Body-directed gesture and expressions of social difference in Chachi and Afro-Ecuadorian discourse

Simeon Floyd
Universidad San Francisco de Quito

This paper presents an analysis of a data set consisting of instances of body-directed gesture that occurred in racializing expressions of social difference during ethnographic interviews with two neighboring peoples of Ecuador: the indigenous Chachi, speakers of the Cha'palaa language, and Afro-Descendant people, who speak a variety of Spanish. When talking about differences among social groups and categories, a particular sub-type of body-directed gestural practice was salient: using indexical-iconic self-directed gestures as a way to describe other people's physical bodies or appearances, including references to skin color, hair texture, clothing and ornamentation, and embodiments of carrying objects close to the body. The paper describes the trends seen in the forms and meanings of these gestures in their role here as part of socially categorizing and racializing discourses in the Latin American socio-historical context.

Keywords: body-directed gesture, pointing, race, Ecuador, Chachi people, Afro-Descendants

Multimodality in the Latin American socio-historical context

Studies of gesture and multimodality usually tend to begin with questions explicitly mentioning visual communicative practices, asking about the ways that people use their hands and bodies to express themselves during social interaction. This study begins instead with some broad social questions touching on classic anthropological themes of representation of "ethnic" differentiation (e.g., Barth, 1969) and representations of the "the other" and "otherness" (Said, 1978; Fabian, 1990, 2006; see also "alterity", Taussig, 1993), questions which I posed to participants in ethnographic interviews during fieldwork in neighboring indigenous Chachi and Afro-descendant communities of Ecuador: Who constitutes the relevant local social

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categories, what are they like, what things to they share, and in what senses do they differ? The purpose of the video interviews was to learn about local social categories and how they are constructed in discourse. However, following insights from research on multi-modal co-expressivity, in my analysis I envisioned "discourse" not just as speech but as integrally including its visual bodily elements together with its spoken elements. This study analyzes some of the practices and patterns seen in the visual modality that emerged in the context of those conversations about local social relations, particularly the practice of pointing back towards one's own body in discourse about social categories.

In one of my first interviews, an older Chachi man responded to these questions in terms of different *razas* or "races" of people, and when I followed up by asking which different races exist, he stated without hesitation that there are three: indigenous Chachis (*chachilla*), white people (*fibala*), and black people (*peechuilla*). The first thing I noticed about his discourse in the visual domain was that indexical gestures featured heavily, both towards people and towards places as stand-ins for people. Spatial discourse in Cha'palaa tends to feature highly accurate long-distance absolute or direct pointing (see Levinson, 2003; Le Guen, 2011), and references to white people may include pointing towards the capital city Quito and the Andean highlands, or references to other neighboring indigenous groups might include pointing to their territories. Similarly, in Image 1 from the same part of the interview the speaker points downriver when mentioning the Afro-descendant peoples who live there. When referring to indigenous people, on the other hand, he points to himself, and for white people, he gestures toward the interviewer.

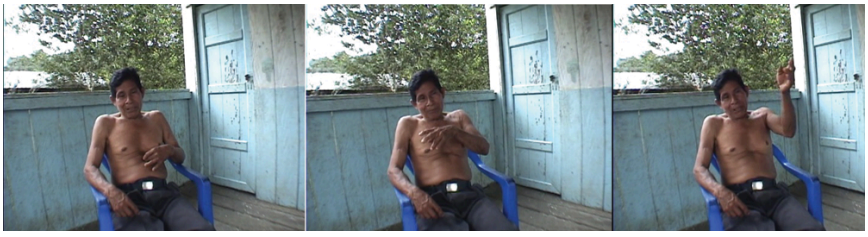


Image 1. "Three races: us [self point], whites [point at interviewer], blacks [point downriver]"[1]

1. The participants in the interviews gave their permission for the materials to be used for academic purposes including publications, and most of the images have already been published in Floyd (2010).

Chachis have souls that are able to pass on to heaven after death, he explained, but black people instead become dark clouds, while white people become white clouds, he said while directing his gaze at the sky. These types of racial terms are historically recognizable as deriving from elements of European colonialist categories (see Wade, 1997; Gotkowitz, 2011a), but here they were being combined with more local cosmologies. During my fieldwork I found variants of this racial terminology currently to be pervasive in the discourse of both the indigenous Chachi people of the Pacific coastal Esmeraldas Province of Ecuador and their Afro-descendant neighbors. Work in anthropology going back to Boas and his contemporaries in the early 20th Century has played an important role in the critique of scientific racism by showing how race is a social construction rather than a biological phenomenon (see Stocking, Jr., 1982; "AAA Statement on Race", 1998; Hammonds & Herzig, 2009). Yet while this intervention has historically been a key counterweight to proponents of racist thinking, it has also led many anthropologists to avoid discussing race entirely (or to only mention "race" in scare quotes), even when members of the societies they study employ explicit racial categories like those I heard used in Chachi and Afro-Ecuadorian communities by local people to talk about social sameness and otherness.

In Latin America, racial categories have long been wishfully described as less rigid than in places like North America, and narratives of racial mixture and fluidity have become a part of the construction of nationalist ideologies of "mestizo" identity in the region (Casagrande, 1981; Stutzman, 1981; Wade, 2005; Hale, 2006; Whitten, 2007). Weismantel describes how many scholars followed these narratives while downplaying the continued relevance of evolving iterations of the Colonial categories of "white", "black" and "Indian" in local peoples' lived experience.

> By the time I started graduate school in the 1980s, though, Latin Americanists were no longer talking about race. Recognizing the spurious biology and false history on which all systems of racial stratification are based, they had concluded that the conflicts they witnessed were not really about race after all. The social reality of racism in Latin America continued unabated; but scholars talked about it as if it were something else – usually class or ethnicity.
>
> (Weismantel, 2001, p. xxix)

While race is indeed a "fiction", points out Weismantel, "in the Andes, and throughout the Americas, it is a social fact of great salience nonetheless." (Weismantel, 2001, p. xxx; see also Hartigan, 2005). Because both peoples considered in this study used explicit, matter-of-fact racializing language, and employed the Spanish word *raza* both in Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish and borrowed into Cha'palaa, I respect the same terms here in my discussion of how the speakers of these languages construct social difference. After providing some more social and linguistic background, this study

will go on to look at what speakers were doing with their bodies during interviews when they used these types of classifications reflecting what Mallon calls the "post-colonial palimpsest" (Mallon, 2011) of the social history of race and racialization in Latin America (see also Wade, 1997, 2017; Whitten, 2007).

Multimodality in racializing discourse

The modern social constructivist approach to race in anthropology emphasizes moving away from static categories and towards the analysis of dynamic socio-cultural processes of racialization (see Fassin, 2011; Ifekwunigwe et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2017).[2] Work in linguistic anthropology has emphasized the key role of language and discourse in such processes of racialization, whether through explicit forms of linguistic categorization or through more covert practices (Dick & Wirtz, 2011; Chun & Lo, 2015).[3] In the context of the social relations of the two neighboring peoples discussed here, my goal was to learn about how they discursively constructed themselves in contrast with others, employing methods of long term ethnography including everyday participant observation in the communities as well as the semi-structured interviews considered here. My methodology also incorporated insights from multimodality research that emphasized approaching speech and gesture as part of a "single plan of action" (Kendon, 1997, pp. 110–111) built of "diverse semiotic resources" (Goodwin, 2011) combined into "composite utterances" (see also Enfield, 2009; see also "composite signals" in Clark, 1996, and "integrated messages" in; Bavelas & Chovil, 2000). For this reason in addition to considering the spoken linguistic forms summarized below (and discussed at greater length in Floyd, 2014), I looked for patterns in the visual bodily communicative aspects of the discourses of social categories and racialization I was considering.

However, while I was convinced that face-to-face interaction always has meaningful visual bodily elements, it was challenging to analyze the types of practices I saw in the data. Gesture and racial categorization have rarely been discussed

2. See also the definition of racialization in Gotkowitz (2011b, p. 11): "By "racialization" I mean the construction of racial stereotypes via political discourse, cultural performance, social policy, censuses, physical and verbal violence, and other acts of marking. Racialization is not simply a discursive or cultural process. It goes hand in hand with the exercise of political and economic power. It is often accompanied by the exploitation of labor and the expropriation of land."

3. A useful definition of linguistic racialization can be found in Chun & Lo (2015, p. 220): "We highlight research on linguistic racialization, or the sociocultural processes through which race – as an ideological dimension of human differentiation – comes to be imagined, produced, and reified through language practices."

together since Efron's *Gesture, race and culture* (1941) advanced a Boasian critique of the mistaken idea that some peoples were biologically included to gesture more than or distinctly from others by showing gestural practices are clearly transmitted culturally, not biologically. Once any connections to biological aspects of the body had been thoroughly critiqued, however, the ongoing anthropological study of race followed the broader shift in anthropology to focus on power and inequality (see Ortner, 2016), and away from any direct analysis of the physical body or of bodily semiotics when it came to race and related issues of social categorization. Within linguistic anthropology, discursive practices linked to in-group and out-group representation and differentiation have remained a central focus of work on language and race (e.g., Reyes & Lo, 2009; Hill, 2009; Bucholtz, 2010; Urciuoli, 1996; Bucholtz et al., 2018 etc.), but little research has considered the gestural or multimodal components of racializing discourse.

It is possible to identify a few gestures in different societies that carry symbolic meaning about social categories, some overtly racist or otherwise discriminatory; for example, the upside down "ok" sign can be read instead as "wp" or "white power" (Anti-Defamation League, 2019), gestures referencing martial arts or bowing may be used to harass people of Asian heritage (Chun, 2010), and the current US president Trump appears to use implicitly and explicitly offensive gestures mimicking people from different social groups in his political speech (K. Hall et al., 2016). In Covington-Ward's pioneering work *Gesture and power* (2016) she gives us a more politicized ethnography of gestural expression in which she was able to uncover a range of conventionalized bodily practices that carry sociopolitical meaning in Congo. Ayobade's (2015) study of the evolution of the US Black Power raised fist into the two-fisted Afrobeat Salute used in African contexts gives an example of gesture used in positive, anti-racist ways. However, as simple as it would have been to connect racialization and gesture in my data by finding explicitly racially offensive, anti-racist or otherwise politicized gestures, during fieldwork I never observed anything comparable to these gestures in talk about social categories and racial difference. Instead, the visual communicative practices I observed in relation to social categorization there had much more subtle connections to social issues like racialization. One of these practices is the topic of my discussion here: body-directed reflexive gestures, indexing locations on the body of the speaker that occur as part of references to differences of physical appearance among people.

Self-directed indexicality in discourse of social categorization

Below are two examples of the practice I will focus on, one from a speaker of the indigenous Cha'palaa language of northwest Ecuador, and one from a speaker of Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish from the same region. Both examples are similar in that the speaker makes a brushing movement with one hand over the surface of the opposite arm together with a spoken reference to skin color.

(1) *tsen naa kolor-nu pa-ñu-bain peechulla-la kolor neegro* [4]
so how color-LOC speak-DR-also Afro.Descendants-COL color black
'so, speaking of color, the Afro-Descendantrs are black color,'
tsen-mala lala-a matyu somos kanela no?
so-then 1COL-FOC so we.are cinnamon NEG
'and then so we are cinnamon colored right?'
[SWEEP HAND (L) OVER ARM (R)]

(2) *en- en- con la tez que tenemos*
'in- in- with the complexion that we have' [BRUSH HAND (R) ON ARM (L)]

Within the multimodality literature, this type of body-directed gestures have not been closely looked aside from in Cooperrider's (2014) study which describes a fairly wide range of usages and meanings of pointing reflexively to the body.

4. Key to Cha'palaa abbreviations: 1, 2, 3 = person; AG.NMLZ = agentive nominalization; COL = nominal collectivity; DCL = declarative; DR = different referent dependent clause; FOC = focus; LOC = locative; NEG = negation, OB = object/accusative; PFV = perfective aspect; PL = verbal pluralization; POSS = possessive; Because Spanish is a well-known major world language, I do not include glosses.

Cooperrider categorizes these different types of phenomena according to three general groups: (1) self-points, referencing the whole body, often in connection with first person references, (2) body-points, referencing specific points on the body, with reference either to the speaker's body or to the bodies of others, and (3) anchor-points, associated with more abstract references (2014, pp. 2–3). In this typology, the gestural practices I was observing among speakers of Cha'palaa and Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish would fall into the second category, body-points, specifically in this case using articulations on an individual body to collectively characterize other bodies. After giving some more background on the social context of the research setting, this paper will first discuss the formal and semiotic properties of the practice of body-pointing in discourse about racial and ethnic differences and then conclude by making some observations about multimodality in the study of racialization and racializing discourse.

Inter-group relationships and linguistic categorization in Esmeraldas, Ecuador

From my conversations with Chachi and Afro-descendant peoples, it appeared that their long historical encounter continued to be articulated in variants of terms originating in the early Colonial Spanish "caste" system (see Schwartz, 1995, among many other sources); Chachis even used the archaic Spanish term *casta* to refer to local social groups, long after it has fallen out of common Spanish usage. Most work on racialization in Latin America has focused on the top-down nature of this history, looking at the discriminatory treatment of indigenous and Afro-Latin peoples within white-*mestizo* hegemony, and while this perspective is important for revealing systematic inequality, it also sometimes tends to reduce the complex lives of marginalized peoples into oversimplified narratives of oppression and resistance. When formulating my research project in the region, I hoped to mainly learn about what rural local people thought about each other rather than about their relationship with the distant white urban elites, but I could only find a few studies on the historic (Restall, 2005) and contemporary (Losonczy, 2015) relations between Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples in Latin America. In my project I was particularly interested in how two groups who are both marginalized by larger Ecuadorian society, the indigenous Chachi and the Afro-descendant peoples get along with each other as close and generally equal neighbors in the Pacific coastal rainforests.

Both of these peoples came to the rivers of this hilly coastal lowland region between the Andes and the Pacific Coast relatively late, with the Chachis migrating over the Andes under pressure from the successive Incan and Spanish invasions

(Jijón y Caamaño, 1914; Barrett, 1925; DeBoer & Blitz, 1991; Añapa Cimarrón, 2003; Floyd, 2010, 2014), while the Afro-descendant communities were founded by populations of formerly enslaved people who escaped captivity and settled the region from the coast moving upriver (Whitten, 1965, 1974; see also Lane, 2002, for historical context). This history of settlement has led to current the situation of Chachi communities towards the headwaters of the Cayapas river basin, Afro-descendant communities downriver, and a few multi-racial communities in the middle. While the two societies have remained mostly separate from each other, in part due to the endogamy restrictions adhered to in the more traditional Chachi communities which do not permit intermarriage or mixed settlements, they maintain generally friendly relations, with only the occasional dispute.

The Cha'palaa language is a member of the Barbacoan language family of Ecuador and Colombia (background in Curnow & Liddicoat, 1998). In some ways it resembles other Western South American languages, as an agglutinative verb-final language with complex morphology, but in other ways it stands out, such as in its lack of person agreement morphology and its extensive knowledge-based morphology including rare egophoric marking (see Floyd, 2018). One particularly relevant aspect of the language for this discussion of social categories is how it deals with the linguistic value of "number" (see Corbett, 2000), traditionally understood I as involving singular/plural type distinctions on nouns. Unlike in English and many other languages, in Cha'palaa, inanimate nouns are not marked for number, and must be quantified with a word like "many" or a numeral to be understood as plural. Animate nouns (people, spirits, some animals) can take a suffix *-la* that, while resembling a plural marker, is better described as an "associative/collective" marker, which only applies to social groups, not to groups of multiple inanimate objects (Floyd, 2010, 2014).[5]

The associative/collective suffix *-la* tends to appear in much of the spoken references to collective social categories which often occurred together in the same stretches of discourse as body-directed gestures. The technical term for the resulting words is "ethnonym", or a name for members of specific racial, ethnic, national or regional populations, which can further be classified as "autonyms" that people use to talk about themselves, as "exonyms" that they use to talk about others, and as "ethnophaulisms", exonyms that carry a negative valence (Roback,

5. A distinctive feature of associative/collective meaning, in contrast to plurality, is that associativity can be applied to proper nouns, either to people (e.g., *Humberto-la*, Humberto-COL, "Humberto and associates/people accompanying him") or to places (e.g., *Tyaipi-la*, Tyaipi-COL, "people from Tyaipi"). In English, on the other hand, we don't usually say "the Bobs" to mean "Bob and friends" or "the Bostons" to mean "people from Boston". Note: some languages use the same marker for both plural and collective meanings.

1944; Allport, 1954, pp. 178–188). In Cha'palaa the collective ethnonym for the Chachi people is *chachilla*, often used together with the first-person collective pronoun *lala*, which also historically derives from the suffix *-la*. For other groups, the Chachis also have specific exonyms: *peechuilla* for Afro-descendants, with the likely etymology "those who came to live downriver", *uyala* for white foreigners, in reference to the foreign enemies from Chachi oral history (see Basso & Hymes, 1979; Bashkow, 2017, for studies of indigenous views of white people), *eyula* for the highland Andean peoples who speak the local Andean Quechuan language known as Quichua or Kichwa, and a number of other terms for other indigenous groups. Older people recall using the term *juyungo* or "howler monkey" as an ethnophaulism referring to Afro-Descendants, although they expressed that this is no longer heard (see Floyd, 2010, 2014; see also Ortiz, 1957).[6]

The Spanish variant used by the local Afro-Ecuadorian people in the Cayapas River region is part of a continuum of coastal Spanish varieties of the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Latin America, with some local influences from African and indigenous languages as well as from Andean Spanish (see Lipski, 2008, on the neighboring Afro-Andean Spanish; no studies yet exist on the coastal variety). The autonym used by Afro-Descendants in Ecuador has shifted over the years, with *moreno* ("dark/brown") once considered a more polite term than *negro* ("black"), but now falling out of use in favor of *negro,* which has come to be seen as more positive in relation to international ideas of Blackness. Today "*negros*" is used interchangeably with "*afro-ecuatorianos*" (Afro-Ecuadorians) or "*afro-descendientes*" (Afro-Descendants), commonly shortened to "*afros*". For their Chachi neighbors, the local Afro-Descendants used to use the term *cayapas*, but as this has come to be seen as a mild ethnophaulism by the Chachis, the Afro-descendants tend to use only "*los chachis/un chachi/una chachi*" for exonymic usage today. The usual exonym for white foreigners is *gringo* (with less negative valence here than in other countries like Mexico), and a range of other exonyms exist for talking about other social categories, like *manabas* for people from the Province of Manabí, while white or mixed race Ecuadorians are known as *blancos* ("whites") or are sometimes identified by region, e.g., *quiteños* ("people from Quito").

Linguistic forms for collective reference to human groups often occurred together with body-directed gestures in both Cha'palaa and Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish discourse in the data set considered here. While the interview context was particularly conducive to such practices, I also observed them in everyday conversation, commonly seeing gestures towards the face or upper body when mentioning ethnonyms like *chachi* or *negro*, and once in a Chachi community meeting

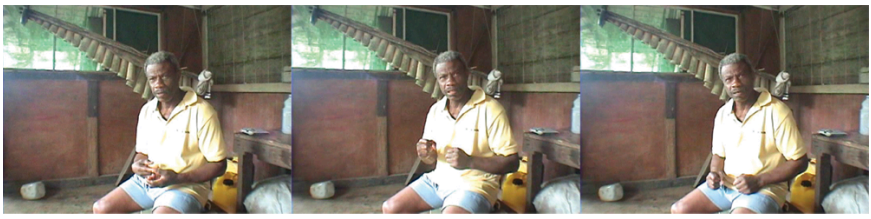
6. *Juyungo* is also the title of a classic Ecuadorian novel about an Afro-Descendant man who lived with Chachis, where he received the term as a nickname (Ortiz, 1957 [1943]).

during a discussion of the *pillujmu*, a water spirit that is said to look like an Afro-Descendant person. A study of this type of gesture in less controlled conversational settings would certainly illustrate more about how they are used in social interactive contexts, but these usages do not depart entirely from what I observed in the semi-controlled but informal and conversational setting of the interviews. The following section describes the formal and semiotic properties observed for the gestural practices of interest in this study.

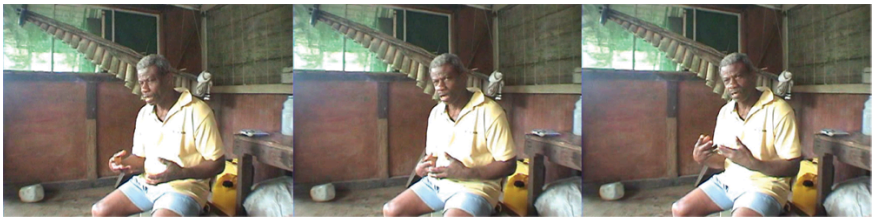
Body-directed gesture in racializing discourse

The data set for this study is drawn from a series of ethnographic interviews I conducted between 2008 and 2010 in Spanish and Cha'palaa concerning relationships between the Afro-Ecuadorian and Chachi communities. During that period, I was living in a smaller, more isolated, community exclusively populated by Chachi people, and also spending time in two larger towns with mixed populations of Chachis and Afro-Ecuadorians. With speakers of both languages, I employed a semi-standardized format for ethnographic interviews. The interview questions inquired about the day-to-day relations between the two groups, the history of co-settlement in the region, perspectives and stereotypes about the differences and similarities between the groups, attitudes about intermarriage and children from mixed marriages, group participation in local politics, attitudes towards other people besides Chachis and Afro-Ecuadorians, links from modern peoples to social groups known from oral history, terms that people use to talk about each other (and which ones are polite and impolite), and personal narratives of experiences with other social groups. While I had observed body-directed gestures referring to social distinctions in everyday discourse from time to time, as mentioned in the previous section, I found the topics raised by the interview questions about inter-group perceptions notably increased their frequency, even though there was no prompt in the questions referring to the visual modality in any way.

The transcribed interviews were flagged for all occurrences of body-directed gesture, and a selection of those examples are presented here. Before examining the body pointing gestures, however, it should be noted that these were not the only types of gestures that occurred in relation to discourse of racial and ethnic difference. For example, in (3) the speaker is discussing a stereotype that Afro-descendants are "braver" or "tougher" than Chachis, and he uses a type of iconic-metaphorical gesture of bracing the fists firmly together with the phrase "*más fuerte, más valientes*" or "stronger, braver". Later in the same interview, another iconic gesture occurred in association with discourse about race, a bringing together of both hands to show two bloods "colliding" in interracial children, shown in (4).

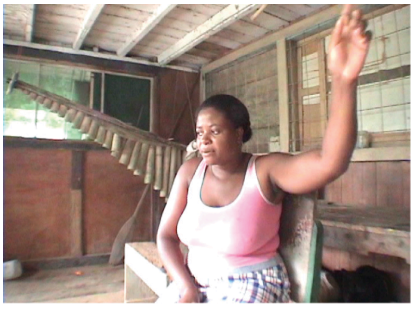


(3) *así no nos importa morir, pero somos más fuertes, más valientes*
'so we don't care if we die, we are stronger and braver' [TWO FISTS RAISED]



(4) *entonces ya decimos nosotros ahí las dos sangres están chocadas*
'so we say then that the two bloods have collided'
[OPEN HANDS MOVE TOGETHER]

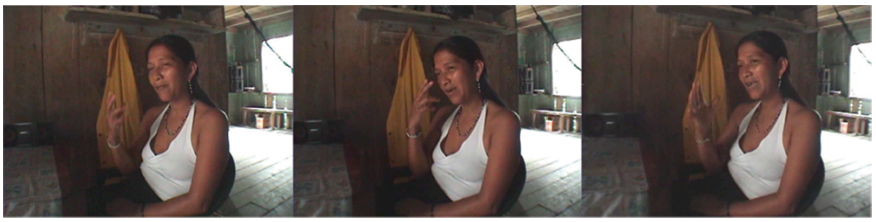
Turning to more indexical gestures, the spatial distribution of settlements was sometimes a resource for talking about different social groups, as in (5) in which the speaker refers to the Epera, an indigenous group distinct from the Chachis living downriver, together with a direct or "absolute" pointing gesture identifying the exact direction of a distant town (Le Guen, 2011; Levinson, 2003).



(5) *ellos son de abajo*
'they are from downriver'
[RAISED HAND (L) INDEX FINGER POINT:WEST]

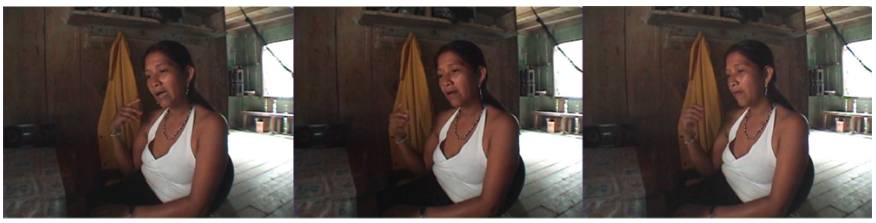
Body-directed gestures, on the other hand, are indexical gestures oriented not to external points but reflexively back towards the body. Example (6) provides a good illustration of how body-directed gesture can be used to talk about bodily

features, similar to the gestures described in (1) and (2) that referred to skin color. Here the topic is eye color, and the speaker performs a notable two-finger point to her two eyes when talking about the light eyes typical of white foreigners (*gringo* in Spanish and *uya* in Cha'palaa) (Chun, 2010 also mentions cases of mocking gestures referring to eye type with reference to Asian American people):

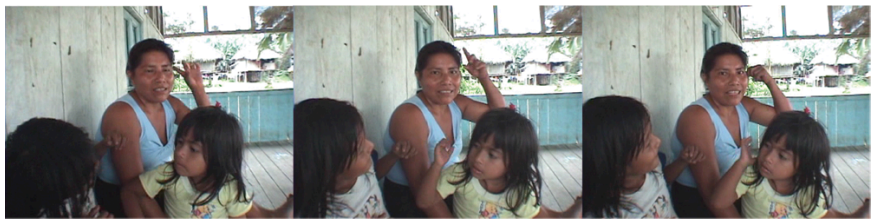


(6) *kapuka naraa-ñu-'mitya-a uya-a ruku ti-mi, ishdandaa palaa.*
eye beautiful-DR-because-FOC gringo-FOC man say-DCL transparent word
'because of their pretty eyes they are called "*uya* man"; 'transparent' is the word' [RAISED HAND (R) 2 FINGERS POINT:EYES]

Another phenotypic difference that was frequently remarked upon in addition to skin and eye color is hair type (commonly seen as racially meaningful in many contexts, e.g., Robinson, 2011). In the following series of Examples (7) to (11), speakers of Cha'palaa and Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish realize several different types of self-directed with reference to hair in response to an interview question about attitudes toward racial mixing and the identity of children of mixed unions of Chachis and Afro-Descendants. One commonly observed variant was a finger twist oriented at the side of the head in reference to curly hair, performed similarly by two different Cha'palaa speakers in (7) and (8).



(7) *yaila-' kailla faa-mi achuwa nara-a te'wallullu*
3COL-POSS children come.out-DCL hair beautiful-FOC curly
'their children come out with hair in pretty curls'
[HAND (R) RAISED TO HEAD; INDEX FINGER TWIST]

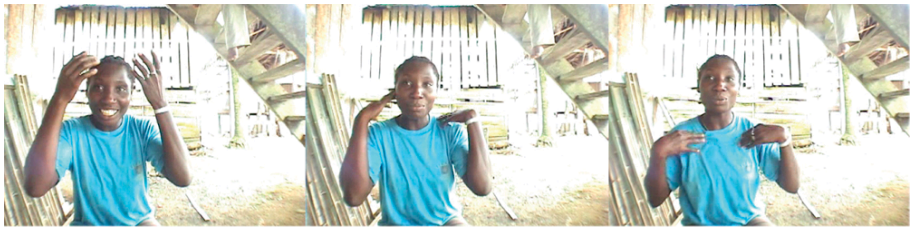


(8) *tsaa pababa-a achuwa te'wallulluu*
like black-FOC hair curly
'like black hair in curls'
[HAND (L) RAISED TO HEAD; INDEX FINGER TWIST]

Very similar gestures were observed together with similar topics in both in Cha'palaa, as seen in (7) and (8) and in Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish, as seen in (9).

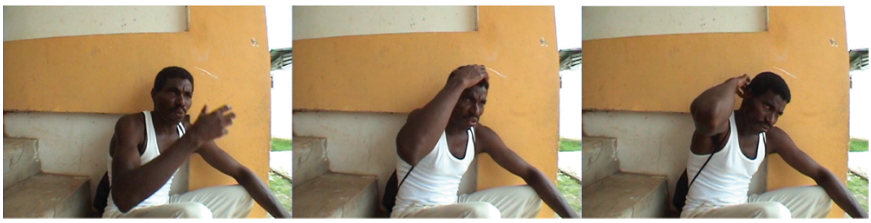
(9) *más virado el cabello*
'curlier hair' [HAND (R) RAISED TO HEAD; FINGER TWIST]

Other references to hair type take up other iconic aspects, like the top-to-bottom, two-handed gesture used to describe long flowing hair seen in (10):



(10) *hay una niñas que tu has visto, bien churoncitas, ellas son entre*
there are some girls you've seen, very curly, they're both Chachi and
chachi y negro
Afro-Descendant
[2 OPEN HANDS RAISED TO FORHEAD > SWEEP TO SHOULDERS]

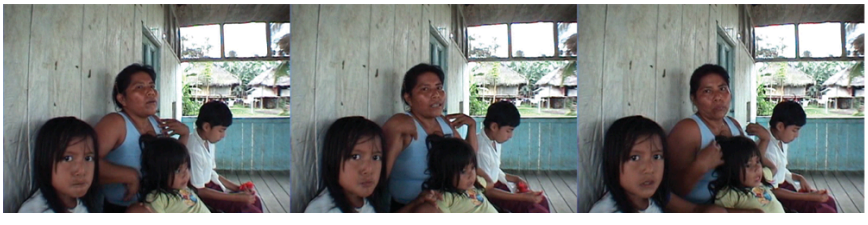
In (10), on the other hand, the speaker refers to long, curly hair with a formally different gesture, sweeping his hand over the back of his head.



(11) *igual salen su pelo choro, pero cuando son muy apretadas también sale chureado*
'they come out with curly hair but when they are very tight then they can come out curly' [OPEN HAND (R) SWEEP – HEAD FRONT-TO-BACK]

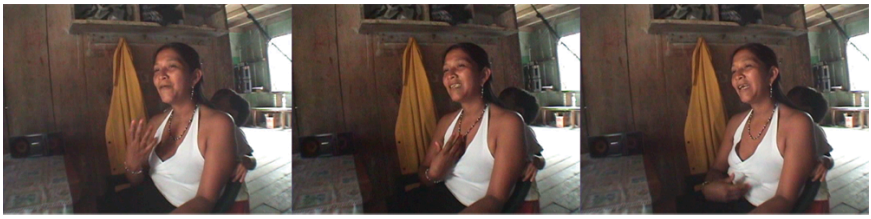
Gestures referring to characteristics of the body were not the only way speakers used self-directed gestures to talk about social categories. Another type of gesture that was commonly observed referred to clothing and accessories that can play an important role in social group differentiation. The Tsachila people, whose language Tsafiki is the closest linguistic relative to Cha'palaa, are famous for the red *achiote*-dyed hair style that is the basis for the exonym *colorados* ("red colored") by which they were traditionally known, before their autonym *tsachila* came into common usage as a general ethnonym. In (12a) and (12b) a speaker of Cha'palaa refers to this hair style and the traditional woven tunics with two distinctly located and articulated self-directed gestures.

(12a) *leshkapa-nu aa-bebeke pinta ke-mu-de-e-we*
forehead-LOC AUG-around paint do-AG.NMLZ-PL-become-DCL
kulaadu-la-ya
Tsachila-COL-FOC
'they paint around their foreheads, the Tsachila'
[OPEN HAND (R) TO FOREHEAD]



(12b) *man-pire-n-de-tyu-we* *chaiba yala'* *kultura*
again-disappear-PFV-PL-NEG-DCL still 3COL-POSS culture
yala' *traje* *utilisa ke-mu-de-ju*
3COL-POSS clothing use do-AG.NMLZ-PL-be
'they haven't lost their culture yet, they use their traditional clothing'
[2 HANDS RAISED TO SHOULDERS > LOWERED TO CHEST]

In (13) a speaker of Cha'palaa uses a gesture that, like in (12), sweeps over the torso in reference to the traditional dress of another indigenous group, the highland Quichua speakers. In (13) the articulation is different and uses only one hand compared to the two seen in (12).



(13) *e-ruku-la-a* *yaila-'*
highlander-man-COL-FOC 3-POSS
jali-nun aseeta i-i-mu
clothes-OB find.out become-become-AG.NMLZ
highland men we recognize by their clothes
[OPEN HAND (R) DOWN CHEST]

In (14) a speaker of Afro-Ecuadorian Spanish makes a similar gesture to refer to traditional clothing, this time two-handed, sweeping from above to below, here reaching all the way to the knees to refer to the knee-length tunic traditionally worn by Chachi men.

(14) *eso es que se lleva hasta acá abajo*
'that is what goes down to here below'
[2 HANDS RAISED TO SHOULDERS > DOWN CHEST TO KNEES]

As was already seen in (12a) and (12b), sometimes multiple self-directed gestures occur rapidly in stretches of discourse, when the speaker is describing several different aspects or parts of the same general reference. For example, in (15a) and (15b) the speaker performs two successive self-directed gesture to talk about the traditional Chachi women's clothing, first tracing the arms around the waist before sweeping downwards to refer to the traditional *anaco* skirt made of a woven belt and a wrapped cloth, and then doing a two-handed gesture sweeping over the torso to refer to the tradition of going shirtless (similar gestures were used to refer to clothing in previous examples – here to a lack of clothing).

(15a) ellos vestían con un trozo de tela amarrado, y se les decía que era un anaco
they dressed with a strip of cloth tied and it was said to be an "anaco" (skirt)
[2 ARMS WRAP AROUND WAIST]

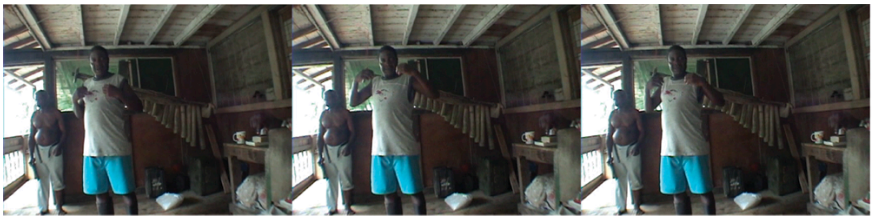
(15b) *andaban sin cubrirse el pecho*
'they went around without covering their chest'
[2 HANDS RAISED TO SHOULDERS > DOWN CHEST]

For Afro-Ecuadorian people, the practice of traditional Chachi women to wear only beads over the torso (these days only observed by older women) represents a marked contrast with their style of dress, which is closer to Western ideas of morality, and Afro-Ecuadorian women in the region traditionally wore full-length "missionary" style dresses or blouses and long skirts, before more modern clothes became popular. Clothing and body ornamentation were referenced by Afro-Ecuadorian people a number of times with respect to identifying different

indigenous peoples, as in (16) where the speaker refers to the feather crowns worn traditionally by some Amazonian peoples.

(16) *en ese entonces usan un, un cintillo aquí y se ponen unas plumas aquí que los diferencia*
'in their case they use a, a little band here and they put feathers that differentiate them'
[THUMB/INDEX TOGETHER, SWEEPING APART FROM CENTER FOREHEAD]

Several self-directed gestures in the data set referred to more external features beyond bodily characteristics and clothing in connection to social categories. For example, in (17) the speaker describes how Chachi people carry agricultural goods on their backs in special baskets with straps for bracing on the forehead, tracing the shape of the strap with two hands. While some material culture is shared between the two groups, like dugout canoes for example, these types of baskets in particular are associated with Chachi practices and can become a way to differentiate them from Afro-Descendant practices.



(17) *y cuando lo- ellos lo andan a cargar lo cargan aquí encima así, esos son- o sea la piña*
'and when- they carry, they carry them above, like this, they are- pineapples and such' [2 HANDS RAISED TO SHOULDERS]

Another similar example seen in (18) refers to the way that Highland Quichua women typically carry their children wrapped in a shawl on their back, a practice generally not seen on the coast among Chachis or Afro-Descendants.

(18) *y andan con los niños acá atrás*
'and they walk around with the babies here behind' [HAND (R) TO BACK]

Seen broadly, the body-directed gestures seen above all had similar properties in that they were manual gestures (one- or -two handed) that had a places or places of articulation on the body of the speaker, and that used the body of the speaker as an analogy for the bodies of a collective group of people. In the following section I will conclude by analyzing these gestures formal and semiotic properties and then in terms of their larger social meaning linked to the history of race relations in the region.

Discussion: Talking about bodies with bodies

To conclude I will try to connect this set of body-directed gestures back to the social context of racialization in Latin America mentioned in the introduction, the "postcolonial palimpsest" (Mallon, 2011) in which the racial categories of the colonial period continue to be articulated in new ways up to the current moment. The examples presented above are diverse and touch on many different aspects of social relationships in northwestern Ecuador, but for speakers of both languages, the interview topic of inter-group relations motivated both instances of similarly racializing language and a series of gestures with some core properties in common. In terms of their semiotic properties, all of the examples of gestures considered here are indexical in the sense that they meaningfully indicate points in space, or more specifically, on the spatial frame of the body. Some include other elements of canonical pointing (see Kita, 2003, on pointing), such as extended index fingers. Most also used both the shape and the path of the hands and fingers to add iconic meaning to the indexical meaning, referencing aspects of skin, hair, clothing and so on. At the more iconic extreme, in a few cases they take the form of embodied action rather than simply pointing (see Goodwin, 2000).

These combinations of pointing and depiction are not drawn from an inventory of culturally standardized gesture in any salient way, but instead appear to be generated on-line in the discourse of speakers of both languages. As Cooperidder points out in his analysis of body-directed gestures, this is a key difference from

the signs of sign languages: signs are also often articulated at specific points on the body, but those points are not strictly indexical since they are parts of words that have specific conventional symbolic meanings (2014, pp. 14–15). As indexical and iconic gestures, the gestures considered here did not feature the specific conventionalized meanings of the more symbolic gestures discussed by Sherzer (1991), Brookes (2001, 2005), Covington-Ward (2016), Ayobade (2015), and others, but rather were ambiguous on their own, and take on their specific meanings mainly in combination with speech like the collective references and ethnonyms.

However, considering the long historical process of racialization in Latin America that have structured the lived experience of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, it does not appear adequate to say that these gestures "just" refer indexically or iconically to skin, hair, or clothing. When elements of bodies and physical appearance are culturally treated as parts of the social signifiers of racial categories (see S. Hall, 1996),[7] the fact that the these body-directed gestures are articulated by and on racialized bodies in a specific social setting is not insignificant. The socio-historical context of the racialized, articulating bodies appears to add an additional layer of meaning onto the indexical or iconic meanings of the gestures. The phenomenological concept of "bodily schema" (Merleau-Ponty, 2010 [1945]) in its adaptation by Fanon as the "historico-racial schema" directs our attention to the experience of living in an always-racialized body as an ever-present meaningful element of social interactions (Fanon, 2008 [1952]).[8] The idea of "collective experience" often referenced in antiracist approaches like Black Feminism (e.g., Collins, 2000, p. 256) provides a similar but less individual and more social perspective on the meaningful lived historical experience of race and racialization. If a first basic meaning of these body-directed gesture expresses simple indexicality and iconicity associated with the body, a second layer of meaning also exists, not about the message, but about the gesturally articulating body itself, and its social context within the history of racialization in Latin America. This history continues to structure the daily lived experience as well as the multimodal discourse of neighboring indigenous Chachi and Afro-descendant peoples of northwestern Ecuador.

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7. While all serious scholars of race would agree with Hall that racialization occurs through discursive signifiers that construct racial categories, many would not fully accept his "floating signifier" characterization because, rather than being an Saussurian "arbitrary" sign, these signifiers are not arbitrary at all but are motivated by specific histories and lived experiences that are more fixed than floating, and history cannot be changed by simple semiotic adjustments in the present, as "color blind" or "post-race" stances attempt and fail to do. Here I cite the concept more for the "signifier" element than the "floating" element.

8. Several scholars have followed this line to give more phenomenological, embodiment-based accounts of race (e.g., Alcoff, 1999; Macey, 1999; Mahendran, 2007; Whitney, 2015).

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Address for correspondence

Simeon Floyd
Dept. of Anthropology
Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, COCISOH
Universidad San Francisco de Quito
Av. Diego de Robles y Vía Interoceánica
Quito
Ecuador
sfloyd1@usfq.edu.ec

Biographical notes

Simeon Floyd is a linguistic anthropologist specializing in languages and cultures of Andean and Amazonian South America, focusing on ethnography, descriptive and historical linguistics, language documentation, linguistic typology, social interaction, and gesture and multimodality. He is from Austin, Texas, and completed his BA (2002) and MA (2004) in Latin American Studies and his PhD in Linguistic Anthropology (2010) at the University of Texas, Austin. From 2010 to 2015 he was a postdoctoral staff scientist in the Language and Cognition Department at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands. From 2015–2016 he held a joint affiliation with Radboud University Nijmegen and Senescyt-Ecuador. Since 2017 he has been a professor of anthropology at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.