Structural and Contextual Factors of School Violence in Guerrero, Mexico: Policy Analysis

from Critical and Anti-colonial Lenses

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Abstract

School violence in Mexico is a topic that has received significant attention in recent years. Likewise, it has been linked to the overall context of social violence that the country lives and as thus, different state initiatives have been implemented to address the problematic. However, not much have been said regarding the adequacy of these initiatives to fully address the roots of the problem. With this research, I reveal that the policy-approaches to prevent violence are not fully consistent with the structural and contextual factors underlying school violence in one of the Mexican federations: Guerrero. Utilizing case study methodology, as well as policy and textual analysis of institutional documents, I found that current policies are based on three main perspectives: a liberal approach to differences and diversity, a focus on social and emotional learning, and a zero tolerance approach to school discipline. Drawing on anti-colonial discourse framework, I argue that these perspectives are not addressing the different forms of oppression to which students from Guerrero have been historically subjected and that create the necessary conditions for violence to emerge. I show that Guerrero is a region in Mexico characterized by social inequalities, state-sanctioned violence predicated on processes of racialization and othering of Indigenous populations, as well as various manifestations of resistance. Within the current approaches to prevent violence in Guerrero, these social forces are not acknowledged and thus the initiatives created are directed toward the symptoms rather than the roots of the problem. The study seeks to provide different lenses through which to analyze school violence and invites to create more supportive and inspiring school environments.

Résumé

La violence à l'école au Mexique est un sujet qui a reçu une grande importance au cours des dernières années. De même, elle a aussi été liée au contexte général de violence sociale dans lequel vit le pays et, par conséquent, à son environnement, diverses initiatives étatiques ont été mises en œuvre pour faire face à ce problème. Toutefois, on n'a pas beaucoup parlé de la pertinence de ces initiatives pour s'attaquer pleinement aux racines du problème.

Grâce à cette recherche, je constate que les approches politiques de prévention de la violence ne sont pas pleinement cohérentes avec les facteurs structurels et contextuels sur la violence à l'école dans l'une des fédérations mexicaines : Guerrero. En utilisant la méthodologie des études de cas, ainsi que l'analyse politique et textuelle des documents institutionnels, j'ai constaté que les politiques actuelles sont fondées sur trois grandes perspectives: une approche libérale des différences et de la diversité, l'accent sur l'apprentissage social et émotionnel, et une approche de tolérance zéro à l'égard de la discipline scolaire. S'inspirant du cadre du débat anticolonial, Je soutiens que ces perspectives n'abordent pas les différentes formes d'oppression auxquelles les étudiants du Guerrero ont été historiquement soumis et qui créent les conditions nécessaires à l'émergence de la violence. Je montre que le Guerrero est une région du Mexique qui se caractérise par des disparités sociales, la violence sanctionnée par l'État et fondée sur des processus de racialisation et d'autres formes de discrimination à l'égard des populations autochtones, ainsi que diverses manifestations de résistance. Dans le contexte des approches actuelles de prévention de la violence au Guerrero, ces forces sociales ne sont pas reconnues et, par conséquent, les initiatives créées sont axées sur les symptômes plutôt que sur les racines du problème. L'étude vise à fournir différents angles d'analyse de la violence à l'école et incite à créer des environnements scolaires plus encourageants et inspirants.

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Preface

I, Ariadna Camargo Balcazar, am the primary author of this thesis and research and I have conceptualized and written the work in its entirety. I received the guidance and supervision of Professor Naomi Nichols for all the conceptualization, research, writing and presentation of this thesis. My colleagues Amanda Jarrell and Mengting Hu, provided feedback for the initial chapters. Zoe Babad-Palmer, Jackai Musonge, Clinton Hendry and Yuri Aikawa read and provided copy-editing of chapters 1 through 5.

Introduction

Situating the Research

I arrived at this research influenced by my personal and professional experiences. After some years working in the educational field in Mexico, both in the public sector and in non-governmental organizations, I decided to pursue a master's degree. The decision was driven in part by the feeling that the work that I had been doing in the last years, focused on prevention of youth violence, was missing something fundamental, but I could not clearly see what that was.

I started working for the Ministry of Education in Mexico in the middle of the implementation of some educational reforms. One of them was the introduction of a new educational model that had, as one of its key components, the incorporation of social and emotional learning into the national curriculum. At that moment, I was working on a project that was initially designed to improve the environments of the country's public high schools. When I first started working, I was told that the program had recently changed its approach. Instead of having the focus on the improvement of school environments, the focus was on the improvement of students' social and emotional learning. For that reason, many international and national experts on social and emotional learning started to develop a special curriculum for the teaching of those skills. We started to develop a complete teacher's training on social and emotional learning and for several months we discussed how to "measure" the improvement of those skills in the students.

While that was happening, my colleague and I were receiving calls from school principals accounting for school violence incidents. Many of them were asking for insights on how to handle these situations and prevent more incidents from happening. Most of the time, the only answer we offered was to advise them to look at the series of materials that the Ministry had

online, and they would soon receive materials regarding social and emotional learning that we hoped in the end would help prevent violence in their schools.

Decision-makers from the Ministry of Education constantly referred to the fact that the target of the program was not the prevention of school violence per se. However, there were no other strategies specially devoted to resolving that problem at the high school level, and when something related to school violence emerged, authorities referred to the program on which we were working as an intervention that contributed to the solution.

Though I was feeling uncomfortable with the lack of strategy to address the manifestations of violence in schools, I was not sure what to do with the many doubts that arrived to my mind when designing the program's new approach. When I was in the middle of the meetings with those recognized academics from universities in the United States and Mexico discussing how, if possible, to measure students' grit, I was thinking about the youth that I used to work with in the non-governmental sector. I was constantly asking myself what impacts this type of strategy could have on their lives – if any.

I thought particularly about the youth and educators from the states of Guerrero, Michoacán, and the State of Mexico, with whom I worked. These three regions of Mexico have been among the most affected by the former president Felipe Calderón's so-called war against drug trafficking (which was initiated in 2006). I thought about children's stories of how they dealt with daily violence in their communities, how most of them talked about a cousin, a brother, or a close friend that "disappeared," or how some abandoned school because the scholarship money they received was not enough to cover the cost of the transportation from their communities to the schools. I also recalled how they shared a wish for music lessons, and how, in the absence of

these lessons, the children got together once a week at an internet café to watch YouTube tutorials on guitar lessons, in order to learn on their own.

   With all of these recollections and doubts, I arrived in Montreal, and in one of my first classes I was introduced to the study of Critical Race Theory with a text by McGee and Stovall (2015). The text resonated with me, as its authors argue that current research interest in grit, perseverance, or resilience fails to consider the societal racism that African-American students have experienced and that ultimately have a negative impact on students' mental health. I started to reflect on the curriculum in Mexico that highlighted perseverance as one of the main skills to develop in students and I thought about both experiences that the teachers and youth have related to me and those that I have observed.

   As I continued exploring topics regarding the interplay of race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc., and thought about how these social categories shape and are shaped by people's experiences, and how they impact the educational process, I found myself encouraged to analyze educational policies in my country from a sociological view. Specifically, I wanted to adopt a critical stance for the study of educational policies. That means that it is my aim with this research to address the power imbalances and social inequalities that permeate educational processes. I decided to focus on school violence policies because of my experiences with youth violence prevention programs, but also because I was thinking about the numerous reports and calls my colleague and I received from schools and how, in that moment, we couldn't give concrete or useful answers on how to handle the problems they were facing.

While there are insufficient resources and strategies to address school violence at the upper secondary education level (high-schools) the same does not apply at the basic education level[1] (grades 1-9). Here, special policies and interventions have been designed to address the problematic. Thus, as I will explain later, my research will be focused on policies to address school violence at the level of basic education (grades 1-9).

I started to explore scholarly works regarding school violence from critical contemporary approaches and I found that research within these approaches has suggested that manifestations of violence in schools involve issues of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression, such as racism, classism, gender harassment, and/or sexism (Robinson, Davies, & Saltmarsh, 2012; Walton, 2011; Watts & Everells, 2004; Winton & Tuters, 2015). For example, Walton (2011) mentions that people who are oppressed in single or multiple ways (in economic and social terms) are also targets of exclusion in schools. Similarly, Robinson, Davies, and Saltmarsh (2012) suggest that homophobic harassment in schools is experienced by students who are perceived as transgressors of the normalized performances of masculinity and femininity.

In exploring what educational research has said about school violence in Mexico, I found that it is a recent subject of investigation in the country. In the 1990s, Mexico's scholars started to produce research about school violence focused on certain topics such as bullying (Gómez & Zurita, 2013). Moreover, according to Gómez and Zurita (2013), research around the topic still needs more contributions in the conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and technical dimensions (p. 204). Specifically, I found a gap in the literature, as there are no specific studies

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[1] Basic education in Mexico is composed of three stages: pre-primary education (ages 3 to 5), primary education (grades 1-6) and lower secondary education (grades 7-9).

that address how education policies on school violence in Mexico attend to the structural conditions that shape the problem.

Thus, with this research I want to offer a different approach to understand school violence and contribute to the study of the current educational policies and initiatives that are implemented in Mexico. I turn now to explaining the research objectives and questions that I pursued with this study.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

The objective of this research was to analyze the degree of fit between the state policies and interventions to address school violence at the basic education level, and the local context in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. In particular, I examined the social, cultural, historical, and political factors that surround this region (which are most commonly associated with school violence in the literature) and I compared these contextual factors with the educational-political response in this state.

I decided to focus on Guerrero for three reasons. First, I was drawn to Guerrero because of my previous experiences working with youth from this region. Through these experiences, I had the opportunity to start learning about the population of Guerrero's history of resistance. For instance, the creation of the communitarian Indigenous police that, as I will explain with more detail later in this document, emerged partly as a response to the racist practices that excluded Indigenous populations from the justice system. Second, because the social, political, and economic characteristics of this region called my attention. Guerrero is a territory in which more than 60% of its population is living under poverty conditions, a situation that becomes worse among child and youth populations, as more than 70% are living in poverty (Consejo Nacional

de Evaluacion de la Politica de Desarrollo Social [CONEVAL], 2017a; Fondo de las Naciones

Unidas para la Infancia [UNICEF] & CONEVAL, 2016).

Finally, I was inspired to focus on Guerrero because of the tragic event on September 26,

2014, when forty-three students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in Guerrero

disappeared. This atrocity generated a profound outrage in me and moved me to make a call for

action. After the tragic event, I participated in protests and political mobilizations to pressure

authorities to pursue the investigation, demand justice, and solidarize with the families. Thus, I

take this research as part of my academic political engagement to raise my voice by addressing

those elements that have contributed to the violence that happens in communities and schools

and to engender alternatives so that our streets, schools, and publics spaces are supportive,

inspiring and respectful spaces for all youth.

In pursuit of the objective of the research, I used a case study methodology and drew upon

policy and textual analysis of institutional documents. The research was guided by the following

research questions:

1. What are the foundations of and approaches to school violence in Mexican national and
   state educational policies, and in what sociohistorical, cultural, economic, and political
   context were they created?

2. How are the approaches of the national and state school violence policies consistent
   and/or inconsistent with the structural and contextual factors that underpin school
   violence in Guerrero?

3. What improvements can be made to the policies so they can fully address the structural
   factors that are associated with school violence according to the local context?

The answers to these questions are reflected in each of the chapters that this work contains and that I organized as it will be described in the following section.

Description of the Chapters

In the introduction of this dissertation, I explained the personal and professional experiences that have inspired my work and led me to explore this topic. I also presented the research questions that guided my research and a brief explanation of the methodology and methods I followed.

Chapter 1 contains the literature review section of the research. I first present an overview of the studies that discuss the phenomenon of school violence. I highlight the research that discusses school violence from critical contemporary approaches and that explores the social, economic, political, historical, and ideological practices that underlie this problem. Likewise, I refer to those studies that discuss the manifestations of school violence in the Mexican context to understand more about the specific traits of the problem in Mexico. Finally, I explain the anti-colonial discourse framework and why this was a suitable framework to guide my research. In Chapter 2, I explain in detail the methodological approaches that I used to produce my case study of Guerrero and carry out the educational policy and textual research. I describe here the policy documents I choose to analyze and the method I followed to analyze them.

In Chapter 3, I describe the historical, social, political, and economic contexts of Guerrero – the case study at the heart of my research-. I provide some elements that help to better understand the conditions that surround the schooling experiences in this region and that are connected with manifestations of school violence. I pay special attention to elements such as state violence against Guerrero's population, particularly violence directed against Indigenous

and rural populations and to the social and economic policies that have led to the division of spaces in this territory.

I turn in Chapter 4 to the explanation of how the historical, social, and economic elements that I described in Chapter 3 influence the institutional context of schooling in the region. I show here how those schools that attend to the Indigenous, rural, and urban populations from marginalized areas are the ones with poorer infrastructure conditions, lack of teachers, and educational materials.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the policy and textual analysis. I explain that policies contain three main approaches to the prevention of school violence: social and emotional learning, a liberal approach towards diversity and difference, and some elements of a zero tolerance philosophy. I argue that these approaches are inconsistent with the structural and contextual factors underpinning school violence in Guerrero.

In Chapter 6, I close this work by proposing some alternative approaches to prevent school violence in Guerrero. Overall, the recommendations that I provide in this chapter look toward the construction of more supportive environments for students in Guerrero.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of studies around school violence, specifically highlighting critical contemporary approaches to this social problem. I will discuss some scholarly works that explain the social economic, political, historical and ideological practices underlying school violence. Then, I will specifically refer to the studies about school violence in Mexico and highlight those structural forces and social, economic and political elements that have been acknowledged as connected with school violence within the Mexican context. Finally, I will present anti-colonial discourse as the guiding framework for understanding the underlying elements of school violence practices in Guerrero. I will explain some of the key elements and how these are relevant to this research.

School Violence from Critical Contemporary Approaches

School violence studies have been dominated by approaches that portray violence as a result of individual pathological or psychological problems. They suggest that school violence is an individual act and place the responsibility on students and their families (Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982; Nansel et al., 2001; Sanders, 2004). In contrast, there are some critical contemporary approaches that move beyond this individualistic view and emphasize the systemic causes of violence, such as poverty, inequality and exclusion, the role of structural forces and the social context in which acts of violence are expressed (for example, Wortley 2008; Watts & Everells 2004).

From Critical Race Studies, Critical Race Feminist and Anti-colonial approaches, scholars in the United States have explained the role that the broader social context plays in shaping school violence. For example, Watts & Everells (2004), argue that school violence is a consequence of the structural violence and oppressive conditions to which racialized groups such as Black and

Latinos have been historically subjected. According to these authors, these circumstances make students feel angry and vulnerable and create conditions favorable toward violent behavior (p. 274). In a similar argument, Wun (2018) suggested in an analysis of school violence among youth Black and Latina females in United States, that some violent reactions of these students are influenced by factors such as poverty, gender and interpersonal violence. The author finds that outside school settings students deal with poverty, domestic and sexual violence. As a result, this internalized anger is often expressed outwardly through their behavior in schools.

Critical approaches to bullying, one of many manifestations of school violence, have pointed out the need to move beyond the conceptualization of this problem in terms of the individual and their behavior. For instance, Walton (2004, 2011) reveals how economically and socially oppressed students are also targets of exclusion and bullying in schools. The author also argues that bullying must be conceptualized as a social and political construction whose origins stem from the ideological relations of power (p. 113). Similarly, Winton and Tuters (2015) state that the social and cultural elements behind bullying (for instance marginalization and exclusion) must be addressed with the policies and strategies that are designed to prevent it.

On the whole, these studies recognize that a context of marginalization, exclusion and oppression influence the manifestation of violence in schools. Therefore, factors such as poverty within communities, racism against certain groups and different forms of violence to which students are exposed outside the school context, should be acknowledged when analyzing this phenomenon.

School Violence in Mexico

Scholarly works about school violence in Mexico have been mainly concerned with the identification of the different types of school violence occurring in the country. For instance, they

have offered detailed descriptions about episodes of violence in school settings and they have

documented the arguments that students give to justify the violence they exercise. Through the

results of these studies and the descriptions they offer about how violence manifests in schools, it

is possible to identify that violent practices in Mexican schools are based on various forms of

racism, classism, sexism, and ethnocentrism (Azaola, 2009; Baruch-Domínguez et al, 2016;

Pasillas, 2005; Velázquez, 2009 as cited in Carrillo, Prieto & Jiménez, 2013; Gómez, 2005; Gómez,

2013; Gómez & López, 2011; Chowell-Godínez, 2005 as cited in Carrillo, Prieto & Jiménez,

2013). I proceed to present some of the relevant findings about those scholarly works in the

following lines.

Racism. Results of studies about school violence demonstrate that bullying and other forms

of violence within the school settings are often expressions of deeply-rooted racism. In an

ethnographic study conducted in two public elementary schools in Mexico City, Gómez

(2005) described how harassment towards students, in addition to physical violence, is

accompanied by racist expressions such as: *"pinche naco[2], indio[3]..."* (p. 710). Similar studies

about bullying (Gómez, 2013; Gómez & López, 2011) reveal the frequent use of the

expression "*Indio*" when directing verbal abuse towards students, especially those with brown

skin, which is usually associated with Indigenous features. Likewise, Chowell-Godínez (2005

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[2] Naco is an adjective that comes from the word "totonaco" which is an indigenous group (Diccionario de la Real

Academia de la Lengua Español, 2018) and it has been used as a discriminatory adjective given to a person based on

their physical appearance (associated with indigenous features) and socioeconomical status (Consejo para Prevenir y

Eliminar la Discriminación de la Ciudad de México, n.d.).

[3] Within Mexican context "Indio" has been used with a pejorative and negative connotation or has been used as a

synonym of being a member of an exploited minority (Schryner, 1990).

as cited in Carillo Prieto & Jímenez, 2013) conducted a study about school violence in junior high schools in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico, and revealed that physical condition, speech patterns, and students' social and economic conditions, were determinants of victimization.

Gender norms. Homophobic bullying is one of the types of school violence that occurs within the Mexican school context. This violence is against students who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), or students who are perceived as such by others (UNESCO, 2012 as cited in Baruch-Domínguez et al, 2016). Homophobic bullying in schools in Mexico is linked to dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity that are reinforced and reproduced by students, teachers and principals (Prieto, 2006; Chávez, 2017; Azaola, 2009; Baruch-Domínguez et al, 2016; Gómez, 2013). For instance, Gómez (2013) describes how in an elementary school in the state of Colima, boys who carry out acts of violence against other students justify their actions with phrases such as: "if I don't do it [hit other students] they think I am a girl", "I am his father", or "he [a boy that was been harassed] didn't stay at school because he was like a girl…". Likewise, Prieto García (2006) describes episodes of physical violence in which aggressors tell the victims (male students) that they are being attacked because they do not behave according to social gender norms (p.105).

Violence against women. One common form of gender-based violence within Mexican school settings is against young women (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2009; Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, 2007; Azaola, 2009). Violence against women is perceived to be natural among students, teacher and principals and is even encouraged by schools because authorities support and reward the dominant models of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, sexual aggressions against young girls and women that occur within school contexts are either hidden or minimized by school authorities. (Rosado Rosado & Santana Rivas, 2010; Torres,

2012; Spitzer, 2004; Tapia Ibañez, 2012 as cited in Pereda, Hernández & Gallegos, 2013; Chávez, 2017).

Violence related to drug trafficking. A history of social and political violence and disruption in a country or region can influence how violence is manifested in the school context (Robinson, Saltmarsh, & Davies, 2012). In Mexico, this is evident when we consider what scholars have referred to as drug-related violence (violence related to drug trafficking groups and drug trafficking culture). The Studies of González, Inzunza and Benitez (2013), and the one of Chávez (2017) have demonstrated how students adopt some cultural practices and symbols that are common in drug trafficking groups. For instance, Chávez's (2017) study in the Mexican states of San Luis Potosí and Nuevo León reveals that teachers reported students pretending to be "zetitas" inside the schools. The "Zetas" are a notorious drug trafficking organization known for mass kidnappings and brutal murders. Likewise, Chávez (2017) notes that in some junior high schools of the state of San Luis Potosí, students are recruited by organized crime networks to work as "halcones" – that is, street level informants who warn gang members of the presence of federal police, soldiers or people considered as external to their territory (Ellingwood, 2009; Robinson, 2017). Cauce Ciudadano and Stanford University (2018) report similar findings in a study conducted in junior high schools in Ecatepec, in the state of Mexico. Their survey results revealed that 12% of the junior high school students had received an offer to engage in drug trafficking operations.

As revealed in the studies regarding school violence in Mexico, there are social, cultural and political elements that are associated with the manifestations of violence inside the schools, however, they have not been deeply explored. One of the aims of this research is to explore these factors to understand how approaches towards school violence in educational and

social policies are consistent and/or inconsistent with the structural and contextual factors that underpin school violence in Guerrero, Mexico. Thus, in the following lines I will present the discursive framework that will support and guide the understanding of those structural and contextual elements.

Anti-colonial Discourse Framework

Anti-colonial discourse is a guiding framework that highlights the transhistorical nature of colonialism and the ongoing effects on marginalized groups in terms of economic and social injustices and the perpetuation of inequalities (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) point out that anti-colonial discourse defines colonialism as anything that is imposing and dominating, and not just as the European colonization or colonization from one nation to another. This guiding framework looks into the daily manifestations of oppression (both material and nonmaterial and this includes psychological, spiritual and ideological aspects) and focuses on the understanding of power relations and the oppression resulted from colonial relations and their consequent repercussions (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Dei, 2000; Kempf, 2009). In education, for instance, anti-colonial framework suggests that among Indigenous peoples, there are other racialized communities that are excluded from the dominant pedagogical practices (Kempf, 2006).

The anti-colonial approach thus offers important insights through which to understand the nature and extent of domination. It does not focus on single categories of oppression such as race, class, gender and ethnicity, but rather asks us to consider how these different categories, that serve as sites of oppression, intersect with each other (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). This implies that an anti-colonial framework seeks to understand the different sites of oppression and how they work together (Kempf, 2009). Moreover, an anti-colonial stance questions and

deconstructs dominant discourses by emphasizing the importance of context, which is to be considered a key element of analysis (Dei, 2006).

The use of an anti-colonial discourse framework in this research is important because, like most Latin American countries, Mexico went through a process of colonization marked by the violence of territorial devastation, slavery, exploitation and oppression (Moraña, Dussel, & Jáuregui, 2008). Moreover, the effects of colonialism are still visible in contemporary Mexico and reflected in the country's social inequalities, the marginalization of Indigenous and rural communities and the countless manifestations of violence particularly within these marginalized areas. The region of Guerrero, which is the focus of this study, has been historically impoverished and characterized by various manifestations of violence. In that respect, the anti-colonial framework is particularly important in my attempt to understand the various forms of oppression that constitute the basis of school violence in Mexico.

One of the key elements in an anti-colonial framework is the notion of resistance. As Dei and Kempf (2006) point out, anti-colonial discourse focuses on those sites where the oppressed have historically fought against domination. It is about the struggles of the "contamination of the present and the stealing of people's future" (p. 11). Equally important is that anti-colonial discourse favors the epistemologies of the marginalized and aims to disrupt dominant modes of thought that reproduces colonial relations (Dei, 2006). In this study, therefore, I offer an alternate explanation for the various forms of violence manifested within school settings by exploring the structural causes of violence, which have been left largely unaddressed in dominant discourse about this phenomenon in Mexico.

Race and racialization in an anti-colonial framework. The question of race is a salient element in anti-colonial thought, it is considered as a central element of oppression and a

significant feature when analyzing the structural causes underlying school violence. Race is conceptualized as a socially constructed category that, notwithstanding its lack of well-grounded scientific validity, remains a central category through which we came to understand and interpret ourselves and our world (Dei, 1996). Fanon (1963) suggested that in colonies, colonizers intentionally divide the world into two different spaces and race is the category that determines who belongs to each of them (p.3). Likewise, Memmi (1965) observed that colonizers construct those characteristics that differentiate them from the colonized and justify this as the essence of the rejection and domination. Colonizers convey these differences as part of the basic nature of the colonized so that the differences seem unable to change.

Race, as it has been pointed out by Omi and Winant (1994), is not a fixed concept. It is the result of the social and historical process. That is, the selection of certain particular human characteristics that allow racial classification in a society, is based upon the political and social struggles of a particular time. According to these authors, to understand why race continues to structure the social world, it is necessary to look into the process of racial formation, which they define as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (p.55).

Closely related to the idea of racial formation is the concept of racialization. Murji and Solomos (2004) argued that racialization is viewed as fundamental to the construction of racial identities and racial meanings in processes of racial formation. Thus, according to these authors, racialization is part of, but not equivalent to the racial formation process that Omi and Winant formulated. In the words of Simpson, James, and Mack (2011), racialization can be defined as "the ways in which individuals and institutions categorize and treat people and groups in racial terms" (p. 298). All in all, racialization involves a process through which meanings of race are

made and that allows the categorization and treatment of people according to those racial meanings.

While recognizing that skin color is a primary factor in the racialization of society, an anti-colonial framework acknowledges that there are other means through which social groups are "distinguished" to expose them to dissimilar and unfair treatment (Dei, 1996; Dei & Calliste, 2000). For instance, today we recognize that cultural, religious and/or language differences are markers of race through which racist practices are grounded (Dei, 1996). Racialization becomes a central concept because it is identified as an historical construction that permits the white supremacist system of power to categorize individuals for differential and unequal treatment along racial, cultural, biological and phenotypical lines (Dei, 1996; Dei, 2006). This differential and unequal treatment is evident when considering how certain spaces, policies and/or institutional practices are organized in racial terms, and thus impact these racialized population as it will see in the following lines.

Internal colonies. Fanon (1963) first referred to the notion of internal colonies when explaining that the world has been compartmentalized into two different spaces: the one of the colonizers, full of services and resources and the one of the colonized, which is characterized by poverty, hunger and overall scarcity. This division is intentional and, according to Fanon (1963), race is the category that indicates who belongs to each world. In the same line, Razack (2000) argues that spaces are organized in such a way that they reproduce racial hierarchies and sustain unequal social relations. According to Razack (2000), these spatial practices are often accomplished through the law that delineates which spaces belong to the settlers and which ones go to the natives (p. 130).

Watts and Erevelles (2004) argue that the aim of such a configuration of spaces is to create situations of "haves" and "have-nots", which are guided by the principles of capitalism, and in which the two different worlds have to operate under the same rules but with different results and in different circumstances (p. 284). These authors (2004) explain that the economic exploitation of the marginalized sectors, combined with residential segregation makes possible the creation of two very different societies, one that is white and affluent and the other that is racialized and poor. Thus, internal colonies (that is, the geographically, economically and racially segregated societies within the dominant society) offer limited alternatives to racialized populations in terms of employment, education and health. Furthermore, these internal colonies are under constant police surveillance and other coercive institutions, which, as I will explain in the next few lines, creates circumstances favorable to violence against racialized minorities.

States of Exemption and State Violence. States of exemption are defined as those legal measures that governments enact to suspend rights alleging the interest of the national security and the protection of the state from those who represent a threat to the social order (Razack, 2007). This social order, as Razack explains, is organized along racial terms and accordingly, it allows the world to be divided between the "deserving" and the "undeserving", the "us" and the "others". Those who represent the threat to the state are those who are constructed as the racialized others and that possess inherent differences. Razack (2007) argues that states of exception are invoked precisely when it is claimed that these differences represent a danger to the state. As Agamben (2005) claims, states of exemption have become one of the fundamental practices of the modern democratic states (pp.2-3). Moreover, Razack (2007) argues that the logic of exception enables the states to determine who belongs and who does not belong and to

create new practices of governance that will apply to those spaces or subjects that they determine
as not being part of the community.

State violence is one of the government practices that applies to those spaces. Maynard (2017)
defines this as "the complex array of harm experienced by marginalized social groups that are
caused by government (or government-founded) policies, actions and inactions" (p. 6). Maynard
(2017) observes state violence can be administered by many institutions, not only by the criminal
justice system as is usually imagined. For instance, medical services and schools also exercise
state violence when they expose marginalized populations to certain punishments, social control
and surveillance. Maynard's (2017) research demonstrates how state violence is perpetuated
along race, class and gender lines, and illuminates how it has targeted and impacted different
groups of individuals through history, as notions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender evolve. As
it will be described in the next chapter, state violence in Mexico has impacted some spaces in
Mexico that have been intentionally configured as internal colonies, in which states of
exemption are invoked. These spaces are mainly inhabited by racialized populations in Mexico.
In the following lines, the racialization process in Mexico will be described.

Processes of Racialization in Mexico. To understand some of the social effects that
racialization has in Mexico, and more specifically, in the Mexican educational context, it is
necessary to look into the historical processes of racialization in the country. Here, *mestizaje* is a
key term because it has been the prevailing racial ideology and a key feature in the project
nation-state formation that took place during the 19th century (Moreno Figueroa, 2010, p.390).
Mestizaje describes the biological and cultural mix between Europeans and the Indigenous Latin
American populations that emerged during the colonization period, and at the same time was

created as an official discourse through which the identities of national subjects were defined (Moreno Figueroa, 2012).

At the center of *Mestizaje* is the idea of whiteness. Even though it was promoted as being distinct from the racial ideology prevailing at the time in the United States and Europe because of its supposed acceptance of racial mixing (Saldívar, 2012), at the core is the idea that Indigenous and Black populations, which are constructed as the inferior others, can be improved by mixing with white Europeans. The ideal subject then becomes the one who could get closer to the white subject (Moreno Figueroa, 2012), both physically and culturally. This ideal subject could be achieved in different ways. For instance, those who were not phenotypically or culturally white could become white through social-sexual relations with those visibly whiter, by the abandonment of rurality (because this was the place of less whiteness), by embodying the supposed virtues of whites such as education or religious values, and/or by investing in successful business or other economic activities that allowed them to move to a higher social class (Goldberg, 2009). Consequently, as Goldberg (2009) points out, Indigenous populations, if not assimilated by the whitening process, are ignored or devastated and African populations become invisible or marginalized (p. 219).

After the period of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, which was as an armed rebellion in the country based on ideals of social justice and equity, *mestizaje* was promoted as the national identity project to create a new sense of nation. It was articulated in terms of national belonging and as the representation of equality and justice (Moreno Figueroa, 2010; Saldívar, 2014). However, *mestizaje* became also the ideology to justify exclusions and social stratification (Saldívar, 2014). For instance, it has had an important role in the configuration of racial representation of the different regions in the country. That is, the north of the country as white

space, prosperous and industrialized; the center as *mestizo* and the south as Indigenous, rural,

poor and culturally backward (Mora, 2017; Saldívar, 2012). As a result, differentiated

developmental policies were (and have been) created in these regions, and their effects can still

be felt today. The poorest regions in the country, Guerrero, Chiapas and Oaxaca, located in

South Mexico, are also the regions with the most concentration of peoples from Indigenous and

African descent (CONEVAL, 2017a; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geofrafía [INEGI],

2012). Overall, *mestizaje* as a racial project, has shaped the redistribution of privileges among

racial lines as well as the way in which Mexican society understands and relate to differences.

In the 1940's, ethnicity became a central concept in the racial project and the ethnic paradigm

started to strongly resonate in the state policies (Saldívar, 2014). The ethnic paradigm promoted

the idea that cultural diversity was the main obstacle for national unity and that cultural

differences, and not the racial hierarchies, were the reason behind the lack of unity and harmony

(Saldívar, 2012). Thus, diverse state policies were implemented based upon the idea of

integration and assimilation of the rural Indigenous population (Saldívar, 2014). Example of this

were the educational policies implemented first based on *castellanización* (i.e. the teaching of

Spanish) for the subsequent assimilation of the native population to the *mestizo* ideal, and then

based on a multicultural model (Fuentes & Nieto, 2011).

From the 1990's, aligned with the neoliberal policies of the time, the focus of state policies

was on liberal notions of pluralism and diversity. These ideas were promoted as a promise of

equality and democratic participation and were based in the recognition of cultural differences.

These notions prevail until today and are the base of policies such as the Intercultural educational

policy (Coordinación General Intercultural Bilingüe, n/d). The primary assumption of this policy

is the existence of the "other" in the national scenario whose culture is different from "ours"

(Saldívar, 2014). That "ours", on the whole, entails the characteristics of the *mestizo* ideal and thus of the national identity.

This chapter offers a description of the broader social forces and contextual elements that play an important role in the manifestation of violence inside schools – particularly in the Mexican State of Guerrero, but also more broadly in the country. A context of racialized, classed, and gendered poverty, exclusion and oppression creates the necessary conditions for a violent environment and violent behavior within schools. In Mexico, there is a gap in literature regarding studies that explain how and why school violence emerges more in certain contexts than others. However, available research demonstrate that manifestations of violence involve, among others, racializing and racist practices, classism and forms of gender-based violence, and are also related within a broader context of social and political violence (e.g., the case of drug-related violence and the State's responses to this phenomenon.) The anti-colonial discourse framework explored in this chapter anchors the chapter's critical exploration of the social, historical, political and economic context of Guerrero and it provides a foundational understanding of the structural and systemic elements that contribute to an increase in school violence in this particular region.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter I present the methodological approaches I used to carry out my research. First, I explain why I decided to choose a case study methodology and how I applied it to my research. Second, I briefly explain Critical Policy Analysis, its policy cycle and the three contexts that are considered within it: the context of influence, context of text production and context of practice. I also explain why in this project I chose to focus only on the context of influence and the context of text production. Likewise, I describe how the use of Critical Policy Analysis was relevant to answering the research questions of this study. Then, I expose the data collection process I followed and the policy documents I chose to focus on for the policy text analysis. I conclude this chapter by describing the analytical process of the data that I followed.

Case Study

A case study approach is used when the research seeks to generate a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009), including an understanding of the phenomenon and its social, political, economic and other contextual conditions (Stake, 2005). It is also, as Merriam (1998, as cited in Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013) defines it, an approach that has a delimited unit or object of study around which there are also a set of boundaries that define what is going to be studied.

I argue that a case study is a suitable approach because I wanted to carry on an intensive analysis of the structural and contextual elements in a specific place – Guerrero, Mexico – that shape the manifestations of school violence in this context. Likewise, to analyze how policies were consistent with this local context, I considered that delimiting the research to a case study of one of the Mexican federations was the most appropriate to this interest. Initially, the research was intended to be a cross-state comparison between the federation of Guerrero and the

federation of Mexico. I had intended to study the differences and similarities between the local

contexts of the two states and their policies. As I first started to gather information about the

historical context of Guerrero and the state of Mexico, however, I found my attention called to

some elements in Guerrero's history that were closely related to the structural factors that my

initial literature review acknowledged as underlying school violence (i.e. marginalization, state

violence). Therefore, I decided to pursue a more in-depth analysis of Guerrero to analyze in more

detail those factors surrounding school violence and the degree to which the policy-approach to

school violence addresses the underlying structural determinants.

Policy Analysis

This study conceived policies as shaped by and producing social and political discourses.

Policy, therefore, is seen as imbued with values, and thus a policy analysis must look into the

economic, political, social, cultural and historical contexts that surround its creation, recreation

and implementation (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Taylor, 1997; Winton, 2012 as cited in Winton

& Tuters, 2015).

Following the above criteria, I thus considered the study of the policies as a cycle comprised

of three main contexts: influence, text production and practice (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992).

According to Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) the *context of influence* is defined as the moment

where policy is initiated, actors become involved and social networks interact to influence the

policy. The *context of policy text production* is the context in which policies are represented

within policy texts. Texts are not only official or legal documents, but also speeches, public

performances or official videos that represent policies. They reflect the evolution and

contradictions of policies, so they have to be read in relation to the time and place of production.

Finally, the *context of practice* refers to the recreation and interpretation of policies and the actions taken in the name of the policies.

In this research, I focused on the relationship between the context of influence and the context of text production. I used some of the elements of the historical and social context of Guerrero in the analysis of the context of influence to identify how or in which ways these elements were influencing the policies and how they were represented in the context of text production. Then, in the context of text production, I identified how the representations in the policy texts about school violence were consistent with the elements underlying school violence in Guerrero that I previously described because the words that are used to define a problem in policies also create limits and possibilities for policy solutions (Thomas, 2005, p. 26). Moreover, as Smith (1993) suggests, texts are active components of social organization and social relations. They contain concepts that organize how a policy is put into practice in the daily life of the schools and in the work of practitioners. Conceiving of policy in these ways allows me to understand how the policy texts define the problem of school violence and possible solutions as well as the ways these definitions and interventions fit (or not) with the local contexts of schools in Guerrero.

Data Collection

I decided to start this process by navigating the website of the federal Ministry of Education. I identified that I needed to go directly to the specific section of the *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* (PNCE for now on as its acronym in Spanish), which, based on my previous knowledge and professional experience regarding educational policies in Mexico, I knew was the main program related to the topic of interest. There, I identified several documents that described the strategies of the PNCE to target schools, educational materials and

evaluations. I scanned these documents and I decided to focus on the text analysis of two documents:

1. The foundational document of the *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar.* This text explains the evolution of the program, the description of the problem and the justification, conceptual framework and description of the program's strategies.

2. *Guía para la implementación y operación del Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar. Ciclo 2017-2018.* This document is an extended version of the foundational document after which it was launched. It contains guidelines for the implementation of the program.

The decision to center my investigation on these two documents was made because they contain the relevant information for my research question. Likewise, although I am aware that policies are also comprised of laws, projects, resources, etc., for purposes of this study I decided to concentrate on the textual analysis of the policy documents of this program because, as I will explain later, this is the main strategy of the national government to prevent school violence. Additionally, I decided to include the analysis of a video in which the Director of the program explained, during an interview on national television, the decision to incorporate certain approaches to address school violence within the program. This was relevant because this video was cited in one of the documents as part of the materials that principals and teachers can use to better understand the program and because it extends the explanations that are contained in the documents.

In the state-level policies, I have had to use creative ways to obtain information for the study because the web page of the Ministry of Education has been unavailable since I started this process (August 2018) and the documents available on other sites did not indicate any relevant information about policies to prevent school violence. I decided to look into the social media

channels of the Ministry of Education of Guerrero to identify if they were announcing any kind

of activities related to school violence prevention. Through their Facebook and Twitter accounts,

I realized that they were running three programs in public schools related to the topic. Then, I

submitted four different right of information requests to obtain all the documents containing

information about these programs. The formal request was to the Ministry of Education, the

Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Youth and Childhood as I identified that they

oversee the three different programs to target school violence and the three are implemented at

the school level. With the information obtained I decided to analyze the following documents:

1. *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar. Protocolo para la Prevención, Detección y
   Actuación en Caso de Acoso Escolar. Guerrero.* (Action plan for the prevention, detection
   and treatment of school bullying)

2. *Plan de Trabajo del Programa Nacional y Estatal de Convivencia Escolar 2018.* (Work
   plan of the National and State Program for School Coexistence)

Finally, I decided to include in the textual analysis some of the Tweets and Facebooks posts

that the Ministry of Education in Guerrero and the Ministry of Public Security published to

communicate the actions of the programs to prevent school violence. I did this because while

initially looking for the information available, I noticed that images they were including in their

posts contained relevant information that complemented or better exemplified the information

contained in the documents.

Data Analysis

To conduct the analysis of the policy texts, first I used the framework proposed by Fairclough

(2003) because it allowed me to best identify the approaches that are represented in the policy

texts regarding school violence. Fairclough (2003) proposes the analysis of twelve elements from which I chose to focus on the following:

Intertextuality. This is directed to the analysis of the actual elements of other texts that appear in the text as well as the identification of the voices (texts) that are significantly excluded (Fairclough, 2003). This is particularly relevant to this research because I identified the influences on the definition of school violence that appeared in the policy, the data and facts that were cited and the ones that were excluded. The latter allowed me to compare in the discussion section how these influences were relevant to the local contexts that were identified.

Assumptions. This is the identification of the assumptions about what exists, what is, can, or will be, and what is good or desirable. These assumptions are not attributed to a specific text or author but rather are implicit. I used this element of Fairclough's framework to identify the assumptions that the policy made about who is responsible for violence or why it is important to focus on its prevention.

Discourses. Fairclough (2003) defines this as the identification of the representations of a particular part of the world with a particular perspective by answering: what discourses are drawn upon in the text, and how are they textured together? Is there any significant mixing of discourses?

Representation of social events. Social events are those elements such as persons, social relations, institutional forms, times, places and objects that are represented in the texts. Fairclough (2003) also encourages the identification of those elements that are most salient and how abstractly or concretely they are represented.

Additionally, based on these four elements and considering my research questions and my theoretical framework, I chose to ask the following questions when reviewing the texts:

- What references are made in the texts to race, gender and class related to school violence and in which context?

- What references are made to Indigenous peoples and in which context?

- What references are made to the broader social context surrounding school violence?

Analytical Process for Text Analysis

The analytical process that I followed is based on Ritchie and Spencer (2002) and Schreier (2014). Ritchie and Spencer (2002) propose five stages which I loosely followed in my analytic process: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping and interpretation.

Familiarization. This stage concerns the first immersion into the data in order to gain a first understanding of the range and diversity of the materials. For this research, I first skimmed the selected policy documents paying special attention to aspects such as the headlines and introduction of paragraphs. Likewise, I started to highlight all those references that were made to school violence, bullying, physical and verbal aggressions, gender, race, and ethnicity. I listed key ideas and recurrent topics that were related to my research questions and to the elements proposed by Fairclough (2003) for the textual analysis. Accordingly, I also wrote down those important aspects that I did not find represented within the texts to later analyze it with further detail.

Identifying thematical framework. To organize the material into themes for its examination, I first draw upon my research questions, the four elements from Fairclough's (2003) framework, the theoretical principals of an anti-colonial framework, and the guiding questions I formulated. I came up with 10 main themes that were refined later, and I created subthemes for each of them. The subthemes derivate from the initial notes I came up in the

familiarization stage process. I created a code for each of the themes and subthemes, for example: "Impacts on learning outcomes"; "Impacts of school environment", "Differences approach". For naming the codes, I integrated some of the elements that I previously revised in my literature review section. For instance, during the familiarization process I realized that the policy documents were constantly referring to concepts such as embracement of diversity or respect to the diversity. These concepts are related to the differences approach that I referred in the literature review as a key component of the Mexican state racial project. Therefore, I named the code "Differences approach" to identify all the statements related with this perspective within the policies.

Indexing. In this stage all the data are read and marked according to the themes previously formulated (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Here, I read the documents line by line, I selected quotations (highlighted them) and assigned them one of various codes. During these process, new themes emerged, and I assigned them a code. For instance, during this stage I recognized diverse elements related to "investigative procedures" in schools. Likewise, in some cases, I reviewed some of the references that the texts made to other documents or educational materials and, if relevant, I assigned codes.

Charting. This stage involved the rearrangement of the data according to the appropriate thematic reference (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). For this, I first transcribed the quotes into different small pieces of papers and placed them on large pieces of cardboard that were identified by a given code. For instance, under the "Impacts on learning outcomes", I placed all the quotes that highlighted the importance of school violence prevention because of its impact on learning outcomes or academic achievement. Some quotes were put into more than one cardboard.

After this, I created three main charts in a spreadsheet in which I organized the data. Each chart contained one theme related with the research question. The example for one of the charts addressing the question of the main approaches finding in the policy is shown in Figure 1.

Approaches to prevent school violence			
	PNCE (Federal)	Guía PNCE (Federal)	PNCE (Local)	Plan de Trabajo del Programa Nacional y Estatal de Convivencia Escolar 2018
Social and emotional learning				
Differences approach				
Zero tolerance				

Figure 1. Example of chart used to arrange the data

I filled in the charts by collocating the quotes, previously coded, into the corresponding cell. Each of the quotes in the chart contained the page number and paragraph number to facilitate its citation in the following stages of this thesis. During this process I went back to the literature to clarify some of the definitions and approaches. For instance, after reviewing the quotes I placed under the "investigative procedure" group, I revisited the literature review section of this research and I review other relevant documents regarding school violence policies. I found there that some elements were related with zero tolerance approach, thus, when organizing the chart, I decided to name the subtheme as "zero tolerance". This also means that while organizing this data I was starting the mapping and interpretation process to which Ritchie and Spencer (2002) refer to and that I now explain.

Mapping and interpretation. In this final stage I started to review the information of the charts to look for patterns and connections. I began with the description of the content of the charts. For instance, I described the different approaches for school violence prevention that I found and how these were presented in the policy documents. Likewise, in accordance with the anti-colonial theoretical framework guiding this thesis, I started to identify the missing information in each of the charts. For instance, voices, actors, social events, that were not represented but that according to my literature review and to historical and contextual elements previously analysed, are relevant in the study of school violence (i.e. indigenous population, marginalization, violence outside school context). This mapping and interpretation process allowed me to visualize the findings of this research.

In sum, I chose to undertake a case study approach because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts surrounding the school violence phenomenon in one of the Mexican federations, Guerrero, to later explore the degree to which the policy-approach to school violence addresses the underlying structural determinants. Likewise, I chose to adopt the policy cycle approach because this allowed me to understand the elements surrounding the creation and production of the policies and how these were related to the previous social and historical elements identified in Guerrero's context. Finally, Fairclough's framework served as a tool to critically analyze the data and conduct the analytical process of the policy documents.

Chapter 3: Guerrero's Historical, Social and Economic Context

Before the period of the conquest of Mexico and colonial occupation by Spain in 1521, the region of what today is the Mexican federation of Guerrero, was one of the tributary provinces of the Mexicas. Meaning that was a province that had to pay "tribute" mainly with food or services to the Mexicas. During what is officially known as the period of the colonial occupation by Spain (1521-1821), Guerrero was an important region for the Spanish because of their vast mineral territory located in the city of Taxco, and the seaport located in the city of Acapulco that allowed the arrival of products from other parts of the world (Bartra, 1996).

During the war for independence that started in 1810, the region of Guerrero actively participated in the armed movement and was a primary site for the recruitment of military personnel. The war for independence was an armed revolution that ended with Spanish rule in Mexico. It was initiated mainly by the intellectual *criollo* (creole) elite in the country. *Criollos* were Spanish descendants born in Mexico and that were highly educated. However, they could not occupy privileged positions in the political, economic and social life of the nation because these positions were reserved for Spanish immigrants (Lira & Muro, 1994; Villoro, 1994). This caused a great deal of resentment and so the Criollos started to oppose to the existing order, first by attempting to initiate some institutional reforms that were ultimately resisted by the privileged class. The Criollos started to realize that without the support of the working class (Indigenous peasants mainly), they would be unable to successful carry out a program of social reform. This obliged Criollos to look for support within the working classes, which they were able to obtain due to resentment caused by the various forms of oppression to which the working class was subjected under Spanish colonial rule (Villoro, 1994).

The military personnel that joined the armed movement in the region of Guerrero later became important figures in the achievement of the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821. For example, Guerrero is named after Vicente Guerrero, who was a key figure in the independence movement (Bartra, 1996; Illades, 2000). It is important to highlight here that, even though the official colonial rule eventually ended, the colonial practices in Mexico and in most of the Latin American countries have not in fact ceased and continue to mark the history of these nations (Moraña et al., 2008) as it will be explained throughout the document.

After independence, Guerrero was formally declared a state (federation) of Mexico and ever since it has been a territory characterized by poverty, inequality and discrimination that, among other consequences, has resulted in the emergence of diverse social and political movements founded by the peasantry, Indigenous organizations, teachers' unions and students' movements. In a large part due to ongoing state repression of activist movements, several Guerrilla movements emerged (Illades, 2014). Additionally, Guerrero has become a primary and strategic site for both the cultivation of opium poppies and the transportation of drugs (Hope, 2016). In this context, Guerrero has become a region shaped by crime and violence and a central site of organized criminal activity.

This chapter has two main purposes. First, I will explore the historical, social and political context of Guerrero to enable a better understanding of the context in which school violence policies were created and implemented in the state. Second, I will explain those elements of the historical, social and economic context of Guerrero that promote violence and that shape the lives of students outside the school context. As seen in Chapter 1, material conditions such as poverty and marginalization, and other forms of structural violence such as racialization or sexism influence the creation of the "violent student" or the conditions in which violence

between students proliferates (Robinson et al., 2012; Walton, 2004; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Winton & Tuters, 2015; Wun, 2018). Researchers suggest that analyses of school violence must move beyond merely concentrating on individual risk factors; rather, research must focus on other forms of violence that surround students outside the school context. In other words, we must understand the antecedents and context in which violence proliferates if we want to prevent it.

In line with the anti-colonial framework that guides this research, I will first explore the forms of structural violence that have surrounded Guerrero's population. In doing so, I will explain how different social and economic policies were implemented in the region and the impact this has had on the predominantly poor population. I will explain the interaction between structural violence and other forms of direct state violence to which the population of Guerrero is exposed. I will specifically refer to the government's violent response to social and political movements in the region and the quasi-permanent state of militarization that prevails in the state. I will then attempt to demonstrate how these forms and dimensions of violence, which shape social life outside of schools need to be taken into consideration when analyzing manifestations of violence occurring *within* educational settings. Finally, I will talk about specific forms of resistance to violence that have emerged from within the Indigenous communities of Guerrero.

Understanding the Historically Marginalized Context of Guerrero

Studying the historical context of Guerrero requires an examination of the state's unique social and political identity in comparison to the rest of the country, and how this unique social and political identity contributes to the marginalization of certain sectors of the population. My argument here is that zones of Guerrero have been configured into what Fanon (1963) refers to as internal colonies and as such has been set at the periphery. As defined in the literature review

section, Fanon uses internal colonies to indicate how the dominant groups (colonizers) intentionally divide the world into two different spaces based on race. As explained, in the country Indigenous people and those who are distant from the mestizo ideal, constitute the "racialized others". Consequently, the spaces in Guerrero that are closer to the Indigenous than to the mestizo ideal, are the ones that have been configured as internal colonies. To exemplify this, I will present the development of two different spaces within Guerrero: the rural area of la *Montaña* and la *Costa,* and the city of Acapulco.

By the end of the 19th century, which was the confirmation period of the nation-state in Mexico, several social and economic policies were implemented within the country. However, Guerrero and its rural and Indigenous communities remained at the margins of many of these polices. For instance, communication routes such as the railway lines, arrived in Guerrero much later than in the rest of the country and were mainly constructed to the North of the territory (Illades, 2000). Likewise, the few roads that allowed communication between Guerrero and other sites in Mexico only benefited certain cities such as Acapulco, Iguala or Chilpancingo, while the population of *La Montaña* or *La Costa* (mainly Indigenous territory) were cut off and set aside when it came to health and educational services (hospitals and schools).

This situation has not improved over time. For example, Villaseñor-Franco, Toscana-Aparicio, and Granados-Ramírez (2017) state that Guerrero is the region in Mexico with the lowest density of highways in the country, leading to social and territorial segregation. These authors mention that in one of the biggest natural disasters that occurred in Mexico in 2013, this region was devastated because its isolated location prevented victims from gain quick access to emergency services, potable water, food and medication. Today, the majority of the population of *La Montaña* and *La Costa* live under highly marginalized conditions (Consejo Nacional de

Población, 2016) and municipalities such as Coachapa el Grande, have the lowest percentage of human development in the country according to the *Human Development Index* (United Nationals Development Fund, 2015).

The city of Acapulco was a main point of attention for the federal government due to its strategic location and vast natural resources. In the beginning of the 20th century Acapulco was promoted as one of the main tourist destinations of the country. Consequently, the government invested significant resources for the development of the tourist industry and for the attraction of international investment (Illades, 2000). The expansion of the tourist industry in Acapulco was based in part on the expropriation of communal land (ejidos) that benefited the private sector and the development of high-value real state (Illades, 2014; Sáiz, 1987). The expropriation of the communal land had, as one effect, that some of the displaced communities established in informal settlements and some others were relocated in lands outside the city (Alcaraz M. & Salgado G., 2016). Informal settlements are commonly identified as spaces lacking access to services, such as water and sanitation, and lack of legal property documentation or land use permissions (Wigle, 2014). It should be pointed out how the division of spaces in Acapulco has been configured by elements such as the dispossession of lands through the creation of laws and policies that shaped who was able to inhabit each space. In this sense, along with race, class has been a determinant factor in the delimitation of the areas. Outside the areas owned by hotels and wealthy neighborhoods, many zones lacked basic services (potable water, drainage) housing and employment for the population (Illades, 2000). Acapulco is today among the Mexican cities with the largest percentage of the population living in extreme poverty (CONEVAL, 2017b) and one of cities with the highest rates of violence in the country (Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad, 2017).

These zones of Guerrero, that I argue have been configured as internal colonies, have not only been set at the margins of social policies, but also, the programs that have been operating in the region to alleviate poverty, underpin a racial logic that also works as a form of oppression. In a study about the criminalization of poverty in the region of *La Montaña,* Mora (2017) reveals how the program *Prospera,* which has been the main poverty alleviation strategy in Mexico since the 1990's operates under the premise that the cultural traits of Indigenous and rural population are those that prevent their social mobility. The implicit logic of the program frames Indigenous populations as backward and incapable of effectively participating in economic market opportunities due to inadequate social and cultural habits (p.75). In this way, Mora (2017) observes they become the "state's by-product of neoliberal development", and in this process they are framed as having little cultural, economic or human value (p.76). The social relations of internal colonization relate to school violence because, according to Watts and Erevelles (2004), there are often few alternatives for access to meaningful educational processes or to decent wages for the youth in these spaces, creating conditions that favor violent behavior. Second, the devaluation of life allows for others forms of state violence that impact the lives of students in the region outside the school context, an idea I will explore in the following section.

State Violence and Social and Political Mobilization in Guerrero

Historically, Guerrero has been home to a number of social and political movements, especially in the regions of *La Montaña* and *La Costa* – regions which, as I indicate above, are mainly inhabited by Indigenous populations (Illades, 2000). The mobilization of social movements has been accompanied by an intense military and police presence, which has resulted in state violence (harassment and assassination) against Guerrero civilians. In the following paragraphs I bring the reader's attention to the ways that the processes of racialization that have

shaped the history of social life in Guerrero have made it possible to define this population the racial others, legitimatize forms of state violence, and create states of exception (Razack, 2007) where national norms and laws do not apply.

The consistency of state violence and its impact on individuals and families, leads to different scenarios that shape what happens in schools – including increased rates of violence in these social and institutional spaces. The brutality and the symbols used by the state services such as the military and police forces, serve not only as inhibitors but also as stimulants for action, anger and rage among the population (Fanon, 1963). In other words, as Dei and Simmons (2010) assert, violence can be both a form of resistance and a reaction to the systemic violence and social exclusion that oppressed populations experience (p. 6). Thus, it is necessary to understand how youth view and use violence as an essential action to get rid of the anger and frustration, reclaim dignity and react to the systemic oppression to which they have been subjected.

Episodic violence became more commonplace after the independence movement, as Guerrero was a site of multiple rural, working-class, and teacher uprisings through which people demanded the redistribution of land, improvement of working conditions and better wages for workers (Illades, 2000, 2014). These uprising, as Illades (2014) and Bartra (1996) argued, led to some necessary social changes such as redistribution of land among the peasants and constructions of schools. However, they were accompanied by high levels of violence and multiples change in governors and city mayors. As Illades (2014) pointed out, the increase in violence was a result of the government's repressive response to uprisings via the deployment of military forces, which in turn led to violent resistance from social organizations.

In the 1960's and 1970's, Guerrero was a central site of the guerrilla movement and a region in constant conflict. Lucio Cabañas, a professor and graduate from the Rural Teacher's college of

Ayotzinapa, created a political party called the Party of the Poor[4], which constituted the base of

the armed movement (Illades, 2014). The party was created after violent and repressive actions

of the government against university students and rural educators in Guerrero (Illades, 2014).

The actions of the guerrilla movement led to constant military presence in the region of Guerrero

(Bartra, 1996; Illades, 2014). Constant military surveillance served as an instigator for more

violence, with the guerrilla movement determined to counter and resist the actions of the

government forces (Illades, 2014). Moreover, the government's actions against the guerrillas

during those years led to grave human rights violations against the population as well as several

civilian-kidnappings (Bartra 1996; Illades, 2014).

Drawing on Razack's (2007) conceptualization of racial thinking and racialization and Mora's

(2017) study about criminalization of poverty in the region of *La Montaña,* I argue that the state

violence directed against the people of Guerrero is based on a process of racialization that allows

the state to conceive of this population (composed mainly of Indigenous peoples and other

racialized bodies) as inferior and devalued and thus as a threat to state values. Furthermore, the

guerrilla movement in Guerrero caused the state to employ different measures that involved the

surveillance of the population, arbitrary detentions, physical violence and enforced

disappearances[5] among others, in the name of securitization (Gamiño Muñoz, 2017; Illades,

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[4] In Spanish *Partido de los Pobres*

[5] Enforced disappearance, according to the United Nations (2019) is the " arrest, detention, abduction or any

other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the

authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty

or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the

protection of the law" (para. 9).

2014). That is, Guerrero became a state of exemption because the state, in this determined space, authorized the physical elimination, control, disappearance and/or deprivation of racialized bodies deemed impossible to be integrated within the political system (Razack, 2007, p.13; Goldberg, 2009, p.334).

The state's response to these movements resulted in a "quasi-permanent militarization" of the daily life in some regions of Guerrero that amongst others, resulted in episodes of direct state violence against the population (Mora, 2017). For instance, in 1995, 17 people from a farmers' organization were killed by the state police of Guerrero. The group was on its way to a protest to demand the liberation of one of their rural leaders when they were intercepted by the police. The farmers' organization was formed in 1994 mainly to demand services and resources (schools, hospitals, materials for agricultural work) for their communities and was characterized by using methods such as the take-over of government buildings or closing important roads (Illades, 2014). Another incident occurred in 1998, in the community of *El Charco,* where10 Indigenous peoples and one student were killed by the military due to suspicions over their supposed connections to the guerrilla movement. The conflict in *El Charco* arose in 1997 when 30 Indigenous groups demanded the departure of the military from their communities due to constant military harassment by these. Ostensibly, the military were in the communities to implement actions designed to put an end to the guerrilla movement (Quintero and Wences, 2005).

Guerrero's population continued with an intense social and political mobilization rooted in demands for social justice, even as people continue to be subjected to militarization and state violence. Quintero and Wences (2005) conclude that the history of marginalization, dispossession of lands, appropriation, and destruction of natural resources in Guerrero, have led

to a state of permanent resistance. Illiades (2014) similarly observes that armed movements in

Guerrero continued precisely because social justice was in the heart of the demands of these

groups and thus, as these demands were not (and have not been) met, the conflicts have

continued. The legal suspension of rights prevails in Guerrero, legitimized by the state as a

response to potential threats - one of the most significant being the war against the organized

crime.

In 2014, 43 students from the Rural Teacher's college of Ayotzinapa, were kidnapped and

disappeared in the municipality of Iguala when they were traveling to commemorate the 1968

student massacre in Tlatelolco, Mexico. The students took over some buses[6] and used them to

travel to the event when they were intercepted by police agents. The police stopped the buses,

fired shots against students and forced some to get into police cars. One student was murdered,

and it is still uncertain what happened to the 43 that disappeared. Mora (2017) argues that the

experiences of the Ayotzinapa students should be situated in a broader analysis of systematic

state violence in the region of *La Montaña* in Guerrero. Dominant social imaginaries that portray

Indigenous population and rural areas of south Mexico as "inherently backward, violent, and

ingrained with cultural deficiencies" (p.67) operate in the country and interact with neoliberal

development programs and security policies that tend to criminalize the population of this region

(Mora, 2017).

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[6] The takeover of passenger buses has been a frequent practice amongst the students from the teacher's colleges

in Mexico. They normally ask all the passengers to get out of the bus and use this to attend protest or other kind of

social and political activities (GIEI, 2015)

Programs for the alleviation of poverty in the region are based on a premise that this population is incapable of breaking out of their current state of cultural and economic marginalization due to inherit cultural backwardness. These impressions, as Mora (2017) reveals, articulated by the government with security laws, programs, and institutional practices that classify those racialized bodies as potential criminals and encourage the use of preventive measures to deter crime. The ambiguities of the Law Against Organized crime in Mexico have further resulted in an increase in arbitrary detentions and violent extortions mainly against the Indigenous population and peasants (Mora, 2017). Likewise, programs to prevent violence in these communities situate the lack of culture and appropriate values in the family as causes of the social violence that this region is currently living. Mora (2017) concludes that the articulation of these elements generates the conditions for the permissibility of the state-sanctioned death of Ayotzinapa students.

In sum, the diverse forms of social mobilization that have been taking place in Guerrero through history, have converged with forms of state violence. This violence has been rooted in a process of racialization through which inhabitants of the region come to be seen as inferior to, and distant from, the ideal mestizo subject of the nation, and consequently as a threat to the social order. In addition, legal states of exemption established within this territory allow state-sanctioned violence and the installation of differentiated forms of governance. All these factors shape manifestations of violence in schools, and thus must be considered in any policy or programmatic effort to prevent school violence.

In the next section I will discuss methods of resistant to violence and oppression that have been taking place in Guerrero. I will describe how and in which context the community police

force emerged in Indigenous territories of Guerrero and their importance in the analysis of school violence policies in the region.

Sites and Methods of Resistance: The Community Police Force in Guerrero

Guerrero has a long-lasting tradition of community police groups and alternative justice systems. These community-led interventions emerged as a response to three inter-connected forms of state violence: 1. The inability of the state to protect the population from the violence stemming from organized crime; 2. Ongoing violence and harassment from the police and military; and 3. Racism and discrimination in the justice system, particularly targeting the Indigenous population. In what follows, I attempt to describe the conditions that led to the creation of this community policing system and briefly explain some of the alternative methods that the population uses to resist the different forms of violence that it faces. The community police force represents an essential element in the political context of this region. It is thus important to consider in an analysis of the creation of educational policies against school violence and their local application. One of the goals of this thesis is to explore possible improvements to school violence policies, so that they might address locally specific and historically situated structural factors that are associated with school violence in Guerrero. To this end, here I focus on sites and methods of resistance designed by the local population to oppose the violence of the colonial world, and that might serve as important tools in considering how to create more responsive local school violence prevention initiatives.

The creation of the community police force dates to 1995 when the communities of the *La Montaña* and *La Costa* of Guerrero organized themselves in response to the wave of violence and insecurity they were facing and as a response to the racism, discrimination and corruption that they faced within the institutions of the state – for example, the lack of appropriate roads and

public transportation, which led to an increase in violence against the communities as they moved between villages (Gasparello, 2009); and state police agents who asked Indigenous residents for money prior to carrying out an investigation of reported crimes. Moreover, people also encountered linguistic barriers in interacting with a justice system conducted mainly in Spanish, without enough interpreters of Indigenous languages (Gasparello, 2009).

The community police force led not only to the formation of a vigilance network (integrated by members of the communities that are elected each year by their own people), but also to the creation of their own system for the administration of justice within communities. During the first years of the creation of the community police forces, offenders were handed over to state authorities. However, the authorities often released them immediately back into the communities where their crimes were committed (Sierra, 2005). This led the communities to create the Regional Coordinating Committee of Communitarian Authorities (CRAC), a system that would be in charge of administering justice and coordinating the reintegration process mandated for people found guilty (Sierra, 2005). The process of administering justice is based mainly on Indigenous laws and customs, but especially Indigenous methods of conflict resolution. Thus, the reintegration process aims to reincorporate the people found guilty by establishing a reflection process guided by community leaders (mainly elderly people) and having them perform a community service in the different communities that integrate the CRAC.

The relationship between the state and the CRAC has been full of contradictions and tensions that go from first the recognition, then the negotiation with, and last the harassment from state authorities (Sierra, 2015). Local laws in Guerrero recognize the existence of an Indigenous justice system and the authority that the CRAC has. However, the ambiguities in the same laws make it possible for state authorities to constantly harass the communities and specially the

leaders of the CRAC and ask them to be subordinate to state police forces (Sierra, 2015). For instance, many arrest warrants have been issued against the leaders of the CRAC by state judicial authorities. This situation has forced the Indigenous communities to negotiate and to appeal to International treaties that the Mexican state has signed in order to solve these issues (Sierra, 2015).

One of the main challenges that the CRAC has faced since its creation is how to properly address women's issues, particularly violence against women. The CRAC has been an instance mainly dominated by a male vision and therefore, as Sierra (2017) points out, Indigenous women have confronted a deeply rooted patriarchal system within it that often does not account for women's demands and needs. To ameliorate this, and as a result of organized efforts among women, in 2006 a woman was formally incorporated to the CRAC for the first time. Women demanded their incorporation to the CRAC because they were looking to make visible some of the barriers that they faced in the justice system. For instance, when women went to the authorities to report crimes against them, they were often made to speak with men about the issues that they face such as domestic violence or sexual harassment (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios en Antropología Social, 2014; Sierra, 2017). Currently, Indigenous women have more representation in the CRAC but as Sierra (2017) points out, women still face multiple obstacles and challenges when addressing issues of gender inequality. Nonetheless, the incorporation of women in the CRAC opened debates inside Indigenous communities about gender rights and has made visible the many interlocking systems of oppression women experience.

It is important here to highlight some additional relevant facts about the context in which the community police force emerged. First, it was created in-between a national context marked by the emergence of Indigenous peoples' movements, such as the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación*

Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army) that among other things, demanded autonomy, self-determination and territory. Second, due to the emergence of the movements such as the EZLN, the government strengthened the armed forces in aspects such as special training in counter-insurgency strategies that was used to weaken those social and political movements such as the EZLN but also the movements that emerged in Guerrero during that time (Piñeyro, 2010; Sandoval, 2000). Third, during this period, the Mexican government started a process of consolidation of a state security apparatus, that was highly associated with the intensification of punitive measures in the name of the protection of the sovereign power (Mora, 2017, p.77).

All of these aspects are important to emphasize because that context marked the beginning of security state policies that are ongoing and that have had an impact in the school context and influenced the creation of policies to prevent school violence. As Zurita (2011) points out, the first program that addressed this issue was part of the National Security Strategy and as such, it was managed by the National Public Security Secretariat. Thus, as part of the analysis that will follow in this research, it will be important to consider how this context of the emergence of Indigenous movements, social and political organizations, influenced the way that current local and federal policies addressed the phenomenon of school violence and how the strategies aimed at solving the problem took into consideration the local conflict resolution system available in these communities.

In this chapter, I explored some of the structural and material conditions that underpin school violence in Guerrero. I discussed how zones of Guerrero have been configured as internal colonies because these spaces have been set at the margin of some social and economic policies. I described how these same spaces are the ones that are inhabited by Indigenous peoples that as demonstrated, have been racialized in the country. Likewise, I discussed how this racialization

not only of the Indigenous population of Guerrero, but also of the general population of this region, has permitted the evocation of legal states of exception, which have made possible the repeated episodes of violence from the military and police forces. I suggest that these forms of violence and the marginalization conditions of the internal colonies create a set of conditions that could lead to violent behavior among the youth and that thus these conditions must be incorporated into any analysis of school violence in this region. Moreover, I suggest that these forms of violence that students navigate influence the way that youth view and use violence in the school context. Finally, I discussed how the different forms of oppression that communities in Guerrero experienced, especially the Indigenous communities, led to the creation of an alternative justice system and security network among these communities. I argued that besides another example of the structural violence, this should be seen as one of the sites of resistance that the anti-colonial framework asks us to examine. Equally important is to examine how women within these communities and within the alternative justice system, have challenged the power structures and have made visible the interlocking systems of oppression they face.

In the subsequent chapters, I will analyze how the approaches to violence in the local and federal educational policies, are consistent or inconsistent with these structural factors that underpin the school violence in Guerrero. Also, I will refer to some of the facts mentioned in this chapter about the social, historical and political context of Guerrero, to create a better understanding of the context in which the policies were created and how this influenced the approach to school violence policies.

Chapter 4: Institutional Context of Schooling in Guerrero

En la Montaña de Guerrero,

para acceder al derecho a la educación

hay que recorrer un largo camino

(In the Mountain of Guerrero, to have

access to the right to education, you need to walk

a long way) Centro de Derechos Humanos Tlachinolla, 2012.

The above phrase partly synthesizes the schooling context that surrounds students in Guerrero. The words make reference to the 1-2 hours that some primary students and their families have to walk daily to arrive at their schools, but at the same time, it illustrates the many challenges that students, teachers and families, especially among the Indigenous and rural communities of the region, experience in order to guarantee the right to education. In the previous chapter, I described some of the factors outside the schooling context that underlie school violence in the region. I now extend the analysis to the schooling context in Guerrero to explain how the structural and material conditions that were described manifest and operate in the education system. In presenting this account, I attempt to demonstrate how the external factors that exacerbate school violence intersect with the oppressive conditions within the school context and together create favorable conditions for violence to proliferate. I will refer, for instance, to how the segregation that was described in the previous chapter is manifested similarly in the educational settings.

Thus, the section is divided in two parts. First, I will explain some of the general features that allow for a better understanding of the educational system in Mexico. Then, I will specifically refer to two types of school services that are significant in Guerrero: Indigenous schools and

multi-grade schools. I will explain how the ways in which schooling is organized in these two settings exemplify some of the forces that constrain students' opportunities, reproduce racial, class and gender status quos and could ultimately provoke anger and resistance from youth.

General Features of the Institutional Schooling Context in Guerrero

The operation of the national education system in Mexico is based on a distribution of activities between the federal and the state governments. At the federal level, among others, the Secretariat of Public Education (from now on SEP, its acronym in Spanish) is in charge of the curriculum design for basic education and teachers' colleges. Likewise, it is in charge of the design and production of the educational materials for the schools, mainly books, and the implementation of compensatory programs in those regions with the most significant educational gaps (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación [INEE], 2005).

The state governments, on the other hand, have the responsibility to provide educational services in basic education, and to assure the federal government transfers of financial resources are distributed to each of the state governments (INEE, 2019b). The educational services, which come from various types of schools, were created to address some specific needs and demographic characteristics of the population. In primary education, the services are: 1. General service, which includes the so-called schools of complete organization and the multi-grade schools; 2. Indigenous education, which are schools created to attend to the Indigenous population of certain demographic areas; and 3. Community education, which was created for isolated communities with few inhabitants.

In lower secondary education, the services are divided into: 1. General education, which are schools of complete organization; 2. Technical education schools, which were created to develop technological skills that the labor market demands; 3. *Telesecundarias,* which are television-

based programs designed to address the marginalized, isolated and low-income communities in
Mexico, mainly located in rural areas; 4. Community education, which was created to address
the needs of isolated communities with few inhabitants; and 5. Schools for workers that are
designed for people over 15 years who did not finish their lower secondary education previously.
In lower secondary education, *Telescundarias* and community education schools have only one
teacher per group, which means that they lack specialized instructors for each discipline that the
curriculum mandates (INEE, 2005).

All the types of services deliver education to the whole of the population. This means, for
example, that an Indigenous student can complete their education at any school from the general
service. However, the conditions in which each of them operates and has historically operated, as
well as the resources that they receive and have historically received, vary considerably. As an
example, the general and technical education in the lower secondary level are located mainly in
urban centers with low levels of marginalization. Indigenous schools, community education and
telesecundarias, on the other hand, are mainly located in rural communities and communities
with high levels of marginalization (INEE, 2018b). Likewise, the latter schools are the ones with
poorer infrastructure conditions; they lack appropriate and adequate educational materials
(INEE, 2018b), among other issues (such as the fact that in many of the schools there is only one
teacher who is in charge of all the groups and teach all the disciplines) that affect their operation
and in the end impact students' learning.

In recent years, schools in Guerrero have been particularly affected by violence occurring in
its communities, which is related to the activity of organized crime in the region, and the security
strategies that have been implemented by the government. This phenomenon is complex and
cannot be fully addressed in this research; however, it is important to highlight some of the

impacts it has that relate to the topics explored in this thesis. In the urban zones of Guerrero, such as Acapulco or Chilpancingo, access to education has been interrupted in recent years due to violence occurring in the surroundings of the schools and to direct threats to teachers. Reports indicate that in 2017, more than 150 schools were closed because principals, teachers and parents feared for their safety due to the violence in the community context (Cervantes, 2017; Animal Político, 2017).

As a result of this, but also as part of the government's actions within the program *Escuela Segura* (to which I will refer in the following section as part of the programs to prevent school violence), military and police forces have been deployed in schools in the urban centers and also in regions such as *La Montaña* and other rural areas of the state. Images that are disseminated through the social media channels of the Secretariat of Public Security of Guerrero (2019) show highly armed officials, some of them with fully covered faces, at the entrances of the schools. I wanted to highlight this here because it is an element that is distant from the schooling contexts of other regions of Mexico and that connects with the overall environment of surveillance that prevails in the region.

In the following section, I will first describe some distinctive features about multi-grade schools and Indigenous schools and education. This account is important because these programs serve large numbers of Indigenous peoples and those experiencing economic exclusion in rural parts of the state. I will then explain how some of the features that characterize these schools are related to the historical and social contexts described and analyzed in the previous section.

Multi-grade Schools

Multi-grade schools were created in Mexico as a response to the growth of the educational system and the need to address the population of rural areas. It was seen, since the beginning, as

a temporary and compensatory service (INEE, 2019a); however, these schools exist until today, operating under disadvantageous conditions. In these schools, one teacher is responsible for more than one grade level; at the same time, one of the teachers of the school (most of the time the only teacher in the school) acts as school principal. That means that besides their teaching responsibilities, they have to carry out the administrative tasks demanded of a school principal. Multi-grade education would not represent as big as a challenge if not for the conditions under which they need to operate and deliver the educational services to a sector of the population that has been historically oppressed and for whom this type of school is the only option available.

Multi-grade schools are located in those communities with the highest levels of marginalization in the country (mainly rural and Indigenous communities). They serve a low-income population characterized by lack of access to basic household, health and education services (INEE, 2019a). The schools operate with a very poor infrastructure (for example, they only have one classroom) and lack equipment and educational materials. Teachers receive poor pedagogical training and limited to no ongoing professional support to work within this type of school organization (INEE, 2019a; Leyva B., Santamaría B. & Serrato, 2018). The curriculum, educational materials and resources available are not adequate for the real needs and characteristics of these schools and their populations. For instance, the curriculum mandates the teaching of English as a second language in those schools that are not Indigenous; however, teachers from multi-grade schools have not been trained to teach this second language (INEE, 2019a).

In Guerrero, almost 50% of the primary education schools and 75% of the lower secondary schools are multi-grade. Additionally, almost 50% of the Indigenous schools in primary education are multi-grade (INEE, 2018b). Even though they represent a high percentage of the

schools in this region, the local government does not account for specific actions to meet the

needs of this type of school (INEE, 2019a). Likewise, at the federal level, there is not a specific

public policy devoted to addressing the needs of these schools and their populations. Ultimately,

as pointed out by the INEE (2019a), this explains the disadvantages that these schools have in

their operation and the educational results they obtain, which are significantly lower compared to

other types of schools in the state (p. 293).

Indigenous Schools and Education for the Indigenous Groups

Indigenous schools and, in general, the educational services for the Indigenous population in

Guerrero represent a significant educational service considering that 20% of the schools

delivering primary education services in this region are Indigenous schools, and it is a region

with a significant presence of Indigenous peoples. Likewise, Guerrero is one of the territories in

the country with a higher concentration of monolingual students: almost 30% of the basic

education students speak only their native language (INEE & UNICEF, 2016). Education for the

Indigenous population in Mexico have evolved hand in hand with the racial ideologies and

projects prevailing in the country. For instance, during the nineteenth and beginning of the

twentieth century, the educational model for the Indigenous population was focused on the

assimilation and homogenization of the population through the instruction of the curriculum only

in Spanish and the exclusion of Indigenous cultural features (Jiménez-Naranjo & Mendoza-

Zuany, 2016).

In the 1990s, as a result of the Indigenous social movements, and in line with the neoliberal

politics of recognition that started to have echoes across the country, the government adopted the

education Intercultural policy. However, as Saldívar (2018) argues, intercultural policies do not

move away from the project of *mestizaje* insofar as it does not contest the definition of otherness

that was defined by *mestizos* within *mestizaje* ideology (p. 443). Likewise, it does not question

and thus does not change the racial hierarchies and privileges that have been established in the

country (Saldívar, 2018).

One of these hierarchies manifests in the curriculum and instruction that is delivered to

Indigenous students, both within the Indigenous schools and in the general services. Even though

various laws in Mexico (INEE, 2017) mandate that Indigenous populations have the right to

receive education in their native language and in Spanish and have access to a curriculum that is

culturally relevant, there are still several barriers to achieving this and some problematic issues

with the laws themselves. At a national level, 47% of the teachers in the Indigenous schools do

not speak the native language of the community in which the schools are located (Schmelkes,

2019). However, even if the teachers speak the native language, research has revealed how it is

used only while students learn Spanish or as a way to communicate the instructions of the

learning activities mandated in the curriculum, which are mainly delivered in Spanish (Jordá

Hernández, 2003; Schmelkes, 2019).

These problems are exacerbated when Indigenous students attend a school of the general

service, as almost 60% of primary education Indigenous students in Guerrero do (INEE &

UNICEF, 2016)[7]. Here, as studies have shown, the use of one's native language is not only

unsupported pedagogically, it is often still punished within some institutions. The INEE (2018a)

indicates that 5.1% of the students in non-Indigenous schools and 11% of those in Indigenous

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[7] The Indigenous schools exist only for the pre-primary and primary education. For lower secondary education, Indigenous students attend the regular services, whose instruction is in Spanish.

schools are punished by school authorities or teachers for speaking their native language in school.

It is particularly important to note how policies and daily practices regarding language constitute a form of educational violence and harm to students. Memmi (1965), when referring to the situation of the colonized, explains that bilingualism for the colonized creates a duality, as it is a matter of participating in two physical and cultural worlds and living in two languages that are in conflict (p. 107). Memmi refers to this as a linguistic drama, as it is not that the two languages coexist, but rather that the mother tongue of the colonized is the one that is the least valued. Indigenous students experience this devaluation of their world and duality in a moment that is fundamental in their cognitive and linguistic development and identity (Barriga Villanueva, 2008).

Furthermore, the curriculum and the school in general are organized in a way that does not benefit students from Indigenous backgrounds. In consultations that the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education (INEE, as its acronym in Spanish) carried out with Indigenous groups from different regions of the country (including Guerrero), teachers, families and Indigenous leaders indicated that the current curriculum is directed towards a more individualistic way of living that contradicts the communitarian and collective life inherent to the Indigenous ways of living (INEE, 2016). Consequently, Indigenous students experience difficulties when interacting with a schooling model that is distant from their cultural values and ways of experiencing the world (Schmelkes, 2019).

Teachers in Indigenous schools and those within the regular services who have Indigenous students in their classrooms also experience barriers to properly attending to the needs of these groups. For example, teachers do not receive pedagogical advice or support aimed to help them,

for instance, with the improvement of the native language instruction (Mendoza Zuany, 2017).

Likewise, the isolation of these schools and the fact that in many of them there is only one

teacher make it so that these teachers do not have any assistance from other colleagues,

pedagogical advisors or authorities close to them (Jordá Hernández, 2003).

There are other factors that surround the schooling context of the Indigenous schools and

education, such as the fact that there are still communities in which the access to education is not

accomplished, or that to gain access it is necessary to overcome barriers that students in urban,

middle class areas do not have. For example, 5.2% of the students that attend Indigenous schools

walk more than two hours to arrive at their schools, and 7.5% of them walk between one and two

hours (INEE & UNICEF, 2016). In Guerrero this situation is common and has even resulted in

formal complaints from local residents against the government. In an emblematic case that was

one of the first formal educational allegations against the Ministry of Education, the community

of Buena Vista in Guerrero won in its lawsuit for the construction of a school to serve the local

community's children that before had to walk a long distance to arrive at their schools (Centro de

Derechos Humanos Tlachinollan, 2012).

The organization of both multi-grade and Indigenous schools should not be analyzed without

considering the historical, structural and social factors that were described in the previous

sections. These schools serve a population that inhabits racialized spaces in Guerrero: Indigenous

communities, rural areas and urban marginalized areas inhabited by those who are distant from

the *mestizo* ideal that the racial ideology deploys. The abandonment of these spaces manifested

in the lack of specific policies as in multi-grade schools, and the lack of appropriate resources

resembles the division of spaces in the colonial world to which Fanon (1963) refers as internal

colonies. Furthermore, the linguistic and pedagogical practices, curriculum contents and

disadvantageous conditions in which schools operate show that, as Saldívar (2018) suggested, the Intercultural policies do not challenge racial, linguistic and cultural hierarchies, and *mestizaje* still operates in the schooling process.

It is important for this research to consider the various forms of educational violence that all of these elements represent. One form of violence is how institutional discourses focus on the lower educational achievements of the small rural and Indigenous-serving schools. For instance, in the Strategic Development Plan of Guerrero (Congreso del estado de Guerrero, n/d), it is mentioned that students in the region are commonly situated in the lowest levels of achievement in the country according to the results of standardized tests, either the nationals or internationals such as PISA. They show that *students do not* achieve even the lowest level in the language and communication tests and that they *are not able to* solve basic mathematical problems (p. 78). Likewise, in the General Education Law in Mexico it is stated that in order to move towards more equitable education, federal and local authorities should specifically address schools that, because of their location in isolated communities, urban marginal areas or Indigenous communities, are more likely to have students drop out and lag behind (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2018).

In these policy and discursive presentation of the academic achievement patterns within the state, no attention is paid to the ways that the organization of the schooling perpetuates racialized achievement gaps. Nor do these documents address the problematic educational conditions shaping the educational outcomes of those students receiving educational services in environments other than the schools receiving general services (e.g., linguistic barriers or the lack of provincial resources or teaching materials to support multi-grade education). As Razack (1995) argues, within a cultural deficit paradigm in education, the ways schooling is organized to

benefit only students from dominant groups (white, middle- and upper- class) is not problematized; instead, low school achievement is explained by differences in cultural characteristics.

Ultimately, educational policies and daily practices are also working in concert to create certain conditions for the enactment of violence. Earlier on it has been mentioned how the structural violence to which students are subjected influences the manifestation of anger and feelings of vulnerability and creates conditions favorable to violent behavior. Here it is important to consider how the institutional context of schooling is acting in a way that pushes them out, produces harm and enhances emotions and behaviors that in some cases put them at risk. Studies such as those by Nolan (2011), Tuck (2011) and Meiners (2002 as cited in Nolan, 2011), suggest that students' anger and disruptive or oppositional behaviors reflect not only their opposition to unjust policies and practices that push them out of school, but also acts of self-preservation, processes of dignified self-emergence and self-creating. In the following chapter I will explore whether the policies to prevent school violence take in consideration (or not) these elements and thus assess the degree to which they effectively contribute to create more supportive and inspiring school environments.

Chapter 5: Policy Analysis Results and Discussion

In this section, I present the findings based on the analysis I conducted of school violence

policies at the federal and state level. I dedicate the first part of the analysis to the policies'

context of influence. That is, I briefly explain the context in which first policies to prevent school

violence emerged and the transition from a model focused on surveillance and linked to the

strategy against organized crime to a model emphasizing peaceful and harmonious coexistence in

schools and social and emotional learning. In the second part I present the findings of the policy

text analysis. I find that there are three main approaches to the prevention of violence: The first is

aligned with the liberal approach of difference and diversity, which highlights the importance of

embracing diversity and appreciating differences to achieve a harmonious school environment.

Another approach affirms social and emotional learning as the primary intervention and

highlights the importance of aspects such as self-seem, managing one's emotions and conflict

management. The third approach is closely related to a zero tolerance philosophy. In this chapter,

I discuss how these approaches relate to the sociopolitical context of the country and the region.

For example, I illuminate how the differences approach is consistent with the racial state policies

implemented in part as a response to the Indigenous uprisings emerged in the country in the

1990s. Accordingly, I present my arguments regarding why these approaches are not fully

consistent with the structural and contextual factors that underlie school violence in Guerrero.

The Emergence of the Policies to Prevent School Violence in Mexico

In the 1990s, scholars in Mexico started to publicly address school violence

as a phenomenon that was impacting school contexts and in need of attention from the

educational authorities (Gómez & Zurita, 2013). However, it was not until 2007 that the Mexican

government launched the program *Escuela Segura* (Safe School program), which was the first

initiative that explicitly addressed school violence. This program implemented at the basic

education level and had as a purpose to create safe schools environments (Nambo de los Santos

& Arredondo, 2009). At first, this program was one of the components of the overall

strategy, *Limpiemos México* (clean up Mexico), launched by the former president Felipe

Calderón as the government's main strategy to confront organized crime (Zurita, 2012).

It is important to point out that during this period, Felipe Calderón started the so- called war

against organized crime. As part of this strategy, a militarized campaign against the drug cartels

was deployed. Among other things, this strategy involved the strategic dissemination of a

discourse in which the government depicted the criminals as the "enemies of the state," and thus

the military forces and police had the authorization to combat these "enemies" at any cost

(Magaloni & Razu, 2016). The strategy has been highly criticized because, among other things,

during this time complaints against the military and police (e.g., with respect to arbitrary

detentions and enforce disappearances) drastically increased (Pereyra, 2012; Ramírez de Garay

& Díaz R., 2017). In Guerrero, during this period arbitrary detentions and extortions directed

towards Indigenous population and peasants also increased (Mora, 2017). As part of the efforts

to end organized crime, Calderón's government included a crime prevention line within the

strategy.

Escuela Segura (Safe School program) was one of the components of this aspect of the

strategy. The discourse that accompanied the presentations and explanations of the program was

centered upon the connection between youth, drugs and delinquency (Quintana Navarrete, 2013).

The causal relationship between drug consumption among the youth and the propensity of

delinquency was a dominant theme (Quintana Navarrete, 2013). Thus, the program centered

upon the idea that schools were a site for the prevention of drug use and delinquency among

youth, which was the main focus of the security and crime prevention strategy.

   In this sense, the message around the war against organized crime was also transferred into

the school contexts. *Escuela Segura* was first implemented in those schools located in the

municipalities with the highest rates of criminality and, as I have indicated, was seen more as a

strategy to reduce delinquency and drug consumption among youth than a strategy focused on

school violence per se (Saucedo & Guzmán, 2018). For example, one of the main activities of

the program was the delivery of workshops about crime prevention for students and parents, the

inspection of backpacks, and the delivery of financial resources to schools that were used to buy

and install security cameras (Zurita, 2014). These later elements align with a zero tolerance

philosophy and associated interventions, which rely on, among other things, the increase of

security and police presence to send the message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated in

schools (Skiba, 2014). *Escuela Segura* was questioned by scholars because of its policing focus,

its criminalization of students and its allowance of police intervention in school contexts

(Saucedo & Guzmán, 2018). Ultimately, these critics contributed to the change of focus within

the program.

   With the change of government in 2012, the narrative about the security and prevention of

violence in the country changed. The new government wanted to distance themselves from the

strategy of Felipe Calderón. The focus this time was not on the confrontation of organized crime,

but on violence prevention strategy through what has been called in Spanish: The reconstruction

of the *tejido social*[8] (México Evalúa, 2014). As both a result of these changes and a consequence of the critiques of the program *Escuela Segura*, in 2014 the federal government launched the pilot project *Proyecto a Favor de la Convivencia Escolar* (Project in favor of the school coexistence), which aimed to replace *Escuela Segura* and became the base of what later was released as the national program to prevent violence in schools.

In 2016, the government formally announced the cancellation of *Escuela Segura* and the implementation of the *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* (National Program for School Coexistence, PNCE), which is currently operating nationwide. This program was announced as part of the *Política Nacional para una Escuela Libre de Acoso Escolar* (National Policy for a School Free of Bullying) in which its design participated the same governmental instances that were involved in the National Strategy for the Prevention of the Violence and Delinquency (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2015). That is, instances such as the Office of the Attorney General or the Federal Police remained involved in the design and implementation of the program, as it was with *Escuela Segura*. Likewise, even though the program changed in name and focus, and the governmental narrative was transformed, the program remained linked to the overall goal of violence- and delinquency-prevention. For instance, the first schools participating in the program were those located in the municipalities that the government classified as linked with delinquency risk factors and violence (Gobierno de la República, 2015).

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[8] The term *tejido social* has been defined by the government as: "an articulated set of personal networks, categories, formal and functional structures, initiatives of association and mutual help within societies, which allow individuals and society to expand their options and opportunities to improve their quality of life" [my own translation] (Gobierno de la República, 2014)

In 2017, one month after a school shooting incident in the state of Nuevo León, in the north of Mexico (Franco & Villegas, 2017), the federal government announced the *Plan de Acción para la Prevención social de la Violencia y el Fortalecimiento de la Convivencia escolar* (Action plan for the Social Prevention of Violence and the Enhancement of the School Coexistence). This action plan promoted the incorporation of more schools into the *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* (PNCE) and introduced some of the components of the program *Escuela Segura* again, such as the inspection of backpacks by police officers in the schools. This was justified as a way to prevent the introduction of firearms and other weapons as well as drugs into school settings. It is important to highlight that these components were not adopted by all of the Mexican federations, but Guerrero was among those who incorporated them. Likewise, this action plan highlighted the incorporation of the social and emotional learning not only as part of the program to prevent violence, but also as an important component of the new basic education curriculum, which by that time was close to being announced (Gobierno de la República, 2017).

Here, it is important to highlight the name of the policy because it refers only to school bullying, which (as I explored earlier in this thesis) is only one of the manifestations of school violence. Likewise, as I will explain later in this section, the PNCE mainly refers to the prevention of bullying and not the prevention of other manifestations of violence that exist within the Mexican schooling context. However, in some other official communications, such as the *Plan de Acción para la Prevención social de la Violencia y el Fortalecimiento de la Convivencia escolar,* or at the state level in the programs that the Ministry of Education does not oversee, references are made to the term school violence, not just bullying.

In short, the prevention of school violence in the country has been linked to the broader security strategies and the actions towards the prevention of delinquency and crime. It is

important to consider here what I pointed out in Chapter 3 regarding the articulation of the

security strategies and racialization in Guerrero, and how these have generated conditions for the

permissibility of state-sanctioned racialized violence in the region. This is also relevant because

even though the PNCE changed the narrative and focus of the actions, the program coexists with

other actions that have been focused on the prevention of crime and delinquency. Moreover, as is

the case in Guerrero, some local governments continued with the implementation of *Escuela*

Segura, under the coordination of the Secretariat of Public Security.

Current Policy-Approaches to Prevent School Violence

I now turn to presenting the findings derived from the text analysis about the approaches that

policy documents currently have towards prevention of school violence and of the analysis of

how these approaches are consistent with the structural and contextual factors underlying school

violence in Guerrero. In doing so, I will be guided by the anti-colonial discursive framework that

influences this study and I will refer to the overall social, historical and political context of

Guerrero that was presented before. I divide the section according to the names that I assigned to

the categories that emerged from the textual analysis and that are related to my research

questions. One important aspect to highlight is that the policy documents, both at the national

and the state level, refer to the phenomenon of school bullying rather to school violence in a

broader sense. Thus, I will refer here to school bullying whenever policy texts name the

phenomenon in this way, but it should be kept in mind that in this study I consider the broader

aspect of school violence.

The importance of violence prevention in policies: bullying and learning achievement.

In considering how policy documents approach the problem of school violence, I identified the

reasons given by policy documents regarding why it is important to address the problem. In this

sense, policy texts underline the importance of addressing bullying in schools because ultimately it is a problem that impacts students' learning. It is stated that bullying affects school climate which, at the same time, influences the learning process. Likewise, policies consistently suggest bullying has repercussions at the individual level, such as students' low self-esteem and anxiety. These experiences have effects on students' academic achievement and also, as the narrative of the program points out, influence school dropout rates (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], n/d-a). This relationship is represented among the federal- and state-level policy documents. As an example, at the state level in the introduction of the *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* (PNCE), it is mentioned that in a state such as Guerrero that is characterized by significant educational lags, it becomes necessary to address the problem of school bullying in order to boost academic achievement (Secretaría de Educación de Guerrero [SEG], 2015). At the national level, the justification of the PNCE began by alluding to studies from UNESCO which conclude that school climate is one of the primary elements that influences students' achievement (SEP, n/d-b).

The relationship between learning achievement and bullying that has been established as a priority in Mexico has been identified as representational of neoliberal and neoconservative values within educational policies (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire & Braun, 2011; Winton & Tuters, 2015). To put it in another way, there is an emphasis on ensuring safe and secure learning environments, or in this case, peaceful and harmonious school environments, because this raises students' academic achievement levels and helps them to meet their academic goals.

The improvement of academic achievement has been one of the elements at the center of the educational policies in Mexico particularly since the 1990s when the country started a series of educational reforms aligned with the broader neoliberal reforms of the state (i.e. the

decentralization of the educational system and implementation of national systems of schools,

teachers and student assessment). Since the institutionalization of such reforms, a central

conceptual focus has been on educational quality and its improvement, which is monitored via

the evaluation of student achievement on international and national standardized tests (Olivera,

2015).

Some of these standardized evaluations that have been implemented in Mexico, such as PISA,

measure the incidence of bullying in schools. This element has received significant attention

because results indicated that Mexico was among the countries with the highest incidence of

school bullying (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). The base

document of the PNCE (SEP, n/d-b) cite this study and the fact that Mexico was among the

countries with the highest bullying incidence (p.8).

This has some implications because the purpose of solving the school violence problem relies

on the impact that bullying has in students' academic achievement and even in country rankings,

rather in seeing this as a problem with implications in student's social, physical and affective

dimensions. But also, in this sense bullying is seen as another of the elements that frame students

and their families as producing problem of low academic achievement and learning. The latter

obscures all the other elements such as, policies, institutions, socioeconomic context that impact

both, school violence and learning outcomes.

In this sense, Mexico has joined the global trend towards the implementation of accountability

systems based partly on performance and testing. As has been elsewhere argued (Lipman, 2006,

2010; Monahan & Torres, 2010) accountability measures in education that are highly based on

standardized tests, alongside other mechanisms such as zero tolerance policies, contribute to a

culture of control and surveillance in schools. Within the policies texts I found some elements of the zero tolerance philosophy and this is the policy approach that I analyze next.

   The zero tolerance approach. The zero tolerance approach is based on the idea that schools must react to disruptions, even to minor ones, with relatively strong force because this will disincentive other potential school disruptions (Skiba, 2014). That is, at the core of the zero tolerance approach is the idea that all incidents must be treated with severe interventions, and as thus, without consideration of the social and environmental contexts (Solomon & Palmer, 2004) and factors surrounding students and schools. One of the main features of the zero tolerance policies in schools have been its reliance on exclusionary discipline measures (i.e. out-of-school suspension and expulsion). These kinds of measures, as I will explain, are not clearly identified in the Mexican policies. However, there are other elements that I identified in Mexico's policies that have been characteristic of zero tolerance, such as its reliance on surveillance methods, policing and punishment (Verdugo, 2002). The decision to use this term is based mainly upon the idea that under the zero tolerance approach, infractions and measures ignore student's social and cultural contexts. This, as I have shown, is a central argument in this disseration.

   The zero tolerance approach in educational policies was first introduced in the federal program Escuela Segura, but was highly criticized and removed because of its policing focus and tendency to criminalize students (Saucedo & Guzmán, 2018). Notwithstanding the changes at the federal level, in Guerrero it is possible to identify some elements of a zero tolerance philosophy remaining in the policies to prevent school violence.

   Policy documents state that school authorities should notify the prosecution authorities of the state about bullying incidents that school believes it cannot solve internally (SEG, 2015, p.61). Nothing is said regarding which kind of incidents would be challenging to resolve internally.

Likewise, the program *Escuela Segura* mandates the inspection of backpacks by police officers to detect firearms, other weapons and drugs, and the presence of police outside the schools to "keep schools as spaces free of violence" and to "provide safe spaces for the school community" (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Guerrero, 2019; Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Guerrero, n/d/, slide 6). It is not clear in the policy texts if students are suspended or expelled if they are found to have broken the rules, which is one of the key elements within zero tolerance. However, the presence of police officers in school grounds, inspection of backpacks are common practices associated with zero tolerance policies in schools (Verdugo, 2002).

In addition, there are other elements in the policy texts that point to a more bureaucratic process that must be followed but is accompanied by some elements that are characteristic of policing measures associated with safe schools' policies in Ontario, Canada (Nichols, 2017). For instance, texts introduce terms such as "investigation," "report acknowledging the facts" and "allegation" within the so-called procedures to follow if a bullying incident manifests in the schools. These procedures include actions such as families being required to assure that they have signed the documents and norms which state the procedure that the school is going to follow in case of school bullying or present a written complaint in case they suspect a school bullying case (SEG, 2015). Furthermore, teachers and principals must also conduct the written complaints (teachers to principals, principals to supervisors) in cases where bullying is suspected and/or where a bullying incident is recorded inside the school. Additionally, it is stated that schools should conduct an investigation if there is suspicion or complaint of a bullying case. If there is an incident happening in the schools, principals should document this in the report, in which they must include elements such as descriptions of the exact words that were used by the students, students' appearance and students' behavior (SEG, 2015).

The incorporation of the investigative procedures in the schools is significant in this context because, as Nichols (2017) suggests, when referring to safe schools' policies in Ontario, Canada, such practices create the conditions of increased surveillance in school contexts (p. 619). In Guerrero, these measures of school surveillance become yet another of the elements to add to the overall climate of surveillance that exist in the region. Here, it is important to bring into view that as a result of the heightened monitoring mechanisms implemented in Guerrero as part of strategy to end with organized crime, there has been an increase in arbitrary detentions and extortions, mostly among Indigenous populations and other racialized bodies (Mora, 2017). This trend cannot be ignored, as students, especially from minority groups, are particularly susceptible to state sanctioned practices in the region.

Therefore, the implementation of practices associated with the zero tolerance approach does not respond to the broader social context underlying school violence, but rather I suggest that this type of practice could be the instigator of more violence and rage among the student population because they represent yet another imposition of state surveillance and violence in their lives. Practices under the zero tolerance approach do not offer support to students, especially to those students that navigate diverse forms of violence within the schooling system and outside the schools (as is the case in Guerrero) and instead these policies tend to exclude, punish and push out students (Nolan, 2011; Tuck, 2011; Wun, 2018).

The liberal approach of diversity and differences to prevent school violence. Policies to prevent school violence in Mexico contain some elements that are characteristic of a liberal approach to diversity and differences. A distinctive feature of this approach is the celebration of the cultural differences, its emphasis on openness and participation of multiple voices but within the boundaries of a common framework of values (Gillborn, 1995; Gunew, 2004).

Here, a central element found in the policies was the recognition and appreciation of diversity and attention to and appreciation of differences. It appears as an element that helps in the prevention of bullying because it promotes the development of peaceful, inclusive and harmonious school environments. Embracing and appreciating differences is framed as a key element in the peaceful resolution and management of conflicts – a set of dispositions students will learn through the program (SEG, 2015; SEP, n/d-a). In this sense, aspects such as empathy, negotiation and mediation are seen as central elements in the process of conflict resolution (SEP, n/d-a, p. 25). Another element that is connected with differences and diversity within the policy texts is discrimination. Policy texts mention that peaceful, inclusive and harmonious school environments are achieved through a reflection process about the beliefs and prejudices that justify discriminatory actions (SEP, n/d-a, p.24).

It is also interesting to note that policy texts include physical, cultural and gender differences under the umbrella of diversity and differences more broadly (SEP, n/d-a, p.24). As an example, when referring to conflict management and resolution, it is stated:

It is essential to recognize that conflicts are part of coexistence and we learn to solve them peacefully. In this sense, the recognition of differences and the appreciation of diversity are fundamental for managing and resolving conflicts assertively, emphasizing gender equality[9]. (SEP, n/d-a, p. 25)

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[9] In Spanish: *Es primordial que se reconozca que los conflictos son parte de la convivencia y aprender a solucionarlos por la vía pacífica. En este sentido el reconocimiento de las diferencias y la valoración de la diversidad son fundamentales para manejar y resolver los conflictos de forma asertiva, haciendo hincapié en la igualdad de género.*

This approach, which emphasizes the appreciation of diversity and differences, has been at the core of other state policies designed mainly towards Indigenous (i.e., the Intercultural Educational policy). According to this perspective, problems related to discrimination and exclusion exist because of the inability to understand "others" and because of the lack of contact with and understanding of the experiences of "others" (Saldívar, 2014). In this sense, as it has been stated by Saldívar (2014), the principles of Intercultural policy does not differentiate much from the racial project of *mestizaje,* as much as they do not question the construction of "otherness" made by the dominant mestizos and the status quo of the dominant groups within the country. Likewise, as has been pointed out in critical analyses of the Intercultural policy, this approach hides the specificities and historical experiences of racialized groups within the country. For instance, by not acknowledging the colonial practices that have led to social, economic, education and political inequalities among Indigenous populations (Fuentes & Nieto, 2011). Likewise, this conceptualization of differences and diversity addressed in the policy texts detaches the different historical and institutional aspects that have sustained, for example, racism and sexism (Mohanty, 1990; Ng, 1993) in the country.

Consequently, this perspective addresses the individual as the source of oppression and domination, and thus the way to solve lies also in the individual experiences (Mohanty, 1990). The preoccupation in this sense is that, again, it is implied that students can disengage from their historical, racial, gender or cultural markers and interact as equals to solve conflicts. Likewise, stereotypes, in this case gender stereotypes, are reduced to an individual stance, something that could be avoided or erased without a broader understanding of how they have been historically constituted and how they interlock with other systems of oppression.

I argue that the differences approach within the policies to prevent violence is problematic in a context that, as established, has been characterized by racism embedded in different aspects of social, political and economic life in Guerrero, historically and at the present time. A liberal differences approach obscures systematic process of domination, inequality and privilege, and sustains the belief that racial hierarchies exist due to the inability to engage positively between cultures; instead, the approach suggests that the recognition of, closeness with and respect for differences will allow social harmony in school and in society more generally (Saldívar, 2014; 2012). Accordingly, within this policy framework, racial hierarchies are not questioned, and their negative effects are not acknowledged nor addressed.

Politics of difference in this sense tends to deflect any responsibility from the dominant groups in the construction and maintenance of the asymmetrical relations of power. While acknowledging and celebrating diversity, there is also an erasure of the aspects that have shaped and sustained discriminatory practices and exclusions and that have important effects in the social organization of the country and in the way that we, Mexicans, relate to each other today. For instance, a recent study from Campos-Vazquez and Medina-Cortina (2019) concluded that skin color in Mexico is key in the understanding of social inequalities and intergenerational mobility. The authors show how population in Mexico with the lightest skin color classification have an average of 1.4 more years of schooling and earn 53 % more in hourly wages than their darkest counterparts. Likewise, in Guerrero's context, for instance, while policy texts state that the appreciation of differences is a crucial element for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, they fail to recognize that the use students' Indigenous language has been an important determinant of discrimination and even of aggression and punishment in the schools.

I suggest two different levels of implications regarding the dominance of the liberal differences approach. First, it leads to underestimation of the effects that racialization has had in within the region (i.e. violence, marginalization of Indigenous and rural populations, lack of appropriate resources in Indigenous education) and how these could influence the manifestation of anger among the students (Dei & Simmons, 2010; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Wun, 2018), as these elements have surrounded their life experiences inside and outside the school contexts. Second, obscuring forms of racial and cultural discrimination leads to an uncritical understanding among school communities about, for instance, why the pejorative expression *Indio* is commonly used in manifestations of verbal violence, as is the case in Mexico. Furthermore, without acknowledging the presence of racism, there is a lost pedagogical opportunity to critically examine racism in the country and how, specifically, it affects relationships and outcomes in the school context and beyond.

Overall, I find that these approaches of difference and diversity to address the phenomenon of school violence and that mainly situate the responses within the individual experience do not fully respond to the underlying causes of school violence in Guerrero. While it is relevant, for instance, to promote alternative ways to approach and solve conflicts, this would not permit an understanding of how the individual actions and beliefs that lead to discrimination, exclusion and violence, are entrenched in and supported by institutions and structures. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand and reflect upon the fact that these are attached to a historical context.

The social and emotional learning approach. The development of students' social and emotional skills is located at the center of the strategy for bullying prevention. It is stated that strengthening of students' self-esteem and the expression and auto-regulation of emotions contribute to the prevention of violence and school bullying (SEP, n/d-b). It is, at the same time,

the cultivation of social and emotional learning skills is framed as a way to support student achievement because these skills are seen as influencing the construction of the peaceful, inclusive and harmonious environments that, as mentioned before, are located as a key element in an effective learning process.

    The incorporation of social and emotional skills-development efforts is justified by national and international studies that have revealed the existence of manifestations of bullying in Mexican schools. The studies that are referenced are mostly based on surveys implemented by the same Ministry of Education that account for physical and verbal aggressions among students as the main manifestations of violence (SEP, n/d-b). Likewise, the policy texts also reference bullying prevention programs in the United States, Finland, Spain, among others, that are based on social and emotional learning (SEP, n/d-b, pp. 6-7).

    Hence, the intervention is based on the incorporation of social and emotional learning as this contributes to the development of skills that would help to avoid bullying or school violence such as how to express and regulate emotions (SEP, n/d-b, p. 18). Policy in this sense, presents the problem of school violence as a decontextualized phenomenon. That is, there is no mention of the causes of those verbal and physical aggressions occurring in schools, nor the contexts in which they manifest. Moreover, nothing is said in the policy texts about those aggressions directed to students based on aspects of their social identity (gender, class, ethnicity, sexual preference) or the physical appearance. For instance, as referred in the literature review section, a big problem in Mexican schools are homophobic and transphobic bullying. Therefore, the problem goes beyond the incapacity of certain students to regulate their emotions, and involves a more complex understanding regarding the structural conditions.

Thus, I argue that this perspective is not fully in line with the experiences of Guerrero students. First, the statements included within the policy texts situate the cause of students' experiencing difficulties with resolution of conflicts, relationships with others and situations of bullying within the individual dimension. This emphasis on working with students' inner life could lead to a failure to critically interrogate the structural and material elements that lead students to experience anxiety and anger, among other difficulties (Matthiesen, 2018).

The following statement given by the former director of the PNCE, a key participant in the creation of the above policies, in an interview regarding the social and emotional learning approach in the program and its potential helps to illustrate my argument:

[…] a very important finding is that when you give children the opportunity to see life differently, not so much to change their environment, but to teach them to see the positive side, children greatly optimize their working memory and all their learning process. I think it is the most important finding, that we do not need to change all the socio-economic and environmental conditions because these will not change from one day to another, but the way in which children resolve the world and that with very specific things you can change all the environment, with a hug, with telling parents do not criticize the person criticize the behavior, the idea is to mediate conflicts […] (Oldak, 2018)[10]

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[10] In Spanish: *Creo que un hallazgo importantísimo es que cuando le das la oportunidad a los niños de ver la vida diferente, no tanto de cambiar su medio ambiente sino de enseñarles a ver la parte positiva, los niños optimizan muchísimo su memoria de trabajo y todos sus procesos de aprendizaje. Creo que es el hallazgo más importante, que no necesitamos cambiar todas las condiciones socioeconomicas y medioambientales porque no se va a lograr de un día a otro, sino la forma en la que los niños resuelven el mundo y que con cosas muy concretas se*

Besides the fact that this perspective tends to overlook the structural causes of the problem, I want to discuss how the policy texts dismiss the ways in which "socio-economic and environmental conditions" influence the way in which students perceive themselves and their world. To analyze this passage, I will refer to what has been discussed as internalized oppression by anti-colonial thinkers such as Fanon (1965) and Memmi (1965). The central idea is that undergoing oppression of historically marginalized groups can cause individuals to internalize those messages, such as the negative stereotypes, expectations and racism that they have received from their oppressors (David, 2013). This phrase from Memmi (1965) illustrates the argument I am seeking to make here:

> People have told the colonized that his music is like mewing of cats, and his painting like sugar syrup. He repeats that his music is vulgar and his painting disgusting […] He becomes indignant with himself, conceals it from strangers' eyes or makes strong statements of repugnance are comical. […] The point is that whether the Negro, Jew or colonized, one must resemble the white man, the non-Jew, the colonizer. (p.122)

As Chapter 3 illustrates, the social imaginaries in the country portray the population of Guerrero as violent, inherently backward and embedded with cultural deficiencies (Mora, 2017). As an example of how these imaginaries operate today it is relevant to bring about a recent controversial declaration of an ex-presidential candidate that received significant attention. Gabriel Quadri, who contended for the presidency of Mexico in 2012, wrote in his Twitter account that Mexico would be an emerging power and a developing country if did not have to

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cambia todo el ambiente, con un abrazo, con decirles a los padres no critiques la personalidad critica la conducta, la idea es mediar los conflictos…

"carry" the Mexicans federations of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas: *"Si México no tuviera que cargar con Guerrero, Oaxaca y Chiapas, sería un país de desarrollo medio y potencia emergente..."* (Quadri, 2019).

These three Mexican federations Quadri points to here are the ones with the highest rates of poverty in the country and with the higher concentration of Indigenous groups. These type of messages are commonly seen in the Mexican public opinion. For instance, in 2013 national television programs broadcast a video in which young students from a public school in Guerrero were in a fight. Two different TV hosts referred to this as "another" of the school bullying cases that happen in Guerrero. One of the TV hosts added that this violence could be explained by looking into how their "orangutan" teachers (referring to the teachers of Guerrero) behave [11](Imagen Noticias, 2013a). While the video was being broadcast, teachers from Guerrero were protesting in Mexico City due to the educational reforms that governments wanted to implement and which they were openly against, so the TV host was implying that teachers were behaving as "orangutans" in the protests and thus students would behave in the same way. The other TV host suggested that the students resembled sheep[12] (Imagen Noticias, 2013b).

As these negative social imageries intersect with the different material and political oppressions experience by students, students may develop damaging ideas about themselves and

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[11] In Spanish: *si vemos a los maestros por un lado, a los señores que llegan y hacen pedazos el congreso, nos podemos explicar también qué es lo que pasa, algo debe pasar también en la casa de esta pobre chava y también si vemos a los maestros, estos barbajanes, orangutanes que deshacen el congreso, pues este es un círculo vicioso, ¿no?, y así vamos a seguir hasta que no se ponga un alto*

[12] In Spanish: *...parece casi de fuente ovejuna, solo que ahí no es fuente ovejuna porque a las agresoras es posible ponerles, cara, nombre y apellido"*

their communities (David, 2013; Irizarry & Raible, 2014). In Guerrero, 71.8% of the population between 0-17 years live under poverty conditions (REDIM, 2018). These social discourses also intersect with an overall context of social violence such as the one that was described in Chapter 3 of this work and that has its crueler manifestation in the homicides of children and youth in Guerrero – amongst the highest child and youth homicide rates within the country. According to the non-governmental organization REDIM (2018), since 2006 when the so-called war against drug trafficking was initiated, 1285 children and youth have been murdered supposedly as a result of the actions of organized crime.

Within the definitions of policy texts around social and emotional skills, the ways in which structural factors and sociopolitical context influence students' perceptions, self-care and overall well-being, is not considered. Self-esteem, for instance, is also the result of the policies and practices, inside and outside the school context, that value and reaffirms some groups while devaluing others (Nieto, 2004, p. 195). Students do not passively receive these messages, they show forms of resistance. However, I argue that given the social circumstances described in Guerrero, it is not possible to isolate those factors when talking about students' self-perception or self-confidence. As Nieto (2004) has argued, educational strategies that does not consider the macro-level disparities are sometimes no more than wishful thinking because they take for granted that all students began their education on equal basis.

In summation, in this chapter I have highlighted how historically, policies to prevent school violence in the country emerged as part of an overall security strategy focused on the "war" against organized crime. The program *Escuela Segura,* the first that was designed to prevent violence in the schools, reflects a zero tolerance philosophy that is linked to crime, drug-use and

delinquency prevention. As such, it included strategies based on control and surveillance that are aligned with elements of the national security strategy.

The zero tolerance approach in which policies to prevent school violence were first based still appears as an approach to prevent school violence in local policy documents such as, *Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar, Protocolo para la prevención, detección y actuación en caso de acoso escolar,* and the *Plan de Trabajo del Programa Nacional y Estatal de Convivencia Escolar 2018.* These policies suggest the presence of more punitive measures, control and surveillance over students aiming to send the message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated within the school context. I argued that the prevalence of zero tolerance practices in Guerrero could be seen as part of those broader control and surveillance measures that have been implemented in this region as a result of the racialization process and related to the complex social and political mobilization that has taken place. I suggest the practices under the zero tolerance approach rather than offering support to the students, have the potential to instigate more violence and rage.

Finally, in this chapter I also explained that the policies to prevent school violence are rooted in a liberal differences approach to diversity and differences. This approach emphasizes the importance of embracing and recognizing differences and diversity as a way to foster peaceful and harmonious environments in schools and to prevent bullying. Aligned with this, I described how policies situate social and emotional learning as the way to prevent school violence. I claimed that these approaches tend to underestimate the structural and material elements underlying violence, situate the source of the problem and the solution at the individual level and obscure the historical context. I explained how this is not cohesive with the local context of Guerrero, in which, for instance, colonial practices have led to economic, social and political

inequalities and exclusions of the Indigenous communities that inhabit the region. Likewise, it does not take into account how the different ways in which populations have been oppressed in this region could affect the way students perceive themselves and their community. I suggest that without a critical understanding of these issues, the policies, programs and school practices to prevent violence are not sufficient to support students from this region and offer them alternatives to better understand their contexts, their identities and their relationships with others.

Conclusion

I started this journey of my thesis work with the aim of offering a different approach with which to analyze the phenomenon of school violence in Mexico. By addressing some of the sociopolitical, economic, and structural elements that surround education in Guerrero, Mexico, I tried to show how these elements influence the manifestations of violence in schools and how the current policies designed to address the problem do not fully consider these sociopolitical, economic, and structural factors.

I began with an interest of describing Guerrero's context because of my personal experiences working with youth of this region. Another reason I chose to focus on Guerrero is because of the many emotions I experienced while participating in the protests and social mobilizations regarding the forty-three students from Ayotzinapa. This led me to research more about Guerrero's history and while doing this, I found elements that resonated with me because they spoke about the historical conditions that help to better situate the racialized poverty, marginalization and exclusion in Guerrero's population.

I pointed out to the division of spaces that characterises Guerrero and how these seems to be done based on a race and class basis. That is to say, those spaces that have been historically inhabited by Indigenous groups and rural populations and by those who are not conceived as closes to the mestizo ideal, are the most marginalized spaces. I explained that these social inequalities contributed an intense social and political mobilization in the region, which led to the surveillance of the population and multiple forms of state-sanctioned violence.

Surveillance, poverty, violence and exclusionary institutional practices and policies work in concert to create certain conditions for the enactment of school violence in Guerrero. Disruptions, anger, and aggressive behaviour are also responses to repressive states, institutions

and practices that are perceived as unjust, or responses to the racialized surveillance and control (Meiners, 2007; Nolan, 2011). Thus, I argued that a complete understanding and acknowledgement of these elements in the policies is fundamental.

Through the analysis of the policy texts I found that policies to prevent violence are based on three main approaches: a liberal perspective towards differences and diversity, the social and emotional learning and some elements of the zero tolerance philosophy. Overall, I claim that the current approaches within the policies fall short of what is required considering the current social context and the historical elements that I have presented. The policies that I analyzed present approaches based on a liberal perspective of diversity and differences, social and emotional learning, and some elements of a zero tolerance philosophy. I claim that these three approaches point more toward addressing the symptoms of the problem and not the roots; that is, the oppressive conditions that lead to the different manifestations of violence in schools.

The picture they offer with these approaches is distant from the context and material conditions that students experience daily. While writing the final chapters of this thesis, the *Red por los Derechos de la Infancia* (REDIM)*,* a non-governmental organization in Mexico, presented the results of the study *Niñez en Crisis: Altos Niveles de Incidencia Delictiva y Violencia Contra Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes* (2019) regarding youth and child violence in the country. According to this study, since 2006, when the ex-president Felipe Calderón declared the so-called war against drug trafficking, sixteen thousand children and youth have been murdered in the country, and 17.7% of the enforced disappearances happening in Mexico correspond to children and youth. That is, students in the country, and especially students from Guerrero, are experiencing many forms of oppression and the cruelest manifestations of violence that cannot be overcome simply by improving their self-esteem and teaching them about tolerance. Thus, in

this last section I want to offer a brief set of alternatives to address these sociopolitical and structural factors underlying school violence oriented to offer a more supportive school environment to Guerrero's students.

Addressing the Sociopolitical, Economic and Historical Elements Impacting School Violence

I first became interested in researching the problem of school violence because of my of professional experience in the education field, and my mounting sense that something was missing within the different educational strategies that are implemented to prevent violence, both in the public sector and in the community sector. After analyzing the policies in place to address school violence, I found that some of the elements in which school violence is rooted are not named and are not made visible within the policies. As an example, there is a lack of acknowledgement of colonial relations and how these have led to the exclusion of and discrimination against Indigenous groups in Mexico and particularly in Guerrero. Likewise, how these colonial relations still determine the way that Mexican society is organized and the way in which we relate to each other. More important is the recognition within the policies that these aspects play an important role in the way that students relate to each other.

Equally important is the acknowledgment of power relations and power dynamics and how these have had resulted in historical social inequalities that some sectors of the population experience. Correspondingly, there has to be recognition that people participate as unequal subjects, and that all students come to the schools as differently gendered, racialized, and constructed subjects who will not interact on equal terms (Ng, 1993). That is, there needs to be a transformation from the current focus of the policy that formulates the problems in individual

terms or as personal attitudes towards an approach that acknowledges that manifestations of school violence are more often rooted in broader systems of oppression.

Beyond Oversimplified Notions of Social and Emotion Learning

I have argued that the social and emotional learning approach that policies currently emphasize does not offer a critical understanding of how the sociopolitical and structural factors influence the perception that students have about themselves, their communities, and, overall, their world. I do not pretend to say with this that the incorporation of the social and emotional approach is useless in the school context. Rather, I suggest that it is necessary to address the affective dimension from a more complex perspective. In doing so, it is essential to include in the policies a more complex definition regarding the social and emotional dimension. That is, given the social context and the historical elements that surround, in this case, Guerrero's educational context, it is necessary to address the ways in which poverty, exclusion, discrimination, racist practices, and so on impact students' affective dimension.

This also implies the inclusion of other approaches toward a more critical understanding of anger and disruptive behaviors. Anger, hostility, or disruption can be a response to perceived and real injustices experienced both outside and inside schooling contexts (Meiners, 2010; Tuck, 2011; Zembylas, 2007). Likewise, it can also denote longer struggles linked to power relations (Zembylas, 2007). A thoughtful analysis of where students' anger come from encourages giving voice to youth and children and providing them with a more supportive school environment.

Alternative Supportive Measures

Considering approaches that focus more on listening to students' voices and considering their demonstrations of anger or disruption from a more constructive approach leads to the creation of more supportive spaces in schools. It leads to the transformation of the current perspectives

within the policies in Guerrero, which impose investigative procedures, violent incidents, and measures based on control and surveillance, into perspectives that offer opportunities to critically reflect on the incidents and understand them. I believe that there is no one-size-fits-all approach; rather, schools can implement different alternative measures that support students depending on the context and situation.

Among these measures, there are models based on group assemblies that have already been implemented in Mexican public schools. These are based on periodical and structured meetings in which students sustain a dialogue around school conflicts (Ocejo & Hernández, 2016). I consider that these kinds of initiatives are opportunities to critically reflect about the conditions leading to the manifestations of violence. That is, group assemblies or similar formats, could be spaces where students are invited to have dialogues and discussions around those social, political, and economic structures that are influencing the manifestation of certain behaviors and understand them.

While I argue that this change of focus within the approaches to prevent school violence is necessary to address the roots of the problem, I also believe that it will have no major impact unless major social, political, and economic changes are made. Education can dramatically improve students' lives, but schools cannot make these changes alone. I consider that the complex situation of Guerrero requires more interdisciplinary analyses and responses. I turn now to offering some thoughts about elements at the macro level that I considered necessary to further explore.

Education Policies

Guerrero is one of the places in which access to education is still not guaranteed for all. As explained in Chapter 4, there are rural communities that lack schools. Additionally, the roads that

bring the communities to the nearest schools are most often inaccessible. Schools lack basic

infrastructure and appropriate educational materials. Likewise, it has an abundance multi-grade

schools, which as mentioned, do not have a proper curriculum and educational materials. It is

thus necessary to improve these conditions. There are already scholarly works in which precise

recommendations of public policy have been made toward a proper multi-grade education, which

includes the development of a curriculum for multi-grade schools, teachers' training for this

educational model, and proper allocation of resources (see INEE, 2019a). Equally important is

allocating resources and providing schools with appropriate educational materials, curriculum,

and resources for teachers for the other educational modalities that attend to the most

disadvantaged groups in Mexico (i.e. *telesecundarias*).

Along with a change of focus in the approaches to preventing school violence, aspects such as

better infrastructure conditions, adequate educational materials, and resources could contribute to

the creation of schools as more supportive and dignified spaces for children and youth.

Indigenous Education

Educational policies still derive from the dominant groups and as such sustain their

conception of the education process (Araújo-Olivera & Gonçalves e Silva, 2009). Barriga (2008)

cites an interview she conducted with a Zapotec Indigenous teacher regarding what he considers

to be the Intercultural bilingual education. The teacher accurately answers:

Intercultural bilingual education is an institutional approach [...] a disguised racist practice.

With a tendency to disappear indigenous languages. To this end, the State applies an erasure

policy where bilingual bicultural education is a parapet, the current educational practice aims

to teach "Indians" to interact with non-Indian society. But the non-Indian society does not even consider a better coexistence with the Indigenous people. (p. 1250)[13]

Indigenous educational policy can no longer ignore Indigenous voices. Hand in hand with what I presented in the above paragraphs regarding the change in approaches to prevent school violence, I maintain that it is necessary to transform approaches to Indigenous education.

It is particularly important that Indigenous groups lead the development of their own curricular and pedagogical proposals. This implies, among others, the development of teaching and learning methodologies for Indigenous languages and the development and distribution of educational materials for the teaching of this languages. It is important to consider that many Indigenous students attend schools from the general services. Therefore, it is needed an extensive support and training to teachers from these so that they can provide a relevant education and respectful educational environment to Indigenous students. For all this, it is fundamental the proper allocation of financial resources and improvement of Indigenous schools' conditions.

Ending State Violence

Through this work I gave a researched account of the state violence to which the state of Guerrero has been historically subjected. Although this is not the place to provide precise recommendations on how to address this, it is my duty to acknowledge that this is a major concern. Reforms to the state and transformations of the justice system in the country need to be

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[13] In Spanish: *La educación bilingüe intercultural es un planteamiento institucional [...] es una práctica racista disfrazada. Con tendencia a desaparecer las lenguas indígenas. Para ello el Estado aplica una política de borradura donde la educación bilingüe bicultural es un parapeto, la práctica educativa actual pretende educar a los "indios" para poder interactuar con la sociedad no india. Pero a la sociedad no india ni siquiera se le plantea una mejor convivencia con los indígenas.*

made. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that Mexican scholars and Indigenous rights activists have been pushing for legal reforms to end the militarization of the public security system in the country that consists of, among others, the presence of the military in the streets and the constant surveillance that has been brought to a sector of the population. The proposals also include changes to the access to justice systems in the country (Seguridad sin Guerra, 2019). This should have at its center the voices of the different Indigenous groups in the country, which, as accounted in this work, have been among the most affected by and subjected to different forms of state violence in not only Guerrero, but also other parts of the country.

Increasing Young People's Access to Economic, Social, and Political Opportunities

Through this work I described how poverty, unemployment, unequal access to housing opportunities, and lack of basic services are characteristic in Guerrero. Thus, these aspects cannot be ignored when thinking about school violence prevention. It is especially important to think about racial segregation in the region and intervention strategies to address this. Programs for youth employment, improvement of basic services, and appropriate roads that allow the communication with rural areas, are important to address. Largely, this moves us towards to think about all those elements that contribute to the transformation of the hopeless environment in which students live.

Overall, with this work I am exhorting to move beyond thinking about school violence and the efforts to end it as a problem that resides in the individual and requires a change of behavior and attitude on the part of the students. I am inviting a look into the disruptive behavior and other manifestations of anger in schools with all the complexity that they imply. That is to say that policies and initiatives must consider the way in which the institutional practices in the school, the educational policies, the economic and social conditions that students navigate, and the

historical aspects, contribute so heavily to the manifestations of different forms of school violence.

With this, I am not aiming to romanticize behaviors that put students in a position of risk when enacting violence. Rather, the social circumstances that I described in the previous chapters, along with the schooling context presented here, urge us to consider these positions within the educational policies to prevent violence in schools. In the end, as Nolan (2011), Tuck (2011) and Meiners (2002 as cited in Nolan, 2011) claim, looking into this generation's positions with critical, anti-colonial lenses could offer us deep understanding about structural inequalities and help us move to a more relevant, respectful, and inspiring educational experience.

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