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**EDUCATION AND  
TRANSCULTURATION:  
INDIGENOUS YOUTH  
(REGION V LOCAIS  
ALTOS) IN SAN  
CRISTÓBAL DE LAS  
CASAS, CHIAPAS**

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this research is to reveal how formal education, received by young people of indigenous origin and mestizos who live in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas affects social interaction that occurs in the school context and outside of this, through identifying their socio-regional and demographic conditions, as well as the repercussion that this entails in the construction of their identity and intercultural coexistence. The investigation pretends to trigger a meditation about day-to-day developments between two social groups apparently equals, but with cultural differences, in order to expose that the presence of ethnic and cultural minorities in contemporary societies requires actions to promote interculturality, since no culture is superior to another in terms of its origin.

**Keywords:** Identities, interculturality, regional studies.

## INTRODUCTION

When it refers to the coexistence of two different social groups, the people who assume their belonging to a specific group do so based on the similarities, customs and traditions that they have in common, in a word, the culture that is shared. From the accepted recognition, that is, when the individual is included in a group, he simultaneously excludes himself from the other, identifying them as different. Giménez (1997, p.12) says that identity is “the self-perception of a subject in relation to others.”

In San Cristóbal de Las Casas, different cultures interact, mestizos born in the city (in a greater proportion), mestizos from other cities, foreigners of various nationalities and the indigenous population who, according to the data reported by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography As of the 2010 census, they currently make up just over 40 percent of the city's total population.

According to population records, most of the indigenous settled in San Cristóbal come from San Juan Chamula, and although there are also other Tsotsil and Tzeltal ethnic groups that have immigrated, these are a minority in relation to the aforementioned; however, in the framework of analysis of the diversity that exists in the city, its consideration is important. The origin of the first migrations of chamulas was due to religious differences with their community of origin, from that moment and to date, these migrations have increased and their flow is permanent, since they believe that the city represents better living conditions compared to those they may have in their communities of origin. The other ethnic groups from the surroundings of the city, their immigration is motivated by the search for employment, although it must be mentioned that, among the indigenous ethnic groups found in Chiapas, the Chamulas have stood out for their versatility in adjusting to changes regions and the adaptation of their uses and customs, which has allowed them to have a significant presence (Martínez, 2011).

The existence of diverse cultures in the same city demands that they coexist beyond multiculturalism and that the existence of interethnic, interlinguistic and interreligious relations be genuinely sought, that is, that interculturality be practiced through coexistence in diversity ( Dietz, 2012).

Vidal de la Blache (as cited in Hernández López, 2010, p.86), says that “in identical environments, men do not behave identically”; however, the environment that is lived can condition, although not determine the forms of development and culture. Based on this idea, it can be said that the condition of young people of indigenous origin who were born in San Cristóbal can be studied from the assumption that they live a shared reality. It can be said that these young people have assimilated the mestizo culture, with some

variants that impact their identity, since the adoption of a new culture implies a rupture or detachment from their own, so it is relevant to know the effects of that transculturation.

Most of the indigenous people are located in the northern zone, although there are also settlements in the south of the city. Many of them no longer speak the language of their communities of origin, since they are children of the generations of indigenous people who migrated in the mid-1970s (first migrations), which places them as the third generation, which was already born in the city. However, the lag in the appropriation of the Spanish language is evident, which is fundamentally and incorrectly learned within their family and that, although they attend school, there is also no specific program on learning the language, because it is assumed that they dominate it, but since this is not the case, the consequence in their development in the educational and professional fields is deficient.

Most of the educational institutions in the city offer instruction in Spanish and, although these young people must not have any problem in their performance, the structural lag of the poor oral and written competence of Spanish shows the opposite, which invites to investigate about what has happened in their school career that has not allowed them to acquire these skills and beyond that, if formal education is a promoter or inhibitor of an intercultural coexistence that is governed by principles of equality, equity, difference and interaction positive. Formal education must serve as a vehicle to promote interculturality among young people of different ethnic origins; however, in light of the argument above, promoting equal education among unequal assumptions is not having this effect.

In response to the brief background mentioned, the importance of carrying out this research focuses on knowing what are the relationships of coexistence between mestizos

and indigenous people that have observed the benefits of living in an urban area, have decided to stay and fight for the appropriation of the territory. This has caused some discomfort among the mestizos, to whom this denomination was attributed since colonial times and whose sense of belonging and identity emanates from the appropriation of their territory, therefore, they feel “invaded”, in addition to considering that These settlements generate various public health and urban development problems, since the indigenous people, in most cases, continue to carry out customs and traditions that are not compatible with those of the mestizos and often contrary, especially with respect to eating habits and personal hygiene.

Now, both social groups are exposed to practices, experiences and consumption, as a result of modern society and globalization (Serrano, 2015), between indigenous youth and their parents there is a huge generational gap, which affects informal education they receive in their homes and consequently in their relationships of coexistence and in the construction of their identity, since it is probable that many of these young people do not recognize the community of origin of their parents and in order not to feel discriminated against, by decision of their own parents, have not even learned the mother tongue.

For all of the above, it is important to know in depth the conditions under which these groups coexist in San Cristobal society.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methodology corresponds to the interpretive hermeneutical paradigm, the method is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. There will be 14 in-depth interviews, a discussion group, in addition to non-participant observation and documentary review. The population to be studied are women and men of indigenous and mestizo

origin with ages between 18 and 24, students from two public universities in the city of San Cristóbal (UNACH and UNICH).

## RESULTS

This is the beginning of the research, which will be completed in two years, when the Doctorate program in Regional Studies ends.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The findings will allow to know what is the role of formal education and its contribution to strengthen or weaken the social relations established between indigenous and mestizos in the population of San Cristobal.