“It’s so Pura Vida”

The Tourism Global Value Chain and Ethnoracial Stratification in Costa Rica

by

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Department of Sociology
Duke University

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy in the Department of
Sociology in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Over the last thirty years successful national economic development is considered participation in global industries, particularly in global value chains. Frequently, however, inclusion in these chains brings forth varied socioeconomic benefits for chain actors, acutely different ethnic and racial groups. Costa Rican participation in the tourism global value chain while heralded as a success story shows varied impacts for ethnoracial groups who are incorporated, excluded, and stratified in various forms. By comparing two communities in Costa Rica, Tamarindo and Cahuita, three main practices are apparent in determining the position of foreigners from the global North, Costa Ricans from the Central Valley, Afro-Costa Ricans, and Guanacastecans in the industry as workers or entrepreneur suppliers: (1) the role of governance structures, i.e., power dynamics between firms along the value chain and the importance of standards, formal and subjective; (2) institutions, including global private travel fairs, national tourism boards, and specific development policies; and (3) the dominance of environmental imagery and rural democracy narratives to market Costa Rica. Concretely, the development of global tourism in Costa Rica and its impact upon different groups is nuanced and it is a testament to both opportunities for local economic and social empowerment and stratification and marginalization.
Dedication

For Blair and Niko. Together we did it, poco a poco.
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1. Introduction: Tourism and Race in Costa Rica

I first became interested in studying Costa Rica after I read *Otros Amenazantes* “Threatening Others” (2004) by Carlos Sandoval García who was then Director of the Social Research Institute at the University of Costa Rica. I wanted to design a research project that explored the intersection of economic globalization and national development with racial classifications in Central America. The discourse used by an international development official in Nicaragua during a meeting I had several years prior stayed with me, pushing me to want to uncover how racial stratification occurred at global, national, and local levels within the context of facilitating economic development. The official used a racial narrative to describe why certain regions of Nicaragua were not developed. My gaze turned southward to Costa Rica because it was a country that was almost always championed as a success story in international and national development circles. I wanted to know why. When I read *Otros Amenazantes* I was fascinated because it was the first book I read on race in Central America that addressed how the process of racialization happens, how countries can be “exceptionally” racialized, as Costa Rica is, and how this can dictate national identity and state-making processes and economic development outcomes. Sandoval García wrote how racialization does not have a Spanish translation and too few scholars have explored how it is operationalized in a Central American context. I thought I could play a small part in filling that research hole.

Furthermore, examining tourism seemed like the perfect global industry to explore the contours of globalization, economic development, and race since it is heralded as the nation’s economic development success story. Following three decades
of economic liberalization policies and international development organization loans, tourism has advanced as one of the highest contributors to gross domestic product (GDP), with growth spearheaded by foreign direct investment (FDI). In 1997, there were roughly 800,000 international arrivals. By 2007, there were two million. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, for 2009, the year I was in the field, it was ranked second out of all Latin American countries for its relative contribution to the national economy. The questions I wanted to explore were: How were racial and ethnic groups in Costa Rica participating or not in the global tourism industry? Were non-white Costa Ricans capturing the gains from the tourism global value chain? How does unpacking the global, national, and local levels explain potential ethnoracial stratification?

When I traveled to Costa Rica for a preliminary research trip in May 2007, one year before I entered the field, I began to make some early observations to address those questions. On that trip I saw the images international tourists were inundated with the second they got off the plane: advertisements for luxurious hotels, resorts, and condominiums based in the Guanacaste and Puntarenas provinces that were owned and operated by foreign companies; and the tourist steering that takes place by the information desk at the baggage claim by marketing boards and business associations, along with the local cab drivers within San José. Yet, most clearly were the differences I found when traveling from the Central Valley to the Atlantic coast.

In the small coastal town of Cahuita I met local Costa Rican afrodescendientes who were working hard to gain a small portion from tourism’s growth. Regardless of their capabilities – one business owner operated a unique local restaurant that was well
managed, well staffed, and offered a little piece of local culture with the dishes it served –
the community already had immense challenges due to the lack of tourists coming to that
side of the country and a history of local underdevelopment. Furthermore, most locals
operated small tourist businesses, restaurants, and cabinas “small hotels” in the main
town whereas foreigners owned much of the property and nicer hotels in Playa Negra, the
adjoining “neighborhood” (mostly representing just one main street connected to the
town). The businesses connected to the larger global value chain were those in Playa
Negra and less in Cahuita. Nevertheless, Cahuita also exhibited a rich history of local
mobilization that encouraged the maintaining of local property ownership and many
locals saw tourism as a potential way to economically prosper. Discovering the
challenges this community had to that prosperity, while also acknowledging tourism’s
potential, solidified my desire to pursue the study using Cahuita as a case example.
Comparing how Cahuita and its population were incorporated into the tourism global
value chain to how Tamarindo is, another small community on the opposite side of the
coast that is ethnoracially different, although both regions are considered to be inhabited
by “internal others,” and linked to the global value chain (GVC) at national and global
levels in different forms, became the foundation of my comparative research design.

1.1 My Study

In this dissertation I explore how racial and ethnic groups are incorporated within
the tourism global value chain between two communities in Costa Rica (Tamarindo and
Cahuita) and the United States. I specifically look at the tour operator segment of the
tourism global value chain to connect global, national, and local levels of analyses.
Foreigners from the global North, Costa Ricans from the Central Valley [meseteños], Guanacastecans [guanacastecos], and Afro-Costa Ricans [cahuíteños and afrodescendientes] are incorporated within the chain via the types of jobs that they hold; their ownership status of tourism firms that are suppliers within the chain; and how as community members, tourism development is positively or negatively impacting them, e.g., through local environmental degradation, land policies, and the marketing images of the communities used. I address how these groups are potentially incorporated in a hierarchical manner with negatively racialized groups (guanacastecos, afrodescendientes, and cahuíteños) filling subordinate worker positions or entirely excluded from chain segments.

While critical globalization and uneven economic development studies are abundant for tourism (Perez 1975; Britton 1983; 1993), this literature, however, lacks a strong theoretical framework to describe how tourism is a global industry that impacts national and local dynamics. With a global value chain analysis I hope to counter the problem argued by Lanfant (1995) that tourism researchers generally ignore investigating in detail how the local interacts with the global in tourism. Nevertheless, most global value chains research lacks an account of how particular racial and ethnic groups are incorporated into the chain that moves beyond acknowledging ethnic or kinship ties. Bringing in an understanding of a structural view of race perspective (Bonilla-Silva 1997; 2001) and the concepts of cumulative racial legacies and new racial practices, and how they pertain to the value chain, strengthens the GVC framework. Some GVC researchers have already begun to understand the importance of how gender is situated in global
value chains (Barrientos 2001; Barrientos, Dolan, and Tallontire 2003; Christian 2011b). A similar analysis is needed for race and ethnicity.

Overall, there is a lack of research that combines economic globalization, development, and race despite the fact that racialized labor was always at the center of capitalist forms (Cox 1964; Robinson 1983). Many scholars have examined globalization and race through the fields of identity changes and diaspora movements and meanings (Thomas 2006), but there is little with regards to racial and ethnic relationships being embedded in global economic industries. Thomas and Clark (2006:1) write:

Race and the processes of racialization are not usually considered central issues in academic discussions of global economic and political transformations. Yet, because globalization today is facilitated by the transmission and reproduction of deeply embedded social prejudices rooted in a past characterized by territorial concepts of belonging that both generated and were generated by racial inequalities, the contemporary redistribution of wealth has exacerbated historically entrenched racial hierarchies. These are hierarchies that also articulate with ideas about ethnic, gendered, and cultural difference.

Race works in intersecting forms in global processes. There are multiple racial projects at play. Race operates differently in various historical and cultural contexts, i.e., in Costa Rica and in the United States, and when those backgrounds converge through global-national-local interactions, they need to be addressed to understand why and how racial outcomes are exhibited. Nonetheless, cultural differences of racial understandings, such as with the case of Costa Rica, has its roots in a global diffusion of racial perspectives that took form in Western colonialism and the growth of liberalism following decolonization (Putnam 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to understand race as a global phenomenon and how racialization happens uniquely in disparate societies (Wade 1997).
Tourism has become an important industrial avenue for developing countries to pursue, particularly smaller countries, and those with few development options beyond traditional agriculture. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) international tourist arrivals reached 924 million in 2008, up 16 million from 2007. International tourism generated US $865 billion in 2007 and represented 30 percent of the world’s exports of services. By 2010 global tourist arrivals reached 940 million and tourism receipts generated US $919 billion (UNWTO 2011). Global tourism as a form of global production is wildly understudied, nonetheless. Since Lea quoted Louis Turner in the late 1980s stating that tourism is “the most promising, complex, and under-studied industry impinging on the Third World” (1988:1), economic globalization researchers in particular have not been quick to fill the void. Beyond the need to analyze the organizational arrangement of the industry at a global, national, and local scale to help explain the drivers behind the impressive tourism figures, a further layer of analysis is necessary to unpack who exactly is gaining the most from tourism development and how does that fall upon ethnoracial lines.

Tourism like any other global industry considered as a means for a country to develop, does not positively benefit countries, regions, communities, and ethnic and racial groups evenly. The organizational arrangement of the industry, and powerful institutions, shape how opportunities are distributed and outcomes are generated. Within global industries there are several historical trajectories including a history of development and industrial policies and changing racial formation projects (Omi and Winant 1994) that shape divisions of labor and power configurations both internationally
and nationally. These trajectories are what global industries are embedded in but also help to form. Costa Rica is an example of tourism as a global industry creating both positive and negative outcomes for the diverse ethnic and racial groups who occupy its borders.

The layers to the tourism story in Costa Rica are deep. Tourism promotion, development, and traffic are clustered around the Central Valley, the cities consisting of San José, Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia, and in the Northern Pacific peninsulas. Its success is dependent upon promotion in the international community and from investment from foreign firms and immigrants. There is also a disconnect between the national tourism and development laws which include sustainable tourism and environmental protection and the realities in the tourism communities, particularly along the beach coasts. Accusations of corruption, incompetence, and favoritism are rampant among community members, government officials, and developers with all actors pointing accusatory fingers at one another. Lastly, this ethnically and racially diverse country, despite the ubiquitous whiteness narrative that surrounds descriptions of Costa Ricans (Gudmudson 1978; Paige 1997; Sharman 2001), has a history of marginalizing their internal racial other populations while downplaying their ethnoracial diversity and history which has contributed to ethnoracial groups’ inability to fully benefit from participation in global tourism while attempting to do so. The example of global tourism in Costa Rica and its effect upon different groups in Costa Rica is nuanced and it is a testament to both opportunities for local economic and social empowerment and stratification and marginalization. Groups are incorporated in high or subordinate
positions within the chain through various practices that were supported by past racial
formation strategies that created underdevelopment but reformulated within a twenty-first
century context that continues it.

Therefore, I expected to find several forms of incorporation for ethnoracial groups
in the value chain based upon the theoretical foundations of global value chain analysis
and a structural view of race perspective. First, ethnoracial groups’ position would be
ddictated by firm practices. Tour operators would choose their tourism firm suppliers,
e.g., hotels and excursion providers, based on racial rational or because they had
benefited disproportionately in gaining cumulative advantages from a racialized society.
Within firms there would also be divisions of labor along ethnoracial lines due to varying
education levels and racial assumptions of work capabilities. Second, the development
policies pursued by the Costa Rican state, historically and contemporarily, were practices
that would disadvantage Costa Rica’s minority ethnoracial populations, and hinder their
chance at benefiting from tourism global value chain participation.

1.2 Methodological Steps

To uncover if my expectations were met, I conducted an initial nine-month field
journey where I employed a mixed methodological approach. Methodologically, I used
comparative historical research design techniques and semi-structured interviews and
participant observations. To connect local field sites to global forces I followed
Burawoy’s conceptualization of “global ethnography” and the “extended case method”
(1998; 2000). Furthermore, in order to identify where, what and whom I needed to
interview and what I needed to compare, the GVC framework provided a blueprint for how to study global industries.

In laying out the structure of how to do global commodity chain research, the original incarnation of global value chains, Gereffi (1994:97) outlined how to construct: (1) an input-output structure that outlines a set of products and services and how they are connected in the design, creation, and distribution of a final product; and (2) how to identify the geography of the input-output structure where different segments are performed at varying global locations and their levels of concentration. For my analysis, I identified: (1) the input-output stages of the tourism global value chain and (2) the geographical component in Costa Rica. With this identification, I chose a sample of firm and institution actors from each stage of the value chain to interview, and I analyzed with a combination of primary and secondary data the institutions and policies most important. I also conducted a content analysis of marketing materials used by global and national tour operators, the Costa Rica Tourism Board, travel guidebooks, and the most reputable travel magazines (Selwyn 1996; Morgan and Pritchard 1998).

Therefore my methodology and analysis included interviewing individuals and organizations and analyzing materials at three levels of analysis: global, national, and local. In total, I conducted over eighty interviews and I explored the relationships between each linkage of the value chain, which allowed for the multilevel approach. These relationships, or governance structures as understood in value chain analysis, became a crucial theoretical mechanism or practice in explaining variability of ethnoracial group incorporation and benefit distribution in the chain.
Unlike traditional industries that have a tangible product that is being produced, studying the tourism global value chain brings forth several theoretical and methodological concerns that surround the analysis of a service industry (Clancy 1998; Gui 2007). Tourism is a complex product representing a series of connected and fragmented separate industries that make it more difficult to classify than the typical tangible product supply chain. What is it that is actually being created and packaged for tourism consumption? If we focus solely on the destination as the “product” we forgo the international connections that connect the product to the consumer. I found it most useful to focus on what I label “components of trip” and the “organization” segments of the value chain which are the series of industries that a consumer or traveler experiences when they embark on deciding, organizing, and partaking in a tourist experience. Therefore, I follow a tourist’s footprints. Within the tourism segments, one particular actor is a key connector linking the various tourism stages together: tour operator.

Hence, I more narrowly conceptualize the tourism global value chain as a tour operator global value chain to: (1) connect the stages of the value chain together at global, national, and local levels via the notion of a “global tour operator” or “global service provider,” a category of firm that creates, organizes, and implements a tourists’ entire travel experience; and (2) to analyze how tour operators play different roles and organize different tourist activities depending upon if they are located internationally, in destination capital cities, or local host communities and how tourism firms in destinations all take on to various degrees tour operator functions. Global tour operators’ function to plan, organize, and execute a tourist’s entire vacation leads to their ability to control
segments of the tourism value chain. Their direct contact with tourists and coordination capabilities throughout the chain make them key actors in the entire industry in that they have the ability to decide which local suppliers, i.e., national tour operators or destination management companies, hotels, or transportation companies are incorporated into the chain. All tour operators also have the ability to market destinations anyway they see fit, thus creating a particular image of a country, region, culture, or subgroup within a nation.

Consequently, I interviewed global tour operators based in the United States and participated in their conventions, which is a key arena where incoming country firms are connected to global operators; tour operators based in San José who are also known as destination management companies or receptive, incoming, inbound tour operators and incoming agents, and play a key role as a country middleman that connects global operators to the tourism service providers who are based in the local community destinations of Tamarindo and Cahuita. The sample of global tour operators interviewed were identified from the United States Tour Operator Association (USTOA), the largest and most prestigious American global tour operator association. The tour operators interviewed and analyzed throughout the dissertation (see “Chapter 4”) were the tour operators that have packages to Costa Rica. The national tour operators sampled and analyzed throughout the dissertation, as well, (see “Chapter 4”) were all members of the Costa Rican Tour Operator Association or Asociación Costarricense de Operadores de Turismo (ACOT). They represented an elite group of national tour operators who act as suppliers for global tour operators and subsequently create national tour itineraries and packages that are also used by global tour operators.
In Tamarindo and Cahuita my interview sample was wider because I interviewed a sample of hotels, local tour operators, and excursion providers. These providers were the potential suppliers for global and national tour operators. My interview sample in the communities was comprehensive. In Tamarindo, I interviewed all of the large foreign-owned, branded hotels, a group of small, foreign-owned boutique hotels, and some meseteno-owned cabinas. I also interviewed a sample of all of the different forms of excursion providers in Tamarindo, i.e., surf, sailing, and fishing. In Cahuita, I interviewed a sample of foreign-owned, boutique hotels in Playa Negra and cahuiteño-owned hotels in the center of town. I also interviewed almost all of the local tour operators who were also excursion providers. Therefore, my sample was designed to capture foreign, national, and local ownership patterns, various types of tourism businesses, and differences between firms who were in and out of the global value chain.

I also interviewed representatives of tourism promotion institutions in San José, both public and private, and in Tamarindo and Cahuita. In the communities, I also spoke with representatives of the community-based development associations and participated in some of their meetings. This organizational, institutional component made clear the importance of tourism policies that directly affected tourism development in Costa Rica and in the communities, in addition to the more broad development policies that shaped economic and social development trajectories, such as environmental, education, labor, tax, and real estate laws. Most of these policies are situated domestically, i.e., in Costa Rica, but other private institutional forms such as global travel trade fairs shaped how
local tourism actors gain access to international markets (see Annex 1 for an interview summary).

The firm interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. The questionnaire was designed around four broad themes; (1) history of the company, (2) their linkages with other tourism firms, e.g., what forms of distribution access did they have for their products and which firms did they recommend to their clients, (3) worker expectations, (4) attitudes about Costa Rica and the communities of Tamarindo and Cahuita, and (5) important tourism-related policies. For the institutions, the first two themes were changed to a history of the particular institution and typically specific questions related to the institution that I knew prior to the interview. For most of the interviews, I attempted to add questions that were related to their particular segment in the value chain. With this interview structure, I was able to analyze how firms were linked to each other, created job and worker assumptions, and determined which institutional forces were shaping the industry. Without directly asking about race, I established how firm standards, formal and informal, and how attitudes about workers and communities potentially created racial barriers for guanacastecos and cahuiteños.

GVC analysis is most adequately situated in case-based comparisons coming out of the comparative historical tradition. Gereffi (1994:104) argued that chains are historical and comparative because they are not static, and structural arrangements of the input-output structure “vary across industrial sectors as well as geographical areas.” I used the case examples of two tourism communities in Costa Rica – Tamarindo and Cahuita – as the foundation of my comparisons, but I also addressed the different levels
along the chain. I analyzed the incorporation of the various ethnic and racial groups who were part of the population in the communities into the tour operator global value chain to determine how groups were positioned in the value chain in varying forms. The communities were chosen based on four main criteria. I wanted to capture differences in regional attributes, racial demographics, forms of tourist development, and levels of foreign penetration in the cities primarily through multinational corporations or American and European expatriate capital. Both of the communities are relatively small, less than 5,000 inhabitants, and are outside of the Central Valley. Choosing localities outside of the Central Valley was important because I wanted to see how these tourism towns were also connected to the “national” tourism network being organized out of the Central Valley, specifically through the national tour operators.

Although Tamarindo and Cahuita are both coastal communities they are on opposite sides of the country. Tamarindo is in the Guanacaste province on the Pacific coast while Cahuita is in Limón province on the Atlantic coast. While both guanacastecos and cahuiteños have an “internal other” status with regards to Costa Rican Central Valley national identity, cahuiteños have a long history, with the rest of the Atlantic coast, of subjugation and marginalization based on race from both foreign companies (e.g., the United Fruit Company) and the national government. Both communities are inundated with a Western foreign presence of businesses and immigrants but the forms of tourism development, i.e., larger hotels and condominium development in Tamarindo, and small and micro-sized enterprises in Cahuita, vary, in addition, to the types of foreigners that are attracted to the regions. The two communities
are also marketed differently by tour operators at all levels of analyses and the national
government in contrasting forms.

Consequently, I examined the role of the communities’ position in the tour
operator global value chain and how ethnoracial groups were incorporated as suppliers or
workers with case-based comparisons (Ragin 1992). This included highlighting how
development and national policies supported or hindered the communities and their
lasting effects. Importantly, with this methodological approach, I parsed out the practices
that created real and potential racial inequality in the complex workings of global-
national-local interrelationships within a global service industry.

1.2.1 Sticky Research

Being reflexive and constantly confronting how personal subjectivities and micro
meaning is created during interactions with respondents in a form that shapes data
collection and analysis strengthens qualitative and ethnographic research (Harding 1987;
Twine and Warren 2000; Nager 2002). When I was initially preparing my research
project I was aware of how my perceived traits of being young, female, American, white
(but with a Cuban background), and a researcher from an American university was going
to dictate all my exchanges from getting and participating in interviews to normal daily
occurrences on the street. I found that my multiple identities worked for and against me
in different ways because of the multilayered analysis approach to my design (Henderson
2009).

For instance, depending on which actors from different segments of the value
chain I interviewed, or had a less formal social encounter with, I tended to emphasize
certain identities and/or aspects of my study more. When I attended the annual global
tour operator convention my status as a Ph.D. student from an elite university was
emphasized along with my intention to better understand the structure of the tourism
industry. During my interviews with national tour operators in Costa Rica, they too were
impressed with my university status, but with them I pushed my concern of wanting to
understand Costa Rican tourism more so that Costa Ricans can gain from the industry.
While living in the communities it was important for me to appear both objective and as
an advocate for the communities. When I talked to foreign developers or business
owners my foreigner status positioned me as being perceived as having a similar attitude
as them on many themes they communicated. Lastly, when I interviewed community
members who were from the region (Guanacaste and Limón respectively) it was
important that I gained their trust and demonstrated that I understood their difficult
economic and social position.

I often struggled while I was in the field worrying that I was being too ingenuous
and disingenuous at the same time. I asked myself, “Is it fair for me to potentially
critique this person/business after I sat through an interview where I nodded and said
‘yeah,’ ‘I understand’ to statements that showed how locals were being stratified or when
bias racial attitudes were in play?” In addition, was it correct of me to say I was an
advocate for the communities during community meetings when, (1) I am not a
community member and cannot speak for them, (2) some of my analysis may be critical
of community issues, as well (Nager 2002; Royster 2003)?
In addition to political presentation-of-self issues, and how I presented my research, I also had personal appearance issues that went beyond the common themes we hear about in qualitative research (i.e., gender, looks, and race). After my first month in Costa Rica I found out I was pregnant. I spent the entirety of my pregnancy in Costa Rica. My pregnancy was less of an issue when I was in San José interviewing national tour operators because I was not physically showing, but it played heavily into perceptions of me while I was in the communities. Sometimes the pregnancy humanized me more and presented an easy opening discussion when I first met people. But it also might have worked against me in ways I do not know, particularly if people looked down upon me for doing work in Costa Rica while pregnant. Most acutely, however, was how my pregnancy impacted how interview respondents and community members interacted with me when I was in Cahuita. Due to a racialized, sexual history of mostly European white women coming to the community and “hooking up” with local black men, and many having children with them, the image of myself walking down the dirt-paved roads seven and eight months pregnant conjured up numerous perceptions of who I was before I ever spoke (Frohlick and Johnston 2011). I discuss in “Chapter 6” on Cahuita the various forms of signifying I had to do before I introduced myself to people and how I subsequently think this affected my data collection and analysis.

Thus, sociological research is sticky. It is never smooth and easily interpreted through established procedures and results analyses un-embedded from our social environment and personal biographies (Mills 1961). Ultimately, the complexity, confusion, and constant reflection I brought to the entire research project I hope created
stronger findings (Stanfield and Rutledge 1993; Twine 2000). Nevertheless, I have left the field with a somewhat new politics of the field. While I stand by my research and my analyses, I address in the “Conclusion” why I would not necessarily recreate the research project in other settings. Now I advocate for potentiating locals to conduct research themselves in a collaborative fashion with outside researchers (Nager 2002) and a form of “critical ethnography for social justice” (Fitts, Perry, and Davis 2006).

1.3 The Practices of Incorporation, Exclusion, and Stratification

My main findings were determined by analyzing the data and comparing the specific levels at which I was able to identify where ethnoracial inclusion and potential stratification occurred in the global value chain and between the communities. The comparisons fall under what Tilly (1984) calls “encompassing” comparisons, which allow all of the levels to be analyzed together in order to determine their varying relationships to the entire system as a whole. In the communities, I was able to determine how groups were first integrated into the local tourism value chain network, than with the national tour operators, and finally with the global operators. The communities were then compared to each other to determine the similarities and differences between them with regards to value chain structure and how tourism development policies and community reactions toward tourism development was playing out in similar and unique forms.

The findings point to a parallel demonstration of theory rather than identifying one or two key variables within the cases that distinguished why differences or agreements occur in the process of incorporation, exclusion, and stratification of ethnoracial groups from the tour operator global value chain in Tamarindo and Cahuita.
There are three broad findings I highlight in the chapters that follow: (1) the role of governance structures, i.e., power dynamics between firms along the global value chain. Concretely, networks, cumulative advantages, and ethnoracial understandings dictated governance relationships and access to the value chain. (2) institutions, including global travel fairs, the Costa Rican Tourism Board, and specific development policies acted to mediate the distribution of resources and represented discontinuity in the communities; and (3) the use of tourism marketing images and narratives from global and national tour operators, the Costa Rican Tourism Board, and guidebooks often reproduced rural democracy exceptional narratives and ignored cultural diversity. Tour operators also excluded racial communities from tour package products. The three points were shown at each level of my analysis – global, national, and local – but also represented variability in how stratification, incorporation, and exclusion were practiced.

(1) Global value chain scholars addressed how the theory of governance in the global value chains framework identified how relationships between firms on the chain were configured, particularly where power was concentrated, but also how governance shifts overtime (Bair 2009; Sturgeon 2009). The architects of governance analysis brought a network-based approach to the already existing perception that economic relations were confined between the two poles of vertical integration and spot-market transactions (Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon 2005). The five-part typology they created – markets, modular, relational, captive, and hierarchy – were useful starting points to evaluate the dynamics between firms and their linkages but in analyzing which indicators allude to broader racial outcomes I highlight how we also need to address how
ethnic and racial social relations and racial subjectivity are built into firm actors’ understanding in creating firm linkages. Broadly, there are three ways that governance linkages can display racial outcomes. First, firms may choose to work with other firms of the same racial background because they have the same segregated racial networks – with no overt racial reasoning involved. Second, firms can choose other firms who are at a strong capability level and are able to meet the formal and informal standards because they have received cumulative advantages from a racialized history and society. Finally, firms can choose providers with justifications that show ethnoracial rational.

Applying this analysis allows for a “social/cultural-symbolic” understanding of how relationships are created and understood amongst chain actors in a way that was lacking in previous GVC studies (Ponte and Gibbon 2005:77). This emphasis stresses how social embeddedness creates racial exclusionary networks, how financial and skill needs can be accumulated in racial societies, and how subjectivity comes into play in the evaluation of a “service product.” Specifically regarding the latter shaping capability perceptions of suppliers along the chain, with tourism part of measuring the capability of suppliers is determining how tourists will judge their tourism experience. Those judgments are not always racially neutral. Some tour operators at the national level and tourism firm operators at the local levels use a variety of linguistic forms to explain why or why not they use a particular supplier in the local communities in overt and subtle racial forms. Local firms also use a discourse of racialized skills to explain tourism worker capabilities that is similar to research that has explained how skills become gendered (Elson and Pearson 1981).
There are six main governance linkages I address: global tour operators and national tour operators, global tour operators and hotels, national tour operators and hotels, cruise lines and national tour operators, hotels and excursion operators, and excursion operators and excursion operators. Each of the linkages exhibit how either racial networks, advantaged position, or ethnoracial rational created differences in which groups where incorporated or excluded as owners of tourism businesses that were suppliers in the value chain or workers within firms.

(2) Institutions include the larger structural context which global value chains are embedded in including private and public forms, such as business associations, government bodies, national policies, and local civil society (Mayer and Pickles 2010). I specifically highlight five that shape ethnoracial group position – international travel fairs, the Costa Rican Tourism Board, the Ministry of the Environment, Energy, and Telecommunications, taxes, and local associations. At the global level international travel fairs operate as the most important institution that links global service buyers (i.e., global tour operators) to destinations and suppliers within the destinations. Ethnoracial stratification occurs due to the standards, skills, and capital that are needed to compete in these arenas. At the national level the most important tourism regulatory and development body that impacts Tamarindo and Cahuita is the Costa Rican Tourism Board or Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT). The government entity is charged with administering the tourism development budget, promoting Costa Rica abroad, and enforcing tourism development laws including business practices, environmental protection, and most importantly, land policies. The Ministry of the Environment,
Energy and Telecommunications or Ministerio de Ambiente, Energía y Telecomunicaciones (MINAET) and the national environmental office embedded in it, SETENA, dictate how development procedures are administered locally. The ICT, MINAET, and SETENA did not operate homogenously in communities based on existing laws. For all groups there was immense regulatory and protocol confusion in the communities regarding how the ICT and MINAET would develop tourism and particularly dictate land laws. Land laws and how taxes are levied on land, however, influenced ethnoracial groups differently and their ability to benefit from global tourism development.

The activities of the local level institutions – public and private associations – show how community mobilization can help shape local development, which can influence how the regions and local ethnoracial groups are part of the value chain. The level of power that the asociaciones have with local and national government forms is often a barometer of how locals have been able to control tourism development in their region. Divisions within the associations based on race and ethnicity demonstrate how community power dynamics are asymmetrical between different ethnoracial groups but also how in the ethnic group there are strong disagreements and differences.

(3) The image making of Costa Rica alludes to the last main finding, the role of marketing in determining ethnoracial groups’ position in the global value chain. Global tour operators, national tour operators, and the ICT all sell an image of Costa Rica that affirms the country’s environmental uniqueness and rural democratic exceptionalism. There is a historical foundation for the making of the Costa Rican exceptional image that
helped to shape the way the industry developed in the country. Costa Rica’s internal racial other populations – indigenous, guanacastecos, and afrodescendientes – are excluded from the national identity narrative of the country and hence the marketing messages used to describe Costa Rica. Their perceived difference has contributed to a lack of marketing of their community tourism products and racialized constructions about their regions, yet brought different consequences for guanacastecos and afrodescendientes due to the forms of tourism development in their localities.

With these broad findings there are also some community specific dynamics that also play into the incorporation, exclusion, or stratification of ethnoracial groups in the industry. For example, in Tamarindo condos compete directly with hotels for “extended stay” travelers and they also offer their own in-house tour operations. Gated community complexes are also part of the real estate growth near Tamarindo. In these complexes, that sometimes offer hotel services with their houses and condos they sell, insulate tourists during their travel experience. Many area businesses argue that these developments take away from community prosperity because tourists are not using the services provided in the communities. Moreover, developers are often cited for environmental degradation and pursuing quick “flips” just to make a profit.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

I structure the remaining chapters in the following way: In “Chapter 2” I layout the global value chains framework and structural view of race perspectives. In “Chapter 3” I analyze the making of Costa Rican racial exceptionalism and the rise of global tourism, highlighting how entrenched divisions of labor and regional development
disparities in the country were created and reformulated with the growth of the sector. In “Chapter 4” I look at the global and national levels of the tourism global value chain emphasizing the role and linkages between global and national tour operators and international travel fairs and the importance of marketing narratives by the ICT, tour operators, and guidebooks. “Chapters 5” and “6” are the local community case studies of Tamarindo and Cahuita. I analyze community divisions of business ownership and labor in the industry and their connections to the value chain. Lastly, in the “Conclusion” I compare the Tamarindo and Cahuita cases and offer some policy suggestions for better distributing tourism development benefits along with address the role of global North researchers in the global South.
2. Global Value Chains, Tourism, and Race: A Theoretical Perspective

Since the beginning of global capitalism and Western colonialism individuals were categorized into ethnoracial groups (Cox 1964; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). From its inception race was used as a rigid organizing principle for global industries but for contemporary dynamics we need to understand how racial projects operate in industries differently at global, national, and local levels and the implications for when they intersect and interact. In most countries today ethnoracial groups must navigate their life opportunities living with the cumulative consequences to a history of racial subjugation that has put them at a contemporary disadvantage when competing for jobs and position within global value chains (Myrdal 1957). Furthermore, continued racial practices within the development of global industries still exist, even if not overtly or intentionally, and can maintain inequality (Bonacich, Alimahomed, and Wilson 2008).

Understanding how cumulative disadvantage and continued racial practices were shown in global tourism in Costa Rica entails identifying how racial disadvantage was created and how industrial governance structures, institutions, and marketing strategies maintain it (Winant 2001; Wherry 2008).

In this chapter I attempt to add layers to the global value chain theoretical framework by addressing how the framework can be adapted to the tourism industry, a global industry that is woefully under studied, and by placing processes of racialization
within the chain at its center. A racial analysis is typically left out of global value chain and tourism studies, or when addressed is treated as a tangential matter or theoretically underdeveloped. As Richter (1995:72) writes, gender and race “must be taken seriously both as independent variables impacting on tourism and as dependent variables affected by tourism.” Bringing in the theoretical writings that examine how race can be viewed “structurally” or as embedded within social systems (Bonilla Silva 1997), and an analysis of how labor segmentation along racial lines occurs (Adler and Adler 2004; Castellanos 2010), assists the GVC framework by addressing how inequality is created and maintained, but also where forms of contestation and upgrading can take place.

This research emphasis follows the next wave of chain researchers highlighted by Bair (2005:171) who are concerned with how the reproduction of inequality in the global economy is contributed by commodity chains but also how developing countries can learn to leverage participation in the chain to benefit specific constituents including workers and communities. Comparing my research focus to how Bair (2005) and Sturgeon (2009) differentiate between the various “chain” frameworks, (e.g., world-systems, global commodity chains, global production networks, and global value chains)

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1 Throughout the dissertation I use the term ethnoracial groups to typify groups that have both ethnic and racial characteristics. Typically, ethnicity is defined as “cultural attributes” (Waters 1999; Pilkington 2003) and “chosen” (Waters 1990; Alba 1990; Nagel 1994). This is not to say that racial groups do not hold these characteristics, rather instead of conflating the two we need to study “race” as structurally separate from culture, as a process that individuals are subjected to. The best definition of race ultimately pinpoints that "races, racial categories, and racial ideologies are not simply those that elaborate social construction on the basis of phenotypical variation or ideas about innate difference, but those that do so using the particular aspects of phenotypical variation that were worked into vital signifiers of difference during European colonial encounters with others" (Wade 1997:15). When racialization happens to ethnic groups it becomes a process-based phenomenon. As a process-based phenomenon we can highlight the agents and actors who are crystallizing the labeling individuals into racial categories, illustrating racial meaning and the practices that distribute life chances and resources based on those categorizations. The practices vary within structures and levels of analysis.
and its levels of analyses and ultimate research goals, intuitively my emphasis may seem best situated within the world-system and commodity chain or production network focus where structures of inequality and institutional forces are more pronounced in research and the focus is on avenues for development for the weakest players. I believe, however, there is room for an ethnoracial focus within the global value chains framework.

First, this project pushes forward the growing GVC research focus on issues surrounding industrial governance structures, particularly on multiple governance structures (Sturgeon 2009). Second, adding a gender analysis to chain research, which serves as a guide for adding race, was first used within a GVC framework (Barrientos 2001); and lastly, there are more similarities than differences between the chain frameworks. Sturgeon (2009:135) argues, “The field of GVC-related theory building is wide open.” Therefore, I advance this proclamation by addressing how ethnoracial groups and stratification can be added to the GVC theory building process through an analysis of the tourism global value chain in Costa Rica.

To show how I create a tourism global value chain that highlights the practices of inclusion, exclusion, and stratification of ethnoracial groups, in the remainder of the chapter I: (1) map out the tourism global value chain and highlight the importance and my emphasis on tour operators; (2) examine the lack of a racial focus in GVC studies, and overall economic development literature, despite the global economy’s racial foundation; (3) review how most literature on global industries and race have affectively emphasized labor segmentation but either focus on firms or state practices and leave out
multiple levels; and (4) explore how a structural understanding of race and concepts like “cumulative advantage” and “new racial practices” help to understand racial dynamics in the value chain, and lastly, (5) highlight the practices of inclusion, exclusion, and stratification along the Costa Rican tour operator global value chain.

2.1 The Tourism Global Value Chain

Unfortunately, there are few tourism studies with a GVC analysis. There are little to no studies that use the framework or have mapped out the tourism global value chain. Yet, while there is a lack of GVC studies, there is an abundant literature from a political economy approach with a dependency theory bent and from economic geographers. There are also a series of edited volumes and texts such as *Tourism and Development in the Third World* (Lea 1988), *Passport to Development* (de Kadt 1979), *Tourism and the Less Developed World* (Harrison 2001a), and *Tourism in Developing Countries* (Huybers 2007) that have sought to address the potential and tensions of tourism for developing economies.

The researchers who have studied tourism from the developing country perspectives and stress the asymmetrical power forms adapted a political economy approach coming out of the dependency theory tradition of the late 1970s and 1980s. Many of these studies are useful for a GVC analysis particularly in highlighting the dominance of foreign lead firms within the value chain. Their identification of the actors within the industry emphasizes how destinations are dependent upon global actors – multinational hotels, global tour operators, and international airline carriers – in
developing their entire industry and bringing tourists to localities. The patterns of
development follow historical patterns of colonialism and dependence. Britton’s (1983)
research on Fiji was one of the original studies highlighting how underdevelopment can
happen in the space of development and his contemporaries (Hills and Lungren 1977;
Nash 1978; Oglethorpe 1984) began the initial steps of mapping out the global value
chain and the relationships between firms (Lea 1988). Their overall emphasis on the
nation as the unit of analysis tended to skew how multiple levels interact, but the research
was an important step in indentifying how mass tourism controlled by foreign investors
impacts development in conflicting forms. The work of economic geographers, most
notably the edited volume by Ioannides and Debagge, The Economic Geography of the
Tourist Industry (1998), is the closest analysis on tourism that outlines the supply-side
and global productive system nature of tourism that acts with the political economy
approaches as proto versions of tourism global value chains.

2.1.2 Mapping Out the Tourism Global Value Chain

Although the dependency theorists began connecting the global and the local
within tourism, contemporary research has not bolstered these original themes with
detailed yet concise current configurations of tourism production networks. Since Lea
quoted Louis Turner in the late 1980s stating that tourism is “the most promising,
complex, and under-studied industry impinging on the Third World” (1988:1) economic
globalization researchers in particular have not been quick to fill the void. Judd (2006)
writes that tourism studies are relatively absent from the literature on economic
geography and globalization with most research focusing on systems of consumption rather than production. Much of this dearth is due to the complicated process of visualizing a service industry. Services in general are “invisible,” “eclectic” and multi-sectoral and consumption and production can take place simultaneously (Clancy 1998).

Defining what tourism is and how to measure it is a contentious issue. If it is a collection of interrelated industries and markets, i.e., lodging, food, retail, (Sinclair 2007) where does tourism begin and where does it end? Shaw and Williams (2004) and Doerry (2008) highlight the bundling capacity of different sectors to create a final tourism product. How to capture the tourist “experience” is at the center of the complexities because if tourism is the “overall experience that is sold to the client,” (Mosedale 2006:439) within tourism experiences vary based on sales, components, and destinations. A useful definition comes from Judd quoting Debbage and Daniels (1998): “tourism is no single product rather a wide range of products and services that interact to provide an opportunity to fulfill a tourist experience that comprises both tangible parts (e.g., hotel, restaurant, or air carrier) and intangible parts (e.g., sunset, scenery, mood)” (Judd 2006:325).

Notwithstanding these difficulties, while limited, there is a growing group of scholars who adapted a range of value chain theoretical positions to the tourism industry (Clancy 1998; 2008; Judd 2006; Mosedale 2006; Doerry 2008; Lessmeister 2009; Erkus-Ozturk and Terhorst 2010). The strategy for these researchers was to focus on a particular sector in the industry. Clancy (1998) was one of the first researchers to
advocate using the framework but originally focused his analysis to airlines and hotels. More recent work has analyzed the value chain from the tour operator segment. This focus advances the analysis forward because it connects more segments of the chain, however, this research is still limited because it emphasized only a few linkages. For example, Doerry (2008) and Lessmeister (2009) focused on the relationship between global tour operators and incoming agents in destinations but little is understood about how other actors, such as smaller destination hotels and excursion operators, were incorporated in the chain. An important theme since these actors were more likely to represent local ownership and ethnoracial groups.

Multilateral agencies and development organizations, however, have pursued a form of value chain analysis in order to uncover key points along the chain where interventions can be made to assist in poverty alleviation. These reports are the closest examples to mapping out the global value chain in detail at local levels in developing countries. The Overseas Development Institute\(^2\) has carried out several value chain studies in developing countries particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) are also actively involved in learning how to harness tourism’s pro-poor capabilities. These studies are very useful in that their approach follows the tourism dollar and identifies which segments and firms capture the most profit. A report from

\(^2\) They had financial assistance from the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).
The Gambia highlighted how global firms – tour operators, airlines, and hotels – absorb most of the value from holiday tour packages, but pro-poor benefits are derived from tourist discretionary spending on retail items (Mitchell and Faal 2008). A report on The United Republic of Tanzania’s northern safari circuit found that a larger percentage of package fees reached the poor due to park fees, registered guide systems, and minimum wage requirements (Mitchell et al. 2009).

These reports, however, are mostly descriptive in nature and address little to how private governance relationships between firms, the role of standards, and the various institutional arrangements that encompass tourism value chains constrain or benefit poor individuals’ participation and rewards. They also do not address whether how and why local tourism firms are able to upgrade. Furthermore, the focus on tourist spending habits and cost structure while important, fails to capture the larger labor implications, such as how the structure of the tourism value chain assists in the creation of different categories of tourism workers, (e.g., permanent, contract, casual, and or own-account), and how these workers are subject to varying working conditions and enabling rights. Ethnoracial conditions of work, participation, and benefits distribution are also left out.

To date, no one has fully mapped out an entire tourism global value chain in detail. In Figure 1, I attempt to fill this void and conceptualize what a global value chain of tourism might begin to include. This model is influenced by traditional chain categories but I adapted those to meet the uniqueness of the industry. There are five
segments of the supply chain: inputs, components of trip, organization, sales, and final product.

I focus on the linkages between two segments of the global value chain: “components of trip,” specifically “lodging” and “excursion;” and “organization.” The tour operator under “organization” is a main focus of analysis because it plays a key role knitting together a vast array of tourism products to create one total tourist experience.
There are several forms of tour operators. Global tour operators create total package tours for their customers that can include international transport, transport to and from hotels in destinations, and excursion planning. Some global tour operators, particularly those from Europe, are vertically integrated owning several stages of the supply chain such as retail, international transportation, and lodging (Cavlek 2002; Medina-Muñoz, Medina-Muñoz, and García-Falcón 2003). Because they bundle services together and operate at high volumes they can compete with low price points (Buhalis 2001). Not all global tour operators are large and some operate solely for niche markets such as environmental or cultural tourism. United States-based operators are not as vertically integrated and as large as its European counterparts. Nevertheless, all global tour operators because of its organizational capacity, direct access to tourists, and ability to negotiate with destination suppliers, essentially controlling the supply chain, carry considerable power and are considered one of the key drivers, if not key driver, of the tourism global value chain (Ioannides 1998; Lessmeister 2009).

Whether large or small, global tour operators often outsource their destination trip planning to destination incoming agents or receptive, inbound tour operators. These incoming agents are national tour operators who work prominently out of capital or major cities in destinations. Incoming agents are responsible for ground operations including choosing and vetting destination suppliers, such as hotels, excursion operators, and ensuring organizational transportation runs smoothly. These operators are local destination “experts.” In addition to the global tour operators and incoming agents, in
local tourist communities there are regional tour operators and local operators all of which sell some form of tourist experience, mostly excursion activities. Interestingly, in these local communities several different types of businesses become “tour operators.” For example, restaurants, excursion operators, and hotel concierge desks in varying degrees can sell local tours or services, even in some cases their competitor’s tours for a commission fee. This latter phenomenon is least understood and researched within the literature.

Fittingly, I follow the tour operator global value chain as an organizing tool for the research. The networks within tour operators are a useful analytical starting point because tour operators have the ability to work with all of the different categories of tourism firm by creating, packaging, and coordinating the entire tourist experience (see Figure 2 below). By following global tour operators based out of the United States, incoming agents in San José, and a mix of local excursion operators and hotels in the two final destination communities – Tamarindo and Cahuita – I connect the global, national, and local segments of the value chain; and importantly, I am able to address how at different levels and between linkages, networks are used, standards are placed, and assumptions are made between firm operators that allude to ethnoracial characteristics from an industrial governance perspective.
Understand the governance structures between firms in a global value chain is the theoretical foundation that explains who the lead firms are in the chain, i.e., the drivers of the chain, and how they impact other chain firms. There is little analysis on industrial governance structures within tourism research because of the newness of GVC-based research in the literature. Research surrounding discussions of “power” relationships in general, however, is strong and these analyses inform the most recent governance typology put forward by Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon (2005). As Mowforth and Munt (2009:49) argue, an “effective analysis of tourism must acknowledge the
importance of relationships of power.” Although the OECD (2007) and researchers who take a Foucault-inspired analysis (Urry 2002; Cheong and Miller 2000) posit that tourists hold much of the power in the chain through the “tourist gaze,” and for the OECD, the use of the Internet; firms still play a pivotal role in the shaping the business strategies of other tourism firms. Britton (1993:164,165) highlighted how firms that have (1) a strategic role in defining the tourist product; (2) transport international tourists, and (3) determine the organization and operation of tourism products can shape the supply chain. By controlling technology, industry expertise, pricing, design, and the overall value-added segments, multinational chain (MNC) hotels, international airlines, and global tour operators are lead firms based in outgoing countries, yet tour operators are the only category of the group that can link all the tourism segments together in a buying and bundling capacity.

From a GVC perspective, tourism is defined by multiple governance structures (Lessmeister 2009; Erkus-Ozturk and Terhorst 2010). In Clancy’s (1998) first tourism adaption using a commodity chain governance framework he argued that neither the original producer-driven or buyer-driven ideal types fit tourism and that a “contract-driven” form is more appropriate because large hotels and airlines work together with tour operators in an array of contract agreements. Recently, Erkus-Ozturk and Terhorst (2010) and Lessmeister (2009) have specifically advocated for the diversity of network relationships between firms in tourism, most acutely between tour operators. Although Lessmeister’s “governance” relationships are not defined as such, he differentiates
between “power,” “governance” and “coordination,” all three forms fit into the five-part typology from Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon (2005). The firms who hold all three characteristics control the chain. Global tour operators, and to a lesser extent incoming agents, play that role. Erkus-Ozturk and Terhorst (2010) provided the most detailed analysis of governance structures in the tourism global value chain. Highlighting the multiple relationships between types of tour operators between Holland and Turkey, they identified six different types of tour operators ranging from the highly concentrated vertically integrated forms, all the way to small operators in Turkey. The diversity of these firm networks was such that some firms had one relationship with one firm and a different one with another firm, although the latter firm serves the same function as the former. Thus, regardless of tourism typology or category of firm, there are multiple network modes.

Most of the research has focused on the relationship between global tour operators and incoming agents and/or large hotels. There is a limited understanding between linkages upstream or directly in smaller tourist communities. Particular attention needs to be given to how excursion operators are incorporated into the chain and how the relationship between global tour operators and incoming agents dictate community supplier participation. This is distinctly important because it is these linkages that position small local entrepreneurs and the communities into the global value chain or not and house the varying ethnoracial groups.
Bringing an institutional analysis in tourism global value chains studies is limited, as well. Like all global value chains, tourism is embedded in a series of institutional arrangements that dictate how the segments of the chain are able to operate. These institutions embody public and private dimensions and are located at global, national, and local levels. From a public perspective, the industry is highly unregulated in comparison to others at the global level. This may be because as a whole it is made up of several sub-industries and no clear product goes through an international trade regime. Tourism services covered under the World Trade Organization through “Tourism and Travel Related Services” is limited in scope and addresses hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and tour operators. Most developing countries have their commitments under commercial related services. Furthermore, unlike traditional industries that have a tangible product that is governed by quality and potentially quantity laws, tourism as an intangible experience does not adhere to any law that protects the tourist’s experience. This hole is filled by private regulation from firms who through business associations and institutions dictate many of the industry’s guidelines (Harrison 2001b).

An institutional approach that analyzes the institutions are embedded in is critical to determining how these forms create a backdrop of the “rules of the game” which the firms within the global value chain must adhere to but also can potentially manipulate (Mayer and Pickles 2010). Groups like the United States Tour Operator Association, ITB Berlin, and the American Association of Travel Agents, set stiff parameters for members and act as facilitators between global buyers and suppliers and are lobbying arms for the
industry. Membership and access to international travel is expensive and participation requires tough guidelines. There is typically a bifurcation between “members” who are buyers of services like tour operators and “associate members” who are suppliers of tour groups or services based in destinations.

International travel fairs are where the associations hold their annual meetings or are independent trade shows. At these events buyers and suppliers interact through “marketplace” events where suppliers pitch their services to global buyers in a speed marathon that allows for the meetings to last a mere 10 minutes. ITB is the largest global travel tradeshow with more than 100,000 visitors and over 10,000 exhibitors from 180 countries (ITB 2011). Being able to market destinations and providers in destinations at these forums becomes a crucial link that brings in tourists to countries. It takes a strong skill set, particularly soft skill set, to compete at this level because suppliers need to “make the deal,” engage in formal and informal networking, and speak an international business language.

At the national level, however, public institutions play the most important role. For developing countries Harrison (2001b) highlights that the United Nations World Tourism Organization identify five ways the State is involved in the industry: (1) creating a public/private cooperative framework, (2) in a legislative capacity protecting environments and local interests, (3) developing and training a workforce, (4) creating appropriate infrastructure, and lastly (5) developing and implementing a tourism growth plan. For many countries the most important goals are to increase foreign exchange
earnings. The competency levels and ability for states to carry out their functions in a manner that increases net returns and distributive benefits are often low (de Kadt 1979).

Researchers have also noted how in developing countries not implementing a development policy, chronic underfunding, and inappropriate laws or taxes often keeps tourism in the hands of foreign firms and interests (Harrison 2001b; Weaver 1998). The foreign direct investment incentive policies many countries create that include land right concessions, tax holidays, and duty free imports on food, design products, and infrastructure materials can enforce foreign concentration if proper linkage, training, and technology spillover policies are not adopted (Patullo 2005). Moreover, having a national tourism development plan often is not dissected down to the local community level. The lack of a local development plan in a small tourism town can further augment problems when necessities like water, sewage, garbage, tax collection, and environmental protection are not adhered to.

Even when plans or laws exist a common problem is enforceability and potential corruption. Because most governments do not have the resources to enforce the laws, as well intentioned as they are, businesses can run roughshod over them. This is particularly prominent with environmental protection laws even in countries where a form of environmental, eco, or sustainable tourism is marketed. Corruption propels lack of enforcement, as well, when area officials make limited salaries and are not trained in understanding tourism’s needs.
One of the most critical public institutions at the national level is the Marketing Boards, which are typically run by the Ministry of Tourism or a similar body. These boards serve several functions depending on the country: creating tourism development plans, allocating resources to tourism communities, regulating the domestic industry, and marketing the country abroad. The latter function is often the most important in increasing international tourist arrivals. Representing the destination at international tourism fairs and networking with international buyers is a large part of their role but they can have a contested relationship within the destinations. Boards are accused of favoring one region of the country over others, using contested images in their marketing campaigns, and for overall incompetency.

Lastly, at the local level public institutions or local government forms, like municipalities or local offices of national government departments, can represent a great disconnect between development procedures depending on the country’s government system. Local governments also often lack even more than at national levels the skills to address burgeoning tourist community needs, hence leading to corruption or weak enforcement. There are also local community groups that can be government-supported with financial resources but independent. These groups address the needs of local community members who live in tourist towns. At the local level is where many tensions to tourism development rises, and the local groups try to raise grievances, like how the fallout to inadequate planning affects their lives to local municipalities or national government offices. There is also private tourism marketing boards that market their
particular regions, sometimes to counter negative images or inadequate representations at
the national level and are concerned with tourism in their communities. Unlike the public
associations these groups are membership and fee-based and depending on the
community can take on racial and foreign expatriate contours, sometimes in direct
opposition to public groups.

2.2 Race and Ethnicity: Forgotten Analysis?

Beyond a labor segmentation perspective, a racial analysis is consistently ignored
in writings on the global economy and development. There are no studies in global value
chains writings that have approached how race impacts firm decisions and state economic
development policies or how racial divisions of labor are created and perpetuated outside
of an “ethnic tie” notion. When ethnic ties are discussed it is mostly within the context of
how ties based on ethnic or kinship networks establish trust and open doors for economic
transactions (Chen 1994) rather than creating practices of ethnic stratification as
Raynolds (1994) hints at. Traditional development literature that was a precursor to
global value chain analysis, i.e., modernization theory, dependency theory, world-
systems theory, thought that race and ethnic divisions would either go away with the
stages of economic growth, as with the modernization paradigm (Seidman 1999), or it
was mostly a phenomenon subsumed within a class-based focus for dependency and
world-systems theorists (Lovell 1994).

Thomas and Clark question why race is regularly ignored and considered
insignificant by globalization and development scholars even though “racial formations
dynamically reflect and shape global processes” (2006) and according to Winant “the
global issue of ‘underdevelopment’ is in fact a racial issue” (Winant 2001:16). Marable
(2000:7) calls underdevelopment “not the absence of development; [but] the inevitable
product of an oppressed population’s integration into the world economy.” Gott (1999-
2000:1512) argues that we need to return to a “critical race globalism” that reestablishes
the early views of “race internationalists” like Du Bois who clearly linked “capitalist
imperialism” to racial oppression and marginalization in economic global structures.

There are scholars, nonetheless, that always associated global capitalist
accumulation and race. The scholarship of Oliver Cox, Cedric Robinson, Aníbal
Quijano, Manning Marable, Howard Winant, and Immanuel Wallerstein all address how
racial divisions and capitalism progressed together with the origins of the global economy
and how race has evolved in different cycles via “global racial formation projects” to
maintain and create “new systems of capital and labor” (Winant 2001:21). Cox and
Robinson emphasized through a Marxism perspective (although Robinson challenges
traditional Marxists understandings of race) the creation of racial categories to fuel labor
needs for the export of raw goods in the global marketplace: “the creation of the Negro,
the fiction of a dumb beast of burden fit only for slavery, was closely associated with the
economic, technical, and financial requirements of Western development from the 16th
Century on…. [It] profoundly altered the economies of those states directly or indirectly
involved in colonization and production by slave labor” (Robinson 1983:26).
With global capitalism ethnic divisions were racialized but quickly moved beyond a purely economic deterministic utility and became embedded in other social structures – political institutions, familial formations, the nation state, etc. – and was solidified with a racial ideology, a system of meaning, understanding and common sense that justified the racial status quo. For Quijano (2000), race became the ultimate power defining axis that created divisions of labor, placed control over resources of production, and distributed opportunities and life chances and assigned privilege and identities for the maintenance of white privilege. According to him, this “coloniality of power” affected the entire distribution of power among the world population.

### 2.2.1 Race and Development

For contemporary times, race in the new millennium, it is necessary to interpret the new meaning of race and how it defends a certain racial policy, “a specific racialized social structure, a racial order” (Winant 2001:21) within global economic structures. Yet, there is only a marginal amount of present day economic globalization and development studies that describe how race drives and is shaped by global processes. The 2008 *American Behavioral Scientist* (ABS) and *International Labor and Working Class History* of 1997 have devoted special issues to review how racial classifications are connected to global industries. Their emphasis, like most that addresses overall race and capitalism, focuses on a labor segmentation perspective from a developing country position (see section below). Poster and Wilson, editors of the ABS edition write, “as global inequality is shaped by multiple hierarchies, we believe it is necessary to adopt a
broader perspective that systematically examines both the intersectionality and independence of race, gender and class in explaining labor market inequality in transnational contexts” (2008:295).

The analyses of Amy Chua, a lawyer by training and former development organization employee, has developed some of the closest analysis that has cast a wide racial perspective as it pertains to current economic globalization since the surge of neoliberal market reforms in developing countries beginning in the 1990s onward. She chides both pro-globalization and Western critics of globalization who overlook the “ethnic dimension of market disparities” (2003:12). While Chua’s analysis was mostly descriptive in form and based on notions of “ethnicity” and less on race, she clearly addressed how pro-market reforms to bolster export growth and foreign direct investment can potentially increase entrenched social divisions in the periphery; she writes “markets favor different ethnic groups” (2003:6). For example, she highlighted how those classified as white in Latin America, the Ibo of Cameroon, and Jewish elites in Russia disproportionately gain from global market participation. She wrote about Latin America, “reforms from the 1990s disproportionately benefited Latin America’s Spanish-blooded latifundistas who because of their capital, education, foreign connections, and conservative social policies historically have tended to be the soul mates, if not the relatives, of political leaders championing economic liberalization” (Chua 2003:65).

The early research of Edna Bonacich’s (1973) concept of “middle-man minorities” was a proto academic form of Chua’s evaluation, as Bonacich highlighted
how Jews, the Chinese, Asians in Africa, and Armenians in Turkey and Syria have held
certain roles in capitalist production, similarly to Wallerstein’s construction of “ethnicity”
(Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Research from geographer and whiteness scholar
Alastair Bonnett (2006) has also addressed how the fall of the Washington Consensus,
with powerful development institutions such as the World Bank advocating for more
“racial and ethnic inclusion in development” and “ethnodevelopment,” created the
perception that the Bank can operate “as agents of counter-authority, acting on behalf of
the victims of a racist status quo” while sustaining and advocating for further “capitalist
globalization” that creates further inequalities (pp. 1093, 1094, 1096).

Although typically privileging class as the key axis of inequality in capitalist
accumulation, historical world-systems theorists have addressed the connection between
race, ethnicity, and nation within the world capitalist structural configuration between
core, semi-periphery, and periphery nations. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein
(1991) argued in the early 1990s that “racism is not receding, but progressing in the
contemporary world. There is uneven development and there are critical phases in this
phenomenon . . . but it can only be explained in the last analysis by structural causes” (p.
9). Where Balibar emphasized racism as an articulation within nationalism, Wallerstein
addressed the differences between nationalism, racism, and ethnicity and that racism
became the tool to crystallize and promote geographic capital divisions surrounding the
division of labor, while ethnicity was used to socialize the culture of an ethnic group to
naturally fit particular job occupational categories (pp. 82-83). Categorization is fluid but
based on hierarchies, which justify advantage and disadvantage. More recently Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and Timothy Patrick Moran (2010) highlight, in advocating for a relational, historical, global scale perspective on understanding inequality, how ascribed characteristics, like race, historically created stratification within high-inequality countries that has remained overtime.

### 2.2.2 Race and Labor Segmentation

Traditionally, according to Barrera (1979), the labor market segmentation approach had a limited race and gender analysis, focusing instead on a larger class understanding. Split-labor markets progressed due to historical turns in labor market control that created advancement and stability for some workers and stagnation and decline for others. Ascribed social characteristics were used to justify unequal job placement and allocation. The early theoreticians of the class conflict approach to race, and Bonacich’s (1972) split-labor market, addressed how capitalists created the traditional “divide and conquer” strategy to maintain regulation and that dominant labor groups felt threatened by cheaper labor and ethnic conflict followed. Criticism of the class perspective on race with segmentation and conflict that note how race was turned into an economic deterministic pursuit were valid, but the approach helps us in understanding the utility in having segmented labor markets based on race and the practices that were in place to enforce them.

Various labor markets (depending on the country, time, and setting) displayed different practices that assisted segmentation. These practices were within the firms and
in national state policies, and more often than not, were overtly racialized. Most segmentation scholars highlighted the practices from a nation state or firm decision perspective, and typically focused on one level (local, national, or global). From the policy angle, the writings on South Africa, particularly Seidman’s, personified this emphasis. Seidman’s (1999:423) research on racial capitalism as it pertains to South Africa documented how class identities and race were intricately linked acutely through the policies of South Africa’s apartheid regime. The regime wanted to “uplift ‘poor whites’” while providing sufficient labor for white-owned mines and farms. Specific policies that controlled internal migration of black South Africans were imperative.

How immigration policy has shaped racial labor segmentation historically and contemporarily is another important theme. In Latin America, in the nineteenth century, there were tensions between national governments who wanted to “improve” their population and persuade Europeans to migrate to work in burgeoning commodity export industries and the export industrialists, most often from America, who were “completely uninterested in the racial improvement of the countries in which they operated” and wanted to ensure a pliable workforce (Reid Andrews 1997:13). Tensions have continued in less overt forms regarding immigration policies (internal and external) in countries throughout the globe who need workers to fill specific low-skill jobs in industries but do not want to flood countries or particular cities and regions with “undesirable” groups. In the developed world, Sassen’s (1998) research on global cities examined how behind the glorification of corporate capital lies the laboring work of immigrants, disadvantaged
minority groups, and women who are making a space for their presence and identity.

From the global firm aspect the most recent work from Bonacich and colleagues (2005; 2008) have addressed how workers are “located within a hierarchically organized racialized labor system that differentially exploits workers based upon their racialized and gender location” (2008:342). For these researchers, global employers participate in a racial othering practice where they justify pay, working conditions, and opportunities within their global supply chain because they are considered “less worthy” and the international workers should be satisfied and grateful for the opportunity to work in the industry compared to “what they otherwise would be getting” (2008:348). Morales and Bajarano (2008) make a similar claim when they described the export processing border region of the United States and Mexico. They articulated “racialization at the global level” when “TNCs move their operation to [a] ‘nonwhite’ ‘brown’ region in search of ‘cheap’ labor” (2008:189).

There are also researchers who highlight less specific practices but describe the overall labor dynamics and how it takes on racialized and feminine descriptions, and hence, creates gender and racial meaning particularly for those workers who toil away in manufacture export processing zones or export farm production. Feminization is the most studied (see below). Sanmiguel-Valderrama (2007) highlights the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in the Columbian fresh cut flower industry and that it is low income women from peasant indigenous and mestizo backgrounds who occupy the lowest-skilled and precarious jobs within the industry.
Ultimately, to bolster these studies we need, first, more of them; and second, a fuller analysis that focuses on firm decisions and government policies and connects the segments to global, national, local connections through industrial chain linkages. The majority of labor segmentation and race in global industries and development studies focus on the firm, or the State, or the transnational organization, and fail to connect the multiple levels and firms who are all part of the same global value chain. Moreover, the stress on the creation of racialized working classes ignores how segmentation occurs not just through labor and types of low-skilled jobs, but also through ownership status and multi-skilled jobs. Hence, we need to understand racialization through a global value chain perspective in order to understand how the interconnectedness between firms embedded in institutions across geographical levels create practices that assist in the racial stratification of workers and firm suppliers.

2.2.2.1 Tourism and Race

There is a need for a broader race and ethnicity focus in tourism research. Often, more than in other industries, the racial dynamics to work and production are all the more apparent because the consumer comes face-to-face with the producer. Furthermore, more than in any other industry, culture tied to ethnicity and often race becomes commodified. Researchers highlight that tourism for racial groups is a question of power and control. Who holds power in the industry and who controls tourist images, creates tourism products, and drives the commodification process can dictate how benefits are allocated to ethnoracial groups. The studies by Picard and Wood (1997) and Oakes and Lew
(1995) have explored the importance of the State in diffusing ideas of ethnicity and sanctioning ethnic identities while denying others. Specifically, the State shapes “ethnic options” and attempts to control resources. Much of the research has analyzed this from the perspective of Asian and Pacific countries. Using an internal colonial perspective, Oakes and Lew (1995) argued that the Han Chinese dominate all aspects of ethnic tourism in Guizhou province. China is an extreme example of the State fully judging, marketing, and producing a “commerce of authenticity.”

Early Caribbean writers, intellectuals, and leaders questioned tourism as a mirror image of colonial structures. Weaver (1998) highlighted scholars that put forward a Black-servility theory. For them, tourism, as a service industry experienced by white tourists but produced by people of color reinforced subservient attitudes among workers. Grenadian coup leader, Maurice Bishop, said in 1979 about tourism that a “clear association of ‘whiteness’ and ‘privilege’ is a major problem for Caribbean people . . . we had been so carefully taught the superiority of things white and inferiority of things black” (quoted in Mowforth and Munt 2009:300). Patullo (2005:82) writes how Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul argued that tourism was a “path to a new slavery” as Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* argued that it recreated the labor relations of slavery.

The tourism and race research that is particularly constructive is the work that highlights how labor segmentation appears. As de Kadt wrote in 1979, tourism development and patterns of tourism employment “reflect those of the existing system of stratification . . . in ethnically stratified societies, often ex-colonial societies, the
employment hierarchy may closely follow the ethnic one” (de Kadt 1979:48). Harrison (2001c) highlighted how those who benefited in tourist destinations in racially stratified societies typically took on racial characteristics because only certain groups had access to financing and the skills necessary for high-placed jobs. He addressed on Kenya how the lack of capital and the inability to create entrepreneurial initiatives for black Africans left most of the tour operator, souvenir, and entertainment businesses in the hands of Asians or white Europeans. Richter (1995:79) wrote, “in developing nations, [tourism] employment typically follows a pattern of both assigning the poorest jobs to women and inferior jobs in general to minorities.”

Research on tourism workers in Latin America highlight the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and appearance as axes of job placement. In Cuba, Patullo (2005:71) quotes a white Cuban guide that stated “there is an aesthetic criteria in the selection of tourism personnel that favors whites.” Cabezas (2009) and Castellanos (2010) have found similar findings. Castellanos (2010:90) wrote about workers in Cancún, Mexico that “women’s sexual and racial appeal to consumers relegated them to visible posts” if they had characteristics such as blonde hair, fair skin, and “pleasing” presentations. Van den Berghe (1992:243) outlined a ladino “quadruple advantage” of tourism occupations in San Cristóbal in the Chiapas Highlands of Mexico where tourism businesses were mostly run by ladino elites while ladino workers provided low to mid-skill workers and Indians made crafts. Liu and Wall have noted that in China the “use of
appearance, age, and height, as important factors of recruitment, limited the ability of the marginalized to enter tourism jobs” (2004:705).

To date, research on Fiji (Samy 1982; Britton 1983; Burns 1995) is some of the most detailed on addressing how racial stratification happens in tourism in developing countries. Samy (1981:70) broke down in detail the ethnoracial division of labor in the industry:

The tour desk staff, barmen, porters, and security guards were all Fijians as were most of the staff in the reception and front office occupations, the band, the switchboard, the dining room. Indians were predominant in the accounts, the maintenance and industrial activities, the gardens, and the kitchen. They held such jobs as the accountant, accounts clerks, cashiers, carpenters, mechanics, utility drivers, cooks, bakers, and pantry gardeners and laborers. Fijians were chosen for jobs, which involved direct contact with tourists. Europeans occupy top paid managerial and executive positions involving greater economic and social benefits.

Samy argued that the job distribution was an institutionalized phenomenon supported by overt racial prejudices and stereotypes by management. With overt discourse, Samy noted how a manager confirmed “an ethnic approach” to job placement and skills based on his belief that Europeans were “public relations men” the Fijian “an extrovert” and the Indian “an introvert.” European management also called Fijian workers “unreliable” and “insolent and lazy.”

As in developing countries, hotel work in developed countries represents ethnic and racial stratification, as well. Adler and Adler’s research on what they label “ethnic stratification and ghettoization” in hotel resort work across America where a racial hierarchy in jobs from white at the top to whatever the local ethnic minority population is
(i.e., African American in the South; new immigrants from Africa, and Asia in the Midwest, Mexican Americans in the Mountain West) at the bottom is facilitated by “institutionalized racism” where employers racialized workers to determine their appropriateness for particular service jobs (2004:66). Alcorso (2003) and Zuberi (2007) highlight similar findings in Australia and Canada.

Research on the cruise industry may be the strongest example of exhibiting how processes of worker racialization happens by multinational tourism firms facilitated by an international regulatory environment whereby ships flying “flags of convenience” dodge tax, labor, and environmental liabilities (Wood 2000; Chin 2008; Clancy 2008). Chin’s (2008:130) detailed account of cruise ship labor unpacks the racial division of labor for the largest cruise line, Carnival, as one where there are Italian captains, marine officers and engineers; American hotel managers, cruise directors, doctor and information technology specialists; British food and beverage managers, casino supervisor and staff, hairdressers; Asian, Eastern European, Caribbean and Central American bar staff; and finally, Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American hotel and cabin stewards; Asian, Central American, Caribbean galley stewards; and Chinese laundrymen. Far from being a model “United Nations” shipboard hierarchies equated luxury with Europeanness or whiteness and used ethnic essentialized arguments to justify job classification.

Overall, the work on race, ethnicity, labor, and tourism has begun to address the important and complicated nature of tourism for ethnoracial groups in developing countries. As the research from Harrison (2001b) and Samy (1981) have showed there
are structural practices built into historical arrangements and institutions that make it difficult for ethnoracial groups to compete in the industry and to attain certain positions. The service aspect of the industry further muddles how race is understood because racial ideas about capabilities and attitudes create notions of racialized skills that pigeonhole groups into jobs but also perpetuates servile expectations resonant from earlier historical moments. Tourists also have their own racial and ethnic assumptions about the groups they are encountering in the industry – as workers and as products. We still, importantly, need more specific analyses about all of the different practices built into inter-firm relationships that create ethnoracial divisions, particularly connecting multiple levels, with a strong understanding of the global nature of the industry.

2.2.3 What about Gender?

Where there is a lack of a racial focus, however, there is a wealth of gender analysis in economic globalization. Feminist scholars have chronicled how gender is incorporated in global forms most famously by the “feminization of labor” theory that posits how types of jobs created in the global economy are feminized (Elson and Pearson 1981; Standing 1999; Sanmiguel-Valderrama 2007; Tejani and Millberg 2010). The feminization of labor process describes how gendered notions of what is female/male work is equated to stereotypical assessments and the overall precarious and marginalized position of women in societies that helps maintain low wages and a flexible workforce. Critical scholars like Fernández-Kelly and Nash who coined the term “international gender division of labor” through the lens of maquila production along the U.S.-Mexico
border, Hochschild who examined “global care chains” and views on “emotional work,” and Sassen who highlighted the centrality of female immigrants in emerging global cities with new forms of inequality (Poster and Wilson 2008) have pushed economic globalization scholars to investigate how disparity and divisions are experienced by groups who are categorized and divided beyond a nation state and class classification.

Specifically, within a GVC framework, Barrientos (2001) and colleagues (2003) have begun to connect how the shape, firm segments, and key drivers of chains help mold gender divisions in geographies and are influenced by local gender dynamics. Barrientos (2001) showed particularly in her research how gender roles in workers for suppliers to horticulture value chains help firms to control against uncertainty in the global value chain due to price fluctuations and increased standards from global buyers. According to Barrientos, gender division lowers pervasive “uncertainty and risk” as suppliers are subject to in an increasingly “fragmented” and “dispersed” (Dicken 2007) global economy.

Barrientos research is an example of the new chain research program that is proliferating and challenging new theoretical formulations and creating new empirical findings that are contradicting, complementing and correcting current knowledge about how “people, places, and processes are linked in the global economy” (Bair 2009:1). Just as Joekes (1999 quoted in Barrientos 2001:84) contended that we need a full value chain analysis that considers variation in access to (and exclusion from) particular segments of production work in the value chain based on gender, we need one for race, as well.
While cleavages based on the organizing principle of gender and class are crucial, race should no longer be relegated to secondary importance, as Lovell (1994) contends. In many tourism destinations cleavages on race and gender are inextricably combined, and while this is not a focus of this project, it will be for my future research.

**2.3 A Structural View of Race and Global Value Chains**

Taking a structural view of race contends, as Bonilla-Silva noted (1997; 2001), that there are a series of practices embedded in different structures – economic, political, social – that perpetuate advantages for some and disadvantages for others along racial lines. Some form of an ideology holds the system together justifying the distribution process. For this project, the tour operator global value chain and its connection to Costa Rica is the economic structure which practices are embedded in to create racial difference. There are two ways to think about a structural view of race and global value chains: (1) Cumulative legacy of historical racial inequality, globally and nationally; and (2) New practices along the segments of the global value chain and the institutions that the value chain is embedded in that generates racial divisions of incorporation, exclusion, and stratification. Color-blind global capitalism does not exist.

**2.3.1 Cumulative Racial Legacies**

The cumulative legacy of racial inequality is a global and national one. From a global perspective, the lead firms or large multinational companies are based in countries, predominantly United States and Europe (Japan and Asia later on) that for several hundreds of years had overt racial policies that systematically benefited those classified
as white. In the United States, legal rights, access to jobs, education, housing, and services was racially defined. In Europe, the expansion of Western colonialism where European powers sought out resources in periphery countries solidified the old division of raw material extraction from colonies and manufacturing and production in colonial powers. The dominant “racial project” or “interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particularly racial lines” (Omi and Winant 1994:56) during this time considered people of color to be racially inferior and essential biological and cultural arguments were used to justify racial inequality within and amongst nations. Koreniewicz and Moran (2010:26) note how over the last two centuries white supremacy was a powerful tool to create and justify categorical inequality with ascribed characteristics in historically high-inequality and hybrid countries.

By the end of the Civil Rights Movement and decolonization those nations and groups within nations classified as racially superior in the “global hierarchy of nations” (Joseph 2000:346) for hundreds of years had generated a surplus of wealth, opportunities, resources and skills while those countries racialized inferiorly had limited mobility and life chances. Historically, the practices of “selective exclusion” are difficult to overturn (Koreniewicz and Moran 2010:27). There was simultaneous cumulative advantage and disadvantage. Although development economist Gunnar Myrdal understood race matters largely from an individual perspective of “prejudices” and downplayed its ideological and structural components in the United States and in colonial countries, his notion of
“circular or cumulative causation” is helpful in understanding racial group gain. He postulated how racial groups or underdeveloped regions in nations can have their disadvantage maintained due to the cumulative process of sociological variables like racial prejudices or poverty, or economic growth in one pole over another (Streeten 1998:1033). It meant “that the free play of market forces can increase inequalities” (Streeten 1998:549) when individuals compete against those nations regions, firms, and groups that received the most from the distribution of resources and property overtime. Street (2009) writes “what people get from the present and future ‘free market’ is very much what and how much they bring to that market from the past . . . inequality accumulates over time.”

Myrdal (1957) understood that “non-economic” factors are linked and interlocked with economic outcomes through circular causation where change in one factor may decrease or increase change in another. Where his hypothesis could be tested to uncover which variables would impact the “mutual causation” of the “vicious cycle,” one of his most fundamental points was that without direct intervention in the market an underdeveloped region, former colonial state, or underdeveloped racial group would be “laid bare and defenseless to the play of the market forces” (Myrdal 1957:59). When the new international division of labor exploded onto the global scene – what McMichael (2008) labels the “globalization project,” which came after decolonization and the global South debt crisis – multinational companies began to break-up their production process and outsource and offshore production. Those companies were largely run by white
elites and were products of countries that received advantage overtime and were beneficiaries of “enforced bilateralism” between colonies and their colonial power (Myrdal 1957:58). That advantage gave them excess capital, skills, technology, and strength – large negotiating power when setting foot in developing countries. When they set foot, nonetheless, in the countries they also contended with a nation’s own racial history and division. Most developing countries went through at least two racialization processes. The country was categorized by outside countries mostly from the developed world and it also had its own internal racial divisions that were customarily similar to the racial beliefs of the global North. These internal divisions that created white Spanish elites in Latin America, or Chinese elites in Southeast Asia, or white European descendant elites in East Africa were at a stronger position to gain when global value chains began to descend, whereas other internally racialized groups could only fill specific labor roles or were excluded entirely from participation.

Therefore, cumulative advantage and disadvantage for different ethnoracial groups created an unequal playing field when overt racial projects came to an end and continued to create hurdles for those disadvantaged. A new racial formation was taking place. A process where new racial categories and justifications emerged and new racial projects were molded to make sense of the new global and national beliefs on race. These new beliefs did not alter, all the same, the foundation to the global economic structures that race constructions helped to historically shape.
2.3.2 New Racial Practices

As Bonacich, Alimahomed, and Wilson claim regarding this new turn in the global economy, in congruence with new racial norms, “although overt racism may be absent from the legal system or from acceptable discourse, the entire system [global economy] depends upon racial understandings” (Bonacich 2008:352). Whereas practices within the structure of global value chains, i.e. decisions and policies by firms along the chain, and the chain institutional arrangements were historically racially overt and helped to create unequal benefit accumulation and patterns of selective exclusion, those practices have now become subtle, covert, or indistinct and they work in a “routine” or “ordinary” fashion. These practices need no racial intent to continue with racial stratification.

Hall describes how race and racial practices change, reorganize, and rearticulate with new modes of production (1981:338). With the new global value chains, production was broken into parts and spread across the globe. It was also supported by a new international trade regime and international development organization philosophy that pushed countries into particular economic development policy agendas. Decisions of foreign firms to locate to one country, region, or area within a country took on new dynamics as firms’ needs changed. The new firm policy decisions that had to do with country and supplier selection could create continued racial divisions unintentionally as firms, for example, chose to hire only from one region, or chose not to place production in another. National policies of underfunding services (particularly health and
education), infrastructure improvements, land rights, or environmental protection in certain localities also maintained ethnic and race divisions.

It is difficult to uncover what these new practices are because they are now subtle and nondescript. Different global value chains and its placement in different countries will exhibit different arrangements. There are also different practices at different levels of analysis. Global firms act in one way, national suppliers, and small local subcontractors in another; varying institutions exhibit further differences. Hall (1981) citing Carter suggests the metaphor of “articulation” as a way of connecting the linkages who together make a whole, a complex structure creating the overall processes of incorporation, exclusion, and stratification in the global value chain. For every global value chain we must identify the new practices of selective exclusion to understand how certain populations are included in some market and productive arrangements while others are excluded or stratified to specific labor and supplier positions (Korzeniewicz and Moran 2010).

The whole system does not necessarily need to equate to what Althusser labeled a “complex unity structured in dominance” (quoted in Hall 1981:325). Omi and Winant (1994) and Winant (2001) underline the disruptive nature of racial projects. Mainly there are multiple at play and groups are actively engaged in ways to counter their position and reality; contest what is unjust. The other benefit of using a global value chain framework to map out global industries is that it uncovers who are the drivers of the chain and where are the intervention points were potential change can be leveraged. Activist groups, non-
governmental organizations, and governments alike are attempting to influence the configuration of global value chains. So are racial and ethnic groups.

2.4 The Practices of Racial Incorporation, Exclusion and Stratification

The broad practices in the tour operator global value chain between Costa Rica and the United States that create ethnoracial outcomes of incorporation, exclusion and stratification in the value chain are governance structures, institutions, and marketing strategies. The first two represent two aspects of the four-part framework Gereffi originally put forward regarding chain research in 1994. Sturgeon (2009:127-128) writes where the input-output structure (the mapping of the value chain) and geography (where the value chain touches down) are descriptive, governance and institutions are causal; “they contain explanations for observed organization and spatial features of GVCs, and highlight the forces external to the chain that structure (enable and limit) what actors in the chain can do.” The last practice, marketing, represents how promotional strategies by tourism firms, government bodies, and global travel guidebooks can impact global value chain participation by shaping the image of a destination. Combined these practices help us understand why we see divisions based on race between tourism business owners who are suppliers and workers, and overall community benefits within the chain. Each of the governance linkages, institutions, and marketing tactics structure differently the six ethnoracial groups in Costa Rica I highlight – foreigners (white Europeans and Americans), Central Valley residents (meseteños), Guanacastecans (guanacastecos),
Afro-Costa Ricans (*afrodescendientes, cahuiteños*), and Nicaraguan and Indigenous – in their ability to gain from value chain activity in Costa Rica.

### 2.4.1 Industrial Governance Structures

In Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon’s (2005) theory of value chain governance the authors describe three variables that dictate the relationships and economic transactions between firms along the value chain: (1) complexity of transactions acutely as it impacts product and process standards, (2) the ease of codification of knowledge and info that limits transaction specific investment, and (3) the capability of suppliers.

Adding to this typology, I specifically address how social relations and racial subjectivity are built into firm actors’ understanding in creating governance linkages. Ultimately, there are three ways that governance linkages can display racial outcomes. First, firms may choose to work with other firms of the same racial background because they have the same segregated racial networks – with no overt racial reasoning involved. Second, firms can choose other firms who are at a strong capability level and meet the standards needed *because* they have received cumulative advantages from a racialized history and society. Finally, firms can choose providers with justifications that show ethnoracial rational. Specifically, firms can judge the capability of their supplier with racial reasoning. This is particularly apparent in the tourism industry where tourists from different ethnic and racial backgrounds bring with them their own sets of expectations and assumptions to tourism localities. There is a subjective element to how service skills and informal standards are valued that can allude to racial assumptions in overt and subtle
ways and, hence, play a role in how suppliers are decided, and within firms how job placement is allocated.

Granovetter (1985; 1995) famously underlined with his analysis of the interpersonal nature of economic choice that the invisible hand is not so invisible and that the facilitation of “norms” and “trust” between economic actors becomes a foundation to make economic choices. Arguing against the neoclassical economics stance where social relations minimally impact economic behavior, Granovetter’s (1985) “embeddedness” argument situated that behavior and institutions are constrained by social relations, which create paths of opportunities or exclusion. As he elaborated in his study about finding employment, there is “enormous, though often unnoticed, constraint placed on individuals by the social networks in which they find themselves” (Granovetter 1995:4). As with finding a job, these networks can also dictate the ability to become suppliers in global value chains. Trust and norms that facilitate network creations are often solidified from and between “like-minded” actors. Social capital researchers have also documented how social ties emerge overtime to create bounded solidarity where trust can be reinforced and displayed through how decisions are made with economic transactions (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Importantly, in racialized societies, similarity, family, and friendship networks, which lead to “bounded solidarity” and trust, are often built on race and ethnic ties and in-group assumptions.

Using Granovetter’s embeddedness concept, in her pioneering study on black and white job placement out of a Baltimore vocational high school, Royster (2003)
documented how racially segregated networks through institutional, group, and interpersonal connections created different employment outcomes and upward trajectories for black and white graduates. Where much of the literature on race-based exclusionary networks has focused on jobs, Wherry has analyzed how supplier relationships are cultivated through similar kin trust groups. In his study on Costa Rican and Thai tourism artisan groups, Wherry (2008) highlighted how groups that have family members and friends who are involved in other segments of the tourism value chain can direct tourists to their artisan workshops. Kin networks and social standing dictated how artisan suppliers for tour packages were chosen. Where early global commodity chain research also saw ethnicity and kin as creating pathways toward firm linkages (Chen 1994), it is just as important to analyze how those “ethnic ties” are exclusionary and potentially discriminatory.

Just as network relations are influenced by social embeddedness, particular firms are also recipients of cumulative advantages and disadvantages based on the social history of their growth, and the background of their owners, that gives them unfair advantages over other firms. Importantly, they have received the appropriate education and training and had access to create wealth, which provided them opportunities to meet the standards of global and national buyers. Cumulative advantage is acutely on display in the tourism industry when you explore the growth of foreigners from the global North moving to the global South to open and run small and medium tourism businesses, and the national tour operators in urban localities that act as travel hubs and centers of
development. Amenity migrants bring with them advanced financial and cultural capital to the countries they immigrate to. These advantages received from an economically developed society puts locals at a competitive disadvantage. Most amenity migrants are also from the dominant racial group in their home societies; thus, when they arrive in tourism localities they have nationality and racial privileges and the advantages that follow. Furthermore, national tour operators in key urban and capital cities have access to advanced education facilities and area networks that allow them to gain the formal and informal subjective standards needed to establish tourism linkages.

Lastly, when quasi, overt and subtle racial rationale is used to choose providers, in addition to creating racial divisions of labor within firms, it is more easily justifiable by the firm that is establishing the linkage because tourism is about creating social experiences involving perceptions of international service. When consumers and producers come face-to-face “the quality of the social interaction is itself part of the service purchased” (Urry 2002:60). In Urry’s seminal text on tourism, *The Tourist Gaze*, he highlighted the particular and complicated nature of service industries. Rational criteria like the first two variables highlighted in governance structure determinants, complexity, and codifiability, become more difficult when consumers are buying a “social or sociological experience” (Urry 2002:60). Judging who has the “capability” of fulfilling part of this experience is filled with assumptions, stereotypes, and historical legacies that are not always racially neutral. For service industries, like tourism, informal standards become more dominant than the traditional formal ones that dictate governance
linkages. When service providers and buyers come from different cultural and racial
grounds those differences become all the more acute. “Service” is based on an
that in the IT call center industry, Indian workers were asked to “act American” – change
their names, invent fictionalized histories – all to be more appeasing to Western clients to
their psychological and mental detriment. Therefore, particular potential ethnic group
suppliers can have their skills racialized as either fitting a perceived capability perception
“naturally” or are considered antithetical to the skills needs.

Furthermore, when tourism firms are owned and managed by individuals with
different ethnic or racial backgrounds than the dominant ethnic group in tourism
localities, racialized skill constructions can also be used to create divisions of labor
within firms. Once attitudes and skills are associated with a particular ethnic group and
becomes racialized they can be used to justify inferior job placements, lack of upward
mobility tracks, categories of workers between informal and formal classifications, and
pay differentials. There are a myriad of service expectations in tourism. How firms think
tourists or their clients/guests will perceive certain groups is very important in how they
recruit, train, and place their workers. Patullo (2005) argued in the case of tourism in the
Caribbean that many tourists thought blacks in the Caribbean had a “bad attitude” which
equates to them being service poor. The subjectively determined “soft-skill” needs that
are embodied in service industries allows for the potential of racial beliefs to enter worker
skill assessment. In their study on soft skills and race, Moss and Tilly (1996), highlighted
how some American employers viewed black workers as having low interaction skills centering on their “difficult attitude” and were “unmotivated employees.” The studies highlighted under the tourism and race section above also clearly pointed to how employer perceptions of worker skills can be racialized.

The racialization of skills follows the similar analysis put forward by early feminist economist researchers work on the role of gendered skills and the devaluing placed on jobs that were perceived for women. Elson and Pearson’s (1981) classic work on the infamous “nimble fingers” of young female factory workers unpacked how the training that women received from their mothers in the household that made them excel at certain factory jobs was interpreted with biological “natural” arguments that paved the way for female work to be classified as “unskilled.” As the gendered notions of skill assisted female participation into export processing zones, albeit in perceived low-skill and underpaid positions, assumptions regarding the work quality of negatively racialized groups often keeps them out of jobs or in inferior positions.

Racialized skill beliefs are both considered naturalized with ethnic groups and can be fostered. They are perceived, can be overtly cultivated by employers, and include overall attitude descriptions of employees’ work ethic and personality. Tilly and Moss (1996:266) argue that they are “a complicated combination of stereotypes, realities, and conflicting cultures.” Reid Andrews (1997:15) addressed how Afro-descendent workers in export industries in Latin America were customarily labeled as “lazy,” “recalcitrant,” and “irresponsible.” With the passage from export agro commodities to tourism service
in many developing countries, this stereotype has held on and shaped perceptions about if or not black and other ethnic populations are capable to conduct the tourism skills needed for specific job functions. Castellanos (2010) highlighted in her research on Mayan hotel workers in Cancún, Mexico how hotel employers actively sought out Mayan workers because of the traits they believed they held – were submissive, hard workers, and trustworthy – in comparison to mestizo populations. Their submissiveness was further developed through employer training seminars to cultivate “positive” attitudes toward work while exorcising “bad” cultural practices. When tourism began to be used as a development tool in Africa in the 1970s, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme proactively encouraged expatriate workers for the industry because local Africans were assumed to be service poor. Sindiga poignantly wrote, “such a plan was based on wrong notions about Africa and Africans” (1999:30).

**Table 1: Governance Linkages and Ethnoracial Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Linkages</th>
<th>Ethnoracial Inclusion, Exclusion and Stratification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global tour operators - National tour operators</td>
<td>Foreigner and meseteño owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global tour operators - Hotels</td>
<td>Foreigner owners, meseteño managers, guanacasteco and cauiteño workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National tour operators - Hotels</td>
<td>Foreigner owners, meseteño managers, guanacasteco and cauiteño workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise lines - national tour operators</td>
<td>Meseteño owners, cahuiteños excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels - Excursion operators</td>
<td>Foreigner owners, guanacasteco workers, some cahuiteño owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursion operators - Excursion operators</td>
<td>Foreigner owners, guanacasteco guides, some cahuiteño owners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hence, tourism suppliers can be chosen through racialized segregated networks, based on skills acquired with cumulative advantages, and capability perceptions of suppliers can also be justified with racial skill constructions. Ethnoracial divisions of labor within firms are also facilitated with racialized skill beliefs. The six governance relationships I highlight in Table 1 display a mix of illustrations of how governance linkages can incorporate, exclude, and stratify ethnoracial groups in Costa Rica.

The link between global tour operators and national tour operators incorporates foreigners and those from the Central Valley and excludes guanacastecos, Afro-Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans. Almost all national tour operators are based in the Central Valley region, which is considered the center of Costa Rica and is historically where the “white” Costa Rica myth was solidified. Operators in the region have benefited from access to better education, infrastructure capabilities, and other business and government networks – cumulative advantages – that have given them important skills and network access to compete in the industry. Furthermore, some of the incoming agents are foreigners who specifically cater to global operators based in their home countries, e.g., German global tour operators working with German incoming agents. They gain from their ethnic network along with embodying the perceived appropriate skill set and service needs that German tourists are considered to have.

Foreigners are incorporated in links connecting global tour operators and hotels and national tour operators and hotels because they act as the predominant owners of the hotels and excursion operators the tour operators use in their packages to Tamarindo and
Cahuita. Foreign ownership and management gain from their access to international markets, brand reputation, and the belief by tour operators that their products represent the tastes of international consumers. *Guanacastecos* and *cahuiteños* are stratified as mostly workers in lower-skilled jobs for hotels and excursion providers who are suppliers for tour operators. Within the hotels that are used as suppliers, racialized skill constructions are often given as the reason why *guanacastecos* or *cahuiteños* are low-skilled workers. In Tamarindo, *meseteño* managers are brought in to fill higher-skilled positions. In Cahuita, most global and national tour operators exclude the destination entirely. When a small portion of European-based operators use Cahuita suppliers it is foreign-owned hotels. Many national tour operators use a narrative of “underdevelopment” of the tourism products in Cahuita and a racialized discourse that stresses the lack of “safety” in the region.

The last linkage displayed at the global level between cruise lines and national tour operators pertains specifically to Cahuita. Cruise lines that stop in Limón outsource shore excursion activities to national tour operators based in the Central Valley who then mostly exclude south Atlantic coast activities. Most *cahuiteños* are excluded from this linkage because when national tour operators arrive with cruise passengers in the community they visit Cahuita National Park but do not use local guides, local transport vehicles, stay in local hotels, or shop and eat in the town except for the one or two stores around the Park. Local guides do not meet the formal and informal standards for national tour operators.
Linkages at the local level exhibit segregated networks in Tamarindo but more inclusion in Cahuita. In Tamarindo community hotels work with only foreign-owned excursion operators, e.g., sailing, snorkeling, and diving because they are all foreign-owned and excursion operators recommend each other. Guanacastecos act as guides or employees of the foreigners. Foreigners have the capital, skills, and international network to dominate the local entrepreneur class. Excursion operators are in the same networks that locals are not in, do not have the skills to be in, and because for some do not have the right qualities. Therefore, they are relegated to low-skilled worker positions with low pay that many owners justify as better than they would get if they were not there. At the local level there is also mix of quasi-overt and subtle racial meaning behind job capabilities. It is a racialized skill construction that in Tamarindo equates to foreigners from the global North complaining about a pura vida attitude that labels guanacastecos as lazy or not committed which can serve to justify low pay.

In Cahuita, there is a larger mix of owners who are Afro-Costa Rican but they are owners of non-tourism businesses, such as small markets, or small-scale tourism businesses such as cabinas, (small motels), a few restaurants, or independent guides. Community hotels in Cahuita talk more overtly about wanting to work with local excursion operators and excursion operators themselves recommend each other without much of the nationality or ethnicity divisions in Tamarindo, however, there are similar issues as in Tamarindo regarding how worker capabilities are constructed by foreign
tourism business owners with racialized beliefs. Nonetheless, foreigners in Cahuita are complex and also commonly highlight the racism *cahuiteños* face in Costa Rica.

### 2.4.2 Institutions

Institutions are broadly defined within public and private entities and shape industry dynamics from global, national, and local perspectives. They represent what Mayer and Pickles (2010:1) call “those institutions that constrain or enable market actor behavior, both public in the form of governmental policies, rules, and regulations and private in the form of social norms, codes of conduct adopted by businesses, consumer demand for social responsibility, or other non-governmental institutions and social movements.” They personify the “beliefs, values, meanings and priorities embedded in societies that create them” (Sturgeon 2009:131). From a stratification perspective, they create avenues where political, social, and economic forces built into the “rules of the game” shape distributional outcomes.³ Because multiple societies are brought together in the global value chain, consequently, they embody different sets of values and capabilities for the groups that inhabit them. Institutions can clash, confuse, weaken, and embolden the groups who are trying to navigate their life options within their parameters.

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³ Koreniewicz and Moran (2010) identify various definitions of institutions and how they pertain to inequality (see pp. 33-37).
Table 2: Institutions and Ethnoracial Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Ethnoracial Inclusion, Exclusion and Stratification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International travel fairs</td>
<td>Foreign businesses promoted, <em>meseteño</em> tour operators promoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rican Tourism Board</td>
<td>Land policies disadvantage <em>guanacastecos</em> and <em>cahuiteños</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulatory confusion and park regulations disproportionately affect <em>guanacastecos</em> and <em>cahuiteños</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINAET</td>
<td>Benefit foreign expatriates, limited revenue from tax code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Foreign-led private associations push agenda, <em>guanacastecos</em> and <em>cahuiteños</em> rely on public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are five institutional processes I highlight in Table 2 that create racial constraints but also provide avenues for mobilization by locals within the communities. At the global level travel fairs create stratification outcomes due to the standards, skills, and capital that is needed to compete in these arenas. The business of international tourism reaches its zenith within the fast-paced, meet-and-greet, networking-fest of international travel fairs. These events bring together thousands of tourism businesses and are where a significant amount of contracts are signed between buyers (global tour operators) and suppliers (large hotels, incoming tour operators). These events are where destination countries try to present their best image, building upon a repertoire of representations that personify the hopes, fantasies, and stereotypes a tourist may have of the country. For Costa Rica, these fairs incorporate foreign-owned hotels and national tour operators in the Central Valley while excluding *guanacastecos*, *cahuiteños*, and indigenous groups. There are three avenues that assist in the stratification process:
money, skills, and marketing. First, these fairs are extremely expensive to participate in. The tour operator private fair I participated in cost over US $800 for the registration fee alone. In addition to registration, there are international transportation, hotel, and miscellaneous daily expenses that all add up to create a very expensive business trip. For developing countries only the largest and most well funded businesses can compete at this level. The small excursion operators in Tamarindo and Cahuita cannot afford membership and/or fair attendance. The only hope of being “represented” at these venues is through the middleman national tour operators based in the Central Valley that attend or through the promotion of the Costa Rican Tourism Board.

Second, to be successful at this level tourism businesses need to have a well-developed soft skill and social capital base. The art and craft of networking and “pitching” are on display in these forums. During the marketplace portion of the fairs buyers and suppliers meet in a face-to-face dance where suppliers “pitch” their services, hoping that in the allotted ten minutes they are able to make the case why any tourist would be in travel heaven if they spent two nights in their hotel or experienced one of their nature tours. It takes a strong skill set to communicate to the international buyers based in America or Europe, on top of the most basic, fundamental skill needed: good English speaking. Beyond the marketplace dynamic there are also informal meet-and-greets that take place over drinks, dinners, and organized socials, e.g., golf tournaments, fund raisers, city tours, etc., where behind-the-scenes deals can be made or at least introductions and relationships can be further solidified. National tour operators in the
Central Valley and foreign-owned hotels based in Costa Rica have the opportunity to reach the education and cultural and social capital levels to participate and be the “face of their country” which guanacastecos and cahuiteños lack. If providers in Tamarindo and Cahuita are not on the tour itineraries of the national tour operators who are making the Costa Rican pitch, then they are excluded from a pathway to this international market and distribution channel.

Lastly, throughout the several days of the fairs different countries’ marketing boards have opportunities to host tea and/or coffee breaks, lunches, or dinners. These are opportunities for the Boards to highlight the most stunning and popular images of their countries. Overall, at these events, marketing boards hold much of the capability of shaping the dominant marketing images for the country. In Costa Rica, the images that are packaged and sold at these events center around the environment, coffee from Café Britt, and the few national tour operations based in the Central Valley. Indigenous artisanal crafts are not positioned as something to be hallmarked nor or the tourist destinations on the Atlantic coast that highlight Afro-Costa Rican and indigenous culture. Unless, global tour operators already knew about the “other” Costa Rica, many would not know that those communities and destinations exist.

In Tamarindo and Cahuita, there are two national institutional arrangements I emphasize that disproportionately impact tourism dynamics in the value chain for different ethnoracial groups at the local level: the Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT) “Costa Rican Tourism Board,” Ministerio de Ambiente, Energía y
Telecomunicaciones (MINAET) “Ministry of the Environment, Energy, and Telecommunications.” The ICT and MINAET as government ministries are charged with regulating the tourism industry and sustainable or effective development. Their policies help to cause regulatory confusion and stratification processes for all of the groups involved but disproportionately for guanacastecos and cahuiteños who lack the resources to contest them. Development seems to be uncontrolled in many tourist communities and there is a perception of corruption with foreign real estate developers being able to bypass environmental developmental laws. Municipalities, particularly in Tamarindo, are also important due to the issues surrounding state parks and the beaches that they include. Notably, land policy built into the Ley de Zona Marítimo Terrestre, the law that forbids building on parts of the beach and is regulated by the ICT is a contested terrain with the results showing big foreign capital winning more battles than not. Cahuiteño landowners are distinctly affected by the threat of expropriation and how concessions are granted since large portions of cahuiteños still own property unlike guanacastecos in Tamarindo.

The low tax code on corporations and real estate also further helps to incorporate foreign businesses and home owners in Tamarindo who find it economically feasible to buy-up property and businesses at exceedingly lower rates than in the U.S. and in Europe, and the tax revenues are then not redistributed effectively to help position would be Costa Rican and local community businesses.
In Tamarindo and Cahuita, public and private associations are the most pronounced local institutions that represent civil society. These associations are organizing effective mobilizing campaigns to directly challenge aspects of the national institutional forces that they feel are threatening their quality of lives in the communities. In Tamarindo, however, there is struggle of who defines the community and knows what its best interests are. The private association made up mostly of foreigners from Europe and America and South America, like Argentina, has internal conflicts between which priorities should be made and whose interests are met. The association has been successful in halting development projects deemed detrimental to the environment but they have received criticism from members and the local guanacasteco community for thinking insularly and without self-reflection on their own culpability in recreating problems.

The local public associations in Tamarindo and Cahuita are made up of guanacastecos and meseteños for Tamarindo and all ethnoracial groups in Cahuita. These public bodies are part of the local government process in the communities and are forces in pushing for their issues in the local municipalities and in San José. The cahuiteño group has a long history of activism against actions by the national government and several times it has sent delegations to San José to fight for issues such as land and property rights and community voice within state park administration. The cahuiteño association is where locals are leveraging all of their strength to maintain control of their community while also trying to prosper in tourism. In contrast, the Tamarindo group is
new with less resources and momentum. For them, work in the shadow of the foreign-led private association is an arduous process.

2.4.3 Marketing

The marketing of a destination is a political process that is tied to a particular representation of those who have the capability to create it. Buzinde, Santos, and Smith described tourism as “a collection of idealized images, which circumscribe the boundaries of experience and essentially direct the tourist gaze” (2006:712). Selwyn addressed how tourism myth making “is about the invention and reinvention of tradition” that carries “far reaching economic, political, and social consequences at levels ranging from the household to the nation” (1996:28). Images and myths reveal how relationships are structured around cultural, racial, and gender beliefs between and within nations that can maintain or exacerbate historic inequalities (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; Mowforth and Munt 2009). While narratives draw from existing social, cultural, and historical ideas about place identity it is a challenged terrain where counter narratives and images compete. Ultimately, however, only a few actors can control destination image making via their resources and access to international tourist markets. The State is an important actor in the diffusion or not of ethnic representations. Picard and Wood’s (1997) research on Asian Pacific nations outlines how states sanction concepts of ethnicity and culture for tourism consumption and try to control the process, while Harrison’s (2001b) analysis of tourism images from Fiji and Bali, Indonesia demonstrate how particular ethnic groups
are marketed over others to the detriment of national sub-cultures. Tour operators, media, and travel guidebooks are the other important forms that shape destination images.

**Table 3: Marketing and Ethnoracial Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Ethnoracial Exclusion, Inclusion, and Stratification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global tour operators</td>
<td>Exclude southern Atlantic coast tour sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National tour operators</td>
<td>Exclude Cahuita tour sites, market nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rican Tourism Board</td>
<td>Market nature and rural democracy narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel guidebooks and magazines</td>
<td>Reproduce nature and rural democracy narratives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 3 I focus on how global and national tour operators, the ICT, and international travel media and guidebooks perpetuate two main marketing narratives for Costa Rica: (1) environmental uniqueness and (2) Costa Rican rural democracy traditions. Global and national tour operators mostly ignore regions and cultural traditions that counter Costa Rica’s environmental or social democracy national identity, and the ICT uses a repertoire of linguistic and visual cues to foster a broad social, democratic environmental exceptional image of Costa Rica while deemphasizing the racial internal others who inhabit its borders. Some international travel magazines and guidebooks perpetuate national mythologies while simultaneously critiquing them. These portraits are not necessarily false but they serve to focus on a limited form of the Costa Rican experience that bypasses its ethnoracial and cultural diversity.

These arguments follow the pioneering research of Cornelissen (2005), Wherry (2006; 2007; 2008), and Vandegrift (2007) who position the importance and consequences of tourism destination imaging for racialized populations. Cornelissen’s
(2005) study of the production of tourism images of South Africa addressed how environmental representations of destinations are not value neutral. For South Africa, when environmental imagery are selected as marketing tools over cultural ones it continues systems of inequality produced during apartheid where African culture was deemed less worthy of celebration or something to be interpreted with racial stereotypical beliefs. Similarly in Costa Rica, by highlighting the natural, environmental landscape of the country and its conservation projects, continues the privileging of the Central Valley where many marketed natural attractions are based and is the home of the internationally supported conservation movement, while downplaying Costa Rica’s ethnoracial groups as active members of Costa Rican history and culture to be marketed.

Wherry’s (2006; 2007; 2008) and Vandegrift’s (2007) research details how Costa Rica’s public narratives of social democracy, and a historically white identity, has, according to Wherry, weakened the marketing and export promotion of indigenous Chorotega crafts from Guanacaste, and for Vandegrift maintained the assumption that the south Caribbean is a region of non-citizen subjects who are separate from the predominantly white Costa Ricans who inhabit the essence of Costa Rican identity. By being eliminated from the perception of Costa Rica as a tourist destination they have a diminished capacity to participate in global value chains.

Therefore, foreigners are incorporated through image making practices by tour operators, the ICT, and the media because the towns they live in and the businesses they run are promoted, and, for-the-most part, they are positively associated with tourism in
the region because they own and run the ecotourism hotels and excursion businesses. Also, because foreigners, according to one guidebook, do not “stick out like a sore thumb” (Glassman 1998:83), this supposed racial imagery of an American-European like Costa Rica downplays Costa Rica’s diverse ethnoracial background and tourist sites. Afro-Costa Ricans, indigenous regions, and guanacastecos, are stratified and mostly excluded through the marketing practices that exclude their communities from destination offerings; focus on marketing images of nature and a rural democracy culture; or when their regions are highlighted with stereotypical depictions.

Destination making and marketing for tourism takes on a different level of complexity than in your typical marketing by lead firm brands within tangible product value chains. In tourism, people are marketed and consumed and the repercussions have lasting effects for placement in the value chain and social-psychological consequences for those who cannot control the process. Richter (1995) positioned that those who perpetuate the marketing represent an “enclave of influence” where gradations between power, values, and goals define the parameters for how things are bought, sold, and consumed.

Costa Rica has enjoyed a long history of being exceptionalized by American and European foreigners. Conservatives, liberals, scholars, journalists, travel writers and your average man-on the street; just about everyone to different degrees have fallen under the Costa Rican spell. Despite the growing scholarship since the late 1970s that has critically challenged Costa Rica’s exceptional mythology (Gudmundson 1978; Chomsky 1996; Paige 1996; Putnam 1999), to the general public Costa Rica remains “a relative sea of tranquility in a region of turmoil” (Greenspan 1997:4). Even the liberal New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, who is known for documenting the horrors of genocide and highlighting the global North’s responsibility to Africa, is not immune to the country’s charms. He called the nation in a 2010 column titled, “The Happiest People,” the “pearl of Central America” and went on to write, “after dragging my 12-year-old daughter through Honduran slums and Nicaraguan villages on this trip she was delighted to see a Costa Rican beach and stroll through a national park …” (Kristof 2010). In his column Costa Rica was close to perfection with Kristof highlighting its lack of an army and investments made in education, equal gender relations, and environmental protection. Their exceptionalism was placed in opposition to the “Honduran slums and Nicaraguan villages.”

Kristof’s column is one of the latest examples of the long narrative bolstering Costa Rica’s exceptionalism. What is not discussed, however, is that for many there is an
underlying assumption that Costa Ricans are white, and historically, Costa Rica was exceptionalized internally and externally specifically for their perceived whiteness. The seeds of Costa Rican exceptionalism and the beginning of the “white legend” (Creedmore 1978) began during the first liberal reform period sweeping across Central America that Mahoney (2001) traces for Costa Rica from 1821-1914. As pointed out by Palmer (1993), Chomsky (1997), and Putnam (1999) it is necessary to analyze the rise of the Liberal State with the simultaneous racial project that was forming to racially unite populist sentiments in the Meseta Central “Central Valley” in order to justify liberal reforms. As liberalism grew in the latter part of the nineteenth century so did the racialization and separation of provinces outside of the Central Valley highlands, most prominently in Limón where the exportation of bananas took place but also with cattle production in Guanacaste, and the denial of racial pasts in the Central Valley during colonialism.

This early historiography of the beginning of Costa Rican exceptionalism has evolved from the original incarnation to the 1948 Costa Rican Civil War, the post-war Figueres reform period (1948-1949, 1953-1958) with the growth of the State, and lastly with the beginning of neoliberal economic policies spurred by the World Bank and the International Monetar Fund exemplified with the growth of global tourism (1980-present). At each of these moments how race was conceptualized by the State and foreign influences impacted economic and political development schemes and created racial outcomes. Highlighting how race was embedded in the process of the Costa Rican
identity and state building experience does not negate the social development indicators Costa Rica achieved. It qualifies them and unpacks how different groups received varying levels of resources and benefits. It also lays down the structural environment and racial beliefs that helped to shape the process and have maintained the ideology to this day.

By the time global tourism began to take off in the late 1980s and 1990s, the ideology helped to position Costa Rica as a country more like the global North and therefore a safe and developed place to visit, “like a Carmen Miranda Movie: Latin America without the downside” (Glassman 1998:83), and particular regions and populations were recipients of promotion and development assistance and were able to position themselves in higher value-added placement along the tourism global value chain. As institutional practices, the facilitation of tourism policies, such as the creation of national parks, land development regulations, foreign direct investment (FDI), and education training also created varied outcomes for the Costa Rican communities where tourism was becoming the only development option.

In the remainder of this chapter I (1) explore how the ideology of Costa Rican exceptionalism and race are intertwined beginning with the first liberal reform period in the nineteenth century on through the racial projects of the twentieth century with the threat of communism and the 1948 Civil War and post-war period. I specifically highlight the debate surrounding Costa Rica’s colonial heritage and the foundation of the rural democracy thesis, and the role of slavery, *mestizaje*, and racialized internal others.
(2) Lastly, I chronicle the growth of global tourism following the period of structural adjustment neo-liberal reforms and the policies and international private and public actors who are influencing and shaping the global value chain. Overall, this chapter underlines the historical background to racial formations in Costa Rica and how it facilitated cumulative advantages and disadvantages for specific ethnoracial groups and regions, as well as facilitates current governance and institutional practices that perpetuate ethnoracial stratification in the tourism global value chain.

3.1 Creating a National Identity – the Liberal State

In explaining Costa Rica’s public narratives of downplaying their racial diversity while highlighting their democratic, social and economic advancement, Wherry (2008:22) quotes Somers and Block who wrote, “Every nation has a story – a public narrative it tells to explain its place . . . in the flow of history, to justify its normative principles, to delineate the boundaries of national political decision-making, and to give meaning to its economic policies and practices.” As Quijano wrote, “any given society is a power structure . . . thus any possible nation state is both a power structure and a product of power. But it can be expressed through its members as an identity” (2000:222). Costa Rica has actively created for over a hundred years a national identity that has solidified the cultural and naturalization of what is deemed their exceptional character. The national identity is centered on colonial Costa Rican dynamics that position how colonial poverty and isolation due to a lack of precious metals and a shortage of labor created a predisposition to egalitarian tendencies and stable societies.
The country, in the words of Biesanz, Biesanz, and Biesanz (1982:16-17), was “taxed, scolded, ignored, and kept miserably poor” but it brought forth a remarkable “rural democracy.” Anthropologist Marc Edelman (1999:45) succinctly put it:

Few countries have as beguiling an imagined past as Costa Rica. Traditional historians, politicians, and average citizens alike portray it as a redoubt of democracy and peace in Central America forever plagued by tyrannies and internecine conflicts, as a bastion of egalitarianism and reformism surrounded by societies polarized between wealthy elites and impoverished masses, and as a “European” island and outpost of civility in an uncultured mestizo and Indian sea.

The latter part, focusing on the perceived lack of indigenous and enslaved African populations, became a centerpiece linking the perceived Costa Rican racial identity and their distinguished attributes that would maintain throughout historical junctures in various overt and subtle versions but always remaining.

Historian Lowell Gudmundson (1978; 1986; 2010) more than any other scholar over the last thirty years has actively produced a revisionist scholarship on Costa Rica’s mythology by challenging the classless, rural democracy narrative of pre-coffee Costa Rica and by expanding the analysis of stratification beyond the Central Valley to include Guanacaste and Costa Rica’s racial populations. Regarding pre-coffee societies Gudmundson and other historians note how coffee deepened already existed inegalitarian structures; that many peasants did not work their own land but were paid workers; how original conquering families became economic elites; and how coffee oligopolists, and various city organizational styles, determined economic coffee development structures (Hall 1976; Vega Carballo 1979; Gudmundson 1986). Edelman’s (1993) research on Guanacaste also addressed how the focus of research on the Central Valley, i.e., coffee,
ignored the proliferation of large landholdings in Guanacaste and the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

In 1996 labor historian Aviva Chomsky noted that the original revisionists, however, had “not [gone] so far as to incorporate a discussion of the Atlantic Coast” and have seen it mostly “peripheral to national events” (pp. 3-4). Since the late 1990s beginning with the 1999 publication of a special edition devoted to Costa Rica’s African descendant heritage of *Revista de Historia* from the *Universidad Nacional* in Heredia there is a growing focus to reconceptualize the role race has played in the making of the Costa Rican state and national identity. Costa Rican anthropologist Carlos Sandoval García asserted how, overall, while the junctions of class and gender have “currency in social sciences in Central America . . . racialization, for example . . . has no translation in Spanish. This absence shows the extent to which racism has frequently been missing from the agenda of the social sciences in the region” (2004:182). In comparison to other regions of Latin America where studies of the African diaspora and indigenous populations are examined in detail, by and large, there is a dearth in Central America. In their 2010 edited volume, *Blacks & Blackness in Central America*, editors Gudmundson and Wolfe argue that, “these histories were not simply whitewashed, but were so often displaced or denied” (p. 2). Rather than making a racial and ethnic analysis an “additive” to structural analysis to the growth of the State and national identity it needs to be an axis that serves to define what Costa Rica was not (an oppositional identity to the racially
inferiorized neighboring states) and in turn distributed resources and created economic and political practices with varied racial outcomes.

The most succinct analysis to understanding Costa Rica’s exceptional identity is situated in connecting its creation to the growth of a liberal ideology throughout Latin America following independence from Spain and the Federation of Central American States. Golcher (1993) argued that the Liberal State was called upon to create a Costa Rican national identity that would serve to explain, justify, and legitimize its policies and vision for Costa Rica. It was, as Edelman (1999:12) described, a “modernizing, developmentalist ideology” with the goal to facilitate a free market, secular landscape articulated by politicians and intellectuals as the pathway toward the economic and political model exemplified by the developed countries of the global North. Mahoney outlined the structural conditions that allowed for liberalism as an ideology to push Central American states to implement reforms that solidified the expansion of capitalist commercial agriculture into the global economy.

Mahoney (2001:163) noted that it was not “a distinct yeoman peasantry and culture” that was the foundation of Costa Rican democracy, rather the gradual transition to commercial agricultural capitalism was supported by the weakness of the national state, an absence of significant indigenous populations, no preexisting commercial economy during colonialism, and that church and community lands had already begun to be transferred to private lands. The country was not “born liberal” in its “reform” based policy change. Structural conditions spurred it forward. He documented how
presidential reformers, such as Braulio Carrillo, did not have to create and build massive armed forces to control and spur economic change because there was not wide scale mobilization against liberals and the lack of a strong military took away the option to implement coercive radical polices. Mahoney’s path-dependent structural perspective nicely lays out the conditions that liberal elites faced when they implemented development change but he forgoes an analysis of the importance of the national identity ideological components, particularly as it pertains to portraying a racially exceptional country. This misses the wider implications of who was left out of state-making practices in the Central Valley. As Edelman (1999) noted, there were other early independent similar agrarian structures in Latin American (e.g., highland Puerto Rica, Andean Venezuela), but it was the combination in a geographical space of political and economic control and growth, as witnessed with the Central Valley, that gave it its distinction.

Palmer (1993:42) argued that the Liberal State had to create its “imagined origins” in order pursue “oligarich hegemony” where the populace would not fight against established social hierarchies and state policies. Historian Lara Putnam’s 1999 article in Revista de Historia directly connects the liberal state to racial ideology. She argued that it was impossible to separate the racial ideas in the new independent republic and the Liberal State. The Liberal State supported the distinctions based on race and forwarded the myth that the elites and the popular classes all shared one blood, la sangre blanca. Liberal elites were able to practice a form of blanqueamiento and limpieza de sangre by denying their diverse racial foundation and through creating racial spaces of
exclusion and repression. As Putnam notes, “raza, cultura, moralidad, e hygiene” “race, culture, morality and hygiene” became the axes defining Liberal State qualities while excluding those did not fit.

3.1.1 Racial Spaces and Internal Others

Colonialism started a clear geographic spatial element to racial identities. There were black slaves in Matina on the Atlantic coast, a mix of mulatos and indigenous populations in the Pacific Central and Nicoya in Guanacaste, Indians in the Talamanca region on the Atlantic side, and Spaniards in the Central Valley (Edelman 1992; Putnam 1999). Following independence these perceived divisions were made more demarcated particularly with the Atlantic coast and Limón. The Central Valley accounts for only 6.4 percent of the national territory but the Liberal State, with the growth of coffee elites and capitalist expansion, conceptualized it as the heart of Costa Rica. Morúa (2004) argued that the Liberal State, in their goal of achieving a Western culture of progress and civilization, had to create one identity culture that excluded “the internal others.” Controlling the internal border by drawing a line around who were the true Costa Ricans was important because the internal border regions around the Central Valley represented a breach on perceived national racial identity and rural democratic structures (Putnam 1999). A discourse of difference from the Costa Rican exceptional traits was used to describe internal racial others. Putnam (1999:151) wrote:

The savage Indian, lazy and unkempt, the vicious Chinese, the quarrelsome Nicaraguan, the black male brute and promiscuous black woman; all of these images served implicit and sometimes explicitly to highlight the virtue, the hard
work, the honor, the love, the work and the peace of the Costa Rican, automatically understood for white (My translation).

Sharman (2001) argued that in Costa Rica the regionalization of race maintains a racial-spatial order that allowed the notion of a white Costa Rica to be reified through geographical barriers.

By the time of independence in 1821, Palmer and Molina (2004:229) noted “not even a tenth of the population was of direct Spanish descent while over half were mestizos, blacks, and mulatos.” Guanacaste was by then a culture of “peasant cowboys” of Afro-indigenous descent. Anthropologist Marc Edelman, who has documented extensively Guanacaste’s post-colonial land structure of latifundio and later peasant backlashes against neoliberal reforms, wrote that “the yeoman of the white legend were conspicuously absent and the land tenure pattern was anything but democratic” (1992:28). Prior to Spanish conquest the region was populated with the pre-Colombian Chorotegas part of the southern Mesoamerican Indian culture. They suffered drastically under colonial rule due to the Indian slave trade, epidemics, and the disruption of agriculture production, with their numbers declining 97.1 percent from 62,292 in 1522 to 1,800 sixty years later (Edelman 1992:38). Toward the end of the sixteenth century, small groups of African slaves came to the areas of Rivas, Nicoya and Esparza in Puntarenas to work on cattle ranches and indigo plantations and by the eighteenth century the mestizaje process was apparent with a casta mix of mulatos, zambos, indios, and mestizos together representing over ninety percent of the population (Edelman 1992:48). By the time Guanacaste was annexed to Costa Rica the casta group was the “backbone”
of the hacienda system and they represented a distinct cattle frontier culture bringing fears from the Liberal elites of the “violent,” “rural mulatos and mestizos” within their northwest borders. They became to be called “cholos” a pejorative term to describe the descendents of the region who had apparent “rasgos negroides” “negroid features” (Melendez and Duncan 1972:38) or “nicas regalados” “Nicaraguans who were given to them” (Palmer and Molina 2004:249).

While the guanacastecos were the violent, rowdy internal other in the Northwest, the black West Indians and Chinese immigrants joined in Limón province the African slave descendants in Matina, and the Indians of the Talamanca range to further racially separate the Costa Rican internal frontier. In 1871 Tomas Guardia Gutierrez (1870-1882), then ruling dictator with a series of puppet successors, contracted American Henry Mieggs, later to go to his nephew Minor Keith, to build a railroad to Limón port. Keith would bring in 10,000 Jamaican workers between 1871 and 1881 to construct the railroad (Bourgois 1998) that became part of a circuit of migration linking Jamaica, Panama, and Costa Rica (Putnam 2000). This represented a reprieve from the 1862 Costa Rican laws that prohibited immigration and settlement of people of Chinese and African ancestry. Part of the Liberal State’s project of solidifying their European heritage. The reprieve was possible because the workers were seen as a “foreign and temporary workforce . . . not viewed by the Costa Rican public as potential fellow citizens and neighbors” (Putnam 2005:206). They were able to meet the great need for labor while maintaining the internal racial borders around the Central Valley by not allowing as early as 1890 black
workers from the Atlantic side to work on the Pacific side. The government nonetheless
would return to banning undesirable groups beginning with excluding the Chinese and
other races that were deemed “harmful to the progress and well being of the republic” in
1887 (Chomsky 1996:24).

These first Afro-Antillean workers were actually encouraged to stay on in Costa
Rica with the governor of Limón in 1884 offering land concessions (only in Limón
province) as an enticement to finish the project and they eventually became part of the
new established banana enterprise as independent contractors for Keith’s United Fruit
Company (UFCO) which was formed in 1899 (Vandegrift 2001). Twenty thousand more
Jamaican and West Indian workers arrived between 1900 and 1913 and would create a
thriving cultural community in Limón (Chomsky 1996). Until the 1920s black workers
would be the dominant labor pool for the UFCO and the company practiced a traditional
“divide and conquer” strategy where blacks were placed in higher positions such as
mechanics, clerks, watchmen, and foreman over mestizo Hispanics who considered
themselves white (Bourgois 1998). Many black workers also left the Company to farm
small plots and this group, with the original land concessionaires from the governor or
Limón, would hire Hispanic workers. This reversal in ethnoracial job classification and
upward mobility would later be used against Afro-Antillean residents and their
descendants by the government in their battle against communism and anti-imperialism.

While the Liberal State was allowing the immigration of black workers they were
not going to give up recolonizing areas beyond the Central Valley and attempted to found
colonias with white European immigrants from Spain and Italy. These blanqueamiento attempts were part of a large push from liberal elites and their foreign supporters to encourage immigration only of the best possible blood lines to maintain their white internal border around the Central Valley and to try to expand it, if possible, in the outer frontiers. Early nineteenth century traveler accounts both served as a conduit to propagate Costa Rican exceptional development with whiteness and to encourage its solidification (Edelman 1992). Spurr (1993) highlighted that Western travel writing uses words of classification as a language procedure to generate an ideologically charged meaning to describe encounters with difference. Costa Rica, however, was described with categories of similarity rather than difference. This was the goal of Guardia and his “Olympian” followers who sought to encourage the growth of a racially pure nation that could achieve the highest levels of secular education and civilization (Wherry 2007:224). Immigration and eugenics strategies were seen as pathways toward advancement (Putnam 1999).

Frederick Boyle, a geographic explorer, wrote A Ride Across A Continent: A Personal Narrative of Wanderings Through Nicaragua and Costa Rica (1868). Boyle was a member of the Royal Geographical Society in England. He wrote (1886:218):

Of the great and growing prosperity of the country there can be not a question at all. We may reasonably hope that the dangerous instability of other republics is definitely uprooted here and that Costa Rica will continue to thrive. But I believe there is a cause for the tranquility of this country other than mere prosperity – that is purity of population. Not in manners or morals – but in blood.
American diplomat, E.G. Squire who was considered a respected ethnohistorian and leading proponent of polygenesis wrote *The States of Central America* (1858) and made the similar claim that “the people of Costa Rica have a larger proportion of pure Spanish blood, less intermixed with that of the negro and Indian than of those of any other Central American state; and if they have attained a greater prosperity, and evinced a greater degree of activity and enterprise, materially and otherwise it may fairly be attributed to this circumstance” (1858:465). Costa Rican diplomat to the United States, Richard Villarfranca, wrote *Costa Rica the Gem of American Republics* (1895). His text affirmed the advancement of Costa Rica based on race and also affixed the racial geographies internally in the country when he documented, “Costa Rica when compared with the South and Central American states holds a position that is unique and envious in respect to its native Indians. Their numbers are few and their tribes are completely separate from the civilized race . . . [and they] honor white men with almost a spirit of worship” (Villafranca 1895:30). Villafranca’s text was written with the direct goal to spur immigration and he wrote, “let us give an impulse to immigration, which is the most potent instrument of progress” (1895:28). Boyle communicated the Liberal elites goal with his simple statement; “a rule of white men is eagerly desired by every influential person in the country” (1858:62-63). To spur European immigration the government created a fund offering ten blocks of property to each individual, twenty for each married couple, and five for every additional son under the age of 18 (Powell and Duncan 1988).
In 1891 Antion Maceo, *el héro* of Cuba, was authorized to bring 100 Cuban families to colonize Nicoya.

Costa Rica was framed as a country following a liberal ideology format that included the facilitation of a superior race. Its exceptionalism was based on what it was not: not like their Central American neighbors such as Nicaragua “the land of the lost race” (Marr quoted in Sandoval García 2004:66) or undemocratic like the coffee elites in Guatemala and El Salvador (Paige 1997). Whereas there were structural conditions during colonialism and their transition to independence that spurred their form of state and military development that bred a “reform” path according to Mahoney (2001), the creating of a exceptional ideology is difficult to separate from racial constructions, considering the racialization of geographic space and the downplaying of their mixed racial heritage. As Jeffery Paige documented in his study on coffee elites in Central America, the Costa Rican coffee oligopolists actively saw their racial identity as a factor in what they perceived to be their democratic exceptionalism and “democratic exceptionalism could never rest on such ‘inferior’ races and racial mixtures” (1997:223). The internal racial others could not be part of the rural democratic myth since they racially, and their structural conditions, countered it.

Chomsky wrote that the “isolated yeoman farmer was a creation of the 19th century Costa Rica and that his place in Costa Rican national ideology” was strategically fostered (1996:209). For Putnam (1999), the Liberal State succeeded at creating a naturalized boundary understood to represent Central Valley whiteness, *guanacasteco* and
Nicaraguan *mestizo*, and Chinese, Indian, and black others that was reified in the material distribution of power and in national identity narratives. For Costa Ricans this became a powerful subjective element where the sentiment of superiority over their neighboring countries and internal others would become internalized, naturalized and passed on through generations, families, and in daily discourse (Golcher 1993). It was normalized and became the status quo, where the past as a source of identity and difference and uniqueness created a “hegemonic sense of nationhood” (Sandoval García 2004:xv).

To maintain the push for liberal reforms and the maintenance of institutions and emerging social hierarchies, where class antagonisms could not be fostered, the Liberal State also needed a symbol that the popular masses could embrace. They chose the symbol of Juan Santamaria, the young soldier who courageously gave his life fighting against the invading foreign American William Walker, as the symbol of Costa Rican nationalism. Liberal thinkers used a mix of cultural apparatuses and the education system to create a form of nationalism that according to Palmer (1993) was one of “national preservation” rather than liberation. Part of their national project, however, was to erase for Santamaria “Erizo,” the nickname that refers to individuals with *mulato* features, such as coarse hair, and turn him into the “unknown soldier”: a person who represented “the fold of Costa Rican racial sameness” (Palmer 1993:70). Hence, the act of erasing and denying the Costa Rican *mestizaje* ancestry was the other important strategy that materialized with the Liberal State.
3.1.2 Limpieza de Sangre

Gudmundson and Wolf argued that while studies and analysis that focus on the Caribbean coastal communities of Central America, and the wider racialized space arguments, are necessary and full of important details regarding African diaspora studies, they also can serve to “reproduce Central American nationalist discourses that located blackness outside of national history and only marginally within national territory” (2010:9). While Costa Rica’s demographics may have been less extreme during colonialism, Costa Rica was never a “white” colonial country. Melendez Obando noted that if we look at current faces of Costa Ricans the African heritage is alive in “their living and material culture as well as in the blood that runs in their veins” (2010:35) and he traces the African genealogy of such Costa Rican luminaries as politicians Vincent and Francisco Aguilar Cubero and author Carlos Luis Fallas.

Creating the mythology of a white Costa Rican population during colonialism downplayed or ignored the indigenous populations that were abundant when Spaniards arrived on Costa Rica’s shoreline and their attempts to colonize them as a labor source; the enslaved populations in the Central Valley, Matina in the Atlantic Coast, and Nicoya and Puntarenas; and the structural conditions that supported the mestizaje process during colonialism where black and freed slaves frequently married women of higher racial castas that created a further color gradation process where mulatos claros were often described as blancos. All of this served a larger blanqueamiento process where limpieza de sangre was both literally and figuratively achieved by the Liberal State.
When the Spaniards came to Costa Rica in the fourteenth century there were upwards to twenty distinct indigenous groups reaching population figures in the hundreds of thousands. The ravages of conquest reduced those figures to merely 10,000 at the beginning of the 1600s and would continue to decrease there on (Palmer and Molina 2004:4). Their most numerous presence was in Nicoya, then part of Nicaragua, and in the Talamanca region on the Atlantic coast. The indios bravos of Costa Rica were a famed group who ousted several times the Spanish from Talamanca, which eventually culminated in the execution of rebel Indian chief Pablo Presbere in 1710, whose statue stands in Limón today. During the early and mid 1600s Spanish colonists founded settlements in Talamanca and placed Indians in deposits as sources of manual labor. The brutality and mistreatment they received brought the first expulsion of the colonists from Talamanca in 1610 (Lohse 2010:59). By midcentury plans were made to recolonize the area to cash in on the wealth of cacao cultivation taking place in Matina. This form took a Franciscan “missionary character” but the Urinamas revolted and fled or were forced into hacendados for cacao harvesting. Presbere then led the consequential rebellion of 1709 destroying churches and essentially stopping Spanish colonization in the region although cacao cultivation would continue and prosper in Matina into the eighteenth century.

Although Indian labor turned out to be an unsuccessful option for colonists, African slave population experienced a “mini boom” in the slave trade in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with registered slave sales in 1680s rising 44
percent from the previous decade and rising an additional 51 percent in the 1690s (Lohse 2010:71). The largest number of slave imports, bozales, was before 1750 (Gudmundson 1978). Slaves were based in three geographical areas: in the Central Valley (Cartago, San José, Heredia, and Alajuela), Guanacaste on the cattle estates, and in Matina cultivating cacao. Melendez and Duncan (1972) argued that el negro was already an important element of life in Costa Rica by the eighteenth century. By the end of slavery in 1824, Gudmundson (1978) documented the manumission of 430 slaves between 1648 and 1824 with most coming from Cartago (p. 274).

While the overall enslaved African descendent populations were lower than in other Latin American contexts they played an important role in the socioeconomic life of colonial Costa Rica. The structural conditions of poverty did, however, create less stringent casta demarcations. It also assisted in the mestizaje process where mulato descendents maintained contact with the dominant racial class, and thanks to newly acquired wealth in Matina, enslaved or free men married mestizas and occasionally with poor españolas (Gudmudson 1978). Lohso (2010) claimed that the relative autonomy many enslaved men had in Matina due to absentee hacendado owners and the economic responsibility given to slaves in the managing, overseeing, harvesting, and selling of the cacao, enhanced their independence, position, and upward mobility possibilities. Cacao was the most important economic activity in the colony and the enslaved African men in Matina were the difference between economic survival and failure for hacendado owners in Cartago. They also helped to protect the property from British buccaneers and Miskito
zambos who often attacked the Atlantic shoreline. Several men were able to purchase their freedom, bought homes, and established businesses in the pardo neighborhoods of Cartago, notably La Puebla, and married free mulatos and mestizos. The cult of the Virgin of Los Angeles, Costa Rica’s black Madonna, la negrita, began in a Cartago pardo neighborhood and would become the beloved icon still currently worshipped.

The mestizaje process was rapid enough that by the end of colonialism the afro-descendent slave populations had disappeared in society’s consciousness. The hierarchical structure during colonialism allowed for less significance placed on castas since different groups occupied similar job categories and mulatos and mestizos began to identify with the general social system. Blanqueamiento was achieved through the color gradation schema that was established when descendants of mixed racial backgrounds continued to marry and produce a further gradated schema of color where the classification of mulatos claros, trigueño, loro and cuarteron became more abundant. Gudmundson (1978:56-57) stressed that the fundamental point is that for a portion of individuals of color, particularly mulatos claros, they were actually considered blancos. As Wade (2004) proclaimed, however, mestizaje should never be considered in opposition to racial absolutes or a destabilizing form of racial classification, rather hybridity can sit easily with power, and hybrid racial categories shift to maintain new dominant power structures. The racial constructions in Costa Rica during colonialism allowed for the perceived disappearance of afrodescendientes but they maintained a permanent presence in the population although their contributions were denied and
history reformulated to fit the new national project of the Liberal State. The fact that “second-class mixed race descendants of the conquerors driving forward the democratic process were *mestizos* whose smuggler origins in the cacao trade on the Atlantic coast led them to break away from Cartago to found San José” (Gudmundson and Wolfe 2010:7) could not be the narrative to solidify Costa Rican identity following colonialism says more about the continued salience of race than the exceptional characteristics that are perceived to be beyond race.

### 3.2 Racial Projects in the 20th Century – Communism, Civil War, Assimilation

By the early twentieth century the Liberal State began to solidify their reforms and hold on Costa Rican society and would take a more active role in pursuing policies that confirmed to the racial ideology of white Costa Rican superiority. The first half of the century would see the government pursue eugenics-based immigration policies and overt racially discriminatory employment and societal practices fueled by economic crisis and the growing discourse of anti-imperialism personified by the threat of the black foreign worker. The build-up and fallout to the 1948 Civil War between the *calderonistas* and *liberacionistas* would bring another racial formation change one of assimilation and citizenship for Afro-Antillean descendents. The “tropical welfare state” that followed would not however ultimately expand the definition of Costa Rican citizenship and benefits allocation to Costa Ricans of color, rather it served according to Vandegrift (2001:92) to “entrench its definition of citizenry as white” as a new era of
liberacionista thinkers reformulated old Liberal State tropes to explain the essence of Costa Rican democracy, stability, and equality.

### 3.2.1 Anti-Imperialism and Communism

Chomsky (1996) highlighted that in the early twentieth century, workers, students, and intellectuals challenged liberal elite policies. They fought against what they viewed as a growing foreign imperial threat in the UFCO. The Communist Party in Costa Rica was growing in the 1920s and 1930s. They attempted to organize banana workers but found it difficult to mobilize West Indian workers who felt a growing resentment from Hispanic workers and alienation from the central government. Hispanic workers had begun to adopt a racist nationalist discourse blaming black banana workers who they saw in support of UFCO practices. Following nineteenth century tactics of uniting class populaces the national government attempted to create an interclass coalition that used racist and exclusionary rhetoric and enacted policies to push forward their agenda to diffuse the communist threat. When this failed, and communism continued to grow, the State then tried to fuel further ethnic tensions by reaching out to blacks as potential allies against communism (Chomsky 1996:211). The then predominantly Afro-Costa Rican population in Limón was used as pawns to gain the desired goals of the relevant actors: the UFCO, the State, Hispanic workers, and the Communist Party. Afro-Costa Ricans, however, had by then, despite the narrative keeping them out of the Costa Rican identity formation as “internal others,” and their
own desire to hold on to their West Indian heritage, had already begun a long practice of reaching out to the Costa Rican state to demand their rights.

In the height of the economic depression and poor working conditions on banana plantations, in 1933, 543 Hispanic (white) Costa Ricans sent a letter to the National Assembly. It stated:

We want to address ourselves especially to the Black problem, which is of the utmost importance, because in Limón province there exists a situation of privilege for his race which is manifestly inferior to the White race to which we belong. It is impossible to coexist with them because their bad customs don’t permit it . . . That is why we come to ask the Constitutional Assembly to put an immediate end to this humiliating situation in which a race inferior to ours comes into our own country to invade our countryside our cities our homes (quoted in Palmer 2005:207).

Putnam noted how “denouncing the racial menace of the alien workforce introduced by foreign capitalists” was a narrative actively pursued by politicians who were eager to defend their “blood stock” and “native soil” (2010:296) and was an easy transition from their burgeoning eugenics stance. In 1927, Costa Rican delegates participated in the Pan-America conference on eugenics and homiculture that was led by Dr. Domingo Romas of Cuba with cooperation from the Carnegie Institution’s Eugenics Record Office who were instrumental in pursuing the U.S. Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 barring immigration to the United States on eugenic criteria (Putnam 2010:292). By 1934, the Costa Rican government stopped issuing visas to “persons belonging to the black race” (Putnam 2010:297). In Limón the government also began to implement segregation practices, such as denying blacks access to recreation facilities and in housing options.
Hispanic workers thought black workers were colluding with the UFCO because they were considered “‘el rosco’ the groove of the screw because they were so tight with management” (Bourgois 1998:124). For the UFCO, racial constructions of worker capabilities and needs justified harsh work and living conditions, including low pay, bad housing, and forced scrip payments for a wage (Chomsky 1996). The Company by then had already established the habit of mitigating risk by focusing on marketing, distribution, and transportation while outsourcing banana production to small to large farmers, *arrendatarios*, who rented company land. The Company often would simply not buy bananas for a range of reasons that coincided with prices falling, disease infestation, or because they claimed the fruit was damaged. Independent producers in the Sixaola division cultivated more than 28,000 hectares of company land.

Chomsky contended that political elites might have actually fueled Hispanic worker resentment. The government wanted to receive concessions from the Company before signing a new contract in 1930. The *sociedad economic de amigos del pais* created a commission in 1926 to study the banana industry and spoke out against the plight of Costa Rican private farmers and against the UFCO in “darkening the racial composition of the country” (1996:222). President of the society stated, “the black is only good for the Company as a beast of burden and for the *junta de caridad* as a buyer of lottery tickets; but he is deadly for the social order: vicious, criminal in general (witness the delinquency in the Atlantic) he *mestizos* our race, which is already darkening” (Chomsky 1996:222). By appearing tough on the Company and their strategy
of employing black workers, the government could appear populace, anti imperialist
driven as complaints from white workers continued to grow in the 1930s arguing that
“the sovereignty” of their nation was at stake.

After three years of organizing by the Communist Party a two-month strike
against the UFCO occurred in 1934. Most black workers felt alienated from the Party
and the strike. Although the Party tried to recruit across racial lines their pleas to elites in
the government who held racist beliefs and enacted policies against blacks, added to the
rhetoric of anti-imperialism and nationalism, and their failure to stop racist scapegoating
from Hispanic workers, only served to distance them from any form of worker solidarity.
The UFCO also contributed to the ethnic division by planting fake newspaper articles of
strike leaders projecting racist sentiments. The government originally sympathetic
crushed the strike and arrested its leaders. The strike lives on in popular Costa Rica labor
folklore as another form of distancing blacks from Costa Rican national identity. They
are portrayed as not supporting Costa Rican workers to save their economic interests with
foreign powers or simply alien from understanding Costa Rican worker solidarity.

Rather than being docile, however, West Indians and their descendants fought
against UFCO practices in work stoppages and strikes in the late nineteenth century and
formed the Aristans and Laborours Society in 1910 and petitioned the government for
assistance against UFCO labor practices, which included worker beatings, and their
refusal to acknowledge Jamaican Independence Day. The UFCO tried to weaken the
union by importing in St. Kitts labor but it backfired when in 1910 St. Kitts workers went
on strike demanding to be paid as much as Jamaican workers who were locked out. The government again sided with the UFCO and brought in Nicaraguan strikebreakers, ending with the death of a worker (Palmer 2005). West Indians and their Afro-Costa Rican descendants have always maintained a strong civic and cultural pride that included what they believed their rights to be as Costa Ricans and they were never shy in making their appeals heard. This would remain as part of the collective memory that is currently used to demand for their rights when Atlantic coast switched to international tourism.

The 1934 strike was the beginning of the end for the UFCO in the Atlantic coast and their connection to black workers and independent producers. Despite all the anti-imperialist rhetoric the Costa Rican government signed a new contract with the UFCO in 1934 that gave the Company more favorable terms including low banana taxes but the government was able to make the Company appease to national racist sentiment. The UFCO was allowed to open operations on the Pacific coast but the employment of black workers was prohibited in the new plantations. As job prospects stagnated in the Atlantic, black workers were not allowed to move and follow the Company, which subsequently “quarantined the Afro Caribbean population to the Atlantic zone” (Sharman 2001:49). The State’s last sanctioning of racism came when in 1942 individuals of the black race were included to the list of undesirable immigrants (Chinese, Arabs, Turks, Syrian gypsies) and banned from further integration affectively ending the Atlantic mobility of labor to Central America (Putnam 2010).
3.2.2 1948 Civil War and Reestablish a New Liberal State

The 1948 Civil War is popularly framed as an aberration from Costa Rica’s rural democratic culture and the post-Civil War period can be seen as an attempt to “reestablish a society and an ideology that were being seriously challenged by leftist labor oriented and anti imperialist forces” (Chomsky 1996:3-4). Palmer and Molina call the period between 1930-1958 a “turbulent time” where “political institutions, identities, and practices were reformulated but not fundamentally transformed” (2004:142). With the liberacionista win, the “improbable alliance” between the Communist Party, the Church, and the calderonistas was stopped and liberacion thinkers set the task of refashioning the tropes of Costa Rican exceptionalism that emerged following independence.

Costa Rica’s internal others’ position did not see an ideologically shift in Costa Rican national identity after the Civil War although there was now a concerted effort from the Figueres administration (1953-1958) to “assimilate” the minority populations and Afro-Costa Ricans in the Atlantic. During the War Afro-Costa Ricans’ sympathies were more closely aligned with liberacionistas due to their experiences with the Hispanic workers allied with the Communist Party and the conservative racist nationalist view. It is estimated, however, that between 1927-1950 upwards of 45 percent of the black population left Costa Rica (Putnam 2000:381). Historically, the State made it difficult for Afro-Costa Ricans to gain citizenship. Children born in Costa Rica whose parents where born abroad were automatically given the nationality of their parents despite the
fact that most West Indian descendents viewed their citizenship “determined by birthplace rather than ancestry” (Putnam 2010:299). Applying for naturalization was burdensome, difficult, and expensive and Afro-Costa Ricans were essentially stateless until they applied for naturalization. The assimilation process was forced in many ways due to the State’s refusal to incorporate West Indian culture and language into Costa Rican identity, the increased migration of Costa Ricans from the Central Valley to the Atlantic zone, and the continuation of racist sentiments (Palmer and Molina 2004). It would not be until 1960 that there was a law that prohibited racial discrimination in the workplace and eight more years till there was a general law against all forms of racial discrimination (Powell and Duncan 1988).

Although Sharman (2001) argued that Figueres “initiated sweeping changes in the national ideology” by incorporating Afro-Caribbeans and extending citizenship and redressing overt racist practices, he did so by returning to the colonial rural democracy narrative. As the State began another wave of state institution building with nationalization of businesses and increased social welfare, Costa Rican historians reemphasized their colonial egalitarian and racially homogeneous past, and Sharman does contend that the “new era of social democracy provided a convenient opportunity to side step the issue of racism in Costa Rica” (2001:49). Sandoval García asserted how the new generation of intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s, such as Carlos Monge-Aflaro and Rodrigo Facio, reconceptualized the earlier Liberal State description of rural democracy, the yeoman farmer, and racial homogeneity as a form of “historical inversion” that turned
“idealized representations into actual facts and into part of the national heritage” (2004:68). An early key book was from Monge-Alfaro’s *Historia de Costa Rica* (1941) that advanced the colonial interpretation of rural democracy that underpinned the cultural and psychological foundation of Costa Ricans (Sandoval Garcia 2004:64). “Blacks were never connected to the national sensibility: always an islet in the accord of the Republic. . . generally tall, pedantic and slow mentally” ([My translation] quoted in Morúa 2004: 28). These popular intellectuals helped to secure the continuation of political claims into normative daily life that once again became part of the cultural symbolism of what it meant to be Costa Rican, a symbolism that characterized internal others as exotic and distinct from the white *meseteños* of European descent (Morúa 2004) and played a part in justifying the distribution of resources and public spending strategies.

Costa Rica did institute sweeping reforms that began under Calderon with the social security legislation, “social guarantees,” and a new labor code. When Figueres assumed the presidency following Otilio Ulate, a Figueres ally during the War, he solidified the social guarantees and set about to develop ambitious import substitution industrialization. Edelman (1999) contended the reforms institutionalized the escalation of the State’s involvement in the economy and social welfare policy, but Vandegrift (2001:92) added that the new state policies also continued the “national myth of the white citizen.” The advanced social welfare programs initiated reached wider and beyond the Central Valley and Edelman argued that “most Costa Ricans derived at least some immediate recognizable material advantages . . . while [not achieving] any fundamental
progressive redistribution of resources” (1999:73), but they also masked the “subtle more persistent underdevelopment” of the Atlantic coast (Vandegrift 2001:100).

Palmer and Molina (2004) noted that the political and demographic imbalance of the Central Valley created inequality in where public spending was allocated in the twentieth century; policies “were overwhelmingly directed at the interests of the Meseta Central” (Vandegrift 2001:102). Agriculture support was still dedicated to coffee growers with no support going to any crops cultivated in the southern part of Limón province, English schools were closed, and health care, transportation and infrastructure facilitation, and electricity and running water were shortcoming in comparison to the rest of the country. With the newly established Junta de Administración Portuaria y de Desarrollo Economico de la Vertiente Atlántica (JAPDEVA) to run the port of Limon, urban Limonese received more advantages than the southern coast towns, but with nationalized banks lending mostly to the Central Valley, the underdevelopment of Limón grew while Costa Rica as a whole achieved growth. When cacao farmers asked for assistance form the State they were told “to cut down [their] cacao to plant bananas” (Vandegrift 2001:108).

Therefore, it is arguable that Afro-Costa Ricans were ever really assimilated into Costa Rican society. Although many felt Costa Rican in their birthright and in their sense of “rootedness” (Gudmundson and Wolfe 2010) in being from Limón and the southern coast, and they felt they were owed and deserved citizenship rights and privileges, they were never incorporated into the national landscape on their own cultural terms. They
were always an exotic other, an aberration to the national mythology. Guanacastecos have fared better in receiving material support from the State, as Edelman (1999) described how most rural towns received social services, yet, campesinos and farmers still found themselves disposed and became wage laborers due to the agrarian reform policies, even if well-intentioned. They would later fight the government against the onslaught of structural adjustment policies following the collapse of the economy with the debt crisis and the death of Costa Rica’s social welfare experiment. The remaining Indian tribes were also mostly forced into inhabitable lands in the mountains of the Atlantic coast where they predominately remain today (FUNCOOPA 1997) and it took until 1977 for the rights of indigenous groups to be recognized.

Costa Rican national identity narratives and exceptional ideology has never changed and the internal others outside of the Meseta Central are still considered different from the Costa Rica of the Meseta Central. Afro-Costa Ricans have not, nonetheless, moved to shy away or downplay their racial background with the 2000 census reporting that children of mixed race backgrounds identify more as Afro-Costa Rican, but the Afro-Costa Rican population outside of Limón continues to be underreported and underrepresented as census takers do not want to “offend” participants and label them Afro-Costa Rican (Putnam 2000). This underscores the continued racial narrative of Costa Rica and skirts a thorough analysis of the larger issues Afro-Costa Ricans in the Central Valley face as they migrate from underdevelopment in the Atlantic zone. As structural adjustment began and Costa Rica national businesses were privatized
and export-oriented growth became the development model, the deterioration, stigmatization, and criminalization of Limón grew (Caamaño Morúa 2008). Caamaño Morúa (2008) noted how the region was especially hit by structural adjustment when they closed the railway in 1995 and over 1,000 employees lost their jobs and benefits. Unemployment is particularly high for Afro-Costa Rican youth who are in the periphery of the labor market while being criminalized in the national media. The reestablished banana populations, now run by Dole, laid off 300 workers in 2000. Furthermore, guanacastecos had limited opportunities as wage laborers and ranchers.

When tourism began to be positioned as a development option in the new Costa Rican development model Afro-Costa Ricans, guanacastecos, and indigenous groups would have to negotiate the ideology of Costa Rican exceptionalism and the strategies by foreign development organizations and the State in how they would be able to position themselves in gaining from participation in the tourism global value chain. As I address in “Chapters 4”, “5,” and “6,” their limited skill set base; lack of capital and development of their regions; policies that support foreign concentration and non cultural tourism products; and racial sentiments regarding skill capabilities and social capital facilitation have served to create a global value chain of supplier business ownership and labor outcomes along ethnoracial lines.

3.3 Global Tourism Growth: 1980s – 2000s

The fall of the Costa Rican “tropical welfare state” and the rise of export-oriented growth coincided with the rise of global tourism. In July 1981 Costa Rica stopped
making their debt payments and became the first Latin American country to default. When they received loans from foreign development banks (World Bank and the IMF) as a small country they did not receive favorable repayment terms in addition to being required to having cross-conditionality in agreements (Edelman 1999:75). After public opposition, the government eventually signed a US $100 million IMF standby accord that required the government to cut public spending and raise taxes. The first World Bank structural adjustment loan (SAL) came in 1985 that favored private banking interests and pushed national production to cater to international markets; and SAL II came in 1988 with further restrictions on public spending and privatization, followed by new IMF accords in 1991 and 1992 (Vandegrift 2001; Edelman 1999). The backlash was strong against austerity measures and SAL III was delayed then eventually cancelled by the World Bank. Cost Rica managed however to secure a US $250 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank with the IMF’s approval.

Costa Rica is commonly hailed once again “exceptionally” as another “economic success” and a triumph for free market reforms; Edelman (1999:83-84) however, argued that it is actually the “non-market factors” including large sums of U.S. aid in the 1980s, the tax credit CAT program begun under Figueres, the expansion of U.S. quotas, currency devaluations, and FDI investment that was spurred by the high social development indicators in Costa Rica due to the “tropical welfare state” that deserve credit for its success. Although tourism growth was not solely an outcome of “neoliberal prescriptions” it grew due to the new policies that were being developed in Costa Rica.
that encouraged foreign-led international investment and international conservancy over small scale Costa Rican enterprises even while investment in tourism products, such as funds for the ICT and national parks were being cut due to loan stipulations (Honey 1999; Martin 2003). Costa Rica was also helped by development assistance from USAID that pushed for an expanded role of private banks and the creation of nonpublic entities. By 1985, US $592 million in American economic aid was delivered to Costa Rica becoming the second highest per capita recipient behind Israel (Edelman 1999:78). USAID helped to also create and finance CINDE an export investment promotion department separate from the government, where international tourism became a leading industry to develop. USAID had the goal to generate US $1 billion in foreign exchange reserves for Costa Rica by 1995 by loaning money to American and Costa Rican investors and developers for tourism projects through newly created private banks (Honey 1999).

As tourism began to grow it “was superimposed on existing patterns of inequality” (Wood and Deppen 1994 quoted in Harrison 2001:38). The internal other populations, found that their communities had the potential to be turned into tourism products and tourism appeared as the only development option for Afro-Costa Rican communities in south Limón that received no state support in strengthening the cacao industry while guanacastecos saw tourism as an employment option beyond the wage labor ganadero and sugar sectors and subsistent fishing. The State, however, in the fallout of structural adjustment, pressure from international conservation efforts, and in
accordance with their exceptional ideology, supported tourism policies and created practices that helped to further stratify who would benefit from global tourism growth. Transnational capital (large and small), private businesses, and the regions of the Central Valley and coastlines in the Central Pacific and Guanacaste would be the greatest beneficiaries. Costa Rican tourism scholars from the Sustainable Tourism group at the Facultad Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) argue that the growth of neoliberal globalization in Costa Rica privileged managers, business elites and international tourists rather than the rural peasant, coastal, and indigenous communities where tourism development vies as the only economic option (Hiernaux-Nicolas et al. 2002). Consequently, you have stratified benefit distribution where foreign capital and meseteño elites gain from international tourist growth rather than the racialized populations who call tourism towns home.

Even as Costa Rica began to tout a form of ecotourism, and environmental and social sustainability, long-term analysis regarding the effect on communities of land registry designations, human capital deficiencies for locals who knew little about international service, and the difficulties in gaining international distribution channel access was shortcoming. The government and tourism businesses also found that by reproducing the tropes of Costa Rican exceptionalism they could further separate the country from other destinations and international firms and visitors would feel comfortable making Costa Rica their first international tourist visit. The rural democracy folklore could be marketed all the while the culture of internal others was downplayed.
Therefore, the policies adopted privileged foreign capital and individuals in the Central Valley who could compete in the industry while creating an uphill battle for Costa Rica’s peripheral racial communities who found themselves kept out of distribution channels, access to financial capital, and unprepared for how international service would be determined and their skills judged.

The Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (ICT) became the most important state entity shaping tourism policy and development. They are responsible for “superior control and vigilance” over the Ley de Zona Maritimo Terrestre, deciding regions for tourism development and marketing, and approving applications for concessions (Honey et al. 2010). They are commonly viewed with a mix of ambivalence, contemptuousness, incompetence, and distrust in Tamarindo and Cahuita. They are the face of Costa Rican tourism, though, and the power they have in shaping marketing images, choosing who receives concessions, and encouraging whether or not larger tourism-related laws are enforced make them an important actor in shaping the beneficiaries of tourism development.

Overall, at the national level, over the last thirty years tourism has continuously grown in Costa Rica. Statistics over the last ten years from 1999-2008 (see Table 4) highlight increased tourism arrivals, with most coming from North America particularly the United States, increased income and export earnings, and tourism accommodation and tour operations offerings. The numbers need to be qualified for arrivals since a large number are Nicaraguans who are most likely not international tourists but visitors and
workers coming to Costa Rica; but export earnings for the sector are strong. Tourism quickly overtook the traditional industries of coffee and bananas, as well as pharmaceutical products, as an income generator. As tourism grew so has the number of workers involved in the sector. By the late 1990s, 12 percent of the population worked in tourism (Horton 2009) and by 2006 hotels and restaurants accounted for close to 98,000 direct jobs according to national census statistics. If tourism related jobs are included such as tour operators and rental agencies, the figure would be even higher. The ICT went so far to calculate that by 2006 the industry had generated 326,488 direct and indirect jobs based on the assumption that every hotel room generates two direct jobs and every direct job creates three indirect jobs. The largest conglomerate tourism employment generating area is the Papagayo Tourism Pole where 11 operating businesses detail that they have generated around 1,400 jobs, relatively small considering the size of the entire project.

If we disaggregate these figures by province, nonetheless, we see large regional disparities in tourism development, ownership statuses of businesses, and in ethnoracial divisions of labor. In Table 5 we see that over 70 percent of tourism businesses are located in the Central Valley (San José, Cartago, Heredia, Alajuela). Furthermore, a large percentage of tourism work is casual and undocumented particularly in the smaller accommodations and tourism businesses in communities creating precarious forms of work where Costa Ricans do not have steady incomes and lack benefits all while being subject to inflationary pressures in tourism towns.
### Table 4: Costa Rica Tourism Statistics, 1999-2008

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrivals</strong></td>
<td>1,031,585</td>
<td>1,088,075</td>
<td>1,131,406</td>
<td>1,113,359</td>
<td>1,237,948</td>
<td>1,452,926</td>
<td>1,679,051</td>
<td>1,725,261</td>
<td>1,979,789</td>
<td>2,089,174</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>1,036,1</td>
<td>1,229,2</td>
<td>1,095,5</td>
<td>1,078,0</td>
<td>1,199,4</td>
<td>1,358,5</td>
<td>1,570,1</td>
<td>1,620,9</td>
<td>1,927,4</td>
<td>2,144,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Export Earnings</strong></td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Exports</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodation Rooms</strong></td>
<td>13,714</td>
<td>14,122</td>
<td>14,990</td>
<td>15,172</td>
<td>15,611</td>
<td>16,003</td>
<td>16,696</td>
<td>17,139</td>
<td>17,258</td>
<td>18,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Agents/Tour Operators</strong></td>
<td>289</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Millions of $US  
Source: BCCC 2009

### Table 5: Tourism Businesses by Region, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hospitality</th>
<th>Travel Agent/Tour Operator</th>
<th>Rental Car</th>
<th>Water Transport</th>
<th>Restaurant and Entertainment</th>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San José</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alajuela</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartago</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanacaste</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puntarenas</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limón</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BCCC 2009
3.3.1 Entry into the Global Value Chain (1980s)

The ICT defines this period as the Ecological Tourism Pioneering Period. International visitors began coming to Costa Rica during this time mainly for environmental scientific and conservation purposes. A group of Costa Rican scientists with the financial assistance from U.S. universities and environmental NGOs began operating environmental reserves for scientific study and researching in the National Parks which was began in the 1970s. Most people who visited during this time represented a base of scientists, interested amateurs, and naturalists (Horton 2009). Prior to the 1980s, tourism was catered to the country’s middle and upper classes that took extended holidays during *semana santa* at Christmas time.

The National Park system began to expand rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. The first push toward creating a parks system occurred as early as 1939 with Law No. 13, which preserved space around Volcanoes Irazú and Poás. In 1960 Santa Rosa in Guanacaste was declared a National Monument, followed a decade later in 1970 with Cahuita National Monument. The declaration of Cahuita National Monument is viewed as the first protected area under the new Forestry Law of 1969. The law is heralded as the “key to future conservation success” (Evans 1999). Poás became the first national park in 1971 and Santa Rosa became the second. Other parks quickly followed: Manuel Antonio (1972), Rincon de la Vieja (1973), and Tortuguero (1975). The facilitation of a park expansion was supported by international organizations like the World Wildlife Fund, Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club as well with technical assistance from the
U.S. National Park Service. These groups stepped in to financially support Costa Rican conservation after structural adjustment policies cut back public funds for the parks. The national park system received over US $50 million in foreign donations covering more than 90 percent of park purchases (Honey 1999). In the late 1980s, the Arias administration (1986-1990) launched five “debt for nature swaps” where lending countries forgave portions of their debt in exchange for erecting conservation projects (Honey 1999:141).

The government, with the support of development banks and in need to gain foreign exchange reserves, began to see tourism’s potential and started to invest money, time, and resources to refocus the work of the ICT and the overall tourism development strategy. Growth was fast with the country gaining US $117 million in international receipts in 1984 to US $136 million in 1987 (Weaver 1998). During this time period, the tourism strategy began to shift from pure ecological tourism to spurring American investment in tourism and designating tourism regions to be recipients of tourism development focus. The Tourism Development Incentives Law was passed in 1985 and tourism projects became eligible for ICT administered incentives and tax breaks. These included property tax exemptions, limited import duties for construction materials, tourism equipment like boats, jet skis, golf carts, etc., and facilities had to offer more than 20 rooms and meet design and aesthetic standards (Coffey 1993; Honey 1999). Seventy-five percent of all hotels by 1990 participated in the program and in 1988 hotels in the program purchased upwards of US $5 million worth of imported goods with savings
estimated in excess of US $2 million (Coffey 1993:87). Businesses would receive a “tourism declaration” from an ICT inspector that would give a rating based on relative international standards. Overall, the incentive structure assisted foreign investors. In 1987, the ICT signed another incentive agreement with CINDE to further create foreign exchange. The largest foreign-led tourism development initiative began to take shape during this period. The first Master Plan for the Bay of Culebra Tourism Project was drawn up in 1978 that focused on the development of three, four, and five star resorts. The revised master plan that formed in 1988 under the name Papagayo Gulf Tourism Pole focused more on luxury and upscale lodging. The government gave out concessions to developers for long leases, forty-nine instead of the customary twenty, and granted generous tax exemptions, and agreed to invest in infrastructure (Honey 1999).

This time period demonstrates the early tensions that would come to mark Costa Rica’s pursuit between conservation sustainability and global tourism development. The construction of the Costa Rican exceptional ideology would now include “environmental exceptionalism” but the reformation of Costa Rica’s cultural excellence would mask the wider problems of deforestation (during the 1980s it had one of the highest rates of deforestation in the Western hemisphere); lack of community access and resources in protected areas; and which groups are privileged in policies that on the surface appear to be environmentally oriented but facilitate the stratification of benefits to tourism’s growth (Honey 1999; Hiernaux-Nicolas 2002; Martin 2003; Horton 2009). The Maritime Terrestrial Zone Law and the granting of concessions represent these fault lines.
The *Ley de Zona Marítimo Terrestre* (ZMT) passed in 1977 designated the first 200 meters above the high tide line along the coasts as public land owned by the State. The ZMT is subsequently divided in half with the first 50 meters as a restricted subzone where no development is allowed and the remaining 150 meters can only be developed via the granting of concessions, or *permisos de uso*. Some coastal areas are exempt if they are declared cities, such as the case with Jacó, and homes and businesses that were in the zone lines for at least 30 years prior to the law. Foreigners who have not resided in Costa Rica for at least five years are prohibited from having concessions along with foreigners who found companies in Costa Rica. In the next couple of decades after the enactment of ZMT foreigners, Costa Rican politicians, and ICT administrators would be exposed as being granted concessions while individual homeowners and Costa Rican coast communities were under threat of losing their homes and potential livelihods. The inconsistent and confusing administration of ZMT regulation “allowed private developers to step into the void” and pursue large-scale tourism development projects that sidestepped national law, environmental regulation, and community accountability. Issues surrounding ZMT would play an important role in shaping who could and would benefit from global value chain participation in Tamarindo and Cahuita.

### 3.3.2 Growth, Expanding Tourism Products (early-late 1990s)

The ICT describes the second period of tourism growth between 1989-1994 but this period can broadly encompass most of the 1990s. By 1993 they had achieved US $577 million in international tourism receipts (Weaver 1998). There was growth in the
hotel and tour operator segments and tourism type product offerings. The hotel growth was mostly in one-three star offerings and some fifty-eighty room four and five star hotels. Most of the growth was also concentrated around the Central Valley and its surrounding volcano attractions, notably Irazú and Poás. The tour operator presence in the Central Valley also began to grow. The Asociación Costarricense de Operadores de Turismo (ACOT) was formed in 1989 with operators who began to build up their tour capabilities in creating packages around the country. These packages reflected the more diverse tourism type offerings that centered on nature tourism (hiking, biking, all-terrain vehicles, and rafting) and beach tourism, reflecting a mix of adventure activities and upscale leisure.

By the time President Figueres (1994-1998) came to office again the tourism strategy was focusing on a dual approach of light ecotourism with nature adventures and beach resorts with government support tilting toward the latter. This is evident in the earlier steps taken during Rafael Ángel Calderón Fournie’s administration (1990-1994) when 12 concessions involving mainly foreign capital were granted in the Papagayo Gulf. Although Article 11 of the tourism incentives law passed in stage 1, which gave a business a tax credit of up to 50 percent of investments made in tourism related activities, was repealed in 1992, firms that signed tourism contracts prior to April 1992 could still take advantage of the credit. It is estimated that US $238 million of investments received tax credits for US $119 million up to 1999 with twelve four and five star hotels, including two Marriotts, receiving 73 percent of the total (Raventos 2006:379). Furthermore, in
1996 a new tourism incentive law was passed granting a 12-year moratorium on taxes from hotel developers, car rentals, and tour operators if they invested in new tourism projects (Honey 1999:133-134).

The multi tourism product type provided diverse product offerings but the Costa Rican government would struggle with reconciling their wish to be sustainable tourism leaders while encouraging resort development. In 1995, the Legislative Assembly passed a new Basic Environment Law that made environmental impact studies mandatory for tourism development projects. This manifested in the creation of the National Technical Secretariat of the Environment (SETENA) in 1995, which was charged with issuing permits for development based on environmental feasibility. It is part of the now Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Telecommunications (MINAET), the large multidimensional ministry that oversees protected areas (Honey et al. 2010). In 1997 and 1996, the ICT also initiated the Certification for Sustainable Tourism, a voluntary environmental certification program for hotels and tour operators and the “Ecological Blue Flag” program for rating clean beaches. They found, however, that they had limited resources to promote and execute the programs while development projects that were approved would represent inconsistencies in the application of the law spurring accusations of corruption. The ICT, nonetheless, pushed forward promoting ecotourism and launched a US $15 million publicity campaign to attract North American eco-travelers.
The national parks early on had a difficult time with funding and in the 1990s began actively looking at tourism revenue to fund itself. In an attempt to raise revenue the government enacted a two-tiered pricing strategy for foreigners and nationals but originally raised the foreign fees as high as US $15 at the gate. After a backlash from the tourism industry it was lowered to US $6 in 1996. An additional conservation strategy adopted early on is conservation based on different management plans or land classifications that would allow for different levels of development. This ultimately would be an additional complexity to an already complex development system (see Table 6). One form of land use that took off was private reserves. By 1991, seven privately owned protected areas had been established covering 24,357 hectares. Many reserves are owned and operated by foreign and international organizations like the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, and Rainforest Alliance. Two of the more famous ones are La Selva Biological Station established in 1963 by the Organization for Tropical Studies, a group of U.S.-based universities that conduct scientific research; and, Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve managed by the Tropical Science Center a San José-based NGO. By 1994, Monteverde was generating US $850,000 per year, more than all of the national parks (Honey 1999). Reserves do not need to register with the government but if they do they are eligible to multiple benefits including tax exemptions, technical assistance, and guaranteed expulsion of squatters within the reserve (Honey 1999:150).
Table 6: Costa Rica Protected Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Category</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Area (ha*)</th>
<th>% of National Territory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Parks</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>621,268</td>
<td>12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Reserves</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21,663</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Reserves</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>227,545</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands (including mangroves)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62,226</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Wildlife Refuge</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>182,474</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Zones</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>166,404</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Categories (National Monuments)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,283,181</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.01</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* hectare
Source: SINAC 2004 in MINAET 2008

With the combination of establishing national parks, proliferating private reserves and protected areas, and the large presence of foreign international conservationists involved, by the 1990s Costa Rica became “ecotourism’s poster child” (Honey 1999:131). The country won accolades from the global industry, such as from the U.S. Adventure Travel Society and the international travel fair ITB. The accolades, however, started an awareness of Costa Rica’s dual tourism development strategy and the inconsistencies began to show. Mowforth and Munt argued that by the 1990s the ICT’s claim that the country was a model for sustainable began to ring hollow (2009:329). While they began policies to monitor development and establish sustainable criteria for
businesses, wastewater dumping and cutting down trees in protected areas was occurring along the coast, and tourism developments received permission to build in protected areas.

In 1992 Maurice Strong, a powerful environmental activist, was attempting to build a luxury beach hotel south of Puerto Viejo on the Atlantic coast in the Gandoca Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge and in the Kekoldi Indian Reserve without having titled deeds. In 1999 (and again in 2006) Declarations of National Convenience were made by the president that allowed developers to change land use laws and cut down trees in forested areas; only Papagayo, Marriott’s Los Suenos and American Online co-founder Steve Case’s Punta Cacique received the declarations (Honey et al. 2010). Richter proclaimed: “Costa Rican tourism has become seduced by the money tourism has brought” (2001:52). Even the privatization of conservation is suspect if it is not regulated and balanced with public well-being. For example, private reserves are not required to pay fair market value from community members who get displaced and they also take away desperately needed resources from the public park system and create dependency on non-governmental organizations and international private initiatives.

3.3.3 Foreign Investment Explosion (early-late 2000s)

The decade of the 2000s is representative of a foreign investment explosion, building up in early stages, mostly in hotels, and later in the mid to later part of the decade, in condominium construction catered to foreign retirees. By 2007, revenues from global tourism reached US $1.7 billion for the year. The Pacific coast was specifically
pushed ahead with international tourist arrivals with the beginning of direct flights from
the U.S. to Liberia Airport in Guanacaste. The ICT, the Ministry of Transportation, and
private developers have invested millions in building the airport’s capacity and wooing
international air carriers, notably Delta, often to the disadvantage of other regions. While
construction of hotels with international brands and standards and luxury levels hit a high
point, tour operators became capable to meet the growing logistical and coordination
demands of global tour operators and cruise lines. I outline in Table 7 tourism designated
businesses in 2008 and those in project. Web site creation and Internet marketing and
reservations also improved. This period continued the multi tourism product
characterization of Costa Rica, as well, but the products began to represent more extreme
opposite tourism offerings – the continuation of resort, gated luxury with the beginning of
community based rural tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Operation</th>
<th>In Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitality</strong></td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Agents/Tour Operators</strong></td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rental Car</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water Transport</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restaurant and Entertainment</strong></td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Misc.</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICT 2008

Between 1997 and 2004, tourism attracted 66.3 percent of foreign direct investment
mostly in hotels. For 2004, the Costa Rican Bank estimated US $176.6 million in
tourism related FDI, growing 27 percent in 2005 to reach US $224.5 million. This
continued to grow in 2006 and 2007 with US $328 million FDI for 2007 (Montoya 2007). Guanacaste, the Central Valley, and Puntarenas have received the bulk of the investment. Out of the three, Guanacaste is leading in resort tourism development, culminating with the opening in 2004 of the US $120 million investment by the Four Seasons in the Gulf of Papagayo. By 2010, thirty-two concessions had been granted of which 15 were complete or close to completion (Honey et al. 2010). Los Suenos Marriott, Reserva Conchal with Sol y Melia, the JW Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt Hotels and Resorts are also examples of the foreign resort push, but Costa Rica also grew its mid-range budget option offerings of international brands from a diverse array of foreign hotel groups (see Table 8). Costa Rica’s ground transportation rental car business is also led by foreign car rental agencies such as Hertz, Dollar, Budget, and Avis but their domestic air transportation, which tourists can take to regional locations, are Costa Rican owned Nature Air and Sansa.

Table 8: Global Hotel Groups and Brands in Costa Rica

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Group</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>InterContinental</td>
<td>Crown Plaza, Holiday Inn</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meliá</td>
<td>Sol y Melí</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barceló Hotels and Resorts</td>
<td>Barceló</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Western International</td>
<td>Best Western</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriott International</td>
<td>Marriott, JW Marriott, Courtyard</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occidental Hotels and Resorts</td>
<td>Occidental Grand Papagayo, Allegro, Terremolinos, El Tucano and Spa</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton Worldwide</td>
<td>Hilton, Hampton Inn, Doubletree</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Seasons</td>
<td>Four Seasons</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlson</td>
<td>Radisson, Country Inn and Suites</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyndham Worldwide</td>
<td>Ramada</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice Hotels</td>
<td>Clarion, Quality Inn</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyatt Corporation</td>
<td>Hyatt Regency Spa, Hyatt</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tour operator segment also continued to grow with ACOT having forty-four members by 2005 and many of those members act as incoming agents for foreign-based global tour operators. As incoming ground operators they take on and execute much of the entire tour package to Costa Rica and choose which in country community destinations and suppliers are added to itineraries. Its role in shaping ethnoracial group incorporation and stratification is crucial and addressed throughout the remainder of the dissertation. During this period tour operators, hotels, and the ICT witnessed process upgrading, as well, which assisted in their ability to market their services, and for some, create a forum for online reservations. A 2002 survey noted that 64 percent of all hotels in Costa Rica had an Internet presence and 86 percent of four and five star hotels (Raventos 2006). Only 18 percent, however, of Costa Rican hotel offerings are visible on global distribution systems and their virtual travel agents like Travelocity and Expedia, where offerings are typically large foreign hotels (Raventos 2006). To give Costa Rican-based hotels and tour operators a greater Internet presence, the ICT initiated a call for proposals in 2001 to design, build operate, and introduce a reservation booking function to their Web site.

As foreign resort and luxury hotel offerings grew there was also a push for tourism product diversification with the growth of rural and community-based tourism. In 2009, the Law for the Promotion of Rural Community Tourism was adopted. Farmers began offering the cultivation stage of their agriculture products as tourism experiences
and small communities learned how to develop tourism offerings in their communities. Projects received support from the Small Grants Program implemented by the United Nations Development Program. The Costa Rican government also began to realize that in order to pursue a multiple tourism product strategy, but still wanting to market Costa Rica as a sustainable tourism model, they had to bolster their regulatory capacity. Often only after the diligence of community and activist groups the government began enforcing more regularly health, environmental, and labor policies, but there continues to be deep inconsistencies in enforcement and in divergent actions from different ministries and government bodies.

By the late 2000s, Costa Rica’s “middle-of-the-road” showing in sustainability became all the more apparent when communities began fighting against the realities on the ground and the continued “exceptional” rhetoric coming from the national government and international industry. In 2008, Sardinal in Guanacaste began a long battle over water rights and access, arguing against the privatization of water for tourism resorts, and throughout the decade, Tamarindo’s private association sued several developers in violation of environmental laws. *El Financiero* a business press reported in 2005 deep violations of the ZMT and how Costa Rican elites were benefitting from the granting of concessions (Montoya 2004). They found that despite the law forbidding ownership of the land within the 200 meters to private entities some hotels in Guanacaste and Puntarenas are owners of the land thanks to legislation prior passed in 1970 on tourism urbanization. They also found that 81 percent of concessions included foreign
participation, mostly U.S. citizens (Kimitch 2006). The largest belonged to U.S. resident John Grainger who has property concessions worth 170,210 square meters in Puntarenas. Another large concession holder is American James Zeller in collaboration with Costa Rican Alvaro Fernández who want to construct tourist villas in Limón. Costa Rican politicians have also fared well: former director of the ICT Alvaro Martín Salazar had 15, other ICT official Rubén Pacheco Lutz has two in Papagayo, and representative of the Partido Unidad Social, Cristiana Olman Vargas Cubero had 7, to name a few (Montoya 2004). The incompetency and lack of funds for municipalities in creating regulating plans, inconsistency and shallow sustainable rhetoric, and the corruption and greed of some are all contributing factors in mismanagement of the ZMT that has immense effects on ethnoracial communities in Tamarindo and Cahuita and in their participation in the global value chain.

The financial crisis hit the industry in 2008-2009 while I was in the middle of my fieldwork and many of the international investment projects that were initiated in 2006 and 2007 were on hold or slowed down. This forced slowdown was viewed for some as an opportunity to reevaluate Costa Rica’s neoliberal development model for tourism. The time for reflection did not last long, however, with AMResorts part of Apple Vacations, set to open a Dreams Resort in 2013 and in the Papagayo region, Hyatt, Guacamaya Reserve, and the Ritz Carlton had openings in 2011.

The beginning of the growth of the industry following the fall of Costa Rica’s welfare state with the support of foreign development organizations and international
conservationists found it hardening already established ethnoracial stratification
hierarchies while creating new ones by adding amenity migrants to the list. The policy
support for foreign capital and non cultural tourism (addressed in the next chapter)
without support for community businesses and local training outside the Central Valley,
and the practices between global, national, and local tourism firms accentuated the
underdevelopment of Costa Rica’s peripheral racial zones where community members
found themselves stratified to low skill labor roles to foreign tourism businesses in
Tamarindo and as small businesses owners in Cahuita left out of the global value chain.

The creation of Costa Rica’s exceptional ideology that mythologizes Costa Rica
has served the country well. From their initial independence and the growth of the
Liberal State, to the 1948 Civil War and growth of the State’s involvement in social and
economic forms, and lastly with “environmental exceptionalism” and global tourism
advancement, Costa Rica’s internal racial other populations have attempted to claim their
rights and identity in the Costa Rican state making landscape and receive material
benefits from the latest form of Costa Rica’s insertion in the global economy. While
Costa Rica can be lauded for strides they made in embracing an early social development
norm, environmental protection, and in abolishing their army we should not let
romanticized culture negate the prevalence of stratification and other problems that
counter Costa Rica’s identity. When the identity serves ideological purposes to help
understand and maintain an unequal ethnoracial status quo, exceptionality loses its luster.
4. Global – National Connections along the Tourism Global Value Chain

As I approached the large ballroom where an event was taking place as part of the global tour operator travel fair I was attending, there was a large group of participants lined-up against the wall while a few tourism promotion representatives from Brazil were handing out bags of mementos to commemorate Brazil. The bag was full of information on Brazil: a brightly colored scarf, a bag of chocolates, and other give-away materials. After entering the ballroom adorned with bars and food tables and a bold, stylized collection of Brazilian paintings the evening’s entertainment began their performance. Men wearing white sashes around their waist began moving in a circle depicting the traditional capoeira gestures of a mock battle while percussion beats and singers were providing the musical rhythm to their motions. Soon a video appeared on the large screen erected highlighting Brazil’s large African-descendant population and their immense impact on Brazilian culture. African influences from this South American country was glorified and marketed rather than downplayed or denied.

How countries are represented at large global travel fairs has consequences for which communities in tourism destinations are deemed to have appropriate tourism products and are granted access to international markets (Doerry 2008; Wherry 2008). Global travel fairs bring together global buyers of tourism services and destination suppliers. For developing country destinations their “performance” – the story they tell about themselves, their products, and their tourist potential – to global buyers may
represent a large part of all the information that global audiences know about these
countries. Destinations spend thousands upon thousands of dollars to participate in these
events in order to host coffee breaks, lunches, dinners, and party events, and to pitch their
services in marketplace speed rounds all with the hope that important global buyers will
choose to create tour packages to their localities or use their services. Image,
presentation, and networks are the three most important vehicles that support or hinder
developing country destinations and their representative suppliers in competing for global
tourism dollars. The image they choose to depict of their country, how they present
themselves and sell their product, and how successful they are at navigating the global
networks that connect global tour operators together and with suppliers through informal
channels separate well established destinations and national suppliers from others and
provide a portrait of who the most important global and national actors are in shaping the
participation or exclusion from the tourism global value chain.

The example of Brazil in choosing to highlight their African heritage as a
marketing campaign is notable because rather than downplaying the impact of slavery in
Brazil and the growth of a diverse, racially mixed population, they signified their status
as the largest country with an African descendant population outside of Africa. This
marketing narrative does not tell us who owns the tourism businesses in Bahia, the state
that has the largest percentage of Afro-Brazilians and co-sponsored the promotional event
at the travel fair, or how Afro-Brazilians are benefitting in indicators such as business
ownership, worker status, and how tourism revenues are being redistributed in the
communities; but it does tell us that global tour operators now know that Brazil has an Afro-descendent population, they have a cultural repertoire and localities that can be turned into tourism destinations and potential tour products (Keisha-Kahn 2004). Gaining acknowledgement of racial or ethnic diversity at a global level to global tourism actors is half of the battle for ethnoracial minority populations in developing countries, particularly Afro-descendants in Latin America, who are seeking to pursue international tourism development. It does not tell us their structural position in the global value chain, e.g., as workers or owners or if they are participating in the creation of marketing images, but it tells us that at least they have a chance to get in it.

Unlike Brazil, Costa Rica is not marketed as a country with a racially diverse population by national tour operators and the ICT to global buyers and global buyers, like most international tourists, are typically not aware of the rich diversity that represents the country. Moreover, national tour operators based in the Central Valley become the gatekeepers to tourism development for the rest of the country because they have direct access to global buyers. They meet the skill set and standards that are necessary for becoming receptive, inbound operators for global tour operators and they often have the right networks and cultural capital to gain global tour operator clients. Global tour operators, national tour operators in the Central Valley, and the ICT shape the global value chain in Costa Rica and impact how guanacastecos in Tamarindo and cahuiteños in Limón gain access, exclusion, or are stratified within the chain.
In this chapter I address (1) the importance of tour operators (globally and nationally) as a distribution channel option in the tourism global value chain and the different global and national tour operators; (2) the relationship between global and national tour operators and the importance of networks and standards to compete at international travel fairs; and lastly (3) how the use of environmental marketing narratives and selective cultural imagery by the ICT and tour operators, and the exclusion of racial destinations on tour packages, perpetuates Costa Rica’s exceptionality while downplaying their ethnoracial diversity. International travel guidebooks and magazines also highlight Costa Rica’s established marketing message, albeit in a nuanced form.

4.1 Tourism Distribution Channels

How international tourists buy their tourism products, the distribution channel, is a useful heuristic tool to distinguish linkages and power relationships between tourism firms along the tourism global value chain. Ujma (2001:39) defined distribution channels as “an operating structure, system, or linkage of various combinations of travel organizations through which a producer of travel products describes and confirms travel arrangements to the buyer.” Buhalis (2000) emphasized the information dissemination capacity of distribution channels and their ability to provide a blueprint to arrange and pay for tourism service products. All tourism firms hold distribution capacity because they can sell directly or indirectly their services but tourism firms that specialize in distribution, the logistics (tour operators) and sales (travel agents) segments of the tourism global value chain, play stronger chain driver roles due to their intermediary
status. Tour operators, even more so, because travel agents operate a purely sales function, have greater ability to influence other chain actors. Three characteristics that tour operators hold grant them power. They control information, control demand, and create travel products.

Being the source of information regarding a range of tourism services and by being considered experts in travel destinations gives tour operators control over how destinations are marketed, which tourism service providers are marketed and positioned to tourist clients, and what background information about destinations and travel experiences are disseminated. Information is a powerful tool in international tourism because many tourists often lack the most basic information about what to expect and what would make a good tourism product. Thus, by controlling information tour operators are also controlling demand by being the direct link to the international client. They have the ability to create demand through marketing campaigns and products to destinations and they create and manipulate the access consumers get, deciding which providers can have access to international tourists. Lastly, by creating the tourism products through bundling portions of the value chain together into total packages, and by deciding which localities in destinations and which type of activities are determined tourism products, they decide what are tourism products and how they should be created and executed.

This capability gives tour operators bargaining power and leverage in their relationship with tourism service suppliers of the components of trip segment of the value
chain, the “core” segments of transport, accommodation, and excursions; however, the size and scale of international air carriers leaves this segment less amenable to tour operator demands. There are also different types of global tour operators, and those that have brand appeal, ownership control over other value chain segments, and size and scale characteristics are better positioned in controlling negotiation and formal and informal agreements between suppliers (Buhalis 2000). Although global tour operators are the most influential actor that specializes in distribution services, national tour operators play important roles in the destinations at the national and local levels. Global tour operators have numerous international destinations that they provide tour packages for. They commonly rely on incoming agents or national tour operators to create the packages for them, which they then sell and market directly to their clients. This key gatekeeper, middleman role allows national tour operators to have the same influencing power of global tour operators, but at the national level, and many national tour operators are now becoming regional tour operators and mini global tour operators. As they gain experience and direct international tourist access they also can market directly to international clients without going through global tour operators.

Even with the power of many tour operators, however, all tourism global value chains are composed of multiple distribution channels that operate parallel to each other. Firms use all possible avenues to sell their products: directly, through global/national intermediaries, through commissionable sales to competitors, etc. Different distribution channels will have different lead firms or actors. Some channels may have more than one
lead firm but there may be one main driver. In Table 9, I highlight nine potential
distribution channels for tourists in outbound countries to purchase their tourism product
experiences. The option they choose, i.e., the type of business they choose, or if they
choose independently, sets into motion a series of governance relationships along the
chain and the likelihood of using certain types of firms. This schematic is not exhaustive
or exact but highlights some broad distribution and governance themes in the industry.

Table 9: Tourism Distribution Channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution Channel</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Governance Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bubble Travel</td>
<td>Globally Integrated Tour Operator</td>
<td>Hierarchy, Modular, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quasi Globally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Brand Travel</td>
<td>Integrated Tour Operator</td>
<td>Hierarchy, Modular, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Travel</td>
<td>Global Air Carrier</td>
<td>Hierarchy, Relational, Modular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail-Tour Travel</td>
<td>Global Tour Operator</td>
<td>Market, Hierarchy, Modular, Modular-Relational, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Package</td>
<td>Global Small or Medium Sized Tour Operator</td>
<td>Market, Modular, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Virtual Travel</td>
<td>Global Virtual Travel Agent</td>
<td>Market, Relational-Modular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Integration Travel</td>
<td>Nationally Integrated Tour Operator</td>
<td>Market, Hierarchy, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Led Travel</td>
<td>National Tour Operator</td>
<td>Market, Modular, Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Organizer</td>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td>Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I particularly focus on forms of “bubble travel,” “managed brand travel,” “retail-tour travel,” “specialized package travel,” “destination led travel” and “tourist organizer travel,” as channel options along the tourism global value chain to Costa Rica and Tamarindo and Cahuita specifically. Bubble Travel involves a tourist buying a package from a large global tour operator company in Europe such as TUI and Thomas Cook or buying a package from a cruise line like Carnival. They are the “driver” of this channel. These companies are vertically integrated travel agents, tour operators, airlines (or boats as cruises), and lodging. The large global tour operators and cruise lines may have a modular relationship with incoming agents in the destination urban cities to design shore activities for cruise guests or excursion activities for guests staying at their hotels. The incoming agents may have captive relationships with a series of drivers or guides who work for them in smaller destination localities. This distribution channel is witnessed in Cahuita when tourists arrive from cruises that dock in Limón and use San José tour operators as shore excursion providers bypassing cahuiteño providers. Managed Brand Travel involves buying a package tour from a global tour operator that is integrated with travel agents and international transportation like Virgin Travel Group or Apple Vacations. They can work closely with independent travel agencies to sell their packages. These companies may also work with incoming agents in destinations in a modular fashion to arrange destination arrangements or they might work directly with large hotel groups in a more relational fashion since large hotel groups have a specific high-valued product with a brand name. These hotels typically have tour desks in their
lobby that work in a modular or captive relationship with excursion suppliers. This distribution channel is used in Tamarindo when tour operators with charter services work with local all-inclusive hotels for accommodation offerings and national tour operators for excursion and transportation planning.

*Retail-Tour Travel* entails buying a package form a tour operator that also works as a travel agent, like GoGo tours once did in the U.S., or in a close relationship with independent travel agencies These companies can operate either a modular relationship with incoming agents or bypass incoming agents and work directly with destination hotels in a modular relationship. Tour operators in general tend to have more negotiating power in the tourism chain and hence create typically more modular linkages with suppliers, but if the supplier, like a hotel, is large and has core competencies and brand recognition that relationship may be relational. Tourists can also choose to book airfare separately in a market fashion. This is another distribution option for Tamarindo.

*Specialized Packaged Travel* includes buying a package from small or medium-sized tour operators, which is the dominant size of U.S. global tour operators. These companies work either with incoming agents in destinations to plan the destination trip or they work directly with hotels to plan the trip. Tourists can book their airfare separately in a market fashion or with them.

*Destination Led Travel* involves tourists buying their airfare from international air carriers but booking with tour operators in destination urban areas who then arrange their package tour. These tour operators organize the national and sometimes regional travel
but they are usually not vertically integrated with other tourism businesses in the
destination. Lastly, is the Tourist Organizer Travel, which involves tourists bypassing all
global and national intermediaries, except global airline carriers, and booking directly in
a piecemeal fashion lodging, ground transportation, etc. in destinations. Sometimes these
providers might work in a modular or captive relationship with activities providers in
locations. Many tourists to Tamarindo and Cahuita use this form of distribution,
particularly for Cahuita, and other forms of gaining destination information, such as
through global travel guidebooks, play an important information dissemination role.
Independent travel is often praised as a way to bypass intermediaries that cut into profits,
but as with the case of Cahuita, when a destination relies mostly on independent travelers
its excludes them from multiple distribution forms and diverse access points to the global
value chain.

4.1.1 Kaleidoscope of Tour Operator Firms – Global and National

The sample of U.S.-based global tour operators that I analyze (see Table 10)
throughout the dissertation represents the most successful of the highly fragmented and
mostly midsize, privately held companies that began as family operations and represent
the overall global tour operator markets in the U.S. who have packaged trips to Costa
Rica. They principally represent the Specialized Package Travel distribution channel.
All of the companies offer tour packages to multiple global destinations, including to
various developing countries; have tour products that range from escorted group travel,
free independent travel or FIT, to arranging all-inclusive extended hotel stays and in
piecemeal component fashion. Some are wholesalers that focus solely on creating bundled tour packages and then sell them to other global tour operators and travel agents to sell, but do not execute any of the activities. Most, however, do wholesale and operation activities. Very few represent degrees of vertical integration business models except for Apple Vacations, Lindblad Expeditions, and Tauck but they are increasingly becoming part of other global tour operator and travel brand portfolios or are expanding their own brand portfolios. All sell the packages directly and through travel agents and work with inbound national tour operators in destinations in arrangements ranging from outsourcing the entire inbound destination trip planning and execution to only subsections, such as transportation, and identifying local guides.

They are also part of the United States Tour Operator Association (USTOA) the private tour operator industry association for the United States that acts as a monitoring and regulating institution because there is no accrediting body or licensing procedure for tour operators in the U.S. The price to join is steep, however, with the organization requiring all tour operators members to have 18 references, prove financial, sales, and passenger levels, and must carry a minimum of US $1 million in professional liability insurance. These financial barriers keep many small tour operators out of the association but the highlighted operators are small in comparison to the large, vertically integrated companies based out of Europe. These operators have the most influence over the value chain at the global level for the U.S. market. I forgo an analysis of specialty global tour operators based out of the United States that send groups to Costa Rica due to their small
sales and passenger numbers and the limited influence they have in shaping the structure of the chain at the national and local levels.

In general, the global tour operator industry has had to deal with the wide global economic crisis since 2008 that culminated in widespread discounting of trip packages in 2009 and 2010 but several trends will potentially impact future business decisions and supplier relations including the instability of airfare pricing, the growth of family and FIT travel, being able to access supplier inventory and price data (particularly hotels) in real-time, and direct marketing and consumer connectivity strategies typified in the move toward tour operators developing social networking sites on forums like Facebook and TripAdvisor (Baran 2010a).
Table 10: Global Tour Operators with Tours to Costa Rica

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GoGo Worldwide</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>part of Flight Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Vacations</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>AMResorts (22); Amstar (DMC); USA3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avanti Destinations</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Kent</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendan Vacations</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>part of TravCorp USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Vacations</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Part of Expedia, Collette Family, Smithsonian Vacations, Smithsonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeys Travel Adventures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collette Vacations</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Journeys Travel Adventures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Ahead Tours</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Expeditions</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>part of Grand Expeditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaTour</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>part of Isram World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindblad Expeditions</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>collaboration with National Geographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Travel Corporation</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>15, including air carrier travel services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayflower</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tauck</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Tauck World Discover, Tauck Small Ship Cruising, Tauck European River Cruising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Company Web sites, field notes

GoGo Worldwide is a leading wholesaler and several time winner of Travel Weekly’s best tour operator for the Caribbean. They exclusively sell through travel agents. They are known for their vast supplier inventory network and typically work with large hotels/resorts in destinations through negotiated contracts and GoGo Recommends Program. Some providers in their Recommends Program include Sandals, Sunset Resorts, AMResorts, RIU, Breezes, and Iberostar. In 2009 the Australian travel
agency company Flight Centre acquired GoGo Worldwide and sister travel agency company Liberty Travel. GoGo and Liberty were officially separated in the new company structure, which also includes companies in the U.K., Canada, South Africa, Hong Kong, India, China, Singapore and Dubai.

Apple Vacations is the most vertically integrated company that began as a tour operator. They are credited with turning Latin American beach destinations, such as Cancún in Mexico and Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, as popular travel spots for American tourists. In 2001, they added on charter airline services with USA3000, hotel properties with AMResorts, which they have between 30-50 percent ownership stake in (includes Secrets, Dreams, Zoetry, and Now), and destination management services with Amstar (Weissman 2010). They also have agreements with several air carriers including United, American, Frontier, Delta, Jet Blue, Virgin America, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic. The company has bolstered their packages to Costa Rica and in 2010 began new weekly character services to Liberia in Guanacaste from Denver and Chicago (Baran 2010b).

Avanti Destinations specializes in independent tailor-made packages and single travel components to Latin America, Europe, and Mexico. They have preferred supplier relationships with air carriers American, British Airways, Lufthansa, United, Continental Airlines, Delta, British Airways, Air France, Alitalia; and hotels including Best Western, Ofitel, K+K Hotels, and Radisson. Abercrombie & Kent (A&K) is considered one of the premier luxury tour operators in the world. They commonly win best luxury tour
operator and African tour operator from *Travel Weekly*. Originally from the U.K., they have sixty-two offices worldwide and only 40 percent of their market is for American travelers. A&K was one of the earlier pioneering global tour operators to set up destination management companies in their destinations minimizing their need to work with local national tour operators. Kenya is one of their flagship destinations where they spearheaded this model. Brendan Vacations began in the late 1960s through escorted and independent travel to bring Americans to Europe, particularly Ireland, then to new destinations in East Africa in the 1970s, and South and Central America in the 1980s. They were bought by large but family and privately held Travel Corporation in 2006. TravelCorp has over 25 brands that include luxury hotels, boutique cruises, and specialty tour operators.

Classic Vacations specializes in high-end, luxury-based travel for independent and piecemeal component travelers in order to create custom-built packages. They are now part of the Expedia, Inc. portfolio. In 2009, Expedia ranked fifth in global sales for travel retailers. Their portfolio includes Hotels.com, TripAdvisor, Venere, Hotwire, Bloglines, CarRentals.com, CitySearch, Evite, Gifts, Lending Tree, Match, Online Shopping, Proto, ServiceMagic, Shoes, The Daily Beast, TicketWeb, Travel Ticker. Expedia is considered the world’s top online travel agency but they have begun to also buy, repackage, and sell trip components. Collette Vacations is another family-owned tour company that began escorted tours to Europe in the late 1970s, than to Australia, China, Africa, and Mexico. All Collette’s escorted tours are accompanied with tour
managers from America or Canada that travel with their clients throughout the tour. The company has launched several travel tour brands that cater toward specific tour niches such as Collette Family Vacations, which they launched in 2010, Explorations, and Smithsonian Journeys Travel Adventures, a partnership with the Smithsonian. Go Ahead Tours also travels with tour directors on their global trips, which typically include airfare.

International Expeditions began in 1980 as one of first tour operators specializing in small group nature travel that specializes in learning and environmental based products. They have continued their focus on escorted group travel in over 40 destinations. They also helped develop the International Ecotourism Society and have helped raise funds and awareness for conservation and research initiatives in global ecosystems. In 2000, Grand Expeditions acquired the company in a move to acquire brands that had an ecotourism focus. LaTour is the brand within Isram World that caters to travel to Latin America. Other Isram World brands include Orient Flexi-Pas Tours, Escapade Vacations, Jewish Heritage Tours, and Holy Land Sun Tours. Lindblad Expeditions, like International Expeditions, is another originating nature, adventure tour operating company. Originating as Lindblad Travel, Lars-Eric Lindblad for some is considered the “father” of eco or adventure tourism with trips to Easter Island, the Galapagos, and the Amazon. When his son took over it became Special Expeditions, which turned into Lindblad Expeditions and now specializes in escorted, small ship travel on one of their five owned ships. Naturalists, historians, geologists, and destination experts travel with vessels that visit such global places as Africa, Central and South
America, and South East Asia. In 2004, they began a partnership with National
Geographic to develop and market tours, which included renaming the ships in their fleet
to National Geographic titles. Lindblad has also worked with other tour operators in joint
marketing initiatives.

The Mark Travel Corporation is one of the largest companies with over 15 brands
that range from being the supplier behind several airline travel divisions including
Continental Airlines Vacations, Southwest Vacations, and United Vacations. They were
the first operator to make leisure travel available through airline travel portals and have
since become an innovator with travel e-commerce and computer reservation systems.
Their flagship brand is Funjet Vacations, which specializes in flexible, independent
travel. In 2000, they went into a marketing alliance with Mayflower providing a
distribution platform for Mayflower tours in their distribution booking systems.
Mayflower is another family-owned tour operator that focuses on individual and group
escorted travel. Lastly, Tauk is one of the most established, original family-based tour
operators with four generations of Taucks running the company. Like Collette they have
expanded into tour brands such as Tauck World Discoveries, Tauck Bridges, Tauck
culturious, Tauck Small Ship Cruising, and Tauck European River Cruising. Tauck has
been a leader in the tour operator industry since the global downturn in criticizing the
widespread practice of discounting. They also have been singled out by the Unite Here
hotel union campaign in the United States because of their business relationship with
hotels the union was striking against.
For their packages to Costa Rica these global players rely on a handful of elite national tour operators based in the Central Valley with organizational and trip execution support. The companies highlighted in Table 11 are a sample of the top national tour operators in Costa Rica I analyze throughout the dissertation who plan and execute group escorted, FIT, incentive (private corporations who send their employees to vacation destinations), meetings, conferences, and other events tour types, as well as organizing shore excursions throughout the country for the large cruise lines that visit the two Costa Rican ports. All market and sell tour packages that highlight nature tourism, including beaches, volcanoes, national parks, and Central Valley cultural products such as coffee and museums, and most have, or are in the process of gaining, ICT sustainable tourism certificates. How sustainability and environmental stewardship is incorporated into their business model, however, varies between them. Essentially, these companies all sell similar national destination packages of Costa Rica and a few have begun to create tours to regional countries including Nicaragua and Panama. Three companies, Sunnyland Tours, Avel Tours, and ARA are the destination management companies for their global parent companies where Gray Line Tours is the national franchise for the global Gray Line Group. While they all can and do sell their products directly to international tourists through the Destination Led Travel distribution channel, most rely heavily on the business from global tour operators to gain access to international markets. They also employ a large network of guides who mostly come from the Central Valley and have received extensive guide training, for many at universities. Importantly, all are the
“essential link making [downstream] connections to industrialized countries and
[upstream] economic ties to local businesses within” Costa Rica (Higgins quoted in
Honey 1999:43).

**Table 11: National Tour Operators in Costa Rica**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Tour Type</th>
<th>Destinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greenway Tours</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT, Shore</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terra Nova</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic Vic</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>FIT, agency</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rican Trails</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>FIT, Group</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armo Travel</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, Incentive, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontes</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avel Tours</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Wholesaler</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camino Travel</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, Incentives, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica Excellence</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT, Incentive</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnyland Tours**</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Group, FIT</td>
<td>Americas, Medit., Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica Top Tours</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT, Incentive</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARA</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Group, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray Line Tours</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT, MICE, Shuttle, Shore</td>
<td>Nicaragua, Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAM</td>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, FIT, MICE, Shore</td>
<td>National, Nicaragua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Travel</td>
<td>American/Costa Rican</td>
<td>Group, Incentives, FIT, Shore</td>
<td>National, Nicaragua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Company Web sites, field notes, **subsidiary of global tour operator

Swiss Travel and TAM are considered the biggest national tour operators. In
1972, Swiss Travel was begun by American Archie Fields who also owned one of the
first small cabina/hotel in the Tortuguero region on the Atlantic coast. They have one of the largest van and bus fleets next to Gray Line. In addition to their two office locations, one in San José and the other in Liberia, Guanacaste they operate 15 tour desks in foreign-managed hotels in San José, Guanacaste, and Puntarenas. The hotels range from two Hiltons, three Marriotts, and four within the Papagayo tourism pole. They also have a large presence in organizing shore excursion events for cruise passengers. They have worked with GoGo, Apple, Travel Impressions, Worldwide Tours, Brendan and Trafalgar both part of Travel Corporation. Their size and strategic position as tour operator/excursion provider for global tour operators that widely book all-inclusive hotel packages, e.g. Apple, in addition to having a dominant presence in multiple hotels, gives them multiple access points in the global value chain. They are also perceived as difficult national buyers to many in-country suppliers they use. Tam originally started as an outbound travel agent than moved into inbound operations. Like Swiss Travel, they operate in 13 hotels in Guanacaste, several where they are in direction competition with Swiss Travel.

Greenway Tours and Horizontes are the most specialized of the sample due to their position on the environmental and in reaching specialty tour markets. Greenway Tours, in addition to promoting environmental and local businesses, create tour packages for students and gay travelers. Horizontes has been at the center of the ecotourism movement in Costa Rica and has worked for scientists, researchers, and NGOs in the international sustainability movement. They have worked with the larger global
operators like Abercrombie & Kent and Lindblad Expeditions along with smaller global tour operator outfitters. Although not part of my initial sample, Costa Rica Expeditions is another large national tour operator and one of the only operators to own and manage lodges with Tortuga Lodge, Monteverde Lodge, and Corcovado Lodge Tent Camp. Like Horizontes, they are considered a leading ecotourism national tour operator and their founder, the American Michael Kaye, is considered the father of ecotourism in Costa Rica. They have received vast marketing exposure and have networks with international organizations, travel media, and work with many global tour operators.

4.2 Governance Structures and Institutions and Ethnoracial Stratification – Global and National Tour Operators

The relationship between global tour operators and national tour operators and national tour operators with their local suppliers incorporates Costa Rican tour operators from the Central Valley while excluding cahuiteño suppliers and stratifying guanacastecos to workers for Tamarindo suppliers. Global tour operators may work directly with national suppliers, for example in contract hotel bookings, but they commonly rely on national operators for designing tour components and in choosing local suppliers ranging from transportation, excursion, and lodging. National tour operators have the formal and subjective skill sets to meet the standards and gain the trust of global tour operators, and due to their role as middleman national gatekeepers between the global and the local, they have the ability to steer tourists through the tour package proposals they design and give to their global clients. National tour operators also have
direct access to international global tour operator markets through their participation in international travel fairs where it is necessary that they display a high international service skill set and communication capabilities in order to distinguish themselves as being able to meet the needs of international tourists from the global North. They gain networks at these fairs that further positions them as members of an elite group of tourism service providers.

Costa Rican national tour operators in the Central Valley and their employees have gained cumulative advantages through the opportunities granted to them with the education system, networks, and financial capital and business support available. Because Costa Rican in general, and the Central Valley in particular, claims that they are more similar in values, education, and development to the global North, and market a form of exceptionalism from other destinations, they situate themselves as speaking the particular language of perceived international tourism standards. This standard is based off of broad, normative white American and European language and service skills judgment. When national tour operators come from the outbound countries they have a further advantage because they already have established networks in the international markets and they are able to play the role as cultural broker or interpreter between the tourist and the destination. Afro-Costa Ricans and guanacastecos have had limited opportunities to gain the skill set to compete and become national tour operators and direct suppliers in the value chain, and their own skill sets are often labeled with stereotypical racialized skill assessments.
4.2.1 Global and National Tour Operators – National Tour Operators and their Suppliers

In describing the importance of working with national tour operators one global tour operator stated: “the national partner . . . they have their finger on the pulse of things . . . because we deal with so many countries, I can’t possibly be current on everything everywhere. So I heavily rely on my Marios in the world” (Prosper, interview by author, 7 May 2008). A Costa Rican national tour operator reiterated that their ability to offer “immediate service” on the ground and recognize and unpack how to handle local issues distinguishes part of their value-added use particular for FIT products:

The benefit is that we give an immediate service to the client . . . we sell a lot of what is called FIT, all are individual clients that want private transportation and a guide. On the other hand, those companies that do not have a growth agent (ground operator) in Costa Rica don’t have control over these clients . . . if they have someone that understands Costa Rica the product is very different and it is giving an immediate service ([My translation] Daniel, interview by author, 14 January 2009).

Global tour operators use a set of formal and subjective standards in choosing their “Mario’s of the world,” which represent their problem solvers, tour executor, and local expert in their destinations. Different destinations may have specified needs and there could be various contract forms between global tour operators and their wide net of ground operators and direct suppliers. The most formal standards include insurance policies, requirements dictating transport vehicle specifics, guide preferences, asking for a specific number of client references, to price point component demands. In more formal settings global operators may ask for a ground operator to create a detailed
proposal of tour package options and the global operator may review several options and properly interview different suppliers.

For all their formal requirements, however, it is the informal or subjective standards that dictates how and which ground operators are chosen. The subjective criteria have to do with how the global tour operators judge a good international tourism service standard and for many global tour operators in developing countries there are a limited number of national tour operators who can meet their expectations. One global operator stated, “in many places there is a limited choice of tour operators with the level of competence and the communication skills to be worth considering.” (Saul, interview by author, 20 October 2009) while another stated, “Frankly, there’s too many vendors that I need around the world who have an onshore vendor for cruise ship passenger mentality that ‘these people are never coming back and they’re bothered and I certainly don’t need – all I need to do is the minimum requirements’” (Prosper, interview by author, 7 May 2008).

Subjective criteria are based on the belief that the ground operators are able to demonstrate that they understand what it means to be “service oriented” and “understand the needs of a traveler” (Tanya, interview by author, 21 October, 2009). Another operator described that their ground operators “must be empathetic, perceptive and insightful with the ability to cope with unexpected situations . . . professional judgment and discretion insure client privacy and security” (Anna, interview by author, 13 July 2011). Other operators used a language such as “getting us” and “on the same wave
length” to describe how they choose their local operators. These quite abstract and subjective criteria point to the importance of soft skills and meeting the demands of international service providers whose clients have very specific ideas on what is good and not good service that is connected to white international standards.

Only an elite group of tourism tour operators in Costa Rica meet the needs of global tour operator buyers. Of all of the skill sets, core skills, or what more generally refers to soft skills, is the most fundamental. The national tour operators in Table 11 know how to navigate the cultural preferences, standards, and tourism ideals international tourists bring to destinations. Although the act of traveling and tourism is partly about experiencing another culture and landscape, tourists still often expect service based on their notion of international service. Those expectations vary between outbound countries so tour operators become the ultimate cultural brokers when they deal with multiple outbound countries. Confidence in tourism service also follows foreign language competency. International tourists expect destination service providers to speak their language or the de-facto universal language of tourism, English, and they also expect that how they speak English, the tone and words they use, is appropriate and agreeable.

Broadly, developing a strong soft skill base is one of the most challenging for developing countries that often have “only a vague sense of what the provision of services entails” (Liu and Wall 2004:700). Afro-Costa Ricans, guancastecos, and indigenous groups have had limited opportunities in Costa Rica to cultivate a skill base to
meet the needs of the global tour operator buyers and become national tour operators, and thus, are not; and they must rely on national tour operators intermediation to get access to international buyers. Due to the limited schools, public colleges, and tourism training facilities outside of the Central Valley, and their limited ability to get on-the-job training because they are channeled into low-skill positions in tour and excursion operations, prevent them from gaining the competency to compete and become national tourism providers. Furthermore, their perceived lack of skill has left a vacuum for foreign entrepreneurs and workers from the global North to fill tour operator and excursion operator provider roles in Tamarindo and Cahuita.

*Guanacastecos* and Afro-Costa Ricans also are plagued by the stereotype that they come from backwards regions inhabited by lazy workers, which I address in more detail in the chapters on Tamarindo and Cahuita. *Guanacasteco* workers are stereotyped as *cholos* or *polos*, pejorative terms that allude to being lazy, a hick from a primitive community, and as negatively representing the personification of the *pura vida* lifestyle; whereas Afro-Costa Ricans are dangerous, lazy, *Rastas*, and lack motivation to work. These descriptions are not racially neutral in Costa Rica’s historical ethnoracial context. These stereotypes limit their upward mobility opportunities as workers and entrepreneurs by justifying low pay and low job status placement for workers and why their businesses might not be chosen as suppliers. Their form of good service and tourism skills that are locally situated and defined are often misunderstood, devalued, and ignored.
The standards that global tour operators place on their national tour operators are then shifted upon their national supplier network of hotels, transportation providers, excursion operators, and guides. They are not as stringent as the global tour operator standards with most national tour operators highlighting the need for suppliers to have insurance and an operating license with the ICT, but they stress their own form of quality and service that is inspected when they conduct site visits. One national operator explained: “We have identified our suppliers very well. We just don’t work with anyone that wants to work with us. We get a lot of requests from hotels, from tours, from people interested in that we sell their services but we don’t do that until we study very well their offer” (Norman, interview by author, 4 September 2008). The same operator went on to explain that while they choose their suppliers with inspection criteria the informal relationship building process of the network is also important and can dictate sale placement:

We sign our contracts year after year. But with the ones we have right now we have excellent relationships. They come here and have a cup of coffee; they are friends of us, the sales representatives. They are very, this lady is a very good friend of ours, she comes often and we have a cup of coffee and she gives us the contract and blah, blah, blah; and she is very happy with our groups and I sell a lot of groups to her (Norman, interview by author, 4 September 2008).

For small-scale suppliers in destinations it is very hard to get access to these informal relationship building networks and although several of the national tour operators say that they want to work with Costa Rican providers they all overwhelmingly use foreign-owned and managed hotels and foreign excursion providers particularly in Guanacaste and Tamarindo and in Puerto Viejo south of Cahuita. The foreign-branded hotels,
particularly, work with multiple global and national tour operators and travel agents, and have direct distribution channel options; thus, they are less influenced by the demands of the national operators because they know their products are already in demand. The foreign providers, as well, are better able to meet the new standards that national operators are beginning to demand such as the Sustainable Tourism Certificate (CST) from the ICT and other certificates such as the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) pledge.

Working for national tour operators as direct employee guides or contract guides also comes with requirements. Several national operators are trying to distinguish themselves by the strict demands they place on their guides who have to speak multiple languages, take guide courses, and many need to have the equivalent to a bachelor’s degree in ecological or environmental-based studies, and as one national operator emphasized, they have to have to understand the “psychological understanding” of group management (Nicholas, interview by author, 9 October 2008). The guide standards continue to follow the emphasis and importance on soft skills and the necessity for guides, and overall suppliers, to meet the expectations of complex and sometimes difficult international tourists.

All of these standards, as with the global tour operator standards, exclude most guanacasteco and Afro-Costa Ricans as direct suppliers and stratifies them to workers for their foreign suppliers where they are subject to the same racial skill stereotypes. Particularly, as I address in the marketing section below, for the Afro-Costa Ricans in
Cahuita, they are mostly completely eliminated from this linkage. Cahuita is not marketed by national tour operators as a destination in their tour packages. Cultural products that highlight ethnic diversity in Costa Rica are limited as well. Even if national tour operators bring tourists to Cahuita through a shore excursion for cruise lines they bring their own tour guides and stay in Puerto Viejo, the foreign dominated south Caribbean town.

4.2.2 International Travel Fairs

Participation at international travel fairs, such as ITB in Berlin, World Travel Market in London, and the United States Tour Operator Association’s (USTOA) annual meetings are where global tour operators and destination suppliers and tourism marketing boards, along with supporting tourism industry service providers, e.g., travel insurance and travel media come together for a three to four day extravaganza of networking events, industry panels, and destination hosted lunches, dinners, cocktails, and parties. These fairs are where final deals are made and renegotiated. It was reported that the commercial contracts signed at ITB 2011, where over eleven thousand exhibitors participated, exceeded six billion Euros (Xenios 2011). While USTOA is not a traditional trade fair in that it is only open to members of USTOA, which consists of global tour operator buyers in the United States and their destination suppliers globally, it is an international convention venue where global buyers and suppliers meet.

Although these fairs are large, this is a relatively exclusive world where only a handful, if that, of developing country destination suppliers get access to and where there
is immense pressure for destinations to spend money and market and position itself in the most impressive fashion that translates to a global audience that it is a “must see” place. These travel fairs as a form of private, global institution in the industry incorporates national tour operators in the Central Valley and foreign-owned suppliers in the value chain while excluding Afro-Costa Ricans, guanacastecos, and indigenous groups. In Table 12 I show that only a limited number of Costa Rican businesses, tour operators from the Central Valley and foreign-owned/managed hotels, and the ICT have access in these venues, and hence, become the representatives of the country and a key link in the value chain. Money, soft skills, and the marketing images projected by the ICT (see next section) are the three main avenues that hinder broader participation.

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Source: Travel fair Web sites, field notes

A lot of money is needed to attend these fairs and a lot of money is spent and on display for participant consumption. While USTOA is for members only, even for members it costs over US $800 to register for the meeting. Once you include,
international airfare, hotel lodging at typically a resort style hotel, and miscellaneous expenses such as food, drinks, and transportation participants are spending thousands of dollars. This is economically inaccessible for most small, micro size tourism enterprises in developing countries, which is the dominant form of local ownership for racial minority groups. Gaining direct access to international markets is key for suppliers who want to convince global buyers and sales agents to buy and sell their services. There is a “trust deficit” between global buyers and destination suppliers who already have a perception that many destination providers, even national tour operators who take on destination management company capabilities, lack the appropriate skill sets to handle their clients. Building a face-to-face relationship with them is a critical form to establish ties on familiar ground. Even if not through attending travel fairs, suppliers who are able to travel to international markets, and go on a “tour” to global tour operators and travel agents and meet and give presentations of their products in the outbound country, have a large advantage in gaining access to these distribution channels. Without a “patron,” through sponsored events from national marketing boards or private associations, or through established networks in international outbound markets, it is virtually economically impossible to do this.

In addition to the money that is needed to travel abroad to travel fairs, there is a lot of money that is on display at the fairs spent by destination marketing boards and corporate sponsors who want to market to tourism businesses. Destinations have the opportunity to be a “partner” destination in the entire fair that grants them coveted booth
and display access or they can sponsor key events such as a coffee, cocktail, lunch, or dinner. Some destinations, such as Egypt, Croatia, and Mexico, have strong reputations through hosting continuous popular events. One event I attended from Croatia included a performance by a famous Croatian composer and musician who was internationally flown in just for the event. His set included background dancers dressed in traditional Croatian clothing from the various regions in the country. After they completed their performance, three large screens projected a technically sophisticated and visually stunning movie/documentary about Croatia that was accompanied by vast theme music that had the sound of a Hans Zimmer-scored movie. Participants enjoyed the Croatian entertainment while eating a mushroom-bisque starter, fresh cod, and crème brûlée. They left the event with lavender sashes and sterling silver necklaces. This was a lunch attended by hundreds. At a different party held for participants sponsored by the local restaurant and tourism community of the city where the conference was held at, the party could have been easily substituted for a young Hollywood party complete with models, expensive food and alcohol, and acrobats performing in bubble pools. At these events, tourism sellers experience the tourism product and the line between fantasy, reality, and extravagance are easily blurred but marketed and consumed.

For the small number of destination suppliers who are granted access an extreme form of soft skill finesse is needed to succeed. These fairs are driven by large global travel companies whose representatives speak an international language of tourism service that they expect their suppliers to speak. Suppliers have to have just the right
“pitch” to position their destination and their product as an ideal choice for the buyers to choose from. This skill performance is particularly witnessed through the marketplace rounds, which closely resembles a form of tourism speed dating, albeit a one-sided form. In large hotel ballrooms or conference rooms with rows lined with booths and tables global tour operators sit behind tables and meet with destination suppliers who had signed-up for prearranged meetings. The suppliers have ten to twelve minutes to explain to the global buyer why they should first choose the destination, if it is not a regular destination, and make them a supplier. It takes a particular presentation, articulation, and communicative skill set to successfully handle these marketplace sessions. A destination supplier told me that the worst thing that a supplier could do was to be unprepared and potentially, “make a-fool-out-of-themselves.” Supplier representatives need to be highly educated, speak limited accented English, and have the skills of persuasion and charm. Moreover, beyond the marketplace events, a lot of networking and potential deal brokering takes place over informal drinks, dinners, or entertainment functions scheduled. Gaining informal access is generated for suppliers that have established reputations, contacts, and friends in the global industry who open doors that would have normally been closed.

These soft-skill requirements are subjective, hard to judge, and very hard to teach. In developing country destinations that are culturally, linguistically, and racially different than the global North, being able to adapt and acquire these skills is very difficult. Only those representatives in destinations that are the best educated, commonly in the global
North, have established contacts in international outbound markets, and financial resources succeed in this arena. For Costa Rica, these representatives typically are the national tour operators based in the Central Valley and/or global North expatriates who now live in Costa Rica and work in tourism. Costa Rica’s exceptional ideology positions them as more similar than not to the global North – racially and in values. The only way for guanacasteco or Afro-Costa Rican entrepreneurs and communities to be represented on the global stage is if they are via proxy through the national tour operators and the ICT. The marketing image of Costa Rica, however, and national tour operators’ limited number of non-foreign owned and racially diverse tour products in their tour itineraries limits this opportunity.

4.3 Marketing and Ethnoracial Stratification - Destination Imaging

The projected image of a country is a manifestation of power relationships that form social and economic controls between those who fit the image and those that do not (Selwyn 1996). Key actors who hold positions of influence in the tourism global value chain use language, imagery, and narratives to describe Costa Rica to global tourists. These marketing strategies have material consequences for destination communities and groups who counter imagined perceptions in their ability to gain a position in the value chain as workers, entrepreneurs, and destination tourism products. Destination imaging draws upon existing social and cultural tropes within Costa Rica in order to develop a place identity that is alluring to international tourists and foreign investors and
competitively positions the country distinct (Cornelissen 2005:675). Choosing which “things/ideas/attractions are powerfully and or commercially made dominant, while other are subjugated, silenced, or ignored” (Hollinshead 1999:9) is a social and political issue with economic consequences.

Global and national tour operators and the Costa Rican state, more specifically the ICT, market two pronounced narratives to define Costa Rica (1) environmental uniqueness and (2) Costa Rican rural democracy traditions. International travel media with travel guidebooks have also picked up these narratives and reproduced them for global audiences. Both narratives evoke imagery and language of Costa Rica’s believed exceptional character. While whiteness in some examples is less overtly positioned as a part of Costa Rica’s character, by focusing on cultural repertoires coming out of the Central Valley, particularly the glorification of coffee culture and rural democracy traditions, the cultural significance of internal racial others is downplayed and their role as active and present participants in Costa Rican national identity. When these groups are highlighted and marketed they are framed as culturally separate from Costa Rica, as something completely different from Costa Rica’s identity, something exotic. Whereas, some travel magazine and guidebook outlets, like National Geographic Traveler and the Lonely Planet, have critiqued Costa Rica’s exceptionality it is usually for environmental reasons and less for cultural while still reproducing national narratives. Furthermore, the typical exclusion of ethnic minority destinations in Costa Rica, e.g., indigenous reserves and the southern Atlantic coast, from tour packages maintains their limited visibility in
attracting international tourism flows in multiple distribution channels and beneficial participation in the global economy. Exclusion is not a passive strategy. Thus, the marketing strategies of national tour operators, the ICT, and international media outlets, including travel guidebooks mostly excludes *guanacastecos* and Afro-Costa Ricans from the tourism global value chain.

### 4.3.1 Global and National Tour Operator Itineraries

The southern Atlantic coast and trips to indigenous reserves are generally not marketed by global tour operators and when they are marketed by national tour operators the accommodation offerings given are based in Puerto Viejo, the predominantly foreign-run southern Caribbean town. Furthermore, national tour operators in describing Costa Rica people emphasize the rural democracy thesis and European descent, and a sense of difference of Caribbean peoples from Costa Rica. Of the fourteen global tour operators highlighted in Table 10 none offer travel destinations to the southern Limón region. Even when the Atlantic coast is offered as a destination option for Turtuguero it is framed around difference. Apple Vacations write, “designed for those travelers wishing to experience a totally different part of Costa Rica this tour takes you to the Caribbean Coast with its distinct culture and cuisine. Visit a banana plantation and Tortuguero National Park, home to the green turtle” (Apple Vacations 2011). Apple is also the only global operator that advertises a visit to an Indian reserve.

Environmental, nature-based itineraries, including beach offerings, are the dominant group tours and FIT travel offerings that are sold to international tourists by
global and national operators, but they center initially around key destinations close to the Central Valley including Volcano Poás, Volcano Arenal, and Monteverde, than branch out to beach destinations in Manuel Antonio National Park in Puntarenas, the northwest beaches in Guanacaste and Tortuguero National Park in northern Limón. Descriptions of lush tropical rainforests, cloud forests, diverse flora and fauna, and the vast array of national parks and private reserves and pristine beaches are marketed to the potential visitor. A common itinerary tour option for Costa Rica follows the eight-day Costa Rican tour from Mayflower Tours that begins in San José where they visit Poás Volcano and a local coffee estate. From there they go to Arenal Volcano and visit the national park and Caño Negro National Wildlife Refuge and end their tour at Manuel Antonio National Park along the Pacific coast in Puntarenas. Typical substitutions for this itinerary change Manuel Antonio for a Guanacaste coast destination such as Papagayo, Flamingo, or Tamarindo. Global tour operators that heavily market all-inclusive hotel vacation packages, such as Mark Travel, Apple Vacations, and GoGo highly market the large foreign-ran beach hotel offerings.

National tour operators generally market more varied tour options than global tour operators because they have only one destination, Costa Rica, and most all of them include some market options for the south Caribbean. Their offerings mostly focus on Puerto Viejo, except for three, CR Excellence, Costa Rican Trails, and Camino Travel who market Cahuita. CR Excellence describes in greatest detail the offerings of the southern Caribbean. They write:
The Caribbean side is renowned for its variety of aquatic ecosystems and its different colored sandy beaches, an ideal setting for varied aquatic and ecotourism . . . The fascinating Afro-Caribbean culture a combination of Jamaican, Italian, and Chinese immigrants, predominates in this region and fills the atmosphere with fragrances, tropical rhythms and brilliant colors which mixes with the daily work of many of the inhabitants on the banana plantations and the ports of Limon and Moin . . . along this area you can observe small groups of houses among the plantations of cassava, annatto, and bananas as well as a vast number of beautiful beaches on the southern part of the coast . . . (CR Excellence 2009).

Camino Travel also highlights the south part of Limón when they write:

If there is a region in Costa Rica where a local atmosphere can be sensed all around, it definitely has to be the Caribbean coast. It has a particular history of immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and other West Indies Islands, as well as Chinese descendants who came as workers during the height of the banana exports, when the railroad [from] San José [to] Limón was built. Furthermore, unlike other Central and Latin American countries only 1% of Costa Rica’s population is indigenous most of which lives in the mountains of Talamanca . . . (Camino Travel 2011).

While these examples seem to position positive attributes about the Caribbean side both operators still market the difference of this part of the country. Camino Travel further writes about the region, “the culture in this area is completely different from the rest of the country; the Afro-Caribbean influence is reflected in the music, food and laid back lifestyle” (Camino Travel 2011); while CR Excellence writes, “Costa Rican culture is in many ways a reflection of its racial diversity. The predominant influence has long been European which is reflected in everything from the official language to the architecture of the country’s churches and other historical buildings.” The differences that are found in the Caribbean side were created due to a history of exclusion and separation from mainstream Central Valley dominant culture and the refusal to incorporate diverse cultural forms as national Costa Rican symbols.
Using a narrative of difference and separation to describe the southern Atlantic coast also serves to distant the region from the rural democracy thesis and exceptionalism that is used particularly by national tour operators to describe Costa Ricans. Costa Rican Trails links their exceptionalism with their Europeanness when describing Costa Rican “people.”

Ticos are open-minded, diverse, free, global, polite, courteous, calm, humble, hospitable, hard-working and highly educated . . . Costa Ricans are proud of their culture and their extraordinary natural richness that surrounds them. They are persistent in their religious convictions and very family oriented. Ticos are predominantly direct descendants of Spanish colonists. For its everlasting fortune, Costa Rica was the most neglected of colonial Central America because of the absence of mineral wealth (gold and silver) and abundant indigenous population. Therefore, colonists who arrived to Costa Rica were not looking for minerals or to exploit indigenous labor, but instead a nice and calm place to work and settle down with their families. They originated in one of the largest middle classes of America, farmer families with humble and peaceful attitudes. Costa Ricans are the result of a peaceful nation with a long democratic tradition (Costa Rican Trails 2011).

Even Costa Rican Excellence who markets the southern Caribbean the most advertises Costa Rican’s exceptionalism tied to their European settlers. They write:

What makes "Ticos" so different? This is a common question. The answer lies in the country’s history and culture. Costa Rica has a mostly peaceful past. From the very beginning, Costa Ricans have been exposed to little violence. During colonial times, it was one of the few parts of Latin America settled by people more interested in creating a pleasant place to live and start a family than in exploiting the indigenous people and their gold (CR Excellence 2011).

These common rural democracy narratives ignore the history of conflict and historical exclusionary practices of internal racial others in Costa Rica but serves as a powerful marketing tool for Costa Rica’s tourism industry while impacting those local destinations that are considered not part of this history.

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4.3.1.1 National Tour Operator Attitudes about Tamarindo and Cahuita

National tour operators in the Central Valley give various perspectives regarding their attitudes toward Tamarindo and Cahuita. Interestingly, Tamarindo is framed with negative terms as overdeveloped and lacking in planning while Cahuita and *el Caribe*, the Atlantic coast, was commonly referred to as one of the most beautiful, if not most beautiful, locations in the country and one their favorite places. The national operators, however, also stated that they send few visitors to the region. This discernible inconsistency between their personal attitudes about the region and business marketing choices is explained by the narratives they use of crime, underdevelopment, and poverty to describe Limón. Crime is too high and locals are perceived unable to meet the accommodations needs and skills to compete in the industry whereas the foreigners who are there (in Puerto Viejo) do but they are considered to be a *different kind of foreigner* from those in the Pacific coast. Foreigners who want a different style of life rather than to make a profit. Tamarindo, in contrast, and the Pacific coast’s problem of real estate development and environmental contamination in general, is considered a threat to Costa Rica’s ecotourism.

One national tour operator stated about Tamarindo and the larger issues of Guanacaste:

For me, and this is like a secondary effect of tourism. Of the form of tourism that has been accomplished or generated that gives an impact to level of real estate. Because these tourists that come here as tourists later they want to come and buy their condominiums and buy their things and then we enter in a very dangerous game that threatens the image of the country that threatens the image of the green nature. Including you place to see the ICT slogan for many years is, “No artificial
ingredients,” true, this is not ([My translation] Nicholas, interview by author, 9 October 2008).

The same operator went on to explain that due to guanacastecos “humble” origins they did not understand tourism’s potential and squandered their money after they were paid in comparison to another area in Costa Rica, La Fortuna (an area just outside the Central Valley), where the people had “pride.”

Guanacaste, we say, are zones where the people are humble, we say, little level of education . . . the people that their scale of necessity before was very short; they fished and with this lived. They lived on a little ranch, but had their land. Suddenly, the foreigner arrived and offers to buy and then these people that never has had money . . . This money they didn’t use intelligently. They took it. Spent it. Do you understand me? Then they became more poor . . . La Fortuna is a different case. La Fortuna is a zone, is a progressive zone. The people have a lot of pride ([My translation] Nicholas, interview by author, 9 October 2008).

Cahuita and el Caribe, in comparison, while liked and was not described as being anti ecotourism, was perceived to be lacking in knowledge of tourism services and marginalized by the government and people in power in the region. Safety concerns were also believed to impact the region. One national tour operator explained how he “loves” the zone but “unions” are ruining development. He also distinguishes that this is a local problem and not representative of the country.

I love it. This is the zone with the prettiest beaches of Costa Rica. The problem that this province has is there is an ignorance of what is tourism and there is a problem of the unions, of what the people want, the manipulation of the local people, because the development that they had wanted was for few people. The people that is in power wants the riches for only a few. Like that, to some, no interest that the province sinks in poverty, in garbage. To some they are not bothered in that all, they have some form to gain something to do little, work less, and not care about the rest. It is a local problem not a problem of the country ([My translation] Daniel, interview by author, 14 January 2009).
Another tour operator depicted the lack of acceptable accommodation offerings and services, along with the importance of “security.”

Keep in mind the quality of service. We prefer not getting involved, because if I recommend you a very low budget cabina and you have complaints, I don’t know. We are responsible for all the recommendations, if something happens, we are going to take care of it. And we guarantee to our customers that they are getting a very good service . . . Limón we don’t recommend because of security. Cahuita is the same (Norman, interview by author, 4 September 2008).

Another operator mentioned drugs affecting Cahuita, “There, if always one has said, there is a lot of drugs, a lot of drugs. Prostitution, I have not heard, but yes a lot of drugs there in Cahuita” ([My translation] Quentin, interview by author, 17 September 2008).

In their discussions about Cahuita and the Atlantic coast when the region was praised it was the natural beauty and not the history and culture of locals. Only one operator connected the underdevelopment of the region and the neglect from the national government and the problem of “prejudices” even comparing it to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

I feel that also the government has not give the support it needs, true, despite the potential, it has a lot of potential. There is a parallelism there is a little what is able to be in Limón and was able to be in New Orleans . . . This, I believe that perhaps the same prejudice, the prejudice that [is] dangerous, that there is a lot of drugs, of education that is not good, a lot of those foreign and national investors had not, did not have interest in to go and make large real estate developments ([My translation] Nicholas, interview by author, 9 October 2008).

Regardless, of the national tour operator’s personal beliefs about their dislike of the Pacific coast and praised beauty of the Atlantic coast they continue to promote and offer package offerings to the Pacific and market their hotels as accommodation offerings in the value chain. Despite their esteem for the region’s beauty, historical national
development neglect and racialized notions of skill sets has left *cahuiteños* unable to compete as tourism service providers because they are framed similarly to *gaunacasteco* workers as having “*menos mano de obra calificada*” “few qualified workers.”

*Guanacastecos*, however, are not the tourism business owners and managers in Tamarindo as many *cahuitenос* are in Cahuita. So, national tour operators send their clients to Tamarindo options that are foreign-ran. When providers are used in south Limón it is to Puerto Viejo where almost all the businesses are foreign-owned even if they are considered to be a different type of foreigner.

The attitudes about Tamarindo and Cahuita from national tour operators are representative of the complicated ways of addressing ethnoracial inequality as it pertains to regional tourism development. They use narratives that acknowledge historical neglect, and even for some prejudices, without a full self-reflection of how their own marketing strategies and beliefs continue to recreate it. By using marketing imagery and language that highlights Costa Rica’s environmental wonders and not on cultural racial diversity in tourism products; by lauding the rural democratic exceptionalism that is Costa Rica (separating it from the Atlantic coast which is perceived to be dangerous and undeveloped); and by working with predominantly foreign-ran and owned businesses in Cahuita and Tamarindo that reinforces the notion that *guanacastecos* and *cahuiteños* lack the appropriate skills to understand tourism, all serves to create barriers for Costa Rica’s internal racial others from fully benefitting from Costa Rica’s participation in the tourism global value chain. Because national tour operators are important gatekeepers via their
relationship as incoming agents and receptive operators with global tour operators, if and why they market and include particular Costa Rican tourism communities in their tour packages, and particularly the small businesses that are based there, may explain why they are left out of and affected by the Costa Rican packages of global tour operators.

4.3.2 Costa Rican Tourism Board

Chapter II Article 4 of the ICT states the main purpose of the Tourism Board is to increase the tourism to the country which includes promoting and developing an advertising campaign abroad “so that the country is known” to best attract international tourists. There are multiple marketing platforms and joint-marketing initiatives with private businesses that the ICT uses to attract international visitors. Print advertising campaigns, international travel fair promotion, and Web site development are three of the most heavily employed. In 1999, the country spent US $6.3 million in international promotions. After the Ministry of Finance authorized the ICT’s ability to put their surplus funding toward advertising, between 2006 and 2007, they had US $20 million to spend in 2008 (TCRN 2010). The surplus represents the funds received from the new airline tax levied on tourists that replaced the 3 percent additional sales tax (total 13 percent), which was applied to the daily rate of hotels.

Since initiating their promotional campaigns the ICT has tried to harness their image as “a poster child of ecotourism” (Honey 1999) and entice nature and soft adventure tourists mostly from the United States and Canada. With their first major advertisement campaign, “No Artificial Ingredients,” that began in 1994, to the
promotional materials used abroad, and the images and language used on their Web site, a nature-based experience that combines sun and beach became the “central and unifying signifier in a multifaceted, niche marketed industry” (Frohlick and Johnson 2011:1096). With its focus on nature there was an additional emphasis the “No Artificial Ingredients” campaign also wanted to position as well: ecological tourism in Costa Rica went with peace and stability particularly in comparison to the rest of the region. The nature-based product complemented the social peace of the human environment (Araya 2005). They went hand-in-hand to represent Costa Rica’s exceptionalism. In their analysis of the campaign Frohlick and Johnston wrote that the imagery in the posters represented “spaces of ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ nature” of “gendered, sexed, and raced bodies, nearly always in terms of ‘whiteness’, which serve[d] to reproduce the ‘white national mythology’ and erase bodies of color from the landscape and from history” (2011:1097).

Nature as the dominant imagery evoked while cultural (non Central Valley) tourism products are downplayed is also used in the promotion of Costa Rica at international travel fairs. At an international travel fair I attended, Costa Rica hosted a “coffee break” where they paid the conference for the opportunity to “host” the coffee, tea, cookies and scones for two days during breaks between marketplace promotions. During coffee breaks travel fair attendees sat at the tables in a salon and continued to network while others were in appointments. The ICT’s promotional materials consisted of two posters of the “No Artificial Ingredients” campaign and business cards from ICT representatives and selected national tour operators in the Central Valley who the ICT
worked with on joint-marketing initiatives. Additional materials were miniature Café Britt liqueur bottles. In comparison to other countries’ coffee breaks, such as the Netherlands whose representatives actively mingled with attendees and set-up a picture cutout display where people could get their pictures taken with the famous Dutch tulip flower background, the ICT’s coffee break was a bit bland and relatively ineffective in promoting Costa Rica. Nevertheless, the limited materials represented the nature imagery of the “No Artificial Ingredients” campaign rather than any form of Costa Rican cultural diversity.

When culture was highlighted though written materials and imagery on their Web site it was the *tico* culture of rural democracy and the peace and stability narratives that were drawn from the folk history and rural democracy national identity of Costa Ricans. Cultural symbols that embodied this narrative such as coffee, oxcarts that transported coffee, and other artisan products coming from the Central Valley area of Sarchi that further depicted “the country folk” of yeoman pastoral life, were marketed and reproduced for consumption in the global marketplace. These limited cultural forms represented the chosen Costa Rican national identity symbols (Wherry 2007). Café Britt, in addition to the oxcarts of Sarchi, represents the marketing of Costa Rica’s yeoman coffee past at its strongest.

Grupo Britt is a tourism juggernaut in Costa Rica. Once you exit your international flight at Juan Santamaria international airport the Britt Shop entices visitors in to discover their coffee, chocolate, and artisan wares and get the first feel for Costa
Rican culture. They have been operating in the airport since winning the concession bid in 2001 and currently have over 77 gift shops in Latin America. You can find Café Britt coffee being sold at hotels all throughout Costa Rica and their popular Britt coffee tour that is marketed by hotels, cruise lines, and tour operators is centered on the reenactment of the traditional yeoman coffee farmer in Costa Rica in the nineteenth century. Actors in traditional dress who have phenotypes of European descendants explain the coffee planting, harvesting, and roasting stages; and “coffee lover” tours include a trip through the Central Valley coffee town of Heredia to visit one of its roasting plants. This is the dominant culture tourism form that international tourists have instant access to. With Café Britt Costa Rica’s rural democracy thesis comes to life and is reproduced for twenty-first century international tourism consumption.

Vandegrift (2007:127) notes in her work that the ICT “in the marketing of the nation’s citizens to international tourists Costa Rica’s political and cultural citizens are by definition white.” The “people” section on their Web site until very recently read, “you may be surprised by the number of fair-skinned people you’ll see in the country, especially in the Central Valley. In the low lands, more people are mestizos – that is a mixture of European and indigenous blood – whereas most along the Caribbean coast belongs to an African lineage, and much of the Talamanca mountain range is inhabited by full blooded Indians of various tribes.” As Vandegrift (2007:127) argued, even though diversity may be featured in this statement, the emphasis is “overwhelmingly on
whiteness” and “whiteness is firmly linked to the country’s economic and cultural achievements” based in the Central Valley.

The ICT’s Web site “people” section has recently changed and now reads:

Costa Rica’s richness also lies on the cultural diversity of our people. Throughout our history, the indigenous population of pre-Hispanic origins have been added movements of immigrants, which settled in these lands, making it their home. Populations of European origin, mainly Spaniards, persons of African and Asian ascendance, as well as people from different places of the American continent have interacted among them, enriching the cultural backgrounds in the process. Currently, besides the predominant half-breed component, there are ethnical-national groups and colonies of immigrants recovering their particular cultural heritage: African descendants, Chinese, Hebrew, Lebanese, Italian, etc.; as well as the indigenous populations of the Bribri, Cabecar, Maleku, Teribe, Boruca, Ngöbe, Huetar, and Chorotega (ICT 2011).

This more inclusive description highlighting the mixed, “half-breed” component, may not translate well from Spanish, but does mark an important shift from the former “people” narratives the ICT employed. This change, however, is very recent (after I returned from the field in 2009) and limited in representing change. For decades the ICT emphasized Costa Rican whiteness and Europeanness, something that is still reproduced by the literature and materials coming from the national tour operators who often take marketing symbolism from the ICT, and if you look at the photographic images prominently in display on the Web site under “About Costa Rica” the only non nature-based images are the cultural symbols from the Central Valley – cattle parade with oxcarts in Escazu, an up-close picture of an artisan painting an oxcart, and the central park and church in Alajuela. Even with sections that highlight Limón and a new emphasis on indigenous connections that make Costa Rica unique the mainstream marketing form by the ICT is of
nature and rural democracy to the detriment of the diverse people in and beyond Central Valley’s borders.

4.3.3 Travel Guidebooks and Magazines

Travel guidebooks and magazines are additional marketing sources for travelers to learn about Costa Rica. Most of the magazine descriptions are centered solely on the environment, not culture, with limited overt references to Costa Rica’s exceptionalism narrative. While mainstream non-travel media sources such as Forbes have highlighted Costa Rica’s social democracy narrative the top American travel magazines such as National Geographic Traveler, Travel and Leisure, and Conde Nast were more nuanced in their analysis of the country’s exceptionalism, but mostly from an environmental emphasis. Overall, an analysis of the travel magazines point to how when quasi critiques are used it is from an environmental perspective, challenging some of Costa Rica’s green credentials, and that particular Costa Rican providers are given exposure in their pages. One tour operator, American-owned Costa Rican Expeditions, is highlighted frequently. Moreover, Conde Nast is the only magazine that provides a substantive description of tourism in Costa Rica’s racial minority communities in a thoughtful evaluation of tourism in Central America’s Caribbean coast. Popular travel guidebooks, in contrast, commonly describe Costa Rica’s rural democratic narratives and their European descendant backgrounds in overt language in their introduction sections on Costa Rica.

National Geographic Traveler has a strong reputation in the industry for promoting environmental, nature, and responsible tourism. Its articles on Costa Rica
have focused on the business structure of the industry, an evaluation of their environmental position with tourism, and in recommending attractions and providers. It has offered a stronger critique of Costa Rica’s environmental image that is projected to the world. In a 2009 article on their sixth annual survey of destination stewardship, Costa Rica was given a “middle-of-the-road” rating due to what they label as the “large scale resorts” on the Pacific coast and “growing crime” (Walljasper 2009); and in a 2008 piece about Costa Rica “trying to restore its image as the most eco-savvy place to visit” the journalist pointed to the “yes-no-yes-no” answers travelers find when they are evaluating the country on ecotourism indicators. In their “Geosavvy Tips” section they recommend community tourism routes travelers can use including options that include visiting indigenous reserves (Tourtellot 2008). While in the latter example they recommended exploring tourism attractions promoted by Costa Rica’s community tourism association (ACTUAR), cultural tourism products regarding Afro-Costa Rican destinations are not highlighted. Furthermore, they prominently market Costa Rica Expeditions, which is owned by the American Michael Kaye who is considered “one of the founding fathers of ecotourism.” The company was granted the title of one of the world’s fifty best-guided expeditions and Kaye is a constant source used for articles on Costa Rica’s tourism industry.

*Travel and Leisure* also recommended Costa Rica Expeditions and the hospitality facilities they own in Corcovado and Tortuguero. The magazine also wrote about the many “shades of green” to Costa Rica’s ecotourism as *National Geographic Traveler* did;
but in a 1999 article Costa Rica’s exceptionalism was fully promoted. They write, “Costa Rica is the science geek of Central America. It has the highest literacy rate and standard of living in the region. While its neighbors were fighting civil wars, Costa Rica – the first country ever to constitutionally abolish its army in 1949 – was studying moss and saving sea turtles. It could be Al Gore’s poster child” (Theroux 1999). Conde Nast Traveler was the only travel magazine out of the big three that gave a long and substantive profile, of not only Costa Rica’s African descendant population, but of all Central America’s. In the author’s boat expedition of the Central American Caribbean coast she describes the “coastal culture” whose ancestry include indigenous, West Indian immigrants, and mixed enslaved and indigenous groups such as the Miskito and Garifuna (Humes 2007). The author wrote about the paradox of international travels from the global North being able to visit these destinations while the locals cannot leisurely travel, and about the threats communities have toward preserving their heritage and rights. Although she did not address the discrimination many communities face or their challenges of being incorporated into the tourism industry she gave them a presence in a travel media form where they are typically neglected.

When I examined a sample of twenty texts (1990-2006) from four popular travel brand books: the Lonely Planet, Frommer’s, Let’s Go!, and a miscellaneous travel guidebook category, I found that travel guidebooks, even the more critical guidebook brand the Lonely Planet, all highlight Costa Rica’s rural democratic past and the dominance of whiteness in representing Costa Rican people. This emphasis in the
introductory sections of the texts, set the tone for the remainder of the guide, and served to position Costa Rica as country more similar than not to the global North – in development, values, and racial background – making it a safe and secure destination for travelers.

The *Lonely Planet* wrote in the introductory section that introduced the theme of the book that in Costa Rica “there is the added attraction of a country which has long had the most stable political climate in Latin America . . . with democratic elections since the nineteenth century” (Rachowiecki 1991:10) after it mentioned that most Costa Ricans are white. *Let’s Go!* also wrote in their introductory section, “since its independence in 1848, Costa Rica has been one of the most egalitarian and democratic in the region. The adoption of a republic form of government and the abolition of the army under the constitution of 1949 have spared Costa Rica the violence and political instability which has plagued other Central and South American countries” (1995:627). This statement was written after the writer stated that most *ticos* are of European descent.

*Frommer’s* and independent travel writer Paul Glassman makes this move even more direct when they wrote, “peace and democracy have become of tantamount importance to Costa Ricans . . . Costa Rica’s 100 years of nearly uninterrupted democracy have helped to make it the most stable economy in Central America. This stability and adherence to a democratic process are a source of great pride to Costa Ricans” (Greenspan 1997:61) immediately following the introductory statement that “96% of the population is of European or Spanish descent, and it’s not at all surprising to
see blonde Costa Ricans” (58). Paul Glassman (1998:83) wrote, “I like to tell my friends in America del Norte that Costa Rica is like a Carmen Miranda movie: Latin America without the downside. The visitor is relatively unharassed by peddlers and beggars, and doesn’t stick out like a sore thumb, as in some neighboring countries.” For Glassman, international tourists do not stand out because they are perceived to share the same racial phenotype.

The most popular conceptualization to address Costa Rican rural democracy narratives of exceptionalism was with the use of the metaphors of “oasis” and “tranquility” to describe Costa Rica. Frommer’s wrote, “bordered by the troubled nations of Nicaragua and Panama, Costa Rica is a relative sea of tranquility in a region of turmoil” (Greenspan 1997: 4). A later edition of Frommer’s continued this metaphor with, “Costa Rica is, and has been for many years, a relative sea of tranquility in a region that has been troubled by turmoil for centuries” (Greenspan 2000:292). The tranquility and oasis metaphors were also used with independent writer Erin Foley who wrote, “the small country of Costa Rica stands out among its neighbors as an oasis of tranquility, democracy, and education” (1990:3). This sentence was the first sentence of Foley’s text. Lonely Planet wrote that Costa Rica is “a stronghold of peace in a region torn by strife” (Rachowiecki 2002:7). The rural democracy narratives and frames serve to position Costa Rica as an advanced, developed, and [white] country to visit and positions the country separate from their negatively racialized neighboring countries. Through the
marketing strategies Costa Rica is positively racialized and distinguished “in the global hierarchy of nations” (Joseph 2000:346).

4.4 Bringing the Global to the National?

Who controls image creation and destination knowledge; who has access to global markets; and who decides which suppliers are used down the value chain demonstrate the influence of global and national tour operators and the ICT in shaping the value chain and creating practices of ethnoracial stratification. Other organizations in Costa Rica, however, are attempting to create a more diverse image of the country and are bringing the global buyers to the national level. The Asociación Costarricense de Profesionales en Turismo (ACOPROT) holds an annual travel fair in Costa Rica bringing global buyers to the country. ACOPROT’s members represent all of the regional tourism associations, including in the Atlantic coast, so the images and narratives they position on Costa Rica are broader than ones that are seen at global travel fairs. The global buyers that visit are smaller, specialized, and also include regional actors. Local participation at these events, still, nonetheless, is focused on larger providers and less on the small business owned by ethnoracial minorities. Until there is a large venue that proactively seeks out these businesses and provides access to global markets there will continue to be barriers for local ethnoracial groups to gain direct global access. Moreover, until international service is judged in a more inclusive fashion and beyond the perception of global and national actors, guanacastecos and Afro-Costa Ricans will continue to be characterized with racialized skill assessments and stereotypical regional assumptions.
5. Desarrollo Hormiga and Globalizing Gentrification – Tamarindo, Guanacaste

Within the five hour drive to Tamarindo from San José you inhale the flowing fields of green vastness and cattle farms, the wild flowers that line the road, and the relief of finally seeing street signs; and exhale as you reach Tamarindo – and try not to choke – traffic jams, stray dogs, and never ending dust in the dry season. What you do not realize at the time is that you are also exhaling – without wanting to – cheap bus fare, reasonably priced food, and the normalcy of Costa Rican run businesses, workers, and leaders. The borders around the Central Valley quadruple threat of San José, Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela are more than geographical demarcations. The surrounding provinces each maintain their own distinct histories, identities, and diverging connections to the Central Valley. Guanacaste is riddled with personal back-stories of migration to and from the Central Valley, between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and the presence of the soaking weight of American, European, and South American foreignness that is gripping the beach communities along the Pacific coast. These linkages – international, national, and local – paint Tamarindo with its broad multilayered intentions in complex variations that are not easily labeled, understood, and placed in a tiny, neat organizational box.

Tamarindo is a beach town encompassing Playa Tamarindo and Playa Langosta in the Golden Coast of the Guanacaste coastline. It is part of a beach development surge along the Guanacaste coast that also includes others like Flamingo, Coco, and the Papagayo Peninsula. In all of these towns we can see the bustling growth of
predominantly foreign managed resort tourism projects led by groups such as JW Marriott, Four Seasons, RIU Hotels, Barceló, and the Diría Group. The construction of luxurious resort getaways is only surpassed by its sister form of development in real estate, condominium construction. Condos reaching over seven stories high (tall for this small town) in various stages of completion are forcefully making its presence known through the ubiquitous sound of cement mixing, scaffolding arrangements, and worker shouts. Add to the mix the peppering of smaller hotels, local tour operators, restaurants, kitsch souvenir shops, dust clouds engulfing the air, and the local shirtless beach drug dealers and you have a town deeply entrenched in change in what a recent Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) report labeled _desarrollo hormiga_, ant-like development that is “intense” and “chaotic” (Honey et al. 2010:7).

Change is thrust forward by the hope for piling tourism dollars and an intense migration of Americans, Europeans, and some South Americans who are chasing a version of paradise that includes both a new lifestyle and income generator. Ever since Pat and “Wingunt” surfed the Tamarindo waves at Witches Rock and Olly’s Point in 1994 with Robert August, the original surf globetrotter, in the sequel to the classic ode to surfing documentary _The Endless Summer_, foreigners have increasingly come to this once sleepy Guanacaste town to experience their own version of an endless summer. The rodeo lifestyle, beautiful girls, and bad roads as documented in the movie may still exist but the romanticized Costa Rica images displayed in the movie are confined to the surrounding communities of Villarreal and Santa Rosa and the other small towns within
the territory of the Santa Cruz Municipality. These *guanacasteco* towns now serve as the home to the low-skilled labor pool that travel into Tamarindo on the 6:00 a.m. bus to cook the meals, clean the rooms, and landscape the yards of tourists and global North immigrants.

Tamarindo, like other small beach communities along the coast, was historically isolated from the Central Valley. Guanacaste’s racial background is connected to Nicaragua, which it was a part of until 1824, the pre-Columbian indigenous group the Chorotega, and enslaved Africans and their *mulato* descendants (Edelman 1992). *Guanacastecos* who lived in the area mostly worked as *ganaderos* on cattle ranches or in agriculture production, and according to one American immigrant, the region “was the poorest and most backward part of the entire country” (Caleb, interview by author, 25 January 2009). Poverty still cloaks the region. According to a study by CEPIA, 365 out of 1,160 children who attend school in eight local towns live in poverty (Deweer 2007).

In Tamarindo two families are considered the founders, with two hotels Cabinas Tamarindo now owned and operated by Grupo Diria, and Cabinas Dolly (torn down by the Municipality), operating as the original hubs. The first “developers” of Tamarindo were *meseteños* from the Central Valley who bought property and small homes for vacation purposes. A local *guanacasteco* community leader, don Leandro, stated that this was when the first white people came (in Costa Rica’s race history *meseteños* are “white”) and that originally locals looked up to them, “White people were in the Central Valley and they were very admired by *guanacastecos* of the village” ([My translation]...
don Leandro, interview by author, 20 January 2009). This example is representative of the complex feelings guanacastecos had as racial internal others in perceived white Costa Rica.

From its inception, Tamarindo was never in the control of guanacastecos and an ethnoracial division existed between the more indígena and black-looking guanacastecos and the perceived blancos of the Meseta Central. This helped to create an illusion when tourism grew that Tamarindo was a blank slate to be taken. Locals who did not have the capacity to judge the value of their own property or did not have the ability to maintain their land found the offers for their property very tempting, as one Costa Rican stated, “They didn’t think for the future” ([My translation] Felipe, interview by author, 18 November 2008) while meseteños, along with the foreigners knocking at the door, had the ability and means. Costa Rican author Miguel Salguero’s 1974 prophecy of the “gringo invasion” in the national newspaper La Nación had come to light (Kimitich 2006) and in the process the racialized space of Guanacaste was transformed to whiteness by a new form of blanqueamiento processes for the twenty-first century.

5.1 Tour Operator Global Value Chain in Tamarindo and an Ethnoracial Division of Ownership and Labor

The ant-like development to the tourism industry in Tamarindo looks like something that you might imagine San Francisco, California did in the nineteenth century before roads, services, and laws caught up to it. Like nineteenth century San Francisco, Tamarindo excels at business, albeit tourism instead of gold prospecting, but exhibiting
the same mélange of different ethnoracial groups vying for prosperity. The tour operator
global value chain consists of all of the tourism businesses in Tamarindo because all of
the businesses in some capacity sell a tour or are suppliers for a tour package. From the
Tamarindo side of the global value chain that connects to San José and the United States
highlighted in Figure 3, hotels, local arrangers, excursion tours, and guides are the most
prominent in the community. There are four main distribution channels connecting
global and national firms along the value chain I explore: global tour operators that book
as part of their packages directly with foreign owned-managed large and boutique hotels
(managed brand travel, retail-tour travel, and specialized package travel); and incoming
agents/national tour operators in San José that also book with the foreign owned-managed
large and boutique hotels (destination-led travel). Inside Tamarindo, I also examine the
series of governance relationships that connect local firms indirectly to the global and
national firms, for example, excursion operators that receive a booking from a large hotel,
and then they recommend that same client to a local independent guided tour or another
excursion provider.
5.1.1 A Kaleidoscope of Firms

The local accommodation segment consists of three types of hotels, large hotels ranging typically over a hundred rooms, boutique hotels that have around fifteen to forty rooms, and small hotels, which consist of youth hostels and *cabinas*. There are five large hotels in the greater Tamarindo community. The Diría and Barceló are located in central Tamarindo and Langosta, the one street neighborhood in Tamarindo, while Reserva Conchal, Hacienda Pinilla and the JW Marriott are located just outside of the main “town” area. These hotels provide the largest aggregate number of workers but between
them represent contesting visions, and reputations, for what local tourism should entail. Four out of the five embrace the “enclave model” of tourism accommodation that includes real estate properties and retail and restaurant offerings.

The Diría has a long history in the community. It is one of the oldest hotels dating back to the late 1960s. Then known as cabinas Tamarindo, locals remember queuing outside the hotel to use the one phone in town in the mosquito-drenched night air. Wolfgang Gollas, a German businessman, bought the hotel in the 1980s and he started the Diría Group with an initial investment in 1992 of US $9 million for a tower of units and a building of six floors of 36 units (Sandoval 2006). Diría went on to become the largest property owner in the area spearheading and proliferating the massive development growth. Since that early 1990s investment, by 2006 the cost per square meter of ocean property increased from US $15 per square meter to $950 (Montoya 2006). The hotel sits at the center of town on an overcrowded, congested street along the beach while its condo projects are across the street going up the slight, curving hillside. In random, open green spaces in the town you see Future Quality Development Grupo Diria signs all over (see Figure 4).
Figure 4: Grupo Diría Development

The Diría has the most questionable reputation in the community. For many it personified all that was wrong with uncontrolled development as it was accused of wastewater dumping in the ocean, erecting overcrowded beach buildings, and is the ultimate bully of small businesses. But a Costa Rican hotel manager stated that “the hotel never closed its doors to the community” and it was actively involved in the guanacasteco towns that surround Tamarindo, particularly by fueling employment for its over 160 workers ([My translation] Pepe, interview by author 24 November 2008). Almost everyone you meet in Tamarindo has a “Diría story” about how their business was personally affected by the hotel, how the owner or staff treated them, or its perceived lack of community accountability. As you walk in the lobby of the hotel onto its open
floor plan you immediately see the royal blue pool with lounge chairs of reclining tourists, Costa Rican employees in a range of tropical print shirts wondering around, and the great Pacific Ocean, so close at high tide, you literally can almost step into the ocean upon leaving the grounds. You are struck with the impression that the future of Tamarindo may lie in the future of the hotel. It can either fall headfirst into the ocean or retreat before the last wave breaks.

Interestingly, while the Diría is the biggest developer and mover and shaker in the town, Barceló is the larger of the two with hundreds of rooms compared to Diría’s 182, and has sprawling grounds at the tip of Playa Langosta. The hotel is part of the larger Barceló Hotel & Resort group from Spain that has over 185 hotels in 17 countries. The group also operates a series of hundreds of travel agents in over 23 countries. Barceló Langosta Beach is the fourth hotel in Costa Rica with one in Tambor and two in San José. They are also in the construction phases of two more five star hotels in Costa Rica in Jacó and Santa Cruz. The company has Premium, Barceló and Barceló Comfort brands. Costa Rica is one in five countries that the company has official travel agencies that are owned by the company in addition to having six franchise travel agency offices. Barceló Viajes division consolidated further by combining Vacaciones Barceló and Vacaciones Barceló Destination Services tour operator segments with the retail form of Barceló Viajes.

Barceló Langosta Beach is an all-inclusive hotel where food, activities around the hotel, and accommodation are all included. When tourists arrive at the hotel, and are
driven up its half-circular driveway and greeted with the open lobby and quasi Olympic figure eight shaped pool and numerous thatch huts, they are stepping into a vacation that centers on one compound, one complex of activity, separated, geographically and psychologically, from the greater Tamarindo community even though it is literally just down the road. Hacienda Pinilla and Reserva Conchal, on the other hand, are miles away from town. They are complete enclave travel experiences where residential living and tourism getaways are tucked away behind gated doors. As you drive north from Tamarindo you go through the guanacasteco community, Huacas, then approach Reserva Conchal. The first thing you see are rolling hills that are separated from the roads by wooden-fenced barriers erected for the purpose of exclusion but with contemporary aesthetics and ranch style charm. The gate separates the Reserve from the rest of the world and once you are permitted access and begin your ascent to the main offices you are hit hard by amazing Brasilito Bay vistas that easily take your breath away. This exclusive community houses panoramic and terrace homes and condominium offerings and a series of amenities, clubhouse, golf course, restaurants, and quasi private beaches on its 2,300 acres. The property appears so majestic it seems as if you stepped into a fairytale in the tropics, and for about a second, paying close to a million U.S. dollars for a condo does not seem too unreasonable.

Reserva Conchal is owned by the Costa Rican-based Florida Ice & Farm Co, a holding company, whose subsidiary, Florida Inmobiliaria, runs the property. Florida Ice & Farm has an interesting history. It was started by the Lindo Morales family from
Limón who were English born Jewish immigrants from Jamaica who began an ice hauling business that eventually turned them into one of the most elite families in Costa Rica also owning the ubiquitous Imperial Costa Rican beer. They went into a management agreement with Sol & Meliá Hotels & Resorts\(^1\) to house the first five star hotel in Costa Rica, Paradisus Playa Conchal. Like Barceló it is another all-inclusive retreat managed as well by a Spanish company. The hotel offers the most suites in the area with 406. Sol & Meliá has over 300 hotels in 28 countries within a seven-hotel brand portfolio. Once a grand *finca ganadera*, Hacienda Pinilla although following the resort, gated community feel of Reserva Conchal, markets low-density buildings with stand-alone homes that subsume hacienda and Spanish colonial architecture. It is owned by Grupo Real a subsidiary of the El Salvadorean Grupo Poma. Grupo Real owns hotels all throughout Central America and went into a rapid expansion in the late 1990s and early 2000s. There are two luxury hotels within the community, Hotel la Posada with sixty rooms and the JW Marriott Guanacaste Resort & Spa with 310 rooms. Grupo Real also has alliances with Intercontinental and Choice Hotels International. Of all the developers for large tourist areas, Hacienda Pinilla has the best reputation regarding community investment and ecological design. The original surf globetrotter, Robert August, has anointed the grounds with his charity golf events benefitting local *guanacasteco* communities.

\(^1\) After I left the field in 2009, Sol & Meliá stopped managing the property. It is now managed by the Westin Resort and Spa. The Westin is part of the brand portfolio of the American-owned Starwood Hotels and Resorts.
In addition to the large, mostly luxurious hotels there are numerous boutique and small hotels in the town. The difference between boutique and small is in the level of grandeur. Boutique hotels personify chic, stylish, somewhat luxuriousness but in a tropical low-key way and at a smaller budget than the big hotels. They represent hotels like Cala Luna, Hotel Capitán Suizo, Jardín del Eden, and Hotel Arco Iris where tourists drape across the sun kissed pools while swooping flora and the occasional howler monkey pay them a visit. Small hotels, on-the-other-hand, locally known as *cabinas* or are youth hostels, are budget accommodations and depending on the business can range from tourists sleeping on a hammock outside a room with no doors, to a single bed with a ceiling fan but no air conditioning, and only the traditional Latin and Caribbean accordion windows to keep local critters in or out.

The “local arranger” segment of Figure 3 represents companies who sell some form of tourism tour or experience but do not execute them. The segment also personifies the plethora of businesses and arrangements that sell tourism products. Almost anyone, the local guy on the street, the waiter at the dive watering hole; you name it; can get a tourist a tour. “Tour arrangers” are operators whose main business is to sell tour packages to either other parts of the country or local excursion activities like snorkeling, diving, or hiking. Their offices range from a desk with a limited cover on the side of the road, to air conditioned travel bonanza decorated offices in Florida style strip malls, with coffee and wide maps of Costa Rica enticing visitors in. The last three examples, transport companies, restaurants and *sodas*, and property management
facilities are local enterprises that inform their traditional customers – someone getting a ride to Liberia’s airport or taking a break to eat a Costa Rican *casado* at a *soda,* or the retired couple who are picking up the keys to the condo they just rented out for the month – that they can also accommodate their tour adventure or relaxation needs.

Excursion tours are the businesses that provide a specific tourism activity. In Tamarindo the most popular arranged tour activities are the two catamaran sailing boats, or the “booze cruises,” snorkeling or individual sailing, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) adventures including hiking and potential zip line escapades, and lastly surfing, the activity that put Tamarindo on the map and is now the defining excursion adventure where numerous surf providers help you capture your own Robert August *Endless Summer* experience. Mr. August himself just happens to have his own local surf shop, as well.

Guides are the last segment of the local value chain and this category typifies individual “sub contractors” who are self-employed entrepreneurs who are the “local” experts on flora and fauna and the town. Excursion providers or tour operators will contact them to arrange for the clients a night hike to see the majestic leatherback turtles, or for a private story telling boat ride through the estuary, or for individual surf lesson. These guides work independently, and if not introduced through potential tourists via excursion or other intermediary operators, they are seen out hustling for clients on the street. It seemed that everyone in town had a particular fondness for the neighborhood
A horseman, who would ride up to you shirtless on his somewhat mangy looking horse, flash a happy smile, and address you with all the pleasantries guanacasteco culture emits.

5.1.2 Ethnoracial Divisions

While the ecology of local firms tells one story about types of businesses that make up a burgeoning tourism industry, who exactly owns, manages, and operates those businesses is another. Broadly positing there are four ethnoracial groups in the community who constitute different ownership statuses and job categories within the industry. As I show in Figure 3 and Table 13, there is an acute ethnoracial division of labor with foreigners from America, Western Europe, Argentina, and Israel occupying ownership status of most tourism businesses. Costa Ricans from the Central Valley own some of the cabins and restaurants and sodas and they also fill a niche labor role as managers of foreign-owned hotels. They are also present as part of the property owner groups of hotels managed by foreign brands. Guanacastecos from the area province fill specific, mostly low-skilled service roles as waiters, in housekeeping, grounds keeping, as security guards, in retail, and as cooks. They also fill the role as area tour guide. Nicaraguans are mostly construction workers laboring on the multitude of condo development projects.
Table 13: Tamarindo Ethnoracial Divisions of Ownership and Labor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americans, Western Europeans, Argentineans, Israelis</td>
<td>Large and small business owners, Managers, Real estate, some workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meseteños</td>
<td>Small business owners, Managers, Real estate groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanacastecos</td>
<td>Wait staff, cleaning staff, domestics, gardeners, tour guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaraguans</td>
<td>Construction workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: interviews, field notes

In an interview with one of the few Costa Rican businesses owners, doña Nina, I asked about the concentration of foreign ownership in local businesses and the owner responded in a mix of Spanish and English, “Ellos están perdiendo toda . . . su tierra, tierra de su negocio . . . somos menos, we are less every time,” “They are losing everything . . . their land, the land of their business . . . we are less, we are less every time” ([My translation] doña Nina, interview by author, 26 January 2009). When we think of foreign direct investment the typical images that are in our minds are large companies with brand names like Intel, Toyota, and Wal-Mart. Rarely, does our mind wander to the image of a small beach hut with a wood sign outside advertising dive adventures, fishing extravaganzas, and a large helping of old-man-in-the-sea folklore of “I remember when no one was on this beach . . .” Tamarindo is the quintessential example of the growing chasing paradise phenomenon in tourism. This entails foreigners
from developed countries who originally travel to tourism communities to “get away,” or to emigrate and become “amenity migrants,” and choose to take their chances at running an excursion business, restaurant, bar, lodge, or real estate enterprise.

As Pera (2008) highlighted in her research on amenity migrants to Tamarindo, there is a dearth in the research on the happening as it pertains to developing countries and the wider consequences. She quoted Geoffrey who wrote that when these transmigrants choose “to settle in their own dreamland, the ideal land to be offered to their children or the ideal land in which to spend their old age, it seems that they often forget about the people who inhabit their dream” (quoted in Pera 2006:13). Although this group of “globalizing gentrifiers” embody the local entrepreneur business class and push land speculation to skyrocketed prices, (a 300 percent rise in coastal properties in Costa Rica in the early 2000s), they are not a homogenous group and they adopt diverse attitudes about their roles and responsibility to the community. Nevertheless, intentionality is not needed in order to push forward global gentrification and worker stratification. This pattern follows many beach communities in Costa Rica. Horton (2009:97) noted in her research how foreign investors on the Osa peninsula had the economic and cultural advantage, a range of international experiences, and were a part of transnational social networks that enabled them to recognize tourism potential and have the means to act on it.

Overall, affluent foreigners are their own boss and own and operate tourism excursion businesses, hotels, and restaurants, or are attached to larger property
development groups. Foreigners who are workers and not owners mostly fill niche managerial positions with large hotel chains that bring in their own executive management team. A quote from a Costa Rican manager of an excursion operation business highlights this occurrence and how it pertains to Reserva Conchal.

Reserva Conchal, that is the largest hotel today, all of their executives, the persons that have the better salaries are foreigners. Are persons of the chain Meliá because they are of the chain Meliá that brings from other countries . . . the chain brings them and what understanding they do is move them, go to be two years in Costa Rica, two years in Dominican Republic, two years in Cancun ([My translation] Simon, interview by author, 11 November 2008).

Rotating internationally trained managers is a common practice in the hotel sector and presents steep training barriers for local workforce development.

Costa Ricans from the Central Valley occupy the next level of business ownership and higher-skilled employees. The few remaining businesses that are in the hands of Costa Ricans (e.g., cabinas or sodas) are almost fully owned by meseteños. Many of these businesses represent families who were part of the original town developers who have maintained their business and developed it through the generations. One foreign excursion operator described the differences between meseteños and guanacastecos in racial terms: “Yeah, it’s like two different worlds or something . . . but it was not necessarily totally [a] multicultural deal, [what] you’ve had around the whole Meseta Central is all the Castilian Spaniards and Indians here” (Caleb, interview by author, 25 January 2009). Costa Ricans from the Central Valley are also the midlevel managerial class for big and boutique hotels. A Costa Rican manager from the Central Valley stated about the practice of recruiting from the Central Valley:
Generally, the executive is from the Central Valley or other places because in the area there does not exist sufficient employees or collaborators with a profile that satisfies the needs of the company, although yes we have one or two executives that are from the area. But generally all have developed in the Central Valley, have studied in the Central Valley and including we have brought from the Central Valley because they work there. Generally we have to bring our executives from outsider of Guanacaste ([My translation] Pedro, interview by author, 15 December 2008).

In 2007, the Executive Director of the Guanacaste Tourism Chamber of Commerce and the Director of the State of the Nation group stated that there was a disconnect between rising Costa Rican tourism dollars and local nationalized workers, particularly in Guanacaste where luxury homes and development is pushing tourism but back office jobs and executives are brought in from outsider the country or form the Central Valley (Golden 2007). The 2010 CREST report affirmed the continuation of this practice.

With foreigners filling most ownership and managerial jobs and Costa Ricans from the Central Valley taking the remaining management positions, most local guanacastecos fill low-skill service jobs ranging from housecleaning, grounds keeping, wait staff, and food preparation. They also occupy positions as independent tour guides performing duties such as taking tourists on boat trips through the estuary, horseback riding on the beach, surf instructors, or local drivers. Although these positions are considered low skill, many employers highlight how the jobs are opportunities and a path out of poverty. A meseteño hotel manager stated:

I’m going to say that we have workers from San José, Heredia, I am from Heredia, Villa Real, Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Liberia, Cartagena, el Llano, Huacas, El Llanita, La Josefina that is all of the area they have here one, two, or three
representatives. Do you understand me? Then how you would be able to see, it benefits (them), the opportunity to have dignified work and a job that allows them to keep rice and beans for their wives, their children, all of his family ([my translation] Pepe, interview by author, 24 November 2008).

Some local community leaders counter the view, however, that locals should, in a way, be grateful just to have a job and underline that employers take advantage of this workforce. One community leader and independent guide/surf instructor, Pedro, commented:

Then how we the locals, we locals that is, we want a good job that the people treat us well, but there is a lot of people that has money and has a large investment or a large company and then they treat the employees like “pure shit” ([My translation] Pedro, interview by author, 15 December 2008).

This interview always stood out for me because Raul was quite agitated by the popular Costa Rican saying, *pura vida*. For Pedro, how could life be *pura vida* when so many *guanacastecos* in his eyes were being treated like “*pura mierda*” “pure shit” in the pursuit for foreigner happiness?

The last group positioned in the local industry is Nicaraguans. Nicaraguans come to fill specific labor needs in the construction boom along the Pacific coast or as domestics in the cities. They are also the scapegoats for many Costa Rican problems (Sandoval García 2004). It seems as if almost every group – Costa Ricans in San José, *guanacastecos*, even advocacy groups who highlight their poor working conditions – demonize them for pushing down local wages and spreading crime or for not adding benefits to local economies because they send their wages back to Nicaragua. The Ministry of Labor allowed 10,000 Central American workers visas, mostly Nicaraguans,
to work in construction and the conditions that the workers face are arduous. In Tamarindo, hidden behind the facade of luxurious condominium construction complete with Jacuzzi, walk-in-closet, and balconies with beach panoramic views you see makeshift housing of corrugated tin roof over dirt floors, hanging clotheslines, an improvised open fire kitchen pit, and stacks of construction supplies piled dangerously amongst debris (see Figure 5). This is the temporary home for many Nicaraguan construction workers and, on occasion, entire families. In 2008, over 300 workers became ill and there was a death at an RIU Hotel project in Playa Matapalo in Guanacaste. Investigators found that although project managers had already been warned about unsanitary food preparation and sleeping conditions in camps, they employed three sub-contractors to monitor workers who were not abiding by health regulations.
5.2 Governance Structures and Ethnoracial Stratification

There are four governance linkages along the tour operator global value chain connected to Tamarindo that call attention to how we can understand local ethnoracial divisions. Two linkages – global tour operators and hotels along with national tour operators and hotels – are the main avenues connecting local tourism businesses to global buyers and exhibit how certain businesses that have received cumulative historical advantages that gave them the appropriate skill set are incorporated into the global value chain. These foreign-owned businesses are able to meet the formal and informal
standards that either incoming agents or global tour operators have while others do not. The remaining two linkages – hotels and excursion operators in addition to excursion operators with each other – accentuate a continuation of how cumulative advantage positions businesses over others but also how similar ethnoracial networks facilitate segregated networks and opportunities. Interestingly, there is also a unique dynamic surrounding the relationship between hotel tour desk managers (who are Costa Ricans) and foreign excursion providers.

Whereas the legacy of cumulative advantage and segregated networks are paths in determining governance structures that can facilitate stratification without overt racial intent, when foreign and mesteño employers talk about workers form Guanacaste it is not racially neutral. Some employers who discuss the ability to find trained, hard working, or reliable staff used a language that is often cloaked in a subtle cultural narrative of the workers from the area, and they almost always compare these workers to those that come from the Central Valley. These cultural stereotypes and racializing of skills serve to keep guanacasteco workers in low-skilled positions or prevent them from getting jobs. Importantly, however, some employers acknowledge the stereotyping and were proactive in working to develop the skill set of their employees to overcome it.

5.2.1 Global Tour Operators and Hotels – Hotels and National Tour Operators

The linkage between global tour operates and hotels incorporates foreigners whereas mesteños, guanacastecos and Nicaraguans are stratified. Foreigners are incorporated because the Tamarindo-based hotels that are part of the tour operator global
value chain are all foreign-owned or operated by foreign hotel chains, except for one Cala Luna. Italians originally owned Cala Luna, however. They built up the hotel’s brand and reputation before it was sold to a Costa Rican bank. In Table 10 from Chapter 4 I highlighted the sample of top global tour operators from the United States that come to Costa Rica. Of that group, most all of the tour operators offer at least one Tamarindo accommodation (see Table 14), and the most popular hotels are the largest, most luxurious, and are in a gated community – Paradisus and the JW Marriott. The smaller boutique hotels included – Cala Luna, Hotel Capitán Suizo, and Jardin del Eden – offer a particular small scale grandeur in the middle of tropical Costa Rica that positions them as an accommodation alternative. These hotels are also the preferred options from tour operators who are part of the Association of Independent Tour Operators based in the U.K. Five out of the twenty-one independent tour operators who are part of the group and bring people to Costa Rica also include Tamarindo hotel options.
Table 14: Tamarindo Hotels in Global Tour Operator* Packages

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* Highlighted tour operators from Chapter 4 that have trips to Costa Rica

^ Info unavailable
These large foreign-owned and operated hotels are able to meet the formal and informal standards and fit the image of what global tour operators think their international tourists want to experience while in Costa Rica. One mesteño hotel manager stated, “Generally we work with wholesalers directly outside of the country . . . each day the international demands are very difficult” ([My translation] Pepe, interview by author, 24 November 2008). The relaxing walk on the beach with the sun slowly descending in the horizon also entails 1000 thread count sheets, high pressure steamed showers, and perfectly chosen design décor to make the room feel cozy but exotic and unique. Figure 6 is the hotel room photo JW Marriott displays on its Web site. It personifies this form of exotic (high priced) cool and aesthetic that international tourists want and local accommodation offerings are expected to meet.


Figure 6: Hotel Room JW Marriott Guanacaste Resort and Spa
Because Costa Rican hotels in Tamarindo are not chosen as part of the packages of global tour operators they are stratified in the value chain from this segment through their role as workers. As highlighted, the worker stratification process within hotels is that for the largest brand hotels the top management comes from outside of the country and the lower-level managers are from the Central Valley, and for the foreign family run hotels, family management or individuals from their foreign home country can be common. One meseteño manager from a local tourist firm stated:

It is very possible that yes they want to manage with people of their country. You have trust in the people of your country, you don’t trust the people of Costa Rica but for to say something of a hotel like Cala Luna the owner was a family of Italians, that is a family very closed, he is not going to give an opportunity to a Costa Rican to give him work. In the Diría, Golas is the owner, he is German, his daughter is the General Manager of the hotel and below there are many Costa Ricans ([My translation] Simon, interview by author, 11 November 2008).

Local guanacastecos are the low-end service staff for these businesses while Nicaraguans build the properties that are adjacent to many of the hotels. The sometimes, stereotypical images of these workers and their skills, and their weakened starting point, disadvantaged them when tourism came to town and has limited their ability to reach higher positions within the industry. It is also difficult to get jobs at the luxury, high priced lodging offerings because it takes an international skill set to make a bed, prepare food, and interact with guests to meet a five-star international standard. Hotels have also begun looking not only outside of Guanacaste, but also Costa Rica, to fill these considered low-mid level jobs.
Although many of the hotels have arrangements with global tour operators their relationship with national tour operators was the connection managers mostly addressed. In this linkage foreigners and meseteños are incorporated and guanacastecos are stratified. As I show in Table 15, foreign-owned hotels are the continued preferred providers by national tour operators but a few more additional boutique hotels, still foreign-owned, are added to their itineraries.

National tour operators based out of the Central Valley, as discussed in “Chapter 4,” can hold a lot of power in small tourism communities. The region, and tour operator businesses there, have fostered an important niche function as national tourism coordinators who can steer tourists to one region, hotel, or tourist provider as they see fit. They are often the key linking global tour operators to local national destinations. One hotel manager affirmed, “It is very important the relations that we have with the ground controllers as we call them here in Costa Rica and the relations they have [with] wholesalers” (David, interview by author, 9 January 2009). Although the global tour operators may advertise an arranged trip they are selling, the trip may actually be created and performed by national tour operators. By filling the role as ground controllers they are meeting tourists as they get off the plane, ushering them to their hotel and destinations throughout the country, and representing expertise in biodiversity and Costa Rican culture, along with the logistics of international travel, often while wearing the uniform of the global tour operator. One hotel manager lamented about the role these companies fill as middlemen players:
You need as a wholesaler . . . it would be an ideal world if we, lets say X hotel, can have a relationship just directly with the wholesaler, yes, that would be the ideal part of it, but how does the wholesaler move their people form the airport to X hotel, okay you can manage that, but usually your customers contact you as a wholesaler and they won’t ask you only for X hotel they want to see the Arenal Volcano they probably want to see Monteverde cloud forest . . . the ground operators . . . they have the logistics they have all the people, the team to make your vacation, the whole thing (David, interview by author, 9 January 2009).
Table 15: Tamarindo Hotels in National Tour Operator* Packages

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* Highlighted national tour operators from Chapter 4
Excursion operators also must contend with the role of the national tour operators, as they too are often by-passed for direct international bookings by global tour operators who prefer to not work with small local businesses. One foreign excursion operator noted when asked about working directly with global operators, “we’ve tried, it’s also the fact that these big companies look and . . . you have one manager and the owner and a few clerks and they’re like you’re not big enough, which is basically what they say, and they contact TAM or Swiss Travel” (Derick, interview by author, 16 December 2008).

The Central Valley’s history of being conceived as the “center” and “heart” of Costa Rica and home to the making of the white Costa Rican myth has provided Costa Ricans who were born and raised there the opportunity to occupy unique business positions due to the options, advantages, and perceptions of that region. Foreign national tour operators have also been able to carve a market in the region as well by specializing in being the national contact for global tour operators based in the operators’ home country or region such as with ARA catering to German tourists and global operators. Their specialized knowledge of German culture – demands, needs, and expectations – puts them at a far better advantage to win the contracts of German global tour operators.

These firms, whether meseteño ran or foreign ran, have the skill set to be the cultural interpreters from both perspectives. They have the training, style, English speaking command (or other international languages), and cultural capital that comes from being from the Central Valley or abroad to know what their particular international tourist clients want and they choose their suppliers based on that knowledge. For the
Costa Rican ran operators, they have the ability to reinterpret tico culture in a form that
they think the tourists want. They are the portraits of the smiling, affable tico guide who
can answer all your questions, make you feel at ease and reaffirm the assumption that
Costa Ricans are so friendly, so educated, very advanced, and white in comparison to
other Latin American countries. For the guanacastecos whose character and profile is
rooted in ranch campesino identity separate from the Central Valley their inability to be
cultural interpreters maintains their stratified position as low-skill workers within their
community.

Some of these national tour operators are also aware of their increased strength
vis-à-vis the local communities who they bring tourists to. Both foreign owned hotels
and excursion providers and meseteño ran businesses in Tamarindo particularly complain
about one of the largest operators: Swiss Travel. Because Swiss Travel works with the
largest global tour operators, like Mark Travel Corporation, and the largest cruise lines, it
exert its influence by demanding strict, cumbersome pay demands from its suppliers and
other organizational demands. Swiss’ demands have become so vexing that some hotels
and excursion operators choose not to work with them at all in supplier relationships. As
mentioned in “Chapter 4,” Tamarindo is not a personal favorite destination for national
tour operators and they often spoke very poorly about the community. Nonetheless, they
provide Tamarindo supplier options because they know that Tamarindo provides for
some tourists an example of comfort and controlled international travel and there are a lot
of foreigners there to put tourists at ease. Whereas some suppliers, particularly foreign,
can opt out of working with the Swiss Travel-like operators in country, while others less affluent and connected, and lack the appropriate marketing skills, cannot stop.

5.2.2 Hotels and Excursion Operators – Excursion Operators and Excursion Operators

Within the greater Tamarindo community there are two different sets of relationship linkages along the value chain that untangle some of the ethnoracial divisions: hotels and excursion operators and excursion operators with other excursion providers. Segregated networks along with the ability to operate as cultural interpreters places the foreign dominated excursion operators into a key business force role that commands the local entrepreneur class. Many of these providers have lived in Tamarindo for long periods of time and consider themselves above and better than the new group of providers coming in who have less respect for the area and knowledge of their craft. These operators, however, want to work with area hotels to get bookings, and even if the hotel is foreign-owned, the “tour desk” is most likely staffed by a Costa Rican. Therefore, while paid little, these local tour desk workers have the ability to steer tourists one way or the other and are also receptive to the intricate commission process that may influence their direction. One hotel tour desk is especially notorious for how they choose providers and charge tourists. Lastly, these linkages shed light more directly on the nuanced manner in which ethnicity and culture are alluded to locally that is located in the long narrative of difference and race in Costa Rica.

The relationship between excursion operators with each other incorporates foreigners and stratifies guanacastecos. Because foreigners are the most prevalent
providers in the town they can pick and choose amongst each other what providers they will recommend to their customers. As is custom, a recommendation brings with it a commission typically around 10 percent or more. There are four main excursion activities in Tamarindo and three of them revolve around water. Sailing, fishing, surfing, and a combination of outdoor trail activities – hiking, biking, ATV – are the most popular. All but one or two of the water excursion operators are owned and operated by foreigners from America or Europe. Within this group there are divisions between excursion providers who have been in Tamarindo for more than ten years or more and the recent transplants. The older generation has a strong personal connection to Tamarindo and Costa Rica. They beguile you with BD stories – “before development” – when there was no electricity, everyone was on a generator and no roads existed, and just a few Costa Rican families from the Central Valley would visit during *semana santa*, the official holiday week in Costa Rica. Coming to Tamarindo for them was a lifestyle choice that they happened to stumble into making a career out of. The explosion that hit Tamarindo after they came is both lamented and appreciated if only from a business sense.

This generation of foreign immigrants is close. They recommend each other and work with each other; but the new generation of foreign immigrants also organize into their own networks and associates. Small town politics and connections become rampant, but for this group, the politics surrounds other foreigners. From a tourism
industry perspective, the mix of cultures or personalities can strengthen business ties and exacerbate them. One excursion manager mentioned:

This is a small town. I compare it to Iowa in the 1950s. It’s a small town. We eat at restaurants where we like the people, even if we don’t love the food . . . umm, I mean of course there are some things where the trips are just better, but people hold grudges here, its unbelievable. People hold grudges here for a really long time, they won’t sell our tour, you know its really bizarre how it works out, and with alliances (Lea, interview by author, 12 November 2008).

Direct competition between some excursion operators can also take on the feel of high school petty fights. Rival surf shops can operate under a mix of antagonism, masculine ego, and scouting or poaching techniques for the best local surf instructors.

All of this posturing is happening, however for the most part, amongst foreign expatriates. When they disagree or when they work with one another they are doing it within this microcosm expatriate community where expatriates are guiding the direction of a town that is very far from their native land and the local guanacasteco often cease to be more than background wallpaper. Somewhere along the way Tamarindo stopped being a Costa Rican town. Globalized gentrification has made Tamarindo an ironic “Costa Rican” tourist destination where once racialized guanacasteco space has turned into white space. Excursion operators filled a vacuum for services and had the skill set, identity, and financial capital to grow their business. This pattern follows other towns in beach communities in Costa Rica. Wherry’s tourism study in Guanacaste regarding how social ties helped form and facilitate tourism product distribution notes how “the stronger more intimate social ties were directing flows of tourists into particular workshops of particular villages” (2008:96) for artisan workers. The same happens within the
expatriate community but a specific strength of their social tie is their foreignness. While operators work mostly with hotels, each other, and national operators based in San José, their foreignness is also seen as an advantage when they get direct bookings with global tour operators. One excursion operator stated, “we started getting less of the wholesale business too because they were worried about not having an English speaking captain, which they are . . . there is a little bit of racism or whatever you want to call it in that respect because if I were still running [the] boat, they would still be using us” (Caleb, interview by author, 15 January 2009).

The relationship between hotels and excursion operators incorporates foreigners who are the owners and stratifies guanacastecos who are mostly low to medium-skilled employees for the operators and at the hotels, but their job as tour desk agents at the boutique and larger hotels gives them some intriguing power. If excursion operators have their own networks and issues amongst themselves they all court to varying degrees the tour desk workers. According to the excursion operators, the big hotels early on were relatively clueless in understanding the huge market potential they had to arrange excursions for their guests and often relied on excursion operators setting up tour desks at the hotels, but once they realized how lucrative this segment of the value chain could be because they had built-in tourist access they quickly adopted pricing and marketing strategies to try to arrange all the local activities in-house. A surf provider noted:

What’s happened in every scenario that we have is we get there and they see that it’s a profitable business and they kick us out and they put in their own [people] . . . the only one that actually really pays is the client, because we have a net rate say on one of our surf lessons, say twenty dollars, well [they’ll] sell it for $40 so
they’re making 50 percent off of our business just by selling (Derick, interview by author, 16 December 2008).

The Costa Rican tour desk workers are motivated to choose suppliers by a mix of commission rates and established relationships. Some operators complain how the workers are only looking to make some cash under the table that they can pocket while others stress the relationship they need to build with this group. One asserted, “it’s just really a small town, as far as the people that live here, its all networking, and I just really, my personal relationships with my, with the people that sell the tours, the Ticos that work in the hotels, that’s [a] huge thing” (Lea, interview by author, 12 November 2008). It is also not lost on the operators that these desk agents are selling a tour they themselves could not afford. Many try to offer private tours and events so they can experience what they are selling. The standards demanded by hotels for the excursion operators are also informal and not codified. Many operators say most hotels want them to have insurance but after that it is an open book regarding what is important and not. Some say “reliability,” others say “trust,” and others it is the “service” provided. The gulf between what the exact definition of service is can be quite wide but the foreign excursion operators are all versed in the skills of international tourism demands.

5.2.3 “It’s so Pura Vida” – The Language of Guanacasteco Workers and Racialized Skills

If local guanacastecos only position in the global value chain is as workers for foreigners or Costa Rican’s from the Central Valley, how they are perceived by their managers is an important determinant in their ability to potentially get better jobs or
higher pay in the industry. Many tourism employers in Tamarindo use a language of difference when talking about their guanacasteco employees. A racial skill narrative is constructed when they use a guanacasteco cultural narrative highlighting a pura vida attitude that is personified as service limited, all about instant gratification, and completely different from what one would find in the Central Valley. Guanacaste is referred to as a “backward” province and this supposed backwardness has impeded locals’ ability to get an education, work hard, and be reliable. They do not meet the standards of their American employers. The assumption is so strong that many guanacastecos have adopted it, as well. There are some employers, however, who are actively engaged with their workers providing in-house skill attainment, give benefits, and acknowledge that the stereotype is limiting.

Pura vida is a loaded term in Costa Rica. For outsiders, and the ubiquitous guidebooks you see throughout tourist towns, it represents the quintessential laidback, “I’m on vacation” lifestyle. Depending on who is saying it, the context that brings on the phrase, and the delivery, the meanings are wide. When Tamarindo employers talk about pura vida and their workers its with a little exasperation, frustration, and matter-of-factness. Although pura vida is used to describe Costa Rica in general, in Guanacaste it is a different context and cultural understanding that highlights its difference and somewhat primitiveness from the Central Valley. One foreign business manager lamented:

No nothing is important here, nothing, its really like, its so pura vida, it’s so, anything can be done tomorrow, ahorita, ahorita, means right now, tomorrow or
never . . . In tourism you have to just let go of that pura vida attitude, you have to go the extra mile and that just doesn’t exist here . . . I just don’t know how you can change the culture enough to make it, or make it work. Like I said, the people in the cities are fine, but out here in the campo its like a different thing (Lea, interview by author, 12 November 2008).

Meseteños who have emigrated from the Central Valley to Tamarindo will emphasize this worker stereotype, as well. A meseteño hotel manager emphatically noted:

It is not a stereotype, it is certain . . . I don’t have good employees, and I want to grow, I need to surround myself with good employees that all are in one line. But if I have an employee that goes away from the line than I am not able to grow . . . I don’t understand but the guanacasteco is very laid back . . . only here ([My translation] Felipe, interview by author, 18 November 2008).

Sometimes, workers themselves will also affirm this notion about the region even when they do not hold any of the characteristics. One guanacasteco worker for a foreign local arranger who was prompt, efficient, and spoke in a clear and intelligent manner explained it this way:

A lot, a lot of what they say is true [but] I am not saying that they [guanacastecos] would not be able to arrive to have a small business, of course, of course they would be able to do it, however, it is a little complicated until we, the locals change, a little of our ideology our manner of thinking, and we want to see a little more forward ([My translation] Sam, interview by author, 13 November 2008).

For some foreign and meseteño tourism managers and owners the stereotype is unfair and stated that it should be their responsibility to work and train locals. A meseteño hotel manager said:

(Sigh). Once I’ve had this conversation with Costa Ricans and foreign people, and what I always tell them is, you have to choose right. Yes, you would be able to have Costa Ricans that are lazy, as they say of the Guanacastecans, but I worked in the Central Pacific region, I worked up in the mountains in Heredia, I worked in San José, I worked in the Southern Pacific, I worked in the lets say around the areas Punta Isla. I worked for Hilton at Papagayo I worked here, and
uhh, you can find great people everywhere, just treat them well, train them, and that’s I think a universal rule (David, interview by author, 9 December 2008).

Other foreign employers noted that they have paid for workers to receive English lessons, been flexible with work hours so they could attend school, and promoted them in the business when they reached a level of proficiency and advancement. These employers are outnumbered, however, by the others who see the local workforce as a necessary hurdle to doing business in the area.

The cultural stereotypes that surround Guanacaste are cloaked in the discourse that devalues what some foreigners and many from the Central Valley perceive to be an inferior way of doing business and being professional. While their language does not overtly use racial words the region was historically racialized differently from the Central Valley with its inhabitants as internal others and those differences are now adjusted with a new vocabulary that emphasizes “differences” and “backwardness,” instead of overt racial references, but they still create a form of racialized skill beliefs. These beliefs hinder locals if their character and potential are judged by it and are potentially not given a job, promotion, or chance to run their own business. Importantly, it shows how in global tourism in Costa Rica it is mostly foreigners and expatriates who judge and deem what is considered appropriate service-oriented behavior. As one manager stated, “the problem is, umm, it comes down to customer service. Things are really different, than our American standards” (Lea, interview by author, 12 November 2008). Skills become racialized when only particular ethnoracial groups are perceived to hold the appropriate service qualities for tourism. When these foreign immigrants come to Costa Rica, or
when meseteños come to Guanacaste, they bring with them their own assumptions, stereotypes, images, and beliefs regarding what is and is not good service, what tourists want, and exactly who fits the bill of being able to fulfill certain tourism roles.

Not one of my employer respondents reflected on the fact that they were either foreign or meseteño transplants to Tamarindo and what that image might convey to local guanacastecos. Many smaller excursion operators and tour arranger businesses that were foreign-owned had a local that they employed that appeared to be their “right-hand-man.” They were regional experts, had relationships with local guides, and were able to translate what it meant to do business in Guanacaste and Costa Rica. Several foreign operators I talked to spoke very highly of these employees (in contradiction to the worker stereotype of the region); yet their praise hinted at a tinge of paternalism. One tour arranger referred to his top employee, who appeared to be over forty-years-old, as his “boy,” with the air that the fact that they were the owners/managers while their “local experts” were just employees seemed to be the natural order of things in Tamarindo. I had the distinct impression that if these workers had the connections to national and global actors, financial capital, tourist support, and racial cultural capital they would be able to be business owners.

What struck me the most was the low wages most workers received in addition to the arrangement being informal and off-the-books. Most guanacastecos who did not work at the larger hotels were informal workers. The original average wage per hour a few years back around 2005 was around 700 or 800 colones equating with the exchange
rate roughly between US $1 dollar to $1.50 an hour. For some employees that are often sought after by multiple businesses their wages can go as high as 1,000 to 1,200 colones an hour. Many foreign employers spoke about how bad it was before they were in Tamarindo and that now locals have jobs and opportunities, but they seem to forget that “Guanacaste has become economically inaccessible for most Costa Ricans” (Honey et al. 2010:76) or the fact that they are not charging “Costa Rican” prices for their tourism services although they are paying their workers Costa Rican wages.

It is extremely expensive to rent, let alone buy a house, buy household goods, and any form of consumer product, like electronics, at a decent price. There are three grocery stores in the greater Tamarindo area and the prices are higher than in the United States due to import duties, transportation costs, and an artificial rate of inflation which prices all goods higher in areas that have more foreigners. The only way guanacastectos are able to survive on tourism wages in tourism communities is to live family style – multiple generations of families living under one roof. One family member pays for the utilities, one for the cable, the other for the week’s food, all while mostly subsisting on rice and beans, vegetables and fruit, and maybe the chickens running around the front yard.

The informal, seasonal economy of tourism employment also exacerbates the situation. Tourism in Costa Rica is seasonal, operating around the dry season that runs from November to May in Guanacaste. The minimum wage in Costa Rica for unskilled workers is 7,200 colones per day or 900 colones an hour in an 8 hour day, but this low figure is supposed to be buttressed by mandatory payment of employers into the Social
Security system which guarantees Costa Ricans with medical services and retirement benefits. If employers hire locals off-the-books, however, they are not paying into the Social Security system, and locals can potentially receive a lesser salary than the already low minimum wage. A study from the University of Costa Rica’s Economic Science Research Institute found that 30 percent of Costa Rica’s private-sector employees do not receive a minimum wage (Long 2010). Locals also compete for jobs against low-skilled foreign workers, typically young Americans and Europeans, who are looking to get some extra cash to prolong their endless summers in Costa Rica. They may negotiate special arrangements with tourism businesses for temporary employment for jobs that have them working directly with tourists where their cultural affinity, race, and understanding are taken advantage. One foreign owner joked that when immigration comes to Tamarindo “gringos go running.”

The low wages locals receive and the outrageous cost of living in Tamarindo is not lost on all foreigners. A founder of the foreign-written, biting, and incisive commentary-filled local magazine Flyswatter wrote in an editorial piece about the irony of foreign transplants complaining about crime when they are surrounded by such increased inequality. In a facetious tone he imagines foreigners thinking, “Why can’t these people show up to work for six days a week, on time, on a crowded bus from out of town and do good, honest, quality work for a dollar an hour and then bus the hell back out of town, everyday, for as long as I need them” (Willoughby 2005). In a Letter to the Editor for the English language Tico Times a soon to be Canadian expatriate wrote,
“Costa Rica belongs to the Ticos, and we foreigners should never forget that. The best way to show respect is to pay decent wages” (Newton 2010).

5.3 Institutions and Ethnoracial Stratification

National and local institutions shape businesses and workers in the tour operator global value chain in Tamarindo in conflicting and consequential ways. Institutions do not unanimously benefit foreign or the few Costa Rican businesses just as they do not unanimously hinder tourism development progress. Institutional arrangements create two distinct parallel outcomes. First, they assist ethnoracial stratification by supporting foreign tourism business and home ownership over national and local via weak tax policies, lack of microenterprise and financial capital support, and an even weaker education systems that ill equips locals to compete successfully in the industry. Second, they were sorely under prepared, under resourced, and their funcionarios weakly trained to handle the onslaught of tourism development that tore open this once sleepy fishing and agricultural community. In its wake, the tourism tsunami exposed the underbelly of incompetence, greed, and corruption.

While the first outcome highlights how practices within institutions continue to perpetuate ethnoracial stratification in ownership and job categories, the second outcome is a larger, universal one for all groups in Tamarindo because all of the groups depend on Tamarindo as a tourism product. The tourism product in Tamarindo, the natural assets – the white, sandy beaches of Playa Tamarindo, Playa Langosta, Playa Ventanas and Playa Grande, the largest estuary in Central America; and the gentle green giants, the
leatherback turtles, who make their nesting home in Las Baulas National Park – may one day disappear. As long as unchecked development continues to explode this potentiality does not seem too far-fetched. Foreign developers and foreign businesses, however, have the option to leave and chase their dream in another paradise around the world while local guanacastecos are left with the remains of polluted beaches, third-rate buildings, a nonexistent sewage system, and an endangered turtle species.

At-the-same-time, guanacastecos and foreign business owners in Tamarindo are not accepting a doomed future lying down. Through their own organizations each group is fighting to save Tamarindo. Where they differ is whom they want to save Tamarindo for and how they can go about doing it. These groups may be one of the last hopes for Tamarindo but they must get beyond their own internal fights and ethnoracial divisions in order to truly change the future of Tamarindo.

5.3.1 Weak Taxes, Bad Schools

In a 2007 “state of the community” address from ProMejoras, the private, mostly foreign-ran community development organization, extolled the fact that Tamarindo community members should not wait for the government to help Tamarindo but should do it themselves and that the bemoaned “we pay our taxes” argument is a non-issue. The leader of the organization wrote, “What about the taxes you pay? What about them? In relation to the taxes you paid where you came from, they are nothing and you know the old saying you get what you pay for and 99 percent of us haven’t paid” (Tamarindo News 2007). Most foreigners pay limited taxes and the Municipality in Santa Cruz does not
have the ability to collect the taxes they should. The taxes that are collected, furthermore, are channeled to the Central Valley with little being reinvested back into Tamarindo. If little is being collected and reinvested in Tamarindo and the greater area communities than the social support systems that are needed to create a strong workforce and local business opportunities are weakened, thus, helping to further consolidate foreign control who already hold advanced resources and capital. Therefore, low taxes and weak collection capabilities help incorporate foreigners into the value chain as business and local home owners and stratifies guanacastecos who are receiving limited tax resources to better their communities and schools. Cordero and Paus (2008) argued that the Costa Rican tax structure does not reflect the dynamic tourism and real estate industries. Even with large real estate purchases and infrastructure development in Guanacaste the region’s share in total tax collection has stayed the same since the early 2000s. Costa Rica, in general, suffers from weak tax revenue with Costa Rica’s tax ratio remaining relatively low hovering between 11 and 13 percent between 1987-2004 (Cordero and Paus 2008).

Foreigners in Tamarindo typically pay a corporate tax if they own a business and a property tax if they own a condo or house. The corporate tax is based on gross income and is 10 percent for income up to roughly US $42,000, 20 percent for income up to US $84,000, and 30 percent for everything over. The Law of Incentives for Tourism Development, however, provides some firms with “various tax exemptions and favorable treatment regarding income tax” and has made it difficult to raise tax revenue (Cordero
and Paus 2008:12). The property tax is established annually and constitutes 60 percent of the appraised value of the property. Originally houses with a value more than US $18,600 were charged .25 percent, and as of January 2009 an increased rate was in effect between .25 percent and .55 percent for houses valued more than US $200,000. This was part of the luxury tax on houses that was approved in 2008 with the hope to reinvest the money toward eradicating shantytowns in the country (Nicholson 2008).

Homeowners have to self-report their property value that is to be confirmed by tax inspectors. Therein lies the problem. If underreporting is rampant and the municipalities lack the ability to verify and collect the tax then revenues from tourism and development are lost. Guanacaste has one of the worst tax collection rates with a Costa Rican Central Bank study reporting that “all taxes collected in Guanacaste in 2006 did not add up to US $15 million, less than 1 percent of taxes collected throughout the country” (Schmidt 2007a). Furthermore, The Finance Ministry announced in February 2010 that there were 10,000 luxury homes in Costa Rica, but only 3,000 owners paid the tax at a loss of US $16 million (Zueras 2010).

Several foreigners actually chided the limited tax base, however, they focus on taxes used as a source of infrastructure and environmental protection and less on human and social development. One foreign manager lamented:

The way I see it you have two problems. You got someone like myself who owns and lives here. I have expectations for better infrastructure, but the problem is that the tax base, what is the tax base to put into the infrastructure? It’s personal income taxes which is basically for all intensive purposes non existent if the average employee makes $400 a month. What kind of tax base are you going to get off of that? Nothing. Than you have corporate income tax and I’d say that
half the businesses are cheating on it, so they’re not reporting all that they should, so they’re getting ripped off there so you are losing on your tax base again, and then probably the most prominent tax base in this area to help the infrastructure is that with property taxes, and if its even paid, the people are lying about the amount of how much its actually worth. So if you got a half-a-million dollar property your paying taxes on it at a value of $50,000. Then you, that’s what you got. We got $50,000 worth of infrastructure (Kevin, interview by author, 18 November 2008).

The infrastructure issue is one of the sorest points for foreigners and nothing represents this more than the infamous Road to Langosta project. The project – a joint effort between private investors, the municipality, and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MOPT) has experienced several delays, mismanagement, and stalemates over the years. The parties involved have disagreed with all pointing accusatory fingers at each other. The private investors – a consortium of local hotels and business developers – are quick to point out that if the Municipality in Santa Cruz would give Tamarindo its due share of tax revenue then finishing the Road to Langosta would be a moot point. Investor Mark Schneider was quoted in the Tamarindo News as saying, “If the Municipality of Santa Cruz allows us to keep our tax revenue, I can assure you that we would not be asking them for help in construction of roads, infrastructure, or other improvements. We want to pay for everything ourselves from the tax revenue of Tamarindo. It is time for our voices to be heard, because we should have our rightful share of taxes, paved roads, and quality surveillance” (Umana 2010). Fundación Demuca reports that Costa Rican municipalities only receive US $18 per person for public works in 2008 (Villegas 2008). The same amount as Nicaragua the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Local municipalities in Costa Rica receive “approximately 2
percent of total government spending, one of the lowest proportions in Latin America . .
.” (Stanley 2007).

A weak local public education system that does not adequately prepare local 
guanacastecos for the service skills necessary for the burgeoning tourism industry is one 
of the strongest consequences to a weak tax system. Compound that with a still high 
poverty rate in comparison to the rest of the country, which according to the National 
Institute of Statistics is around 30 percent. The local community organization, CEPIA, 
that provides support services for children and survivors of domestic abuse calculated 
that the region suffered from a 40 percent unemployment rate, that 20 percent of 
teenagers become pregnant, and 20 percent were a combination of either being addicted 
to drugs, victims of domestic violence, or at risk of homelessness and sexual exploitation 
(Palacios 2008). This is the backdrop which local kids must receive their education and 
acquire the skills to find tourism jobs.

In a Flyswatter article highlighting the potential and consequences for when 
tourism will hit another small guanacaste town, Lagarto, one foreign former Peace 
Corps volunteer to the area commented, “When tourism hits those people need to have 
skills that can get them jobs. Women cook, wash clothes, and clean like human 
machines. Men can clear land and build. But I doubt many have used a computer. They 
will need to learn English to work in fancy hotels for tourists; they will need computer 
skills, accounting, and banking skills” (Raftis 2006:6). The remainder of the article goes 
on to write “we are asking them to take on several decades of technology in a few short
years and all in a second language to boot. Without training the locals will be at a serious
disadvantage, a disadvantage that has repercussions similar to those seen in Tamarindo
and the surrounding towns now” (Raftis 2006:6). A very apparent but sort of kept as the
“thing not discussed” repercussion is that “gringos” have all the wealth, own the houses,
businesses, and are the bosses, unless the tico is from the Central Valley, and
guanacastecos are tolling away at cleaning the floors, weeding the gardens, and serving
the drinks. Without the proper skills those are things they are able to do and are
perceived capable of doing.

Overall, almost all business owners and managers I spoke with admonished the
schools’ inability to prepare students for the new business environment – tourism – which
confronts them as one of the only employment options. One manager berated the fact
that system is set up to disappoint. “It’s education and it's the kids learn here from the
very beginning that you know commitment isn’t really commitment. They’re suppose to
go to school five days a week, they’re lucky they only go to school for four house . . .
when I worked in the schools they would be lucky to have three days of school” (Lea,
interview by author, 12 November 2008). In the Chorotega region (the region of
Guanacaste) according to the July 2009 National Institute of Statistics survey, only 11
percent of the survey respondents finished secondary school and only 7 percent finished
college. A Costa Rican from the Central Valley who is a cabina owner stated, “some of
the problem is that these communities were, were behind in terms of education. When
they are like that it is fertile land for many things” (Nina, interview by author, 26 January 2009).

The many things entail a foreign take over of land and business and the reformation of the stereotype that locals have a pura vida attitude. Tourism as a business is a tour de force in bringing a tidal wave of foreign owners and bosses who have a very distinct view of what international tourism service should entail: prompt, reliable service with a smile, close to if not perfect English speaking capabilities, and an appreciative demeanor that shows tourists how grateful they are for them to visit their community. And those are just the soft skills. The hard skills that are needed to move beyond the low skill jobs (although almost all of the jobs need some form of soft skill) involve marketing and business development capacities, information technology knowledge, particularly global distribution systems, and leadership and management success. Ergo, advance training at colleges with a wide liberal arts and business curriculum is needed but very few locals are receiving it.

Most “tourism education” takes place at the Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje (INA) with support from the ICT and some private tourism development organizations like the national Asociación de Costarricense de Profesionales en Tusismo (ACOPROT) and the Guanacaste Tourism Chamber of Commerce. By-and-large the outcome of these educational venues is mixed. The recent CREST study reported that “in spite of INA’s and ICT’s initiatives to foster training to local people, there are complaints that these programs have largely failed due to a lack of worker interest, poor planning, scheduling
problems, and the unwillingness of companies to allow their workers to participate in training” (Honey et al. 2010:45).

Training through INA and other public/private institutions where students can take a class here and there, but do not have formal or regular education, is sporadic and their effectiveness is in question. The July 2009 INEC survey reported that only .7 percent of respondents without regular education, but took classes at various institutions, finished classes in *Hotelería, Turismo, and Restaurantes* and most of those were with INA. Many of the hotel managers I spoke with said that INA was “good at teaching the basics” but offered little of advanced skill training. INA has nine regional offices with one in Guanacaste. Often the large hotels work directly with INA, such as Diría and Barceló, in developing training programs for basic service skill development like how to prepare a restaurant table and serve food, how to prepare an accommodation room. A fuller evaluation of the courses offered and their strength is needed to determine their value but from tertiary discussion with businesses in Tamarindo the skill training is limited, even for the low skill focus, and it keeps locals at the low end of the labor pool. Furthermore, the focus on training for larger hotels has steered workers from the smaller Costa Rican-owned *cabinas*. One Costa Rican *cabinas* owner complained that INA ignores small businesses that have the same labor needs as large ones.

5.3.2 “Para muestra un boton” – Ineffective Government Institutions and Policies

Uniquely, almost all the groups in Tamarindo in the tourism industry – foreigners, *meseteños*, and *guanacastecos* – seem to agree that institutions, mostly government-based,
have done little to ensure the vitality and sustainability to tourism development in Tamarindo to the detriment to foreign business owners and guanacasteco workers alike.

Responsible tourism consultant Vinicio Garcia posed the definitive statement of Tamarindo’s relationship with governing bodies. He stated to *Flyswatter*:

> Can we hope for help from the government here in Tamarindo at this time? The answer can be obtained by the following question: what has the governmental commission, organized directly by the Minister of Tourism along with other public entities in order to try to rectify the adverse situation that this fate is showing actually done? As the saying goes ‘*para muestra un boton*’ (there’s the proof) and that is a good example of what one can expect from the government, as much as the central as well as the local (*Flyswatter* 2008).

Former President Oscar Arias has branded the town with Manuel Antonio as “already lost.” If one group is profiled as the “winners” from the lack of any institutional foresight it is foreign developers mostly from America and Europe. These are “phantom groups” because they lack connections to Costa Rica or Tamarindo and pursue real estate development for, often, speculative purposes. The lax regulation and unwieldy development procedure has provided an outlet for shoddy construction, environmental degradation, and skyrocketed land and home pricing. The institutions that are in charge of planning and controlling development growth are, therefore, some of the most important actors shaping the tour operator global value chain although real estate falls out of the industry analysis. But, follow any tourism community, especially beach communities in the developing world, and the shadow of condominiums loom large over the sunset beaches.
At the national level two institutions, the ICT, The Ministerio de Ambiente, Energía y Telecomunicaciones (MINAET) and the Secretaría Técnica Nacional Ambiental (SETENA) which is a part of MINAET, and at the local level the municipalidad de Santa Cruz have helped to perpetuate an environment where no one is sure about the procedures of development therefore shoddy buildings and inappropriate concessions (permission to build on the beach) are granted that counter national policies. The under resourced institutions and their regional representatives lack the training, economic resources, and manpower to properly regulate the industry’s growth in a sustainable manner that focuses on the long-term. Their limited attempts at regulation and monitoring are piecemeal at best and usually only follow the persistent requests of ProMejoras. If Tamarindo continues down a path that is “killing the golden goose” than tourism may be lost for all the groups who are staking their future on its success.

As addressed in “Chapter 3” the ICT is tasked with developing and implementing a tourism plan for the entire country, marketing Costa Rican tourism, and ensuring that government laws are being followed and importantly employing “superior control and vigilance” over the Maritime Terrestrial Zone Law 6043 passed in 1977 that divided the coastline into separate development and management blocks. Although the ICT created the national ten-year plan, no such specific development plan exists in Tamarindo, including almost all coastal beach communities, Cañas being the exception. Without an instituted and enforced development plan there is unchecked and unmanaged growth for the estimated expected US $2.1 billion tourism investment dollars in large hotels and
luxury real estate between 2007-2010 in Guanacaste (Schmidt 2007b). The explosion of foreign real estate development in Guanacaste at its peak in the mid 2000s, close to US $83 million with over 1,500 developments, was unprecedented for the country (see Table 16).

Table 16: Total Real Estate Foreign Direct Investment by Province, 2004-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Real Estate Investment 2004</th>
<th>Real Estate Investment 2005</th>
<th>Number of Cases 2004</th>
<th>Number of Cases 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>36,958,954</td>
<td>37,770,848</td>
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<td>9,574,637</td>
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<td>Heredia</td>
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<td>17,225,733</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanacaste</td>
<td>64,413,668</td>
<td>82,791,757</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>1,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puntarenas</td>
<td>39,839,668</td>
<td>56,596,599</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>1,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limón</td>
<td>3,455,364</td>
<td>4,902,245</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>176,563,384</td>
<td>224,536,308</td>
<td>2,965</td>
<td>4,485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Banco Central de Costa Rica, 2005

While the economic crisis in the United States beginning in 2007-2008 has limited the continued growth of “mega-projects” associated with five-star resorts, during my fieldwork in Tamarindo during fall and winter of 2008-2009, the town was still overwhelmed with real estate development in condominiums and apartments. Within a small four street radius there were over 22 developments with more planned (see Figures 7 and 8).
Figure 7: Pacific Park Condo Complex

Figure 8: Crystal Sands Condo Complex
The lack of a development plan for the community has allowed for inappropriate growth that is often pursued illegally due to incompetency and corruption in the process. Real estate agents have popped up everywhere fueling the process with over 200 between Papagayo, Tamarindo and Juquillal alone, and many of them are working without licenses or are on tourist visas (Montoya 2006). Costa Rican author and early critic of the “gringo invasion” assailed the real estate firms and land speculators who thrived on the country’s inability to regulate the growth. Claims were made that “countless shady deals left foreigners holding property titles to land that didn’t exist or land that was also purchased by multiple other people” (Kimitch 2006a).

The prime real estate that is sought and being developed is along the coastline. Based on the Maritime Terrestrial Zone Law the first 200 meters above the high tide line are public domain with the exception of historic registered private lands. The first fifty meters are suppose to never be developed and if people want to develop along the next 150 meters they have to be granted a concession from the ICT. Foreigners who have not lived in the country for at least five years are ineligible for concessions but an investigation by the business publication El Financiero determined that 81 percent of concessions included foreigner involvement (Kimitch 2006b). Development has also happened within the first 50 meters and in dimensions that counter environmental protection such as cutting down mangrove trees (which are nationally protected) and filling in estuaries while not paying the appropriate fees.
Before development happens all new projects have to complete an environmental evaluation process with SETENA. The Organic Environmental Law 7554 created SETENA as part of MINAET in 1995. Businesses must go through an initial environmental evaluation to determine the level of environmental impact and to receive a categorization based on the designation given. Those classifications are a B2 (low impact), a B1 (moderate impact), or an A (high impact). B1s need to then submit an environmental management plan, *Plan de Gestión Ambiental*, which would highlight the environmental measures the development is taking to mitigate harm. B2s have to conduct an Environmental Impact Study, *Estudio de Impacto Ambiental*. Final permits are granted from municipalities based on this process (SETENA 2010).

The gulf between the development procedure described above and the reality in Tamarindo is larger than the giant leatherback turtles that call Tamarindo home. There are six different categories of land management according to the Organic Environmental Law for environmentally protected land: national parks, biological reserves, protectorate zones, national wildlife refuges, wetlands, and natural monuments. These six can be further subdivided and there are also additional categories of conservation. The entire greater community of Tamarindo falls under some form of protected land beginning with its location in the greater Área de Conservación Tempisque that covers the whole canton of Santa Cruz. The town is part of El Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas and the Tamarindo National Wildlife Refuge that consists of the Tamarindo estuary where 80 percent of the area is a mangrove forest. From the beginning of tourism growth
development should have been harnessed if only because the entire town is legally protected some how.

The Municipality is the local link ensuring that development is happening in an appropriate and lawful manner. Their responsibilities include designing and approving land use development plans, enforcing the national environmental regulations pertaining to building, covering the issue of construction and business permits, and they have the sweeping authority to demolish any property that counters the law. The Santa Cruz Municipality, however, is accused of incompetence, favoritism, and corruption from almost all groups in Tamarindo. One guanacasteco leader stated, “The guanacasteco does not believe in his municipal government, does not believe in this. Does not believe in the municipalities to be able to defend their cause, their right . . . they don’t trust” ([My translation] Leandro, interview by author, 20 January 2009). Another guanacasteco independent guide and community leader who has lived in the area his entire life described his inability after six years of waiting to get a permit to build a small house:

I have six years, seven years almost of trying to get a concession so to be able to build something that, I am a local of Tamarindo I have lived here 33 years and my father 60 years . . . the municipality say that I lack this and of that, but others arrived that did not have the papers and they arrived to throw out $5,000 and already then have a concession . . . I went to talk to a lawyer and they told me “ah it is that they paid $5,000 for to give them permission” ([My translation] Pedro, interview by author, 15 December 2008).

A Tamarindo cabina business owner from the Central Valley, doña Nina, was weary to tell me about the corruption problem due to her perceived belief of dangerous repercussions but she said, “there is a company, a Costa Rican company, a Costa Rican
guy from Santa Cruz who is able to achieve all things. Believe me, if you need a construction permission he will get it, but he will get it his way, meaning that he avoids and he splits the money” (doña Nina, interview by author, 26 January 2008).

During my time in Tamarindo I was always hesitant with respondents on how to discuss the “corruption” problem. It is something that is difficult to “prove” but almost every respondent mentioned corruption in the local government. There are two events, however, that add substance to their accusations. In 2006, Pastor Gomez then mayor of Santa Cruz was suspended for six months then resigned due to his attempting to sell the permits to turn Parque de la Independencia, a designated park inside the Maritime Terrestrial Zone in Tamarindo, into a supermarket and parking lot for an exchange of US $350,000 from an Italian investor (Hayman 2006). In 2009, while I was in Tamarindo, Mayor Jorge Chavarría was imprisoned and under investigation “for misappropriation, breach of public duties, speculation, and embezzlement of public funds, among others” (Kluth 2009:14).

The 2010 CREST report argued that in Costa Rica the “existing legal framework suffers from internal deficiencies and inconsistencies, overlapping authorities, and a heavy reliance on weak and ill-equipped municipal governments” (Honey et al. 2010:23). One foreigner in Tamarindo who has worked in environmental protection stated: “there is a disconnection between the laws in this country and the implementation of the laws, a huge disconnection and that’s true about you know building permits and the agencies actually speaking to each other and getting their act together so that one agency says
‘yes’ and the other says ‘no,’ and they overlap and you’re like ‘what?’” (Dana, interview by author, 6 January 2009). Although the procedures are outlined through MINAET, SETENA, and the ICT there is room for varying perspectives and it seems that depending on which official you speak to you are given a different answer about what can and cannot be done. One excursion operator expressed, “it depends on who you talk to, and then it’s open to interpretation” (Rita, interview by author, 19 January 2009).

The Costa Rican government does not have the money or the resources and a well-trained public staff that can put the “beautifully worded proposals and laws and committees, and Plan de Manéjos” into implementation in Tamarindo (Dana, interview by author, 6 January 2009). Without that capability the marketing practices and certification strategies hailing sustainable tourism at the ICT will always be questionable.

The ICT in Tamarindo is reviled by many small tourism business owners, all foreigners, but supported by the large hotels who also market their “sustainable tourism” credentials. These hotels, like the Diría and Barceló, have not protected against aguas negras and it is hard to understand why they were given concessions to build within the 250 meter mark in the first place (although the “original” Diria was constructed prior to the law). The Barceló had to fill in parts of the San Francisco Estuary during construction and the Diría is so close to the high tide mark that visitors can sometimes literally jump over the Diría waist-high concrete fence right into the ocean. It is doubtful that Costa Rican institutions can continue to signal their leading stance in sustainable tourism while turning a blind eye and increasingly supporting mega tourism growth and its sister real estate
In 2006, the state-owned commercial bank, Banco Nacional de Costa Rica, began lending specifically to foreigners through their “residential tourism real estate” program (Honey et al. 2010). Funneling the US $30 million lent thus far to 363 projects to local community members and entrepreneurs instead would have served local Guanacastecos more.

Shaky institutions – education, tax policies, ICT, MINAET, SETENA, municipalities – hurt the weakest members of Costa Rican society most. While appreciating that there are employment options in tourism, Guanacastecos are finding themselves incapable of finding positions beyond the bottom, low service sector. Tourism development has brought on new ethnoracial hierarchies with foreigners on top and local community members and Nicaraguans on the bottom. The history of underdevelopment, racialization of Guanacastecos, and weak institutions that have fostered foreign land and business take over has left them at a weak position of truly capturing the gains to participation in the tour operator global value chain. Furthermore, if Tamarindo tourism collapses due to unchecked growth they will be the ones with the most to lose.

5.3.3 Fighting for Tamarindo – Contesting Voices and Landscapes

The fight for Tamarindo is not a foregone conclusion. One thing about the massive changes in the community is that they are undeniably in your face. You cannot walk anywhere without noticing scaffolding, construction workers, and extreme prices with any indication that foresight, preparation, and plans were made. These blatant
images have spurred action among community groups, media outlets, and varying property owners. One group, *La Asociación Pro Mejoras de Playa Tamarindo* (ProMejoras) was foreign-began and led by a group of expatriate community members who wanted to fill the hole for community leadership, steering Tamarindo toward sustainable development. The other group, *Asociación Integral de Playa Tamarindo* is mostly all Costa Rican-led. It is part of the larger *Asociación* tradition in the Costa Rican legal structure that gives voice to community citizens. Pro Mejoras has a shaky past with leadership and group direction being dictated by special interests. The few successes they have achieved, nonetheless, are important milestones. The successes do not get to the heart of the issue, however, which is that the group is of mostly noncitizens who have different resources and access, and they are fundamentally trying to shape and judge a direction of a community and country they are visitors in. The Association Integral on-the-other-hand is all *tico* and *guanacasteco* but lacks resources and membership to fully influence affectively against the tide of foreign capital.

Importantly, the foreigners working and living in Tamarindo are not a homogenous group. They may all receive the privileges of a different citizenship and racial background that brings with it better education, work opportunities, and wealth when they land in Tamarindo, but once they get there many take on various perspectives regarding their role and responsibility in turning Tamarindo into its current state. In 2005, a group of foreign writers began the *in your face, we’re-going-to-put-everything-out-there* magazine, *Flyswatter*. *Flyswatter* addressed all the issues Tamarindo faces –
uncontrolled development, inequality, crime – but with a wink and a smile. Humor became a tool to talk about the “big ugly American” while admitting they are all him in some way.

ProMejoras began in 1995 as a private member dues-based organization that was originally concerned about recycling and garbage collection. For nine years they operated a garbage collection program. As the organization grew, membership and leadership changed, and the goals of the group changed, as well. Over the years different coordinating groups have worked on issues such as increasing security, establishing a lifeguard program, working to build a wastewater treatment plant, and establishing the ecological blue flag program. As Tamarindo continued to change with the onslaught of real estate development their focus went to ensuring that the necessary government bodies in San José knew what was going on in Tamarindo. Real estate projects that were on their target list included Naxos, Crystal Sands, and the marketed sustainable condo option, Tamarindo Preserve. They temporally stopped construction of the US $425 million Tamarindo Preserve located along the San Francisco estuary in Playa Langosta telling SETENA that the Preserve’s permits should not have been issued due to construction in a nationally protected mangrove habitat. All of the projects Pro Mejoras went after have completed or are still in the progress. Developers complained that the group was being overly influenced by “rogue” members of the Association (Schmidt 2007b).
Their longest and most daunting project was procuring the funds, working with the appropriate government offices, and contracting the work out for the creation of the Plan Regulador, “Urban Regulating Plan.” Although different land protection categories makeup Tamarindo, and require proper procedures before developing, Tamarindo lacked a comprehensive development plan when tourism hit and they have felt the pain ever since. In 2005, in congruence with the Municipality of Santa Cruz and the National Institute of Housing and Development, the deal was made for ProMejoras to spearhead the formation of the Plan. The entire Plan would include the greater Tamarindo community which entails the guanacasteco communities of Santa Rosa, Villa Real, Hernández, Linderos, Llantas, La Garita, Cebadilla, and Cañafístula and would outline in detail all the steps firms and individuals needed to take if they wanted to enlarge, demolition, restore, or construct on any piece of land in the area. It would also settle the matter of the categories of land property fell under, whether it be a mangrove protection, agriculture, residential, green, or commercial zone. Figure 9 shows the zones of the District of Tamarindo as outlined in the Plan.
Figure 9: Plan Regulador Map of Tamarindo
In 2008, the Plan was complete but it was far from being approved. ProMejoras and the architect of the plan have presented its structure to local guanacasteco communities for their input. It still needs approval from SETENA and the Santa Cruz Municipality. The backlog of moving forward with implementing maintains the chaotic development status quo in the area. It also highlights the strained symbolism of what ProMejoras represents to many guanacastecos – foreign led interests. In their 2007 statement to the community published in the Tamarindo News, the organization even acknowledged their checkered existence: “The Pro Mejoras Association has had a somewhat volatile existence. Many of you don’t trust the association or find it inefficient. Some think it represents big business and others think its anti development” (Tamarindo News 2007). They go on to say, “What the association really represents is our community.” But who exactly is that community?

Most active members of the group are business owners or property owners in Tamarindo and Langosta, which are almost completely American or European. The Costa Ricans who are part of the organization are highlighted as the “face” of the group but are originally from the Central Valley and actively still live or spend most of their time there. One local guanacasteco said that the group “utilizan la cara de los Ticos para poder el chanchullo” “uses the face of Ticos to be able [to do] the swindle” ([My translation] Pedro, interview by author, 15 December 2008). The first language of the meetings is English with translation privately given if there are those who prefer Spanish. If English is not a fluent language for participants it is easy to get lost in the mix. In the
group there are power struggles between those who fall strongly on the environmental protection side and those who want to work with big developers. The internal tensions and multiple directions give the appearance that the group is motivated by the special interests of the members and who is voted into leadership.

Overall, the group has very clear assumptions and judgments of exactly how they expect the government should work. Rather than doing their own research, taking a step back, and asking themselves: “How do I understand Costa Rican laws and government procedures?” “What is the manner in which things get done here?” “What can I learn from guanacastecos and the local indigenous communities?” they moved forward with tackling problems with a privileged Western mindset without reflecting on what it means to be guests in Costa Rica. One foreigner who is critical of the organization stated, “I’m a non dues paying member. I would never give them a dollar. I don’t agree with how they do things. I don’t like how they treat Costa Ricans. I don’t like how they think they know everything about Costa Rica and how to do it here” (Dana, interview by author, 6 January 2009). She went on to highlight that part of the Costa Rican way was the development of interpersonal relationships along the lines of trust and respect that to foreigners seems inefficient and useless:

It’s going to take the Costa Rican way a bunch of times talking together and chisme [gossip] and this and that for us, for it, for trust to form, for us to be able to positively work together . . . you need to have some coffee, and maybe next time you meet you ask for one thing, and then maybe next time you do this, its not [like] you are going to go to the municipality and make your proposal and have a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (laugh). No way! No way! (Dana, interview by author, 6 January 2009).
Notwithstanding the severe deficiencies outlined between the disconnect between Costa Rican institutions, laws and procedures and the reality on the ground, foreign business owners and immigrants have to realize that it is their responsibility to humble themselves, learn the language, reach out to guanacastecos and examine their own privileged position before progress gets made. Regardless how well intentioned the group’s goals are – and there are some very sincere, hard working, and reflective members of the group – until they proactively incorporate the input and leadership of guanacastecos of all class backgrounds it will always be perceived as a foreign dominant intervention. One Costa Rican business owner, doña Nina, stated that she thought the group was “Elite. Elite. Look for their [self interest]” and that when it comes to saying they care about the local communities her thoughts were that “they say, they say . . . but I doubt it. No. I think that the more they get rid of us, us the ticos, the better they would be . . . that might be very tough thing to say, maybe we are like trash in the eye, la basura en el ojo” (doña Nina, interview by author, 26 January 2009).

In 2008, the Asociación Integral de Playa Tamarindo started to meet to become the official community voice of Tamarindo. These meetings are markedly different than ProMejoras. Everyone speaks Spanish and most everyone is from the area or the Central Valley. Democratic-based procedures are practiced that follow the format of community municipalities across the country. Despite their grounding in Costa Rican traditions they have an uphill battle. They are a new group, with limited members, and few people know about them. They are weakly funded through the municipality, but mostly they are also
blatantly outnumbered in power resources due to most of those who live and own in Tamarindo being foreign. There is relatively no collaboration between Pro Mejoras and the Asociación. When I approached collaboration in discussions with Pro Mejoras members the responses ranged from “they are so underfunded with weak resources,” to “maybe they can help with relations with the Municipality.” The Association is also run by one main leader who volunteers time and space for meetings but as one other member stated he can not do it all: “It’s beautiful, but one sparrow does not make a nest” (doña Nina, interview by author, 26 January 2009).

For full participatory democracy to flourish in Tamarindo and for the issues at hand to be addressed and fought for, outreach needs to be made with the majority of guanacasteco workers who travel daily into the town to toll away at tourism jobs. The Asociación Integral while being guanacasteco and tico is still mostly based on ownership status and management. The guanacasteco workers are the forgotten shadows following all construction, tourism experience, and community battles experienced on their doorsteps. They come into Tamarindo daily and are expected to feel grateful that they have a job and earn small salaries while watching US $400,000 condos being built on the country’s protected land.

When the magazine Flyswatter began publication in 2005 they put a mirror up to Tamarindo and forced everyone to take a look. Part of that reflection was a full account of the fact that gringos run the town while guanacastecos work it. Self-reflection and deprecation of the foreign invader became a ubiquitous theme with unscrupulous
developers becoming the “truly modern conquistadores.” But, Flyswatter also made you laugh, and assaults were done with humor along with eye-opening candor. Their covers, (see Figure 10) personify their style: brash, honest, over-the-top, and challenging.

Figure 10: Flyswatter Covers and Photos

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The few years *Flyswatter* was in publication issues were not “brushed under the carpet” and nothing was off limits. *Flyswatter* was catered to foreigners and it highlighted all the havoc foreigners can do to a tourism town. The question still remains, though, how does biting commentary translate to the reestablishment of Costa Ricans charting their own community future and when do foreigners take a back seat?

Globalizing gentrification may be too complete in Tamarindo for it to ever reach that point.

After years of active neglect the central government is realizing the mess that was created in Tamarindo. In January 2009, the Constitutional Court of Costa Rica, SALA IV, suspended all ongoing construction in Las Baulas National Park and granted six months for new sites to complete an environmental impact study. The government wants to move forward in the expropriation of private property in the park, roughly 50 percent of property, and worth millions of dollars, but they lack the funds and political will. The group the Leatherback Trust, who was instrumental in the creation of the Park, is in disagreement of the pacing of the expropriations, and the government who worked directly with the group in supporting Park research and fundraising, asked for an accounting of all funds raised by the group. The Arias government also proposed making legal land use changes to the park that would allow for some parts of the park to be run as mixed private/public use space to allow for continued development. The bill died in committee in April 2010.
6.4 Now What?

Tamarindo is on a long bumpy ride in tourism development. The area is fully incorporated into the tour operator global value chain with the *New York Times, Forbes* magazine, and other international media hailing it as a destination. The hotels that are incorporated, through packages offered from global tour operators and national tour operators, however, are the largest, most luxurious, and most all are foreign-owned. A strong ethnoracial division of ownership exists with foreigners on top as owners and managers, Costa Ricans from the Central Valley mostly as managers and high-skilled workers, and local *guanacastecos* as low-skill workers. Local *guanacastecos* are hampered by a historical neglect of Guanacaste, an almost complete loss of their land, and the continued poor education system that hinders them from being able to acquire the skills necessary to compete for higher placed tourism jobs. Stereotypes about *guanacasteco* worker capabilities further serves to fuel the stratification process and create beliefs about racialized skills.

The much-ballyhooed potential environmental disaster that Tamarindo faces due to unregulated, unchecked, growth and the management of it by weak institutions is important. Ultimately, however, we need to turn our focus to the silent majority who are dropped off on the 6 a.m. bus who after chatting with their friends and fellow workers and buying a *fresca* embark on their long day ensuring that our tourist experiences fit the image and standards we bring with us to this tiny developing country. They smile as we ask (in English) about the air conditioner, why we don’t have more pillows, why the
monkeys scream early in the morning, and why the water pressure is so low. For one to two dollars an hour they make sure that our chase for paradise is met. A paradise that for them is more allusive than ever.
6. “You’re not Costa Rican” – Cahuita, Limón

During my fieldwork in Cahuita every morning I sat in an open-walled café on the locally made picnic tables, drinking a café con leche, admiring the low hanging tropical flowers, and watching the town wake up. From the table I could see the city center park that was the main juncture demarcating the way to the Guápiles Highway, the main road connecting the small towns in the South Caribbean part of Costa Rica to Limón; and calle principal, the hub of Cahuita town that is lined with bars, restaurants, and dead-ends at Cahuita National Park. In the city center park sat a mix of locals, young moms with their kids and young and older Rasta men who embody a lifestyle they think will give them the “good life” while meeting the expectations of female tourists. Through the generations these men have risen and fallen with the effects of tourism growth where drugs, sex, crime and mixed-race children have shaped the perception of the town as much as the reality of historical, institutional neglect and underdevelopment. In the vast banana plantations you see after travelling through Braulio Carrillo National Park on Guápiles Highway to get to Limón and further south to Cahuita are the remnants to the over fifty years of the United Fruit Company’s (UFCO) presence in the region that personified the first racialized global value chain for Costa Rica. Between the switch from cacao to banana cultivation, back to cacao, to tourism, the country’s most racially diverse province has had to negotiate new global industrial arrangements and firm practices, Costa Rican government policies, and the narrative of Costa Rican exceptionalism in their attempt to
not only capture the gains from the tourism global value chain but to survive the Atlantic coast version of globalizing gentrification.

Cahuita is breathtakingly beautiful. It is hard to not be hypnotized by its allure. It is located in the largest canton in Costa Rica, Talamanca that has 50.90 square kilometers with 55 percent corresponding to three national parks, Chirripó, la Amistad, and Cahuita. Thirty-one percent is occupied by the indigenous reserves of Kéköldi, Bribrí, Cabécar and Telire and two percent is the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge (Gudiño 2007). Only 12 percent represents non-protected areas. It is not unusual for two-toed sloths with their crooked smile to greet you outside your window. Walking down the street you are cloaked in the humidity depths with the scents and textures of bougainvillea, birds of paradise, and bromeliads; and you are in awe of the draping coconut palm trees lounging over the black and white sand beaches where sun pierces through the leaves creating the illusion of a crystal-filled Caribbean Sea.

It is the people, however, who have called Cahuita home for over a hundred years who give the area its distinct appeal. They are the descendants of Afro-Caribbeans from the Antilles, Afro-Latinos from Panama, the Bribrí, Kéköldi and Cabécar, guanacasteco, and more recently, from countries in the global North. The local family names of Smith, Ferguson, Palmer, and Spencer anchor the history of the town in its struggle for acceptance, distribution of national resources, and citizenship rights. These struggles have evolved in the context of tourism global value chain placement where local business ownership is cloistered in the main Cahuita town, foreign ownership dominates the
adjoining area of Playa Negra, and tourism jobs overall are limited. Differing from Tamarindo, however, all tourism businesses, foreign and local, have to contend with the fallout of the spatial racialization of Limón province from national tour operators, national media outlets, and global travel guidebooks. Furthermore, foreigners and locals work together in Cahuita with foreign participation in the local asociación. This “different type of foreigner,” nonetheless, does not negate the fact that foreigners came to Cahuita with cultural capital and racial privilege that advantageously positions them in competing for tourism dollars. Being conceptualized as “not Costa Rican” carries widely different consequences for foreigners than for Afro-Costa Ricans.

6.1 The President, Moniliales, a Park, and Pan Bun

Cahuita traces its history to the young bachelor fisherman who migrated from then Colombia and Nicaragua who later brought their families or began families with the indigenous Bribrí, Kéköldi, and Cabécar women from the Talamanca mountains in the nineteenth century (Palmer 2005). Throughout the stages of Cahuita’s existence the town has negotiated their relationship to the Costa Rican state and the global economy. The movement from turtle fishing, cacao and banana production, and finally tourism is marked, as Vandegrift (2001) described, by racial projects that defined community members relationship to the State, foreign powers, and national identity narratives. Key stories of the “founding” of Cahuita, the death of cacao with the fungus moniliales, the creation of the Cahuita National Park, and how current cahuiteños have experienced racism situates how we understand the incorporation of Cahuita into the tour operator
global value chain and the current governance relationships, institutions, and marketing strategies that dictate participation and distribution effects.

The town had its official “founding” described in oral histories with a shipwreck, a president, and the much admired *cahuiteño* hospitality. In 1910, Costa Rican president Alfredo Flores found his crew and ship, the Cristina, washed ashore where they were quickly assisted by local families and with the president staying at William Smith’s house. In gratitude the president bought property from Mr. Smith, subdivided the area, and gave land and titles to the community members. This event, the presidential sanctioning of Cahuita, is part of the lore and narrative *cahuiteños* have used in their continued negotiations with the State regarding land and citizenship rights (see Figure 11).

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**Figure 11: Mural Depicting Founding of Cahuita**
The history of Cahuita is most famously chronicled in Paula Palmer’s oral history text *What Happen* ([1979] 2005). In a series of interviews in the 1970s, Palmer told the story of the original cahuiteño families, their community structures, social organization, and transnational identity connections. While there is some debate in the community regarding the accuracy of some of the stories and the wider ethical question of exactly who benefitted from the publishing of the text, the work should be commended for being one of the first attempts to describe the life of Costa Ricans along the Atlantic coast through the folk history stories of the inhabitants themselves. Palmer specifically outlines cahuiteños’ connection to the UFCO via selling provisions to workers but importantly through their relationship as contract farmers. As discussed in “Chapter 3,” UFCO created racial divisions of labor and played groups off of each other with the support of the Costa Rican government who looked at the region as the land of black foreign others. Cahuiteños were part of the extended network of arrendatarios, “independent producers” who cultivated bananas for the Company. As Palmer (2005:139) wrote:

> This way the company passed on the risks of production to the arrendatarios while it enjoyed a monopoly on the marketing of their products. The Company generally exploited the fertile, freshly cleared land for the first ten years then as productivity declined it leased the exhausted soils to arrendatarios…by 1929 after the company had been exploiting Talamanca soils for 20 years 71 percent of bananas exported from the Sixaola and Bocas del Toro Divisions were cultivated by independent producers.

Independent producers had to grow bananas that met the stringent standards set by the Company and the “natural” bananas that are indigenous to the areas (small, easily
bruised, and grows between trees and the cacao) were not allowed to be cultivated, and often the company refused to buy the produce. Even after the UFCO left and when local farmers returned back to cacao farming there was the perception the UFCO and the government colluded to “introduce the banana plantation again” and were the cause of the moniliales fungus outbreak. Returning to cacao cultivation was a relatively successful endeavor where farmers would bring their produce to market in Limón. When monilia came all the farms that were formerly in the old UFCO train line from Penhurst to Estrella Valley to Limón was cacao. Now they are all banana plantations. In the words of one local who has lived in Cahuita for over sixty years and whose father was a farmer; “They got it. They got everything” (doña Noni, interview by author, 2 March 2009).

The belief in Cahuita that monilia was spread purposely is a strong narrative in the community. It follows the awareness from members that they were never treated with respect and/or supported by the central government even when they have petitioned for their rights. All older generation cahuiteños I spoke to mentioned the coming of monilia with memories of planes, contestation with the central government, and ultimately as the event that paved the path toward tourism. One older cahuiteño tour operator stated, “People say it is [a] natural disease and we don’t believe in natural disease. Because we could see and remember that there was a plane which came and sprayed and from this spray, this word monilia came” (don Samuel, interview with author, 9 February 2009). The belief in poisoning being proactively used goes all the way back, according to
Palmer (2005:129), to the Bribrí suspecting that the UFCO arranged the assassination via poisoning of their last king, Antonio Saldaña, in 1910 because he was a vocal critic of the Company. These perceptions are all tied to cahuiteños’ relationship to the UFCO and the State. Their inability to economically survive in the mode they saw fit; the lack of developmental support in the form of crop development, infrastructure, education and healthcare received; and in their precarious position regarding land usage are all connected to outside forces. This came to a climax when the same year monilia struck the Cahuita National Park was created without the approval or insight of the community. As Martin (2003:11) wrote, “while this may have been coincidental, it was not interpreted as such by many residents.”

Executive Decree declared Cahuita National Park (CNP) in 1978. This was the culmination of plans beginning in 1969 to conserve the area and develop tourism that started with declaring Cahuita Peninsula a national monument in 1970 (Martin 2003). There were farms and houses in the CNP. Due to an absence of legal land titles and lack of funding owners were not compensated for their loss of property and livelihood. Vandegrift (2001) wrote that 58 percent of the farms had less than five hectares and roughly fifty farms were affected by the conservation. Martin (2003) documented how the CNP came to symbolize the dichotomies of government abuse and the community’s greatest asset. After years of administration confusion, and what the community deemed was complete alienation from the development and management of the CNP, they made their voices heard as loudly as they possibly could through a community wide protest in
1994 where they stormed the park. The protest was to dispute the decision from President José María Figueres’ government to raise park entry fees. On February 13, 1997 an unprecedented agreement was signed that established a park management committee that would be filled mostly by locals and reaffirmed the call to compensate owners of expropriated land.

6.1.1 “That mountain thing was just like the race barrier, right there”

The founding of Cahuita, the rise and fall of banana and cacao cultivation, and the final creation of the Cahuita National Park are key historical moments that marked the way toward tourism for the tiny town. The events personify how community members would come to understand their rights and how they believed the State in collusion with global powers tries to marginalize them. These events and the narratives that surround them are tropes that the community uses to explain the challenges they continue to face with the development of global tourism – threat of loss of land, lack of economic resources and opportunities beyond tourism, and the negative imagery used to describe the Atlantic coast. For many cahuiteños their struggles and agency they employ is a consequence of their racialized lived experiences. They have a keen awareness that they traditionally were never considered part of Costa Rica and that the mantra of Costa Rican exceptionalism excluded them. The geographic race barrier between the Atlantic coast and the rest of Costa Rica created racialized spaces but it also solidified a more stringent race divide in comparison to how race is understood as a continuum in other Latin
American contexts. In some regards, every person living along the Atlantic coast except individuals from the global North becomes *un negro*.

This classification of residents is dismayed by some and proclaimed by others. I had one *mestizo* appearing young man say to me while walking down the road in a non-tourist part of town, “I am from Cahuita but I am not a negro”; and another light-skinned business owner proclaimed over dinner, “my mother is from Heredia, father from Salvador . . . and *ahora soy negro*.” As Sharman noted (2001), racialized space has created an ideology of blackness for the region regardless of the fact that contemporary Limón is now a predominantly white city. *Cahuiteños*, and *limonese* are subjected to blackness and negotiate the category with various forms of incorporation to disdain.

Racial classification was tied to place and was demarcated by more than phenotype. Blackness from the Atlantic coast is “part of a physio spatial reification of race in white Costa Rican society that associates blackness and danger with certain portions of the national landscape” (Sharman 2001:46). The history of the Atlantic coast and individual’s position in the community, who they married, how long they have lived there, and their family connections all shaped personal racial identity constructions. It was personal experiences of traveling to the *Meseta Central* for work, to live, or to visit family that was the defining moment, however, for many residents in understanding their own racial position. As one American foreigner stated who lives in Tamarindo and traveled to Cahuita as part of the first wave of “los hippies”: “That mountain thing was just like the race barrier, right there” (Caleb, interview by author, 25 January 2009).
Both older and younger generations of *cahuiteños* have their personal Central Valley stories. For the older generation memories of believing that they were not allowed to travel to the area prior to 1948 still lingers. One local tour operator commented: “We had problems because when the first people wanted to send their kids to San José, you cannot . . . so you send them back to Limón because even in 1948 it was prohibited for us, the black people, to go to San José. We would come back with black and blue or beat up or killed. They murdered us because we were not allowed to go there” (don Samuel, interview by author, 9 February 2009). Putnam (2010:299) noted that despite the fact that no “official” race-based geographic restriction ever existed the “informal violence that policed spatial segregation within Costa Rica territory left scarred memories” and widespread beliefs to the contrary. For many, Turrialba would always be the de-facto color line and if crossed consequences would follow.

An older *cabina* owner, doña Noni, spoke of the traumatic experiences that befell her in San José:

They would call, “look at the negro” sometimes in San José when I went over there and I had 23-24 years old I was in Coronado the area, kids would follow you [and say] “look at the negra, look at her hair” . . . “*mira a el pelo*,” they would want to touch you . . . and when [I] would go to Alajuela and you would go in some of the *pulperias* and they would say, “wow, it’s going to rain it’s dark, clouds dark, *negros*” (doña Noni, interview by author, 2 March 2009).

Doña Noni was of Afro-Costa Rican and Bribrí descent and spent her entire life in Cahuita but her appearance marked her as *una negra de Limón*. Doña Noni’s youth experiences in San José during the 1960s have carried on for the later generations. She described the experiences her nephew has recently gone through: “My nephew was living
in Heredia and he would say, he’d tell his parents, they use to call him ‘pan bun’ in school; ‘pan bun,’ ‘Cocorí’ . . . He’d come home and [say] he’s not negro, ‘yo soy chocolcate.’ He’s like my color. ‘Yo no soy negro, yo soy chocolate,’” (doña Noni, interview by author, 2 March 2009).

Using descriptors like “pan bun,” and “Cocorí” allude to the racialized assumptions Central Valley residents have of Afro-Costa Ricans and demarcates their difference. *Pan bun* refers to Caribbean sweet bread with spices, rum, and fruits. Cocorí is the title character of a little boy in Joaquín Gutiérrez’s children book titled *Cocorí* (see Figure 12). It is a book much beloved in the Central Valley of Costa Rica and it is taught in the schools. While studying in San José my Spanish professor even brought the book for me to read as part of my language lessons and she described it as “precioso.” Minnott (2005:16) highlighted how Afro-Costa Ricans fought against the stereotypical and discriminatory descriptions in the book that they argued gave their children low self-esteem but it was not until 2003 that the Ministry of Education took the book off of its compulsory read list for primary schools. Morúa (2004) argued that the description of the characters in *Cocorí* helped privilege the white Costa Rican view where whiteness is beautiful (the little girl is “soft and pink”) while blackness is strange and exotic (Cocorí is different from Costa Rican “sensibilities” and “traditions”).
Spending time in the Central Valley or outside of Costa Rica becomes an economic must for young *cahuiteños* due to high unemployment rates in Limón province and the lack of opportunities. Once they arrived they often describe how their sense of blackness becomes heightened by the reactions to their presence in the region. One *cahuiteño* who has worked as a tourist guide and restaurant waiter described how he would be harassed by police in particular San José neighborhoods: “When you go walking down to the street, going to a club or something, they rush after you and they arrest you, and stuff like that, sometimes it’s physical . . . Escazu early in the nineties, cause it’s a rich neighborhood, there’s a black man and they think they will steal . . .
Cartago is pretty bad” (Kahindi, interview by author, 22 March 2009). Another now cahuiteño business owner who lived in San José during his late teens from 1994-1998 said that “he had a hard time living there” and that “white people” would stare at him on the bus and that he would get stopped and harassed at banks (Nico, interview by author, 10 March 2009).

The experiences cahuiteños have, young and old, in the Central Valley serves the purpose of reminding them that they are not considered to be part of Costa Rican culture and are in fact at best exotic and at worse dangerous and inferior. The customs that have marked their life by living on the Atlantic coast and through the mixtures of multiple cultural influences – Antillean, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, English, indigenous Costa Rican – is constructed ultimately as not Costa Rican. This brought material consequences when global tourism arrived but it also demonstrates a psychological burden many carry. Doña Noni discussed the shame and confusion to racial identity in Costa Rica when she describes her interaction with los espanoles as a child:

They would say, “Come here” and you would go up to them, and you could hardly speak Spanish and they would say, “What did you have for lunch today?” . . . it was like “oh my God,” and you’d say, “Come yame” and they’d say “See what are you telling me, negra de Jamaica . . . you’re not Costa Rican,” and you’d feel so bad . . . That’s why most of the older kids don’t eat yame. “I don’t eat yame; I don’t eat fruta pan” (interview by author, 2 March 2009).

6.2 “This is God’s land and this is love and peace and they put their ‘hamacas’ anywhere!” – Global Tourism Arrives in Cahuita

After the UFCO, monilia and the Cahuita National Park came “los hippies.” Cahuita would never be the same and tourism became the only economic viable option
for residents. *Los hippies* are discussed with a mix of humor and a bit of scorn with some residents remembering how nice they were and how they wanted to learn from them while others remember the drugs, the sex, and lack of respect. Doña Kate remembers how: “They remained in the house the whole day! They came, had breakfast, stayed having coffee all day with us: cup of coffee, talking, going to the beach, returning, eat the food that we eat, rice, beans, fish,” ([My translation] doña Kate, interview by author, 16 March 2009). Don Gustavo remembers them as a “*colonia de hippies*” that took over the beaches with “*nudistas*” and “drugs” (don Gustavo, interview by author 12 March 2009). Doña Noni revealing the humor with the scorn recounted their tourism philosophy as “yeah, this is God’s land and this is love and peace and they put their *hamacas* anywhere!” (doña Noni, interview by author, 2 March 2009). Anywhere included doña Noni’s property and her beloved porch.

The hippies would come to represent contemporary foreign expatriates living in Cahuita today. Like in Tamarindo, they own businesses, mostly restaurants and “upscale” lodgings but they are less representative as local arrangers and excursion operators as they are in Tamarindo. In some ways they also personify the first foreigners that came to Tamarindo. In Cahuita the foreign expatriates and locals are much more intermixed, Spanish is the dominant language with a mix of English, and the foreigners who are here, for the most part, want a different lifestyle path than the one epitomized in the condominium-developed Pacific coast. As one young *cahuiteño* worker stated, “*aquí, los gringos conocen la gente*” “Here, the foreigners know the people.” ([My translation]}
David, interview by author 3 Feb. 2009) and another expatriate who brought his whole family including children to live in Cahuita stated, “My role here has been to stop judging or try to be less judgmental and just observe and try to [learn]” (Finn, interview by author, 17 February 2009). You rarely heard in Tamarindo, what one foreigner who was renting shop space in Cahuita said, “I feel like insulting not having learned the language already” (Elle, interview by author, 9 March 2009). This is also a testament of the overall tourists who are attracted to the area. Frohlick and Johnston describe them as tourists who are “attracted to the associations of anti-materialism, anti-development and authenticity with such land forms. In their home countries in the global North, they are yoga teachers, massage therapists, health practitioners and school teachers. Many hold beliefs in new age spirituality, astrology and environmentalism, and aspire to living ‘off the grid’” (2011:1101-1102).

Nonetheless, the beginning of global tourism growth followed decades of underdevelopment, multinational company influence, and racial identity state making in the Central Valley. When Cahuita entered the tour operator global value chain the locals had limited capital resources, lack of infrastructure and human capital, and were inhabitants of a racialized geographic space. Foreigners in Cahuita, as in Tamarindo, were able to fill a hole needed for capital injection and service skills. They were able to bring their education, money, and racial capital, created in Europe and the United States to Cahuita, and take a service provider role with tourism. Cahuiteños, however, unlike in Tamarindo, have been able to hold onto their property, particularly in the city center area,
and have now embraced tourism development. The challenges they face regarding their position in the value chain is now a product of the practices of firms along the chain, globally and in San José, and with the legacy of older racial projects and contemporary policies that create racial divisions, with no overt intent. Furthermore, foreigner and local alike all must negotiate the marketing of Limón as the land of los negros.

6.2.1 Tour Operator Global Value Chain in Cahuita and an Ethnoracial Division of Ownership and Labor

The tour operator global value chain in Cahuita is small and limited. Unlike Tamarindo, Cahuita businesses are mostly excluded from all of the linkages. While international tourists still go to Cahuita via the independent travel distribution channel options mostly, they are disconnected to the tour operator driven distribution channels. The sample of global tour operators from the United States and national tour operators in Central Valley I examine do not offer Cahuita as a local destination on their Costa Rican trip itineraries. Only a few global tour operators out of Europe send tourists on packages to Cahuita, and they do so directly, not through working with an incoming agent in San José. The other packaged form of distribution international tourists use to arrive in Cahuita is through excursion offerings provided by cruise lines that stop in Limón, a form of bubble travel. These excursions are arranged via national tour operators in San José who come to Cahuita to visit the National Park and maybe eat at a local restaurant. Cruise passengers rarely stay in Cahuita longer than a few hours.

In Figure 13 I outline the connections between the firms on the tour operator global value chain connecting to Cahuita. The two main pre-arranged distribution
options by global actors and national intermediaries bypass in direct relations most of the Cahuita tourism business actors – local arrangers, accommodation providers, and area guides. The few global tour operators that book with local accommodation providers work with mid-range and/or boutique establishments in Playa Negra, the northern area of Cahuita along the black sand beaches, that are owned by foreigners. The cabinas that are located in the center of town and are owned by cahuiteños are not included. Local tour operators and independent guides loosely affiliated with local operators are mostly indirectly attached to the value chain if they receive bookings from the mid-range and boutique hotels. A couple of local tour operators receive bookings from both global and national tour operators for particular excursions or transportation needs. No Cahuita businesses are directly, and few are indirectly, linked to the cruise distribution channel. Cruise passengers arrive in Cahuita on arranged transportation from national tour operators who bring them to the CNP and provide their own guide services. The only businesses that may receive some financial gain are the few restaurants and souvenir shops located close to the CNP.
6.2.1.1 Kaleidoscope of Firms and Ethnoracial Divisions

There are only three types of hotels, no excursion operations per se, only local tour operators who operate as local arrangers and excursion providers, and area guides that make up the tour operator global value chain in Cahuita. Restaurants and souvenir shops exist, and provide services to tourists, but unlike in Tamarindo they do not sell tours or excursions for a commission, as was commonly advertised in Tamarindo. There are also no property management offices or condominiums that may provide tour
operation services. By-and-large, the scale is much smaller in Cahuita even if the geographic space is similar.

The accommodation offerings in Cahuita fall only within the forty-bed count max. The more “luxurious” or boutique style hotels, where the seclusion and lushness of the tropics is marketed, for many beyond fenced property, are located in Playa Negra on the road heading north from Cahuita along the coast. Properties such as Playa Negra Guest House, Atlántida Lodge, and El Encanto B&B are examples of properties in Playa Negra that offer small-scale, limited exclusion along the picturesque landscape on the streets of Playa Negra. Private tropical gardens, swimming pools, and gourmet breakfasts are aspects to the particular tourism service these offerings strive to provide; a mantra of one with nature but with comfort. In contrast, the center of town is where the main cabinas are based. There are cabinas in Playa Negra but their hub is in town. The cabinas go for comfort, as well, but in a more sparse and basic décor. The ubiquitous accessory for cabinas in Cahuita is a hammock, a fan, and a coffee maker if you are lucky. Some cabinas offer more of a communal, youth hostel atmosphere to them while others, particularly those facing the sea, are based in old wood houses that were turned into lodging with extra rooms. The balcony, the breeze, and the endless sea are all that is needed.

The local arrangers in Cahuita are the local tour operators. They arrange trips to locations mostly throughout the Southern Caribbean part of Costa Rica but also to Tortuguero, the most popular Atlantic coast tourism destination, and weekend get-a-ways
to Bocas del Toro, Panama. They also provide transportation services and are a one-stop-shop for area recommendations. The local tour operators execute most of the excursion operations, such as hiking to Cahuita Falls, going on nature walks through the Cahuita National Park and the Wildlife Refuge, whitewater rafter in Río Pacuare, or snorkeling. They may work with independent guides who own fishing boats or horses to help in the execution of the tour. They also may sub-contract out parts of a tour, such as logistics, for clients while they are in Panama. Trips to the Bribrí indigenous reserves are also popular and they may work with the Bribrí in providing reserve tours, demonstrations in cacao cultivation and chocolate recipes, or they may travel to the reserves independently. Their offices in Cahuita often become local hangouts where guides, tourists, and residents all mix together. Many offer Internet browsing, limited café services, sell souvenirs, and are overall, one of the many places in Cahuita where local *chisme* “gossip” happens.

The local guides work with sometimes one tour operator exclusively, multiple tour operators, or try to market and book directly themselves. They are typically members of the established *cahuiteño* families and their extended family may own a restaurant, *cabina*, or other small business. Many were former fishermen who if they kept their boat transitioned into tourism. The last group of guides works for the Cahuita National Park and give tours for a donation and/or fee from tourists who travel there. CNP guides are supposed to accompany tour groups in the Park but that practice is rarely enforced. Most of the guides in Cahuita are self-taught and have honed their craft
through experience and local indigenous knowledge and have a particular local flare that is not found with non-local guides (see Figures 14 and 15 of tour operators).

Figure 14: Typical Tour Operator Office in Cahuita
The ethnoracial divisions in ownership (see Table 17) and labor are not as acute in Cahuita partly because there are fewer tourism jobs due to the lack of large hotels and heightened seasonality, but also because many cahuíteños have held on to their property and developed it into cabinas and sodas or have rented out their space to foreign proprietors. Nonetheless, apropos to the racialization of space in Limón, the ownership patterns are demarcated by geography. The midrange and boutique hotels, tour businesses, and restaurants along the Playa Negra road along the coastline belong to foreigners, mainly European and Canadian. The town center is where the cabinas and other businesses are owned by Afro-Costa Ricans mostly, but also some Colombian and Italian ownership. The European foreigners in the town center mainly rent space for their restaurants but there are also a few foreign hotel and cabina owners, as well. Many of
the foreigners in the center are married, in a relationship with, or were formerly in a relationship with cahuiteños. You will see Italians and cahuiteña women, and older European and Canadian women who have been in Cahuita, for some, decades, and have had children with cahuiteños. The racial lines become more blurred with each passing generation.

There is no clear labor division, as well. Because the businesses overall are small for the ones that have foreign ownership or management, foreigners are likely to be seen multi-skilling: greeting tourists, doing bookings, cleaning rooms, etc. Furthermore, family labor is often used for both cahuiteño and foreign ownership establishments. When non-ownership or family labor is not used, it might include some local cahuiteña women who act as waitress or retail attendant or do part time housekeeping for accommodation establishments. You will also find cahuiteña women selling food on the side-of-the-road or offering hair-braiding services from their houses. Some indigenous women do low skill tourism work for the hotels in Playa Negra but most of the indigenous-based jobs are in the reserves. There is also a small group of mostly male Afro-Costa Rican day laborers that make their rounds every morning doing odd jobs for businesses. This might entail cleaning up the town center park, cutting back brush with a machete, or picking up bottles and soda cans. Many of them have substance abuse problems but are from long established Cahuita families. The community takes responsibility for them and treats them as wayward family members that need a break. Thus, the tourism jobs in Cahuita are limited in number, casual, and typically off-the-
books. If residents want to stay in Cahuita, however, tourism work is basically the only option.

Table 17: Cahuita Ethnoracial Divisions of Ownership and Labor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americans, Western Europeans (Italians, French), Canadians</td>
<td>Hotel owners Playa Negra, Restaurant owners Cahuita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Bribri, Kekoldi, Cabecar</td>
<td>Reserve excursion and packaged tour providers, some low skill workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cabina owners Cahuita, Business owners Cahuita, Guides, Workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: interviews, field notes

The less clear labor divisions does not equate to equality, though. The foreign-owned businesses are included in the tour operator global value chain, have marketing influence, international networks, and capital resources to improve their facilities. Their foreign status also helps to separate them from the racialized marketing images of the province even though they are also affected. They also have the resources to continue with the slow building trend of buying up property. As in Tamarindo, those that have bought property were able to come in and take advantage of locals’ desperation for money and lack of knowledge as it pertains to land value and tourism potential. The cahuiteños that are more successful have traveled in the Central Valley and outside of Costa Rica, are educated, and have networks beyond the south Caribbean. One community leader who is also an area historian stated about locals:

Most is non-educated. They just here, didn’t move. So what education can you get here in the farms? So now, somebody comes and they say, “Yeah, I give you US $10,000” and they say “yeah” and they sell. People start teaching I can’t live without money. So they say see they have to buy everything they think they need money and they start to exchange what they have for money. So they didn’t know
no education, how many square meters, or anything like that; what is a square meter, how much should a square meter cost? So they don’t have like a clue of what land cost so they give away the land (don Teo, interview by author, 27 February 2009).

Another Afro-Costa Rican business owner stated that even when locals tried to discuss with a lawyer about the land transaction, more likely than not, the lawyer was hired by the foreign buyer and was biased. He went on to describe how Cahuita tourism business owners are at a disadvantage: “Tourism is a good option but they need to prepare themselves because right now we are just working in diapers. Yes, we are working in diapers, because now we got to get our clothes on and stuff and you know, set it off, because this industry is about goods and services and the more you offer, if you are good at what you are doing then the people recommend you” (Nico, interview by author 10 March 2009). The lack of education, historical neglect of the region, and limited resources puts cahuiteños at a competitive disadvantage. They have received cumulative disadvantages. As Nico stated, they are in “diapers” while foreigners are metaphorically in suits and ties. Moreover, tourism business success also does not carry the same importance for foreigners. For cahuiteños it is about survival, for foreigners it is about chasing paradise, as doña Kate, a cabina owner in the center of town, articulated: “They talk that this is a paradise, that they like it. But this is a standard of living for us. The foreigner sells. Buy here cheap, develop, and sell” ([My translation] doña Kate, interview by author, 8 February 2009).

Moreover, some foreigners also have a similar construction of the worker quality of cahuiteños that foreigners had for guanacastecos in Tamarindo. Although there are
not quantitatively as many direct tourism jobs depicting worker-owner relationships, when there are *cahuiteño* workers they are subject to the same low pay and racialized stereotypical assumptions. Resident workers describe wage rates ranging from 5-10 thousand colones a day; roughly US $10-20, to monthly salaries between 40-70 thousand colones; $80-140. Workers are aware that they are being paid Costa Rican wages while their employers are charging international prices for services. One community leader who also worked as a casual day laborer discussed the pricing practices: “This owner of *cabinas* had a tourism influence and said something, arrived ten tourists and they left thirty, forty dollars for each person, that’s 400 dollars, of this four hundred dollars only paid twenty dollars to the employee and they said, ‘I paid you well’” ([My translation] don Gustavo, interview by author 12 March 2009).

When I asked a hotel owner in Playa Negra about training options for local tourism workers he stated: “Well, now, I don’t know if INA will be working with some courses for training in the tourist zones. I imagine – no, I don’t know it, the truth is I don’t know, its recent, but also here the people don’t have so much . . . for example their desire to work is not like other parts of the country. (They say) ‘I don’t want to work’ . . . and if you don’t want to work that much than the less you are going to train yourself” ([My translation] Nathan, interview by author, 16 February 2009). The owner went on to discuss how hard it is to find workers in the area and they ultimately hired an *indígena* woman. He used a narrative of an untrained, lazy workforce that proactively chooses not to work. A narrative that continues to separate Limón province from the rest of Costa
Rica and devalues the skills and abilities of Afro-Costa Ricans because they are seemed to be antithetical to their foreign standards.

In her study of tourism development in neighboring Puerto Viejo to the south of Cahuita, Vandegrift noted how eighty percent of the foreign business owners she surveyed cited “the local labor force as the worst part of doing business in Puerto Viejo” (2008:792). One of her respondents that was a foreign worker stated: “the blacks here are tranquilos ‘laid back,’ vagos ‘lazy,’ divinos, ‘divine’! We are divided by work, of course. If the blacks from here could do what we do, we the foreigners would not be needed” (Vandegrift 2001:131). Vandegrift argues that foreign business owners and workers do not link state underdevelopment and neglect of the Atlantic coast in their assumptions regarding local workers and in the process create “racist hierarchies of worthiness and efficacy” (Vandegrift 2001:131). Therefore, residents in the south Caribbean of Costa Rica are subject to potential employment discrimination from foreign owners who “underestimate black workers’ skills” and who perpetuate racialized stereotypes of local capabilities. Afro-Costa Ricans are not considered to have the ability to meet international tourists’ expectations.

6.2.2 Governance Structures and Ethnoracial Stratification

There are three main governance linkages along the tour operator global value chain connected to Cahuita that call attention to how we can understand value chain exclusion along racial lines. The relationships connecting global tour operators and national tour operators to Cahuita-based hotels tell a story of delinkage rather than
linkage as does the connection between global cruise lines and national tour operators. The few hotels that are part of the tour packages of global and national operators are foreign-owned and based in Playa Negra. For the two Cahuita-owned hotels that receive some tour bookings one is not Afro-Costa Rican and is also a local tour operator and the other has expansive family networks in Germany. Even these two, nonetheless, were not included as suppliers in my sample of tour operators analyzed. As a shore excursion destination for cruise passengers, Cahuita mainly serves as “a place” with a national park, but few businesses are incorporated. Most Cahuita tourism businesses rely on independent travelers, “backpackers”; and for local guides, relationships with local hotels, *cabinas*, and tour operators to get bookings. Cahuita businesses then also incorporate indigenous reserves by creating area tours to visit the reserves. The reserves, however, receive further distribution support from ACTUAR and the Talamanca ecotourism network.

Thus, the practice of exclusion by global and national tour operators keeps *cahuiteños* from fully benefiting from global tourism development by shutting off these distribution channels. Exclusion is not a passive practice. As addressed in “Chapter 4” Cahuita is proactively left out of tour packages as a destination and in supplier networks based upon racialized assumptions about the region and its inhabitants. The few firms that are included are foreign-owned and ran. Cumulative advantage and racial privilege positions foreign businesses over local. Local business owners have to fight against institutional underdevelopment and a lack of opportunities in the region that keep them at
a structural disadvantage in gaining the financial capital, skills, and connections to successfully compete in the industry, which is further aggravated by racial stereotypes of workers and the local culture.

6.2.2.1 Global and National Tour Operators and Hotels

In Tables 18 and 19 I outline a sample of Cahuita hotels located in the town center and in Playa Negra and if they are part of the global and national tour operator packages as suppliers. This governance linkage incorporates foreign business owners and excludes Afro-Costa Ricans. The only hotels that are in the network for the global tour operators are based in Playa Negra but these global tour operators are not part of the American outbound market based tour operators that are part of my sample. My respondents told me about these few, smaller European tour operators – French, Dutch, Swiss – during my time in the field. One particular global operator seems to be the main global operator bringing tours to Cahuita with many of the hotels in Playa Negra and a couple of the local tour operators having contracts with them. Two foreign-owned hotels in Playa Negra, Suizo and Atlántida, are a part of four of the national tour operators’ packaged tours. Greenway Tours also has a stop to Cahuita National Park in one of their itineraries but the hotel where they stay at is in Puerto Viejo.
Table 18: Cahuita Hotels in Global Tour Operator Packages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinas Arrecife</th>
<th>Cabinas Smith</th>
<th>Cabinas Palmer</th>
<th>Ciudad Perdida</th>
<th>Capitan Suizo</th>
<th>Hotel Jaguar</th>
<th>Playa Negra Guesthouse</th>
<th>El Encanto B&amp;B</th>
<th>Atlántida Lodge</th>
<th>Tort.</th>
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When national and global tour operators add a Limón province destination to their itineraries it is usually to Tortuguero or Puerto Viejo (Tort. and PV in the Tables). Puerto Viejo is mostly excluded from the global tour operator’s packages that prefer only a Tortuguero stop, but it is on many national tour operators’ national tours. Tortuguero National Park is fifty-two miles northwest of Limón and is not considered part of the racialized space construction of the Southern Caribbean part of Limón. It is remote with many areas only accessible by boat. It also represents part of the global conservation movement that created ecotourism opportunities. American Herpetologist Archie Carr founded the Caribbean Conservation Corporation Green Turtle Research Station in Tortuguero to monitor dwindling sea turtle populations. Some locals have been able to gain turtle guiding and conservation and animal protection skills through active engagement and training opportunities with the research centers in Tortuguero but divisions are growing between residents who have and have not gained from tourism (Honey 1999).

When the Southern Caribbean part of Costa Rica is a destination on the national tour operators itinerary it is mostly only through lodging facilities in Puerto Viejo. Like Cahuita, Puerto Viejo is historically an Afro-Costa Rican town, but the locals in Puerto Viejo were less successful in holding on to their property and the town is almost completely dominated by foreign-owned businesses, who like foreigners in Cahuita, have access to international marketing outlets and distribution channels. By 2001, Vandegrift (2001) found that over sixty percent of the town’s businesses were in the hands of
foreigners, a number that has increased in the last ten years. Puerto Viejo with its famed surf break, Rasta influence, and party nightlife is chosen as the sole “Caribbean” culture example to sell to tourists if they want to fulfill their expectations of Caribbean tourist desires but it is the “white expatriate residents [who] more easily met their needs” (Vandegrift 2001:157). Even when national tour operators included Cahuita National Park into the excursions for their south Caribbean destinations, they typically stayed in Puerto Viejo. Of the national tour operators, ARA Tours was the only one that described the town of Cahuita in their itineraries and had excursions that included the CNP and to a nature reserve to view and participate in the process of turning cacao to chocolate.

6.2.2.2 Cruise Lines and National Tour Operators, and Guides

Some international tourists arrive to Cahuita through shore excursions provided by international cruise lines that stop in Limón. According to the Junta de Administración Portuaria y Desarrollo Económica de la Vertiente Atlántica (JAPDEVA), the autonomous government development organization for the Atlantic coast, 135 cruises docked at Limón between August 2010-2011 representing such companies as Carnival Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean. As the Tico Times reported in 2011, the challenge for Atlantic coast residents and Limón city leaders was to keep tourist spending in the region in the context of Central Valley tour operators who “whisk away any potential business” (Tico Times 2011). According to Seidl, Guiliano, and Pratt (2007), the average stay of visitors who disembark in Costa Rica is twelve hours, and 45-65 percent of those that do, purchased local tours while on board with the most popular
tours being visits to Tortuguero and a forest canopy tram ride through Braulio Carrillo National Park.

Cruise lines gain the most from shore excursions and reportedly receive up to 50 percent commission on all bookings and pay a very low US $2.09 per passenger head tax with most of the remaining profits going to national tour operators (Honey et al. 2010). The governance relationship between cruise lines and national operators excludes Afro-Costa Ricans, indigenous, and foreigners in Cahuita. This exclusion is witnessed in three main ways: (1) visits focusing on the CNP; (2) creating restricted access to cruise passengers at the port; and (3) standards and assumptions from national tour operators. On the surface, it may appear that cahuiteños are included because cruise passengers come to the CNP, but the fact that they arrive via San José tour operators who bring their own guides and transport them around amounts to very few local businesses benefitting. As one cabina owner stated: “I don’t know how they make the packages, but we are not benefiting in anything. The guides are not from here, nothing. They don’t eat here, nothing . . . the only thing that I know is that we are not benefiting in anything. Including the people from Limón are not benefitting because all the buses and guides are from San José” ([My translation] doña Kate, interview by author, 16 March 2009).

Cruise lines also restrict access to passengers when they initially dock. One cahuiteño who had worked as a tour guide stated, “I know there are restricted areas for people to enter inside the dock . . . you can’t get inside. You got to have a tour permission and you have to have identification with your face and name and have to
already have a contract with the cruise ship” (Kahindi, interview by author, 22 March 2009). In Figure 16 there are transport vehicles awaiting to enter the main port facility to pick up cruise passengers for shore excursions; and Figure 17 depicts the private curio selling area in the port where passengers can buy souvenirs without entering into Limón.

Figure 16: Transport Vans for Cruise Passengers Await Entry in Limón
The few residents in Cahuita who have attempted to become suppliers for cruise lines mostly do so through sub-contracting negotiations with national tour operators in San José. In order to be suppliers for cruise lines there are high, costly standards particularly surrounding safety and insurance. The national tour guides can also require additional standards such as extra vehicles and guides for groups. The national operators also have their own assumptions about the quality of regional guides that can be race-based. Doña Noni described the hurdles that a Cahuita-based foreigner from South America had in meeting the demands of a national tour operator:

She had to pay all these insurances and licenses and this and that and then there was hardly anybody. She wasn’t getting anybody and finally when she got a big group they would tell her you have to get two buses; this for that boat. Some could come on one bus but they wouldn’t allow it. It was too much money for her and she had to get more tour guides and then she told me that she got, umm, black
girls in the area and they did not want them. They didn’t want them from Limón. They were tour guides but they were not professional from San José. And this company wanted them to . . . I don’t remember the company. They say, “No we don’t want no negros from Limón” (interview by author, 2 March 2009).

The experience of Cahuita residents and those from the greater Limón region in attempting to be incorporated into the cruise line bubble travel distribution channel as suppliers demonstrates how national tour operators control shore excursions; cruise passenger access is tightly restricted; and assumptions regarding quality of workers to meet cruise passengers needs can be racialized. Residents have limited opportunities to successfully compete against national tour operators in becoming suppliers of choice for the cruise lines and they are subject to the high demands and racial assumptions of national operators. As one tour operator, restaurant owner in Cahuita stated, “The cruiser or the cruise line, or the tour, whatever they do here, is big companies. Swiss Travels and those, so those are monsters when it comes to tourism. You can’t fight against them” (Nico, interview with author, 20 March 2009).

Thus, cahuiteño guides are excluded on multiple fronts. They are not chosen by national tour operators for shore excursions or for when the limited times a trip to CNP may be added to the national itineraries of tour packages. As one tour operator stated, “they have their own guides walk them through the park and then walk them back out and then ship them out” (Nico, interview by author, 20 March 2009), and their locally acquired skills are constantly challenged in the context of university educated San José guides. Many guides receive their training from their elders and parents who teach them the local dialect words and the homegrown created knowledge of regional flora and fauna.
that highlight the community’s natural history and experience with the environment. Their English also is labeled non education-based because it was taught at home with a mix of creole words and with a local Afro-Costa Rican accent. It is framed as “ingles de negro” and marked as inappropriate, not proper, and according to doña Noni constructed as “to speak negro is less than nada” (interview by author, 2 March 2009).

Tour operator and restaurateur, Nico, describes how the overemphasis on school-centered learning misses much of the local knowledge that is only attainable by lived experiences.

I have met people coming to university and they learn their stuff in and when they come in the field it is all different, so, I realize that I know more than them even if they study. Probably, technically, okay that is the name, but I say, look, this is this because that is a common name and a part of that this is what it does to you blah, blah, blah. . . They would say, yeah, but it looks so different and I say, yeah, because you don’t know the feel, you know the technical part, but I know the feel (interview by author, 10 March 2009).

Nico went on to describe because local knowledge and culture is so undervalued the only local businesses who are getting any bookings or business from national operators, and the guides that accompany the tours, are those that have “argolla” literally translating to “ring” but represents a local saying about those who have “contacts.” Because most guides and overall businesses in the center of town are excluded the ability to have argolla is difficult and rarely crosses the racial divide.

Guides and tour operators are left with the local hotels in Playa Negra, the cabinas in the center of town, and independent travelers who arrive to Cahuita as their main avenues for bookings. All area hotels and cabinas I spoke with said that they
wanted to support the local guides and tour operators and sent their guests their way
crossing ethno-racial classifications. There is also the hope of one day creating a Cahuita
guide association that would be able to set prices, standards, and do collective marketing
outreach in order to support the local sector and the community. Nico spoke of the
original vision for the idea when he stated:

But it would be more profitable and a lot more better because that way we can
unify prices, you can unify training on different things, everybody have different
criteria, so, you can get together and develop something really good for the
community. And in Manzanillo, the guides, they have a little situation, they are
working really good and I would say the way they are doing is not very hard, they
have a central office, they have all the guide lists and the tour operators, so
everything goes to the central office . . . Normally, if I am on my own I charge
$20, but, like they do it, they are the office and they charge $45 but out of the
forty-five, ten goes to community, five goes to other things and they administer
the money more better. So in the end, the tourists are coming to the town and
they are helping the community, as well (interview by author, 10 March 2009).

Creating a guide association is a long road coming, nevertheless, and it is challenging to
get people involved and to see beyond the immediate and their basic self-interest. As one
foreign shop renter who wants to support local cahuiteños gestured, it is important that
they move forward because “if they don’t, they are all going to lose their jobs anyway
and they are going to be pushed out” (Elle, interview with author, 9 March 2009). The
structure of the value chain is accelerating the process.

6.2.2 Institutions and Ethnoracial Stratification

Local residents of Limón province and Cahuita have lived their lives feeling a
strong sense of alienation from the central government and a deep frustration with the
neglect and underdevelopment that has plagued the region. As Costa Rica is praised for
their “tropical welfare state” after the Civil War, Limón did not receive the level of state investments in education, health care, clean water, electricity, and transportation access as witnessed in other parts of the country (Vandegrift 2001). As other scholar ethnographers of the South Caribbean coast communities have noted, the perception is that regional neglect is due to institutional racism (Vandegrift 2001; Martin 2003). This sentiment is so pervasive that white foreigners who have moved to Cahuita believe degrees of it, as well. A foreign hotel owner stated, “In the first place, I believe that for the blacks, because they are very racist (the government). That I believe is most important. The racism that they have. They do not want the blacks to prosper. Those in the Capital, the government, they oppose the growth of blacks” ([My translation] Bobby, interview by author, 10 March 2009).

Notwithstanding racial intentionality or not, the underdevelopment of the area, notably in education and transportation, and in economic sector support that is community inclusive has maintained the belief that the South Caribbean of Costa Rica as a tourist destination does not have the proper facilities, human capital, and infrastructure to accommodate international tourists. As addressed in “Chapter 4,” these reasons become part of the rationale that is used by national tour operators to not add Cahuita to tour packages. Further racial inequality is increased because a lack of institutional support of the area from the central government deprives cahuiteños of the opportunities to build their businesses, receive infrastructure services, and benefit from tourism growth in Costa Rica. When the region is not promoted and left out of destination imaging of the
country and/or highlighted with negative racialized discourse we see how overt and covert institutional practices create ethnoracial stratification.

In Cahuita the past and continued practices of the *Instituto costarricense de Turismo* (ICT) and the recent ruling of the Constitutional Court, SALA IV, are specific institutional government bodies that helps to create ethnoracial divisions of ownership along businesses in the value chain. The ICT’s lack of development support that is community inclusive stratifies all ethnoracial groups in Cahuita in benefiting from tourism in comparison to other tourism regions, like Guanacaste; and the SALA IV land decision incorporates foreigners in their ability to become property owners and tourism developers but stratifies *cahüiteno* Afro-Costa Ricans by taking away their chances to become title deed holders and in developing tourism businesses. Residents in Cahuita, like Tamarindo, are also fighting the state of tourism development in their small town albeit for differing reasons. Foreigners and *cahüiteños* alike are joining forces to address community issues through the local *Asociación* and past activism success, personified by the unprecedented agreement reached with the government in jointly administering Cahuita National Park, spurs the community in the fight.

### 6.2.2.1 “*Precaristas*”: Contested Land and Development – the ICT and SALA IV

The ICT has both neglected and attempted to change Cahuita. Neglect is detected by the historical ignoring of the Atlantic coast as a tourism destination and in devising comprehensive policies that assist local tourism entrepreneur development. Neglect, nonetheless, is in congruence with their attempts to change Cahuita. A change that,
according to residents, is not community inclusive and created but pushed to reflect a vision of tourism development that looks more like the Guanacaste coast – large hotel developments, real estate properties, and foreign investment driven. Over the decades, the ICT has had sporadic visits to Cahuita and held meetings in the community center to show residents glossy plans and maps of Cahuita that would develop tourism in the area according to their specifications. Cahuiteños asked: “Where are we in these plans” and subsequently rejected them and told the officials to “go back to San Jose.” A cabina owner in the center of town described the ICT meeting with locals as one where people were told they would have to sell and move even though houses had been in families for generations. Residents were in the way to a tourism vision for Cahuita. Tour operator and local businessman, Nico remarked, “They (ICT) just want to impose. They just want to say, okay, this is what I want to do here and that’s it. They didn’t say ‘Do you have an opinion’ or ‘Do you agree with this or not’? No. They just came” (interview by author, 20 March 2009).

The ICT has yet to be back to Cahuita with new plans but the fear of their return is situated in their insecure land deed situation. As one community leader stated, “El ICT dijo que todos los cahuiteños éramos ‘precaristas,’” “The ICT said that all cahuiteños were squatters” ([My translation] don Gustavo, interview with author, 12 March 2009). Conceptualizing cahuiteños as squatters serves to delegitimize their claims to land rights that counters the mandates in the Maritime Terrestrial Zone Law passed in 1977. The law that makes it illegal to own property within 50 meters of the high tide line and
requires concessions from the government for the next 150 meters was not devised and implemented with the input of the residents along the coasts whose ancestry is connected to their environment and land.

When the Law first passed areas that were classified as “cities” were excluded from the mandates in the Law. City designations were given to Jacó, Quepos and Puntarenas on the Central Pacific coast side but not on the Atlantic. That changed in 2005 when the Legislative Assembly in San José decreed the communities of Cahuita and Puerto Viejo as cities. With the designation, property owners that could prove they were legal possessors for over forty years of the lands they occupied could apply for title deeds. The process of proving legal possession is long, complex, and financially difficult. Just as residents began to go through the process the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (SALA IV) ruled in 2009 that the 2005 law granting city titles to Cahuita and Puerto Viejo was unconstitutional. The irony was not lost on community members when the Court argued that it would be “creating a privileged treatment for a segment of the population” (Tico Times 2011). Rather than being a “privileged” group, many cahuiteños viewed it as another example of the long historical marginalization of the Atlantic coast and concurred with former Afro-Costa Rican Puerto Viejo legislator Edwin Patterson, who helped push the original 2005 city law, and called the court’s decision “racist discrimination against the Afro-Caribbean populations that live along the East coast” and stated to the Tico Times, “I’m sad because our people have let themselves
be fooled into believing that because they gave us a piece of paper, it meant we were citizens” (2011).

Without definitive legal access to their land cahuiteños are not able to build Cahuita up themselves through investment renovations in their businesses or to build new facilities on their properties. With titled deeds land can be used as collateral for bank loans to raise capital, but without it locals have virtually no opportunities to raise investment funds sans migrating out of Costa Rica to work. That option is fairly limited as well due to cumbersome legal procedures in gaining work visas. A director of the local business chamber commerce summed up the challenges when asked what are the investment opportunities for local:

Very limited. If a John guy wants to buy, let’s say, a car or a taxi or maybe they want to buy a little boat they can take people from here to Bocas del Toro, or somebody wants to get equipment to do driving, and they go to a bank, the local banks in this country and if you want a loan, let’s say $20,000 or $50,000, depending on the type of business, they are going to ask about guarantee, using the mortgage, what type of guarantee? I will see, okay, myself my business and maybe my father the cosigner, they say “oh no, with that type of guarantee we can led you $5,000 or may $3,000. We need a guarantee of land.” Okay, if the entrepreneur is an Indian, it is even worse, because the land cannot be given as a guarantee and these people around here, many people have lost their land because they have given the land as guarantee and the business went fine, but they didn’t develop the way it was suppose to be and then the bank comes and gets the piece of land. It is really bad. I don’t see any government entity, which is really helping John entrepreneur in this way, saying okay we have half a million dollars in colones and we can help at least let’s say, 20 guys, we are going to give money, not with guarantee of land in some cases but with the guarantee of the guy and maybe 2 co-signers, that really would help (interview by author, don Steven 18 February 2009).

Land allows locals the ability to maintain Cahuita business and home ownership and become tourism entrepreneurs. Without the ability to use land as a way to raise finances
to reinvest in their properties they cannot compete with the foreigners who come to the area with access, networks, and resources. They also cannot develop accommodation structures that tour operators typically prefer on their tour packages. As don Steven mentioned, however, land titles does not guarantee success and locals who have put their land up as guarantees have lost it and many times still do not get the loan. Doña Noni was unsuccessful in her attempt to gain finance to grow her artisan business.

Banks, they wouldn’t give me. First, because I’m a women; and second because I’m a black woman. Because I have friends who told me they went in a bank and got money, Spanish, white Costa Ricans. So she told me why don’t you go to Banco Angelo they are living loans to start small businesses. So, I wanted to go in. I do artesanía I wanted to make that stuff for shops. And they make . . . I went through all the process the papers and this and that I went up and they say, “No.” I said why didn’t you tell me from the start, I spent so much money to get papers, on accountants and this and that . . . and she said “no se puede” (interview by author, 2 March 2009).

Doña Noni believes that she was turned away due to her dual subjectivity that for her and many others is witnessed materially through prolonged neglect of the Atlantic coast. Her lack of being unable to get support although she went through the bureaucratic hurdles and harbored the financial expense of filling out all the appropriate paperwork was a testament to her that businesses in the Central Valley and the government did not want to help local residents along the Atlantic coast.

6.2.2.2 “We always fighting; always trying to beat down prejudices” – Local Activism

Vandegrift’s noted in her study of local activism from neighboring Puerto Viejo that residents used “the most quintessential of Costa Rican citizens’ responses to state neglect: protest. A joke on a t-shirt in San José lists huelgas, striking or picketing, as a
national pastime” (2007:135). Residents up and down the Atlantic coast have a long history of collectively fighting various powerful actors beginning with the United Fruit Company, the local municipality, and the central government for issues ranging from banana worker rights, out-grower farmer rights, land access, development control, and road infrastructure. As tour operator don Samuel asserted:

"The people from these Coasts like Cahuita, Puerto Viejo, Manzanillo, we always fight for rights and we think that if we are born and grow here, we should have some benefit from this place. It is not that somebody comes here, and because you have money, you move out people that have been born and grown here. I think that is not fair. I think the government should find a way that will open a way for the people to easily liaison and build what you want to build and develop the way. They regulate the plan but they give you the opportunity to build (interview by author, 10 February 2009).

Although Afro-Costa Ricans traditionally have never been constructed as Costa Rican, as Vandegrift argued, by protesting they actively contested “the construction of Costa Rican citizens as originating solely in the Central Valley or [are] only of European descent” and they demanded that their voices be heard and they receive the same distribution of benefits and opportunities that is afforded for all Costa Ricans (2007:135). Through action, they are “always fighting; always trying to beat down the prejudices” (interview by author, doña Noni, 2 March 2009) and their success with the CNP and with the original designation of Cahuita and Puerto Viejo as cities are examples that positive results can occur.

The creation of a Comite de Monejo to help manage and administer funds from Playa Blanca in Cahuita National Park is the constant example that the current Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Cahuita uses to request volunteers for various
committees and for donations, and when they need to give a call to arms for whatever important crisis the community might be facing. Don Samuel stated about the storming of Playa Blanca in the CNP in 1994 that, “Cahuita as a community is probably not too united in many things but when you got to fight for rights, they will die. It was like 800 people on the beach there when we took over that park. And the government came in with four container big trucks of police with machine guns, we said ‘you want the park, no problem, just kill us and take it over’” (interview with author, 10 February 2009).

The current crisis in Cahuita is SALA IV. While I was in Cahuita the Asociación was determining how to respond to the recent ruling. In the Salon Comunal, where high school students studied by day on old rickety desks in a one-room building with no real windows, a couple of chalk boards, and with a small fading mural greeting them on the side wall, the town gathered to hear impassioned speeches about their fate and their duty to take their grievances directly to the Legislative Assembly. Alumni from the storming of Playa Blanca led the discussion and planned out the town’s next steps. The audience of around fifty that included around seven foreigners sat for an hour as the town’s future looked more and more unsure.

The Asociación plays a pivotal role in providing a historical narrative for collective organization in Cahuita and institutional knowledge of the legal procedures and rights that as Costa Ricans they can access, but like any organization there are challenges with leadership, town perceptions, and changing demographics that may affect their future success and the ultimate face of Cahuita. There are four key leaders of the
**Asociación** who collectively control the direction of the group even though while I was in town the president was a young *cahuiteña* whose mother was Canadian and father was from one of the long established families. She was intelligent, passionate, and full of ideas to help Cahuita and create a future for young *cahuiteños* who found themselves in unpredictable positions where their future employment prospects beyond tourism, and even in tourism, were unsure. She almost single handedly fought with the municipality and raised funds to create the only children’s park in Cahuita. She was young, though, and as one business owner stated, “she is the president, good, but she is not the one making decisions. I use to be part of this association but I dropped out because I told them I don’t have time to lose with you guys” (Nico, interview by author, 20 March 2009).

The perception that leaders may have too much power and/or turn down ideas that do not meet their own personal beliefs regarding the proper growth of the community may discourage young, up-and-coming businesses and entrepreneurs to engage in community organizations. The *Asociación* leaders are the first step any community member has to go through if they want to propose any idea for the community. During closed session meetings members pitch their ideas, as I had to pitch my research when I first came to Cahuita. During my close-door meeting there was a gentleman who wanted to start a farmer’s market in Cahuita on weekends and a woman who wanted to address issues in the high school that needed to be taken to San José. We all received a peppering of questions about our projects and ideas and went away with our own perceptions of
how successful or not the meeting went. We were not allowed to stay after our pitches were made and we answered their questions.

As I walked to my apartment following the end of the meeting I felt a little uneasy, as if I may not have answered the questions well enough or was prepared enough. At-the-same-time, however, I was happy that there was an entity in the community that ultimately had the community’s best intentions at heart. I thought about how the leaders told me that many researchers have come and gone and they have heard nothing from them and that in the end the community seemed to benefit in no way from the research. I empathized and understood their position, as I know researchers have a long history of extracting data, in what they view as an objective, non-committed form, and ultimately produced work that benefitted their academic careers but possibly not the people who gave them the material for their success. In many ways that is an exploitative power relationship that recreates inequality in the field. I did not want to do that but walked away with the fear and knowledge that I might regardless of all my best intentions.

The older leaders who carry the long institutional knowledge and experience are needed, just as the new young cahuiteños are, to collectively shape Cahuita’s future and continue the legacy of standing up for their rights in the face of active neglect and marginalization. They can learn from each other. Yet as Cahuita continues to change with tourism and as more foreigners begin to come to Cahuita, even if they are different than the ones typically seen on the Pacific coast, the Asociación may not be able to hold on to that spirit and fire for protest that moved 800 people to take over Cahuita National
Park. Time will tell, and foreigners may become active members fighting with locals as foreigners do in Puerto Viejo, but it is foreigners in Puerto Viejo who hold most of the power and wealth and are now the new leaders. If the fight against SALA IV is unsuccessful a similar fate may transpire in Cahuita.

6.2.3 Marketing and Ethnoracial Stratification

Tourism is all about images and narratives. Tourists want to consume a particular product and experience that fits a fantasy or wish and often converges with preconceived belief and assumptions. How a destination is marketed broadly and perceived by a wider community has immense impacts on the success or failure of a tourism destination. The marketing form of the Atlantic coast is personified by neglect and negativity. They are neglected by the ICT and national tour operators, which through their role as intermediaries between the global and local, leads to neglect from global tour operators; and when the Atlantic coast is addressed by the local media, tourism agents at airports and taxis in San José, and in many global travel guidebooks the narratives used highlight negative aspects of perceived Atlantic coast racial stereotypes. The marketing neglect and overemphasis of negative descriptions excludes Afro-Costa Ricans from the value chain and stratifies foreigners. All groups are adversely affected by diminished tourist visitors but a few foreigners are used as suppliers in the value chain, and when they leave the Atlantic coast the imagery does not follow them like it does for Afro-Costa Ricans who are labeled *un negro de Limón*. The marketing also serves to separate the Atlantic coast from the exceptional narrative to describe Costa Rica in general. The Atlantic coast
is framed as not really Costa Rica because of Costa Rican state making identity processes of labeling Limón the home of imperial interests in the UFCO, a province full of foreign non-white citizens, and antithetical to the rural democracy historiography. The contemporary material consequences of the neglect and racialization of Limón disadvantages all residents in gaining from national tourism development.

6.2.3.1 Too Much Crime and too Many Blacks – Framing of and Steering from Limón

Residents in Cahuita are very aware of how the Atlantic coast is portrayed in national media outlets, by airport representatives, and travel guidebooks. As a hotel proprietor told the *Tico Times*, “We have a lot of problems but the main problem is the bad image of the zone” (2011). Discourse surrounding perceived high crime and dangerous settings, in congruence with the belief that the zone is populated with high proportions of blacks, are interwoven in a manner that creates fear of space that has become negatively racialized. Afro-Costa Rican, foreigner business owners, and town leaders lament the image and the ramification it has on the town in keeping tourists away. Several addressed how the airport tourism representatives and taxi cab drivers in San José proclaim “*no vaya*” “don’t go.” The *Tico Times* (2011) reported in an article about the underdevelopment of the region that Costa Ricans from the Central Valley fear the Caribbean coast because “they been scared off by the idea there’s a lot of black people, too many drugs and too much rain.” This fear is transferred to tourists when they arrive in San José.
Town leader don Gustavo stated, “There is a lot of discrimination because, a lot of discrimination, because from the airport when the tourists come down. ‘Where are you going?’ ‘To the Caribbean? ‘No, no, don’t go there’ . . . ‘God keeps no place in Limón, there they usually kill and usually rob and everything’” ([My translation] interview with author, 12 March 2009). Doña Kate a cabina owner also stated, “Since the airport, because the people that come here, the tourists always say to us that since they arrived to the airport they told them that don’t go to the Caribbean, that the people are not nice, that it is very dangerous” ([My translation] interview with author, 8 February, 2009).

Artisan and cabina owner doña Noni and foreign business renter Elle addressed how taxis also participate in the steering away from Limón. “They still tell the tourists ‘don’t go,’ ‘don’t go ’ . . . Like I have these tourists staying at my cabinas they were telling me last week that when there were coming they, the taxi driver when he get to Limón city to turn his way down here he stopped and he said ‘son negros’ ‘they are blacks,’ ‘solo son negroses,’ ‘only they are blacks,’ and the way he was saying it like . . . just be [afraid]” (doña Noni, interview with author, 2 March 2009). Elle commented:

We were there a few weeks ago, Pam and myself and we would get into a taxi and then they would be like okay, where are you from? Cahuita. “Oh, so much rain, why do you live there?” Very negative towards this side . . . They think there is too much drugs here, there is a lot of crime here. Which is ridiculous especially for people in San José to say that . . . I don’t know I feel like it is still some of the leftover residual racism in a way (interview with author, 9 March 2009).

It is hard for the residents to separate the reporting of crime and the steering away from the region and its racial tone. A foreign hotel owner described how there is a portrayal of a fear of blacks,
Clearly, the fear of blacks, always is a racist fear in San José that lives. And I here am able to say that there is with the tourist, that the people of Limón are lovely. Whatever problem that they have in Limón you find in places, or something. They always help me. I went to a bar in Limón where they didn’t have a seat. The people of the place rose and gave me a seat. People very nice ([My translation] Bobby, interview by author, 10 March 2009).

The foreigner description of racist perceptions of the province alludes to the complicated nature in which racism is seen apparently in the act of steering people away from the region but not in any reflection on the language they use to describe worker capabilities.

Limón, like other provinces, has crime and issues surrounding drugs. Most notably two female Americans were killed close to Cahuita in 2000, but the frequency of fear-laden headlines and lack of other reporting on the region from media outlets leaves a viewer or reader to believe that it is all the area has to offer. Furthermore, when crime happens it is never situated in a specific location or area of the province. It is one of the largest provinces of Costa Rica and when events happen it is often in isolated areas or areas quite remote from tourist attractions or the perpetuators are not locals. Tourism director of a local tourism association complained:

Also the media, some of them, some newspapers or TV stations or channels, every time something happens in the province of Limon, let’s say some guy was killed in Matina, well Matina and Guapiles, and what do you call them, they are areas, they are banana plantations . . . you see the newspaper headlines matados en Limón . . . here at the group we write, we write. I have written so many news letters to the newsmen saying, “listen, when you talk about these situations you have to be specific because Limon is a province” (don Steven, interview by author 18 February 2009).

Many guidebooks have also fueled this perception. Guidebooks are a very important form of marketing for Cahuita because they cater more to independent travelers
and backpackers who are more likely to visit the Atlantic coast, and because the region is practically fully excluded from tour operators’ itineraries. In a sample of guide book reviewed from the 1990s and 2000s I find there is some inconsistencies in the overall use of the crime-laden frame, because some writers note that it is somewhat exaggerated, but the overall tone of the language supports the assumption that the area is unsafe, thus, reinforcing the perception. Frommer’s wrote, “Over the past few years, the Caribbean Coast has garnered a reputation as being a dangerous drug-infested zone, rife with crime, and danger” (Greenspan 2000:284). Fodor’s was more blunt, “Most travelers get out of Limon as fast as they can, frightened off by warnings of theft, assault and drug problems. . . Cahuita’s bad reputation is not wholly undeserved. You probably will see signs of Caribbean Coast drug use in the form of a few crack heads muttering to themselves in the street” (1999:282, 287).

Even the Lonely Planet, the quintessential do no harm ethos book for travelers, is accused by locals as portraying an inadequate picture of the community. Tour operator Nico objected to the opinion-oriented nature of guidebooks and its reliance on sole, single author opinions: “Yeah, sometimes they get just one opinion of one people and they don’t experience it themselves, most of the time they just look up and say okay, these people was here, so general, this is bad, so lets put bad. So Lonely Planet is going to be good at

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1 I examined a sample of twenty texts from 1990-2006. They include Fodor’s (4), Lonely Planet (4), Frommer’s (4), Let’s Go (4), and a miscellaneous category consisting of different guide formats and personal traveler narratives (4). The four publishing brands represent the most widely distributed texts within the travel guidebook industry.
other things but is really bad, most of them, but most of the travelers that is bible for
them” (interview with author, 20 March 2009).

*Lonely Planet* was more balanced than the other guidebooks on highlighting the
exaggerated nature of crime in the area and discusses, unlike in the other books,
underdevelopment and marginalization of the region, but because it is a large source of
information for the backpacker crowd any potentially negative review based on one guide
writers’ experience can be devastating for business, as opinioned by Nico. The limited
amount of time spent in the locations and lack of more in-depth research misses a lot of
the story behind the assumptions. “Crack heads” to a guidebook writer are actually
community members who do odd jobs for local businesses for the town residents. Even
when guidebooks are updated much of the same descriptive text is kept from earlier
editions with only the basics of logistics, lodging, and sites being changed. This
perpetuates old assumptions even when they have started to be challenged.

6.2.3.2 *Rasta Girls – Sex, Race, and a Mixed-Race Generation*

Guidebooks also perpetuate, including the *Lonely Planet*, the view that Cahuita is
a sex tourism destination, particularly noted for female tourists who come to the area and
pursue sexual experiences with local men. Some guidebooks, however, flip the narrative
and instead of women being the pursuers, local men are to be warned against. *Fodor’s*
wrote, “Women should watch out on the Caribbean Coast, where overzealous local
seducers tend to take things way too far . . . female tourists who have naively wandered
off with a local for a friendly joint have ended up raped” (2001:404, 411). In this
example Cahuita men are to be feared and are the exploiters rather than placing any
responsibility on female tourists who may come to Cahuita to pursue their own form of
sexual, racial fantasy by being with a “beach boy” “gigolo,” “sanky panky”, “rent-a-
dread” or “Rasta” (Kempadoo 2004:77).

Kempadoo (2004) and Kibiochi (2009) documented in their studies the politics of
the “racialization of sexual desires and the eroticization of cultural difference” in the
commercial sex tourism trade in East Africa and the Caribbean. When sex tourism
involves men the imagery surrounds the eroticization of the Rastafarian man. The Rasta
has become a common global symbol in tourism destinations where there is an African
descendent population regardless if the cultural marker traditionally or historically
existed. From the Caribbean islands to along the coast of Central America to the East
African Indian Ocean beach localities, Rasta men can be found. They try to personify an
assumed image of black male sexuality and what Kempadoo (2004) labeled “hegemonic
Caribbean masculinity.” Dahles wrote that “for most foreign women ideal(ised) features
of masculinity are associated with the Rastafarian. The Rastafarian is thus constructed as
the most important, sexually more tempting than Western men” where dreadlocks
become an overt statement to signify sexual prowess, marijuana-induced philosophies,
and a female pleasing nature (quoted in Kibochi 2009:117).

Many cahuiteños feel that this image used to describe their town and neighboring
Puerto Viejo serves to further marginalize their ability to be perceived as a positive
tourist destination and inhabited by individuals who work hard, are dedicated to treating
others with respect, and who care about their futures and town. Nico, describes, “in the guidebooks, Cahuita was known like a place, the man town, just men” (interview by author, 20 March 2009) and Kahindi bemoans that he is perceived to fit the “Rasta” image: “Not all women come here looking for that . . . Some women come looking for that. They read the guidebooks, and they come out here. They write the book and tell the girls you got to have a condom and find a guy, and cocktails and have sex . . . Some girls ask me that” (interview by author, 22 March 2009). Several residents mentioned the guidebooks’ discussion about “bringing condoms.” This is a direct reference to the Lonely Planet’s description of Cahuita: “women should know that the town enjoys a free love reputation and evidently some female travelers do come here for a quick fling. Be prepared to pay your gent’s way around town and bring and use your condoms” (Miranda and Penland 2004:403). In their study on female tourists to the region who engage in sexual activity with locals, Frohlick and Johnston (2011:1103) noted that “women made explicit reference to tourism guidebook and tourism agencies” as marketing vehicles they used prior to traveling.

Ironically, the Rasta culture that is marketed about Cahuita is an imported culture. Even though there is a mixture of West Indian descendants in Cahuita from trickling down banana workers, the Rastafarian culture did not exist in Cahuita prior to the beginning of global tourist flows to the community. Artisan and cabina owner doña Noni who remembers the first wave of tourism following the fall of cacao emphasized that, “reggae Rastafarian, that’s not really, that’s not what was here . . . that came in, that was
importado, it was adopted, it was what the ladies want” (interview by author, 2 March 2009). It is hard to walk down the calle principal in Cahuita and not here Bob Marley’s greatest hits blasting from the local bars and restaurants. One rarely, if ever, heard Walter Ferguson’s calypso tunes describing life up and down the Atlantic coast. Don Walter is a beloved local folk hero who in the last decade has just begun to be recognized in the wider Costa Rican national artistic landscape, one of the only Atlantic coast artistic accomplishments recognized. Even though his image is seen on the tourism welcome sign as you enter Cahuita his influence is noticed little beyond that and the few die hard music fans who travel to Cahuita from Germany and the United States to try to meet the legend. Instead, a created narrative of Rasta men, marijuana use, and reggae is what some tourists seek.

Doña Noni noted how some local men have tried to fit this image in order to gain a better life:

Those first that started in that era, some of them die and younger one took it over, and another set took it over, and now it is kinda changing. The boys are not like that. They want to study, but the first generation, I had friends; I am talking of my own experiences. I was saying that everybody is saying, “I want to have one of these white women, and because I want to go travel I want to go to Europe; I want to go to America,” so they would do anything in the world to get one of them. Even change their habits like going without shoes, taking off their shirt, no combing their hair . . . yeah, the Rasta, they estupido, they try to be stupid (interview by author, 2 March 2009).

Local men and business owners are caught between “a damned if you do and damned if you don’t” situation regarding meeting the Rasta image or defying it entirely. Many of the young cahuiteño business owners and workers I met were smart, hardworking, and
had goals and aspirations for themselves and in building up Cahuita, but they were very aware of the image that surrounded them. In addition to notions about local sexual conquests, there were also assumptions regarding rampant marijuana use and locals distributing it freely. One day while sitting in a local cafe where I got to know the cahuiteño proprietor I was shocked to witness three young American kids walk into this professional restaurant establishment and proceed to loudly ask the young waiter for drugs who then looked at me and then escorted the kids to his boss who instead of throwing them out had to negotiate with them in a way that does not lose him business but also does not have him commit a crime. Although the imagery of Rasta has been unjustly appropriated for tourism, probably to the distress of true Rastafarians, it is one of the few things bringing tourists, although in a manner that negatively racializes cahuiteños.

The fallout of the Rasta image and the men who have engaged in relationships with foreign women is also a complicated one. As Kampadoo (2004) noted, most women from the global North who engage in sexual opportunities with locals in tourist destinations do not perceive themselves to be sex tourists. They construct narratives of themselves that they are seeking romance and love rather than sex even when monetary or other rewards are exchanged for companionship. In Cahuita, there are women who have come to Cahuita and engaged in relationships with local men that have lasted, with many women immigrating to the area and having children. Even when the relationship dissolves some foreign women have stayed while others return to their native countries.
with their children. With the addition of children, the picture becomes even more complex and blurry. Some of these children live multicultural lifestyles in their mother’s native land and in Cahuita and they ultimately may be the new image of Cahuita generations to come. Slowly, some Cahuita women are beginning to partner with foreigners as well, shifting the dynamics, but for years Cahuita women saw local men choose to pursue a lifestyle they were not a part of but had to negotiate the consequences. Regardless of some foreign women’s best intentions in beginning relationships with local men, and subsequently having children with them, their relationship represents asymmetrical power dynamics where foreign women have monetary resources, can leave at any time, and take their children with them.

This is the context that I found myself in when I came to Cahuita seven months pregnant. In the words of one foreign respondent who described the imagery of me: “You’re a walking stereotype, as a defined stereotype, just by the color of your skin and in fact, you’re pregnant. You fit them all!” (Finn, interview by author, 17 February 2009). My subjectivity was thrust into the field in a form that was unavoidable. I imagine for many community members my appearance, before they knew who I was, confirmed any assumptions that they might have had about me: “she’s just another Rasta girl.” To people on the street I looked like one of the young girls who have come to Cahuita for a good time. I look younger than I am (was twenty-nine), perceived as white, and at the time was a very seven and eight-months pregnant woman (see Figure 18).
Overall, most of my respondents were very nice to me and the matter of my pregnancy and how it might impact my work in Cahuita was never directly discussed, except with a couple of foreign respondents and local cahuiteños who I became friends with who were aware of the image I was projecting. There were several incidents, however, that were frustrating, confusing and filled me with trepidation as I continued my fieldwork. One day, early in my time in Cahuita I was walking down calle principal coming from an interview. I saw a young toddler, possibly one or two-years-old, run into the street. It is not uncommon to see young kids about and most community members
keep an eye out for them regardless if they are theirs. I was concerned, though, because I did not see any immediate adults around and I approached the little one. As I was about to kneel down a young man appeared, I asked him if it was his child and he nodded and muttered a “yes,” but I did not think it was his son. He then pointed to my stomach and said, “your kid.” I was confused and thought does he mean the young boy or the fact that I was pregnant? I muttered the child was not mine, but than quickly added, yes, my baby touching my stomach. He then emphatically asked me if my baby was black or white. I acted a little confused and gave him an awkward look, and even though I knew it was not true, stated the colorblind euphemism, “it doesn’t matter,” and he retorted, “of course it matters.” I then just walked away and began thinking about all the times I walk down calle principal and the young cahuiteña women I smile at who give me more or less slight but suspicious smiles. I rarely interacted with young Cahuita women because they were not any of the tourism business owners I was interviewing. When I did interview women they were either foreign or from an older generation. Young Cahuita women saw me walk and approach men all the time and I wonder what they must have thought of me.

After that incident I adopted several strategies to try to signify who I was. My greatest tool in a way reaffirmed gendered patriarchal norms. My husband was with me the entirety of my fieldwork. While we were in San José and Tamarindo my respondents rarely knew my husband was with me unless it came up in random chitchat before or after an interview, but in Cahuita I tried to make sure everyone knew I was married. Many times he would accompany me on my initial approach to potential respondents and
other times he introduced himself first and then introduced me later. He stood out as the 6′4 white American who tried to get along with everybody. He started giving the local guys who hung out in the park odd jobs to do for cash and he bought food items from all the local vendors - the pipa guy, the ladies that sold the Caribbean sandwich dishes, and he offered free information technology support to town businesses. He treated everyone like they were special and that he was genuinely interested in their life, which he was. For some, I became “Blair’s wife” not the young lady doing research. I hoped this distinguished me as not a sex tourist who had nabbed a local guy and got pregnant.

Even with all the signifying not everyone knew Blair or me and my image was still more powerful than anything else. My last couple of weeks in Cahuita I was trying to get last minute interviews that I had struggled to get. One interviewee I particularly wanted because I knew he was considered a guide leader, from a long established Cahuita family, and he had lots of goals and hopes for Cahuita. On one of my last attempts to arrange an interview with him an older man who looked as though he had lived a long, hard life as an early generation Rasta stopped me in the middle-of-the-road. We began a casual enough, if strange, conversation about the sun and the need to protect myself, and the baby, from getting burned. He then started telling me he liked white girls and that he needed a white girlfriend. Next, he labeled me what most people probably thought I was. “You’re a Rasta girl; I can tell.” He told me my smile and my look allowed people to tell what I am. After discussing his desire for me to bring him a white girl and myself responding “I’m married” he went on to discuss that he had a white girl once and he liked
it. Smiling he said, “all she wanted to do was have sex and ganja.” After I was finally able to break away from the conversation I headed to the destination I was trying to get to before I was stopped. I was not successful getting the interview. My potential respondent blew me off explaining he had too much to do and when he spoke he would not look me in the eye. Out-of-the-blue he then blurted out, “I’m not a bum.” I did not know what to say, I just said “of course not,” and I thanked him for his time and walked away.

I have thought a lot about that conversation and I wonder if he had seen me talk to the Rasta man prior to talking to him and if he assumed that I thought all Cahuita men were like that. Was I just another foreign woman exerting my own stereotypes and power in the town in his mind, even though, I was originally introduced to him by a fellow guide and tour operator? Ultimately, in many ways I was a Rasta girl. I came to town for a short period of time, expected to get what I wanted from community members, and then I left. I think of Vandegrift’s description of her research time spent in Puerto Viejo where she was candid in her evaluation of her role in the town. She wrote, “my family and I participated to a certain extent in a system of inequalities not invented by us but clearly reproduced through our actions” (2001:52). I address in the “Conclusion” how Cahuita forced me to reevaluate the role of foreign researchers in traditionally marginalized communities in the developing world and where our responsibilities lie. For in-depth community work I now think that capacitating local researchers to collect local stories in a collaborative manner is a more appropriate form.
6.3 Are Things Changing?

In November 2008, while I was in Tamarindo and right before I arrived in Cahuita, USA Today ran a piece on the southern towns along the Costa Rican Atlantic coast. The article praised the region as a tourist destination for its laid back lifestyle and its ecotourism offerings. The author highlighted the natural wonders with less overdeveloped amenities and the “reggae” atmosphere that separates it from other national destination spots (Gray 2008). Furthermore, in 2011, the ICT and JAPDEVA initiated a marketing campaign worth twenty-four million colones with the Union de Cámaras del Caribe Sur to promote the region to counter negative images that are produced in the media (Oconitrillo 2011). Lastly, over the last several years the cacophony of complaints regarding under development of Limón province may have finally reached a breaking point. Limón city is set to receive US$ 72.5 million loan from the World Bank, which will be augmented by US$ 7.5 million from the central government. Officials hope this will help “makeover” the city and attract tourists and local excursion activities from docking cruise ships.

These are positive steps for the region but they must be analyzed with caution. First, the USA Today piece, while praiseworthy of the region, only spoke with expatriate tourism business owners who “discovered” the area and are proceeding to turn it into a higher-end tourism product. Hence, tour operators may now take note to bring tourists to the area but they will stay in accommodation and participate in supplier offerings from foreign owners and managers. The promotional campaign to promote the region will
bring positive effects, particularly if it expands the imagery of the Costa Rican artisan tourism product beyond the Central Valley, but the imagery has to include a cultural product of Afro-Costa Ricans and not just ecotourism. The World Bank and central government funds will make Limón more attractive but there should be avenues for local businesses to gain access to loans to create tourist products. If not, the new investment may only encourage non-limonese to migrate to the area and begin businesses, which may squeeze out local ownership options. Moreover, there has yet to be any definition change on the SALA IV ruling, which puts cahuiteños in a very precarious position.

In the end, cahuiteños will continue to fight to preserve their town and to preserve their position in it. Their exclusion from the global value chain as suppliers for tour operators and guides from cruise lines does not take away from their hopes to build their businesses and create opportunities for the next generations. The have many obstacles to overcome, racialized imagery, historical neglect, and lack of land guarantees, but they will not give up, and for many they will not sell because for them Cahuita is priceless. As cabina owner doña Elena concluded: “Then for me this has no price. If you came and ask me how much is this worth, it has no price for me” ([My translation] doña Elena, interview by author, 8 February 2009).
7. Conclusion – Comparing Tamarindo and Cahuita

On a crisp August night in 2008 in San José the evening’s Master of Ceremony proudly announced to the concert hall full of men and women dressed in African-inspired head wraps, dresses and shirts of bright, bold colors that today was “el día del negro.” The event, Limón Roots Awards, was a celebration of blackness and diaspora in Central America where dancers, musicians, and civic leaders proudly performed and addressed the audience with a pride for their identity, their culture, and their struggle for acceptance. It marked the beginning of month-long celebrations across the country but with its foundation in Limón with the Festival de la Cultura Negra. Limón Roots festivities now take place annually in Costa Rica. The month-long celebration and festival is in contrast to the long established Ley 4166 Día del Descubrimiento y de la Raza, “Day of Discovery and of the (European) Race” of July 28, 1968 that is celebrated annually on October 12 as the holiday el Día del la Raza (Hernández, Ibarra, and Quesada 1993). The name was changed to Día de las Culturas in 1994 to reflect cultural diversity in Costa Rica but its original commemoration of discovery and colonization still holds strong.

Costa Rica, like many other Latin American countries, is at a metaphoric racial crossroads where racial diversity and black consciousness is on the rise but the status-quo racial ideologies remain for the majority of citizens. The ideology of Costa Rican exceptionalism that is signified in history texts, the media, day-to-day normative speech, and transferred through families, friends, and visitors to the region is deeply embedded as
the national identity of the country regardless of contemporary attempts of challenging the racial assumptions that underline it. As the analyses of Costa Rica’s, and the towns of Tamarindo and Cahuita’s, shows their incorporation into the tourism global value chain denotes how the ethnoracial classifications of the individuals who live in the communities can dictate how benefits are accrued and value chain participation opportunities are distributed. With cumulative advantages Costa Ricans from the Central Valley and foreigners from the global North were able to position themselves in higher value-added businesses and in management positions, and with the institutional processes from the State, perpetuated new racial practices through governance structure dynamics along the value chain that further served to maintain ethnoracial stratification.

In this concluding chapter, I address how a comparison of Tamarindo and Cahuita characterizes how both guanacastecos and cahuiteños have had to negotiate the consequences of being classified as “internal others” in Costa Rica and how that has kept them from accessing global tourism markets, national and local business networks, and job categories where their skills were not racialized. The comparison also suggests how various community actors used their agency to fight for the version of tourism development considered most appropriate. The battleground over the future of these towns is the real question mark and I conclude with some policy suggestions on how chain segments and institutions can facilitate a more equitable global tourism value chain and the role of foreign researchers in traditionally marginalized communities in the global South.
7.1 Tour Operator Global Value Chain and Governance Structures

Although Cahuita and Tamarindo have multiple distribution channels that are used by local tourism suppliers, the tour operator-driven channels are important conduits because of the role tour operators play as shaping the entirety of value chain due to their coordination, logistics, information dissemination, and bundling capabilities. National tour operators in San José are important middlemen connecting local destinations to global markets and how they decide what local destinations and area suppliers are used has ethnoracial stratification implications. Where Tamarindo is fully connected to the tour operator global value chain through multiple tour operator distribution options Cahuita is excluded.

The diversity of tourism firms that are present in Tamarindo and Cahuita are slightly different. Tamarindo has more accommodation offerings and larger, more luxurious brand options while Cahuita has mostly cabinas and small guest lodges. Tamarindo also has excursion operators that specialize in a particular activity whereas Cahuita has tour operators that work with area guides to perform excursion activities. The business ownership also varies along ethnoracial lines with almost all Tamarindo ownership lying in the hands of foreigners except for a few cabinas and businesses in the city circle whereas in Cahuita the city center has remained mostly in cahuiteño ownership while the businesses in Playa Negra are foreign-owned. The form of accommodations and foreign ownership helped to provide a pathway for Tamarindo’s broad inclusion in the tour operator global value chain while excluding Cahuita.
Global and national tour operators all have Tamarindo accommodation options and trips to the town as potential tours, with the offerings representing mostly foreign hotel brands while in Cahuita no accommodation providers are used from the sample of global and national tour operators, and only a couple of national operators market Cahuita tour options such as with half-day trips to Cahuita National Park. Overall, foreigners are incorporated in the value chain through the tour operator linkages because they own the hotels that are used, even in Cahuita where small European operators use Playa Negra accommodations, when guanacastecos are stratified as workers, and Afro-Costa Ricans are excluded because their cabinas are not used. Foreign hotels and the meseteño managers are perceived to hold the standards that are needed to be global and national suppliers. There are formal and informal standards but their ability to fulfill the informal, subjective standards of international tourism particularly separates them from guanacastecos and cahuiteños.

Excursion operators and local tour operators are indirectly connected to the value chain through the bookings they receive from hotels but all of the excursion providers in Tamarindo are foreign-owned in contrast to mostly local guides in Cahuita. Excursion providers also recommend each other through their personal networks, but again in Tamarindo, it is foreigners recommending other foreigners. International cruise lines also provide an avenue for Cahuita businesses to be linked to the value chain but most businesses except for a few restaurants are excluded. Cruise passengers arrive in Cahuita via national tour operators who do not use local guides or businesses.
7.1.1 Language of Difference and Racialized Skills

Although Cahuita is described as being inhabited by a “different type of foreigner” that personifies individuals who wanted to live a natural, holistic, off-the-grid lifestyle (Frohlick and Johnston 2011), foreigners in Cahuita, like Tamarindo, often used a language of difference when describing the locals of the region that is related to their perceived work habits, capabilities, and potential. In Tamarindo the perception helped to maintain a division of labor where managers were brought in from the Central Valley and low skill jobs were given to guanacastecos. Moreover, young foreigners who wanted to extend their vacations in the communities commonly held some low-skilled jobs that called for direct contact with tourists. In Cahuita, where cahuitenos had ownership status, the narrative helped serve to keep Cahuita businesses from suppliers for national tour operators, and from workers for some foreign businesses. Commonly, guanacasteco and cahuiteño skills were not constructed as fitting the standards to be tourism suppliers and workers.

In both communities it is foreign and Central Valley business owners and managers that decide who has the ability to fulfill the soft-skill capabilities of international tourism service. The cultural repertoire of behaviors from Guanacaste and Limón are framed as not fitting the needs of international tourists. International tourism service is based on a normative white Western aesthetic where English capabilities and service attitudes are supposed to fulfill a socio-psychological experience for tourists from the global North (Urry 2002). Tourists and the foreign expatriates who relocate to
tourism towns to fill key business niches bring with them their own cultural, ethnic, and racial assumptions from their home countries and they are influenced by the racial projects in the tourist countries. The long-established internal other racial stereotypes used to describe guanacastecos as cholos and polos and Afro-Costa Ricans as violent, rowdy, and lazy is refashioned as antithetical to tourism service needs. Where a lack of strong education pathways has helped to ill prepare locals for competing for international tourism service jobs the racialized skill narrative is an additional hurdle to overcome.

7.2 Institutions – It’s all about land and the fight

Where there are a myriad of institutional policies that the global value chain is embedded in the policies surrounding development and land rights and access are the most crucial shaping the future of Tamarindo and Cahuita and are driving the civic fights of the public and private associations. Where guanacastecos lost their land early on via national and global buyers cahuiteños have held on to it but are under threat of expropriation due to its location within the 200-meter mark of the Ley de Zona Maritimo Terrestre. The reasons and implications for the outcome of the battle carry different repercussions for the two communities. In Tamarindo, it is a group of foreigners that are battling against mostly real estate developers who are accused of skirting environmental regulation and improperly building. In Cahuita, it is mostly cahuiteños who are fighting against the recent SALA IV ruling that many environmentalists in ProMejoras hail. The ruling puts a halt on development and sets the path for potential expropriations. Cahuiteños who were originally exempt from potential expropriation due to their city
designation now have to prove that their properties were grandfathered into exemption with the dates of their titled deeds but many lack the appropriate paperwork.

The land and development debate in Tamarindo is amongst foreigners, and ultimately, represents foreigners’, even if well-intentioned, desire to control the direction of a town that is populated by foreigners. They are hotly divided between new versus older expatriates but their vision is one of environmental protection in the vein of protecting the paradise dream that originally brought them to Costa Rica in the first place.

In contrast, in Cahuita land access and development is about social justice. Cahuitéños see it as the latest manifestation of them having to fight for their rights as equal citizens within the context of Costa Rican white national identity. The State in both examples is typically viewed as under resourced, underprepared, corrupt and stuck on short-term growth and a foreign-led resort development bias framed as “eco development.” In Cahuita, however, it takes on additional symbolism when the State is seen as wanting to push out local residents. Popular Costa Rican novelist, Ana Christina Rossi, who has chronicled extensively life on the Atlantic coast and its racialized constructions in books such as *Limón Blues* and *Limón Reggae*, wrote a satirical, yet poignant, account of the development threat on the Atlantic side and the government’s attitude toward the communities in *La Loca de Gandoca*:

The issue was also that I said to the Minister that it was irresponsible to cut down the Caribbean rain forest to build an ice-skating rink. And the Minister replied, “Don’t get involved, my child, don’t get in the way of progress, the black folk in this region are so backward, so poor, that we’re going to give them the opportunity to train to be speed-skating champions and win all the gold medals in the Winter Olympics, that’s how they’ll overcome underdevelopment. And
anyway we’re going ahead with it because it’s a totally green skating rink (quoted in Palmer and Molina 2004:315-316).

Environmentally protecting Tamarindo and Cahuita is a necessity because it is the foundation of the natural assets to their tourism products. Controlling that process in a manner that partakes in distributive justice, however, ensures that protection and/or development does not disproportionately benefit and adversely affect one group over the other. Tamarindo’s attempt through ProMejoras to create a Plan Regulador for development is a positive step but the Plan has struggled in how guanacasteco communities are a part of the process and how social development issues are addressed in addition to environmental. In Cahuita, when local property owners are considered precaristas they lack the paperwork to receive loans to reinvest back in their properties to help meet the standards of global and national tour operators leading to further property deterioration and anti-competiveness. Land in Cahuita is also symbolic and tied to the founding of the town, their struggle for authority over Cahuita National Park, and Afro-Costa Rican culture. The typical buildings (see Figure 19) should be preserved as historical architecture that is marketed as a Costa Rican cultural symbol as Spanish colonial buildings in Cartago and San José are. Guanacastecos already lost their land, and without policies that proactively assist and protect local property owners, cahuiteños will as well and globalizing gentrification will spread. Globalizing gentrification will come to represent unintentional blanqueamiento processes for the twenty-first century. Environmental regulation and social development are not mutually exclusive but too
often environmental concerns are given preference over working conditions, local ownership, and communities in the guise of ecotourism.

Figure 19: Historic Cahuita House

7.3 Marketing – The Dream and Reality of Costa Rica

Costa Rica as an international destination was successful in attracting foreign investment, developing pro-business policies, and has achieved impressive international arrival figures. The destination imaging of Costa Rica, however, was a pool of images, narratives, and visceral feelings that helped to situate the success of Costa Rica’s advancement. The Costa Rican Tourism Board and global and national tour operators
were the most important actors projecting the dream of Costa Rica to potential tourists by cultivating a reality that balanced truthfulness with projected perception. The communities and individuals who were beyond the destination imaging of environmental uniqueness and rural democratic traditions were faced with a huge hurdle in positioning their tourism products and their own marketing narratives. Environmental and cultural frames are never value neutral when they facilitate purposeful exclusion.

Tamarindo and Cahuita are localities within the internal racial other geographic space that counters the second narrative, however, the consequences for the marketing practices on their communities are different. Tamarindo, and other beach communities in Guanacaste have gained international visitors because the ICT and the global and national tour operators market the foreign-ran hotels and resorts, even if national tour operators do not necessarily like the community. Their personal feelings have not translated into decreased material benefits at least for the foreigners who run the businesses in the town. Cahuita, in contrast, has suffered from the perception that the region of Limón is the antithesis of the rural democracy description and tourists are steered from the area. The negative imagery is racialized and sexualized in the context of crime rates and sexual tourism which is highlighted in the national media, picked up and believed by national businesses who are the conduit to global markets, and reiterated to potential tourists. Because independent travel distribution options are so important, the role of guidebooks in perpetuating, while appearing to be providing a more thoughtful and nuanced description, has further served to separate Cahuita.
7.4 Moving Forward – “Cheerful Pessimist” and Fight!

I was a Teacher’s Assistant in a class where the professor asked the students on a test how they would institute change – reform or revolution? It is a loaded question on all accounts but a relevant one. As I have thought about it through the years I have slowly evolved my answer to a hybrid one. Sometimes revolution may be needed other times reforms and sometimes reforms are mini revolutions at least for those who are directly impacted by them. There is no easy answer to not an easy question that is impossible to decontextualize. As a student and scholar of global development and racial inequality I find myself pessimistic and jaded often, but then as a qualitative field researcher in the global South I am surprised by how much I am amazed by the people I meet, interview, and discuss their lives with and how they create and fight in their daily lives for a little bit of dignity and better life chances. I am jaded and inspired in the same moment, in the same context, and it is that tension where change is possible. Capitalism is a mode of production that creates inequality and barriers for upward advancement. It is also a social system and people are the faces behind the corporations and businesses that make decisions. Although ideology is used to justify particular variants of capitalist advancement there are competing ideologies and narratives always in place. This is the historical juncture global development scholarship has found itself – post-Fordism, new international division of labor, and with the end of the Washington Consensus. Civil society and governments in the global South demand better trade deals, more voice, and
Decent Work for their citizens. These societies, however, are further divided along ethnoracial and gender lines and the struggle continues for inclusive development.

With this dissertation I outlined the practices along the tourism global value chain that are furthering ethnoracial stratification. I gave structural answers to the forces of ethnoracial stratification and by doing so I have also created a blueprint where leverage can be exerted to create change. Importantly, the shape and arrangement of the value chain allows for multiple segments to be targeted and therefore more pathways and possibilities. Tourism, possibly more than other global industries, may be more susceptible to change because unlike in apparel, horticulture, or manufacturing global value chains, production and consumption happen simultaneously and workers and consumers come face-to-face. It is harder for tourists to compartmentalize and ignore the human experiences of the people who are fulfilling their tourism services when they experience it first-hand. That is why ecotourism (when definitions of community are involved) and responsible tourism have a market. In a report commissioned by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) argued that responsible tourism has done slightly better than the tourism industry as a whole during the economic recession and there is “increasing consumer demand for travel that offers authenticity, connections with nature, environmental stewardship, and personal growth” (SNV 2009:8).

I outline a series of actions that can be taken by global, national, and institutional actors to mitigate the forces of ethnoracial inequality. These suggestions are not silver
bullets but they follow somewhat controversial figure Gunnar Myrdal’s assessment that “the ‘world was really going to hell in every possible respect’ but he remained a ‘cheerful optimistic’ adding that ‘we must not let the injustices of the world take over’” (quoted in Streeten 1990:1035). The people in Tamarindo and Cahuita – foreigners and locals alike – who are fighting for inclusive development and their demand to be heard, were also inspirations. Their intentions and goals are not always unproblematic but they are both, if disproportionately, part of the human fallout of global capitalism. Hopefully, an analysis of privilege and structural inequality can tilt the battlefield, particularly in Tamarindo, toward an awareness of foreign dominance and the facilitation of globalizing gentrification and that workers are just, if not more important, than beaches and sea turtles.

7.4.1 Global Policies

Global international development bodies and global firms are important forces shaping national and local value chains. Three programs, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Better Work program (BW), Fair Trade Tourism South Africa (FTTSA), and the Tour Operator Initiative are avenues that can hopefully make businesses more competitive and ensure social labor compliance. Growing tourism inequality awareness from other global organizations such as the World Bank and United Nations World Tourism Organization also point to an additional global opening to address ethnoracial inequality.
In 2011, I completed a pre-feasibility study for the ILO on adapting the BW program to the tourism sector (Christian 2011a). BW aims to improve compliance and labor standards in global supply chains with the goal of increasing firm competitiveness. They have implemented programs in multiple countries – Vietnam, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Jordan, Lesotho and Haiti – within the apparel sector. This framework could be a platform for buyers, suppliers, and countries to come together to promote core labor standards and anti-discrimination for ethnoracial minority groups in tourism, particularly in large hotels. The ILO is proactively pushing anti-discrimination policies in their Decent Work agenda and is one of the few multilateral organizations that address problems around race, ethnicity, and tribe (Christian 2011a).

FTTSA is the first organization to implement a fair trade certification program for the industry. Their principles of Fair Share state that “all participants involved in a tourism activity should get their fair share of the income in relation to their contribution to the activity. This principle encompasses fair wages and working conditions, fair treatment of suppliers and fair distribution of benefits to communities who (co)own tourism assets” (FTTSA 2009:2). To date, they have certified 45 tourism firms in South Africa and have relationships with 50 global tour operators. They have the goal to audit and certify packages to South Africa based on fair trade tourism standards supported by the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO). By adopting monitoring and certifications, lead firms could market their compliance status and FTTSA becomes a positive marketing platform for firms that are certified because they have a presence at
international travel fairs. FTTSA is also closely aligning their certification criteria with the 2003 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (see next section). FTTSA is a model that can be adopted within other countries and in monitoring globally fair trade tourism.

Lastly, global tour operators and hotel brands through their buying and brand power in destinations have the ability to influence suppliers down the value chain to implement pro-ethnoracial diversity employment hiring and in providing pathways for management, market access for local suppliers, and anti-discrimination policies. In Europe there exists the Tour Operator Initiative (TOI), which “consists of a commitment by tour operators to be accountable for the social, economic, and environmental consequences of the supply chain” (TOI 2004:3). Several multilateral organizations are involved in its sponsorship: UNWTO, UNESCO, UNEP, World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International, and prominent tour operators like TUI AG and Thomas Cook. The tour operators involved promote best practices and guidelines for tour operators to follow to integrate sustainability throughout their supply chain. Their definition of sustainability is comprehensive and includes economic, social, and cultural, and environmental aspects. Brand sensitivity and the push toward responsible tourism create incentives for global lead firms to ensure their suppliers and destination locations follow best labor practices and promote pro-diversity policies.

The American tour operators to Costa Rica, however, are not involved with TOI but recent forums at ITB Berlin and other international travel fairs are addressing why
they were traditionally lax in implementing green and social initiatives. They all market, though, in various degrees of sincerity “ecotourism.” The challenge remains to push the definition of ecotourism away from an overemphasis on the environment to include ensuring against weak labor and community accountability standards.

7.4.2 National Policies

There are a series of national policies the government of Costa Rica could initiate and/or reform that would help benefit internal racial other groups as workers and small and micro entrepreneurs (SME) and their communities, and potentially mitigate against the institutional practices that facilitate stratification. Policies within a tourism development plan that support SME growth, FDI backward linkages, reform land policies, marketing and development support of racial community destinations, and a form of affirmative action for business success and hiring all would have advantages for Costa Rica’s internal racial other communities. A stronger refocus on ethnoracial inequality from national NGOs and adding criteria from the ICT sustainability certificate on ethnoracial hiring diversity and local community support are also positive options.

The current Costa Rica tourism sustainability plan will expire in 2012. This plan should be revamped with a clear and direct focus on development of regions that were traditionally underdeveloped, with specific action policies on implementation, and a language of direct policies rather on broad statements. Those policies should outline detailed avenues to support SMEs and inclusive marketing of regions and diverse cultural tourism products along with the vital issues of human resource development, land rights,
and FDI backward linkages. SMEs, in general, already struggle in competition with large firms because it is hard to reach scale, they have high average unit production costs, and they have limited resources to invest in training, growth, and marketing (ILO 2001). This is accentuated when the SME is from a racial minority group that was a product of cumulative disadvantage. Therefore, in addition to SME competitive policies for Costa Ricans, there should be some form of racial minority entrepreneurial development and hiring policy in place. Examples of other countries that have started such a program are Australia, Laos, and South Africa. Australia implemented a Business Ready for Indigenous Tourism program that included a US $4.8 million four-year pilot program that provides business start-up assistance for indigenous tourism businesses and training and mentoring support (Yunis 2009); and in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic they built into their human resource development strategy proactive policies to train and generate job opportunities for ethnic minority groups (ILO 2010). South Africa, more than any country, offers the most pioneering example of how to implement affirmative action programs with their, although controversial, 2003 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE).

In 2009, the Tourism Sector Codes for South African were finalized. They created a scorecard of BBBEE indicators, which all private tourism businesses would be measured on. The critical indicators included ownership, management control, employment equity, skills development, preferential procurement, enterprise development, socio-economic development, and industry specific standards (DIT 2009).
FTTSA is working to adopt the scorecard into their fair trade criteria. Importantly, the Codes address the history of racial inequality in South Africa and the legacy it has produced in the tourism sector. While Costa Rica’s racial past is not the same as apartheid, Costa Rica’s internal racial others have and do experience racial bias and underdevelopment. The ICT could implement a modified version of the South African Codes to the certification for sustainable tourism (CST) criteria. While this proposition is most likely far-fetched in Costa Rica due to the lack of political power of internal racial others, it is a model to commend for taking proactive stances to transform structural racism. The CST currently gives loose recommendations and it asks via questionnaires how hotels and travel agencies support local communities but no concrete employment figures and local supplier percentages are requested. As with the case of Tamarindo, though, there exists a wide gap around the politics of certification and reality.

FDI, land, and training policies are possibly the three most important shaping ethnoracial groups. The current FDI policy of not requiring backward linkages, in addition to supporting large-scale tourism resort projects in Papagayo, has marginalized SME growth and foreign-based ownership and management. FDI can be used as a source for positive development if the benefits, that UNCTAD highlighted, such as attracting skill development, product diversity, possibly higher wages, and better linkages with

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2 Under the Legacy section of the Codes it states: “we recognize that our industry, like the rest of South African society, remains characterized by large disparities in access to opportunities and benefits, and in particular, to opportunities and benefits for black people. We also recognize that our sector is largely white-owned and we are aware of the residual impact of this legacy of inequality and its continuing impact on efforts to ensure that a tourism- and tourist-friendly culture takes root in our country” (DIT 2009:6).
suppliers takes place (Bolwell and Weinz 2008); but as the ILO (2010) pointed out, in order to gain the most from FDI there must be an enhanced legislative framework to increase local tourism benefit distribution. Local content requirement should be built into General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) commitments for tourism in addition to procurement from smaller businesses.

Access to land in tourist destinations is a key factor in whether and how ethnoracial groups are able to benefit from local tourism development. Land is a basis for collateral in acquiring loans to start small tourism businesses or in receiving fees from land turned into conservancies or other tourism-related sites. Due to the changing of the city ruling in Cahuita, and historical arrangements that limited cahuiteños from getting proper title deeds or inherent land, they were at a disadvantage when tourism began to develop in their area. Land reform should dismantle all practices that maintain some racial group subordination. Furthermore, land training schemes should be implemented by the government or NGOs to educate locals about their land rights and the potential for tourism development in their towns to offset the practice of selling off land too soon and cheaply.

Costa Rica needs a strong tourism human resource development plan and a revamped course curriculum from the public ran National Learning Institute (INA). The quality of INA is questionable in meeting industry needs, but they are still important conduits for skill attainment and job placement (Christian et al., 2011c). Policies should be implemented that encourage racial minority placement in management and other areas.
where they may be under represented. Classes should also include larger tourism themes that go beyond traditional basic “how to” tourism training that cater to the soft skill subjective nature of providing a tourism experience. Moreover, funding sources, like low interest rate student loans and scholarships, should be made available to colleges and training schools. Advanced degrees, certificates, and diplomas are becoming more requested or required from employers that can further serve to push locals out who suffer dramatically already from weak public school systems in localities.

Lastly, there are some tourism NGOs that are providing a potential development model and added distribution options for internal other tourism products. The Costa Rican Community-based Rural Tourism Association (ACTUAR) was established in 2001 with assistance from the United Nation’s Small Grants Program (SGP), which has funded over 50 community-based rural tourism initiatives. Its diverse membership includes indigenous groups, women’s groups, and agriculture producers wishing to diversify to tourism. They particularly provide a voice for women and indigenous cultural and environmental products. They could easily add more overtly Afro-Costa Rican products, as well. As an association, ACTUAR has provided training and product development assistance, and importantly can be a marketing wing and distribution link for minority-owned SMEs trying to gain access to global markets. Furthermore, there are also growing Afro-Costa Rican advocacy groups who have yet to focus on tourism-specific issues but are leading the rights fight for Afro-Costa Ricans and the diaspora in the region as represented with the Limón Roots events.
7.4.3 Concluding Thoughts – the Field and the Researcher

All of these policy suggestions, however, will remain at the suggestion level without the activism to fight for them. Civil society outreach at the global and national levels, and in the communities, along with the analyses of public academics, is crucial to hold the government and the global tourism community accountable for the outcomes in Tamarindo and Cahuita. Without the actions by ProMejoras, the Asociación, and cahuiteños blocking streets, storming the Cahuita National Park, and sending delegations to San José, the accomplishments achieved thus far – stopping development construction and gaining co-management rights of local environmental resources – would have never happened. Still, in Tamarindo the focus on the environment while ignoring the local guanacasteco has further served to marginalize the foreign activists against the local citizens. In contrast, because in Cahuita foreigners and locals work together and locals drive the process, the focus remains on the community.

It is hard to believe that it is several years since I returned from Costa Rica. My journey upon my return included giving birth, adjusting to balancing the roles of motherhood and scholar, teaching my first class, and becoming involved in an international research network where I could take the lessons learned in Costa Rica and apply them to a global scale. Mostly, I have thought a lot about my time in Costa Rica and brought that reflection into the process of writing-up my findings for the dissertation. One of the biggest conclusions I have drawn is about the role of the researcher from the global North in the field in the global South. While in Costa Rica I constantly struggled
in my responsibility to my research respondents and the communities of Tamarindo and Cahuita. The objective researcher hat does not fit well when it is oversized with the baggage of privilege and a lack of accountability. As researchers, we are typically only accountable to the institutions that we are a part of. Field researchers enter the world of our “research subjects” and expect to gain what we want from the experience while there is no guarantee that the communities we base our work in ever will. When we come from privileged national, racial, and class backgrounds we bring the history of our status groups with us and perpetuate unequal social dynamics without even realizing it and when we purposely attempt to control it.

Our best intentions are sometimes just that: intentions. I cannot count the multiple times I told people in the communities that I would be back, that I would present my findings, that the work will be distributed for community members. I still have every hope to do so, but I also know that my return may not be such a welcome one, and that my findings, particularly for Tamarindo and the wider tourism industry in Costa Rica, may not be appreciated. It is hard to have someone look behind the curtain and critically engage with what they find. I do feel a responsibility, nonetheless, to use my resources and networks to tell a story about how ethnoracial stratification occurs through global, national, and local pathways and to advocate for ways to ameliorate it. I am also aware that whereas the policy suggestions I gave are structural options for structural problems racial bias happens in many ways invisibly without consciousness and without intent. That is what makes it so powerful.
Ultimately, I do not think I will repeat the field design I produced in Costa Rica. When you are researching in an in-depth, qualitative method small, historically marginalized communities where the researcher is from the global North I now think it is best to find a way to work collaboratively with a community member to conduct the research. As community members they have the background, understanding, respect and built in accountability for the community. We can assist them and bring our cultural, social, and financial capital while providing an outlet for the community to be its own voice rather than the researcher as the final interpreter.

This is a long-debated subject in ethnographic and qualitative sociology and there are arguments on both sides advocating for the importance of the researcher as an outside analyst and the exploitative nature of researchers (Twine and Warren 2000; Clawson et al. 2007). I do not think it is black or white but gray. The outside researcher is still important in making larger analyses, bringing hopefully a strong research and theoretical background on the subject. With our academic tools we can supplement the homegrown tools of citizen scholars who while living in underserved communities have a form of knowledge that global researchers lack. Working collaboratively, the two different skill sets are combined and the community is an active part of the research process.

As part of the international research network I am now a part of, Capturing the Gains,3 I have had the privilege to conduct tourism and global value chain field research in Kenya and I am overseeing the research in Uganda and South Africa. Rather than

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3 See http://www.capturingthegains.org/
doing a long ethnographic data collection process I went to Kenya for two weeks of intensive interviews. This field strategy served as a way to gather detailed data but not take on the challenges of a community-based ethnographic study. I had a more distant approach because I was representing a larger research network and outside funding sources. While I am no less accountable to my research respondents, because I was not there a very long time my potential harm on the community by creating established relationships that potentially represented perceived hopes and false perceptions without me realizing it was minimized. Nevertheless, because I was perceived to represent outside global organizations there was a hope that I could enact immediate change.

Thus, even with this limited field activity it was in Kenya where I had my first respondent begin to cry during an interview and begged me to help her and her family. I felt troubled as I told her all I could do was report what she told me to people that hopefully could make a difference. To her I most likely represented a white woman from America who had everything but she trusted to tell her story to while she was a widow, struggling against an abusive hotel boss and unable to pay for schooling and food for her children who slept in a two-room house with no electricity or water. I noticed that she wore what was probably her best dress for our interview and most likely had the perception that something immediately was going to happen after she spoke to me. In those moments the role of the researcher becomes utterly confusing and contradictory. We think we are doing “good” by our work by creating knowledge and understanding but we just as easily create false hopes and immediate disappointment.
This self-reflection, however, does not stop my desire and passion to continue with this work and form of research analysis and advocate for the people who I have had the fortune to meet through this process. As I wrote this last section I received a very unexpected email from a respondent from my very first research project in Houston, Texas. This respondent was a community leader in a neighborhood that was undergoing gentrification. I view my time in this community as part of the foundation that shaped who I would and am still becoming as a public sociologist. I never knew what he thought of me conducting the research and I have often wondered through the years. He said he had just stumbled upon my paper and wanted to reach out to me and thank me for the “wonderful work.” I am not superstitious but I find it hard to believe I heard from him on the day I had to write my reflections about what it meant to be a field researcher.

Without sounding pretentious, all I want is to have the opportunity to do “wonderful work.” While sticky research and the messiness that follows is still and always will be present there is no other form I would like to conduct. The goal now is to do research that better explores how theory and politics are fused for many global audiences and how researchers in the global North can learn how to “talk across worlds” in a manner that moves beyond identity reflexivity to changing the constraints embedded in academic institutions that hinder our engagement in transnational feminist, anti-racist conversations and practices (Nager 2002:184).

I hope I made up for the limitations of this dissertation, such as not having a more robust interview sample including more tourism workers and a supplemental firm-based
survey; an added case on a contrast community in Costa Rica; and a lack of more archival data by addressing a subject that has to date been under researched and little understood.

By unpacking the layers to the stratification process in the global economy we can see how it manifests for different regions, actors, and groups. The racialization process has too often left racial groups from fully benefitting from participation in global industries. With this case we can see how it is experienced through global tourism in Costa Rica.

Now we must examine other regions and other industries. My current research on Kenya has pointed to the importance of intersectionality in shaping the stratification process and how the politics of tribalism, decolonization, and patriarchy are embedded in global value chains, as well. There is a lot of research and work to be done by outside researchers and citizen scholars alike.

With “critical ethnography for social justice” researchers are stakeholders and partners with communities through shared trust and understanding. With their “academic work and their personal service [they demonstrate] a commitment to long-range and systemic social change: change, more specifically, that embraces the tenets of social justice and equitable development” (Fitts, Perry, Davis 2006:4). In order to deracialize global value chains we first need to acknowledge the idea of “race’s” pernicious continuation in global processes. Once multiple practices of racial stratification are identified we can engage in “social justice for development” where our analyses includes the forms in which power and hegemony are reproduced in silent and subtle ways, even when there are well-intentioned development goals. It may be time to reevaluate
development beliefs tied to “the notion of modernity and the rise and practice of global capitalism” (Morvaridi 2008:1) in order to create a new epistemological paradigm where distributive and racial justice are more valued than GDP figures, export growth, and balance of payments.
Appendix A: Interview Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name+</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Business/Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Level</strong></td>
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<td>October 20, 2009/July 12, 2011</td>
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Wendy  February 9, 2009  Hotel Worker
Randy  February 11, 2009  Hotel Owner

+ Names changed
^ Interviewed twice
* Answered questions via email
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Biography

Michelle Christian was born August 7, 1979 in Seattle, Washington. She received an A.A. from Marymount College Palos Verdes in 1999 and a B.A. in International Studies from Seattle University in 2001. After graduating from Seattle University she spent three years working in the International Affairs group at Edelman in Washington, D.C. She graduated from Duke University with a Ph.D. from the Department of Sociology in December 2011. She has published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, edited volumes, and for multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, and the International Labour Organization (ILO). She won graduate student paper awards from the North Carolina Sociological Association, the Association of Black Sociologists, and the Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher award from the Department of Sociology at Duke University. To prepare for her dissertation research she won a Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship from the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies from Duke University. Between 2008-2009 she was a Visiting Researcher at the Social Research Institute at the University of Costa Rica in San José, Costa Rica. After returning from Costa Rica in 2009, she became a global coordinator for the tourism sector group of, Capturing the Gains, a UK Department for International Development sponsored research program.