<sup>147</sup> With this sensitive approach, during the interviews it was easier to create an environment of more active sharing, where I also shared intimate stories.

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<sup>145</sup> Medina Martín, “FEMINISMOS PERIFÉRICOS, FEMINISMOS-OTROS: UNA GENEALOGÍA FEMINISTA DECOLONIAL POR REIVINDICAR,” 55–56.

<sup>146</sup> Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 92.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 95.

bell hooks has raised objections to the idea that knowledge-production can be realized individually, arguing that this is a patriarchal and western fallacy. Rather, as hooks argues, the collaborative production of knowledge means building knowledge together by supporting each other in both personal and professional processes and creating spaces where the contributions of women are visible, as she does in her book *Teaching to Transgress*.<sup>148</sup> In this sense, in order to break down the colonality of power and knowledge in our research, we should make visible all those who participate in the final product. Alicia J. Rouverol said “[c]ollaboration does not mean that we abandon our own stance, that we lose our “critical edge” as scholars. It does, however, challenge our power dynamics in the field.”<sup>149</sup> I have sought feedback from every informant both in terms of my role as researcher during the interview process, as well as the questions and themes discussed during the interview.

In formulating interview questions, my objective was to generate a fluid conversation while letting the interviewee share her experiences on her own terms. For that reason, I chose open-ended questions, not an established questionnaire in a nondirective interview format. Thus, the interviewee could talk about a “given topic with a minimum of direct questioning or guidance.”<sup>150</sup> I identified certain topics/themes as guides: (i) their relationship with their homeland; (ii) their perception of their identity; (iii) their personal experiences of racism in everyday life; (iv) perceptions of Latin American women; and (v) their responses to racist situations. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and English, according to the interviewees’ choice. It was important to me that the women have the possibility to speak in the language in which they felt most comfortable. All the interviews started in Spanish and in some case – with some second-generation informants – during the interview there was a constant shift between Spanish and English. Starting the interview with a “Tell me about yourself” or “Tell me about your life” gave women a more

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<sup>148</sup> Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 1st, 1994, doi:Article.

<sup>149</sup> High, “Introduction,” 14.

<sup>150</sup> Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 48.

active role in the construction and conduction of the interview. Those questions gave them the possibility to start their own narrative anywhere they chose. As High states, oral histories are active processes that takes a “conversational narrative” form from its “question-and-answer format.”<sup>151</sup> So, in a sense, the interview itself is co-produced inside the framework of the interviewer design.<sup>152</sup> For that reason, I discussed the main themes of the interview with some participants in November as a way of welcoming my informants to be part of the whole process of the research and try to establish a collaborative research.

Michael Frisch establishes in his work the shared authority that oral historians must strive towards if there is to be a more democratic understanding of history through addressing personal experience.<sup>153</sup> In this sense, the interview becomes the space where oral history can be participatory and emancipatory. I say ‘can’, because as Catherine Baker claims, the interview is a “struggle for the power to interpret and represent.”<sup>154</sup> Engaging with oral history power structures does not mean that automatically disappear since it is ultimately the researcher who constructs and interprets the ‘text’ of the interview, analyzes and compiles their own interpretation. Conversations ‘off the record’ were powerful spaces that women used for communicating. At the end of every interview, I turned off the recorder and asked the informant to talk about our interview. We looked at how every informant felt about the topic, what questions were difficult for them, what subjects they felt were inconclusive. We also talked about my role as an interviewer. Building a space to evaluate the interview, expressing our emotions within it, critically evaluating the questions asked, are all parts that I consider essential to developing my collaborative methodology. The conversation which was held “off record” allowed me to consolidate a relationship of trust with the women interviewed, obtain an evaluation of the interview, but above all give a space to the joint construction of the

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<sup>151</sup> High, “Introduction,” 18.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>153</sup> Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, 1st ed. (Albany: State University of New York, 1990).

<sup>154</sup> High, “Introduction,” 19.

interview. In my eagerness to build a text, a narrative and an investigation with these women, I wanted to bet on developing a safe, vulnerable, reflective, emotional space with the women interviewed through this “off the record” conversation.<sup>155</sup>

In the process of transcription, one might reflect that the “oral interview is a multilayered communicative event, which a transcript only palely reflects.”<sup>156</sup> So, if the transcript captures merely one part of the conversation, what is the purpose of our transcriptions? The greatest challenge in this research has been the constant need to best represent and articulate the testimonies of those who have provided evidence. I have continually mindful of whose ‘voice’ is expressed through the text. Even if my authorial power dominates the text, I have tried above all to make women’s voices heard. By transcribing the interviews, I was able to quote directly from the informants’ specific parts of their testimonies to show their own voice in the text without paraphrasing. However, “[a]ll recollections of experiences, reflections on experiences, descriptions of experiences, taped interviews about experiences, or transcribed conversations about experiences are already transformations of those experiences.”<sup>157</sup> This brings our attention to the fact that the transcription might never be a real and authentic text, because there is a degree of interference in the process of transcription. There is also limited capacity to capture all of the layers on paper. By acknowledging that I have interfered with the testimonies presented in one way or another, I tried as much as I could to listen to the audio recordings at first without immediately ascribing connotations. I did not search for specific extracts in accordance with a predefined table of content and I did not ‘cherry pick’ evidence to support an anticipated outcome. The themes emerged by finding similar stories and taking narrative excerpts. I selected particular episodes based on central topics.

<sup>155</sup> Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, eds., *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nadia Jones-Gailani, “Qahwa and Kleiche : Drinking Coffee in Oral History Interviews with Iraqi Women in Diaspora,” *Global Food History* 3, no. 1 (2017): 84–100, doi:10.1080/20549547.2017.1278347.

<sup>156</sup> Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 305. The quote is presented by David Dunaway.

<sup>157</sup> Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning - Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014), 313.



Ultimately, to think collectively in a way which takes this research beyond the academic format must also be part of this ongoing, vivid, decolonial methodological path. I exposed and explained my chosen research topic to the interviewees. I was concerned about how to take the research outside of academia, and how to present my text in another format. My concerns would be justified, firstly, because many of my interviewees do not speak English. Secondly, because this research goes beyond an MA thesis to a daily life struggle experienced in a material reality. When I arrived in Sweden, I did not have a clear idea of how to do this. Actually, I did not want to propose an idea myself, because I wanted to – at least in this stage – give my informants the opportunity to inform the methodological process and to have the power to lead the process, in an attempt to bring a more horizontal approach. From the group of thirty-three women, some artists and activists, they drew correlations between this concern and with their own work and they proposed to create a “collective installation” around the topic of everyday racism, identity, identification and resistance. With the women that were interested in creating the installation, I acted as a bridge, and I had put them in contact. They expressed that their art “is part of myself, it is my way of resistance” and they found by putting together this particular installation an interesting way to explore further connections between their on-going identity (re)making. Suffice to say that this is an ongoing project.

*Este trabajo trata sobre mujeres de carne y hueso* who resist their racialization from their transit between borders.<sup>158</sup> I built this methodology as a *mestiza* journey. I started by positioning myself as a *mestiza* from Latin America who is writing for uncovering of *mestiza* voices. I proposed a type of writing where Spanish was in one way or another presented in this research. Not only because the interviews that I conducted were in Spanish, but because Spanish represents the bridge that has allowed me to reach my interviewees. I have continued to reflect about my position of (un)belonging to the group of women that I am studying. Speak 'as one' and not 'about them' is an

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<sup>158</sup> "This is the work of women forged from flesh and bone."

ethical issue and a political inquiry. I believe it is fundamental to problematize the colonality of knowledge and power implicated in my own academic practices. As I ask myself again, how can I be aware of the multiple positions inside the matrix of domination without employing gender, race, class, sexuality just as descriptive categories? This question demands me over and over again to revisit how I can best place my informants as subjects and not objects of knowledge. It has provoked numerous new lines of challenge, on how to be honest with yourself, to leave your comfort zone, to confront your own colonial and patriarchal practices, to be open to change – and if necessary – your entire research topic, questions, structure, objectives, hypothesis. The question demands that one reflects about one own position in the production of privileges and power dynamics.

## Chapter 2 - Embodied *la latina*: Between self-representation and gendered racism

Narratives of exile, forced migration and dictatorial regime are part of the history, identity and identification within the Latin American communities in Sweden. Those are memories that constitute an important image of those communities, even though not everyone has experienced them first-hand. Additionally, there is an external imposition of particular stereotypes on Latin American people in general and women in particular. This chapter explores both the self-identification and the racist imagery that multi-generational Latin American women who settled in Sweden face. I want to explore, on the one hand, how the narrative of exile, dictatorships and the region's leftist struggle have directly influenced those women's self-identification with Latin America, while on the other hand, complicate the analysis by showing the differences among the group of informants and address their identities by focusing on racism and intermeshed oppressions. By opening up racism to political contestation in the process of identification and identity markers, this chapter aims to explore how my informants' identities are to a certain extent imposed on them as gendered/racialized subjects through this imaginary. I will explore this question through the racist imposition of *la latina* in the Swedish context.

My informants tended to express their connection to Latin America as a feeling, *yo me siento latinoamericana*, and as a fact of identity, *yo soy de America Latina*.<sup>159</sup> By highlighting their emotional attachment, they self-identify with a particular historical period of struggle in this region. They referred to the political resistance, leftist legacy and their involvement in international solidarity movements that supported the civil resistance in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador. In this way, their narratives are steeped in a nostalgia of 'what could have been.' In the first section of this chapter, I will begin by exploring inherited memories of exile passed down through generations

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<sup>159</sup> I feel Latin American and I am from Latin America.

that speak to a self-identification with the region as a whole rather than with the informants' specific countries of origin. Thus, I suggest that this regional identification expressed as an emotional attachment supersedes any particular nationalist imaginary.

The second section of the chapter will analyze the construction of the category of *la latina* in Sweden as a specific modality of racialization experienced by women who either emigrated themselves or are the descendants of emigres from the geographical region of Latin America. Drawing on literature concerning *la latina* from places such as the US, Brazil, Germany and Spain to read the resonances in the embodied experiences my informants recounted, I conclude that in Sweden *la latina* as a form of gendered racism is articulated through the imagery of a hypersexualized non-black and non-indigenous body of a woman that is 'good in bed'. By unpacking the category of *la latina*, this analysis unveils the interlocked oppressions – including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship, sexuality, age – within this matrix of domination. My analysis builds upon the decolonial feminist framework of María Lugones and Ochy Curriel and the intersectional analytical frameworks within the work of the scholars Irene Molina and Diana Mulinari.<sup>160</sup>

### ***Ser latinoamericana: Self-identification, the exile scar and the political militancy***

From the thirty-three informants, twenty-two women have a history of migration as political asylum seekers – thirteen first-generation migrants and nine descendants of migrants. Thus, the history of exile, diaspora and devastating military dictatorships can be traced in these narratives of multigenerational migrant women. Focusing on Chilean exile in Sweden, various scholars argue that the idea of return to the homeland is ever-present in life narratives of multi-generation forced

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<sup>160</sup> I arrived to the intersectionality theoretical approach via Black feminism from the United States, specially the work of the Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill-Collins. However, for this chapter, I base my analysis on the work of Molina and Mulinari on intersectionality because they work specifically with the Swedish context.

migrants.<sup>161</sup> Those interested in documenting histories of migration such as Paul Gilroy, Jean Stefancic, Nicholas de Genova and Agustín Laó-Montes have written extensively about the meanings across generations of forced migration within the broader context of diaspora. My aim of this academic is not to imagine the idea of return or belonging as something new. What I intend to argue is that by understanding why the idea of return is ever-prevalent in these narratives, we can nuance the frameworks used to analyze negotiations of identity via both emotional attachments to place of origin as an imagined place *and* the racist imaginaries of the place of settlement.

The majority of first-generation migrant women expressed that when they arrived in Sweden they assumed that one day they would be able to return to their countries of origin. As one of my informants responded: “I came with the idea to return one day. I had the suitcase at the door, always ready to pack and leave. The original plan was staying just until they took ‘the stamp’ out of my passport. But that took more than ten years [...] By the time I was able to travel to Chile, I already had a daughter, a job, a life...”<sup>162</sup> Her professed desire for return is also manifested through terms of both the latent fear that constitutes the memory of forced exile and the persistent idea of eventual return.<sup>163</sup> In this way, the question of belonging cannot focus *only* on structural racism because there is also the important possibility that subjects may never have perceived *themselves* as belonging, but less out of a refusal of where they are than out of a choice to remain emotionally involved in the imaginary of their pasts.

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<sup>161</sup> Aina Tollefsen Altamirano, *Seasons of Migrations to the North: A Study of Biographies and Narrative Identities in US-Mexican and Swedish-Chilean Return Movements*. (GERUM, 2000); Ana Karina Raña Villacura, “Exilio Chileno En Suecia. Proceso, Transformación y Política.” (Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, 2013).

<sup>162</sup> Interview with the author, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm. Under Pinochet’s regime in Chile, hundreds of people were forced to leave their country. At the borders, military marked citizen passport (a red x, a word, a stamp) that branded them as opponents of the regime.

<sup>163</sup> There are several Latin American women writers that have explored the scar of terror and fear in women’s lives during the dictatorial military regimes and wars. The work of Luisa Valenzuela *Cambio de Armas* (1982) and Albalucía Angel *La pájara pinta* (1975) are great examples of how women’s identity is linked to the scar of fear. Both writers explored the impact of political processes in women’s lives and women’s subjectivities arguing that fear directly affects the use of language. Maria Ines Lagos-Pope, “Mujer y Política En ‘Cambio de Armas’ de Luisa Valenzuela,” *Hispanérica* 46, no. 16 (1987): 71–83., analyses the representation of fear in Valenzuela’s writing and tracks connection with Argentinean women’s experiences on the years of dictatorship. The artist Maria Viñolo Berenguel uses sack fabrics and/or burlap materials to recover Chilean women’s practices of resistance against Pinochet’s regime. Roberta Bacic, in her comment “Arpilleras Que Claman, Cantan, Denuncian e Interpelan,” *Hechos Del Callejon*, 2008, 20–22., argues that fear is an essential element in Maria Viñolo Berenguel’s work and Chilean women’s lives during those years.

Overall, many of the women advance narratives like the one above where they expressed a desire – or at least a desire upon first moving – to return home, even when they realized that the political conditions would not return to the pre-dictatorship situation. By the time they were able to return to their countries of origin, they already had families, jobs, partners, community, even family reunions in the host country. They had no material goods in their countries of origin to establish their return. Some of my informants tried to restart their lives there, traveling with their whole ‘new’ families. However, none of them could afford to take the risk of relocating back to the homeland. Informants who are descendants of migrants relate how, as kids, they went to the countries of their parents but later returned to Sweden. Monica says:

“My parents moved back to Uruguay in 1984, when the democracy was reestablished, because both my dad and my mom always wanted to go back. However, I think life wasn’t really as they imagined it would be, so we came back to Sweden. But I think it was always in their back of their minds that they wanted to go back, because when I was little we went back three times: when I was five, eleven and fifteen.”<sup>164</sup>

Monica’s narrative demonstrates how the children of migrants perceive the desire to ‘go back home’ in comparison to their parents. Their childhood experiences are marked by the land of their parents, since they have shared with them fond memories of home through which part of their identity is constructed. Another informant, Carmen, said:

“When I was 5 years old we returned to Chile. I loved Chile, it was like another life, going out and having a thousand friends to play with. My paternal grandmother had many sisters, so I had aunts everywhere [...] I grew up wanting to return to Chile. For many years I thought that, I remember the years after that visit, asking my father ‘please let’s return, please, please’ I wanted to go back, I thought that if we went back to Chile it would be all much better.”<sup>165</sup>

This quote goes beyond childhood experiences of returning to what the country of her parents meant for her, and in both the figure of their parents’ homeland is an important bond in their own personal history. In terms of the persistent dream of immanent return - “Nunca deshacer la maleta” – the women who *did* ‘go back,’ but then found life there less tenable than they had imagined, are

<sup>164</sup> Interview with the author, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Gothenburg.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with the author, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

those who were both forced to flee and then, again, unable to stay; perhaps, we can call this a doubly inflicted wound.<sup>166</sup> The connection between forced migration and self-identification with Latin America is a painful and powerful identity mark. In this way, the complexity of their relation with Latin America is both a very personal one and part of a bigger imaginary of the region that is articulated in these diasporic Latin American communities.

Might, then, those narratives of exile, return and ultimate resettlement in Sweden be infused in the narrativized experiences of other Latin American migrants whose lives did not actually follow that particular story of migration? Exile becomes an important reference point in the Latin American community despite the fact that many did not experience this history in first person.<sup>167</sup> Following this, identification with Latin America as the imaginary of a particular region, rather than a specific country, bespeaks the imbrication of actual memory and shared nostalgia for the decades in which this region was the cradle of revolutionary left and socialist centered political projects. My informants Monica, Maria and Carmen explicitly evince this trend of regional identification, as illustrated in the following anecdotes:

We were drinking coffee at a café on Odengatan, close to Stockholm Central Station. Monica, an actress, was telling me about her life. “I feel Latin American. It is not just a region, it is a common sort of struggle.”<sup>168</sup> Maria was sitting across of me, on a cozy chair of a café in Gothenburg. She was talking about political organization, specifically about her participation in a leftist socialist group. “I was part of the revolution. I know it, nobody will take that out of me. I lived in a Latin America that believed in change. *Yo vengo de esa tierra.*”<sup>169</sup> We were walking on a Tuesday afternoon in February. Minus two degrees! It was pretty cold. Carmen stopped walking and said “ser

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<sup>166</sup> Never unpack the suitcase.

<sup>167</sup> Walter Mignolo advances the idea of exile as a state of mind, instead of only a geographical displacement. Delgado and Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Mignolo.”

<sup>168</sup> Interview with the author, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>169</sup> “I am coming from that land.” Interview with the author, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

latinoamericana es un sentimiento. That feeling of singing all together Victor Jara. No importaba si eramos de Chile, o Argentina, o El Salvador. Everyone knew Victor Jara's songs.”<sup>170</sup> Within these narratives of identification with Latin America, there is a history of common struggle. Latin America for those women represents a region of resistance. The nostalgia that those women described - perhaps - has to do with the strength of the image they had. The image of fighting for their countries and resisting against the violence of dictatorships. In that sense, there is a very particular photograph of a specific moment in Latin America and ‘Latin American identity’.

Two of my informants were part of the “MIR - Movimiento de izquierda revolucionaria” in Chile. They arrived as political refugees in Sweden and got involved with the fraction of the MIR that was sending help back to Chile. Years later, they founded the “Comité latinoamericano de mujeres” as a political network for women's political dialogue and exchange of Latin American migrant women in Sweden, Europe and Latin America. Women told me that the Latin American community in Sweden was quite politically active during the seventies. They organized public demonstrations, groups of international solidarity, fundraising and political networks to help the struggle back in Latin America. When they organized demonstrations, a group of informants in one of our group interviews told me “*salíamos a protestar y la gente nos aplaudía. Estábamos de moda. La gente nos respetaba.*”<sup>171</sup> They indicated that the political atmosphere in Sweden during the mandate of Olof Palme was positive about leftist struggles, and also that Swedish people were at least rhetorically invested in those fights for democracy and freedom. But the general atmosphere regarding migration has changed dramatically in Sweden.

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with the author, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm. The shift from Spanish to English was transcribed as the informant did.

<sup>171</sup> In English “We went to demonstrate, and the people applauded us. As we were fashionable. The people respected us”. Group interview with the author, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg



This identification with Latin America as a region makes me think about Eduardo Galeano's book *Open Veins of Latin America* in the sense that there is still the feeling and the image of an ever-blooming wound.<sup>172</sup> Latin America hurts; *a mí me duele en la piel*. But also, Latin America beats in ourselves. It is such feeling that the ones that come from that land understand. An identification with a region in the image of a common struggle against capitalism, against imperialism, against social injustices. An identification with a 'what could have been.' Here I see a connection with the narrative of the exile. The ghost of exile is part of that identification with Latin America. The exile is part of that scar and wounded wound. The violence of dictatorships and exile remains, as a scar, on the skin and the body of those women.

**“Latinare är kända för att vara heta”<sup>173</sup>: On gendered racism and the construction of the category of *la latina***

In this section I pursue this study by investing *la latina* as a racist and sexist stereotype – identity mark – within the Swedish context. *La latina* is a form of racialization that functions to categorize groups of women that come from Latin America. *La latina* is informed by a discursive construction that spans from the racialization of sexual behavior to emotional expression to cultural practices.<sup>174</sup> In this sense, *la latina* - as a category - is assigned by the racist gaze and installs itself in women's lives and bodies.<sup>175</sup> In order to unravel the multiple layers embedded in the *la latina*, I will present how this category portrays those who are racialized and gendered under this category as hypersexualized bodies and, through the overwhelming force of this 'erotic/exotic' essentialization, erases any further distinction of race, class, labor, ethnicity.

<sup>172</sup> Alluding to Nathalie Díaz, "Post-Colonial Love Poem", <https://newrepublic.com/article/129988/post-colonial-love-poem> (accessed May 20, 2018). The original version of the Galeano's book was published in Spanish "Las venas abiertas de América Latina". Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1971.

<sup>173</sup> The Swedish phrase for "Latinas are known to be hot". This is a quotation from the interviewee's narrative. It should be notice that this phrase was repeated several times from several women.

<sup>174</sup> Cultural practice is often understood as part of a symbolic production processes that contribute to the formation and assertion of an individual and collective cultural identity. However, feminist scholars have pointed out that cultural practices involve embodied practices within a power structures intersect by race, gender, sexuality, etc. I use Carolyn Pedwell, *Gender, Embodiment and Cultural Practice: Towards a Relational Feminist Approach* (London: LSE, 2007). as a based in the employment and understanding of this term.

<sup>175</sup> It is important to stress that racism is an intimate experience that penetrates into our bodies. As Anzaldúa says "fence rods in my flesh, /splits me splits me" Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2.

The gendered stereotypes around ‘Latin American women’ have been broadly theorized from Chicana feminist perspectives in the United States. However, in the case of Sweden, the representation of Latin American women from the white Swedish society has not been explored. There is some research about the change of gender relations among Latin American communities, but not about the specific stereotype of *la latina*. On several occasions, my informants pointed to the existence of such category, and I have faced the *la latina* stereotype myself in different European contexts as well. So, I will conceptualize *la latina* in Sweden by drawing upon specific literature from the US, Spain and Brazil about this stereotype and confronting it with literature about Latin American communities in Sweden in general and my informants’ testimonies in particular.

Chicana feminists and radical women of color such as Toni Cade Bambara, Joe Carrillo, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa have developed anti-racist analyses of the lives of women of color – mostly with Latin American backgrounds - through first person narratives, autobiographical work and poetic writing as a composition of political feminist practices.<sup>176</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa theorize from an embodied position because of “... the exhaustion we feel in our bones at the end of the day, the fire we feel in our hearts when we are insulted, the knife we feel in our backs when we are betrayed, the nausea we feel in our bellies when we are afraid, even the hunger we feel between our hips when we long to be touched.”<sup>177</sup> The narratives of the women’s lives that necessitate this theoretical approach show that they live in the flesh the material reality of oppression, racism and machismo. As one woman related:

“I really feel very tired about all the stereotypes, and sometimes I just don’t say anything because... sometimes you just remain silence, or you just laugh. But sometimes you feel angrier about it, and call them out, and say ‘why are you saying this, you are very ignorant’. It really depends on the situation and what I feel. But it is very tiring to hear those things. It hurts. It is painful. I feel it in my skin, all around me...”<sup>178</sup>

<sup>176</sup> In addition, those Chicana women write about their own bodies as a way to break with the symbolic repertoire created by the male imaginary. As the French feminist Hélène Cixous argues “Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetoric, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse” Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 886.

<sup>177</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, xviii.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with the author, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

In this informant's narrative, we see that the materialism of the racial stereotype of 'la latina' has penetrated her body. Racism is close to the skin, it is an intimate experience. In Cherrie Moraga's words, "racism is experiencing in the flesh."<sup>179</sup>

The Puerto Rican writer and poet Judith Ortiz Cofer details the racist stereotypes that women of Latin descent have encountered in the United States. She describes her own experiences as a way of theorizing from an embodied position; what Moraga terms as "Theory in the Flesh." In her 1993 text "The Myth of the Latin Woman", Ortiz describes her several encounters with racial violence and sexism.<sup>180</sup> However, she also acknowledges her privilege of social class, mostly in terms of education and proficiency with the English language that other 'compañeras' do not have. Ortiz argues that the racial stereotypes around Latin American women are so strong and largely spread by the mass media, and that the image of Latina as "Maria, the housemaid or counter girl, is now indelibly etched into the national psyche."<sup>181</sup> Latinas are thus considered to be fit for domestic and care work or are positioned as migrants who will take up menial jobs, criminality or prostitution.

In the case of Latinas in Europe – broadly speaking – the idea of domestic work is associated with women of color, generally migrants from the Global South.<sup>182</sup> That does not mean that Latinas are not a part of this group, but more recently other migrant women mostly from Africa and the Middle East work in those areas.<sup>183</sup> However, the stereotype of the maid is not part of the category of *la latina* constituted in the Swedish white gaze because domestic work is not common in Sweden.

<sup>179</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 34.

<sup>180</sup> Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Myth of the Latin Woman: / Just Met a Girl Named Maria," in *The Latin Deli. Prose and Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 2010), 148–54.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>182</sup> I do not tend to make invisible that in some countries such as Spain and Italy Latin American migrant women still are the ones that occupy most of the cleaning and care sector.

<sup>183</sup> Sara R. Farris, "Introduction," in *In the Name of Womens Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–21. Sara Farris analyses the political-economic implications of the new centrality of gender in Western Europe, based on case studies in Italy, France and the Netherlands. She argues that Europe is facing a new reconfiguration of social reproduction, in which non-western migrant women have assumed the job of care work (childcare, elderly care, and cleaning); especially Muslim women most recently.

While cleaning services are still provided mostly by women of color, the absence of Latin American women in this sector shows that they – in terms of educational achievement, labor market participation, income and housing – have an intermediate ‘integration’ position in comparison with other groups.<sup>184</sup> They are below Western European migrants, but better off than Asian, African and Middle Eastern migrant groups.<sup>185</sup> The fact that this data on the differential positions of integration is delineated along lines of racialization points to the existence of an ethnic hierarchy wherein discrimination takes place particular features according to ethnicity. How does this ‘intermediate integration status’ position the Latin American population in the structural racism of Sweden? In my ethnographic research, I found that these hierarchies were also internalized within the different migrant communities in that conversations and interviews often included the topic of which migrant group has more or less difficulties.

The stereotype of *la latina* as the whore that Judith Ortiz Cofer describes in the U.S context also appeared within my informants’ narratives. In Sweden, my informants revealed that the association of Latin American women with whores, sluts and ‘good in bed’ is very common. As an informant said: “Something that always bothers me a lot is the idea that we are good in bed, that we never say no to anything.”<sup>186</sup> This also appears in another informant’s narrative: “It is believed that Latinas are easy, we open our legs very fast. You know, well, that we are whores.”<sup>187</sup> This shows that systems of racial hierarchy are articulated and constructed through patriarchal gender formations.<sup>188</sup> The racialization of sexism and the sexualization of racism take place within the bodies of women of color, in which even in the context of decolonization of non-Western countries there is a

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<sup>184</sup> Latin American migration to Sweden can be classified mainly into the following groupings: refugees and family re-union migrants, and economic migrants. Riniolo, “Sweden: A Country of Opportunities and Constraints for Migrant Integration.” Andersson, “Exploring Social and Geographical Trajectories of Latin Americans in Sweden.” Mulinari and Molina, “Explorando La Herencia Colonial Del Feminismo Igualdad de Género y Racismo En Los Países Nórdicos.”

<sup>185</sup> Andersson, “Exploring Social and Geographical Trajectories of Latin Americans in Sweden.”

<sup>186</sup> Interview with the author, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with the author, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>188</sup> Mara Viveros Vigoya, “La Sexualización de La Raza y La Racialización de La Sexualidad En El Contexto Latinoamericano Actual,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Familia* 1 (2009): 63–81.

recolonization of non-Western subjects.<sup>189</sup> Retaking Lugones' *colonial/modern gender system* – as described in the theoretical section – women of color are seen as over-sexualized and thus undeserving of social and sexual protection.<sup>190</sup>

Some of my interviewees told me of occasions when men approached them with these assumptions about their bodies and sexualities, on the basis that they could judge their behavior in bed based on the fact that their parents were from Latin America. One informant highlighted very well this form of hypersexualization of the bodies of Latin American women in Sweden:

“They see us as a body. Generally, as a Colombian being, there is a norm of how Colombians look like. Of the norm of the body of a Latina, very sexy with long hair, long breasts, big ass or good whatever. I have friends who are Latinas and they are black but they never believe that they are Latinas, because there is a norm of Latinos as they are, and that is why I say it is very difficult, because we are very different, we have people who look in very different ways, and they have a different color, I dance differently, whatever it is, then I feel like everything is very Latino, and I think then how is a Latina? In other words, it is very general, people think about what they see on television.”<sup>191</sup>

Here the informant mentions several significant points. It is clear that the *la latina* stereotype is based on a particular model of women, a certain body type that could not also be black.<sup>192</sup> From the racist and sexist stereotype of *la latina*, Black women are excluded. Here -as I see-, it is possible to make a parallel with the figure of *mulher mulata* (mulatto woman) in Brazil. A woman who is not considered white, but is neither black and for that she is hypersexualized. In the case of *mulher*

<sup>189</sup> Sarah Farris, “Introduction,” in *In the Name of Womens Rights : The Rise of Femonationalism*, 2017, 1–21. Farris mentions this to point that the later decolonization processes – mostly in Africa – do not stop the logics of colonization.

<sup>190</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.” To exemplify the reading of Lugones, the ethnographic research of Adriana Piscitelli explores the hypersexualization that Brazilian women face in Spain. She analyzes the intersections between gender, sexuality, race and nationality present in the notions of eroticism of Brazilian women in the sex industry in Spain. Adriana Piscitelli, “As Fronteiras Da Transgressao: A Demanda Por Brasileiras Na Industria Do Sexo Na Espanha,” *Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad - Revista Latinoamericana* 1 (2009): 117–201.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with the author, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>192</sup> Maria Ochoa describes how the media -from national to international level- has consolidated a particular image of the Venezuelan woman through the beauty pageants. Thus, Venezuelan woman is not black, is not indigenous, is hybrid. “[B]eauty pageants produce a Venezuelan national aesthetics that privileges mixtures over any clear markers of race, and the pageant favors whiteness” Marcia Ochoa, *Queen for a Day. Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 36. Ochoa’s work took me to think about the role of beauty pageants in the consolidation of the idea of *la Latina*. Can we draw some connection between the transnational image of the *belleza venezolana* and the *belleza Latina*? It will be necessary a deep research about the media representation of *la Latina* worldwide, and this is not my objective. However, just to give some facts, from the beginning of Miss Universe, 1952, from the 65 titleholders, 25 came from Latin America, the second region closer is Europe (with Russia included) 12. The US entitled 8 winner and Venezuela 7. I track the data above just to reflect which image is constructed around the *mujer Latina*. Will these contexts of beauty have something to do with it? The fact that of the 25 Latin American two winners were Afro-descendants? What Latin women are we talking about?

*mulata*, the Brazilian state built a racialized and sexualized mulatto woman that was responsible for the procreation of the Brazilian mestizos and with that it erased black women's history.<sup>193</sup> So, of what imaginary of *la latina* in Sweden are we talking about then? As several of my informants mentioned, *la latina* is associated with certain models, pop stars and actresses that appear in the Swedish mass media – *La latina más conocida es Sofía Vergara*.<sup>194</sup> The Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros also denounces gender stereotypes in particular around Chicana women. She describes how patriarchal images around femininity that are presented in *telenovelas*, books and songs are used to control women's bodies.<sup>195</sup> The image of Sofia Vergara could be an example of this fictional patriarchal femininity.

Among the women I interviewed in Sweden, both migrant women and the women who are their descendants point out that Latin American women are exoticized, eroticized, and hypersexualized in terms of their bodies, their sexualities, their sexual behaviors and their sexual choices. Working in tandem with this is another stereotypical idea that also frequently appears in the narratives of my informants, namely the image of Latin American women as having a strong temperament, “mucho carácter.” Not only do Latin American women supposedly get into fights, shout, and raise their voices, but they are also very emotional and prone to crying and elaborate demonstrations of personal feeling. Beyond their own perceived qualities, they are imagined by the white, liberal gaze, as are other women of color in Sweden, to be oppressed first and foremost by their own families, partners and cultures. Many of my informants mentioned that Latin American women are imagined as liking to stay at home and taking care of their families in their ‘natural’ caring role. The women

<sup>193</sup> A Figueiredo, “Carta de Uma Ex-Mulata à Judith Butler,” *Revista Periódica*, 2015, 152–69, <https://portalseer.ufba.br/index.php/revistaperiodicus/article/view/14261>.

<sup>194</sup> “The most known latina is Sofia Vergara”. There is a wide literature on feminist theory about issues of representation. Feminist scholars have problematized the representation of female sexuality, making visible the extreme sexualization of the female body for the pleasure of men, while simultaneously exposing the alienating passivity of the woman in front of her own pleasure. The work of Germaine Greer *The Female Eunuch* (HarperCollins, 1970) on women's self-representation and Teresa Lauretis *La creación de imágenes* en *Alicia ya no. Feminismo, semiótica, cine*. (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, 1984) as feminist reading of cinema as a machine of representations, gives us elements to explore the creation of social subjectivities through fantasies, illusions and images.

<sup>195</sup> Gerardo Rodríguez-Salas, “Sandra Cisneros y Su Nueva Definición de Los Estereotipos Chicanos de Género En Woman Hollering Creek,” in *Aztlan: Ensayos Sobre Literatura Chicana*. (País Vasco: Universidad del País Vasco, 2001), 235–42.

I spoke with gave straightforward examples of the imagery around *la latina* in the Swedish context. In an effort to give voice to parts of their interviews without compromising their identities, I have formed my own reflections with their words:

*la latina* has a lot of character “she is latina, she has a lot of temperament”  
*la latina* is more sensitive “she has stronger reactions than a Swedish woman”  
*la latina* is amorous “she likes to take care of her man”  
*la latina* is a good cook “Damn! You know how to serve your man”  
*la latina* is “very jealous, she can kill for her man”  
*la latina* is more patient with men “she forgives them for their infidelities”  
*la latina* hates other *latinas* “she is not capable of having female friends”

*la latina* knows how to dance and move her body “a great salsa dancer”  
*la latina* has a great body “so you must be latina, I see it in your body”  
*la latina* has “long hair, big boobs, great ass, crazy curves”  
*la latina* is like “Sofia Vergara”  
*la latina* is not black “Wait a second, is an afro woman a latina?”  
*la latina* is so sexy, so exotic “Oh! you must be so spicy”  
*la latina* is great in bed “she never says no, she always wants more”  
And of course, *la latina* is “very slutty”<sup>196</sup>

My informants – as have I – have heard all the adjectives, substantives and verbs mentioned above innumerable times, have experienced their bodies being forced to bear witness to the violent encroachments of the patriarchal, white gaze, this modern/colonial gender system. Race and gender are inseparable because the racist constructions used to typify *la latina* are as much based in gender as the gendered terms of sexualization are based in race. These constant processes of gendering and racialization, the two ever-entwined, constitute lived experience as already delimited by a violent system of signification that draws and re-draws the lines of an epidermal and, I add, gendered schema.<sup>197</sup> But this delimitation is *not* an insurmountable limit; as I will now turn to, these women embody strategies of resistance in constructing and living out their own identities of resistance as *mestizas*.

<sup>196</sup> I have selected the phrases and words that were repeated in a greater number of narratives - these are the ones that are in quotes. I have generated the remaining parts of the text inspired from the contextualization that my interviewees have made. In this way, the quotes are from multiple informants between November 2017 and March 2018 in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala.

<sup>197</sup> I make sense of these experiences from my reading of Frantz Fanon, Grada Kilomba and Maria Lugones.

Among the group of women that I interviewed, there were three who identified as indigenous. All three pointed out that they did not feel part of the nation-state rhetoric, but rather as part of an ethnic group “I identify myself as Aymara, not as Bolivian”<sup>198</sup>, “I am Mapuche, not Chilean”<sup>199</sup>, “I identify more with my indigenous roots than with Peru.”<sup>200</sup> Drawing upon a framework of decoloniality, this can be read as the internal exclusion of indigenous communities in Latin America, based in the fact that the nation-states of this region are inherited from the colonial conquest of 1492 and that colonization is an ongoing reality. As decolonial and indigenous scholars have pointed out, there is now a whole system that dismisses indigenous cultures and oppresses indigenous people under the settlement project of *mestizaje*.<sup>201</sup> In Latin American countries, hybridity becomes the foundational myth of national identities.<sup>202</sup> In that sense, hybridity was – and still is – a colonial and ideological project to homogenize indigenous communities and reinforce the racist and nationalist ideas that deny Afro and Indigenous cultures and people’s rights.<sup>203</sup> Nations in Latin America privilege a specific *kind* of hybridity, particularly that of black and indigenous women with white men, and dissuade that of men of color with white women.<sup>204</sup> Not only does this explicitly privilege whiteness as a necessary component of hybridity, it uses the idea of mixing, embodied in the *mestizaje*, to flatten the particularities of racialized experience and occlude the violent colonial histories of sexual coercion and rape.

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with the author, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with the author, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with the author, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Uppsala.

<sup>201</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: Una Reflexión Sobre Prácticas y Discursos Descolonizadores*.

<sup>202</sup> Here it can be mentioned the work of Monica Moreno Figueroa on Mexican ‘nuclear’ family as mestiza “Negociando la pertenencia. Familia y mestizaje en México”, en Peter Wade, Fernando Urrea Giraldo y Mara Viveros Vigoya (editores), *Raza, etnicidad y sexualidades. Ciudadanía y multiculturalismo en América Latina*, Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES), Escuela de Estudios de Género, pp. 403-430.; and the work of Jane Maria Collins on the myth of people without color under the racial democracy in Brazil: “Intimidad, desigualdad y democracia racial: especulaciones sobre raza, género y sexo en la historia de las relaciones raciales en Brasil”, en Peter Wade, Fernando Urrea Giraldo y Mara Viveros Vigoya (editores), *Raza, etnicidad y sexualidades. Ciudadanía y multiculturalismo en América Latina*, Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Centro de Estudios Sociales (CES), Escuela de Estudios de Género, pp. 377-403.

<sup>203</sup> Curiel, “EL REGIMEN HETEROSEXUAL DE LA NACION. Un análisis antropológico lésbico-feminista de la Constitución Política de Colombia de 1991.”

<sup>204</sup> Viveros Vigoya, “La Sexualización de La Raza y La Racialización de La Sexualidad En El Contexto Latinoamericano Actual.” In this particular part of her article, Viveros draws her idea from Laura Moutinho 2004.



This racism towards indigenous people within nation-states is highlighted in the way the Mapuche woman cited above and her descendants, her daughter and her daughter's daughter (each interviewed separately), articulate their experiences of their Mapuche identity: Here are some fragments of their observations: "In Chile there was a lot of racism and classism. As a Mapuche woman, I had to face a lot. But I guess that things have changed"<sup>205</sup>; "My mother and I faced a lot of discrimination in Chile"<sup>206</sup>; "My mother faced a lot of discrimination in Chile because of her indigenous mother."<sup>207</sup> These quotes show the discrimination and racism that indigenous people continue to suffer within the context of the nation-states. In the specific case of Chile and the Mapuche communities, the territories of the indigenous Mapuche have been culturally subjugated since the founding of the Republic of Chile.

As Ruth Behar writes "[w]e cross borders, but we don't erase them; we take our borders with us."<sup>208</sup> Which borders is Ruth Behar talking about? In this particular case, an interesting element of the internal dynamics of communities and groups of migrants from Latin America now living in Swedish cities are the class divisions. One informant told me in her interview at her house one February afternoon in the city of Gothenburg:

"At the beginning, I was looking for Latin people, I wanted to be friends with every person who spoke Spanish, I was excited to find Latin American people. With time, I understood that I had to choose my friends with caution, many people discriminated against me because I was not of the same social class, I felt that in some meetings they treated me as their maid."<sup>209</sup>

This quote highlights how social class is also part of women's experiences. The unfair distribution of power and wealth impact the daily lives of these women both in their countries of origin and in Sweden. In the particular case that the informant address, there are social hierarchies within the

<sup>205</sup> Interview with the author, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with the author, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with the author, 23<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>208</sup> Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 320.

<sup>209</sup> Interview with the author, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

Latin American communities in Sweden, in which each woman becomes a part of these communities in certain ways.<sup>210</sup> Part of the exercise to de-essentialize the Latina woman is to see that apart from the “race”, from the ethnic group, there are also differences of social class. As within the Latin American community, there is violence and discrimination against people from poorer strata. The narrative of this woman makes visible how stereotypes exist within this group of migrants, as certain people are associated with certain types of jobs.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have explored the tension between self-identification and external imposition among multigenerational Latin American women who settled in Sweden. The narrative of exile and the history of common struggle of the region are constitutive parts of Latin American communities. Those women live with the image of a Latin America of the past, of their memories, of ‘what could be’, of the revolution. They have a very personal Latin America. It seems that the tension of (un)belonging is a daily negotiation between being in two or more places, such as between Latin America and Sweden, between their *latina* and Swedish identity. I think that both a personal construction of identity and the way in which identity is seen in its social context bring this fissure, this ambiguity. It is as if there is a wound that will never heal. But also, those women create their own self-identification and self-representation with Latin America. And through it, they face down the racist narratives that are imposed on them under the *la latina* category.

I have shown that under the racist and sexist essentialization of the hypersexualized body of *la latina*, there are several edges, complex and multicolored layers and diversity of narratives. Within the group of informants, women suffer different degrees of exclusion and violence. There are indigenous women, Afros, mestizas. Women of the middle class and the working class. Women

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<sup>210</sup> Some informants mentioned that to have militated in insurgency movements against the dictatorial regimes in their countries of origin, gave them a higher status within their Latin American communities in Sweden.

who arrived without families, others who had a consolidated community upon arrival. Women who in their countries of origin were considered white, and in Sweden when they are considered *latinas*, experienced a corporeal dimension of differential racialization upon migration. I have started with this identity feature because it is a reflection of the importance of generating an intersectional analysis where our own assumptions are disbanded as researchers. When I began this research, many of these differences and oppressions within the group of 'Latin American women' were not evident to me. Facing this multiplicity of life stories is a complex exercise. Thus, my investigation into these women's experiences of being coded as *la latina* has made visible the race, ethnicity, and class differentials articulating their specific experiences within that exotic imaginary of a hypersexualization. It strikes me that the stereotyped image (sexualization of racism or gendered racism) of *la latina* excludes any diversity: *la latina* is not indigenous and is not black. In this way, *la latina* erases a series of processes of identification, stratification, and differentiation.

### Chapter 3 - Kneading *la mestiza*: Embodied Narratives of Racism and Practices of Resistance

“Because I, a mestiza,  
continually walk out of one culture  
and into another,  
because I am in all cultures at the same time,  
*alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro...*”<sup>211</sup>

There is a specific form of racialization that women who come from Latin America face under the category of *la latina* in Sweden. This particular gendered racism is informed by a discourse that spans from the sexualization of Latin American women’s bodies to sexual behavior, from emotion expression to cultural practices. However, the thirty-three women of Latin American origin that I interviewed articulated their identities, lives and experiences by breaking *la latina* fixed category. Within the conception of identity, these women are at the intersection of many kind of borders. Thus, I understand those women’s identity as *mestiza*. *Mestizaje* is originally a Spanish word that has ‘travelled’ as a relic of past empire and colonialism into its current usage to mean racial mixture of indigenous, African and Spanish descent in Latin America resulting from the Spanish conquest. *Mestizo/as* are the hybrid bodies resulted of this specific racial mixture. In Latin America, the common conceptualization of *mestizo/a* has been ideologically used to erase indigenous and African heritage. However, this research works with theoretical proposal that expands *mestiza* identity beyond racial mixture to include the pluralities of lived realities of people who stand at the crossroads, in the borderlands.

In this way, throughout this chapter, I will be addressing the liminal identities of my thirty-three informants as racialized women through the concept of *la mestiza*. *La mestiza* identity will be conceptualized mainly through the work of the so-called U.S. third world feminist theory in general,

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<sup>211</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 77. Fragment of Anzaldúa’s poem “Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders”.

and Gloria Anzaldúa in particular.<sup>212</sup> Her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* published for the first time in 1987 serves as the basis for the analysis, which can be articulated in terms of border identities (Borderlands Theory) and embodied experience (Theory of Flesh). As Gloria Anzaldúa describes in her poem, *la mestiza* walks through cultures, places, worlds, borderlands and embodies hybridity – being all at once. But as she reminds us later "la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war"<sup>213</sup> because "[i]n the Borderlands you are the battleground."<sup>214</sup> The notions of live in/on/among borderlands often implies ambiguity, contradiction, oppression, exclusion, effacement and negation of one's own existence. By inhabiting that particular place of multiple intersections of oppressions, a particular way of consciousness is presented. A consciousness of a life of contradictions and struggle; a *mestiza consciousness*.<sup>215</sup>

To conceptualize *la mestiza consciousness*, Anzaldúa returned to Du Bois' *double consciousness* by rethinking the Chicanas' struggle who have been forced to understand their lives through the white American society. The African-America scholar W.E.B. Du Bois proposed the concept of *double consciousness* to describe the internal conflict experienced by subordinated and oppressed groups that are struggling against a colonial power that defined themselves as the otherness. "... looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."<sup>216</sup> How the oppressed – in particular black people – have been forced to read their own existence under the oppressor gaze. With Anzaldúa's theoretical proposal of *mestiza consciousness*, the gender perspective is forthcoming in the debates about a consciousness,

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<sup>212</sup> Chela Sandoval uses the term 'U.S. third world feminism' in her book *Methodology of the oppressed* published in 2000 to refer to the contributions of the political coalition of women of color in the United States. "U.S. third world feminism represents the political alliance made during the 1960s and 1970s between a generation of feminists of color who were separated by culture, race, class, sex, or gender identifications but who became allied through their similar positionings in relation to race, gender, sex, and culture subordinations" Sandoval, *Methodol. Oppressed*, 192. Cherrie Moraga referred to an alliance between U.S feminist of color in *This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981), p. 106.

<sup>213</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 78.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>216</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45. The first edition of his book was in 1903.

because it is articulated based on the experience of a particular kind of body; the body of racialized women. In the case of my thirty-three informants, I want to explore how they articulate their practices of resistance to everyday racism in a white patriarchal Swedish society through their *mestiza consciousness*.

My informants recall racist encounters on a daily base, in this way I am analyzing the issues about everyday racism in this chapter. Everyday racism refers to processes of repression and projection that unfold in daily life through discourses, images, gestures, language/vocabulary and actions that place People of Color in general and Black subjects in particular as the ‘Other’, the subject with culture. In this sense, the non-white subjects become the difference against which the white subjects are measured. But also, people of color are the “[o]therness, that is, the personification of the aspects the white society has repressed.”<sup>217</sup> In this sense, my informants talk about an invisible border that separate ‘them’ from ‘Swedish-ness’. An invisible border that separate the otherness from the nation.

To understand those borders, I am using the epistemic decolonial turn as I explained in my theoretical framework. Suffice to say here that through the conquest of the Americas, a classification of world population was consolidated. Thus, race was a social construction by European heteropatriarchal colonialism and universalized through capitalism.<sup>218</sup> But this (in)visible border of the colonial heritage are impregnated in the bodies. By exploring the relation between phenomenology and race, Frantz Fanon talks about a ‘historic-racial’ schema to refer how the history of colonialism shape bodies.<sup>219</sup> In this sense, “colonialism makes the world white” in which

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<sup>217</sup> Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 44.

<sup>218</sup> The fiction of race was articulated mainly through the color of the skin. Quijano, “Colonialidad Del Poder y Clasificación Social,” 344. With the abolition of slavery and the independence of colonies in the Americas and decolonization process in Asia and Africa, there was a reconfiguration of these structures of power, where exploitation got other names and other institutions under the same racial system. Curiel, “Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial”; Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

<sup>219</sup> Fanon Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 111.

white bodies belong, they are 'body-at-home' and non-white bodies become 'bodies out of place'.<sup>220</sup> My informants' bodies are out of place and they are constantly place it outside the nation by the repetitive act of asking "where are you from?". However, through their *mestiza consciousness* they articulate practices of resistance to counter that constant placement outside the nation.

In this way, I want to make visible how those women problematize the fix categories of "Swedish-ness", "Latin American-ness", "la latina-ness". They embodied *mestiza* identities; neither/or spaces. What does it mean to perceive those women as *mestizas*? How does reading their practices of resistance through a *mestiza consciousness* as advanced by Anzaldúa support those women? These are two of the central questions of this chapter as I explore on the one hand, explore how those women create their own *mestiza* identity, and on the other hand, how they develop their strategies to counter response everyday racism through their *mestiza* consciousness. In this way, this chapter seeks to illustrate a hybrid identity and explore women's daily practices of resistance to everyday racist encounters. Following Anzaldúa's description of herself "[s]oy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings", she reads her life as both the result and the act of kneading.<sup>221</sup> Throughout this chapter, I use the verb 'knead' as resistant act to refer to women's construction of identity, because they with their own hands, their own bodies mix, shape, move, transform their own identities, their own understanding of their existence, their own practices of resistance, their own struggles. These women are actively kneading their own paths. In this way, the use of 'knead' in my text is connected with a bigger feminist genealogy of using active verbs that originate in "women's work" in terms of kneading, threading, weaving.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," 153.

<sup>221</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 81.

<sup>222</sup> Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*; Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridg. We Call Home. Radic. Visions Transform.*; Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender."

In the first section of this chapter, I provide a theoretical framework of *la mestiza* identity drawing from Gloria Anzaldúa's and Maria Lugones' work. In the second section, I explore the possibilities that Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness* gives us to understand resistance from the place of the oppressed; from a *mestiza* position.<sup>223</sup> Finally, in the third section, I analyze everyday racism encounters and informant's practices of resistance through interview material.

### Theorizing *la mestiza* identity

This section explores the tensions of belonging as forced Latin American migrants to Sweden, using Gloria Anzaldúa's theoretical proposal of borderlands spatiality. Anzaldúa's work makes a personal, embodied theoretical and political statement using her geographical location of birth as a source of theorizing. In this way, she expands Borderlands Theory through her own Chicana experience. Using the powerful metaphor of the crossed roads of those two countries, she reveals the existence of a border identity relating to other kinds of crossings: an identity that is built and rebuilt through *feelings* of belonging and unbelonging of different lands, cultures, religions, spiritualities, languages, bodies, desires. This is the identity of those who live in the borderlands, on the margins, on the peripheries.<sup>224</sup> So, Anzaldúa refers to both an artificial border and a psychological, sexual and spiritual border.<sup>225</sup> In this way, she describes a *mestiza* identity of those who live on, at, or in *la frontera*.<sup>226</sup> I propose to expand *mestiza* identity and *mestiza consciousness* beyond the United States and the U.S.-Mexico borderland to understand women's narratives and women's agency in the context of Latin American migration in Sweden. Also, I want to draw a path from

<sup>223</sup> In addition to *mestiza consciousness* I also work with Du Bois' *double consciousness* and Falcon's *mestiza double consciousness*. However, the two last concepts are complementary to my close reading of Anzaldúa's work.

<sup>224</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 194-195. During this chapter I will use the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* to quote or paraphrase Anzaldúa's work. However, I will use 2nd, 3rd and 4th edition to refer to the preface section. The preface sections of each edition have given me the possibility of a deeply understanding of Anzaldúa's work.

<sup>225</sup> Anzaldúa refers to the border as "physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" this quote is from *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* fourth edition. Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, fourth ed. (Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco: 2012).

<sup>226</sup> Preface 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Norma Elia Cantu and Aida Hurtado 2012.



talking of a geographical borderland between Sweden and Latin America, to an imagined space that women face in their daily lives in Sweden.

Anzaldúa argues that it is at the border where hybridity takes place, *mestiza* identity evolves and combines multiple identities.<sup>227</sup> Thus, she opens the possibility for the oppressed or marginalized to create their own narrative about living across borders, belonging to different places yet feeling excluded from them and deprived of a place of belonging.<sup>228</sup> In this way, I understand identity as fluid intimate construction, shaped through context and personal negotiation of boundaries and (un)belongings. These thirty-three women describe their identity as a fight, a dance, a conversation and a journey between cultures, countries, nationalities, desires, food, colors, languages, music, life styles, bodies, etc. As such, I position these informants as living on *la frontera*, or the borders between belonging and unbelonging. They live on/at the physical borders between Sweden and Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia Nicaragua, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico. They also bridge the border between Europe and Latin America, and the distance between the center and the periphery of old and new empires. Inside this European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system, they are on the border of the modern and pre-modern time.<sup>229</sup> As part of their border identity, Latin America is an ever present/ubiquitous constitutive part of these women's identity and narratives.

What I found so fascinating as I listened to all of the interviews, is that each woman described – in her own particular way – a cultural identity that was ‘in between.’ They belong to two different countries, to different cultures, to different places, but do not feel complete belonging to either. Homi K. Bhabha shed light upon the “in-between” category to expand the understanding of

<sup>227</sup> I want to ratify again that when Anzaldúa refers to border, she makes it in both geographical and psychological, sexual and spiritual way.

<sup>228</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 20-23.

<sup>229</sup> Making reference to the decolonial turn and the importance to describe modernity. Ramon Grosfoguel, “The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms,” in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London: Routledge, 2011), 65–77.

cultural differences. Those liminal spaces or hybrid sites accommodate the multiple negotiations of cultural identity. In Bhabha's words:

"It is in the emergence of the interstices--the overlap and displacement of domains of difference--that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender,etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?"<sup>230</sup>

In other words, cultural identities are not ascribed to pre-given, set, ahistorical cultural traits that define the conventions of ethnicity. Bhabha suggests that there is a continual negotiation of cultural identity by the exchange of cultural performances. So, when my informants mention their feeling of being 'in-between', they are expressing that constant negotiation of cultural identity. They are demonstrating that there are not irreducible and scribed cultural identities.

In the case of twenty-three first-generation migrant women, while they define themselves in terms of culture, their place of birth was the fundamental basis of their identity. As they described in their own words: "I am Dominican", "I am Argentinian", "I feel Chilean". In some cases, it was the local that held meaning, and women referred to specific cities or regions: "I am from La Paz", "I am of Tucuman", pointing out the important specificities of those places and the importance to make that distinction. In this sense, they located their identities within translocal spaces, and their belonging within translocal networks.<sup>231</sup> Inside those national borders there are many differences and they show their attachment to their own city, landscape, particular food, traditions and idiomatic expressions. As an informant stated "When I am thinking about my city, I remember my

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<sup>230</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.

<sup>231</sup> Katherine Brickell explores new agendas of mobility, in which the enduring connectedness between places are fundamental in the experiences of migrant population. Spatialities and identities that are constructed around cities and even neighborhoods in the context of transnational migration. Katherine Brickell, *Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places, Connections* (Ashgate Publishing, 2011).

mountains. Oh, my mountains, my south.”<sup>232</sup> A very vivid memory of a particular landscape that draws an attachment.

In this identity perceived in relation with national borders, the women acknowledge that they have lived in Sweden sometimes longer than in their country of birth, and that this has changed them. When revisiting their homelands, they are not seen as Chileans, Argentines, Bolivians, etc. anymore. As an informant said: “One is never the same person. I feel half Chilean and half Swedish somehow. When I return to Chile, I am no longer seen as Chilean.”<sup>233</sup> In her narrative we can see a *mestiza* identity. The ‘half’, the ‘in-between’; a hybridity of two cultures. Another informant said: “Neither here or in my homeland, am I seen as someone who does not belong. In Argentina they see me as a visitor, no longer completely present. I am perceived as a Swedish or ‘suequizada’ visitor. I speak differently, I move differently, I know different things. I am a stranger, in the sense that I am no longer one of those who remained.”<sup>234</sup> The tension between belonging and unbelonging is pictured in this fragment. The informant expressed her feeling of not having a place, being a *desterrada* (exiled). They show the continual negotiation of cultural identity.

When describing experiences of ‘going home’ and no longer being seen as local, they recognize that they have become different over the years by losing cultural practices.<sup>235</sup> Women documented how they dress differently and have altered their spoken Spanish accent. Anzaldúa referred to how her Mexican and Chicana culture, her family and her people did not read her as part of their community any longer when she returned *agringada*.<sup>236</sup> This experience of unbelonging to one’s own culture, as Anzaldúa reminds us, feels like your own culture is critical of you.<sup>237</sup> However, in the case of my informants the tension of unbelonging is not coming just from not seen as locals in

<sup>232</sup> Interview with the author, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with the author, 22<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with the author, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>235</sup> Pedwell, *Gender, Embodiment and Cultural Practice: Towards a Relational Feminist Approach*.

<sup>236</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 58.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 20.

their countries of origin – or their parents’ countries –, but also that they do not feel to belong to Swedish society; they place where they live.

This illustrates the complexity of that ambivalence, being neither/or, in between, hybrid. Homi Bhabha foregrounds that hybridity implies an everyday fluidity where cultures collide and collude<sup>238</sup>. In this sense, my informants’ identities are in constantly change. But also, “the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation”, thus, belonging is much connected with identification processes.<sup>239</sup> My informants’ experience can be understood as hybrid in terms of the conceptualizations that Gilroy, Anzaldúa and Lugones made by spanning the understanding of hybridity from just mixed race.<sup>240</sup> Thereby, hybridity challenges the conception of culture and race by emphasizing their multiple and fluid natures.<sup>241</sup> My informants with their narratives show the fluidity and multiplicity of these processes by a constantly negotiation of belonging and unbelonging. But above all, they remind us that hybridity is transgressive, new, different, unrecognizable and it requires a change of paradigm.

Even women that did not have those experiences of ‘going back’ – to their countries or the countries of their parents – perceived their life under the code of *mestiza* identity. They explain their experience of cultural identity as “in between”, to be within while without. One interviewee expressed it as *ser todo y nada*; to be Latin American and Swedish and yet perceived as neither.<sup>242</sup> I sat with Ana, a twenty-two-year-old Swedish-Colombian in January. Ana took a deep breath and a silence evolved in the interview. She remained in silence, drank some coffee and continued “... it is like to be in the middle. In Sweden, my whole life I have been perceived as a foreigner and never

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<sup>238</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

<sup>239</sup> Bhabha, “The Third Space,” 211.

<sup>240</sup> Gilroy, “Race Ends Here”; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.”

<sup>241</sup> Gilroy, “Race Ends Here.”

<sup>242</sup> To be everything and nothing.

seen as Swedish. In Colombia, I won't be Colombian because they will probably see me as Swedish. This is the constant dilemma, where I am, who I am and what I feel..."<sup>243</sup> Being on the border between cultures, languages, perceptions and understandings of living. For Ana, this means being in the middle of two identities and ways of belongings. But also, pointing out that in Sweden, where she was born and raised, society treats her as a foreigner.

In Ana's narrative there are the categories of "Colombian" and "Swedish". As two fixed specific categories in which she cannot enter into. As two categories that emulate purity, a certain purity that Ana does not have. Ana is a *mestiza*. *Mestiza* as "a metaphor for both impurity and resistance."<sup>244</sup> Maria Lugones studies the politics of purity to see how the politics of separation are used to control certain bodies; the impure bodies. She argues that modernity reduces our multiplicity as subjects to a simplified unity through categorization.<sup>245</sup> Thus, domination is articulated through fragmentation and separation. Those who possess power attempt to control impurity through split, separate, fragment, break it down into pure elements/categories, because *mestiza* – the impure – "is unclassifiable, unmanageable. She has no pure parts to be 'had', controlled."<sup>246</sup> Lugones claims that *mestiza* is a curdled, impure state that resists the logics of purity and classification. In Ana's narrative we see the *mestiza* stage, she is in the middle of either/or, she has both Swedish and Colombian characteristics and she embodies them in her particular way; elements that cannot be separated into just 'Swedish' or 'Colombian', because they are already mixed and produced through the hybridity. In other words, to perceive her life in terms of Swedish and Colombian as two different separable categories we are reproducing the logic of purity, but her existence cannot be separate in parts, those elements born together and construct each other. The Swedish-ness and the Colombian-ness

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<sup>243</sup> Interview with the author, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>244</sup> Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," 459.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>246</sup> The ones who have the power are the white subjects – and the ones on the top of the social hierarchy heritage of colonialism – because they embrace purity, unity and racialized subjects are impure, fragmented and categorized under fiction assumptions. Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 190–205.; Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," 460.



of the colonial modernity. Her existence demonstrates the fragility of the fallacy of purity. Her existence demonstrates the fissures of the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system. Her existence communicates the rupture. In this way, Lugones emphasizes in the impossibility of unity and purity, there is always some "contamination" and *la mestiza* makes visible that contamination for that she is very dangerous for the system.<sup>252</sup>

With Anzaldúa, Bhabha, Gilroy, Lugones' different perspectives about hybridity and borderlands in the context of identity, I contextualize my informants' identities in terms of *la mestiza*. The hybridity nature of *la mestiza* takes place at or across those borders – liminal spaces. *La mestiza nace de la frontera, se abriga en ella. Cae, se lastima, tropieza. La frontera la curte de rayas.*<sup>253</sup> Those liminal spaces that Anzaldúa calls metaphorically *la frontera* provide the possibility of creating and describing a 'in between' identity. An identity of those who live at the crossroads of different cultures, world, geographies, communities, languages.<sup>254</sup> My informants engage with hybridity in their daily identity negotiation and in this way, they demonstrate that identity is fluid and can be a source of transgression.

### ***Mestiza consciousness***

Anzaldúa states that *la mestiza* has a unique form of consciousness *una consciencia de mujer* that comes from the ambiguity and the inner struggle of existing within a racialized body.<sup>255</sup> A consciousness of a life of contradictions and struggle; a struggle of existing between worlds, cultures, races, genders.

"The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity [...] She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected,

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>253</sup> Author's piece. The mestiza born from the border, she sheltered in it. She falls, it hurts, she stumbles. The border fills her with stripes.

<sup>254</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>255</sup> Woman's consciousness.

nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.”<sup>256</sup>

Anzaldúa argues that from that particular cross-pollination that *la mestiza* embodies, she creates her new alien consciousness. This *mestiza consciousness* comes from the pain of the experience of oppression, but it is a source of power to break down the dual system – of “white race and colored; male and female; subject and object” – that keeps her prisoner.<sup>257</sup> In this way, through her *mestiza* consciousness “La mestiza has gone from being the sacrificial goat to becoming the officiating priestess at the crossroads.”<sup>258</sup> In other words, *la mestiza consciousness* guides you to the liberation. This kind of consciousness allows *la mestiza* to understand the particularities of her existence and counteract the devaluation of her life. In addition, Anzaldúa argues that even though *la mestiza* consciousness is a source of intense pain, it is a powerful motion of creativity and strength to break the dichotomist world where oppressions are articulated.<sup>259</sup> It is a consciousness of divergent thinking.

With her *mestiza consciousness*, *ella se ríe de las fronteras*.<sup>260</sup> In my interview with Andrea, a thirty years old Chilean Swedish social worker, she describes how she perceives and forges her own culture and identity: “I feel Swedish, but it is very important to me to feel Chilean as well. I take the best of each culture. I have two cultures, I live two cultures [...] well [...] I am two cultures. I have to make my own culture.”<sup>261</sup> Andrea talked about her *mestiza* identity. She decided to build her own culture, her own identity with the pieces that she chose for her. Anzaldúa tell us that *la mestiza* “learns to juggle cultures”, she is a resistance subject.<sup>262</sup> So, returning to Lugones’ purity debates, Andrea rejects fragmentation. She rejects the purity logic of separation, of being either Chileans or

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<sup>256</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 79.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> She mocks of the limits.

<sup>261</sup> Interview with the author, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg. The transcription feature for short pause that I use is: [...]. B Poland, “Transcription Quality,” in *Handbook of Interviews Research: Context and Method*, ed. J Gubrium and J Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), 629–50.

<sup>262</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 79.



Swedish. She is a *mestiza* who has a plural personality and operates in a pluralistic mode.<sup>263</sup> She shows us her *mestiza consciousness* “I have to make my own culture” turning the ambivalence into something else, developing a divergent thinking.<sup>264</sup>

In this way, several scholars see a parallelism of Anzaldúa’s *mestiza consciousness* and Du Bois’ double consciousness. In the second case, Du Bois explained how black people’s existence has been described by white people. Black people see themselves and their lives under those measures, the measures that the oppressor apply to them. So, double consciousness is the struggle of racialized people of having “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.”<sup>265</sup> This illustrates how life experiences are interlocked by race, nation, class, gender, etc. How our existence is shaped by all those dimensions.

One of the greatest potentials of *mestiza consciousness* is to realize that our experiences have been described in a colonial way; the oppressor has described the oppressed. It is a call to rewrite history, our history from another place. It is a call to use ambiguity, pain and contradiction lodged in our racialized bodies to knead our path to liberation. Thus, to analyze our experiences and to name them differently it is part of a *mestiza consciousness*. And I see that creative, divergent, transgressive thinking in my informants. For example:

“The pedagogical attitude: as if you just have come down the hill; as if you were just twelve years old; as if you did not know anything about life because you did not grow up here. So, they have to teach you – you have to be taught - that “in Sweden we do things like that”. They tell you with a good tone, with good vibes, but it is very patriarchal! Because as you did not educate yourself here, you do not know how things are done in a civilized country. That is the discourse between the lines. That is one of the things that always happens to me one a week or one every two weeks. A micro racism as a colleague says”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45.

<sup>266</sup> Interview with the author, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg. Original quote in Spanish “la actitud pedagógica, como si tu recién hubieras bajado del cerro, como si tuvieras 12 años. Como que no supieras nada de la vida porque no creciste acá, entonces te tienen que enseñar que “en Suecia hacemos así”, con buen tono, con buena onda, pero es muy patriarcal. ‘Como vos no te educaste acá, no sabes que así se hace las cosas en un país civilizado’, ese es el discurso entre líneas. Esas son las cuestiones que siempre una vez por semana o cada dos semanas me pasan, los micro racismo como lo dice un colega”

Her *mestiza consciousness* allows Maria Clara mentions to understand the ambiguity of her existence, but also gives her resources to name things, to conceptualize the oppression that she faces. She creatively gives a name to a current racist encounter that she faces, ‘the pedagogical attitude’. She illustrates how she is treated as an infant, a girl of “twelve years old”. So, she is represented as someone that needs help, does not know how to manage things. But she makes her analysis of her experience even complex, she mentions the colonial character of it, the relation of power between the developed civilized Sweden and the undeveloped decivilized South (in this case Argentina). A narrative of uncivilization, savagery, backwardness. Maria Clara argues that the projection of the white Swedish subject as the one that knows, the one that will save her, is a patriarchal action. In her own analysis of the situation she makes visible her *mestiza consciousness*. How she is placed at the borders and from there she is understands her own experience.

“To survive the Borderlands  
you must live *sin fronteras*  
be a crossroads.”<sup>267</sup>

Again, Anzaldúa’s poem suggests that in order to manage the struggle of living at/on/among borderlands, one must transgress those symbolic and physical borders. As I see it, to transform the intersection into possibility. In Lugones’ words, to engage with ambivalence and embrace impurity as a practice of liberation. In other words, to play, to re-appropriate that specific position within the intersection of oppressions that one has. And to do that, one recognizes, reflects on and understands her/his/their particular position by her/his/their *mestiza consciousness*. As the informants Andrea and Maria Clara describe it, they are in-between of two worlds, of two cultures, of two identities, of two different places. Their consciousness of that particular intersection at the borderland is a *mestiza consciousness*. And their *mestiza consciousness* allows them to articulate a different identity, a border identity, an identity of their own under their own terms. They forge and knead their unique *mestiza* identity.

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<sup>267</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 195.

Sylvanna Falcon proposes a confluence of W.E.B. Du Bois's *double consciousness* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*. In this sense, Falcon speaks about a *mestiza double consciousness* to better understand gendered racism.<sup>268</sup> However, Falcon proposes this particular understanding to analyze the experience of Afro-Peruvian women. Her idea is to include the gender perspective in *double consciousness* and to geographically expand *mestiza consciousness*. Among my informants were two Afro-women. Julia and Wendy invoke a particular confluence of gender and race in their encounters with the white-Swedish gaze. They were placed outside society for their color of skin, but at the same time in a particular way with interlocking of oppression that they embodied. However, they problematized the racist category of *la latina*, because for their Afro descent they were not consider *la latina* under the racist gaze. By bringing Falcon's work, I want to reflect on *la mestiza* and the *mestiza consciousness*. How can we talk about Julia and Wendy's particular experiences? Every single woman that I interviewed has a particular place inside the matrix of domination. In this way, *la mestiza* identity must problematize differences among the commonality of the oppressed groups and in this particular case, among migrant women, women of color, women with hybrid identities. So, as Ochy Curiel emphasizes for decolonial practices, we must be aware of the multiple positions inside the matrix of domination without employ gender, race, class, sexuality just as descriptive categories.<sup>269</sup> Thereby, *la mestiza* identity must be understood in a way that not neglecting the particular place of oppression of Afro-Latin American women.

As I understand Anzaldúa's proposal – enriched by the reading of Lugones, Du Bois and Falcon – *la mestiza* is not a fixed category linked with a specific race fiction. *La mestiza* is a possibility itself of transgressed dualities, broken pure categories, dismantled taxation. *La mestiza* is along/in/at the borders, so refers to the subjects that are oppressed by white supremacy with a deep understanding of the interlock/intersection of oppressions. I saw each of my informants as a unique experience

<sup>268</sup> Falcón, "Mestiza Double Consciousness: The Voices of Afro-Peruvian Women on Gendered Racism," 661–63.

<sup>269</sup> Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial."

crossroad by class, gender, race, citizen status, age, sexuality, religion and in this way, each of my informant knead her own *mestiza* consciousness.

### **Where are you from? Everyday racism by a constant placement outside the nation**

“Every time I am placed as ‘Other’ – whether it is the unwelcomed ‘Other’, the intrusive ‘Other’, the dangerous ‘Other’, the violent ‘Other’, the thrilling ‘Other’, whether it is the dirty ‘Other’, the exciting ‘Other’, the wild ‘Other’, the natural ‘Other’, the desirable ‘Other’ or the exotic ‘Other’ – I am inevitably experiencing racism, for I am being forced to become the embodiment of what the white subject does not want to be acquainted with. I become the ‘Other’ of whiteness, not the self – and therefore I am being denied the right to exist as equal.”<sup>270</sup>

Everyday racism is the projection of fears and fantasies of white society of the racial ‘Other’. Those projections are rather in term of aggression or sexuality. Thus, the racial ‘Other’ is placed as ‘decivilized’ or ‘wild’, while the white subject is constructed as ‘civilized’ and ‘decent’. It is a daily interaction where those women are placed as the ‘other’. Micro-aggression that even seen as harmless, but they are not. As everyday racism is something that happens every single day multiple times, several of my informants said that they “[e]scoger las batallas que se deben pelear.”<sup>271</sup> They express everyday racism is a very debilitating process in which their self-esteem, self-confidence, self-care, mental health, and life quality can be damaged. For that reason, that when/how/where to respond racist attack request to take into account self-care and self-protection, because “sino te pasarias discutiendo con toda persona blanca que te cruzas durante el dia.”<sup>272</sup> In this way, those women point out the persistent characteristic of racist encounters that request a strategic thinking of their responses.

The aggressions that those women face go from insults in the public sphere to difficulties to get jobs; from paternalistic attitude to forced assimilation; from exotization to disqualification; from

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<sup>270</sup> Kilomba, *Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 44.

<sup>271</sup> “To choose the battles that one must fight”.

<sup>272</sup> “If not you will spend arguing with every white person you come across during the day”

very subtle and almost naïve questions to complete alienation. As we saw with *la latina* category in Chapter 1, there is an eroticization of the ‘Other’; the ‘Latin American woman other’. Beside *la latina* form of racism, my informants also stress the constant placement outside the Swedish nation. That specific form of everyday racism is camouflaged by the repeated question of where those women are from or the invalidation of their existence by threatening them as children. Thus, there is also a narrative of whiteness. These women are placed outside, placed in the side of difference, because a confrontation with the legitimate subject; the white subject. Thereby, I will explore the fantasy of a white Sweden where these women’s bodies are placed outside the nation and at the same time their practices of resistance to those aggressions. Through their *mestiza consciousness*, my thirty-three informants articulated their practices of resistance to everyday racism – the everyday small, subtle, superficial, micro-aggressions to their bodies, their lives, their experiences. Carmen, a 30-year-old Chilean descendent, remarked:

“I can feel Swedish. I can say that I am more Swedish than Chilean, but at the same time the society will not allow me to be one hundred per cent Swedish. If I say, ‘I am Swedish’, they will tell me ‘but your name is Carmen’, so I do not dare to say that I am Swedish, because I know they would question me if I said so.”<sup>273</sup>

Carmen demonstrates *mestiza consciousness* as she tells us the inner struggle of embodying a racialized and gendered body in a space outside of an imagined ‘home’. Her social position has been invalidated. She knows that ‘they’ – white Swedish society- will misunderstand her existence. Within her narrative there are borders, figurative in this case. Borders are set up to make the distinction between the citizens and the ‘other’, to determine which places are safe and which are not. The border determines who is human and who is subject of rights; the border is a product of racialization.<sup>274</sup> The existence of borders takes us from the identity question to identification process as well.<sup>275</sup> Grada Kilomba states that identity builds in the processes of differentiation, in

<sup>273</sup> Interview with the author, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

<sup>274</sup> Frantz Fanon introduced for first time the concept ‘racialization’ in his book *Les damnés de la terre* in 1961. After, the concept got spread by Robert Miles with his work *Racism*, (London: Routledge, 1989); and *Racism after ‘Race Relations’* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>275</sup> Authors such as Homi Bhabha, Néstor Caclini, Stuart Hall, Derrida have deeply explored the connections between identity, identification and racialization.

which one person is considered superior or more human than another. As the feminist scholar Irene Molina defines it in the Swedish context: “processes that differentiate people, stabilize these differences and legitimate power differences based on them.”<sup>276</sup> Thereby, Carmen pictures the existence of racial and ethnical borders within Swedish nation-state.

That racial border that Carmen is experienced is linked to the history of colonialism, European-ness, whiteness and power. With the colonization of the Americas, Europeans created the category of ‘race’ that was articulated mainly by the visible feature of the color of the skin. Thus, Europeans justified their supremacy over the rest of the world’s population by imposing a racial hierarchy. However, that racial classification was just one of the axes of that new system of power. As Quijano argues, the coloniality of power was imposed that “permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/inter-subjectivity and the production of knowledge from within these inter-subjective relations.”<sup>277</sup> Thus, European forces dominated and enslaved all the world population imposing a racial division of labor, where native populations and African slaves were at the bottom. But also, that neocolonial elites were created among the groups of the oppressed themselves and they perpetuated coloniality.<sup>278</sup> Racism and colonization were internalized by the colonized or subaltern. The colonized were forced to assimilate the culture of the colonizer and by doing so, to internalize the colonial bourgeoisie thinking.<sup>279</sup> In addition, knowledge was hierarchized, that means that non-Western knowledge was classified as inferior, barbaric and belonging to the past, while Western science is considered superior and exclusive of modernity. In other words, there is also a coloniality of knowledge in which the knowledge of colonized cultures

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<sup>276</sup> Molina, Irene (2005) Rasi ering. In de los Reyes, Paulina & Kamali, Masoud (eds) (2005) Bortom Vi och Dom. Teoretiska reflektioner om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering. Rapport av utredningen om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering. SOU 2005: 41. Stockholm: Edita, 95-112.

<sup>277</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” 3.

<sup>278</sup> Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique-An Introduction,” 3.

<sup>279</sup> Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 43.

is subaltern on the basis of a geopolitical matrix of knowledge / power, which classified all the knowledge from a Eurocentric criterion.<sup>280</sup>

This colonial modernity has been transferred over the centuries through global capitalism, the international division of labor, heterosexuality as a political regime, financial institutions, international cooperation programs, etc. In the particular case of Sweden, as mentioned in the introduction, the nation-state consolidates itself as white through the denial of the history of native peoples, eugenics practices and the sterilization of certain communities such as Roma, racial segregation of migrant populations, all this strongly settled in the fiction of the race category where white is superior. From the perspective of phenomenology, Sara Ahmed brings Frantz Fanon work on race and colonialism, to see how whiteness is an effect of racialization. In a world that 'is made white', white bodies are at home, are in place and non-white bodies are out of place.<sup>281</sup> Carmen's body is out of place. Rosaldo explores the dynamics of cultural visibility and invisibility to explain the power of certain subjects – white subjects. There are subjects that appear to do not have culture and those are the ones that have power and have full citizenship. Civilized people appear as transparent in terms of culture. Instead, people that have culture occupied subordinate positions. There is a dual system of pre-culture and post-culture, in which the post-culture is seen as a lack of culture, invisible under the eyes, the culture of the white postmodern subject. In Rosaldo's words, "[f]ull citizens lack culture, and the culturally endowed lack full citizenship" and "one achieves full citizenship in the nation-state by becoming a culturally blank slate."<sup>282</sup> Thereby, the fiction of race is shifted to the narrative of 'culture' and social hierarchy is maintained.

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<sup>280</sup> Castro-Gómez, "El Lado Oscuro de La 'Época Clásica'. Filosofía, Ilustración y Colonialidad En El Siglo XVIII," 150.

<sup>281</sup> Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness."

<sup>282</sup> Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 198. The anthropologist Renato Rosaldo based on his work on Mexico, Philippines and the United States.

By establishing a conversation between decolonial studies, cultural studies and phenomenology, I find a possibility to problematize the debate of the borders and to provide a multilayer understanding my informants' experiences. The decolonial epistemic turn proposes a historical and macro structural analysis, with the idea of cultural (in)visibility we see how white supremacy is reproduced in societies and the postmodern subject, and with phenomenology we give a dimension of the body, of the particular individual experience that it is crossroad by all the rest. Thereby, if the world is white and made for white bodies, this is taken as inherited by reification, as natural. Then the bodies that are noticed because they do not fit, because they are not part of the norm, because they are not part of the world, are the bodies of color. The structure of whiteness is the norm, the guide, the pattern, the starting point to mark the limits. Thus, returning to the interview with Carmen, she is not placed outside the imaginary of "Swedish" only by her name, the name is linked to a 'culture' and her body is not white enough for "passing as white" they do that 'they' question its existence. Carmen's narrative shows us that fiction of "us" and "them". A distinction that goes beyond her name. Thus, borders are tools for oppression and exclusion. "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants."<sup>283</sup> Those borders are expressed in women's narratives. Carmen talks about 'they', 'the society' that makes that division, that sets up those borders. She feels outside that line, that safe place in which she can freely identify as Swedish, as part of 'them'.

Asking where they come from – and the different forms of that question – it is an everyday life situation that my informants face. As Palo Santo said, "such a question it is a reminder that we should not be here." Swedish-ness in particular, and European-ness in general, are imagined themselves as white. Thus, people of color are excluded of any possibility of belonging. Not just foreigners, migrants, refugees are pictured as incompatible with the national culture, but also people

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<sup>283</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987), p. 3.



of color whose genealogical tree is rooted in European context for centuries. White subjects present themselves as the unity, the purity, the masters, the ones that their identities, their cultures, their belonging are not even in question. White people represent the nation. So, through that colonial dialectic of whiteness as the constitutive part of European-ness, the white person becomes the only subjects, while the person of color becomes the object to look at.

Monica said that one of the daily situation that happens to her in ‘white settings’ is the question of her national origin. This enquiry takes the form of “Where are you from?”; “How do you speak Swedish so well?”; “When did you arrive in Sweden?”, etc. To such questions, Monica usually replies:

“I am from Malmö. But then, they ask “where are you really belong?” or “how do you people celebrate Christmas?”. And I think: what do you mean at all? Those things that people ask and you think it is just some question. Are they just curious? but it makes you feel like outside, or that you are weird, or you are something exotic, and you have to explain things. So, you may feel strange, or outside the place. And it’s on a daily basis.”<sup>284</sup>

With her narrative, Monica addresses not just the constant question of national origin, but the implication of formulating that question. What is behind, it is the fact that there is an assumption that she is not from Sweden. And, the action of insisting on her foreignness, but she said in the first place that she was Swedish. So, in her response there is a contradiction according the white fantasy. But she also expresses the emotional implications that such a question causes to people of color. Unbelonging, exotification, totemization are aggressions that she faces every single day. As Chela Sandoval said, the oppressed develop technologies to counter balance their oppression. Among those technologies she said, “the semiotic perception of objects-in-culture as signs of power to be taken in, read, and interpreted.”<sup>285</sup> In Gloria Anzaldúa’s words, this is termed as “la facultad”. The capacity of see deeper symbols and meaning in apparently harmless situation. And that capacity comes from a particular place; the place of the oppressed.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with the author, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Gothenburg. Interview conducted by skype in English.

<sup>285</sup> Sandoval, *Methodol. Oppressed*, 113.

I interviewed Carolina in the kitchen of her apartment. We had some *fika* and two and a half hours of conversation.<sup>286</sup> When the topic of everyday racism and unbelonging experiences arose, she told me that the questions “where are you from?” sooner or later came to the conversation. If she replies, “I am Swedish”, people say “but before?” or “but, where do your parents come from?”. Carolina said that she used to lie sometimes, as a practice to challenge the other person, to make a point. To make visible the problematic imagery that is behind such a ‘naïve’ question.

“Kruskaya: when you lie, what do you say?

Carolina: I say my parents are also from here.

Kruskaya: does the conversation end?

Carolina: No, it never stops! Then they ask me "What about your grandparents?"  
Sometimes I say that my grandparents are from Sweden too. But they are shameless,  
because they say ‘oh that is weird, because you do not look Swedish’

Kruskaya: Who says those things?

Carolina: Everyone! It's very common. When I lie, it's not because I'm ashamed. It is only  
to see how daring they are. The more daring they are, the less that I want to tell them  
something as personal as my origin.”<sup>287</sup>

Carolina is challenging white conventions, rigid boundaries. With her act of saying that she is Swedish and lying that her parents, and grandparents and her own generational tree were too, she is breaking down the paradigm of the white Sweden. She is kneading a practice of resistance through her own flesh, because it is the color and features of her body the own that are the battlefield of questioning.

Grada Kilomba, in her research of everyday racism to Afro-German women, mentions how among the racist encounters that her informants face, there was this idea of an ‘exotic’ origin. When white people ask the black women about their national origin, they were waiting to her an exotic story. And if the woman answers ‘I am from here’, the spectator was disappointed. Two of my informants mention that when white people ask them when and why their parents came to Sweden, they were waiting something in particular, certain kind of story. “They want to hear about war. They always

<sup>286</sup> Fika is a concept in Swedish culture with the basic meaning "to have coffee", often accompanied with pastries, cookies or pie.

<sup>287</sup> Interview with the author, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018, Gothenburg.

want to hear that. As all migrants came from the same reason. As all the countries from the global south were the same. As Sweden is salvation.” In her narrative, Paola problematizes the imagery of a global periphery, but also the colonial fantasy about the remote ‘other’. And at the same time, the reinforcement of the imagery that Europe, and Sweden in particular, are the places of civilization and development. They are “the salvation.” The Swedish-Kurdish writer Zhiwar Rashid expressed in a piece this rhetoric of voyeurism and the white anxiety to hear “an exotic story.”

“After answering your question so many times, I've learned what you want to hear  
 I see in your eyes how you hope I will say that it was war and that I  
 probably had died if I had not arrived in your civilized country that received  
 I was in my arms and saved me so that I could have a future  
 I have also learned that it is not enough  
 Not even then you think I'm right to smell your flowers  
 Not even then do you consider I'm right to swim in your seas  
 Not even then do you think I'm entitled to listen to the birds of your birds  
 I say my house was blown up in front of me  
 though it was not  
 I say I painted with blood and played with bearded skulls when I was a child  
 though I did not  
 I say I was tortured in prison  
 though I was not  
 I say I was alone in the world.”<sup>288</sup>

The racial other, the person of color, is expected to provoke pleasure. White people keep asking; asking until they hear what they want to hear. Zhiwar’s poem and Carolina’s narrative illustrate the racist construction of the other as primitive, savage, uncivilized. White people do not welcome the story of Carolina’s or Paola’s or Monica’s life. Those women are transformed as fetish object of white pleasure, obsession and desire. The racial others can only exist through the alienated image that white subjects constructed of them.

<sup>288</sup> Fragment of the poem entitled: “why” not published yet. The original name of the piece in Swedish is “varför?”. Poem translated by the researcher.

To conclude, I want to bring Mirna's reflection: "We are shown only one side of the history. A Sweden that is only white. Instead, I see people of so many color and backgrounds here."<sup>289</sup> In this constant imagery of a homogenous white society, there is a systematic deletion of differences. However, in Mirna's words we see that the colonial fantasy of a white Sweden is disintegrating, because that 'Sweden' as the only one does not exist anymore – it is not real! In a country that one of eight citizens have foreign origins, where and how is the white homogenous handed?

## Conclusion

Based on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones, I have glimpsed how these women embodied hybridity in multiple ways. These women are *mestizas*, they create and define their own identities. Throughout this chapter I depict and explore the possibilities of the theoretical concept of *la mestiza*. Analyzing this concept outside the traditional biological racial mixture meaning, *la mestiza* gives us unlimited resources to understand the experience people that are at the margins, that are racialized, that are outside the white society in which they transit. However, it is important to ratify that *la mestiza* concept is not arguing that all subjects are fragmented within processes of globalization and transnationalism. It refers to certain subjects who are alienated from national and cultural identities within this colonial modernity. We are talking about people who stand at crossroads, liminal spaces. Women than stand at the intersections of identities. The people whose existence has been described through an alienated racist image of themselves. And at the same time, understanding coloniality as a process that continues and restructures, and how individual experiences navigate between the prison of coloniality and the decolonial struggle.

My informants describe their identities and lives as an 'in-between' stage; being in the middle of either/or. By placing their selves in that ambiguous space, they dismantle the fixed and rigid

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<sup>289</sup> "Se nos muestra solo un lado de la historia. Una Suecia solo blanca, y yo en cambio veía gente de tantos color y backgrounds".

categories of purity. They are impure, they are *mestizas*. They feel that something is missing, that they will never feel totally at home. So, they decide to take what they want and need, and they *amasan* (knead) their own *mestizo* home. This feeling of incompleteness is very related with exclusion and everyday racism. Their narratives depict the frontiers of modern racism. A coloniality that generates hierarchies of race and gender, in which they will never be completely 'Swedish' nor women. Then, in front of this panopticon that monitors their bodies, they decide to formulate their radical *mestiza* identity in alliance with other people of color. A local identity, located within the peripheries of these Swedish cities.

## Chapter 4 - Geography as destiny: Towards a coalitional *förort* identity

I am chained to these streets  
Serving a city that shows no gratitude  
But demands me to be thankful.  
Powerhouses shout out senseless senses about unity  
but do not make room for more than one identity.  
I need to escape this Stocktown tragedy.  
S-town, Stresstown move to the beat of fast footsteps.  
My way back home, crooked black; black off I am leaving  
to take  
the train back to my sanctuary.  
My mind sings railway-wagon blues as the tunnels guide  
my thoughts to the right direction.  
We are transported in this public transport archipelago  
where subway lines & train tracks connect the islands.

Isolated  
For we live in the cracks between segregation & gentrification.  
Between old & new/new & old but we have no say in this do we?  
Storytellers from the periphery, raising their fists and their stories.

Stockholm do you see us?  
Do you hear our voice?  
Or must we raise the volume?<sup>290</sup>

The poem “Stocktown Blues” is directly linked to the history of migration to Sweden as well as how aspects of urban development and racial segregation define the lives of people of color in general, and women of color in particular. In cities such as Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala, the urban planning of the city relegates arriving migrant populations to peripheries through the so-called “Million Program” housing estates developed during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>291</sup> These particular suburban neighborhoods are called in Swedish, the *förort*. The poem describes these *förort* as isolated places where migrant people suffer from multiple oppressions in a situation of high housing

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<sup>290</sup> From the Chilean Lebanese Swedish poet Nachla Libre, “STOCKTOWN BLUES.” In *Patchwork of Narratives*. Stockholm: FARGFABRIKEN, 2015.

<sup>291</sup> Irene Molina et al., “Pressure and Violence: Housing Renovation and Displacement in Sweden,” *Environment and Planning*, no. 3 (2017): 631–51.

vulnerability and violence displacement.<sup>292</sup> In this way, the poem also reflects the racialized tensions of ‘belonging’ and ‘not belonging.’<sup>293</sup>

These suburban neighborhoods – *förort* – have become spaces of ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. As the informant Libertad describes:

“all my life I have lived in a suburb in Stockholm. As in many European cities, the suburbs are immigrant neighborhoods. I grew up with people who have the same story than me, in the sense that most of their parents are not Swedish, their parents arrived as immigrants or political refugees. From many places: Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslavia. There are more than one hundred nationalities in the neighborhood where I grew up.”<sup>294</sup>

Libertad illustrates how the *förort* are interacting on an everyday basis given the many different languages, traditions, festivities, food, music, histories, temporalities and locations. These suburban neighborhoods are also among the poorest in each city. The 2014 report on living conditions and health in Gothenburg showed that in direct health conditions there was a difference in life expectancy of almost ten years between the richest neighborhood and the poorest neighborhood. Perhaps not surprisingly, the neighborhoods with less income and less life expectancy are those in which the highest concentration of migrants live.<sup>295</sup> These social inequalities are directly linked to the confinement of migrant population to certain areas. As the informant Emma argues “a lot of migrants arrived at those suburbs, and now the city is very economically and socially segregated. Most of the immigrants and second and third generations live in the *förort*.”<sup>296</sup> The very restrictive situation of the cities – as Emma shows – is a significant factor because one migrant generation after another still live in the same suburbs. This social struggle is also described in Sattarvandi’s novel *Still* (2008), where the suburb Hagalund in Stockholm is depicted as a representation of social

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.

<sup>294</sup> “toda mi vida he vivido en un barrio en el suburbio de Estocolmo. Como en muchas ciudades en Europa, los suburbios son barrios de inmigrantes. Yo me he criado con gente que tiene la misma historia en el sentido que la mayoría de sus padres no son suecos, vinieron de inmigrantes, de muchos lugares Turquía, Grecia, Serbia, la ex-Yugoslavia. Hay más de cien nacionalidades en estos barrios donde yo me crié”

<sup>295</sup> The 2014 report was made by the City Council and the Social Resource Board. The objective of the report was to collect data for reducing differences in living conditions and health. Göteborg Stad, *Skilnader i livsvillkor och hälsa i Göteborg*, <https://bit.ly/2LsIHDV>, (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>296</sup> Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Stockholm.

problems such as unemployment and social immobility.<sup>297</sup> Even if the novel could be one of many public discourses that reproduces the racist ideas about the *förort*, the novel shows “how geography is destiny in certain suburbs” evidencing that social inequality is directly linked with the place.<sup>298</sup>

In addition, those suburbs are easy target for racist rhetoric circulated in the media regarding violence, crime, and the dangers associated with ‘degenerate’ migrants. The feminist urban scholar Irene Molina argues that Swedish white society articulates racist and colonial imageries of the people who live in the *förort* in terms of ‘the submissive woman’ and the ‘violent man’ as universal categories of migrants.<sup>299</sup> The imagery of violent men and submissive women are perpetuated in popular media as well as in films in which those same suburbs become the basis for new fictional accounts of their exclusion. Cinema is a machine of representations which produces and reproduces meanings, values and ideology.<sup>300</sup> For example, the racist content of the Swedish film “Play” by Ruben Östlund shows how sexist and racist stereotypes of migrant neighborhoods are produced and reproduced. In contrast, films such as “Ett öga rött” and “Dröm Vidare” make a very strong criticism of the representation of the *förort* in Swedish popular media.

In her poem “Stocktown Blues”, the Chilean-Lebanese-Swedish poet Nachla Libre makes a call for ‘raising the volume’. She shows us how from a subaltern position, oppressed people generate practices to speak, to demand space, to counteract structures of invisibility that suffocates them. This can be understood as “breaking the silence” in Audre Lorde’s words, “technology of the oppressed” in Chela Sandoval’s terms, “border thinking” in Anzaldúa’s and later on Mignolo’s articulation.<sup>301</sup> But also, the plural ‘us’ embedded in the poem indicates a collective struggle and a

<sup>297</sup> Hassan Loo Sattarvandi, *Still* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2008).

<sup>298</sup> Sarrimo Cristine, “Geography as Destiny: Hassan Loo Sattarvandi’s Representation of a Swedish Suburb” (Budapest, 2018).

<sup>299</sup> Irene Molina, “Intersektionalla Rumsligheter,” *Tidskrift För Genusvetenskap*, no. 3 (2007): 7–21.

<sup>300</sup> Teresa De Lauretis, *Alicia Ya No. Feminismo, Semiotica, Cine*. (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, 1984); Laura Mulvey, “Placer Visual y Cine Narrativo,” in *Crítica Feminista En La Teoría e Historia Del Arte*, ed. Karen Cordero Reiman and Inda Sáenz (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana/PUEG, 2007), 81–93.

<sup>301</sup> Audre Lorde, *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* (Silver Press, 2017); Sandoval, *Methodol. Oppressed*; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Mignolo and Schiwy, “Transculturation and the Colonial Difference. Double Translation.”



collective resistance. My informants also talk about the community/collective aspect of both oppression and resistance. They express their identities in relation with those marginalized neighborhoods and their inhabitants. They describe their identity as being from the *förort*, a specific neighborhood identity in which segregation, racialization and marginalization are all components of fusing a multicultural, diverse and hybrid identity.

I analyze the *förort* identity as a specific type of an oppositional *mestiza* identity. In the interviews, my informants described their *förort* identity as an articulation of the possibility of transgression, self-determination and auto renaming. But also, through this self-identification they forge alliances among – and between – people of color within the *förort*. Thus, I conceive the *förort* as a coalitional identity under Maria Lugones' theoretical framework. More than an identity defined by their exclusion or racial descriptor, it is a communal articulation and understanding of practices of resistance on the basis of historical, located, situated and multiple identifications and interdependences.<sup>302</sup> A coalitional identity is the impulse to come together to resist multiple oppressions. In other words, these women share that material reality of exclusion, but it is their wiliness to organize themselves that drives them to forge the coalitional identity: the *förort*. In order to avoid reproducing an analysis of the lives of women of color as a summation of oppressions in which there is a hierarchy among oppressions, I draw from decolonial feminists who call for a deeper understanding of the multiple positions inside the matrix of domination. Similarly, my informants argue for possibilities of articulation of coalitions among people of color without neglecting differences among individual women. The *förort* identity is thus a bridge across racial/ethnic/national/sexual/geographic categories.

I understand the *förort* identity through the *mestiza consciousness* as a committed effort to recognize commonality within the context of difference, and difference within the context of commonality.

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<sup>302</sup> María Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 13, no. 1 (2014): 68–80, <http://www.jcrt.org/archives/13.1/lugones.pdf>.

In this way, I am using *la förort* as a coalitional identity that reflects intersectional position of privilege and oppression inside the ‘matrix of domination’, as articulated by Patricia Hill Collins. In the process of identifying this racist, colonial, heterosexual and classist system, I am engaging with feminist debates about the concept of ‘intersectionality’ through a decolonial perspective that highlights the inseparability of oppressions and the historical causes of their production. Thus, this final chapter will return to early Anzaldúa and Lugones’ texts and establish a dialogue with critical urban research, Hill Collins’ work on Black Feminism and the book *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* in order to conceptualize the coalition that women knead inside the *förort*.

This chapter will conceptualize the *förort* identity based on a multi-voice conversation between six of my informants: Monica, Luciana, Emma, Libertad, Wendy and Palo Santo. Secondly, problematizing the different positions of my informants and other women of color among the matrix of domination by presenting feminist debates about the concept of ‘intersectionality’. Finally, I explore *la förort* as a decolonial coalition identity.

### ***Förort* identity: Reversing the stereotype**

As I said above, *förort* is the Swedish word for suburb. However, my informants Monica, Luciana, Emma, Libertad, Wendy and Palo Santo explained how the literal connotation of the word has a symbolic meaning: ‘*ort*’ means city and ‘*för*’ means before. So, literally *förort* is ‘before the city’. As Libertad expressed “that term means that we are outside of the city, that we are not even considered part of the city.”<sup>303</sup> And Emma argued that *förort* shows “... the racist Swedish structure where we are read as the prehistorical, before becoming citizens. Before the ‘real’ city, before civilization.”<sup>304</sup> Both Libertad and Emma claim that the *förort* are places rejected by the cities, and also by white

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<sup>303</sup> Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>304</sup> Interview with the author, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Stockholm.

Swedish society more broadly. Their narratives reflect how those marginal neighborhoods are represented in certain way. In fact, Monica said that the *förort* are commonly referred to as *blattle*, which is the Swedish word for cockroach.<sup>305</sup> With this last assertion, we can see the stigmatization that those places and their inhabitants face. My informants are talking about suburban neighborhoods such as Fittja, Alby, Rinkeby, Tensta, Flogsta, Rosengård, and Ångered; the places where they grew up or/and they live nowadays.

My informants emphasized that the representation of these neighborhoods is constantly manipulated by the media. For example, as Libertad clarified: "*förort* refers to suburb and it could also be associated with neighborhoods of people with a lot of money. But when the term *förort* is used in the press, it is associated only with migrant neighborhoods. It is used only to refer negatively to certain areas."<sup>306</sup> In this way, she points out how mass media associates *förort* in a way that is only referring to migrant neighborhoods. Emma states, "on the television they always say that criminality is perpetuated by immigrants. You never hear news of a 'white Swedish' doing something wrong. They always use negative adjectives to define our neighborhoods and our communities."<sup>307</sup> It is possible to see through Emma's narrative the imagery of migrants as constructed through the lens of racial differentiation. But also, Emma shows how these neighborhoods have a lot of polarized media representation that picture them as dangerous, unfriendly places, the 'no-go zones'.<sup>308</sup> In 2016, the Swedish police pulled out a list of 53 'no-go zones,' or areas considered vulnerable and 'particularly vulnerable'.<sup>309</sup> This sparked a great debate

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<sup>305</sup> Interview with the author, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Gothenburg.

<sup>306</sup> Interview with the author, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with the author, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>308</sup> The definition of 'no-go zone' is an area that has a reputation for violence and crime which makes people frightened to go there, an area in a town barricaded off to civil authorities by a force such as a paramilitary, or an area barred to certain individuals or groups. However, the term also makes reference to an area that is beyond sovereignty control; a place where there is an undergoing insurgency. These kinds of places are considered hostile by the government. Thus, the Swedish State justifies the employment of brutality in these places.

<sup>309</sup> Definition of 'vulnerable area' by the Swedish police: "a geographically defined area characterized by a low socio-economic status where criminals have an impact on the local community. The impact is linked to the social context in the area rather than a wish to take power and control the community." This definition can be found in the 2017 Police Report entitled „Utsatta områden. Social ordning, kriminell struktur och utmaningar för polisen". p. 10, [https://polisen.se/siteassets/dokument/ovriga\\_rapporter/utsatta-omraden-social-ordning-kriminell-struktur-och-utmaningar-for-polisen-2017.pdf](https://polisen.se/siteassets/dokument/ovriga_rapporter/utsatta-omraden-social-ordning-kriminell-struktur-och-utmaningar-for-polisen-2017.pdf), (accessed May 28, 2018).

among civil society, academics and activists, given that the zones identified as risky, vulnerable, were mostly peripheral neighborhoods of mainly migrant population.<sup>310</sup> An updated report has now been released, which is likely to be the focus of a lot of discussion in the run-up to Sweden's general election in 2018.

The tensions between belonging and unbelonging are imbedded in my informants' narratives. They described their existence travelling between liminal spaces, and of being in-between, where they are neither Latinas nor Swedes. In their minds, they are 'translated' into identifying with their neighborhoods where other migrants are also negotiating their identities according to their conditions:

"By living in a *förort*, you suffer a lot of discrimination because you come from 'a bad place'. In these places there are people from so many different places. People from Chile, Turkey, Syria, Iran, etc. Then, the identity is based on that place, Alby, the *förort* where I lived. That is your identity, because you are not from Chile and you are not from Sweden, so you are from that place, from *förort*."<sup>311</sup>

Emma identifies from the marginalized areas, the places where she grew up. As she feels neither Swedish nor Chilean, her self-identification with the *förort* is her way of developing "tolerance for ambiguity" in Anzaldúa's words.<sup>312</sup> Through her *mestiza consciousness*, Emma kneads her own identity. However, as the *förort* itself faces a lot of racist stigma and negation, the identification with that place also comes in terms of otherness. What does it mean to self-identify with such a state of oppression? Does the polarized popular representation of the *förort* produce in its inhabitants a sense of self-hatred? Emma told me that, "All the time you are bombarded that living in those places is a negative thing, because they are poor neighborhoods, working class neighborhoods, migrant neighborhoods. It is common to have self-hatred, to underestimate the experiences we have."<sup>313</sup> As Fanon reminds us, colonialism has distorted and poisoned the way that the colonized

<sup>310</sup> The report of the national department NOA of the Swedish police can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2lM9Qs1> (accessed May 28, 2018).

<sup>311</sup> Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>312</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

<sup>313</sup> Interview with the author, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

understand themselves from beneath negative masks of hate.<sup>314</sup> Emma expresses that in order to reach the appropriation of that identity, of that neighborhood history, she has to go through a process of empowerment. Correspondingly, Anzaldúa argues that women of color have internalized self-hatred, poor self-esteem and other countless oppressions by all the violence imposed on us. Thus, a practice for liberation begins with turning those stereotypes and negative images of ourselves into love.<sup>315</sup>

Hill Collins argues that the experience of oppressed groups, in particular black women, allows them to have a particular epistemic privilege to inform a deep understanding of the matrix of domination.<sup>316</sup> Since, as Hill Collins argues, life experience is a powerful source of knowledge, women that live in the *förort* face daily exclusion and everyday racism. I bring Hill Collins' contribution because it is the particular experience of oppression for where my informants read their lives and develop their practices of resistance. Thus, I see commonalities among Hill Collins' epistemic privilege and Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness. I do not interpret both proposals as provocations about who is legitimated to talk, but rather than as a strong theoretical, methodological and activist call for talking through and with the body.

However, Hill Collins also warns that facing oppression does not drive us immediately towards a reflexive analysis of the matrix of domination. "Although common experiences may predispose to develop a distinctive group conscience, they do not guarantee that such awareness develops in all women nor that it is articulated as such by the group."<sup>317</sup> This is a very important insight because I do not want to romanticize the position of oppression, neither do I take for granted that shared

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<sup>314</sup> Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

<sup>315</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, "Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada," in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. Ana Louise Keating (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 137.

<sup>316</sup> Hill Collins, "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence"; Patricia Hill Collins, "Rasgos Distintivos Del Pensamiento Feminista Negro," in *Feminismos Negros. Una Antología*, ed. Mercedes Jabardo (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2012), 99–134; Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial."

<sup>317</sup> Hill Collins, "Rasgos Distintivos Del Pensamiento Feminista Negro," 106.

experience of oppression will drive to collective action right away. I do not claim that all the people of color living in the *förort* articulate an oppositional identity that overcomes self-hatred and resists oppression. Nor do I claim that all my informants participate in anti-racist struggle, but their particular and singular position inside the matrix of domination gives them the resources to articulate a *mestiza* consciousness.<sup>318</sup>

I read this process of re-appropriation as a negotiation between the tensions of belonging and not belonging. It is a process of embracing contradictions and transgressing *fronteras*. Generate a *mestiza* identity, a neighborhood identity, and an identity in coalition with other people of color. As Emma illustrates:

"I came to the conclusion that you do not need to be just one thing. Identity is fluid, it is changing, it does not have to be black or white. Identity can be anything. By growing up wanting to be something hundred per cent, the person suffers a lot. It is painful."<sup>319</sup>

Through her *mestiza* consciousness, Emma articulates her rejection of pure categories of identity. As Maria Lugones argues, purity is a way of regulation that operates under fragmentation to avoid ambiguity and multiplicity.<sup>320</sup> Emma expresses an identity that is not white or black; rather there is a whole spectrum of impurity and hybridity. In this way, Monica, Luciana, Emma, Libertad, Wendy and Palo Santo described and conceptualized their hybrid identities as an act of autonomy, transgression and re-appropriation, because in describing themselves, "nobody else tells me who I am. I position myself as part of the *förort*."<sup>321</sup> A *förort* defined by themselves and not by the popular media, or the police or white society. So, it is also a process of empowerment as Luciana argues: "The people who are from those neighborhoods, who live in the *förort*, we have empowered, we

<sup>318</sup> Among my informants even if the large majority problematize racism and describe their active involvement in anti-racist struggle, not all of them did. For me, this was a call for not assuming certain actions/reaction/analysis just because of non-white body position. Why some of them did not publicly express certain narratives? It is a very rich path of exploration, but for the scope of my research, I focus on those who did acknowledge racism. Again, I bring questions and different routes of analysis that I did not take to make visible the complexity of the topic, possible future research, but most of all, to problematize my own assumptions as researcher and my theoretical and methodological decisions. To make visible my intervention on this archive is very relevant for my feminist practice.

<sup>319</sup> Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>320</sup> Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation." On Chapter 2 I address extensively Lugones' proposal about purity and impurity

<sup>321</sup> Interview with the author, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

have resumed that identity, we see as something positive having grown up in those places.”<sup>322</sup>

Luciana talks about re-signifying the richness of those places, but also developing a group conscience.

### **“Among the *förort* we are not all the same”: unraveling the matrix of domination and revisiting intersectionality**

My informants emphasize that inside the *förort* they are not all the same. There are multiple differences among those marginalized habitants that make them different inside the matrix of domination. That diversity is a source of deep reflection about how to create alliances, coalitions and ‘solidarities others’ against the violent system that they are living in.<sup>323</sup> Libertad describes some of those differences as the following:

“The *förort* is the first collective, the otherness. But among the otherness, we are not a homogenous group as it is often portrayed. Within that group, there are many other oppressions that position us differently. Speaking of women of color, here in Sweden the group of racialized women who are going to have it more difficult are Muslim women. If they wear a veil, they have it even worse because apart from gender, race, nationality, they have that marker of religion. And within that group, women who have recently arrived do not know the language, they do not have the cultural capital, so they are the target of the most brutal racist violence.”<sup>324</sup>

In this way, Libertad brings to the debate different aspects of intersectionality. And it is with intersectionality that I will start this analysis. By bringing the limitations on intersectionality mentioned in the Literature Review, decolonial feminist scholars as Curiel, Lugones and Ochoa argue that race and gender have been created by a colonial modernity. So, it is not about describing the positions of oppression by saying: they are non-white, they are marginalized, and they are women. It is about understanding why they are women, non-white and marginalized.<sup>325</sup> But also, as Elsa Barkley Brown tells us, “[w]e need to recognize not only differences but also the relational

<sup>322</sup> Interview with the author, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>323</sup> I say ‘solidarities others’ because – as a friend said to me once – we are still using certain words to mention other things. And this is a reflection about the tradition and symbolism of words as solidarity. As feminists of color problematized, solidarity and sisterhood were terms coacted by white feminism to claim that all women were equal. So, with ‘solidarities others’ I want to emphasize that criticism and the intent of people of color to develop ‘solidarities’ that address differences.

<sup>324</sup> Interview with the author, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>325</sup> Hill Collins, “The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence”; Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

nature of those differences [...] middle-class women live the lives they do precisely because working-class women live the lives they do.”<sup>326</sup> So, not just are the women different among themselves, they are also differentiated by the position of power some of them hold over the others. It appears to me that relations of power among the matrix of domination are correlational.

Maria Lugones and Mara Viveros argue that one of the problems of intersectionality is that it can be understood just as a sum of oppressions where there is a hierarchy among them. In addition, Lugones indicates that Crenshaw’s category of intersectionality is embedded in the logics of purity; as there were ‘pure’ race, gender, national, class identities and hence, ‘fragmented’ identities.<sup>327</sup> Thus, Lugones argues that the limitation of intersectionality is that the concept is coming from a colonial categorical analysis that use categories as natural and essential hiding the historical conditions that create them as categories and categorical instruments of oppression.<sup>328</sup> For instance, Lugones claims that categories must be understood as impure and merged without the possibility of dissolubility. Gender and race co-constructs each other.<sup>329</sup> The category of woman is shaped by race and race is shaped by gender.<sup>330</sup> Returning to previous debates about purity and impurity in Chapter 2, Lugones invites us to think about identity within the context of multiple positions of oppressions as ‘curdling’ instead of ‘splitting’ to make visible the inseparability of the oppressions and privileges that crossroad us. Oppressions are intermeshed.<sup>331</sup> With that, she returns to the *mestiza* identity as a transgressor of dichotomous, fragmented, binominal logics.

<sup>326</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, “Polyrhythms and Improvisation,” *History Workshop*, no. 31 (1991): 86.

<sup>327</sup> Stella González, “La Lógica de La ‘Pureza’, El Mestizaje y La Identidad ‘Fragmentada,’” *Red Española de Filosofía* viii (2015): 29–40.

<sup>328</sup> María Lugones, “Multiculturalismo Radical y Feminismos de Mujeres de Color,” *Revista Internacional de Filosofía Política* 25, no. 25 (2005): 68.

<sup>329</sup> This is directly linked to the framework of coloniality of gender discussed on the theoretical framework section. The term ‘woman’ without other specificities unveil the racist conception of ‘woman’ that have been historical used to addresses only white European bourgeois heterosexual women.

<sup>330</sup> Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender.”

<sup>331</sup> Lugones, “Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms.”



In order to connect these theoretical debates with my informants' own understanding of intersectionality, I draw upon Wendy's interview:

“There is intersectionality, a lot of stuff that can be put on one person, a lot of oppression. I have friends that are black, and they are Muslims, so they won't get job, so that is a lot of stuff. I also see a lot of colorism as well and that can also be seen a lot in my friends that I am kind of more privilege because I am not that dark, and my friends are darker than me. So, I have privileges that way, so it is kind of how I believe the structure works and at the very top is the white man that has most privileges over all.”<sup>332</sup>

Wendy sees her existence at the crossroads of multiple oppressions. She reflects on how the structure works through her own racialized experience of *mestiza* consciousness. However, what I find very important to mention is how both Libertad and Wendy shed light on the particularly vulnerable position of Muslim women migrants in Sweden. Even if within the themes of the interview there was not a particular mention of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ or Islam, or Muslim women, in almost all the interviews women brought up this topic. They described how Muslim women in general, and with Somalian origins in particular, are the ones who receive the most brutal racist and sexist violence. And by talking about this, they reflect on how to develop tactics collectively to resist racism that take into account that diversity.

### **Kneading coalitional identities**

Maria Lugones argues that the theory of oppression must be liberating. She sees the importance of intersectionality, but just as a provisional stage since theoretical production should provide oppressed people the ontological or/and metaphysical possibility of liberation. Under the same paths of thoughts, Crenshaw says “[b]y tracing the categories to their intersections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable.”<sup>333</sup> In this sense, intersectionality helps to make visible the different and complex

<sup>332</sup> Interview with the author, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

<sup>333</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory*, ed. Kimberle Crenshaw et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 378.

positions of oppression, but it is necessary to go beyond the logic of categories and separation. In this way, Lugones retakes her theorization around purity, impurity, fragmentation and *mestiza* stage.<sup>334</sup> She claims that the oppressed subject is resisting with his/her/their own existence, because as hybrids, oppressed people can go in-between structures and that shows the fractures of the structure.<sup>335</sup> However, Lugones makes clear that understanding ourselves as multiple is not enough to fulfil a liberatory future.<sup>336</sup>

“Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. Difference must be not merely tolerated but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening.”<sup>337</sup>

Lugones argues for the collective struggle as a source of liberation, as does Audre Lorde. With her quote, Lorde mentions the imperative move to address differences and treat them as central in our collective actions. She later says “[d]ifference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.”<sup>338</sup> In this way, Lorde shows the potential and strength of interdependency inside what she calls “non- dominant differences”. She claims for a coalition as a resistance to multiple oppressions in which difference is conceived and appreciated. And Lugones builds from there to say that such coalitions are “not just theorized but lived possibilities.”<sup>339</sup> To understand coalitions as something that we articulate by practicing it every day, as Emma states: “We are from the *förort*, they are my community. We create community day-after-day.”<sup>340</sup> To acknowledge that theory is not enough, that there is a material existence and popular experience of resistance from where Lorde and Lugones were/are part of. They used their activism as part of

<sup>334</sup> Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.” This debate was discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

<sup>335</sup> Lugones, “Structure/Anti-Structure and Agency under Oppression.”

<sup>336</sup> I want to return to the debate of purity and impurity by bringing this Lugones quote: “The logic of impurity, of *mestizaje*, provides us with a better understanding of multiplicity, one that fits the conception of oppressions as interlocked. I mean to offer a statement of the politics of heterogeneity”. Lugones, “Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms.” Advocating for the collective is a call made from different locations of the world by indigenous, black, postcolonial and decolonial scholars. It is a strong critic of the individual western modernity.

<sup>337</sup> Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” 111.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>339</sup> Lugones, “Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms.”

<sup>340</sup> Interview with the author, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Stockholm.

their academic practices. With this, I see the collective production, the grassroots work, the imperative bridge that we must build between academy and social struggle.<sup>341</sup> My informants are articulating those coalition in group, among their communities, inside/with the *förort*.

Lugones argues that in order to articulate practices of resistance that truly take into account diversity and celebrate it, then “plurality [must be] in the very structure of a theory” and she claims that requires of “doing acrobatics.”<sup>342</sup> So, in order to transgress the prison of purity, we must be creative. We must articulate a border thinking, a divergent thinking, an impure thinking, a *mestiza* thinking at the edge of system in liminal spaces. But also, “doing acrobatics” alludes to me to a difficult and risky action that requires practice. I see the “broken colorful Swedish” as one amazing acrobatic action that my informants often created. By speaking a kind of Swedish that incorporates words and idiomatic expressions of their parents’ backgrounds, those women are celebrating diversity and offering communicative openings. They are hybridizing language, kneading their own tongue; a wild tongue in Anzaldúa’s words. In this way, deep coalition demands complex communication that, as Lugones describes it “often invisible to dominant groups, can enable genuine coalition and effective resistance to domination.”<sup>343</sup> Thus, language is one of the spaces where coalition is articulated.

Coming from the *förort* is connected to specific cadence and dialectic qualities when speaking Swedish; both from people living outside and within *förorten*. The way that you speak the language can also be the subject of violence. As Monica said “...Swedish is my first language, but I had a really strong social dialect connected to a social class by the neighborhood.”<sup>344</sup> The way you speak

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<sup>341</sup> As indigenous women said: “You cannot do theory without body, without action and without practices” Sylvia Marcos, “Feminismos En Camino Decolonial,” in *Más Allá Del Feminismo: Caminos Para Andar*, ed. Mágina Millán (Mexico City: Red de Feminismos Decoloniales, 2014), 24. This sentiment was one of the main claims that the indigenous women raised in the First Indigenous Women Summit of the Americas in 2002.

<sup>342</sup> María Lugones, “On The Logic of Pluralist Feminism,” in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1991).

<sup>343</sup> Lugones, “On Complex Communication,” 75.

<sup>344</sup> Interview with the author, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Gothenburg.

a language is directly connected to your social class in terms of what schools you could access on the basis of your place of residence. But also, language is a mark for reproducing race and class differences. In fact, “the links between language, empire and race are at the foundation of the modern/colonial world matrix.”<sup>345</sup> Language was a very important tool for post-enlightenment concepts of ‘citizen’ and ‘foreigner’ and the European nationalist projects during the nineteenth-century.<sup>346</sup> In the particular case of Sweden, there is a long history of how Swedish was imposed to minorities as the Sami and how by language policy Swedish was secured as the common and national language of the country.<sup>347</sup> School language policies for children with immigrant background such as the ‘mother tongue tuition’ and ‘Swedish as a second language’ have become a difference-making mechanism between who qualify as Swedes and who do not.<sup>348</sup> In this way, for these second-generation informants, language becomes a battleground where they must resist their oppression in order to occupy those same white spaces reserved for Swedes. These linguistic particularities are framed within the context of race for many of the women:

“... when I was younger, it was important for me to fit into white settings. And it was connected to language and the way I spoke Swedish. How I speak “whiter” [...] I knew when I started the university like “I can’t speak like this, nobody else does” and I tried to speak more proper, whiter in that sense.”<sup>349</sup>

Monica in her quote shows how ‘speak whiter’ was the practice that she had at the moment to face less exclusion and racism. By highlighting the temporality, Monica points out how practices of resistance must be understood as contextual and changeable.

The women explained this shift over time as a re-signification of their way of speaking Swedish, where they produce a ‘colorful’ Swedish enhanced with words from many other languages, including Spanish, Kurdish and Arabic. As one informant expressed:

<sup>345</sup> Delgado and Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Dignolo,” 12.

<sup>346</sup> Delgado and Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Dignolo.”

<sup>347</sup> See: The Swedish Language Act “Swedish for all” 2008/2009.

<sup>348</sup> Tünde Puskás, “Managing Immigrant Multilingualism in Swedish Compulsory Schools: Working Paper,” *Linköping University*, 2012.

<sup>349</sup> Interview with the author, 13th November 2017, Gothenburg.

“The way that I speak is part of my identity. I am coming from a *förort* and I have a broken Swedish. I am not embarrassed about that. A broken Swedish means a colorful bridge between cultures and languages. It is a wild way of speaking. If they don’t like it, it is because they are afraid of our diversity.”<sup>350</sup>

In my informant’s testimony I find a strong positionality, a political decision of resignifying her history, her identity, and her belonging. She expresses a *mestiza* tongue, a *förort* tongue, a wild tongue. In Anzaldúa’s words “[w]ild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out.”<sup>351</sup> A wild tongue, as the *förort* tongue, cannot be purified, cannot be fragmented, cannot be clean, cannot be tamed. It is a *mestiza* tongue, an impure tongue, a transgressive tongue, a border tongue, a tongue of the resistance. So, it is from the subaltern side of the margins and borders that women forge creative ways of communication.

Libertad is involved in an activist initiative for access to decent housing. Her network is among people from different *förort*. Inside her group, she describes that there is a constant problematizing of the differences among the members. A collective creation of new strategies and new methodologies to take action. She refers to a very complex and deep positionality. Emma talks about a neighborhood radio in which people of the *förort* can talk about themselves, because it is always the others who talk about them. In her activism, she argues that diversity is a challenge and she addresses it by talking about intersectionality with her peers. She reflects that among people of color, there are also power struggles between men and women, and she is constantly addressing such issues. Palo Santo describes her own art as a way to forge coalitions among women of color. She has a performance space with other five women with different migrant backgrounds in which they address through their bodies the complexity of differences and commonalities within the oppressed. She says that often their group reflection on how to show the complexity of their bodies

<sup>350</sup> Interview with the author, 14th February 2018, Uppsala.

<sup>351</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 54.

as mirrors of the complexity of their coalitions. And for them it is so important to open spaces to non-white bodies on stage.

Lugones claims a coalitional identity by understanding non-dominant differences as Lorde posed. To establish a cross-cultural relationship in a different way. The way to create such coalition will depend of the context, temporality and location. To forge a multiculturalism within the *förort* that valorizes histories, diversity, knowledge ‘others.’ Lugones draws her proposal of a coalitional identity in the political stand of ‘women of color’ in the United States. I find commonalities in her proposal with what Maria Luisa Femenías calls “political fiction - negotiated identities - mestiza feminist identity.”<sup>352</sup> In her proposal, Femenías argues that women with multiple diversities in terms of backgrounds, race, gender, social class, etc. can organize themselves around an identity category such as “women of color” or “Latin American women” – in her specific context – as a strategy to counter response exclusion. By when they create such a coalition, they must agree among themselves what they want to feel, create, perceive, communicate with such a thing, even if outside the group their existence can be misinterpreted. The negotiation between them is so important for a real coalition of or for diversity. And for Femenías, that identity will be feminist and *mestiza*.<sup>353</sup> I draw from those arguments, theoretical frameworks and methodologies, to propose my informants’ activism, self-identification, counter-representation in terms of a *mestiza* identity. A very particular identity that is articulated in a particular location, context and temporality. I argue that my informants are kneading a *förort* identity. An identity that comes from the margins, that is articulated in the liminal spaces, and that engages with hybridity. An identity that demonstrates that *mi solo existencia ya es resistencia*.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Femenías, “Esbozo de Un Feminismo Lationamericano.”

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> My only existence is already resistance.

## Conclusion

I use the testimonies of Monica, Luciana, Emma, Libertad, Wendy and Palo Santo to describe and analyze this particular coalitional identity under their identification with the *förort*. As hybrid subjects, my informants transit among liminal spaces, the feeling of ‘in-between’ crossroads their experiences. As Emma explains in one testimony’s fragment above, her tension of unbelonging to the white Swedish society where she grew up, but either to their parents’ country of origin. To face the ambivalence of her experience, she forges her *mestiza* identity through the identification with the neighborhood where she grew up, a *förort*. By her *mestiza consciousness* she re-appropriates the *förort* and articulates other kind of representation. A diverse, complex, creative place. A place where she feels alike, safe and understood. As Emma, the other informants told me their processes of identification with their neighborhood as a political decision to re-signify their existence, counter balance white racist narratives and to knead their own *mestiza* identity. But also, through *la förort* they saw possibilities to articulate resistance with other people of color; with their neighbors; with other *förorten*. I understand these amazing narratives as coalitions within the context of difference. Coalitions that come from recognizing oppression as intermeshed and searching for liberatory practices to resist those oppression.

One of the reflections that I want to highlight is that of romanticizing the subaltern position. With *la förort* coalitional identity, I do not want to generalize by arguing that every single inhabitant of the suburb is involved in social movements or having a critical ‘reading’ of the structural racism. Instead, following Hill Collins’ argument, not because someone is in a particular position of oppression that *per se* drives the person to take political action. However, I argue that within this context of socio-spatial segregation, my informants live in their own flesh oppressions and it is from that embodied experience that they forge coalitions. Not everyone does, but I decided to work with the material of the informants that proposes this specific type of coalition. In this way, from an anti-essentialist perspective, I ‘read’ *la förort* as a contextual and changing identity that is

produced by the logics of exclusion, which is also, incidentally, re-appropriated by the people who are excluded from belonging to civic society.



## CONCLUSION

*“It took me some time to realize what was staying behind that seemingly harmless question “where are you from?”. Maybe I did not question it at first because acknowledging the racialization is painful. It tears you from the depths. Embody the otherness for being a woman, for being of color, for being from the south suffocates...”*<sup>355</sup>

Decolonial feminist scholars call for a commitment to depatriarchalize academic practices as well as to decolonize them. This call resonated with me in three key ways: myself inside the research, the dynamic of power between me and my informants, and the construction of the text. All of those aspects are interconnected and mutually constructed, and it resulted in a politically-conscious methodology of embodied research. As a “theory in the flesh,” I am living and embodying the everyday racism that my women migrant informants narrated. Like the informants, my body has been ‘read’ as *la latina*, which has shaped my interaction with various spaces that I have inhabited as a migrant woman. In this way, it became very relevant to position myself, clearly exposing my methodological and political decisions in the conception and fulfillment of the research. In the text, I articulate what it meant to embody similar spaces based in my own personal experiences that challenge academic research to theorize and politicize them discursively. *Mi lugar como investigadora es el lugar de la mestiza. Soy una mujer mestiza tanto literal como simbólicamente.* Thus, both my writing and my positionality as researcher come from the place of *la mestiza*. From this place, I extend my hand to the authors I see pertinent to my theoretical construction. Being a *mestiza* who is writing this work in Europe is not a feature of my work; it is the basis for my epistemological inquiry.

Thus, within my feminist framework, I envision a radical critique of capitalism, colonialism and racism. For that reason, my theoretical and methodological framework was informed by the rich

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<sup>355</sup> From my diary entry. Berlin January 2013. “Tardé algún tiempo en darme cuenta de que se alojaba detrás de esa pregunta aparentemente tan inofensiva. Tal vez no me lo cuestioné en un inicio porque reconocer la racializada duele. Te desgarras desde lo más profundo. Encarnar la otredad por ser mujer, por ser de color, por ser del sur asfixia.”

feminist debates of Black Feminism, the U.S. women-of-color feminism, Chicana feminism and decolonial feminism. In taking up the proposal of the interlocked/imbrication of oppressions such as race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, age, religion, my thesis has produced an intersectional and layered approach to exploring women's life narratives. My conclusions throughout indicate that intersectionality is not simply different layers of oppression, but rather it *must* be understood as the product of specific and relational effects. Oppressions do not act in singularity; they are intermeshed and inseparable. From the informants' own critical understanding of the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and class, they had epistemic conditions from which to develop a deep and critical analysis of the oppression.<sup>356</sup> And in their analysis, they challenged me to unravel my own imbrication of oppressions and privileges.

My research demonstrated how my informants' identities were to a certain extent imposed on them as gendered *and* racialized subjects through a particular imaginary of women migrants from Latin America. However, at the same time, my informants forged their identities as hybrid to revalue their existence, search self-determination, and create coalitions with other racialized people of color. As I argue, three categories emerged through which I explored their hybridized identities: *la latina*, *la mestiza* and *la förort*. *La mestiza* was not a literal representation that my informants used, but in their narratives they discussed inhabiting liminal spaces through the metaphor of being 'in-between'. In this way, I found in *la mestiza* – using Anzaldúa's and Lugones' frameworks – the possibility to picture the individual transgression in the face of exclusion. Instead, by incorporating *la förort* as a coalitional identity, I was persuaded to make visible the categories, theories and concepts that are articulated within subalternized positions. I considered this a decolonial practice of legitimizing collective knowledge outside the Western paradigms.<sup>357</sup> These women created their

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<sup>356</sup> Davis, Ángela 2004 (1981) *Mujeres, raza y clase* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal); Hill Collins, Patricia 2012 "Rasgos distintivos del pensamiento feminista negro" en Jabardo, Mercedes (Ed.) *Feminismos negros. Una antología* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños); Dent, Gina, 2010 "Dilemas conceptuales en el Black Feminism" (conferencia) en "Black Feminism: Teoría crítica, violencias y racismo" (seminario), Escuela de Estudios de Género, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 17 de septiembre.

<sup>357</sup> Curiel, "Construyendo Metodologías Feministas Desde El Feminismo Decolonial."

own *mestiza* identity and they ‘knead’ their neighborhood coalition with other racialized women of color.

Part of what I wanted to contribute to the field of feminist research was a methodology that is based in evaluating informants as knowledge producers on their own terms, and to interrogate the academic practices of gathering, transcribing, translating and interpreting the testimonies of women. As an academic, migrant, women of color, I struggle between the colonality of power and knowledge and my willingness to decolonize those logics. Because even if I have been continually mindful of whose ‘voice’ is expressed through the text, my authorial power ultimately dominated the thesis. One of the issues that I struggled with – and continue to struggle with – is that an embodied and reflexive methodology, even a feminist one, will not entirely resist the imposition of colonality of the process. The thesis problematizes the invocation of subjectivities in our research and calls for return to standpoint debates around the ethics of studying struggles that are not embodied. Additionally, this opens us up to rethink modes of affective writing within academic research, and to answer the question so central to feminist research: how can we shift the position of our informants from being objects to agents of inquiry? I propose disrupting academic modes of writing in order to help us think about the destiny of the text in terms of expectation and dissemination.

## APPENDICES

### Informed Consent Form

**Information and Purpose:** The interview for which you are being asked to participate in, is a part of a research study that is focused on examining the everyday strategies that Latin American migrant women engage in an attempt to resist racism in the Swedish context. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of Latin American migrant women's reality and how they are able to articulate anti-racist strategies.

**Your Participation:** Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. You will be asked a series of questions about your life in Sweden. You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

**Benefits and Risks:** The benefit of your participation is to contribute information about the life situation of Latin American migrants in Sweden. There are no risks associated with participating in the study.

**Confidentiality:** The interview will be tape recorded; however, your name will not be recorded on the tape if you do not want it to. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research if you want to remain anonymous. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher Kruskaya Hidalgo Cordero by email at: [hidalgo\\_kruskaya@student.ceu.edu](mailto:hidalgo_kruskaya@student.ceu.edu) or her supervisor Nadia Jones-Gailania by email at: [jonesn@ceu.edu](mailto:jonesn@ceu.edu)

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview questions

Topics/themes as guides: (i) their relationship with their homeland; (ii) their perception of their identity; (iii) their personal experiences of racism in everyday life; (iv) perceptions of Latin American women; and (v) their responses to racist situations.

### Introductory questions/ Building Rapport

1. How are you? How are you doing today? Or/and talking about the weather
2. "Tell me about yourself" or "Tell me about your life"

### – ALL TENTATIVE QUESTIONS –

#### (i) Their relationship with their homeland

3. Can you tell me a little bit about the place that you were born?
4. Can you tell me the reason why you left your country?
5. Did you try to go back? When? Why? Why not?
6. Do you want to go back?

#### (ii) their perception of their identity

7. How do you describe/perceive yourself in term of your identity?
8. What defines your identity in terms of (un)belonging? (Origin? Culture?)

#### (iii) their personal experiences of racism in everyday life

9. During these years living outside my country I always feel different from the rest, I always feel foreign, like I'm not part of that new place. Have you ever had that feeling?
10. Do you feel part of this country? (if not) What makes you not feel totally part of this place?
11. (Talk about a personal experience of racism) Has something like that ever happened to you? How often? Still happening? Where? When? (ask for more details)

#### (iv) perceptions of Latin American women

12. Have you ever felt discriminated against for being from Latin America? (woman from LA)
13. Do you think there are stereotypes/imageries about "the Latina American woman"? (Who? When? Where? Why? How often? Any particular setting?)

#### (v) their responses to racist situations.

14. How did you react when this happens? Can you explain me how you felt? How did you feel after your response?
15. Do you think that over time you have changed your reactions? responses?

## GLOSSARY

Frontera	Borderland
Mestiza	Hybrid
Mestizaje	Hybridity
Förort	Suburb
Mujer	Woman

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