

Attributing and non/verifying ethno-racial identities in on/offline spaces

The translocality of online spaces allows groups to gather and discuss – couched comfortably in the (at least) partial anonymity afforded – challenging topics such as inter/intragroup perceptions of ethnicity and race (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2018). This presentation reports on two related case studies in which the Spanish vis a vis Latino identity was relationally co-constructed.

Recent, globalization-related, migration trends have transformed Spain into a multiethnic, multicultural nation. Many of those migrants hail from Latin America and, after the US nomenclature, are also referred to as Latinos in the European context. In the US, however, Latinos (although an ethnic group) have been racialized along with the Spanish language. Further, the US census ties the origin of Latinos to any Spanish culture; this results in the inclusion of Spaniards in the Latino group. Consequently, Spaniards are the only Europeans who have to navigate a bifurcated ethno/racial identity (Soto-Márquez 2019).

In order to probe how Spaniards and Latinos relationally construct their identities and the reactions to Spaniards being attributed a non-white identity, we carried out a mixed methods analysis (Partington et al 2013) of a sizeable corpus of comments in response to a topically related YouTube video and an op-ed published by the Spanish broadsheet *El País* (n = 175,531 and 63,925 words, respectively).

A complex theoretical framework including notions derived from identity and positioning models and general understandings of conflictive interactions as key in processes of identity claims, attributions, and (non)verification was applied to the coding and qualitative analysis of the data (Anton & Peterson 2003, Bucholtz & Hall 2005, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich & Bou-Franch 2014).

Results showed that comments that mutually assessed each group negatively (racist, disrespectful, and unappreciative of the outgroup) were more common than positive ones. Furthermore, in both cases, negative evaluations were more frequently other-attributed than self-asserted. Our findings also indicated that participants' understandings of non-whiteness were different from those commonly held in the US and that American's lack of global knowledge was blamed for mischaracterizing Spaniards. Interestingly, participants resorted to a technical, expert register – infrequent on YouTube – drawing from history, biology, and genetics as part of their discursive non-verification of an attributed non-white identity.

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