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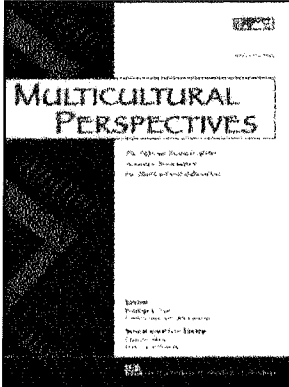
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Akeelah and the Bee: Inspirational Story of African-American Intellect and Triumph or Racist Rhetoric Served Up On Another Platter?

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The term “post-racism” has increasingly emerged in the media and national discourse. Many point to Barack Obama’s election as the 44th President of the United States as proof that this country has moved beyond the ugly legacy of racism (Wise, 2009). With this historic milestone of electing the nation’s first African-American president, the “post-racism” rhetoric encapsulates two major accomplishments at the hands of African-Americans in particular, and U.S. Americans in general: (1) African-Americans can indeed achieve anything they put their minds to—a testament of sorts to African-Americans’ intellect, hard-work ethic, leadership abilities, etc., and (2) The ability of U.S. Americans to look past color and judge on merit alone.

Despite this optimistic appraisal on the state of racism in the United States, we argue that racism is alive and well and often lurks in unsuspecting places. In this article we look into the inspirational movie, *Akeelah and the Bee*, a movie that highlights some of the same themes that emerge from Obama’s election to presidency: The story of an African-American who goes against all odds to achieve success in grand proportions. Described as an “inspirational family film” and a “successful feel-good movie” (Turan, 2006), *Akeelah and the Bee* proved inspirational to many viewers, as it highlights Akeelah’s intellect, tenacity, and determination to ultimately win the Scripps National Spelling Bee. While this movie seems innocent enough, we perform a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Huckin, 1995) of this movie to expose what we perceive as numerous racial overtones, undertones, and more particularly, several racist discourses that underpin and permeate the entire storyline to construct African-

Americans in terms of deficiencies, abnormalities, and disfunctionalities.

CDA

We use Huckin’s (1995) articulation of CDA as a framework to identify and analyze the dominant racist discourses that are often embedded in text, dialogue, images, and video graphics. CDA is an ethical approach to analyzing texts with the goal of uncovering power imbalances that are embedded within texts and images that work to (re)produce racial constructs, and in extension, the status quo. Pimentel and Velázquez (2009), in their CDA of the animated film *Shrek 2*, describe CDA as the analysis of “written and spoken texts to reveal discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific socioeconomic, political, and historical contexts” (p. 8). Important here is that racist discourses are dialogically constructed and consumed in real-world contexts. That is to say, the racist discourses in the movie *Akeelah and the Bee* do not appear in isolation to an otherwise non-racist society, but rather are a reflection of the historical and ongoing racialization of African-Americans. These racist discourses as they appear in *Akeelah and the Bee*, as well as other venues, are repeatedly consumed and eventually serve to solidify the disillusionment of African-American inferiority. In all, we have identified four racist discourses in the motion picture, *Akeelah and the Bee*: (1) African-Americans represent an academic and social underclass that needs to be rescued; (2) African-American communities are wrought with violence and crime; (3) African-Americans rarely achieve success unless through sports; and (4) Successful African-Americans must flee their communities—a notion that is underpinned metaphorically through the concept of flight.

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African-Americans Represent an Academic and Social Underclass that Needs to be Rescued

There are several underlying racist discourses that construct African-Americans as an academic and social underclass who are in need of being rescued: (a) African-Americans are impoverished; they are destructive and degrade their communities, (b) African-Americans are unintelligent, or (c) African-Americans do not possess skills to succeed on their own and look to others for provisions.

Our analysis of these racist discourses begins with the title of the movie, wherein Akeelah is framed right from the beginning as an academic underdog. The title, *Akeelah and the Bee*, makes it clear that Akeelah (an African-American youth) and the Bee (an arena for academic intellect and competition) are not one in the same or even complementary. Rather, this title insinuates that Akeelah is pitted against the bee, much like two fighters in a boxing championship (e.g., De La Hoya vs. Camacho). In the movie, *Akeelah and the Bee*, however, Akeelah is not up against an equal match, such as the case when two boxers fight within their own weight division. Rather, Akeelah is framed as the underdog—someone who is clearly disadvantaged and must continually fight and almost miraculously overcome all odds to win. Indeed, the producer and director of the film, Doug Atchinson (2006) in his commentary of the film, discusses how he wanted to create a film that reminded viewers of “Rocky” where we get to cheer for the academic and social underdog as she goes through several stages of training to ultimately win the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

The racist discourse that African-Americans represent an academic and social underclass continues to manifest in the opening scenes of the movie, which focus in on the streets of Crenshaw. Within these initial scenes, viewers see graffiti-covered walls, chain-linked fences topped with barbed wire, bars on windows, shopping carts filled with aluminum cans, street vendors, trash, including beer cans and bags of garbage on the ground, and an African-American man drinking a beer out of a brown bag while asking Akeelah and her friend for spare change. These initial scenes provide a window into which viewers, many of whom are not African-American, can see the lives of African-Americans unfold—lives that are marked by homelessness, poverty, criminality, unemployment, and remnants of gang activity.

Within the very first scene, we are introduced to Akeelah, and in keeping with the theme that African-Americans from this community represent an academic and social underclass, Akeelah’s character would only make sense if she was introduced as an anomaly to

her community. Indeed, Akeelah is introduced with her voiceover in which she says, “Ya know that feeling of no matter what you do or where you go, ya just don’t fit in?” She continues walking while brainstorming words to capture her seeming misplacement in her community: alienation, estrangement, incompatibility. . .

In the very next scene, the focus shifts to a Crenshaw Middle School classroom. In step with the racial assumption that African-Americans are unintelligent and lacking academic skills, we see students sleeping at their desks while an African-American teacher distributes scored spelling exams. Inked boldly in red, the scores begin with the first paper being 71 percent and the scores digress from there. The only exception is Akeelah’s paper. Almost with disdain, the teacher queries Akeelah about her study habits and returns her exam. As if she is ashamed, Akeelah furtively views her paper that is marked 100 percent. Again, this scene depicts Akeelah as an anomaly—a sort of intelligent outlier who must be saved from a failing community.

Further into the movie, Akeelah is accosted by two African-American girls who ridicule her for her intelligence. Calling her a “brainiac,” the girls ultimately demand she resign to completing their homework. As if the depiction of the girls being incapable of learning isn’t enough, a white principal, Mr. Welch, rounds the corner with an affluent African-American UCLA professor, Doctor Larabee. Inevitably, the two save Akeelah from her classmates.

This theme of Akeelah, as well as other African-Americans in her community, needing to be rescued permeates the film. The bee itself serves as a means to rescue Crenshaw Middle School from its undesirable status as an under-resourced, low-performing school. While Dr. Larabee serves as Akeelah’s coach, he metaphorically represents her savior from the black ghetto. He underscores the need for Akeelah to assimilate to white cultural values through his emphasis for her to learn the European (e.g., Greek and Latin) roots of the spelling words. He never once questions the absence of spelling bee words that have African or other non-European roots. Moreover, he defines her use of African-American English Vernacular (AAEV) as a deficient form of the English language, and is found repeatedly telling Akeelah to leave the ghetto talk at home. In the process, he discredits the socio-cultural and linguistic research that defines AAEV as a legitimate and complex language code that should not be viewed as inferior (Smitherman, 2006). In essence, from the perspective of Dr. Larabee’s character, legitimate forms of intelligence can only be achieved through a Eurocentric perspective, thus advancing the message that Akeelah must be rescued from her African-American ways of knowing, in order to be considered intellectual.

African-American Communities are Wrought with Violence and Crime

Yet another racial discourse that essentializes African-Americans in this movie is one that portrays African-Americans as naturally violent and their communities as hotbeds for crime. This racial connotation is based on beliefs that: (a) African-Americans lack intelligence and therefore resort to violence in order to secure that which others obtain through hard work, (b) African-Americans are a threat to civil society and are best contained in institutional environments, or (c) African-Americans are lazy and resort to illicit gains for success.

Again, the second scene of the movie is the most telling representation of this racial discourse. The scene shows Akeelah's two classmates resorting to violence when they physically assault her for trying to avoid completing their work. The scene underscores that African-Americans lack intelligence and drive to excel academically, and to compensate for their inadequacies, they resort to force.

Perhaps the most ominous scene that serves as an indicator for young, African-Americans' futures is the one in which students in Crenshaw Middle School are climbing a stairwell to their classes. Ironically, chain fencing is draped around every opening. It leaves one to wonder whether the students are being protected from their community, or whether the students are simply being contained. Notwithstanding, the sound effects of police sirens and an occasional search helicopter throughout the movie serves as a stark reminder to the audience that African-American communities are inherently plagued with violence and criminality.

The notion that African-Americans are lazy and resort to illicit gains for success is exemplified in the character of Akeelah's brother, Terrence. During one scene when Akeelah and her older brother, Devon, are eating dinner, they discuss the other brother's activities and express their dismay that he is "hanging out" with "T", a neighborhood gangster. In the following scene, the brother in question enters Akeelah's bedroom wearing a red jacket and matching ball cap, with the bill slung to one side. The attire is indicative of that worn by "Blood" gang members. Still, in a later scene, police officers return Terrence to his home and release him to his mother. Akeelah's mother lectures her wayward brother about his criminal affiliates, and goes on to demand that he remove an expensive, gold watch from his wrist. Through an omission of any explicit language about Terrence's activities or why the cops have returned him to his home, audience members are encouraged to assume Terrence's guilt and assume he stole the watch. These scenes, and several others throughout the movie, leave the viewer with the impression that Terrence is involved in gang and drug activities—yet another example of the racist belief

that African-American males are lazy and resort to illicit activities to obtain monetary gain and success.

African-Americans Rarely Achieve Success Unless Through Sports

The common racial connotation that African-Americans are incapable of achieving success except through sports is possibly one of the most prevalent racial discourses in contemporary America. Albeit African-Americans comprise a large percentage of professional athletes on sports teams, the reasoning behind how or why extraordinary athletic ability resides within a large segment of the respective group is sorely misinterpreted. The common misconception can be linked to several racial connotations including: (a) African-Americans do not possess academic skills to succeed; (b) African-Americans' priorities are misaligned and thus the community discourages academic excellence; or (c) unlike other races, African-Americans are anatomically geared toward athletic and rhythmical superiority.

A clear example of the common misperception that African-Americans lack academic skills to achieve success and thus rely on sports to succeed is depicted in a segment of the film during which Akeelah and other students compete in a spelling bee at Crenshaw Middle School. Although Akeelah ultimately wins the competition, an African-American boy steps up to compete. Before receiving his spelling word, Chucky Johnson, an 8th grader, inquires about school basketball nets, a subtle insinuation that in his world, sports take precedence over academics. Consequently, the moderator dismisses Chucky's comment about the sporting issue and redirects his attention to the academic task at hand. The word she delivers for Chucky to spell is "grovel", one that inexplicably conjures the perception of a lowly, beggarly, unintelligent individual. Chucky mistakenly relates the word "grovel" with "gravel", fails to correctly spell the word, and responds with, "who cares?". Inexplicably, Chucky's demeanor elevates Akeelah to an uncommon status and thrusts the storyline forward.

Another example of how the film insinuates that African-Americans succeed only through sports can be seen shortly into the film during a segment in which Akeelah's mother berates her for missing physical education classes, as opposed to commending and encouraging her for pursuing excellence in spelling. Further evidence of this discourse resides in the assumption that the sports network "ESPN" is the preferred network in African-American homes. In a scene toward the beginning of the movie, Akeelah discovers the Scripts National Spelling Bee while tuning into ESPN. She watches curiously as if the occurrence of a spelling bee is an anomaly—an

event contrary to what is commonly aired on the sports channel.

In a following segment during a meeting between Mr. Welch and Akeelah in the principal's office, Mr. Welch encourages Akeelah to compete in spelling bees. Mr. Welch states that Akeelah rarely misses spelling words, and then proceeds to ask her if she has ever heard of the national spelling bee. She admits having seen the Scripts National Spelling Bee on television the week before. Mr. Welch says, "Yes, they show it on ESPN every year." Unlike other groups of young adolescents who possess interests in a vast spectrum of activities and entertainment, the movie indisputably narrows the African-American adolescent's scope of interest to sports.

The movie further emphasizes the racial discourse that African-Americans can only achieve success through sports by linking the very essence of Akeelah's phenomenal ability to spell to her rhythmic abilities. Not simply in one or two, but in several scenes throughout the storyline, Akeelah is shown tapping her fingers against her leg to count syllables while spelling challenging, multi-syllabic words. In fact, close-up shots in several frames focus on Akeelah's hand tapping against her leg. In one specific scene during a study session in Dr. Larabee's backyard, Akeelah taps rhythmically against her leg as she spells a word. Dr. Larabee asks, "Now what is that you are doing with your hand?" He informs Akeelah that her rhythmic tapping is her mnemonic device—her trick for counting syllables in words. In response, Dr. Larabee encourages Akeelah's rhythmic abilities by presenting her with his deceased daughter's jump rope. In yet another scene, while on stage attempting to spell a difficult word, Akeelah actually pretends to jump rope and successfully spells the word, thus progressing to a higher level of competition. Notably, none of the other competitors resort to such obvious techniques to spell words. This simply leaves one to conclude that the glaring difference between Akeelah and the other children competing in the spelling bees is her reliance on athletic and rhythmic abilities to succeed in an academic forum.

Successful African-Americans Must Flee Their Communities

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the flawed perception that African-Americans can only achieve success by escaping the confines of their African-American communities. This racial connotation can be linked to (a) African-Americans who are successful leave their impoverished neighborhoods, (b) African-Americans who possess skills to succeed must rely on others for help in escaping their ill-fated communities, and (c) African-American communities obstruct promising African-Americans from achieving success.

The most telling scene in support of the racial assumption that successful African-Americans leave their neighborhoods is during a conversation between Akeelah and Mr. Welch at Crenshaw Middle School. Mr. Welch tries to convince Akeelah to contact Dr. Larabee for coaching and tells her that the professor lives close to the school. Akeelah's baffled response is "He lives in this neighborhood?" Her response leads the audience to believe that it is uncommon for successful African-Americans to reside within the boundaries of African-American neighborhoods, such as Crenshaw.

Even though the movie depicts Akeelah as one who possesses exemplary intelligence and the ability to succeed, it nonetheless leads the audience to believe that her only hope to escape an inevitable fate is with the help from her white principal and his associate, Dr. Larabee. Other than the first Crenshaw bee, Akeelah must travel to consecutive competitions located in affluent areas, such as Beverly Hills and Woodland Hills. Mr. Welch accompanies Akeelah to the various competitions and eventually, Dr. Larabee decides to coach her to victory. However, the fact that Akeelah resorts to covert trips to study with her newly acquired friends in more affluent communities leads viewers to assume that it is a rarity for one to find success from within the African-American community. The framing of academic intellect as a rarity in Akeelah's community is capstoned toward the end of the movie when Akeelah's success at the spelling bees brings her whole community (e.g., gang members, mailman, teacher, an Asian shop merchant, her peers at Crenshaw Middle School, and the drunk man who was introduced at the beginning of the movie) to join forces and help prepare Akeelah for the national bee. This message trivializes the severity of division that can sometimes plague communities (not just African-American communities) along racial, economic, and gang lines. This framing of Akeelah's success at spelling bees is framed as so astounding and out of the ordinary that it would bring an entire community to join forces in order to prepare and encourage her.

The idea that one cannot be successful in their African-American community is exacerbated by the message that African-American family or community members will only serve as an obstacle to their success. On separate occasions during the movie, Akeelah's mother is depicted as an obstructionist to Akeelah's success. In a scene near the beginning of the movie, Akeelah's mother refuses to allow her daughter to participate in any further spelling bees because of Akeelah's tendencies to skip physical education. Later in the movie, Akeelah's mother arrives unexpectedly and pulls her from the stage during a regional bee. Had Mr. Welch and Dr. Larabee not overtly and covertly "saved" Akeelah from her mother's obstruction, Akeelah was sure to fail. Yet again, the movie succeeded in depicting Akeelah's mother as an

African-American obstructionist who threatened her daughter's success.

Metaphor of Flight

The movie further accentuates the notion of fleeing through a metaphor of flight that emerges throughout the movie. By embedding the notion of flight strategically within the script, this movie advances the subliminal message that African-Americans flee their communities in order to find success in a world far from the oppressive clutches of their own. Although there are numerous scenes that insinuate the notion of flight, the following three are most notable.

The first scene occurs during an initial segment of the film, in which the author depicts Akeelah's older brother, Devon, as an air force cadet. This characterization distinctly bundles Devon's career choice and chances of success directly with the notion that only through flight will he escape the African-American community. Perhaps Devon's position as an airman—a position that takes him far away from his family and community—offers the clearest evidence of the author's metaphoric use of flight to emphasize how African-Americans leave their communities in order to achieve success.

In a subsequent scene, Akeelah's best friend, Georgia, insists that her career choice is that of a flight attendant. While walking down a dismal street in Crenshaw and as the girls talk, Georgia expresses her insatiable desire to be a flight attendant. Georgia also references Devon as a future pilot and insists she will be his flight attendant some day. Lastly, and most significantly, the producer folds the fate of all of the film's main characters into a final segment, in which Dr. Larabee distributes airline tickets to Akeelah's family and her friend to Washington, D.C. In the segment and during the conclusion of the film, Akeelah finds success by winning the Scripts National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., a place far from Crenshaw District and far from the crippling clutches of her African-American community. Whether intentional or not, the producer's metaphorical use of flight in this instance clearly emphasizes the racial misconception that African-Americans who demonstrate the promise to be successful must rely on others for help in escaping their ill-fated communities.

Conclusion

The impact of racist discourses that emerge in films like *Akeelah and the Bee* are not trivial or isolated events. In 2009 alone, several feature films emerged from the Hollywood scene that centered on the theme of African-Americans needing to rise up or be rescued from their impoverished, abusive, and/or dysfunctional families and

communities: *Precious*, *The Blind Side*, and *The Princess and the Frog*. Repeated exposure to racist discourses that construct African-Americans in terms of deficiencies and in need of being saved or escaping their communities shape what our larger society and educational institutions imagine as appropriate educational services and resources for African-Americans, and furthermore, appropriate representations of African-Americans in academic settings.

We only need to look at the recent racial events at the University of California, San Diego to get an idea of how racist discourses shape the imaginations of the largely white student body, a segment from which threw a ghetto-themed block party, known as the "Compton Cookout". In their fashioning of how they could celebrate Black History Month and embody the African-American Compton community image into the theme of their celebration—they did not center on African-American intellect, beauty, or achievements—but rather, they perpetuated dominant, racist discourses by encouraging their attendees to dress and act "ghetto". The Facebook invitation to the party, which mirrors the racist discourses that are manifested in media, asks attendees to speak ignorantly, come strapped, start fights, drink 40s, and so on (KTLA-TV, Los Angeles, 2010).

As evidenced in the Compton Cookout, as well as other manifestations of race across the country, it becomes clear that the dialogic nature of racist discourses in our society continue to spiral. Our hope in this analysis is to shed light on how seemingly innocent and inspirational films play a much larger role in our society than sheer entertainment. Through CDA, we want to make it clear that *Akeelah and the Bee*, as well as most of the media we are exposed to, reinforces racist constructs, and thus the continuation of a racialized society.

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The Profits of Language Brokering

Charise Pimentel and Tessara Sevin chart the many ways children benefit from facilitating communication on behalf of others

Maya Macias, a twelve-year-old immigrant student from Jalisco, Mexico, accompanies her mother to a haircut appointment. At first glance, it appears Maya serves as her mother's translator, repeating the hair stylist's English statements to her mother in Spanish and her mother's Spanish statements in English. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that Maya is not merely translating. She is language brokering. Language brokering is defined as a practice in which children "...facilitate communication between two linguistically and/or culturally different parties. Unlike formal interpreters and translators, brokers mediate, rather than merely transmit, information" (Tse, 1996, p. 485). In her capacity as a language broker, Maya both employs metalinguistic skills in which she strategically reconstructs messages between the two culturally and linguistically different parties (her mother and the hair stylist), and mediates in the decision making process so that her mother is ultimately satisfied with her hair style as well as the price of the service.

While Maya is content that she can help her mother, it turns out that Maya's, everyday language brokering practices do more than facilitate her mother's communication processes. As indicated in the title of Dorner, Orellana, & Li-Grining's (2007) research study — "I Helped My Mom, & It Helped Me," — research is increasingly pointing to the ways in which language brokering fosters the development of many social and cognitive skills — skills that are linked to language brokers' academic achievement.

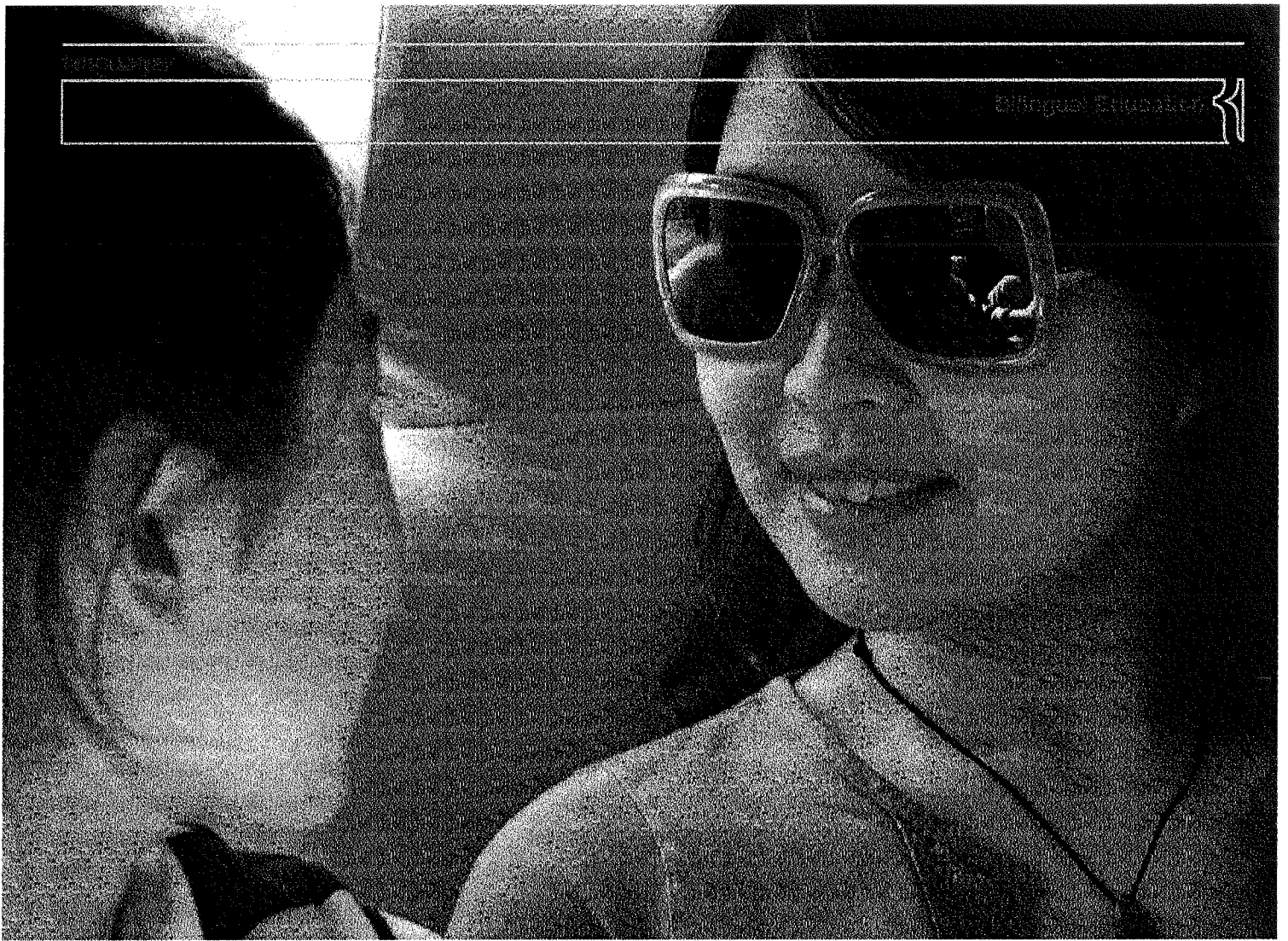
Language Brokering

Research demonstrates that about 90 percent of children from language minority families serve as language brokers (Dorner, Orellana, & Li-Grining, 2007; Dorner & Pulido, 2003; Tse, 1995; 1996). These children attend school and begin to learn English; then come home and language broker for their parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends. Children from immigrant families start language brokering within one to five years of their arrival in the U.S., and children usually begin brokering

between the ages of 8 and 12 years old (Morales & Hanson, 2005; Tse, 1995; 1996). The contexts in which children language broker are varied, including in their homes, on the streets, in stores, post offices, banks, schools, doctors' offices, government agencies, among many others. In these varied contexts, children facilitate understanding in spoken conversations, as well as in written documents, including labels, instructions, tax forms, report cards, bills, bank statements, immigration forms, and various other notes and letters from schools, businesses, and government agencies.

Language Brokers and Academic Achievement

Research on language brokering, especially over the last decade, shows that language brokers often outperform their non-brokering peers on a number of indicators of academic achievement. Not only are their social interactions with teachers and students more sophisticated, but language brokers often outperform their non-brokering English Language Learner (ELL) peers in Grade Point Average (GPA) and standardized test scores. In studies that compare GPAs, students who serve as language brokers report higher GPAs than their non-brokering language minority peers (Tse, 1995; Acoach & Webb, 2004). Orellana (2003) found that the sixth graders in her study performed significantly better on standardized reading and math achievement tests than their non-brokering peers, even when controlling for early school achievement. In a similar line of research, Dorner, Orellana, and Li-Grining (2007) found that language brokering was significantly correlated to fifth- and sixth-graders' standardized reading test scores. While more research needs to be conducted in this area, the little research that has been conducted indicates that language brokering builds skills that are needed for academic success. The following sections, including cognitive and metalinguistic abilities, bilingual/biculturalism, and parent-child relationships, highlight the benefits of language brokering and how these benefits contribute to language brokers' school success.



Cognitive and Metalinguistic Abilities

Language brokers often interact in adult contexts, which require the use of advanced vocabulary and cognitive abilities (Acoach & Webb, 2004). And because language brokers do not simply repeat back word-for-word statements in another language, they must develop a number of metalinguistic skills to reformulate the messages in a meaningful way. Some of the cognitive and metalinguistic abilities language brokers use include their acute attention and comprehension of non-verbal behaviors, such as body posture and facial expressions, contextual cues, and culturally appropriate meanings. They must also synthesize, label, describe, ask for clarification, and gauge whether they have accurately understood and conveyed meanings correctly. The knowledge language brokers gain from the practice of interpreting contextual cues is evident in Buriel et al.'s (1998) study, which found that language brokers who brokered in a wide variety of settings developed more sophisticated language competencies than children who only brokered in one setting.

Many language brokers also gain a number of practical reading and math skills from their everyday brokering practices. Those language brokers who read and interpret written documents utilize a number of reading strategies that are useful in the school context, including breaking words into component parts, using their knowledge of cognates, skimming and rereading for specific information, and knowing when to ask for help (Orellana & Reynolds, 2007). Language brokers also gain real-world math skills, such as measurement, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and various problem solving skills that come from their everyday

experiences of making purchases, balancing check books, etc. All of these cognitive skills are academic in nature and thus provide advantages to language brokers in the schooling context.

Bilingual/Bicultural Development

Once a child immigrates to the U.S. and attends school, they often begin an acculturation process, wherein they infuse the English language and mainstream American culture into their native linguistic and cultural practices, thereby developing bilingual/bicultural identities. For language brokers, the acculturation process is likely accelerated because they are often exposed to situations in which they are required to utilize their knowledge in both native and host cultures and languages (Acoach & Webb, 2004). Indeed, research studies demonstrate a correlation between biculturalism and language brokering (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel et al., 1998; Tse, 1996). In Tse's (1996) study, over half of the students in the study reported that language brokering facilitated the development of their L1 and L2. Furthermore, one third of the students reported that language brokering helped them learn more about their native and host cultures. Language brokers' dexterity in two languages and cultures, as well as their accelerated linguistic skills in both languages, are skills that contribute to language brokers' school success. Buriel et al. (1998) also argue that because bicultural adolescents are better adapted to their dual cultural environment, they are less likely to be affected by the detrimental effects of acculturation, including psychosocial and behavioral disorders — disorders that often detract from students' academic performance.

Bilingual Education

Parent-Child Relationship

Immigrant families often find themselves struggling in the acculturation process and in finding the resources they need for survival. Language brokering often provides the children of these families with an instrumental role in the family. Language brokers facilitate their parents' acculturation process, as well as advocate for their parents in their interactions with a variety of mainstream agents. In these capacities, children often take on adult-like responsibilities and make decisions that affect their entire family (Love & Buriel, 2007). As Buriel, Love, & De Ment (2006) argue, "traditional parent-child authority relationships within families are altered as children assume responsibility for cross-cultural transactions" (p. 249). As a language broker, a child begins to take on adult-like responsibilities and parents must often entrust that their language brokering children will have their best interests in mind. The resulting parent-child relationship is one that requires mutual respect and trust, which leads to a stronger bond between parents and their language brokering child(ren) (Buriel, Love, & De Ment, 2006; Chao, 2006).

The role language brokering plays in maintaining native language fluency further enhances the bond between the language broker and her/his parents. Through the process of language brokering, adolescents are often exposed to their parents' culture and values on a deeper level than they would be otherwise (Love & Buriel, 2007). This effect ensures that the child and parent can continue to identify with similar cultural practices and communicate in a common language. Also, because language brokers are exposed to the everyday struggles their parents experience, they report feeling more empathy for their parents (De Ment, Buriel, & Villanueva, 2005), and come to appreciate the sacrifices their parents have made in coming to this country. Language brokering is one way children and adolescents can show appreciation to their parents. Love and Buriel (2007) found that the satisfaction that comes from language brokering is correlated to a stronger parent-child bond (Love & Buriel, 2007). With a stronger bond to their parents, language brokers may feel more obliged to do well in school. Academic achievement may serve as another way language brokers can show appreciation for their parents' sacrifices, as well as a way to maintain a relationship built on trust and respect with their parents.

Implications for Schools and Teachers

In the face of an ongoing achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers, schools are in great need of teaching practices that promote ELL's academic achievement. Research in fields such as *Funds of Knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), suggest that educators look into students' home and community practices so that schools can build upon the knowledge students are already developing in these contexts. This approach reconstructs deficit approaches to teaching by acknowledging that what students learn at home is valuable and academic in nature. Language brokering is one such knowledge set that is developed in home and local community contexts that can be further nurtured in the school context.

As a way to facilitate language brokering in the school context, educators must consider the benefits of integration — that is — the integration of ELLs and native English speakers in the same learning environments. Traditionally, integration has meant ELLs joining native English speakers in their mainstream English-instructed classrooms (as is the case when ELLs exit transitional bilingual programs to join mainstream, English-instructed classrooms). This one-way integration model has prohibited ELLs from serving as language models and language brokers in their classrooms. As a way to encourage cross-cultural and cross-linguistic



language brokering, educators must consider integration that takes native English speakers into classrooms that are partly instructed in minority languages (e.g., bilingual education). In these settings, native English speakers can broker for ELLs and ELLs can broker for native English speakers. The encouragement and support for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic language brokering are already in place in most dual language bilingual programs. In these mixed language classroom settings, students take turns brokering for each other, as they try to comprehend a curriculum that is alternatively taught in both of their native languages. In schools where dual language programs are not possible, educators should consider other integrative efforts that provide students the opportunities to exercise their language brokering skills. These skills can be supported and developed in a single classroom where ELLs and native English speakers coexist, across classrooms in the same grade level in various learning activities, or across grade levels in mentoring projects, wherein older bilingual students language broker for younger ELLs.

When educators make connections between ELLs home and community practices and school practices, they not only validate home practices as knowledgeable and resourceful, they continue to build upon skills that foster school achievement. In sum, when home and school practices are aligned, students have a better chance of academic success. ■

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Language Gain, Language Loss: The Production of K'iche'tellano in Highland Guatemala

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Abstract

This ethnographic study examines the emerging language practices of a local Maya community in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, Guatemala. The authors utilize racial formation theory (Omi & Winant, 1994) to demonstrate how state apparatuses, such as language restriction laws and the constitution have contributed to the formation of racial categories such as Ladinos and Indians, racial constructs that did not occur prior to the Spanish colonialization. In addition to the structural effects on racial formation, the authors examine the cultural representations that emerge in the process of racial formation, namely Maya resiliency, a pan-Mayan identity, and evolving language practices that incorporate K'iche' and Spanish. Data in this article show that while members of this Maya community may fight to preserve K'iche' in the face of macro-level racial projects that aim to eliminate all Mayan languages, they simultaneously produce micro-level practices that sustain the ideological underpinnings that privilege the Spanish language. More specifically, we find that while participants' use of Spanish and K'iche' is highly contextualized, they also produce hybrid language practices that reflect the ongoing racial projects and linguistic transformations that Maya peoples undergo. We refer to the participants' mixed language code as "K'iche'tellano," a term that captures the competing, yet complementary interaction between the two languages: K'iche' and Castellano (Spanish from Spain). We conclude that the emerging language practices in highland Guatemala are neither assimilationist or counter-hegemonic, but both, representing the competing racial projects that operate in Guatemala.

Keywords: Guatemala, Language Practices, Race, K'iche', Spanish

Language Gain, Language Loss: The Production of K'iche'tellano in Highland Guatemala

Algo que me pasaba con mis nietos es que cuando yo les hablaba solamente en K'iche', ellos me decían "mamá, hable bien, nosotros así no la entendemos". Por eso las abuelas que están vivas ahora tienen la obligación de enseñarles bien el idioma a los nietos, si no muriéndose las abuelas, muere el idioma.

Something that used to happen when I was with my grandchildren was that whenever I would talk to them in K'iche', they would tell me, 'mama, speak correctly, because we do not understand you when you talk like that'. That is why grandmothers who are alive now have the duty to teach their language to their grandchildren. If not, when the grandmothers die, the language will die too.

- Aurelia Gutiérrez, grandmother and bilingual teacher

Aurelia Gutiérrez's concern about K'iche' language loss is a concern many Maya peoples in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, Guatemala have in common. At the same time many Mayas work to preserve K'iche', as well as other Mayan languages, they also recognize the need to learn Spanish, the very language that threatens the vitality of K'iche'. Mayas are well aware that fluency in the Spanish language serves as a means to gain access to upward economic mobility, a formal education, and an elevated social status. As a result of Mayas' complex and diverging language practices, they are becoming increasingly bilingual and bilcultural, producing new cultural and linguistic modalities that are informed by the social, economic, historical, and political dimensions of their emerging identities. To



better understand postcolonial language practices in a local, rural community in Guatemala, this article reports data from an ethnographic study that analyzed the following factors: Maya cultural agency in the preservation of K'iche', the acquisition of Spanish as a second language in formal educational settings, and the resulting hybrid linguistic and cultural practices that emerge in a local Guatemalan community.

In order to theorize Mayas' emerging postcolonial hybrid language practices in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, Guatemala, we must contextualize language and cultural practices in a larger socio-political framework (French, 1999; Gal, 1993; Irvine, 1989; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). In the following sections we provide an historical background of language practices in Guatemala and use racial formation theory in order to understand the emerging acts of cultural agency and language practices in the face of historical and ongoing oppression of Mayas at the hands of the racially dominant Ladinos.

Historical Context of Language Practices in Guatemala Spanish Colonialization

The threat to Mayan languages began with the Spanish colonialization of Guatemala in 1524 (Helmberger, 2006). During this time, the "Spanish Crown" aimed to castilianize Indians in order to convert them to Christianity. The efforts to castilianize Indians continued for several generations and became even more pronounced after Guatemala's independence from Spain in 1821 (French, 1999; Helmberger, 2006). After gaining their independence, the Guatemalan Ladino government aimed to establish Guatemala as a nation state, unified by one culture and one language (French, 1999; Helmberger, 2006; Richards & Richards, 1997). As part of this nationalist agenda, everything "Indian," including the many Mayan languages spoken in the country, were to be exterminated. Guatemala's first constitution, written in 1824, was heavily guided by this nationalist agenda, outlining the unification process and related demoralization of Mayan languages. The Decree of the Congressional Congress in 1824 mandated "the 'extinction' of the Indian languages due to the fact that they were so 'diverse, incomplete, and imperfect', and 'insufficient for enlightening the people or perfecting the civilization'" (Lewis, 1993).

In continual efforts to transform Guatemala into a collective nation, the Spanish language increasingly served as the tool to assimilate and oppress Mayas. In the 1940s the government created the *Instituto Indigenista Nacional (IIN)* to oversee Indian affairs. This government agency dictated that Mayas could be educated in their primary language, but only as a means to gain fluency in Spanish. The IIN's assimilationist project also included the development of a Roman character, Mayan language alphabet. In an effort to simplify the translation from Guatemala languages to Spanish, the IIN produced an alphabet that contained no diacritical marks, was geared toward the sounds and spelling patterns in Spanish, and was not inclusive of the Mayan dialects and languages that were not easily translatable to Spanish (Helmberger, 2006; Lewis, 1993; Richards, 1989, 1993; Richards & Richards, 1997). In years to come, the Spanish language continued to gain legitimacy and power through government policies. Indeed, with the rewriting of the Guatemalan constitution in 1985, Spanish was declared the official language of the country, mandating that Spanish be used as the sole language of instruction in schools (Helmberger, 2006).

Maya Resiliency

Despite the Guatemalan government's relentless attempts to do away with everything Indian, Maya peoples have demonstrated an incredible sense of resiliency by maintaining ethnic and cultural practices, producing a collective Mayan identity, and preserving many Mayan languages (French, 1999). Presently, there are more than 20 Mayan languages in use in Guatemala (Hawkins, 2005; Helmberger, 2006), with 60 percent of the country, inclusive of all indigenous peoples in Guatemala, speaking one or more of these languages (Arias, 2006).

The process of fighting for the preservation of a multicultural and multilingual Guatemala has involved the development of a pan-Mayan collective identity. (Helmberger, 2006). Ironically then, Mayas have had to band together to form a nation within a nation, often referred to as the Mayan Movement or Maya Nationalism, to produce a counter-hegemonic stance on the homogeneous ideologies of nation-

nalism (French, 1999). Some of the achievements that this pan-Mayan movement has accomplished include the creation of a governmentally-recognized unified alphabet for all Mayan languages, the establishment of the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*, *Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe*, the development of numerous dictionaries, pedagogical and descriptive grammars, neologisms, and literacy materials for bilingual education (French, 1999).

Perhaps one of Maya peoples' biggest achievements to date is the 1996 signing of the Peace Accords. Not only did the Peace accords put an end to a brutal 36 year civil war in Guatemala that wiped out somewhere between 450 and 600 Maya villages and consumed nearly a quarter of a million lives (Arias, 2006), but it proposed a commitment to human rights, including rights to dignity, identity, health, security, and bilingual education to all Mayas (Helmberger, 2006). Day to day practices in Guatemala today, however, are not as optimistic as the Peace Accords projected. Mayas are still discriminated against and Mayan languages continue to emanate inferiority to the Spanish language. Arias (2006), for example, explains that Ladino teachers and their union oppose bilingual education, which resulted in a two-month long strike that paralyzed public schools throughout the country in January and February of 2003. In order to theorize how Maya peoples continue to inhabit a marginal status in Guatemala, we now turn to a discussion on racial formation theory and the continued racialization of the Maya peoples.

Racial Formation Theory

Racial formation theory, developed by Omi and Winant (1994) is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55). Race, according to this theory, is not fixed, inherited, a biological essence, a product of material conditions, or solely an ideological construct (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2006). Rather, race is unstable and decentered, "...a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). "Racial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55-56). Racial formation theory offers a distinct perspective in that it incorporates social structure and cultural representation. From this perspective, we can examine how racial constructs emanate from structured inequalities as well as how cultural representations emanate through racial constructs.

The process of racial formation is carried out in both macro- and micro-level social practices (Omi & Winant, 1994). Macro-level social practices can include institutional and state policies and procedures, while micro-level social practices operate in peoples' day-to-day racial judgments and discursive practices. As summarized by Omi & Winant,

...the theory of racial formation suggests that society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected. This racial "subjection" is quintessentially ideological. Everybody learns some combination, some version, of the rules of racial classification, and of her own racial identity, often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation. Thus we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes "common sense"—a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world (p. 60).

Since race is an unstable and arbitrary social construct, Omi & Winant suggest that we can only understand racial formation in contextualized and historical analyses. Even though Omi & Winant base their theoretical framework on the historical and ongoing racial projects in the United States, it can easily be applied to other countries that are undergoing similar racial projects. As Omi and Winant explain, modern conceptions of race did not occur until the European arrival in the Americas. For Guatemala then, the emergence of race did not occur until the Spanish conquest. Prior to this event, there was no unified definition for a Ladino or Indian. Rather, there were Spaniards, Xincas, Garifun, Alaguilacs, Kaqchikel, etc. Even today, Guatemala is made up of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Amongst the Maya peoples of Guatemala, they speak more than 20 Mayan languages and represent 23 different ethnic groups (Arias, 2006). Despite this ethnic and linguistic diversity among Maya peoples, racial formation projects, such as the regulation of language use, reduces Mayas to one racial category: Indian. As part of the racialization process, all the cultural richness and diversity that Mayas represent become stripped away as a means to systematically devalue and erase everything "Indian".

One of the racial projects that function in Guatemala is the ideological loading of languages. That is, languages do not merely serve as a means of communication from one person to another, but have come to represent a currency that can be used to gain social status, employment, and material goods. In Guatemala, Spanish has taken on the ideologies of power, privilege, and opportunity, while indigenous languages have come to embody a sense of inferiority, including a lack of intellect and civilization. As stated previously, the ideological work that racial projects perform are contextually and historically based. Thus, it is important to point out that the ideological significance of the Spanish language, for example, is not likely to carry the same ideological significance in a different context with a different historical background. In the United States, for example, Spanish is a colonized language. Given the racial projects that have taken place and continue to unfold in the United States, including Western Expansion and various language restriction policies, including the denial of bilingual education in some states, Spanish has come to embody the same inferior status as indigenous languages in Guatemala.

In this paper, we use racial formation theory to analyze the language practices in a rural, highland Guatemalan community: Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. We show that while members of this community may fight to preserve K'iche' in the face of macro-level racial projects that aim to eliminate all Mayan languages, they simultaneously produce micro-level practices that sustain the ideological underpinnings that privilege the Spanish language.

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-method approach to collecting data, in which the primary researcher, Martha Bitar, collected both qualitative and quantitative data while living in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. Most of the qualitative data for this study was collected at the *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Daniel Armas* Elementary School. This research project primarily utilized ethnographic research tools (Spradley, 1980), including formal and informal interviews with teachers, parents, students, and community members, as well as participant observations in a 6th grade classroom and some of these students' after-school activities (e.g., cheerleading practice and soccer and basketball games). On average, the primary researcher spent 15 hours a week conducting participant-observations in a 6th grade classroom of 32 students for a period of 10 weeks.

In all, 44 participants from the community of Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán were interviewed. The 44 interviews were with: 11 teachers at Daniel Armas Elementary School, 2 teachers located at another elementary school, 1 teacher who had just graduated and was in search of employment, 1 secondary school principal, 8 women who did not complete their schooling (highest level of education ranged from elementary to secondary), 14 parents of students at Daniel Armas Elementary School, 3 workers at the municipality, and 4 store owners in the community. Of all of these interviewees, 40 were bilingual in K'iche' and Spanish, 3 were monolingual Spanish speakers (1 elementary teacher and 2 store owners), and 1 was bilingual in Spanish and Cachiqual (elementary school teacher). Thirty-six of the interviewees were asked directly about their language practices.

The other eight interviewees, which included the women who did not complete their education, participated in a focus-group interview as well as a one-on-one interview. In both interviews the women were asked questions about schooling experiences and family life (topics that did not relate to the research project) so that we could examine their language practices as they took place within the interview without them consciously thinking about the topic of language practices as they were being interviewed.

Quantitative data were collected from 32 sixth graders and nineteen teachers at Daniel Armas Elementary School. All of these participants filled out a questionnaire (adopted from Collins, 2005), which asked them to evaluate their use of the two languages.

Aside from the school, qualitative data were also collected through participant observations at the market, the streets, the municipality, and the office of the Coordinador Técnico Administrativo (CTA). Also, quantitative data were collected from 129 conversations that took place in various contexts. From these conversations, data sheets were filled out including information on ethnicity, sex, and age, as well as the place the conversation took place. The following sections represent some of the themes we identified from these various data sources.

Spanish is “Taught”; K’iche’ is “Learned”

The maintenance of K’iche’ has been a bottom-up process, in which community members go to great lengths to preserve native language use in homes and communities. With no institutional or state support, and often in hostile, military enforced contexts, Mayas have generated ground-level methods to preserve the K’iche’ language. As a result of the bottom-up language preservation process, as well as the language restriction policies governed by the nation, K’iche’ has become unofficially designated as a “home language,” a language that is acquired and nurtured in home and community contexts. In this capacity, K’iche’ has come to embody images of home, family, and culture.

While K’iche’ maintenance practices are strongly in place in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, community members are fully aware of the social and economic benefits that are associated with the Spanish language. In the labor market, those Guatemaltecos who are less competent in Spanish are at a disadvantage in an already competitive labor market. Due to the ideological power that is attached to the Spanish language, community members encourage youth to learn Spanish in addition to K’iche’. In an interview with the assistant of the CTA, he explained that many parents admit that the only reason why they send their children to school is so they can learn Spanish. During an interview with Pedro Lopez, the principal of the secondary school, he said that he and the other teachers try to use Spanish for very formal work reunions, or for those meetings that require the use of very “technical terms”. As a result of the macro-level racial projects that operate in Guatemala, Spanish has become ideologically linked to the official business conducted by the state, government, schools, merchants, as well as other business settings that are situated outside of home/community contexts.

The contrasting language practices and ideological loading of K’iche’ and Spanish have resulted in highly contextualized language acquisition and speaking practices of the two languages. In the data from this study, we found that K’iche’ in Nueva Santa Catarina, Ixahuacan is the Mayan mother tongue—a language that is learned in the home and in local community-based contexts. Spanish, on the other hand, is taught in “official” public contexts, such as schools. In other words, Spanish is “taught”, while K’iche’ is “learned”. (Wardhaugh, 1998). Amongst the forty K’iche’-speaking interviewees in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixahuacan, all of them said they learned K’iche’ at home and Spanish at school. The data sheets that participants filled out, as well as the observed conversations, show that K’iche’ is used for the majority of the conversations in the community. From the 129 observed conversations in community settings, 107 were in K’iche’ and 22 were in Spanish.

We also found that Spanish is used in conversations with Ladinos, and when it is perceived that the language of the receptor is Spanish. From the 11 interviews with teachers at Daniel Armas Elementary School, 9 said they use Spanish when talking to a stranger, because they do not know if he/she speaks K’iche’, and because this practice establishes a sense of professionalism. All of these participants agreed that the more comfortable they feel with the person, the more possibility that they would transition into speaking K’iche’. The two teachers who did not agree with this were an exception because they were either Spanish monolingual or Spanish-Cachiquel bilingual, so the question did not apply to them. Spanish is also used when the speaker perceives a high socio-economic status or educational background in the receptor. From the eleven teacher interviews, 8 of them said that Spanish and K’iche’ have the same prestige, and are equally important, yet when they were asked to whom they would speak Spanish, they answered, “to those that are well dressed”, those who “occupy a position with authority”, or with “very academic people, [who] are professional”.

Participant-observation data from this study reinforces the idea that K’iche’ is the preferred language among local community members, except when an outsider enters conversations. When I (Martha Bitar) was helping a group of sixth grade girls make up dances for a cheer leading demonstration, we would have rehearsals every afternoon. All eight girls knew both Spanish and K’iche’, although they had different levels of Spanish fluency. Every time they would address me, they would do it in Spanish. However, when they talked to each other, they spoke in K’iche’. So, even though they all had demonstrated proficiency in Spanish, they preferred to use K’iche’ among their friends and Spanish with outsiders.

The participants’ highly contextualized use of Spanish and K’iche’ maintain the ideological significance of each language. That is, participants’ day-to-day micro-practices align well with the macro-practices of the nation. Both micro- and macro-practices produce Spanish as central to business, professional, and academic related practices, while K’iche’ is produced as a marginal, community-based language. These context-specific language practices suggest that the two languages function separately with

little to no interaction between the two languages. However, the next section demonstrates that a fusion of the two languages is an emerging language practice among the participants in this study. In the next section we identify participants' emerging hybrid language practices and theorize these micro-practices within a larger racial formation project.

K'iche'tellano

While much of the data in this study suggest that language codes are rigidly divided amongst official and home/community contexts, a deeper analysis of the data suggest that participants produce hybrid language practices that reflect the on-going racial projects and linguistic transformations that Maya peoples undergo. Thus, the day-to-day micro-practices that Mayas enact, embody a fusion of the two language systems that compete for legitimacy. We are referring to this mixed language code as "K'iche'tellano" because we believe this term captures the competing, yet complementary interaction between the two languages: K'iche' and Castellano (Spanish from Spain). Some of the language practices that represent this fusion of language systems include the production of new words and phrases in Spanish that draw from meanings in K'iche', the intermixing of grammatical rules from one language to another, and the alteration from one language to another in a single conversation, also known as code-switching.

The first hybrid language practice is the production of non-existing words and phrases in the Spanish language that borrow from the meanings of words in K'iche'. The production of these "new" terms often catch on within the community and then become common verse among community members. One example, given by Justo Tepaz, who is a teacher at the Daniel Armas Elementary School, as well as assistant of the CTA, is a substitution for the standard Spanish word for prejudice, ("prejuicio"). The speakers of the community draw from meanings produced in the K'iche' language to create the word, "Adelanto-juicios", (forward-judges).

The next hybrid language practice is the overlaying of grammatical rules in the two languages. For example, when speaking Spanish, community members commonly borrow from K'iche' grammatical patterns to produce a new speech model in Spanish. An example of this overlaying of grammatical patterns occurs in the use of indefinite articles (un, uno, una, unos, unas), followed by a possessive pronoun (mi, tu, su, nuestro, vuestro), and then the noun. For example, speakers from the community often say "un mi sobrino" for "my nephew." In standard Spanish, it would be either "un sobrino", using the indefinite article followed by the noun, or "mi sobrino", using the possessive pronoun followed by the noun, but never both the article and the pronoun followed by one noun. Needing to emphasize possession, one would place the possessive pronoun after the noun, saying "un sobrino mio"

This speech pattern in Spanish borrows from the grammatical patterns in the K'iche' language. To indicate possession in K'iche', nouns are altered by adding the possessive pronoun to the noun, forming one word. For example, to say nephew, "sobrino", in K'iche' ("ikaq"), one must specify whose nephew it is. To say my nephew, "mi sobrino", one would add "w", which is the possessive pronoun for "my". Then, the result would be one noun, "wikaq", which means "my nephew", and not a noun and a pronoun. Nouns in K'iche' are followed by definite or indefinite articles, so after having the noun "wikaq", or my nephew, one should add the article. In standard Spanish, as well as in English, it would be incorrect to add an indefinite article before a noun that already carries a possessive pronoun because the pronoun is showing that it is a specific noun, and not any noun. Indefinite articles are used for unspecified nouns. In K'iche' the indefinite article is added anyway. Then, speakers of the community add "jun", or "a" (which is "un" in Spanish) to the noun, forming "jun wikaq" or "a my nephew", which would be translated directly to Spanish as "un mi sobrino". This last form is the one used in Spanish by the speakers of the community.

Another example of language practices that incorporate both languages, or what we are referring to as K'iche'tellano, is the common practice of code-switching. Brice and Brice (2000) define code-switching as the use of complete sentences, phrases, and borrowed words from another language. In an effort to collect data on the actual production of K'iche'tellano, 8 interviews were conducted in K'iche' on topics that were not directly related to language practices: school and home. We believed that an interview on language use would potentially make the participant aware of their language use. By interviewing the participants on other, non-related topics, we hoped the interviewees would focus on the questions and responses, and not on the form of expression. In order to record the language in

its most natural form, the questions were asked by a native K'iche' speaker who acted as an interpreter. Below is an interview about family and schooling with a 19-year-old housewife who did not complete her schooling. It is important to note that the production of K'iche'tellano is not only produced by the interviewee, but by the K'iche' translator who is asking the questions. These data speak to the pervasiveness and ease to which K'iche'tellano is produced. The bolded text represents words that are spoken in Spanish.

Rosario: Jachike **grado** xate'lwi par i clase
(When did you drop out of school?)

Manuela: Xa'q' xewi **tercero primaria**
(I only stayed until third grade)

Rosario: Ixjanipa' pari ja'
(How many are there in your family?)

Manuela: E'**seis** alabom **y cuatro** alitomab'
(Six men and four women)

Rosario: Jachike at kowi ri at chk'ech ri awachala'l
(Which one among your siblings are you?)

Manuela: Pa **cinco** in kowi chkech
Soy la quinta
(I am the fifth one)

Rosario: Ri at weta xabano' **seguir** par i clase, jawach ta kula' xa xaban **graduar** awib' chech
(If you would have stayed in school, what degree would you have obtained?)

Manuela: We ta xinban **seguir** kurij la' xin wesaj taj jun **maestro**
(I would have become a teacher)

Rosario: Ja din mas kab'an preferir **la maestra o maestro**
(Do you prefer having a female or a male teacher?)

Manuela: Xaq' kis junam kuyao'
(It is the same)

Rosario: Ja wach u **responsabilidad** juni xoq' paja'
(What is a woman's responsibility at home?)

Manuela: Ku josq'ij ri u paja' ku chajo ri ra'l
(To clean up and change the kids clothes)

Hybrid language practices, including code-switching, shape the cultural demands of community members in Nueva Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. Code-switching, for example, is an unstated, yet demanded expectation of community members. Seven out of the eight teachers who were asked about code-switching explained that code-switching is a common practice they participate in. These community members believe that code-switching is a way of showing that they belong to the community. During an interview with an elementary teacher, she said that speakers from the community mix K'iche' and Spanish because "that is the way everyone speaks around here". Thus, community members become culturally linked through their production of hybrid language practices in K'iche' and Spanish.

Conclusion

The production of K'iche'tellano, or hybrid language practices, reflects the ongoing racial projects that are underway in Guatemala. These emerging language practices in highland Guatemala are neither assimilationist or counter-hegemonic, but both. That is, participants in this study simultaneously com-



bat the macro-level racial projects by teaching their children K'iche' and maintaining this language code in home/community contexts, while at the same time embracing this racial project by emphasizing the need to learn Spanish, as well as rendering Spanish as the more dignified language, the language professionals and educated people speak. These two competing practices are collapsed into the everyday micro-level production of K'iche'tellano. That is, in a single conversation, whether it be through the production of non-standard Spanish words and phrases that borrow from K'iche', the overlaying of K'iche' grammatical patterns in Spanish, or code-switching, the participants in this study produce a dual or hybrid language code that simultaneously defies and reifies the racial projects that operate in Guatemala.

As Omi and Winant (1994) have argued, we are all subjected to racial projects, "...often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation" (p. 60). As such, the participants in this study were never formally taught the ideological significance of K'iche' and Spanish, and in extension, they were never formally taught the highly contextualized language practices or the various modes of K'iche'tellano that we have outlined here. Nevertheless, the participants in this study have learned these language practices, which serve as "unofficial" markers to a unified community.

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Writing New Mexico White

A Critical Analysis of Early Representations of New Mexico in Technical Writing

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In this article, the authors analyze early technical documents produced by the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration (NMBI), including “The Legend of Montezuma” and “Illustrated New Mexico.” The purpose of these documents are clear: to increase the number of white Americans to create a clear white majority when New Mexico became a state and thereby prevent the Mexicans from gaining power. In analyzing these documents, the authors use theoretical frameworks from studies in the history of business and technical writing (SHBTW) and critical whiteness theory to show how early textual representations of New Mexico reproduce racist constructions of native New Mexicans and represent whiteness as the norm.

Keywords: *technical documents; New Mexico; race; SHBTW; whiteness; Mexicans*

Technical communicators live on the border between science and humanity. They are the interpreters that allow the sometimes-warring factions to talk effectively to one another. Their job is to interpret and represent an often-opaque world of objects and ideas, making these objects and ideas accessible to interested readers through texts and images. In doing so, technical communicators traditionally have paid little or no attention to producing accurate or even approximately close portrayals of racial others. For example, many writers who produced technical documents on New Mexico

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prior to its gaining statehood are guilty of co-opting and stripping away the complex history and culture of the indigenous people of New Mexico (Jojola, 1996). To boost the tourism economy in New Mexico, historians and brochure writers either painted the native people as “the exotic Indian” or decontextualized them until they became “curious and quaint” (p. 44). Pictures taken of the natives during this time featured them in full dress, often with feathered headdresses and buckskins, thus fixing in readers’ minds the idea of the Indian Chief that was first immortalized on railway trains for the Santa Fe line and then co-opted by sports teams and commercial products.

Such misrepresentation of native knowledge and culture has largely occurred because of the dominating white American view that only written knowledge is valid. Thus, the oral history of the indigenous people of New Mexico did not gain legitimacy in the minds of many white Americans until it was recorded. Governed by the documentation process of oral historians, technical communicators have ostensibly transferred the copyright of this history from native people to the authors and publishers. To understand the dimensions of this documentation process, we analyze here some of the early representations of New Mexicans in technical documents. Using a critical whiteness framework, we suggest that early textual representations of New Mexico reproduce racist constructions of native New Mexicans and represent whiteness as the norm.

Theoretical Framework

Our interdisciplinary analysis draws on two relatively new and emerging research areas: (a) studies in the history of business and technical writing and (b) whiteness theory. In the following sections, we outline some defining characteristics of these distinct areas and explain how we apply these theories to our analysis of early technical documents from New Mexico.

Studies in the History of Business and Technical Writing

Studies in the history of business and technical writing (SHBTW) involve examinations of primary documents not only to contextualize them in a given culture and time period but also to understand how current knowledge production emerges and evolves from historical technical documents. Some of this work includes Richardson’s (1985) examination of England’s shift from a primarily oral culture to a culture that is dependent on the written word. This work shows that England’s eventual dependence on written business and legal documents contributed to widespread literacy

and the standardization of the English language in England. Later, Richardson (2003) continued to examine the evolution of business writing in England by examining the Gawdy family's business documents. Similar studies have been done on U.S. business writing. Denton (1985) traced the evolution of the modern American business letter by demonstrating that letter-writing manuals today draw on etiquette manuals of an earlier period. In another piece, Dillon (1997) analyzed historical records that considered the legislation of women's work schedules in the United States, shedding light on the historical and current role of women in the workplace. As these few examples indicate, such studies are "diffuse and interdisciplinary" (Douglas & Hildebrandt, 1985, p. vi). To date, there is no definitive treatment of or particular thematic focus on SHBTW (Rivers, 1994). But Douglas and Hildebrandt (1985) classified historical studies into two different categories: (a) studies of the didactic practices of a given era, including the rhetorical theories and devices supporting these services, and (b) studies that relate business writing practices and products to a wider historical context as part of the ongoing experience of an age (p. vi). Our study of some of the early technical documents produced in New Mexico can be classified as the second type of study in that we contextualize these documents within a particular local and national history to understand how particular constructions of race emerge in these documents as well as over time.

In contrast to some of the pioneer work in technical writing, which Longo (2000) described as having the potential to be linguistically "pure"—that is, able to gain the status of "linguistic transparency" in its ability to transmit accurate information (Rickard, 1910)—the language in the technical documents that we analyze here seems politically charged and embodies discourses that socially construct meaning onto people. To understand how race, particularly whiteness and Indianness, is constructed in technical writing, we draw from the theoretical approach of "the new historicism" (Dillon, 1997; Thomas, 1989). This approach to textual analysis "generally reflects the sensibilities of a post-structuralist movement that attempts to distinguish meaning from significance and to contextualize any expressive act in the network of social, cultural, psychological, and phenomenological forces that give it shape and purpose" (Dillon, 1997, p. 65). In our examination of original technical documents on New Mexico, we contextualize the language used in these documents to understand how New Mexico and its inhabitants were configured to attract white settlers to the area.

Our analysis of race in these documents is based on the idea that race is a social construction that is neither stable nor objective. Omi and Winant (1994) define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and

interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). Similarly, we see race as being inscribed on different bodies at different times in history in the struggle to gain cultural, political, social, and material capital. Irish Americans, for example, considered to be members of an inferior non-white race when they initially immigrated to this country, eventually gained social and economic power and thus the status of being white (Ignatiev, 1996; Roediger, 2005; Takaki, 1993). In contrast, Mexicans, once considered white in this country, eventually became defined as members of a racial minority.

We see this project as an important contribution to SHBTW in that it sheds light on how historical technical documents reproduce notions of race in a given culture and time period as well as contributes to our ongoing constructions of race. We analyze representations of race through whiteness theory. In the following section, we provide an overview of whiteness theory and identify the specific tools we use to analyze race.

Whiteness Theory

To analyze the reproduction of racist stereotypes and the normalization of whiteness in early technical documents on New Mexico, we have used some of the frames of white privilege that Gordon (2005) identified. These frames of white privilege are part of a larger theory of whiteness that underpins our social systems, especially here in the United States but also in other white dominated countries. This systemic racism is intricately designed to provide psychological, discursive, and material privileges to whites and to disadvantage people of color. The social systems include, but are not limited to, education, the job market, housing, social services, and the judicial system.

The acknowledgment that our social systems disadvantage people of color and privilege whites is nothing new. Traditionally, however, multicultural and racial theorists have centered their inquiries on one aspect of the issue—the disadvantages our social systems pose for people of color. In education, for example, multicultural education theorists have identified biases in assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, and testing, among many other classroom practices that are unwelcoming, and do not validate the knowledge, culture, or language of minority students in school settings. Although this research is resourceful in creating more educational opportunities for minority students, it has left unexamined the aspects of our educational system that secure opportunities for whites. To turn the lens away from theorizing about the disadvantages people of color often experience, whiteness theory attempts

to uncover the often-invisible mechanisms in our social systems that work to benefit white people. As Thompson (1997) pointed out, "By attending to how whiteness is constructed and maintained as a norm, whiteness theorizing displaces questions about the 'underprivileged' status of non-whites to instead expose the systematic *privileging* of whites" (p. 146).

People who study whiteness theory take different approaches at identifying and deconstructing whiteness. At the extreme are race traitors or white abolitionists who aim to completely rid themselves of their whiteness, arguing that the mere existence of race as a social construct provides logic and fuel to a social system that divides material and social wealth based on abstract physical characteristics. For example, race traitor Ignatiev (1997) claimed that

Whiteness has nothing to do with social position. It is nothing but a reflection of privilege, and exists for no reason other than to defend it. Without the privileges attached to it, the white race would not exist, and white skin would have no more social significance than big feet. (p. 1)

Although thinking that we could completely do away with whiteness or that whites could stop benefiting from the privileges whiteness provides may be an extreme viewpoint, whiteness theorists and practitioners generally strive to identify, understand, and disrupt the often implicit and mundane manifestations of whiteness. Thus, as Thompson (1997) put it, whiteness theory can be understood as

a distinctive political position—usually to the detriment of whiteness, for this new research addresses whiteness not simply as another ethnicity to be evaluated on its own terms, but as an oppressor ethnicity that has consolidated its appearance of superiority at the cost of others. (p. 146)

In this article, we identify representations of whiteness that are reproduced in early technical documents on New Mexico, using the frames of whiteness to determine the various ways whiteness emerges in these documents. The frames of whiteness we analyze include color blindness (refusal to see color), selective attribution (specific application of race), whitewashing (the removal of race for whites), and privileged language (the valuation of one knowledge or ideology over another; Gordon, 2005).

Color blindness is not, as we might expect from the inclusion of the word *blind*, the inability to see color. Rather, it is the refusal to acknowledge color—but only because doing so maintains the status quo for white society

(Gordon, 2005). Color blindness can occur on both an individual and systemic level but is universally problematic. Many whites advocate this nonseeing because it appears, on the surface, to advocate a merit-based system of reward, yet it rarely works to the advantage of people of color. By believing everyone has equal opportunity to various privileges, whites can feel comfortable in having their advantages—after all, they have earned them—and think of those who “have not” as lazy, stupid, or deficient in some other way. This refusal to acknowledge color also works to the disadvantage of ethnic people because it often translates into practices and viewpoints that do not recognize the obstacles people of color face or the distinct resources a particular ethnic or racial group may have to offer (Thompson, 1997).

Selective attribution, in contrast to color blindness, calls for a specific naming of race but only as determined by those in a position of power. The identification of Asian Americans as model minorities—the argument that Asian Americans set an example of how other minorities should live their lives, especially in the areas of education and business—is an example of selective attribution. The naming of Asian Americans as model minorities strategically draws attention away from the nuanced systems of racial discrimination that serve as obstacles to many ethnic and racial groups’ pursuit of success, including that of Asian Americans. Thus, selective attribution allows whites to determine who will have their racial identity acknowledged and when, by choosing whose voices will be heard and whose will be ignored (Gordon, 2005). A secondary effect of selective attribution involves the principle of inclusion, in which a race, rather than being named other, is included as part of the white group, as honorary whites. And using inclusion in conjunction with whitewashing can create a better sense of who we are and who they are.

Whitewashing most commonly involves removing differences between white people to create a sense of solidarity, but it can also mean vilifying another group of people as racists—thereby shifting the focus to others who really have a problem (Thompson, 2003). The term can also mean the rewriting of history in favor of whites. When history is the “official” story as told by the victors, a whitewashed history gives an inaccurate and often condescending view of those without power.

Finally, *privileged language* values one set of beliefs or values (usually that of whites) over that of another (usually nonwhites). Like selective attribution, this knowledge only exists as it is given to the reader and typically leads the reader to reach a conclusion in line with those in power. Deliberately excluding knowledge helps to keep the status quo. Privileged language is also used when a white writer rewrites the histories or myths of

others. By rewriting an authentic voice, the writers privilege their own voice over that of the original author and change the power of the story from one group to another.

In what follows, we demonstrate how these frames of whiteness were used to reproduce whiteness in early technical documents on New Mexico. The documents we analyze here were pamphlets produced by the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration (NMBI) and include the “Legend of Montezuma” and “Illustrated New Mexico” (Ritch, 1885, pp. 4-7, 21-90). These two documents are but a small part of the total archive of NMBI documents, which is kept by the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe, and is available online through the Princeton Library (<http://library.princeton.edu/>). From a microfilm of the full archive, we selected the “Legend of Montezuma” and “Illustrated New Mexico” in particular because of their placement within the collection. By 1885, the secretary of the NMBI, Ritch, had got the hang of editing the pamphlets—particularly those dealing with the state as a whole—and was able to put together more cohesive pieces than some of the previous work. By this time, more surveys had been done, better maps had been made, and more illustrations had been donated to the cause of immigration to achieve statehood.

New Mexico Bureau of Immigration

Under Spanish and later Mexican rule (and even under American rule), New Mexico proved to be marginal in national politics, a situation that remained largely until the arrival of the railroad in 1879. This connection to the vital transportation system that brought supplies and people across the country allowed New Mexico to have a greater market for the area’s resources. But New Mexico’s close association with Mexico and Mexicans proved problematic to those trying to lure Anglos—and capital—to the territory. Previous travel accounts written by Anglo visitors to the territory portrayed the area as barren and inhabited by superstitious racial inferiors who were alternately lazy or deadly (Gutiérrez, 1989). Clearly, these accounts would impede immigration to the territory. Thus, New Mexico’s legislation decided to take action, establishing the NMBI in 1880 to disseminate information about New Mexico’s climate, resources, industries, and economic opportunities for development as inducements for immigration to New Mexico. The NMBI sent information in the form of pamphlets (which were later collected into yearly books) consisting of annual and biennial reports from the secretary of the bureau; reports collected and written by county commissioners on

their counties' climate, minerals, and agricultural and water resources; and reports from various towns describing their population, geography, transportation lines, water and fuel resources, industries, climate, schools, banks, and hotels.

These documents, according to the secretary of the NMBI in his annual report from 1884, served as "a convenient means of answering letters of inquiry and of supplying strangers" (Ritch, 1885) with information about the territory, much like a modern day section on "frequently asked questions." These publications—referred to as pamphlets in the annual reports—were widely disseminated throughout the territory, with about 16,000 distributed in the first 2 years of the bureau's existence. An estimated 500,000 pamphlets were eventually distributed before the territory became a state in 1912, at which time the bureau was dissolved.

The success of the pamphlets, according to Secretary Ritch (1885), was "due to the concentration of effort mainly upon the general pamphlet which [he] sought to make comprehensive in description, convenient in classification, and profuse in illustration" (p. 6). This general pamphlet, which was longer than the individual pamphlets available on the counties, was made up of various reports, maps, and charts culled from the individual pamphlets. This pamphlet, titled "Illustrated New Mexico" (Ritch, 1885, pp. 21-90), was distributed not only through the offices of the president of the Bureau of Immigration and the NMBI (by written request) but also through the advertising bureaus of major railroad companies in New Mexico (mainly the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad and the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, who also underwrote some of the cost of the pamphlets and maps), the Interior Department at Washington, the Annual Territorial Exposition, and the Tri-Centenary Exposition, as well as on trains, public offices, state and public libraries, banks, businesses, and hotels. These outlets were also clearinghouses for other pamphlets created by the bureau, mostly detailing the various resources ripe for exploitation at the hands of an industrious immigrant who could use New Mexico's "coal, coke and minerals, to discover and develop its varied latent resources, and to encourage an energetic yeomanry to occupy the fertile valleys and grass-covered ranges, where health, wealth, and happiness are within the reach of the many" (Ritch, 1885, p. 8).

The New Mexico described in these pamphlets seemed to be merely sleeping, waiting for enterprising Americans to wake her from her slumber so she might give up her resources for their benefit—the bureau had merely to sound the call. All welcomed their arrival.

The pamphlets' purpose, according to the official documents, was to entice Americans "out west" by illustrating the myriad opportunities for wealth or homes in the Territory of New Mexico for "those willing to devote

honest, intelligent and persistent effort to the acquiring of a competency” (Ritch, 1885, p. 8). But Gutiérrez (1989) asserted that the real purpose of attracting immigrants was not to increase the wealth of the state but to increase the number of white immigrants within the territory before it gained statehood. The “territorial machine” made up of military officials, local prefects, lawyers, land speculators, and a few Spanish Americans to whom the territory was temporarily entrusted wanted New Mexico to wait for its statehood until Anglo-Americans were the numerically dominant group (Lamar, 1962). To this end, the authors of the pamphlets, who were highly praised in select letters printed in the NMBI annual reports, were not writing “a full and fair story of the climate, resources and geography of [the] Territory, and of the present condition of its people as to education, morality and obedience to law” (Frost, 1891, p. 10) but were in fact writing a whitewashed version to attract more white settlers to New Mexico and thus likely gain a larger white influence over government and business. If Anglos were to wrest control over New Mexico from the native Spanish American elites, white American immigrants were vitally needed. Thus, the bureau created and distributed 124 known titles, totaling some 500,000 items. The most popular of these pamphlets were collected in two books: *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico* (Ritch, 1885), which included “The Legend of Montezuma” (pp. 4-7) and “Illustrated New Mexico” (pp. 21-90), and *New Mexico: Its Resources, Climate, Geography, History, Statistics, Present Condition and Future Prospects* (Frost, 1894). Figure 1 shows an illustration from the latter book published by the NMBI. This illustration shows the New Mexico exhibit from the Chicago World’s Fair. Many copies of the pamphlets published by the NMBI were made available at this booth.

“The Legend of Montezuma”

The first pamphlet included in *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico*, “The Legend of Montezuma,” is a retelling of the Montezuma legend as it has been “gathered from various sources and connected” (Ritch, 1885, p. 5). Briefly, this retelling of the Aztlán legend posits that Montezuma, the great monarch of the Aztecs, was born in Santa Fe of a virgin (who had consumed a pine nut given to her by the Great Spirit). Montezuma was an unpopular youth and came to his leadership position by chance—for while normally the cacique had been a man of great spiritual powers, Montezuma had none. But the day before the big hunt, during which he was to prove himself, the Great Spirit came to him and instructed him to put on the blanket and

Figure 1
From New Mexico: Its Resources, Climate, Geography, History, Statistics, Present Condition and Future Prospects, NMBI, Max Frost (Ed.), 1894



New Mexico Exhibit, World's Fair, Chicago.

Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

moccasins his mother had given him before she died. After Montezuma was thus bathed and dressed, the Great Spirit conferred on him a rattle made of animal hooves that he could use to charm the animals to surrender. Because of these powers, he became not only the town's cacique, but eventually a great monarch. He later wed Melinche, a woman who had been selected for him by the Great Spirit. After a short period, Montezuma took flight on a great eagle, which had been prophesied to lead him to his future capital and metropolis, and headed south (see Figure 2). Wherever he stopped along the journey, he formed new towns and garnered great respect from the local inhabitants, who followed him "as the wise men of Biblical history followed their guiding star" (p. 6). Finally, the eagle landed on an island, where it began to devour a serpent while perched on a cactus—the sign that the Great Spirit had told him to watch for—and there he found his capital. He lived there in peace and prosperity until the coming of "the Children of the Sun," better known as the Europeans.

Figure 2
 From "The Legend of Montezuma," in Ritch's *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico, 1885*



LEGEND OF MONTEZUMA.

Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

This retelling is problematic for multiple reasons, including the conflation of multiple legends of origin into one connected narrative—merging the Pueblo, Mexica, and Tohono O’odham tribes’ various chieftain gods into one Montezuma. Bandelier (1892) explained that the prejudices of multiple authors caused them to change not only the spelling of Montezuma (originally Motecuhzoma in Nahuatl) but also the legend of Aztlán so often that even the Indians themselves accepted the conquerors’ retelling. The accepted version of the legend was the written version of the tale—privileging the white convention of the written word as truth over the Indian oral tradition. This version became so ingrained that eventually even the Pueblo Indians under Spanish rule began to recite the tale as their own myth.

This problem was compounded, Gutiérrez (1989) explained, because Ritch’s (1885) version of the Aztlán legend stemmed largely from Morgan’s (1877) book *Ancient Society*, which strove to replace the idea that the natives were “noble savages” with the idea that they were at the “bottom of the evolutionary scale that led up toward European cultural dominance and superiority” (Gutiérrez, p. 184). After studying Spanish texts describing Montezuma and Tenochtitlán, Morgan pronounced the accounts as grossly

exaggerated and asserted that he was best prepared to interpret what the Spanish conquistadores had seen. Thus, instead of relying on historical documents and narratives for information, Morgan selectively voiced his racist beliefs, further privileging the white version of the story. This version was then accepted as truth by Ritch, who put it to paper in "The Legend of Montezuma" (pp. 4-7), which was subsequently distributed on a wide scale.

Additionally, Ritch (1885) selected various parts of the competing legends to portray what Gutiérrez (1989) called the "rising importance of individualism to American culture as refracted through representations of the Indians" (p. 185). For example, in Ritch's version of the legend, Montezuma is not depicted as a leader of a larger communal (or clan-based) society but as an individual, picked and led by the Great Spirit to a position of high leadership. Much like the beloved idea that any child can grow up to be president, in this legend, Montezuma becomes emperor by chance. This example draws from the logic of colorblindness, a logic that insists that when race and culture are eradicated from our perceptions, anything is possible. But we know that this version of reality is simply not true because of systemic forms of racism (e.g., unequal access to education, housing, etc.).

This skewed version of Montezuma is further evidenced through the Christian imagery and language peppered throughout the legend. Montezuma is portrayed as a Christ-like figure, born of humble beginnings to a virgin. Additionally, Ritch (1885) used language similar to the King James Version of the Bible when writing dialogue between the Great Spirit and Montezuma, liberally sprinkling in *thys*, *thees*, and *thous*. This language is incongruent with the rest of his writing, and he plainly used it as a convention to signal a conversation between God and man. Indians were unlikely to have used this language when retelling the legend, or indeed at all. This altering of the legend to appeal to the white reader is a whitewashing of history in that native legends, such as Montezuma, are only made intelligible to the extent that they have been assimilated into a white frame of reference. This whitewashing of native history is accomplished by another frame of whiteness: privileged language. By being assimilated into a Christ-like figure, Montezuma takes on white Christian values and is thus made comprehensible to a white, Christian readership.

Finally, at the end of the passage, Ritch (1885) included a triptych containing the state seal of New Mexico (see Figure 3). This triptych, a seemingly benign illustration that accompanies the last paragraph, explains far more than the details of the paragraph:

Figure 3
From "The Legend of Montezuma," in Ritch's *Aztlán: The History, Resources and Attractions of New Mexico*, 1885 (p. 7)



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Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

The tradition of the alighting of the eagle upon the prickly pear will be recognized in the coat of arms of the Republic of Mexico, as that upon which the latter was founded. The same appears in the seal of the Territory of New Mexico, a vignette of which has been happily brought out by the artist, with the difference that the Mexican eagle is nestled confidently under the shadowing wing of the emblem of our own nationality. (p. 7)

The artist may have drawn the image "happily," but the image it portrays is rather bleak. The lone Indian (an individual) watches from the top of his pueblo as the larger American eagle overshadows and encircles the vulture-like eagle of his own country. To his right, a cowboy tames sheep and cattle with a whip as the bearded men to his left work the mines with the black clouds of industry rising into the mountains behind them. The Indian is watching peaceably and helplessly as he and his land are conquered again.

"The Legend of Montezuma" is a particularly blatant example of how the mythic history of the native peoples was "selectively appropriated, reinterpreted and selectively transformed to achieve concrete political gain" (Gutiérrez, 1989, p. 187). Using the frames of color blindness, whitewashing, and privileged language, Ritch (1885) created a legend that was palatable to the American audience for which he was writing.

“Illustrated New Mexico”

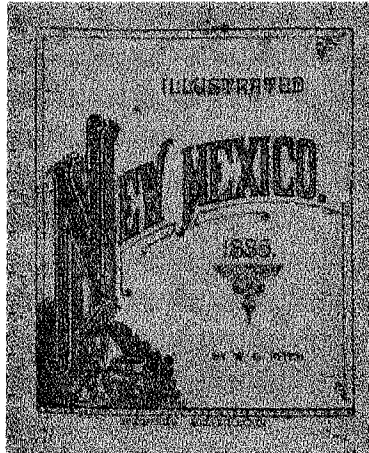
Gutiérrez (1989) made a good start of analyzing Secretary Ritch’s (1885) book, but he stopped with the “Legend of Montezuma.” When we subject the book as a whole to the same careful scrutiny, however, a more disturbing pattern emerges. Few passages in the book were actually written by Ritch—he served more as an editor, putting together individual pamphlets. The majority of the information was compiled by county commissioners from surveys and other reports conducted by county employees. But Ritch’s overall privileged and slightly arrogant voice as editor carries through the entire narrative.

“Illustrated New Mexico” (see cover page in Figure 4) is a problematic study for a number of reasons, the least of which is the length of the piece. At 63 pages, it is the longest of the pamphlets that do not deal with a specific county. Headings within the pamphlet include “Historical,” “Life and Property Secure,” “Railways,” “Area and Boundaries,” “Business Centers,” “The People,” “Immigration,” “Face of the Country,” “Coal and Iron,” “Minerals and Precious Stones,” “Agriculture-Horticulture,” “Live Stock,” “Tanning of Leather,” “Soap,” “The Public Lands,” “Homestead Exemptions,” “Timber,” “A Sanitarium,” “Mineral and Medicinal Springs of New Mexico,” “Religion,” “Education,” “Assessment and Collection of Taxes,” “Land Grants,” “Modernizing,” and “Opportunities for Manufacturing.” The pamphlet ends with a section titled “Adios.” Although all of these sections are worthy of further study, we focus on instances within the pamphlet that deal specifically with the native and Mexican populations. “Illustrated New Mexico” derives from only 1 year’s reports and makes up less than 10% of the overall NMBI collection that is available on microfilm through the University of New Mexico.

Historical Overview

Ritch (1885) began the pamphlet with a historical overview of New Mexico, focusing on the inevitable coming of the Anglo-Americans and the unchanged domestic simplicity of the native peoples. In the opening paragraphs, Ritch pitted the “modern energy, enterprise and prosperity” of Americans against the “mediaeval conservatism, crooked stick plows” of repatriated Mexicans (p. 21). Racial stereotypes aside, Ritch also pointed out how little New Mexico’s population had changed since it was visited by Antonio de Espejo three centuries previous. That is a curious choice of historians because Espejo was not the “more reliable of the early explorers”

Figure 4
Cover of *Illustrated New Mexico* (5th ed.), 1885



Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

(p. 38), as Ritch would have readers believe. Espejo's portrayal of the Indian population as quaint and having the trappings of civilization is, frankly, questionable. The friendly treatment he received from the Indians was probably not a result of strict hospitality. Reading through a full version of Espejo's account (see Blake, 1999), not just the one included in the pamphlet, the reader would find that the Indians usually ran in fear of the coming expedition because it was more likely to be a group of slave traders than a rescue party. This information is conspicuously left out, with the remaining passages portraying a people of "generous hospitality" and "great civility" (Ritch, 1885, p. 23). But the Indians were far more likely to have just been relieved they were not being sold into slavery, and so they gladly gave the Spaniard whatever he needed so he would be on his way.

Ritch (1885) stated that the account of Captain Espejo proves that the Pueblo Indian of 1583 was much like the modern (1880s) Pueblo: living "within the borders of civilization, in fact, if not ranked as such" (p. 23). But Espejo was discovered to be a semireliable source at best a mere 2 years after his expedition into New Mexico (see Blake, 1999). His penchant toward exaggeration and embellishment likely stemmed from his desire to portray himself as a man "with a pious purpose." But when he left on his mission of mercy in New Mexico, Espejo was mainly after gaining clemency from the crown for his murder conviction in 1583. He regarded

his services on this mission to rescue Franciscan friars (the narrative of which Ritch quotes from liberally) as being so meritorious that he lost no time after his return to Mexico in petitioning for a remission of his sentence, which he was never granted.

Why would Ritch (1885) use such a dubious and biased source for his pamphlet? He likely did so because Espejo's discoveries did more to "stimulate the settlement of New Mexico and the exploitation of its mineral resources than did those of any other of the early explorers" (see Blake, 1999). Indeed, in the section "Minerals and Precious Stones," Ritch commented that Espejo "frequently [made] reference to the presence of precious metals" (p. 38). Ritch seemed less interested in accurately portraying the native population of New Mexico than in setting up Espejo as a trusted source for future reference. By privileging certain information in his account of Espejo, Ritch ensured that the American reader of the late 19th century would not only view the native population as harmless but also would trust later accounts by Espejo that referred to possible gains in wealth. Ritch provided limited information in the pamphlet about the native population to keep white immigrants from viewing Indians as a threat. By using selective attribution—that is, strategically naming race when needed to affirm the stronghold of whiteness—Ritch could paint New Mexico as unsettled and merely awaiting whites' arrival.

Ritch again used the logic of selective attribution when describing people who had already immigrated to New Mexico. By stating, in the section "Life and Property Secure," that the "bad element floats with the tide of emigration, in a percentage larger than that which remains in the old and organized communities" (p. 24), Ritch acknowledged the long-held American belief of the unlawful immigrant, a concern that dates back to colonial times (Mears, 2001, p. 2). He went out of his way to acknowledge past indiscretions on the part of "rustlers and desperadoes" but insisted that they had made no demonstrations since October 1881 and that "the Territory is commendably peaceable and orderly, and people who desire to come [to New Mexico] are confidently assured that they will be safe in their lives, property and business" (p. 25).

Then, in the section "The People," Ritch (1885) further assured readers that "the people of New Mexico, both native and emigrants from the States, have frequently given substantial evidence that they are a well-disposed, patriotic and liberty-loving people" (p. 29). He backed up his view of the population by describing the arrival of the American general Kearny in 1846, which was unopposed by the native population. Thus, Ritch implied that the natives welcomed the American intrusion into their land because

they did nothing to oppose it, except for a minor incident when, “under gross misrepresentations by a few restless spirits, a speck of war was developed, which . . . was easily suppressed” (p. 29). As further evidence of natives’ love of liberty, he cited the territory’s contribution of 6,000 volunteers to the Union Army during the civil war, volunteers who “performed arduous, gallant and effective service against rebels and hostile Indians” (p. 30).

The conclusion Ritch (1885) reached seems to be common sense given his examples:

Thus at their homes, in legislation, and in the army have the people given evidence of their love of liberty and fealty to the government placed over them by conquest. The native population are not only law-abiding themselves, but is a reliable element to be employed in repelling Indian raids and suppressing domestic disorders. They are seldom guilty of heinous crimes. Most of the desperadoes who have heretofore infested the Territory were adventurers from other localities. (p. 30)

But in truth, these statements are half-truths and inferences at best. The native population was largely unaware that an American intrusion into New Mexico would occur until after it had already happened even though Kearney had sent a letter of intent to the Mexican governor of New Mexico (Occupation of New Mexico, 2004, p. 2). And the natives’ fundamental opposition to slavery likely stemmed more from a well-deserved fear of enslavement at the hands of their conquerors than from an honest “love of liberty and fealty to the government placed over them by conquest” (Ritch, 1885, p. 30). Their expectations were low because of their history of being mistreated by two governments. The quaint picture Ritch painted of the natives welcoming their like-minded conquerors who will bring industry and wealth to their land stands in contrast to their lived experiences. Again, Ritch used selective attribution, only naming qualities about the natives that would be appealing to white settlers of this land—qualities such as law-abiding, peaceful, liberty loving, and patriotic—and permitted them to believe that their presence and values would go unchallenged by native New Mexicans. Thus, Ritch’s use of language that resonates well with white values is an example of the privileged language that he used throughout this document.

Perhaps Ritch’s (1885) racial bias is most telling in the section on immigration. Here, he reasserted his belief that recent immigrants are “as a body . . . like the mass of those who came here from 1846 to 1880, intelligent, patriotic, energetic, economical, honest and orderly” (p. 30). The difference here is in whom Ritch is referencing. These immigrants (and the immigrants

whom they are like) have been immigrating to New Mexico only since 1846, so they are unlikely to be Mexican or Spanish; they are, in fact, white American. He followed this claim with a table showing the distribution and locality of the population according to the 1880 census (see Figure 5). Perhaps most interesting about this table are the categories into which the census divides the population: male or female, native or foreign, and white or colored. The distribution would indicate that the Spanish American population was included in the white instead of the colored category—an interesting inclusion to be sure. By including Spanish Americans in the white category, whites had inflated numbers, creating a false impression of their population. Furthermore, the breakdown below the chart designates the colored population as being Chinese and Indians and half-breeds. By whitewashing the white category—that is, by obscuring white traits so that the category of white included groups who may not have been previously identified as white—Ritch created an inflated presence of the white population in New Mexico, thereby making New Mexico more appealing to his intended white immigrant audience.

This logic of whiteness is practiced in this census as a means to produce an overinflated dominance of whites in numerical values and thereby maintain the security and prosperity of white ideology. Another way in which the whitewashing of racial traits in this census served to maintain the prosperity of white ideology is that it motivated Spanish Americans to vote for white candidates for public offices. Because the Spanish Americans were considered white, they would presumably vote in favor of white interests, a condition that was certainly more favorable for whites than for Spanish Americans (Montgomery, 2001).

In contrast to whitewashing logic, which is used in this census to obscure and not bring attention to race, selective attribution is used in this census to highlight and call attention to racial categories. These racial categories are used selectively and strategically to uphold and maintain a system of whiteness. This construction of census data calls white readers' attention to the racial demographics of the region as part of the unstated criteria that they may use to evaluate whether the state is an attractive site for immigration. Thus, the logic of whitewashing and selective attribution work in tandem in these census data, simultaneously highlighting race as a salient feature and obscuring the defining characteristics of racial categories. In other words, race is called on when needed to construct a notion, albeit a fictitious one, of white dominance.

Figure 5
“Distribution of Locality of Population According to
Census of 1880,” from *Illustrated New Mexico*, 1885 (p. 30)

NEW MEXICO.							
COUNTIES.	Total.	Male.	Female.	Native.	Foreign.	White.	Colored.*
The Territory.....	119,565	64,496	55,069	111,514	8,051	108,721	10,844
Bernalillo	17,225	9,087	8,183	10,842	383	12,514	4,711
Colfax	3,398	1,973	1,425	3,144	254	3,375	23
Dona Ana.....	7,612	3,958	3,554	4,743	2,869	7,537	75
Grant	4,539	2,844	1,695	2,536	2,003	4,404	135
Lincoln.....	2,513	1,552	961	2,303	210	2,448	65
Mora.....	9,751	5,033	4,718	9,542	209	9,423	328
Rio Arriba.....	11,023	5,735	5,288	10,827	186	10,215	808
San Miguel.....	20,638	11,048	9,590	20,061	577	20,439	199
Santa Fe.....	10,867	6,023	4,844	10,209	658	18,368	479
Socorro.....	7,875	4,280	3,595	7,506	369	7,804	71
Taos	11,029	6,021	5,008	10,872	157	10,401	628
Valencia.....	13,095	6,942	6,153	12,919	176	9,773	3,322

*Including in the Territory 56 Chinese and 9,790 Indians and half-breeds; in Bernalillo county, 2 Chinese and 4,492 Indians and half-breeds; in Colfax county, 17 Indians and half-breeds; in Dona Ana county, 5 Chinese and 45 Indians and half-breeds; in Grant county, 40 Chinese and 9 Indians; in Lincoln county, 2 Chinese and 3 Indians; in Mora county, 86 Indians and half-breeds; in Rio Arriba county, 799 Indians and half-breeds; in San Miguel county, 5 Chinese and 96 Indians and half-breeds; in Santa Fe county, 2 Chinese and 359 Indians and half-breeds; in Taos county, 583 Indians and half-breeds; in Valencia county, 3,301 Indians and half-breeds.

Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

Resources and Spanish Rule

The next few sections of the pamphlet focus on the natural resources of New Mexico (the “Face of the Country”) and how those immigrating to the territory might adapt them for their use. The pamphlet mentions mountains not for their beauty but for their use as water sources and names each of the streams and rivers located within the territory. Then it provides an account of the coal and iron resources (directly comparing them in size, breadth, and supply with California’s output) and how they relate to the “supreme advantages for home manufacturing.” None of the passages seems to pose any particular rhetorical problem to the native population, other than that the passages might contribute to whites’ further intrusion on their land.

The natives are not portrayed favorably, however, in the introduction of the section “Minerals and Precious Stones.” Ritch’s (1885) interest in mining becomes more evident as he focused intently on the “mineral wealth of

New Mexico" (p. 38). He began this section much like he began the book, with the legend of Aztlán:

the traditions and knowledge existing among the village Indians of Mexico at the date of the conquest by Cortez was of a great people and of great mineral wealth in Aztlán, as the country far to the North, since named New Mexico, was known early in the sixteenth century. This much is true, although later historians remark at how cleverly the natives tricked the conquistadores into leaving them and journeying to the north for greater wealth. (Gutiérrez, 1989, p. 184)

Ritch seemed obsessed with the Spanish intrusion into New Mexico, first chronicling the journey of Cabeza de Vaca as he and his band of explorers wandered around New Mexico and California looking for Mexico. Ritch offered high praise for de Vaca and his party, describing them as stouthearted and persevering, wandering for 5 years with "nothing but the most subtle tact, indomitable will, dauntless courage, and endurance of steel" (p. 38)—qualities also shared, no doubt, by Anglo immigrants in their journeying to this new land of opportunity.

But Ritch's (1885) flattering words for the Spanish immigrants stopped abruptly when he spoke of their previous mining enterprises in the territory. Although he acknowledged that the mines were previously worked under Spanish rule, he made a point of mentioning that they "were worked by the Pueblo Indians under duress, from which imposed labors [the Pueblos] revolted in 1680, drove their oppressors out of the country, and kept control of the same for a number of years" (p. 39; see Figure 6). Although the Spaniards returned a few years later, the terms of peace that they negotiated with the Indians stated that in the Spaniards' occupation of the country, "the pursuits of the people were to be confined to agriculture and stock" (p. 40). Thus, mining had been largely ignored for close to 200 years.

Ritch's (1885) mention of the Spanish oppressors served a twofold purpose. First, it allowed white people to feel better about coming into the land and staking claims on various mines. After all, the Indians wanted nothing to do with mining, so they should be able to come in and exploit the unclaimed land. Indeed, Ritch "[did] not hesitate to predict that New Mexico is upon the eve of one of the most remarkable seasons of prosperity, as represented in its mineral resources, that has ever fallen to the lot of mineral-bearing section" (p. 40). All that remained, then, was to have able-bodied people to process the resources. Second, by mentioning a villainous other, that of the Spaniards, Ritch assured Americans coming to the territory that no matter how they treated the natives, they would certainly treat them better than the

Figure 6
From "Minerals & Precious Stones," *Illustrated New Mexico*, 1885



ENSLAVED IN THE MINES.

Source: Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives (Collection 1959-114).

Spaniards had. Through this whitewashing of the history of New Mexico, Ritch was able to create a land of endless possibility for entrepreneurial whites. Certainly, the coming of white technology and industry was certain to help the “simple” people subside on their agricultural prowess.

And what about their agricultural prowess? Ritch (1885) did not think highly of the natives’ technique, describing it as “surface scratching of the Mexican crooked stick” (p. 51). Concerning agriculture, Ritch believed the natives had much to learn from the “scientific farming” techniques of the American who could

plan with all the certainty of a mechanic. He is the chemist whose laboratory is a certain area of land; everything but the water is at hand—the bright sun, the potash, and other valuable mineral ingredients (not washed out of the soil by centuries of rain); his climate secures him always from an excess of moisture and what nature fails to yield—greater or less, according to the season—the farmer supplies from his irrigating canal. (p. 50)

Ritch used scientific or what could be classified as privileged language here to tap into white American values. Because white Americans largely considered science as truth, he privileged the white farmers’ methods in the language of science. Additionally, because white Americans tended to deem science as color-blind, a method that gains results regardless of the users, Ritch constructed the techniques employed by the natives as “crude and improvident” in comparison to that of the scientifically empowered American farmer. Because Indians did not use what white Americans considered the latest scientific methods, white immigrants could justify taking over the land so that it could be used properly.

The remaining chapters of the pamphlet make only a few references to the natives in discussing the opportunities offered by the natural resources of the country (“Live Stock,” “Timber,” “Sanitarium,” etc.). In fact, the “Education” and “Religion” sections are noteworthy in their failure to mention race except for a passing reference to the number of Indians in various churches or schools. Ritch (1885) concluded with the section “Opportunities for Manufacturing.” Although he did not mention the native population (except as it pertained to manufacturing), he did make this interesting statement:

It is the glory of modern civilization to exalt every social value, to demolish every social wall or partition between the liberal and useful arts, to shed the light of science on the industrial processes, and to bring all the honest avocations of men and corporations into harmonious action. (p. 83)

Here Ritch referred directly to the American idea of manifest destiny—the need of white Americans to traverse across the nation and make it one large resource for their sole exploitation. This idea, of course, fails to take into account the indigenous persons in a targeted area. Should their social walls be broken down and their cultures assimilated as well? The answer is yes but only as necessary to suit whites' purposes. Whites' inclusion of these indigenous groups of people is conditional and often fleeting, as they may include one group for purposes of population census and government (e.g., Spanish Americans) but exclude another as being too separate (e.g., Indians and Chinese). Individual and communal history may be rewritten to favor the conquerors, as in "The Legend of Montezuma," until no trace of the original story remains even in the folklore of the native culture. Clearly, the harmonious action favors white people.

Conclusion

These artifacts of technical writing, intended to bring immigrants to New Mexico, served their purpose well. In 1850, only 4 years after its annexation by the United States, New Mexico had a population of roughly 60,000 people (mostly Mexican). But by 1910, New Mexico was home to 327,301 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 1910). With more than half a million pamphlets distributed throughout the life span of the NMBI, the version of New Mexico's history and resources recorded in these pamphlets undoubtedly had a large impact on the native people living within the borders, as well as on the white immigrants who made New Mexico their home. By closely examining these technical documents, we can see that they contain various frames of whiteness that construct native New Mexicans, on one hand, as absent, insignificant, simpleminded, and marginal to New Mexico's history and white immigrants, on the other hand, as dominant, resourceful, intelligent, and thus entitled to take ownership of this land. This construction of race in these documents reproduces the idea that whites are at the center of U.S. history—that history does not begin until whites' arrival or that history does not count until it is recorded by white historians. Thus, these documents give life and sustenance to the concept of whiteness by constructing and manipulating our social system to the benefit of whites.

As our analysis shows, whiteness is not always easy to recognize in its various manifestations. Considering the long-held and mostly white belief that recorded history is fact, we can assume that readers of these technical documents believe what they read without questioning the contents' legitimacy.

Thus, in reading these technical documents, readers unwittingly acquire a skewed version of reality that is largely uncontested.

Given the inherent “truthful” status of technical documents, technical communicators must take care how they reproduce notions of race in their documents. To be critically attentive to race, then, technical communicators must realize that racism and whiteness are not concepts that we can just eradicate from our daily existence or knowledge construction. Rather, racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that runs through every facet of our lives (Akintunde, 1999). Thus, we cannot reasonably believe that we can separate ourselves from and refrain from contributing to racism or that whites can stop benefiting from the workings of whiteness. To this extent, we also cannot reasonably believe that technical communicators can produce documents outside, and completely free from, the racial logic that informs our everyday lives. But technical communicators can reveal and disrupt many of the deceptively subtle yet powerful manifestations of whiteness. We suggest that technical communicators should be hypersensitive to the various ways whiteness can invariably and inconspicuously be engrained in technical documents. By identifying frames of whiteness (Gordon, 2005) that operate in technical documents, such as color blindness, selective attribution, whitewashing, and privileged language, technical writers may be able to identify such fabrications of whiteness in their own as well as in others’ documents. This process of identifying the obvious but also the subtle forms of whiteness is a necessary step toward deconstructing and demystifying the power of whiteness.

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