

# Chapter 70

## My Skin Color Is Not Mi Pecado

**Daisy Indira Barrón**

*Missouri State University, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter revealed itself as the title of the author's dissertation because of the binary mentality that thrives throughout our country and in our personal experience. On the author's first days after arriving in the United States, she was asked where she had her tanning done. She had never heard such a thing while she was growing up in Mexico nor did she think that she had dark skin because she had always considered herself Blanca/White. It did not mean that during her early twenties she could not see color, just that appearances did not matter as much as the treatment toward her. She was raised by those whose skin color also caused them to be labeled here in the United States as Moreno/Black. The ones who raised her were a Mexican medical pastor and a Güera/White Mexican, nurse, and housewife, and they referred to her, their precious youngster, simply as Brown or—as she likes to call her skin tone—café con leche/milk with coffee. The participants in the study also related that they have faced microaggressions and—in some instances—their professional tenure was in jeopardy.*

### **BEING BROWN, HISPANIC, LATINA, SPANISH, AND ... MORE**

Many people may believe that identifications are simple: *Brown* is a skin color; the words Hispanic and Latino/a identify individuals whose main language is Spanish; and Spanish is a language spoken in Latin America and Spain (Rumbaut, 2011; Tafoya, 2004). But in reality, these terms come with additional unstated meanings and nuances that change, depending upon the context in which they are used. In addition, these terms are not applied to the wide variety of nationalities, values, and identities of individuals living in the United States, many of whom come from different continents, whose family members immigrated from a variety of places.

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## **Nuestras Voces/Our Voices**

*Isabel and Carina noted how advantageous it was for them to not have dark skin as a Latina, because having lighter skin actually helped them to “fit in” with the White population. For some, there was an assumption that being Latina meant having darker, or brown, shades of skin.*

*Isabel ~ I know I have advantages because I don't look Latina.*

*Carina ~ Physical appearance may help because it keeps you apart from certain problems that I don't feel, that I don't recognize. I don't look like the stereotype Hispanic. Sadly, people would not label me, at least before they knew me. I was able to mix in... sometimes I felt I was more welcomed than others with darker skin.*

*Queen ~ White Hispanics like myself, do not want to be recognized or put in the Brown category, especially Argentines. It took me time to realize how the United States labels you and that you do not have to forget your cultural values. Either way, we come from very diverse countries, still we have more advantages than our darker skin compatriotas [compatriots].*

*Guadalupe~ My colleagues do not believe me when I tell them how harsh my students treat me. But they are all White. I am Mexican indigenous and have very dark skin. Tenure has been also an issue as the associate provost told me that my Hispanic literature investigation won't be a relevant subject to teach at this university and that he was considering that it will not be a good idea to give me tenure... he paused and said, plus you have also have dirt skin color. My health has been affected by all these experiences and comments. I was just sleeping 3-4 hours to finish writing to meet journal deadlines. Now, I am a type-2 diabetic, and all, I think, because of my skin color.*

Guadalupe's voice relates to Arriola's (2012) poem during the *Denial*

Telephone Message From A Dean

*Well*

*I made the phone call*

*and I still feel*

*phoney baloney*

*This thing called*

*the hiring process*

*of looking for a new job*

*stinks to high heaven*

*as bad as when my*

*dogs need a visit*

*to the groomers*

*Nothing ZEN about*

*my attitudes is there?*

*but wait*

*Enlightenment is NOW*

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