



Mestizaje as a Catalyst of Ethno-Racial Discrimination: A Study of the Reproduction of Structural Racism in Mexico Through Popular Media and Religion

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Mestizaje as a Catalyst of Ethno-Racial Discrimination:
A Study of the Reproduction of Structural Racism in Mexico Through
Popular Media and Religion

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A Thesis in the Field of International Relations
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

This thesis fills the gap that exists on the analysis and documentation of the ethno-racial positive and negative cultural attributes of the figure of the mestizo given by the media and religious institutions in Mexico. I contribute to the state-of-the-art scholarship on this topic by broadening the analysis through the introduction of additional quantitative and qualitative research, and through the analysis of mass media and the Catholic Church's positive and negative representations (stereotypes) of mestizos, covering the period from the 16th to the 21st centuries in Mexico.

The existing scholarly work has not fully explored and does not answer the question related to media and religious imagery contribution to the attachment of positive or negative social attributes based on skin colour and phenotypical characteristics in Mexico, specifically related to the Mexican mestizo, cornerstone of my analysis.

In my conclusion, I contend that in the period covered in this thesis, popular media and the Catholic church have used images based on skin color and ethno-racial characteristics, attaching positive or negative attributes that do not accurately portray the image of a Mexican mestizo, and, consequently, contributing a pigmentocratic culture and structural racism in Mexico.

Frontispiece



Unknown artist, *Tree of Life*, unknown date. Ceramic, 24.1 × 33 cm, Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology), Mexico City, Mexico, Photo 86701963, © Chon Kit Leong, used under editorial license, <https://www.dreamstime.com>.

Author's Biographical Sketch

Beatriz Fuentes earned a BBA in Business Administration from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), Estado de Mexico, Mexico in 1996. She earned an MBA from Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada in 2001. Ms. Fuentes has been working in the hospitality industry since 2000. She has lived in Mexico and Japan. She currently resides in Canada.

Dedication

To my father Rene Fuentes de Diego who, as a single parent, worked tirelessly to provide his children with access to education.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank: my research advisor, Dr. Ariane Liazos, for her guidance and support; and my thesis director, Dr. David L. Carrasco, for making my thesis journey one of great fulfillment and enlightenment, for making my research work more meaningful through invaluable insight, and for challenging me to question and analyze *mestizaje*¹ through different lenses.

I would also like to thank my husband, Gino, who has enriched my life in more ways that he will ever know, and with whom I continue to realize that our different cultural backgrounds make us more similar than distinct.

¹ See *Mestizaje* in Definition of Terms.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

According to CONAPRED (Mexico's National Council to Prevent Discrimination), most Mexicans refuse to recognize that there is racism in Mexico for two fundamental reasons: because in Mexico there is no profound ethno-diversity (the majority of the Mexican population is categorized as mestizo) and because Mexico did not experience the racial segregation that existed in other countries, including South Africa, South West Africa, Germany and the United States. The Mexican government—through CONAPRED—indicates that the discrimination that exists in Mexico is primarily based on economic social class, sexual preference or physical/mental disabilities;² however, my review of existing scholarly work challenges this view, concluding that discrimination based on skin color is more prevalent in Mexico than acknowledged by many sectors of society.

Existing scholarly work has not sufficiently researched the influence that images produced and propagated by popular media and religion have had in the cultural construction, pigmentocracy and perpetuation of racial/social categorization and stereotyping of Mexican individuals based on skin color throughout time.

² CONAPRED, *Documento Informativo Sobre Día Internacional de la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial* (Consejo Nacional Para Prevenir La Discriminación, March 21, 2015), 1-17, https://www.conapred.org.mx/index.php?contenido=documento&id=299&id_opcion=145&op=145.

This thesis fills the gap of the work of Guillermo Trejo, Melina Altamirano, Colegio de Mexico (CM), Edward Telles, Carlos López-Beltrán, Vivette Garcia Deister, and others by conducting an ethno-racial quantitative and qualitative analysis of positive and negative cultural attributes of the figure of the mestizo based on mass media and religious imagery from the 16th century to the 21st century. This thesis reviews scholarly works on colonial history, religion, and mass media, along with personal observations.

I test the hypothesis that since colonial times, through visual representations, Mexican popular media and religious institutions have contributed to the establishment, communication, and perpetuation of a pigmentocratic culture, structural racism and discrimination based on skin color and ethno-racial characteristics. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis of selected media content from the 16th to the 21st centuries in Mexico, and based on the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA) color palette,³ this thesis analyzes how mass media has produced and disseminated content, messaging and narratives that attach desirable positive attributes to lighter skin tones and negative attributes to darker skin tones. Specifically, I will use the values provided by PERLA:

- a) Tones one to four having positive valences, i.e., intelligence, power, beauty, wealth, prestige, and a high social status.
- b) Tones five to eleven having negative valences, i.e., lazy, bad, poor, ugly, unintelligent, etc.

³ For the PERLA color palette and methodology, see the Methodology sub section in the Literature Review section of this chapter.

The same analysis is conducted on religious symbols of the Mexican Catholic Church to find if there are similarities with popular media visual representations and to understand if these representations have changed from the 16th to the 21st centuries.

Because most Mexicans identify themselves as mestizos, this thesis includes an analysis of the figure of the mestizo as a unifying symbol of national racial identity. My work also includes a discussion on the Mexican population of African descent to further demonstrate that racism based on ethno-racial characteristics is more prevalent in Mexico than what government institutions report or acknowledge. My analysis of the popular media imagery and religious visual representations of a mestizo shows that those representations do not correspond to the phenotypical characteristics of a mestizo; instead, popular mestizo imagery is often visually represented with phenotypical features of a criollo or a Spaniard (Caucasian European phenotype or Whitexican).

In my conclusion, I argue that since colonial times popular media and religious institutions have used images of skin color and ethno-racial characteristics to promote an endemic pigmentocratic culture and structural racism in Mexico.

Definition of Terms

Blackface: Dark makeup worn to mimic the appearance of a Black person and meant to mock or ridicule Black people.⁴ For this thesis, I also use the term *Brownface* when makeup is worn to mimic the appearance of a *Moreno*.⁵

⁴ Merriam-Webster, “Blackface,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blackface>.

⁵ See definition of “Moreno” in Definition of Terms.

Caste (Spanish: Casta): The word caste, as a noun, refers to the lineage or ancestry of a certain social group. Those who belong to this lineage share phenotypic, religious, cultural, or historical traits, from which a series of duties and/or rights attributed in society emerge.⁶ In this thesis, Caste and Casta are used interchangeably.

Caste System (Spanish: Sistema de Castas): Caste system is an expression that refers to those societies whose organization and functioning are based on castes, that is, in groups of people classified hierarchically according to their line of birth, which determines their role and social function for life. Characteristics of caste systems⁷:

1. Society is divided into hierarchical segments.
2. Segments are determined by degrees of racial or ethnic purity.
3. The social hierarchy is determined by ethnic origin.
4. The distribution of social roles and work is also adapted to ethnic origin.
5. The occupations of each caste are hereditary.
6. In some societies, a religious justification is attributed to the caste system.
7. Some caste systems are totally endogamic, others allow miscegenation but only formally validate unions between equals or between castes with a similar degree of purity.
8. Each caste in the same society has its own eating and other cultural habits.

⁶ Significados, “Significado de Casta,” translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.significados.com/casta/>.

⁷ Significados, “Significado de Castas de la Nueva España,” translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, accessed May 8, 2021, <https://www.significados.com/castas-de-la-nueva-espana/>.

Criollo: This thesis concurs with sociologist Carolyn Allen’s definition. Criollo is “someone born in the Americas as opposed to Europe...but not an aborigine; a definition that highlights the hybridity of this figure who [has] one identity by blood and another by place of birth and therefore is simultaneously the same and different.”⁸ For the purpose of this research, Criollo refers to a person born in Mexico of Spanish descent.

Culture. Anthropologist Stuart Hall’s definition of culture asserts that culture is about shared meanings. Culture, Hall says, is primarily concerned with the production and exchange of meanings among the members of a society, and as such “to say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways.”⁹ Hall further discusses the role of imagery in identifying group membership within a larger society. These images are tied to a set of practices that produce an exchange of meanings between the members of a group within the society. Figure 1 shows how Hall represents the cultural process and its elements.

⁸ Carolyn Allen, "Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition," *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, no. 1/2 (1998): 36, www.jstor.org/stable/40654020.

⁹ Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage in Association with the Open University, 1997), 2.

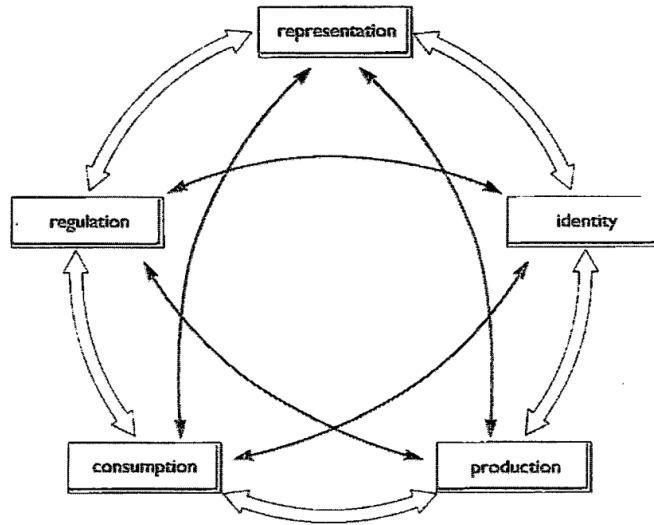


Figure 1. The Circuit of Culture.

*The Circle of Culture is a representation of the cultural process from an anthropological perspective.*¹⁰

Ethnicity: According to sociologist Susan Olzak, ethnicity “is generally defined as a broader concept, which includes the social attribution of membership based on one or more of the following: (A) cultural distinctions, including language, dress, custom, and shared history; (B) nationality or territorial claims to sovereignty; and (C) shared roles in economic production.”¹¹ This thesis adheres to this definition as it incorporates the key aspects of my research.

¹⁰ Hall, *Introduction*, 1.

¹¹ Susan Olzak, “Race and Ethnicity: Residual or Explanatory Concepts?” Presented to the Annual Meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, San Francisco, August 1982.

Indian (Spanish: Indio) and Indigenous (Spanish: Indígena): “The difference between Indian and indigenous is that Indian refers to those born in India while indigenous refers to the original, autochthonous or native inhabitant of a place. The word Indian is also considered a synonym of Indigenous, and, despite being accepted and spread, it is originally a misconception that began when Christopher Columbus used the term to name the inhabitants of America when he arrived on the continent in 1492. Due to this initial misinterpretation, the word Indian (Indio—see definition of Indio) has been used in parallel with the word Indigenous (Indígena) to refer to autochthonous peoples.”¹² Consequently, “in the [colonial time’s] popular consciousness [Indio] refers to the various pre-Hispanic ethnic groups that lost their distinction to form a single conglomerate: If you have seen one Indian, you have seen them all.”¹³ The word Indian or Indio (male), and India (female), “functioned... as an insult, charged with ancestral contempt, racism and hostility.”¹⁴ This thesis uses the Indian (Indio/India) and Indigenous (Indígena) terms interchangeably, but always referring to the autochthonous people of

¹² “Diferenciador: Descubre las Diferencias y las Semejanzas,” translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.diferenciador.com/diferencia-entre-indio-e-indigena/>.

¹³ Ignacio Manuel Altamirano and Andrés Henestrosa, *Proverbios Mexicanos*. Ed. Facsimilar, ed. México, D.F.: M. A. Porrúa, Grupo Editorial, 1997: 6., translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/ap/v26n1-2/v26n1-2a21.pdf>.

¹⁴ Herón Pérez Martínez, *Los Refranes del Hablar Mexicano en el Siglo XX. 1.st ed. Colección Tradiciones* (Zamora, Michoacán De Ocampo, Mexico) Zamora, Michoacán, México : [México, D.F.]: Colegio De Michoacán ; CONACULTA, 2002: 249-250, <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/ap/v26n1-2/v26n1-2a21.pdf>.

Mexico.

Malinchismo: This term is derived from *Malinche*, nickname for Marina (also known as Malina, Malintzin or Malinalli), an indigenous woman that served as Hernan Cortes' translator and concubine. During the colonial period and into contemporary times, Malinche's name was used to form the derivative *malinchismo* or "attitude of one who shows attachment to the foreigner with contempt for one's own [origin]."¹⁵

Mestizaje: Anthropologist Manuel Gamio defines mestizaje as the fusion of cultures and asserts that the figure of the mestizo has become an ideological and national identity tool in Mexico.¹⁶ This view is complemented by scholars Carlos López-Beltrán and Vivette Garcia Deister, as they affirm that the historical process of race mixture/mestizaje created a new nationality that is neither European nor indigenous, but Mexican.¹⁷ Furthermore, Santiago Ramírez points out that the mestizo in Mexico, with very rare exceptions, was found to be made up of unions between Spanish men and indigenous women. The union of indigenous women with Spanish men, Ramírez asserts, represented a profound and

¹⁵ Real Academia de La Lengua Española, "Malinchismo y Malinchista," *Real Academia de La Lengua Española*, translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://www.academia.org.mx/esp/respuestas/item/malinchismo-y-malinchista>.

¹⁶ Edward Eric Telles and Project on Ethnicity Race in Latin America, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Gamio's findings are contextualized on Telles' book.

¹⁷ Carlos López-Beltrán and Vivette García Deister, *Scientific Approaches to the Mexican Mestizo* (História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos, 2003), 1-15, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-597020130002000002>.

dramatic transculturation process because in most cases during the early colonial period the women were abruptly and violently incorporated into an unfamiliar culture that forced them to publicly renounce their indigenous culture and religious beliefs. One result was the stigmatization of these women as betrayers of their indigeneity. Therefore, “the birth of her mestizo child was the manifestation of her estrangement from her world.”¹⁸ For this thesis, mestizaje is defined specifically as the mixture of Criollos or Spaniards with Mexico’s indigenous people that formed a national identity, that, from the Indio perspective, encompasses the renouncement of the Indio culture to adopt the Spanish culture and its eventual evolution into a Mexican culture.

*Mestizo*¹⁹: Historian Serge Gruzinski’s definition of mestizo highlights the role of ancestry, which proves important for the biological and anthropological discussion of racial identity. Gruzinski defines a mestizo as a person of mixed blood; specifically, a person of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry.²⁰ However, for this thesis, Gruzinski’s definition is limited when discussing the Mexican government’s definition of mestizo, or the social and cultural dimensions of mestizaje.

¹⁸ Santiago Ramírez, *El Mexicano, Psicología de sus Motivaciones*, 16. ed. (México: Grijalbo, 1991), 48.

¹⁹ There is difficulty in accurately translating *Mestizaje* in English. For this reason, this thesis utilizes the term in Spanish. For a general overview of the various definitions and the process of mestizaje, see Odile Hoffmann and Christian Rinaudo, “The Issue of Blackness and Mestizaje in Two Distinct Mexican Contexts: Veracruz and Costa Chica,” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2014): 138-55.

²⁰ Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

The Mexican government's definition of a mestizo is not based on skin color or ethno-racial characteristics. INEGI (Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography) indicates that Mexicans who speak an indigenous language are statistically counted as indigenous population, and Mexicans who speak Spanish are counted as mestizos. This makes it possible for a person who is bilingual (Spanish and indigenous language) to be classified as mestizo or indigenous based on language and not on phenotypical characteristics²¹ or skin tone. Researchers López-Beltrán and Deister concur with INEGI and assert that it is possible for a Mexican to be simultaneously *culturally* mestizo and *racially* indigenous.²²

Moreno: According to the Royal Academy of Spanish Language, a Moreno relates to a color that is "dark almost black."²³ For this thesis, Moreno is used to refer to people of brown skin color, or mestizos. My personal observations indicate that, culturally, in Mexico, a Moreno is a person with dark brown skin color. The pejorative term *Prieto* is used interchangeably, as The Royal Academy of Spanish Language defines both *Prieto* and *Moreno* with similar words. This definition is based on linguistics and my personal experiences, and not on a wider range of disciplines because existing literature does not provide the cultural/popular meaning that is relevant for my work.

²¹ INEGI, National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía), *Encuesta Nacional Sobre Discriminación* (ENADIS), 2017, <https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/enadis/2017/>.

²² López-Beltrán and Deister, *Scientific Approaches to the Mexican Mestizo*, 1-15.

²³ Real Academia de la Lengua Española, "Moreno," *Real Academia de La Lengua Española*, translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://dle.rae.es/moreno>.

Pigmentocracy. This term was created by anthropologist Alejandro Lipschütz in 1994 to describe how the social and hierarchical order in Latin America is based on skin color and phenotypical characteristics. Pigmentocracy is not to be confused with colorism. Sociologist Ginetta E. B. Candelario makes a distinction between pigmentocracy and the colorism experienced among African Americans in the United States by indicating that “pigmentocracy refers to how society is ordered to privilege or discriminate against individuals of various phenotypes rather than to an aesthetic hierarchy within a racialized minority group...in a pigmentocracy one’s life chances are linked to one’s appearance as well as to one’s ancestry and heritage. In a pigmentocratic system whites comprise a ruling class situated at the top of the hierarchy, native peoples and blacks occupy the bottom, and those of mixed ancestry are organized from lighter to darker skin color and somatic features between the two ends of the racial continuum.”²⁴

Race: The distinction between race and ethnicity merits discussion because my research work found some instances where the terms are used interchangeably, either when reporting the results of surveying a population or by grouping distinct populations (for example, indigenous and mestizos) as a single group. For the purposes of this thesis, race is defined as “a social attribution of group membership based on: (1) what are assumed to

²⁴ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, "Pigmentocracy," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in Contemporary Politics, Law, and Social Movements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199744619.001.0001/acref-9780199744619-e-385>.

be inherited phenotypical characteristics shared by most members, and (2) an inferred correlation between these visible ethnic markers and other behavioral characteristics.”²⁵

For ethnicity I am substituting *other behavioral characteristics* for *culture*, to establish a more grounded approach and to draw inferences with ethnicity (see definition of Culture for additional context). This, to encompass shared meanings related to ethnicity amid members of a society.

Racial Formation: For this thesis, the analysis conducted by scholar Ruth Hill of the work of ethnic studies professor Michael Omi and sociologist Howard Winant is used. Hill asserts that “Racial Formation is the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed. It occurs through a linkage between structure and representation.”²⁶

Spaniard or Peninsular: “Any of the colonial residents of Latin America from the 16th through the early 19th centuries who had been born in Spain.”²⁷ For the purpose of this thesis, place of birth (Spain) and skin color (white individual) are the most important attributes of a Spaniard/Peninsular. Also, for this thesis, the definition also encompasses

²⁵ Olzak, *Race and Ethnicity*, 1.

²⁶ Ruth Hill, “Critical Race Theory and the Pre-history of Race in Latin America: Some Reflections on Caste and Hegemony in Valle y Caviedes,” *Afro - Hispanic Review* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 77-85, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/scholarly-journals/critical-race-theory-pre-history-latin-america/docview/210679462/se-2?accountid=11311>.

²⁷ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Peninsular,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/peninsular>.

the 20th and 21st centuries.

Structural Racism: “A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.”²⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, this definition also encompasses pigmentocracy that contributes to discrimination based on racial and ethnic characteristics within the Mexican population.

Whiteness: “As opposed to the racialization assigned to people of color, whiteness can be defined by its hyper-visibility, which counterintuitively leads to invisibility... the term white refers most to light skin, but also denotes those who historically have benefitted from light-skin privilege... Whites are permitted to exist outside of racial identity, even though non-whites are constantly assigned racial labels. In other words, to be white enables one to retain a sense of individuality, while barring people of color from exercising that same right. Privilege is inherent within any construction of whiteness.”²⁹

Whitexican. This expression is “derived from the contraction of the words white and Mexicans. Although it is unknown who first coined the term, since the end of 2017 it has become widely popular among Mexicans and its use has become very common on social

²⁸ “RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.Pdf,” accessed October 19, 2019, <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>.

²⁹ Anna Linder, “Defining Whiteness: Perspectives on Privilege,” *Georgetown University Repository Library* (2018), 44, <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/1050459>.

networks.”³⁰ Journalists Alfonso Méndez Forssell, Malena Bonilla, and Saul Vazquez Torres Mendez assert that the expression Whitexican refers to a social order that left intact “a caste system in which those who can be identified as European descendants sit at the top of the social pyramid; it exalts Hispanic whiteness and rejects indigeneity. However, the status of "world citizen" of the Whitexican [has created a] post-national identity defined by mercantile consumption. Therefore, their Mexicanity seems accidental: the elites tend to be whitened as part of their identity and phenotype, which is reproduced in a systematic way in consumer practices...These practices...exhibit a form of celebratory folklore of the supposed deep roots of the Mexican...[while] they practice an open rejection to the cultural and political forms they take in the present. [For] Whitexicans, thus, the memory of the colonialism survives: paternalistic pride of the cultural expressions that [Whitexicans] dominate but of which the Whitexicans are not part.”³¹ For the purposes of this thesis, in the analysis of cultural 21st century, Spaniards and Criollos are also referred to as Whitexicans.

³⁰ México, Redacción El Heraldo de Mexico, “¿Qué Quiere Decir Whitexican, De Verdad Es Un Término Ofensivo y Racista?” El Heraldo de México, October 15, 2020, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://heraldodemexico.com.mx/tendencias/2020/10/15/que-quiere-decir-whitexican-de-verdad-es-un-termino-ofensivo-racista-215363.html>.

³¹ Alfonso Méndez Forssell, Malena Bonilla, and Saul Vazquez Torres. “Whitexican: Hacia Una Definición Crítica,” Nexos, July 19, 2020, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://cultura.nexos.com.mx/whitexican-hacia-una-definicion-critica/>.

Literature Review

In contrast to countries like the United States,³² Mexico has had a very different experience with racial mixing, because (1) Europeans arrived, for the most part, without women and readily mated with indigenous females, and (2) in Mexico the government has never prohibited interracial marriages even though many of these unions were considered illegitimate by colonial governments.³³ For this reason, racial mixing in colonial times was common in Mexico, while in other parts of the world it was prohibited. This history of mixing explains a degree of apparent peaceful racial integration in Mexico.

Review of Findings Obtained from Official Sources Related to Inequality and Race

Mexico is, at least as per official sources, predominantly mestizo. According to INEGI, Mexico can be regarded as a homogenous nation as 83 percent of the Mexican population is categorized as mestizo.³⁴ However, within Mexico's predominantly mestizo population, a high level of economic inequality exists. As of July 2018, Mexico had a

³² For a general overview of the history of racial integrity laws instituted to prevent interracial marriages in the United States, see Paul Lombardo, "Eugenics Laws Against Race Mixing," Eugenics Archive, accessed December 7, 2019, <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/essay7text.html>. Lombardo's essay documents laws forbidding marriages between people of different races in the United States from the Colonial period through the middle of the 20th century, noting that by 1915, twenty-eight states in the United States made marriages between Negroes and White persons invalid; and six states included this prohibition in their constitutions. When establishing a comparison between the United States and Mexico during the same period, it becomes evident that in Mexico racial mixing was not forbidden nor punishable.

³³ See discussion of Mexico's laws and constitution from colonial to contemporary times in the Literature Review section.

³⁴ Percentage reported by Statista, based on data provided by INEGI.

population of 125,959,205 inhabitants, comprised of mestizo³⁵ (Amerindian-Spanish) (62 percent), predominantly Amerindian (21 percent), Amerindian (7 percent), and other—mostly European (10 percent).³⁶ According to CONEVAL (Mexico’s National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development) only 20.5 percent of Mexico's population is not living in poverty and is not vulnerable to social deprivations; this means that 79.5 percent of the Mexican population is poor or suffers social deprivations.³⁷ To corroborate this data, it was necessary to consult other sources that validate that inequality exists in Mexico. The 2016 GINI report for Mexico indicates that 35 percent of total income share held by highest 10 percent of the population; furthermore, the World Bank ranking of 149 countries places Mexico as the 17th most unequal country in the world with a score of 0.48 (0.00 representing total equality).³⁸ This proves that inequality exists amongst Mexicans in general and amongst mestizos, in particular, as the majority of the Mexican population is mestizo. It is therefore important to understand the origin and the evolution of mestizaje, which I cover in Chapter II.

In 2015, Mexico’s National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) published its first Information Document Commemorating the International Day for the

³⁵ The definition of terms of this thesis proposal contains the definition of mestizo.

³⁶ “Mexico Demographics Profile 2019,” n.d. MUNDI, accessed May 20, 2020, https://www.indexmundi.com/mexico/demographics_profile.html.

³⁷ CONEVAL, “Multidimensional Measurement of Poverty in Mexico: An Economic Wellbeing and Social Rights Approach,” n.d., accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.coneval.org.mx/InformesPublicaciones/FolletosInstitucionales/Documents/Multidimensional-Measurement-of-poverty-in-Mexico.pdf>.

³⁸ World Bank Collection of Development Indicators.

Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Mexico. CONAPRED's study concludes that most Mexicans identify themselves with a lighter skin tone and believe that the discrimination that exists in Mexico is mostly based on economic social class, sexual preference, or physical or mental disabilities,³⁹ and not on skin tone or phenotypical characteristics.

Academic studies challenge CONAPRED's findings by demonstrating the ongoing presence of racism in Mexico. Guillermo Trejo and Melina Altamirano, Colegio de México (CM), Telles and PERLA make evident the shortcomings of the CONAPRED study. This means that although the Mexican government—through CONAPRED—indicates that the discrimination that exists in Mexico is primarily based on economic social class, sexual preference or physical/mental disabilities, the existing scholarly work prove that discrimination based on skin color is more prevalent in Mexico, as demonstrated by Trejo's and Altamirano's research; they conclude that “mestizaje does not have an equalizing effect...indigenous populations and mestizos with indigenous phenotypical features continue to experience the harshest levels of social and economic discrimination in Mexico.”⁴⁰

³⁹ CONAPRED, *Documento Informativo Sobre Día Internacional de la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial* (Consejo Nacional Para Prevenir La Discriminación, March 21, 2015), 1-17, https://www.conapred.org.mx/index.php?contenido=documento&id=299&id_opcion=145&op=145.

⁴⁰ Guillermo Trejo and Melina Altamirano, “The Mexican Color Hierarchy: How Race and Skin Tone Still Define Life Chances 200 Years After Independence,” in J. Hooker & A. B. Tillery, Jr., eds., *The Double Bind: The Politics of Racial and Class Inequalities in the Americas: Report on the Task Force on Racial and Class Inequalities in the America* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 2016): 10.

The Limitations of Mexican Census and the Issue of Self Recognition

A review of the conceptual framework of INEGI's Population and Housing Census, particularly the elements considered for the definition of each of the population variables reveals that INEGI's 2020 Census is the first Mexican census that includes an Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendant ethnic category. INEGI's 2020 census asks respondents to indicate race based on self-recognition. Using self-recognition is problematic because, I infer, self-recognition implies perception of self when reporting race and ethnicity. This is problematic because there is no independent parameter or criterion for ethnic classification. INEGI does not use a predefined skin color palette that reports skin color. This demonstrates that INEGI lacks a reliable methodology, and, consequently, INEGI's reported data only reflects population numbers based on self-reporting/self-perception. In sum, there is no reliable census data on Mexican ethnicity from government sources.

To validate the issue that arises from self-reporting, I reviewed the study conducted by 11.11 Cambio Social as part of their *Racismo in Mexico* (English: Racism in Mexico) campaign. In 2012, 11.11 Cambio Social conducted a research with Mexican children to document children's attitudes toward race, replicating the experiment designed by Psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark with children and dolls in the United States in the 1940's. Appendix I includes a summary of my findings; I added a PERLA scale comparison to document the true skin tone of participating children and the children's self-reported skin tone, which is a parameter not included in the original 11.11 Cambio Social study. The data I present in Appendix I demonstrates that children self-report a lighter skin tone than the true one. This is significant for my study because it

demonstrates that Mexicans tend to self-identify with lighter skin tones than their true skin tones, and, based on children's reported attitudes documented in Appendix I, I infer that Mexicans attach negative attributes to darker skin tones.

Scholarship on Class, Race, and Inequality

The Mexican government's definition of a mestizo is not based on skin color or ethno-racial characteristics. INEGI (Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography) indicates that Mexicans who speak an indigenous language are statistically counted as indigenous population, and Mexicans who speak Spanish are counted as mestizos⁴¹. This makes it possible for a person who is bilingual (Spanish and indigenous language) to be classified as mestizo or indigenous based on language and not on phenotypical characteristics.⁴² Researchers López-Beltrán and Deister assert that it is possible for a Mexican to be simultaneously *culturally* mestizo and *racially* indigenous; López-Beltrán and Deister highlight the importance of the mestizo by indicating that the mestizo has become an ideological and national identity tool in Mexico.⁴³

Trejo and Altamirano attribute discrimination in Mexico as a less studied but important factor that has systematically contributed to a society with a high degree economic inequality. Trejo and Altamirano contend that "race has been a most neglected and understudied issue in Mexico's scholarly research until recently and is still being

⁴¹ Refer to the definition of *Mestizo* in the Definition of Terms section, as it includes an explanation of ethnic categorization based on languages spoken.

⁴² INEGI, *Encuesta Nacional Sobre Discriminación*.

⁴³ López-Beltrán and Deister, *Scientific Approaches to the Mexican Mestizo*, 1-15.

publicly debated.”⁴⁴ They also indicate that existing studies have “failed to systematically explore the likely impact of race and skin tone on Mexico’s deep social inequalities.”⁴⁵ Additionally, Trejo and Altamirano note that people in Latin America—and more prominently in Mexico—deny the very existence of racism and racial discrimination, utilizing the mestizaje discourse as some sort of an equalizing agent to prove that there cannot be racism because “the majority of Mexicans recognize themselves as members of the same race—the mestizo.”⁴⁶

Furthermore, Associate Professor of African Studies Anani Dzidzienyo and Associate Professor of Latin American Studies Suzanne Oboler add that the discourse of a racist-free Mexican society has created a “kind of presumption of moral superiority vis-à-vis the United States of America.”⁴⁷ López-Beltrán and Deister explain that through the concept of mestizaje, Mexico differed from the United States because “in the mid-twentieth century, in contrast to the United States Jim Crow laws...Mexican mestizaje [was] commonly presented as [an] inclusive and egalitarian ideology. Both internally and externally...Mexico [was] seen as example of a non-racist society.”⁴⁸ More recent scholarship clearly shows that even when the existence of racism is denied in Mexico, a type of racism exists.

⁴⁴ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 3.

⁴⁵ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 3.

⁴⁶ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 3.

⁴⁷ Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler, *Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, Afro-Latinos*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 39.

⁴⁸ López-Beltrán, “Scientific Approaches to the Mexican Mestizo,” *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-597020130002000002>.

Trejo and Altamirano explore whether the ideology of mestizaje “eliminated race and skin tone as sources of economic and political discrimination or whether they persist as determinants of socioeconomic redistribution.”⁴⁹ They identified connections between race and socioeconomic inequality that other scholars ignored. To prove that racism exists in Mexico, they conducted a statistical analysis based on a dataset obtained from a 2010 study conducted by the America’s Barometer Survey. Using logit models for testing, Trejo and Altamirano concluded that when compared with people with a median to lighter skin tone, Mexicans with darker skin tone tend to perceive greater levels of racial discrimination. This result “confirms the structural persistence of a color hierarchy in Mexican society, with two groups being particularly vulnerable: dark-brown mestizos and indigenous populations.”⁵⁰ They conclude that instead of creating a unified national identity, the historical process of mestizaje exacerbated discrimination based on skin color.⁵¹ Furthermore, they assert that “although the scholarly community and Mexican and international institutions have recognized class and ethnicity as important sources of discrimination, [the institutions] have failed to systematically explore—or even acknowledge—the likely impact of race and skin tone on Mexico’s deep economic and social inequalities.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 6.

⁵⁰ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 7.

⁵¹ Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 5.

⁵² Trejo and Altamirano, “Color Hierarchy,” 3.

Colegio de Mexico (CM) published in 2019 a study titled “Ethnic/Racial Discrimination in Mexico: A Taxonomy of Discrimination Practices.” CM’s study concludes that “the ubiquity of discrimination practices implies that, despite the apparent weakness of racial categories in Mexico, the principles that people use to socially classify, identify, and discriminate are systematically based on racial criteria. This means that discrimination practices are a key element for the reproduction of ethnic/racial inequality in Mexico.”⁵³

Telles and PERLA conducted a study in 2010 and found that although skin color ratings have been widely used in the United States, those ratings have rarely been used in Latin America. To address this research and scholarly gap, Telles and PERLA created a skin color palette that is specific to Latin America and that complements a survey also conducted by Telles and PERLA on self-reported measures of race and ethnicity.⁵⁴

Trejo and Altamirano, Telles, CM and PERLA’s studies are groundbreaking; however, as I will show, their studies do not address religious and media imagery as probable sources and perpetuators of discrimination and their roles as drivers of discrimination in Mexico—discrimination amongst equals—which remains the unexplored area that this thesis covers.

⁵³ Patricio Solis, Alice Krozer, Carlos Arrollo Batista and Braulio Güemez Graniel, *Ethnic/Racial Discrimination in Mexico: A Taxonomy of Discrimination Practices. Working Paper # 1* (El Colegio de México: Project on Ethnic/Racial Discrimination in Mexico, 2019), 1, <https://discriminacion.colmex.mx/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/dt1-en.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Telles, *Pigmentocracies*.

Scholarship on Mestizaje's Racial Formation and Pigmentocracy

In Mexico, the process of mestizaje and the consequent inception of the homogenous figure of the mestizo contributed to the production of a camouflaged caste system that categorized people based on ethnicity and race. The origins of social classification based on ethno-racial characteristics in Mexico can be traced back to the colonial times, when the idea of a racial hierarchical system (or caste system) is first observed, producing, according to researcher Laura Giraudo, the existence of a colonial racial heritage that has continued into contemporary society. Giraudo describes the caste society in colonial times as a “hierarchical order of racial groups classified according to the proportion of Spanish blood.”⁵⁵ My review shows that it was during the colonial period when the social and economic status of individuals was tied to visible ethno-racial characteristics, with emphasis given on skin color.

Sociologist Ginetta E. B. Candelario elaborates when discussing the process of racial categorization in colonial times by noting that positive or negative attributes were assigned to individuals based on race and racial mixing that reflected one's social and economic place. That place was determined as much by one's appearance as by one's official ancestry. Thus, a light-skinned or *fine*-featured mestizo(a) will be advantaged relative to a darker skinned or indigenous looking mestizo, regardless that both were of mixed European and indigenous ancestry. Overall, mestizos as a group were disadvantaged relative to the whites as a group.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Giraudo, *Sociedad de Castas*, 1.

⁵⁶ Candelario, *Pigmentocracy*.

Scholarship on Colonial History and Mestizaje

Historian Franklin Knight's work on the development of a mestizo image in Latin America provides an historical lens for the purposes of this thesis. Knight asserts that with the establishment of a colonial society in Latin America "race and social class merged indissolubly in the configuration of the political power that accompanied the end of the wars of independence. Latin American countries discovered that the mestizo was their most representative national figure."⁵⁷ Knight's work as it pertains to the creation and meaning of the mestizo figure is used as a foundation of the framework of this thesis. He argues that the mestizo became the identity of someone who would not completely identify with the indigenous population, and while not being criollo the mestizo had a criollo aspect in her or his lineage. According to Knight, a whiter mestizo was considered of a higher class, while the browns (believed to have more indigenous blood than European blood) and indigenous people were considered lower class.⁵⁸

Historian Susan Kellogg analyzed artistic representations from Mexico in the late 17th and 18th centuries, finding that "in every family represented, each member belonged to a different ethno-racial grouping, subsuming individual identity into the family grouping. This almost oxymoronic quality of the paintings mirrored an emerging sense of Mexican identity rooted in ethno-racial difference yet unified and whole."⁵⁹ Kellogg's

⁵⁷ Franklin W. Knight, *El Mestizaje en América Latina* (Ediciones UNESCO, Editorial Trotta, 2001).

⁵⁸ Knight, *El Mestizaje en América Latina*.

⁵⁹ Susan Kellogg, "Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts," *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 69-92.

analysis complements the findings of Professor of Equality Jurisprudence Lovell Banks who asserts that “the casta paintings⁶⁰ convey to the viewer not only the superiority of the *español* [peninsular], but also the inferiority of racially mixed groups.”⁶¹ Kellogg’s studies encompass exclusively the colonial times, not covering modern times, which are periods that this thesis covers.

For my purposes, although Banks’ work centers on the Mexican population of African ancestry, her findings can be extrapolated to encompass the mestizo population because structural racism was being communicated through art. These racist images contributed to the ways that skin color was used within the family circle and extending to the macro social level, provoking discrimination amongst Mexicans, thus discrimination amongst equals.

This literature review would be incomplete without mentioning that the mestizo discourse is as alive today as it was in colonial times. Colombian scholar Jaime Arocha Rodríguez notes that the biases of colonial cultures did not disappear with the political independence of Latin American countries from Spain; therefore, the notion that all Latin people are mestizos is still present and problematic because it “prevents the development and identification of specific racial groups. While this myth is used to prevent the development of their own identities and claims, it is not used to achieve a greater degree of equality and social integration.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Casta Paintings are explained and analyzed in Chapter III.

⁶¹ Lovell Banks, *Mestizaje*, 15.

⁶² Jaime Arocha Rodríguez, "Afro-Colombia Denied," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 25 (1992): 28-31.

Whitening Juan Diego and the Virgin of Guadalupe

In 1810, an image of Virgin de Guadalupe, with her olive skin and European facial features became the first symbol and flag of Mexico representing the start of the struggle for independence from Spain. According to scholar C.M. Stafford Poole, Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe was a “‘pious fiction of the 17th century, designed to further the cause of *criollismo* or ‘incipient Mexican nationalism’ by strengthening the identity of New Spain’s creoles as legitimate children of the Virgin who had favoured their new home by appearing to a humble Indian [Juan Diego] on a hill in Tepeyac.”⁶³

Religious visual representations during colonial times and after also highlight the indigenous population. On July 31, 2002, Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego, becoming the Americas' first indigenous Roman Catholic saint. The comparison of how the Catholic Church visually represents a Mexican indigenous man demonstrates that from the official Catholic point of view there is a prevalence on the racial representation of saints as criollos. For example, journalist Richard Bourdeaux's critiques the artistic representation of Juan Diego as depicted by the Catholic Church by saying that the image is of a “light skinned [man], with dark green eyes—a decidedly non-Indian appearance.”⁶⁴ Journalist David Luhnnow concurs by saying that “the portrait shows a light-skinned, full-bearded man who looks more like one of the sword-wielding Spanish conquistadors who subjugated the Aztec empire.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Ellen Gunnarsson, Review of *The Guadalupean Controversies in Mexico*, by C.M. Stafford Poole, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 3 (2008): 617-618, doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S0022216X08004653>.

⁶⁴ Richard Bourdeaux, “Latin America's Indigenous Saint Stirs Anger, Pride,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/la-fg-saint30jul30-story.html>.

Scholarship on Mass Media

From colonial times until the introduction of cinema in Mexico in the late 1800's, art, print media, propaganda and religious symbols remained as main forms of visual communication in Mexico. In 1946 Mexico's first experimental television station was established. In 1958 the first Mexican *Telenovela* (soap opera) was broadcasted, initiating a popular media phenomenon. Anthropologist O. Hugo Benavides has researched telenovelas from a social lens and has found that "the amount of academic or critical literature on telenovelas, despite their pervasive presence over the last sixty years in popular cultural life, is rather scant."⁶⁶ He adds that the phenomenon of telenovelas in Mexico "inherited the structure of the melodrama from both visual and aural media and fused them into one incredibly powerful medium of popular cultural representation."⁶⁷ Benavides' findings regarding the lack of research work on the influence of mass media in popular culture further highlights the gap in existing scholarly work that this thesis covers about visual representations of positive or negative attributes based on skin color and ethno-racial characteristics.

Researcher Nieves Rodriguez Valle from Colegio de Mexico (CM) documented Mexican ethnic proverbs widely used in Mexico that express racism against others within

⁶⁵ David Luhnow, "Mexico's Juan Diego: Saint Who Never was?" *Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 2002, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/398779532?accountid=11311>.

⁶⁶ O. Hugo Benavides, "Mexican Telenovelas," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, October 26, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-458>.

⁶⁷ Benavides, "Mexican Telenovelas."

[the] Mexican society based on skin color and ethno-racial characteristics. This type of proverb (popular saying or *paremia*) also “observes its antecedents and contents from the interaction between indigenous and Spaniards [since] colonial times... particularly those that include [references] to one or more specific ethnic groups like the Indian, [the] Spanish, the creole and the mestizo”⁶⁸; she builds on the work of author Herón Pérez who compiled the most comprehensive list of Mexican proverbs, including an analysis of grammar structure, variants and meaning, the latter not equal to its literal sense; Rodríguez “collects and expands on the previous compilations...*paremias* are not universal, rather they present a disparaging view of the other clearly differentiated from the one who enunciates them; they do not use the metaphor, but the description of the defects - real or imaginary - that they attribute to the stereotype that is the object of criticism of *paremia*.”⁶⁹ These proverbs align with visual representations analyzed for this thesis, along with personal observations related to cultural language that normalizes discrimination, and negative or positive attributes attached to skin color or ethno-racial characteristics. Thus, making evident that visual representations are aligned with language.

“Since the Colony, when the indigenous people were marginalized [by] the conquerors and the creoles, the stereotype [of the Indio] was created...as a tricky, quarrelsome or lazy population by nature. Thus, instead of listening to or attending to their demands, their poverty was justified: the indigenous people were poor because they

⁶⁸ Nieves Rodríguez Valles, "Parencias étnicas En El Refranero Mexicano," *Acta Poética* 26, no. 1-2 (2015): 465, <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/ap/v26n1-2/v26n1-2a21.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Rodríguez, "Parencias étnicas En El Refranero Mexicano," 471.

were part of an inferior, foolish and savage race.”⁷⁰ To elaborate, I analyzed and documented a selection of Perez’s sayings related to ethnicity:⁷¹

- *A barbas de indio, navaja de criollo*. Literal translation: An indigenous beard merits a criollo blade. This saying conveys the message that "the faults or defects of the Indians must be corrected by the Creoles, because of the harshness with which they treated them.”⁷²
- *Alabar al indio es engrandecerlo*. This is a popular saying of probable mestizo origin that indicate that Indians should not be praised.⁷³

Chilango Magazine⁷⁴ cites the following sayings related to ethnicity:⁷⁵

- *Cara de Olmeca (Olmeca Face), Indio Pata Rajada (Barefoot Indio), Trae el Nopal en la Cara (He/She Has ‘Cactus’ Written all Over the Face)*: “The ideal of European beauty - white skin, blond hair, Greek profile - has made the indigenous population continue to be discriminated against based on their physical appearance, their features, their language or even their clothing...the [sayings] have a sense of contempt, as [they] refer to people who live among nopal crops,

⁷¹ Martínez, *Los Refranes del Hablar Mexicano en el Siglo XX*.

⁷² Rodríguez, "Paremiás étnicas En El Refranero Mexicano."

⁷³ Rodríguez, "Paremiás étnicas En El Refranero Mexicano."

⁷⁴ Unknown, *El Racismo Nuestro de Cada Día*, Chilango, February 11, 2018, <https://www.chilango.com/ciudad/frases-racistas-en-cdmx/>.

⁷⁵ Translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes.

generally indigenous communities.”⁷⁶ From my perspective, these are the most harsh and demeaning sayings in Mexico, as these not only discriminate individuals based on ethno-racial characteristics, but also use indigenous symbols (cactus, the Olmeca culture, indigenous culture) to further discriminate.

- *Hasta Entre los Perros hay Razas (Even Amongst Dogs There Are Races)*. “[Sayings] like this perpetuate a misconception: that human beings can be classified according to races and that, of all races, the white is superior to the others. They also reflect the deep feeling of inferiority that Mexican can feel with respect to their skin color.”⁷⁷ In my view, this type of saying not only compares humans to animals, but gives a higher social status to an individual based on ancestry; the message is that some races are better than others.
- *El Niño es Morenito, Pero Está Bonito (The Kid is a Little Brown⁷⁸ One, But He is Cute)*. “Many use the phrase as a joke, but that does not mean it loses its original meaning: Whoever says it regrets that a newborn does not have white skin...[this saying] arises from the prejudice that brown people are ugly.”⁷⁹
- *Trabajo Como Negro Para Vivir como Blanco. Los Mexicanos en Estados Unidos Hacen Trabajos que ni los Negros Quieren Hacer. (I Work Like a Black to Live as a White. Mexicans in the United States Do Jobs That Not Even the Blacks Want to*

⁷⁶ Unknown, “El Racismo Nuestro De Cada Día.”

⁷⁷ Unknown, “El Racismo Nuestro De Cada Día.”

⁷⁸ See definition of Moreno in the Definition of Terms section.

⁷⁹ Unknown, “El Racismo Nuestro De Cada Día.”

Do). This term is used by Mexicans to make inferences between the work that was done by slaves of African origin in foreign countries (United States in particular) and the hard work that middle class Mexicans must do to attain a “white” lifestyle. From my observations, this exemplifies how Mexicans perceive African descendants as “something alien, [they] make fun of the conditions that slaves suffered.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, this refers to Mexican immigrants that in the United States perform undesirable jobs that “not even African Americans want to do.”⁸¹

Further Observations, Media and Religious Imagery

My exploration and observation of media and religious visual representations in Mexico from the 16th century to contemporary times indicates that there is a correlation between ethno-racial characteristics and culturally constructed negative or positive attributes. As such, positive attributes are given to characters with a lighter skin color, and negative attributes are given to characters with darker skin tones. These representations are culturally accepted thus part of the Mexican social fabric and way of life. For example, when I examined political discourses about immigration, I found several instances when former Mexican president Vicente Fox talked about Mexican undocumented workers doing jobs that “not even [African Americans] want to do.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Unknown, “El Racismo Nuestro De Cada Día.”

⁸¹ Unknown, “El Racismo Nuestro De Cada Día.”

⁸² Reuters, “Ven Racismo en Palabras de Presidente Mexicano,” *Emol.Mundo*, May 16, 2015, <https://www.emol.com/noticias/internacional/2005/05/16/182406/ven-racismo-en-palabras-de-presidente-mexicano.html>. Note paraphrasing from one of the

This is a clear reference to the *paremia* related to the jobs Mexicans have in the United States; as such, Fox used a phrase that is of common use in Mexico but that has clear and profound discriminatory meaning.⁸³ Fox received criticism from civil-rights activist Jessie Jackson while Mexican constituents felt that the discourse had nothing to do with racial stereotyping,⁸⁴ demonstrating a degree of normalization of racial discrimination in Mexico.

Methodology

Through statistical qualitative and quantitative analysis of media content from the 16th to the 21st centuries in Mexico, this thesis analyzes if and how media has produced and disseminated content, messaging and narratives that attach desirable positive attributes to lighter skin tones and negative attributes to darker skin tones. The same analysis was conducted on religious symbols of the Catholic Church from the 16th to the 21st centuries in Mexico to find similarities with popular media representations, and to understand if these representations have changed through time.

To avoid the issue of skin color and ethnicity self-reporting, whether from the INEGI census data or observations, the analysis conducted for this thesis uses the PERLA color palette:

The PERLA color palette [complements] the self-reported measures of race and ethnicity [because] skin color ratings... have rarely been used in Latin America. The availability of a variable denoting skin color as observed by the interviewer allows [to account for] actual skin tone rather than rely solely on self-identification of race/ethnicity.

paremias included in the analysis of Scholarship on Mass Media.

⁸³ Review the *Paremias*, Scholarship on Mass Media section.

⁸⁴ Reuters, “Ven Racismo en Palabras de Presidente Mexicano.”

For skin color ratings, interviewers [rate] the facial skin color of each respondent according to colors on a skin color palette, which [is] not shown to the respondent. The palette [comprises] eleven skin tones, with “1” being the lightest and “11” being the darkest. The colors of the palette came from internet photographs and the palette was extensively pre-tested for ease of use by interviewers and to see if covered the range of colors found in the field. Interviewers were advised that the survey was interested in rating skin color because social science evidence has shown that ordinary people commonly evaluate the skin color of others in everyday interactions and often treat them according to ideas based on color/race.⁸⁵

My study correlates the PERLA⁸⁶ skin tone palette (see Figure 2) with the skin color of each of the characters portrayed on each media and religious image and classifies each image and each character to determine ethno-racial representation with a list of positive or negative attributes. To facilitate the reporting of findings of this thesis, I have added a number to each PERLA color, as shown in Figure 2.

⁸⁵ “PERLA Color Palette | PERLA,” Princeton University, accessed July 16, 2020, <https://perla.princeton.edu/perla-color-palette/>.

⁸⁶ “PERLA Color Palette.”



Figure 2. The PERLA Color Palette.

The PERLA Color Palette includes eleven skin colors that complement the self-reported measures of race and ethnicity. For this thesis, a number has been assigned to each individual color. Source: The PERLA Color Palette.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ “PERLA Color Palette.”

Through an analysis of the visual representations that this thesis covers, the goal is to gain an understanding of what the people were exposed to, if there are consistent positive or negative attributes that the authors communicated through images, and if there are patterns (i.e., dark skin color with a consistent low-class and negative narrative, light skin color with a consistent high-class or successful narrative).

Chapter II.

The Bronze Race and the Cosmic Race:

The Creation of the Mestizo Image and a National Identity in Mexico

“Lord, let the glory of your race speak,
the glory of men of bronze.”

- *Amado Nervo, The Bronze Race* (1902)

2019 marked the 500th anniversary of the Conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan by Hernan Cortes. This single event, known throughout Mexico as *El Encuentro de Dos Mundos* (the encounter of two worlds) marked the demise of the Aztec empire, the instauration of the New Spain, the development of the notion of malinchismo, and the first step in the process of the creation of a new racial formation that would give the New Spain—and later to independent Mexico—a national identity: the image of the Mexican mestizo.

The Creation of the Mestizo

Mexican poet Amado Nervo wrote *The Bronze Race* (Spanish: *La Raza de Bronce*) in 1902, shaping racial politics in Mexico, and solidifying the ideology of the mestizo as a superior, universal race. A review of Nervo’s work reveals at the core his notion of utilizing the image of the mestizo as a unification propellor, an image that could bring a nation together.

In the context of the Mexican Revolution and the formation of a national identity based on the figure of the mestizo, Anthropologist Manuel Gamio in his pro-nationalist

book written in 1916 *Forging a Nation* (Spanish: *Forjando Patria*), formulates an integrationist method to consolidate Mexico based on roles played by each [existing] ethnic group.⁸⁸ Professor Castillo Ramirez summarizes Gamio's representation of indigenous Mexicans as:

social subjects who lacked the capacities, motivations, and directive gifts required for carry out, through their own processes, the transformations of their living conditions...they were collectives with a very reduced agency, symbolically conformed in terms of helpless and victimized groups that required an outside contribution - from anthropologists, sociologists, etc. - with the purpose of substantially changing their adverse and unequal social conditions of existence, in order to join national life. And although Gamio attributed importance and value to certain objects and artistic-cultural practices of the indigenous people, it is worth questioning to what extent his representations about the indigenous repeated unfounded judgments about ethnic groups they had certain sectors of the urban upper-middle classes with university education.⁸⁹

Shortly after the Mexican Revolution, Mexican writer José Vasconcelos in his book *The Cosmic Race* (Spanish: *La Raza Cósmica*) in 1925 introduced a theory founded in the notion that the geographic and climatic conditions combined with the amalgamation of the Spanish and indigenous races created a superior race, the Cosmic Race or the Mestizo. For Vasconcelos, the Mestizos would become superior to the Spaniards (Whites), but notably, Vasconcelos discredited the indigenous, Africans and Asians, creating a racist discourse. This narrative, similar to Gamio, places the Indio below the mestizo. I infer that since the Indio is at the bottom, and the amalgamation of

⁸⁸ Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria: Pro-Nacionalismo (Forging a Nation)* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010).

⁸⁹ Guillermo Castillo Ramírez, "Política, cultura e indígenas en el México de inicios del siglo XX. El integracionismo de Gamio como proyecto de homogeneización nacional," *En-claves del pensamiento* 9, no. 18 (2015): 103-130, accessed May 10, 2021, http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-879X2015000200103&lng=es&tlng=es.

the Indio and the Spaniards creates the mestizo. Consequently, the Spaniards are categorized higher than the Mestizos, contradicting, from this simplistic view, Vasconcelos' idea that the Mestizos are superior than the Spaniards.

Sol Tiverovsky Scheines, in her analysis of the racism in Mexican novels of the 19th century, does not acknowledge or mentions the works of Narvo, Gamio or Vasconcelos but instead draws interesting arguments about the mestizo concept that contribute to my research. Tiverovsky finds that in Mexico:

Since the 19th century, the [idea] of miscegenation, in idyllic terms, proposed to unite the indigenous with the Spanish [to] homogenize the nation...[that] biologically collected the positive traits of each, and spiritually, [gained the] love for this country that their parents (each individual race) did not feel...the mestizo represented the national union in a [new] race that would improve both and each other. It seems to me that one of the most terrible consequences of this model...is the self-loathing of this racial hierarchy that has placed the population—based on their supposed race and skin color—on a scale of inferiority-superiority...[this] miscegenation formed a weak, easy to manipulate [narrative that contradicts] what it claims to defend. Because, if for one part the goods of miscegenation are spoken in idyllic terms, on the other hand, neglects those with a darker skin color...creating [for the latter] an inferiority complex.⁹⁰

Tiverovsky, through her research of 19th century novels, documents that the “beauty of a person would make their moral qualities, social status and potential danger to society. [Consequently], we have a population that denigrates itself and that despises what it is because of an assumed [and perceived] inferiority [based on phenotypical attributes].”⁹¹

⁹⁰ Sol Triverovsky Scheines, “El Racismo De Las Novelas Mexicanas Del Siglo XIX,” *Elementos Revista De Ciencia y Cultura* 116 (2019): 42, doi:<https://elementos.buap.mx/directus/storage/uploads/00000003950.pdf>.

⁹¹ Scheines, “El Racismo De Las Novelas Mexicanas Del Siglo XIX,” 45.

My review of the ideas of Nervo, Vasconcelos, Gamio and Tiverovsky makes evident that the concept of the mestizo is fundamentally racist. The four authors acknowledge the perceived (from a cultural lens⁹²) lower social position of the Indio and the higher position of the Spaniard. That being the case, I assert that in the process of racial formation the Mestizo would sit in the middle, influencing an individual's perception of self and others in terms social position by being (1) less or more Indio, (2) less or more Spaniard, or (3) less or more White. Since the Indio, as per Gamio, sits lower than a Spaniard, I assert that a Mestizo would consequentially aspire to be perceived (by others and self) more Spaniard (White) than Indio (Brown). As such, I infer that positive or negative moral, intellectual, and social attributes are culturally given to Indios and Spaniards, while the mestizo would receive those positive or negative attributes based on mestizo's closer resemblance to Indios or Spaniards. Therefore, mestizos with PERLA skin tones one to four (similar skin tones to Peninsular) receive positive attributes, and mestizos with PERLA skin tones five to eleven would receive negative attributes (similar skin tones to an Indio or those of African descent).

⁹² See the definition of Culture in the Definition of Terms section.

Chapter III.

The Third Root⁹³—Afro-Mexicans, the Invisible Population

“We exist. We are here. We occupy this area.
We have a culture and we proudly say that we are Mexicans.”⁹⁴

- *Bulmaro García, an Afro-Mexican from Costa Chica, Guerrero, Mexico (2020).*

I found a neglected topic in academic studies is the existence of population of African descent in Mexico. This topic is important to cover to demonstrate that Mexico has a diverse ethnic composition and a racial formation that encompasses more than the amalgamation of Indians and Spaniards.

In 1966 the Mexican Government signed the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). In 1989 Mexico’s Government also signed Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization Convention (ILO). The signatories of these agreements made the commitment, amongst other provisions, of gathering and providing information on indigenous and Afro-descendant population including data related to access to education, health, employment, conservation of indigenous languages and respect for indigenous identity. Mexico is also one of the 51 founding members of the United Nations (UN) and has been a member of

⁹³ The ‘Third Root’ is a concept I have taken from the project “La Tercera Raíz” by Dr. Luz María Martínez Montiel. Montiel’s project documents the historical and anthropological reality of populations with African descent in Mexico and America. To review this concept, watch NotimexTV, director, *México Negro: La Tercera Raíz*, *YouTube*, Notimex, 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=khDkZfcetAI.

⁹⁴ David Agren, “‘We Exist. We’re Here’: Afro-Mexicans Make the Census after Long Struggle for Recognition,” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2020, www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/19/afro-mexicans-census-history-identity.

the organization since 1945. The UN established the International Decade for People of African Descent, a program launched in 2015 that requires the participant members to obtain data on Afro-descendant population with the goal of developing programs to eradicate social exclusion, poverty and provide access to education.

Mexico's participation in the aforementioned forums, that specifically address African population, could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the existence of Afro-Mexicans, but an analysis of Mexico's census data from 1895 (the first census that took place in Mexico) to 2020 (Mexico's most recent census at the time of this thesis) reveals that it was only in 2015 that INEGI's Intercensal Survey⁹⁵ incorporated for the first time in Mexico's modern history a section about Mexico's Afro-descendants population.

In 2017, INEGI, in collaboration with the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) and the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) published the first socio-demographic profile of the Afro-descendant population in Mexico. This was the first comprehensive, government-led study specifically aimed at "highlighting the existence of girls, boys, adolescents, men and women, all Afro-descendants, who live in the Mexican territory, as well as to show their main demographic and socioeconomic characteristics."⁹⁶

This lack of census data demonstrates that until recently, the existence of African population was not officially recorded nor acknowledged by the Mexican government.

⁹⁵ INEGI is Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography, an autonomous organism of the Mexican Government.

⁹⁶ INEGI, CONAPRED CNDH, "Perfil Sociodemográfico De La Población Afrodescendiente En México," CNDH, 2017, https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/doc/OtrosDocumentos/Doc_2017_030.pdf.

This point is important because the national identity of Mexico has been limited by the mestizo image and two races and cultures (Spanish and Indio). This limited view has negated the existence of people of African descent and their presence in the racial mixing of Mexican people.

Africans arrived in Mexico with the Spaniards, first with Hernan Cortez, and later to meet an increased demand for labor that the indigenous population could not provide. As historian Gisela Von Wobeser documented, Spaniards brought to the New World deadly diseases (including smallpox, influenza, bubonic plague, scarlet fever, typhus, and others) that eventually caused the death of at least 85% of the indigenous population.⁹⁷ Disease created a need for labor in the New Spain that needed to be met.

Research Professor Robert McCaa documented that:

There is consensus among historians that smallpox struck central Mexico in 1520, the first of a series of devastating, multi-year epidemics that erupted in the sixteenth-century. The [smallpox] epidemic was particularly severe because, unlike in Europe, where the virus was a childhood disease, in Mexico it found "virgin soil," striking entire households, adults as well as children, in one massive blow. With almost everyone ill at once, there was no one to provide food, water, or care so that many who fell ill died, not of smallpox, but of hunger, dehydration, and despair...no longer were the dead buried; they could only cast them all into the water—for in those times there was much water everywhere in Mexico. And there was a great, foul odor; the smell issued forth from the dead. A second great multi-year epidemic struck in 1545...and a third in 1576.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Redacción, "La Conquista Española Causó Merma Del 85 % De La Población Indígena En México," *La Vanguardia*, May 8, 2019, www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20190508/462131441231/la-conquista-espanola-causo-merma-del-85--de-la-poblacion-indigena-en-mexico.html.

⁹⁸ Robert McCaa, "The Peopling of Mexico from Origins to Revolution," University of Minnesota, December 8, 1997, users.pop.umn.edu/~rmccaa/mxpoprev/cambridg3.htm.

With data from eleven sources, McCaa showed that the native population suffered a demographic disaster. McCaa documented the estimated population and the percent of native population in 1519 and in 1595 to calculate the native population decrease over that period, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. McCaa’s Authoritative Estimates of Total Population and Implied Rates of Decrease in Mexico (1519-1595).

		Population (Millions)	Population (Millions)	Percent Decrease
Author	Place	Year 1519	Year 1595	Period 1519- 1595
Rosenblat	“Mexico”	4.5	3.5	22
Aguirre- Beltrán		4.5	2.0	56
Zambardino		5 – 10	1.1 – 1.7	64 – 89
Mendizabal		8.2	2.4	71
Cook and Simpson		10.5	2.1 – 3.0	71 – 80
Cook and Borah		18 – 30	1.4	78 – 95
Sanders	Central Mexican Symbiotic Region	2.6 - 3.1	0.4	85 – 87
Whitmore	Valley of Mexico	1.3 - 2.7	0.1 – 0.4	69 – 96
Gibson		1.5	0.2	87
Sanders		1.0 - 1.2	0.1	90
Kubler	128 towns	0.2	0.1	50

*This data summarizes what McCaa calls the “Demographic Disaster in Mexico” that resulted from the importation of highly transmittable diseases by the Spaniards during the colonization of Mexico.*⁹⁹

This population decrease created a demand for labor that needed to be compensated. McCaa elaborates:

There is consensus that demographic [need for] recovery, in addition to growth, meant transformation... recovery was accompanied by a great mixing of peoples of different ethno-racial backgrounds... [it is estimated that] 200,000 [African] slaves were imported into Mexico over three centuries. By the beginning of the eighteenth-century, free labor was too abundant—that is too cheap—for slavery to compete... Afro-Mexicans with conscious identities based on kinship and community numbered more than one-half million by 1810 and constituted the largest group of free blacks in the Western hemisphere.¹⁰⁰

McCaa builds upon Aguirre-Beltran’s pioneering research into Afro-Mexicans by concluding that in the territory that is now Mexico “Indians predominated through the end of the colonial regime, and mestizos proliferated from the late 16th century”¹⁰¹. However, it is important to note that from 1519 to the mid 1700’s, according to Aguirre-Beltran, Africans outnumbered Europeans, as shown in Figure 3. This larger number of Africans could have contributed to a larger percentage of African physical genotypes in a Mestizo than that of Europeans, but notably, and again according to Aguirre-Beltran, Indians consistently outnumbered all other ethnic groups.

⁹⁹ Data from McCaa, *The Peopling of Mexico from Origins to Revolution*.

¹⁰⁰ McCaa, *The Population of Mexico from Origins to Revolution*.

¹⁰¹ McCaa, *The Population of Mexico from Origins to Revolution*.

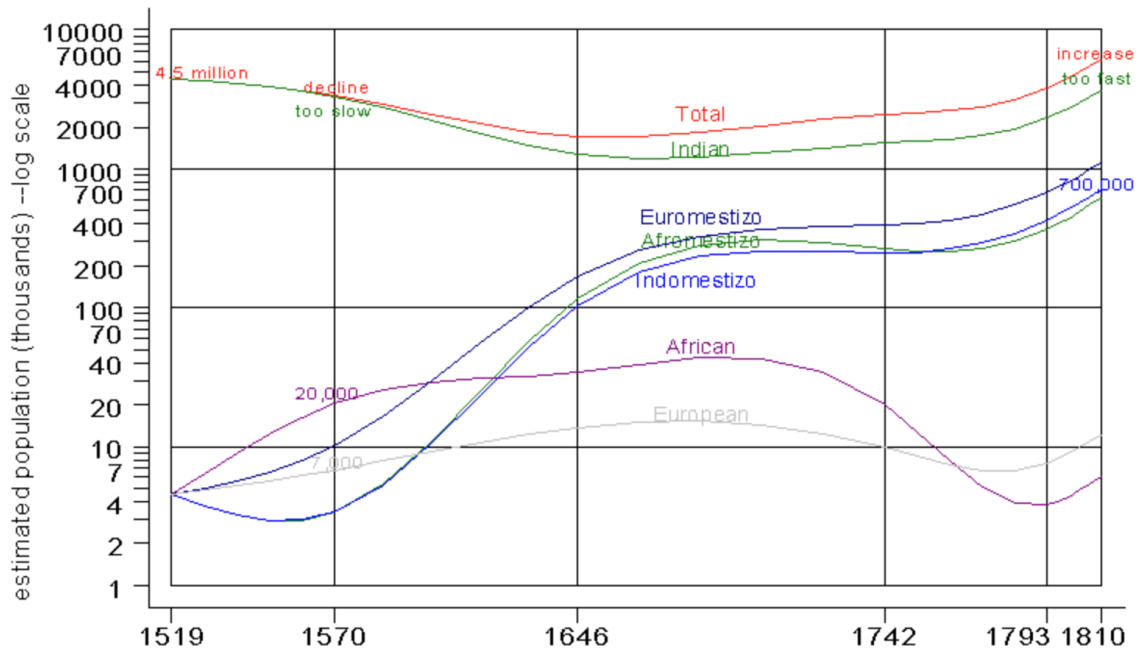


Figure 3. Aguirre-Beltran Ethno-races of New Spain.

*Aguirre-Beltran ethno-races of New Spain Based on Rosenbalt, Diez de la Calle, Villaseñor, Humboldt, and Navarro and Noriega, Aguirre-Beltran documents the existence of African and African Mestizo population in Mexico.*¹⁰²

The presence of all these ethnic groups and the consequent racial mixing/racial formation appeared to be a peaceful process, but from a pigmentocratic lens, racial mixing was a matter of exclusion. Author Pedro Alonso O'Crouley's researched and documented the sentiment of the Spaniards towards the African population, and explains how and why the racial formation in the New Spain came to erase the African presence in Casta categories and also placed the African population below the Indios:

¹⁰² McCaa, *The Peopling of Mexico from Origins to Revolution*.

Because it is agreed that from a Spaniard and a Negro a mulato is born...it is said, and with reason, that a Mulato can never leave his condition of mixed blood, but rather it is the Spanish element that is lost and absorbed into the condition of a Negro....The same thing happens from the union of a Negro and Indian, the descent...incline towards the Mulato.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Pedro Alonso O'Crouley, *A Description of the Kingdom of the New Spain* (1744), trans. and ed. Sean Galvin (Dublin: Allen Figgs, 1972), 20.

Chapter IV.

Casta Paintings—the Racial Taxonomy of the New Spain

“It is known that neither Indian nor Negro contends in dignity and esteem with the Spaniard; nor do any of the others envy the lot of the Negro, who is the "most dispirited and despised"...If the mixed-blood is the offspring of a Spaniard and an Indian [a Mestizo], the stigma [the despise] disappears.”¹⁰⁴

- *Pedro Alonso O'Crouley, 1774.*

In the literature review section, I discussed how Banks validates Giraudo's arguments about the racial classification by exploring how art, through visual representations, embodied the cast society in the New Spain. Banks asserts, “Art not only reflects a country's culture, but often shapes that culture as well. [In Mexico] the colonial art reinforced the hierarchy of the *Sociedad de Castas* (caste society), undoubtedly influencing the thinking of Mexico's predominantly illiterate population.”¹⁰⁵

During colonial times, a mixing of languages (Spanish and an array of indigenous languages) made it difficult for media and religious institutions to fully communicate with the larger population, which opened the way for some art forms (which can be considered mass media during colonial times). These art forms became an influential

¹⁰⁴ O'Crouley, *A Description of the Kingdom of New Spain*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ Taunya Lovell Banks, "Mestizaje and the Mexican Mestizo Self: No Hay Sangre Negra, So There is no Blackness," *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 201, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=790625.

communications tool.¹⁰⁶ Some art works represented the social classifications and hierarchies of the society based on ethno-racial archetypes. By studying paintings and commissioned works of art (by Miguel Cabrera, Ignacio Maria Barreda, Luis de Mena, Andres Islas and dozens of anonymous artists), my research indicates that it was during this period when artists started representing race in images, specifically in the form of casta paintings. Those images also depicted the social place and restricted mobility of individuals based on race and skin color. Historian Thomas B.F. Cummins describes casta paintings as a visual representation of a family model:

Typically, casta paintings display a mother, father, and a child (sometimes two). This family model is possibly modeled on depictions of the Holy Family showing the Virgin Mary, saint Joseph, and Christ as a child. Casta paintings are often labeled with a number and a textual inscription that documents the mixing that has occurred. The numbers and textual inscriptions on casta paintings create a racial taxonomy, akin to a scientific taxonomy. In this way, casta paintings speak to Enlightenment concerns, specifically the notion that people can be rationally categorized based on their ethnic makeup and appearance.

The first position of the casta series is always a Spanish man and an elite Indigenous woman, accompanied by their offspring: a mestizo, which denotes a person born of these two parents. As the casta series progresses and the mixing increases, some of the names used in casta paintings to label people demonstrate social anxiety over inter-ethnic mixing and can often be pejorative.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Laura Giraudo, "Casta(s), Sociedad de Castas e Indigenismo: La Interpretación del Pasado Colonial en el Siglo XX," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/72080>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.72080>.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas B.F Cummins, "Casta Paintings: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico/Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings," *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 1 (2006): 185-189, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/scholarly-journals/casta-paintings-images-race-eighteenth-century/docview/222945742/se-2?accountid=11311>.

Scholar Mey-Yen Moriuchi examined in more depth what each casta communicated in terms of ethnic characteristics and skin color, highlighting that whiteness commanded a higher social status:

Twelve to sixteen panels often comprised a castas series with the most pure, that is, the 'whitest' races, occupying the top category that initiated the series. Attention was placed on the physical appearance, clothing, attributes, and settings of the families to locate them on the social hierarchical ladder. For example, the individuals in the beginning of a series are typically well-dressed, many wearing fashionable European styles. As one moves further down the series, clothing becomes more simple, loose-fitting, and even tattered...¹⁰⁸

I selected three representative casta paintings, all from the 18th century to illustrate this hierarchy. Figure 4 is from an anonymous artist, Figure 5 was produced by Ignacio Maria Barreda, and the casta painting of Figure 6 is also from an anonymous artist.

¹⁰⁸ Mey-Yen Moriuchi. "From Casta to Costumbrismo: Representations of Racialized Social Spaces," *Envisioning Others* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004302150_009.



Figure 4. Casta Painting, Anonymous.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, *Las Castas*, 18th century, oil on canvas, 148×104 cm, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico, <https://nativeheritageproject.com/2013/06/15/las-castas-spanish-racial-classifications/>.



Figure 5. Casta Painting, Ignacio Maria Barreda.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Ignacio Maria Barreda, *Las Castas in Mexico*, oil on canvas, no size found, Real Academia Española, Madrid, Spain, https://www.smith.edu/vistas/vistas_web/gallery/detail/casta-ptg_det.htm.



Figure 6. Casta Painting, Anonymous.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Anonymous, *Pintura de Castas*, c. 1750, oil on canvas, Private Collection, https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat_castas.pdf.

The three paintings have in common that they communicate social class based on racial ancestry (i.e. a Spaniard father and an indigenous woman would produce a mestizo, a mestizo father and a Spaniard women would produce a castizo, etc.), with the highest location in the hierarchy given to male criollos, and the lower social class represented by the descendants of a Mexican indigenous and an African native; other than skin color, and as per Mey-Yen, note the quality/style of clothing and occupation that further communicate social status. That the higher social status is given to the criollos is evident.

I created Table 2 to summarize the racial classification of sixteen castas depicted by these three different artists. Note that the first five Castas, marked in yellow, are named the same in the three paintings, while the other eight have significant variations in races and names, demonstrating the complexity of racial mixing and social classifications of the New Spain. The five initial castas, highlighted in yellow cells, of the three casta paintings are comprised of the same three racial groups: Indias, Spanish and Black, a sign that these three races were the more prevalent ones for illustrative and racial classification purposes, with a higher social status given to the descendants of the Spanish with India (Mestizo). Africans are represented in the fourth category, after all possible mixings between Spanish and Indias are exhausted, and all other races, clear minorities, follow.

Table 2. Casta Painting Comparison, Three Works.

	Anonymous (taken from Figure 4)	Ignacio Maria Barreda (taken from Figure 5)	Anonymous (taken from Figure 6)
1	Mestizo: Spanish with India	Mestizo: Spanish and Indian	Mestizo: Spanish and Indian

2	Castizo: Mestizo with Spanish	Castizo: Spanish and mestizo	Castizo: Spanish and mestizo
3	Spanish: Castizo con español	Spanish: Spanish and Castiza	Spanish: Castizo and Spanish
4	Mulato: Spanish with blackberry (black)	Mulato: Spanish and black	Mulato: Spanish and black
5	Morisco: Mulato with Spanish	Morisco: Spanish and mulatto	Morisco: Spanish and mulatto
6	Chinese: Moorish with Spanish	Albino: Spanish and Moorish	Albino: Spanish and Moorish
7	Sata back: Chinese with India	Back to back: Spanish and albino	Back to back: Spanish and albino
8	Wolf: jump back with mulatto	Tente en el aire: Spanish and turn back	Wolf: Indian and black
9	Gíbaro or jíbaro: wolf with china	Chino cambujo: black and indian	Coyote: Indian and mestizo
10	Albarazado: gíbaro (jíbaro) with mulatto	Wolf: chinese cambujo and india	Chinese: wolf and black
11	Cambujo: albarazado with black	Albarazado: wolf and india	Cambujo: Chinese and Indian
12	Sambaigo (zambaigo): cambujo with india	Barcino: albarazado and mestizo	Tente en el aire: cambujo and india
13	Calpamulato: sambaigo with she-wolf	Zambuigua: Indian and Barcina	Albarazado: tente in the air and mulatto
14	Tente en el aire: calpamulato with cambuja	Chamizo: castizo and mestizo	Barcino: albarazado and india
15	I don't understand you: tente in the air with a mulatto	Coyote: mestizo and Indian	Calpamulato: barcino and cambuja
16	Torna back: I don't understand you with india	Gentile Indians	Barbarian Mech Indians

Comparison of the Castas represented by two anonymous artists and Ignacio Maria Barreda. Note that the first five categories are the same in the three works, with notable differences from classification six to sixteen.

In addition to categorizing the population based on their ethnicity, Casta paintings also communicated daily life, social roles and degrees of social cohesion and discord:

Casta series place figures in complicated scenes complete with rich details about the social status of the figures and the life of the colony, [showing] a marked decline in socioeconomic status and moral behavior as they move down the caste

hierarchy. An increase in depicted violence is especially common in those panels where one or more figures possess significant African heritage.¹¹²

Figure 7 includes six examples of negative traits, including violence, laziness, poverty, and struggle. These images from the 18th century illustrate and visually communicate the daily life in the New Spain. Note the darker skin color of the characters with negative behaviors. Excluding the Spaniard character, all people depicted in these violent representations correspond to colors five or higher on the PERLA scale. From the same century, Figure 8 exemplifies how the interracial union of a Spanish men with women of other races, mostly indigenous women, is peaceful. The clothing of the indigenous women that have children with Peninsulares becomes more elaborate, depicting a higher social class and perhaps mobility.

Often as the series progresses, discord can erupt among families or they are displayed in tattered, torn, and unglamorous surroundings. People also appear darker as they become more mixed. Casta paintings from the second half of the eighteenth century in particular focus more on families living in less ideal conditions as they become more racially mixed. Because Casta paintings reflect increasing social anxieties about inter-ethnic mixing, it is possible that elites who claimed to be of pure blood, and who likely found the dilution of pure-bloodedness alarming, were among those individuals who commissioned Casta paintings.¹¹³

¹¹² Christa Olson, "Casta Paintings and the Rhetorical Body," *Rhetorical Society Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (October 2009): 311, <https://www-jstor-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/pdf/40647265.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A0657c9962f1492c71beab0542178d8f4>.

¹¹³ Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "Casta Paintings: Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo," Khan Academy, www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/colonial-americas/a/spaniard-and-indian-produce-a-mestizo-attributed-to-juan-rodriguez.



Figure 7. Casta images from the 18th century.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ These paintings are visual representations of violence, poverty, and discord. Note the skin tone of the characters. Sources, from left to right: Unknown, *From Mestizo and Mulatta Woman: Quadroon*, unknown date and dimensions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/castas_mexicanas/4148806276/; Miguel Cabrera, *Español e India*, 1763, unknown dimensions, Mexico, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Cabrera_\(painter\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Cabrera_(painter)); Andrés de Islas, *De Español, y Negra, Nace Mulata*, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Madrid, Museo de América, https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat_castas.pdf; Buenaventura José Guiol, *De Español, y Negra, Nace Mulata*, 18th century, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, private Collection, Monterrey, Mexico,



Figure 8. Casta paintings from the 18th century illustrating interracial unions in the New Spain.¹¹⁵

https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat_castas.pdf; Buenaventura José Guiol, *De China y Negro Nace Genisara*, 1777, oil on canvas, 62.3 x 55.2 cm, Minguela family private Collection, Spain,

https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat_castas.pdf; Miguel Cabrera, *Indio y Barzina: Zambayga*, 1763, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Museo de America, Madrid, Spain, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/de-indio-y-barzina-zambayga-1763-album.html>.

¹¹⁵ The scenes depict a peaceful and prosperous life. The common denominator is the presence of a Spanish male and an indigenous woman. Sources, from left to right; Unknown artist, *De Español e India Nace Mestizo*, 1770, oil in canvas, unknown dimensions, Primer Cuadro de la Serie del Arzobispo Lorenzana de Jose Joaquin Magon, https://revistas.uptc.edu.co/index.php/historia_memoria/article/view/2624/6057; Miguel Cabrera, *De Español e India: Mestiza*, 1763, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Museo de Historia Mexicana, Monterrey, Mexico, <https://my18thcenturysource.tumblr.com/post/180141481601/de-español-e-india-mestizo-the-casta-paintings>; Miguel Cabrera, *From Spaniard and Mestiza, Castiza*, 18th century, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Museo de America, Madrid, Spain, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/from-spaniard-and-mestiza-castiza-miguel-cabrera-1695-1768.html>; Miguel Cabrera, *Casta Painting Series, De Español y Torna Atrás: Tente en el Aire*, 18th century, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Museo de Historia Mexicana, Monterrey, Mexico, <http://redbonenation.com/books/colonial-casta-paintings/>;

Figure 9 shows a representation of indigenous people in their native state as they have not mixed with Spaniards yet.



Figure 9. Casta paintings from the 18th century illustrating the native population in the New Spain.¹¹⁶

Miguel Cabrera, *A Mestizo Baby*, 18th century, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Barrio San Martín Tepotzotlán, Estado de México, Mexico, <https://elcomercio.pe/tecnologia/ciencias/surge-division-castas-dominio-espanol-bbc-noticia-465414-noticia/>.

¹¹⁶ Miguel Cabrera, *Indios Gentiles*, 1763, oil on canvas, 132 x 102 cm), Museo de America, Madrid, Spain, <http://redbonenation.com/books/colonial-casta-paintings/>.

My analysis of Casta paintings demonstrate that through visual representations, each painting establishes a hierarchical racial formation, giving a name and identity to the children of interracial unions. These paintings make evident that higher status is given to the mixing of Spaniards and Indias (the Mestizo); Indias gain a higher social status when having children with Spaniards, and integrate into the Spanish culture by deserting their Indian culture, thus the Mestizos favor the Spanish culture, in language and custom, leaving behind, and perhaps even negating, their indigenous roots.

Indias that mix with other races—African in particular—are represented with a lower social status, showing that being a Mestizo is better than being an Indio, and more desirable than being the offspring of an African. These paintings also communicate that Indias' skin color tends to a degree of whiteness when Indias marry Spaniards or Criollos.

Demand for Casta paintings disappeared when Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821, but other forms of mass media visual communication tools were developed to carry on these hierarchies.

Chapter V.

The Propagation of the Casta Messages by the Catholic Church in the New Spain

“Two worlds God has placed in the hands of our Catholic Monarch, and the New does not resemble the Old, not in its climate, its customs, nor its inhabitants; it has another legislative body, another council for governing, yet always with the end of making them alike: In the Old Spain only a single caste of men is recognized, in the New many and different.”¹¹⁷

- *Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, 1770, Spanish Prelate and Archbishop of Mexico from 1766 to 1772.*

Chapter IV documents how Casta paintings visually represented and communicated social hierarchy based on racial mixing. This chapter explores how the Catholic Church in the New Spain reinforced racial hierarchies through its various forms of visual representation about the social order. As previously discussed, during colonial times, the lack of a common language and culture among Indios, Spaniards, Africans and other ethnic groups was a recurring challenge in the communication of the new social order. The visual strategies of the Catholic Church mirrored, to some degree, the messages of the Casta paintings:

Casta paintings draw on strategies of visual education in use since at least the medieval period. The Church used religious imagery (painting, stained glass, statuary, controlled movement through cathedrals, etc.) to "narrate" sacred stories through corporeal interaction. Such physical notions of persuasion still held a great deal of sway in eighteenth-century Spanish America and the serial nature of

¹¹⁷ Ilona Katzew, "Casta Painting: Identity and Social Stratification in Colonial Mexico," *Catalog for the Exhibition New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, (1996): 1, https://acmrs.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-01/v1_Laberinto_Casta.pdf.

casta sets is clearly connected to the [hagiography] series that were major tools in Spanish colonial evangelization.¹¹⁸

In 1810, an image of Virgen de Guadalupe (Figure 10), with her olive skin and distinct European facial features became the first symbol and flag of Mexico representing the start of the struggle for independence from Spain. According to C.M. Stafford Poole, Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe was a "pious fiction of the seventeenth century,' designed to further the cause of *criollismo* or 'incipient Mexican nationalism' by strengthening the identity of New Spain's creoles as legitimate children of the Virgin who had favoured their new home by appearing to a humble Indian [Juan Diego] on a hill in Tepeyac."¹¹⁹ An analysis of the facial features of Virgen de Guadalupe demonstrates mostly a non-indigenous phenotypical appearance and a light brown skin color (PERLA color number four), in closer resemblance of a criollo and not of an indigenous woman.



¹¹⁸ Olson, "Casta Painting and the Rhetorical Body," 311.

¹¹⁹ Gunnarsson, Review of *The Guadalupe Controversies in Mexico*, 617-18.

Figure 10. Original image of Virgen María de Guadalupe (also known as “La Guadalupana”).¹²⁰

Figure 11 is an additional Caste painting that incorporates the social hierarchy discussed in the previous chapter, however the notable aspect here is the incorporation of the image of *La Guadalupana* (Virgen de Guadalupe), adding a religious dimension to the message. The imagery of La Guadalupana, I assert, can be interpreted as an intentional effort of communicating that the racial taxonomy of the caste system is dictated by God through his messenger, the Virgen de Guadalupe. She appears prominently on top of the social world with the different castas below. Note that Mestizos appear first while Africans appear last, replicating the same social narrative (skin color, occupation, behavior) as the non-religious casta paintings examined in Chapter IV.

Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe increased dramatically in Mexico during the seventeenth century with...support from the creole population...One of the earliest books recording the apparitions was the *Nican mopohua*, written in Nahuatl in the sixteenth century and widely distributed in the following century. Creoles began to identify with an “American” or Mexican identity, and supported the Virgin of Guadalupe as a uniquely americano miracle. After all, she had revealed herself on Mexican soil to a Nahua (indigenous) man. With her increased popularity came a demand for more images, especially those that faithfully copied the original miraculous tilma...Many paintings even include the phrase *fiel copia*, or “true copy,” to suggest their painting is a direct copy of the tilma image.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Anonymous, *María de Guadalupe*, December 12, 1531, ayate, Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 175 x 105 cm, Tepeyac Hill, Mexico City, Mexico, <https://virgendeguadalupe.org.mx>.

¹²¹ L. Kilroy-Ewbank, “Miguel González, The Virgin of Guadalupe,” Khan Academy, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/colonial-americas/a/miguel-gonzalez-the-virgin-of-guadalupe>.

Devotion to the Virgen de Guadalupe is widespread in Mexico. According to a study conducted by El Economista in 2014, 69% of Mexicans¹²² consider themselves as *Guadalpanos* (those that express devotion to Virgen de Guadalupe).

¹²² Notimex, “En México, 69% De La Población Se Considera Guadalupana,” *El Economista*, December 7, 2014, www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/En-Mexico-69-de-la-poblacion-se-considera-guadalupana-20141207-0028.html.



Figure 11. An image representing the casta society ruled over by a Mexican version of the Virgin Mary.¹²³

¹²³ Luis de Mena, *Pintura de Castas*, c. 1750, oil on canvas, Madrid, Museo de América, https://jaimeeguiguren.com/usr/library/documents/main/cat_castas.pdf.

Juan Diego's transition from Indio to a Catholic Saint

On July 31, 2002, Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego, becoming the Americas' first indigenous Roman Catholic saint. The Catholic Church's representation of Juan Diego's elevation to the prestige of a saint shows that he has been turned into a criollo in appearance. Journalist Richard Bourdeaux critiques the artistic representation of Juan Diego depicted by the Catholic Church (Figure 12) by saying that the image is of a "light skinned [man], with dark green eyes—a decidedly non-Indian appearance."¹²⁴ Journalist Luhnnow concurs with Bourdeaux by saying that "the portrait shows a light-skinned, full-bearded man who looks more like one of the sword-wielding Spanish conquistadors who subjugated the Aztec empire."¹²⁵

Figure 12 corresponds to the PERLA scale four or five, evidently not the skin tone of an Indio. Also, note how the Saint's name brings together a Catholic name and an indigenous last name, to form a Mestizo representation by name, and a Criollo representation by image. This image of Juan Diego is the one that is prominently displayed at La Basilica de Guadalupe in Mexico City, a place that also houses the original tilma with the original image of La Virgen María de Guadalupe.

¹²⁴ Richard Bourdeaux, "Latin America's Indigenous Saint Stirs Anger, Pride," *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/la-fg-saint30jul30-story.html>.

¹²⁵ David Luhnnow, "Mexico's Juan Diego: Saint Who Never Was?" *Wall Street Journal*, April 17, 2002, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/398779532?accountid=11311>.



Figure 12. Miguel Cabrera, *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin*.¹²⁶

The inscription reads “True Portrait of the Servant of God, Juan Diego.”

My review of additional images of Juan Diego (Figure 13 and Figure 14), demonstrate that he is consistently represented with criollo features. These images reveal a constant narrative of Juan Diego embodying the image of a criollo and not, what in

¹²⁶ Miguel Cabrera, *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin*, 1756, Basilica de Guadalupe, Mexico, <https://virgendeguadalupe.org.mx/san-juan-diego/>.

reality he was, an Indigenous man. Similar to the change in appearance that indigenous women experienced when marrying a Spaniard, Juan Diego's appearance also transitioned when he became a Catholic saint.



Figure 13. Miguel Cabrera, *San Juan Diego*.¹²⁷

Note the lighter skin color, corresponding to PERLA number four.



Figure 14. San Juan Diego, Anonymous.¹²⁸

Note the lighter skin color, corresponding to PERLA number four (left) and PERLA number five (right).

¹²⁷ Miguel Cabrera, *San Juan Diego*, 1752, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/miguel-cabrera/fiel-retrato-do-vener-vel-juan-diego-1752>.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Juan Diego*, The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, <https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/st-juan-diego-and-the-miracle-of-our-lady-of-guadalupe/>.

Chapter VI.

Mass Media Representations in Mexico in the 20th and 21st Centuries

“A society is defined as much by how it comes to terms with its past as by its attitude toward the future: its memories are no less revealing than its aims.”

- *Octavio Paz, Mexican Poet.*

My analysis of casta paintings and specific religious images in Chapter IV and Chapter V demonstrates a growing commitment to a form of public education and communication that gave positive attributes to those with lighter skin tones (PERLA one to four) and Peninsular ethno-racial features, and, conversely, negative attributes to those people with darker skin tones (PERLA five to eleven) and Indio or African ethno-racial features. Indias move upwards socially by marrying a Peninsular and move downwards socially when marrying a person of African descent. The social mobility permeates to the descendants of these unions. As such, Indias that have married Peninsulares are represented with light skin tones, and are characterized as good, rich and beautiful. There are no visible negative attributes. Conversely, those with less Peninsular lineage and darker skin tones are characterized as lazy, dishonest, violent and poor. Negative attributes increase as the skin tone becomes darker. In this chapter, I analyze aspects of mass media in the 20th and 21st centuries to find out if the narrative and visual representation has changed or if it has remained.

Figure 15 includes India¹²⁹ characters in Mexican illustrated novels, movies and soap operas. All these stories narrate the story of Indias that have married a Peninsular, thus transitioning from their Indio roots to a European lifestyle. Note that, according to the stories, all lead female characters represent Mexican Indias, but the representation is merely clothing and hairstyle as all actresses have evident Spaniard ethno-racial characteristics.

Transitioning from India to Whitexican





Just as with Casta paintings, there is a noticeable change in skin tone, clothing and wealth as the India characters get involved with the main male character. Lead male characters are also consistently represented with Spaniard/Whitexican features.

Figure 15 presents a collection of images from different iterations of the widely successful novels “*Simplemente Maria*” and *Maria Isabel*; both novels have the same narrative, of an illiterate, poor and pious indigenous woman who becomes successful when she marries a criollo. Most of these productions were managed by Televisa.¹³⁰ These visuals are from images and photography produced to promote the various versions of this novel—noticeably, throughout the years, the storyline does not change, nor does the Caucasian characteristics of the main character. There is also a consistent whitening of the skin as the character transitions from her Indian origins and adopts a Mestizo

¹²⁹ I use the European term *India* to refer to indigenous people because the characters are called Indias.

¹³⁰ Televisa is the largest mass media company in Latin America, including television, digital content, social media, radio and print.

lifestyle, in a similar fashion as the whitening the skin that shows social mobility analyzed in Chapter IV.

		
Year	1964	
La Perla Scale	6	3
Genre	Illustrated Novel	Illustrated Novel
Source	Lagrimas y Risas Illustrated Novel, No. 79	Lagrimas y Risas Illustrated Novel, No. 90
		
Year	1968	1970
La Perla Scale	5	4
Genre	Movie	Movie
Source	Peliculas Rodriguez	Peliculas Rodriguez
		
Year	1989	1989
La Perla	4	2
Genre	Soap Opera	Soap Opera
Source	Televisa	Televisa




		
Year	1997	1997
La Perla	5	3
Genere	Soap Opera	Soap Opera
Source	Televisa	Televisa
		
Year	2015	2015
La Perla	5	3
Genere	Soap Opera	Soap Opera
Source	Televisa	Televisa

Figure 15. Mexican novels and soap opera images.¹³¹

¹³¹ These illustrations are visual representations of soap operas and movies. Note the skin tone of the characters. Sources, from left to right: Yolanda Vargas Dulche, "Maria Isabel," *Lgrimas y Risas* illustrated novel, Editorial Vid, issue 79, 1964, cover page, https://lagrimasyrisas.fandom.com/es/wiki/Mar%C3%ADa_Isabel; Yolanda Vargas Dulche, "Maria Isabel," *Lgrimas y Risas* illustrated novel, Editorial Vid, issue 90, 1964, cover page, <https://www.pinterest.com.mx/pin/419186677786049904/>; *Maria Isabel*, directed by Federico Curiel, written by Yolanda Vargas Dulche, featuring Silvia Pinal, Jose Suarez and Irma Lazareno, released in 1968, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0244066/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2; *El Amor de Maria Isabel*, directed by Federico Curiel, written by Yolanda Vargas Dulche, featuring Silvia Pinal, Jose Suarez and Aldo Monti, released in 1970,

Maria's skin becomes lighter and the type of clothing she wears changes as she becomes "successful" (image to the right). The characters on the left correspond to the India moment; note the darker skin color when she is indigenous. The same character has a lighter skin color (PERLA tone four or lighter) when becoming the wife or love interest of a Peninsular.

Conversely, indigenous characters with no upwards social mobility are interpreted by actors with indigenous ethno-racial characteristics. These characters never play the lead role; they are either comics with exaggerated features, including dress, language (broken Spanish, stereotypical pronunciation), or are portrayed as people of low socioeconomic status, childish, incompetent, frequently obese, uneducated, and excessively religious (usually Guadalupanos). These characters are always waiting for a miracle that will solve all their problems, because they are incapable of solving those

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066760/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1; *Simplemente Maria*, directed by Arturo Ripstein and Beatriz Sheridan, written by Gabriela Ortigoza, Cecilia Alcantara, Karl Fajer and Carlos Romero, featuring Victoria Ruffo, Manuel Saval and Jaime Garza, aired in 1989, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211866/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1; *Simplemente Maria*, directed by Arturo Ripstein and Beatriz Sheridan, written by Gabriela Ortigoza, Cecilia Alcantara, Karl Fajer and Carlos Romero, featuring Victoria Ruffo, Manuel Saval and Jaime Garza, aired in 1989, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211866/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1; *Maria Isabel*, directed by Miguel Corcega and Monica Miguel, written by Yolanda Vargas Dulche, featuring Adela Noriega, Fernando Carrillo, Lorena Herrera, Rafael Rojas, and Patricia Reyes Spíndola, aired in 1997, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211828/>; *Maria Isabel*, directed by Miguel Corcega and Monica Miguel, written by Yolanda Vargas Dulche, featuring Adela Noriega, Fernando Carrillo, Lorena Herrera, Rafael Rojas, and Patricia Reyes Spíndola, aired in 1997, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211828/>; *Simplemente Maria*, directed by Eduardo Said and Sandra Schniffer, written by Celia Alcantara, featuring Claudia Alvarez, Jose Ron and Fernando Valencia, aired in 2015, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5164970/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm; *Simplemente Maria*, directed by Eduardo Said and Sandra Schniffer, written by Celia Alcantara, featuring Claudia Alvarez, Jose Ron and Fernando Valencia, aired in 2015, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5164970/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm.

problems on their own.¹³² Figure 16 depicts indigenous characters of the same ethnic group as the female characters shown on Figure 15; however, their visual representations show notable differences because these Indios are not mixing with Peninsulares, thus there is no upwards social mobility and they remain “as they are.”

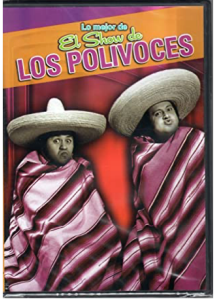
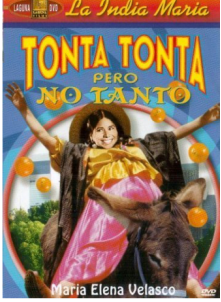



			
Year	1969	1972	1994
La Perla Scale	Inconclusive, but not Caucasian	5	5
Genre	TV	Movie	TV
Source	Televisa	Laguna Films	Filmo Seneca
			
Year	2003	2019	
La Perla Scale	5	4	
Genre	Movie	Teathre	
Source	Producciones Cesar Balestra S.A. de C.V.	La India Yuridia	

Figure 16. Stereotyping of Mexican Indios through movies, TV shows and theatre.¹³³

¹³² A review of Gamio (see Chapter I footnote 84) reveals a consistent narrative and storylines through time.

¹³³ These illustrations are visual representations of movies and live performances. Note the skin tone of the characters. Sources, from left to right: *Lo Mejor del Show de los Polivoces*, various directors, written by Mauricio Kleiff, featuring Enrique Cuenca,

Making Fun of the Roma Phenomenon

In 2018 Mexican director and screenwriter Alfonso Cuarón released his masterpiece, *Roma*, a film that narrates the life of a Mexican indigenous live-in maid (Cleo) interpreted by Yalitza Aparicio, an actress of Mixtec and Trique indigenous roots.

In Mexico, following the film, Yalitza Aparicio (the actual person, not the character she played in the film) had her image altered by fashion and beauty magazines (Figure 17) to conceal her indigenous phenotypical features in a clear attempt to “whiten” her. When observing Figure 17, we see that, in reality, Aparicio is closer to a PERLA skin tone number seven, but the fashion magazine represented the actress with a skin color closer to PERLA number four, or three tones lighter.¹³⁴

Eduardo Manzano and Jorge Zamora, 1960-1976, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0272409/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm; *Tonta Tonta Pero No Tanto*, directed by Fernando Cortes, written by Julio Porter, Fernando Cortes and Isaac Diaz Diaz, featuring Maria Elena Velasco, Sergio Ramos and Anel, 1972, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0311923/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1; *Las Aventuras de Lencha*, directed by Julio Ruiz Llanza, written by Julio Ryiz Llanza and Lucila Mariscal, featuring Lucila Mariscal, Sergio Ramos, Karla Barahona, Guillermo de Alvarado, Gastón Padilla and Jorge Ortín, 1994, <https://www.filmaffinity.com/uk/film667475.html>; *Las Nachas de Maclovio*, directed by Alonso O. Lara, written by Cesar Balestra, featuring Luis de Alba, Irene Arcila and Lorenzo Contreras, 2003, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0420001/fullcredits?ref_=ttloc_ql_1; *La India Yuridia*, advertisement promoting a live event in Torreón, Coah., Mexico, featuring Perla Yuridia Ruiz Castro, 2019.

¹³⁴ A photo of the film “*Roma*” has been excluded because it was filmed in black and white, so no PERLA comparison can be made.



Figure 17. Images of Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio.¹³⁵

Left image, Yalitza Aparicio at a press conference in Mexico City, January 2019, unedited/untouched image. Right image, Aparicio on the cover of Hello Magazine, Mexico, February 2019. Note the differences on skin color and racial characteristics of both images.

Comedians in Mexico portrayed Aparicio with exaggerated indigenous features. For example, Televisa aired a comedy show in 2019 that included an actress dressed up in “brownface and wearing a prosthetic nose to make fun of indigenous Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio...Televisa’s [actress] Yeka Rosales posted photos and videos of herself

¹³⁵ Univision, image of Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio at a press conference, Mexico City, January 19, 2019, <https://st1.uvnimg.com/bb/63/bd3d155747ebbfd01b851b5bafdd/1roma03-yalitzaaparicio.jpg>; Hola.com, “Yalitza Aparicio, Desde Hollywood, Habla para Hola Horas Antes de la Noche Magica de los Oscars,” *Revista Hola de Mexico*, February 29, 2019. <https://www.hola.com/tags/yalitza-aparicio/>.

on social media wearing brown skin paint in an apparent parody of Aparicio, who attended the Oscars last week after being nominated for best actress for her role in Roma.” Figure 18 illustrates how the Mexican media portrayed Aparicio. Note that Aparicio’s skin tone and the skin tone of the comic actress in brownface are similar (PERLA tone seven).

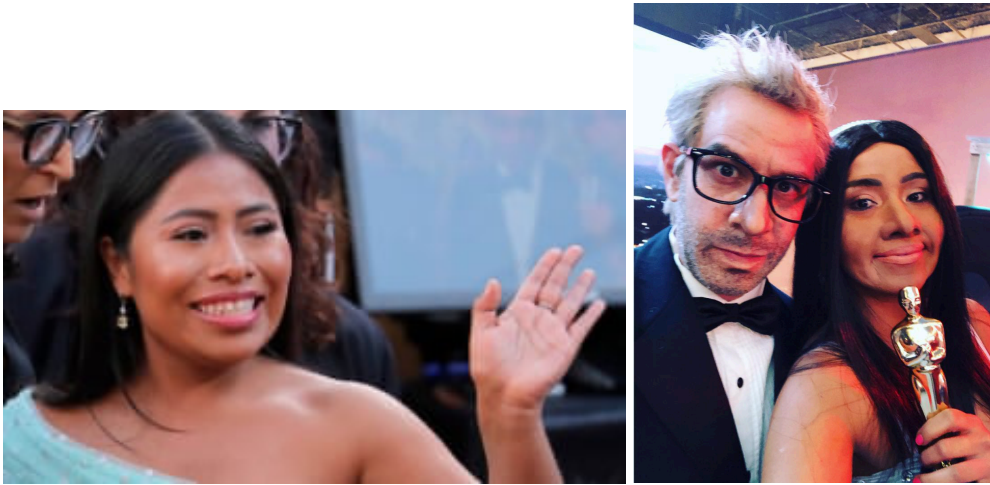


Figure 18. Additional images of Yalitizia Aparicio.

*Left image, Aparicio at the 2018 Academy Awards.*¹³⁶
*Right image, Rosales’ parody of Aparicio.*¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Associated Press, “Mexican TV Network Criticized for Brownface Parody of Roma Star Yalitza Aparicio,” *The Guardian*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/mar/06/mexican-tv-network-criticised-for-brownface-parody-of-roma-star-yalitza-aparicio>.

¹³⁷ Infobae, “La Parodia que Televisa hizo de Roma y Yalitza Aparicio Indignó en Redes Sociales,” *Infobae*, March 4, 2019, <https://www.infobae.com/america/entretenimiento/2019/03/04/la-parodia-que-televisa-hizo-de-roma-y-yalitza-aparicio-indigno-en-redes-sociales/>.

The African Mexicans in Media and Advertising

As discussed in previous chapters, the existence of population of African descent in Mexico has remained largely unacknowledged. This has contributed to a visible racism, structural racism and stereotyping of the African population. My research reveals that companies in Mexico brand some of their products with racist names and images. For example, the dark chocolate pastry *Negritos Bimbo* (translated as *little black men*, see Figure 19) introduced in Mexico in the late 1950's, and updated in 2012 is still commercialized today; the advertising clearly utilizes degrading racialized and stereotyped images of Africans.



Figure 19. Advertising.

Left image “Negrito Bimbo” original packaging from 1957. Middle image, packaging introduced in 2012, that kept the brand name “Negrito.” Right image, 2020 packaging,

*name has been shortened to “Nito” and the image modernized, although keeping some of the original racial messaging and imagery.*¹³⁸ *Source: Bimbo SA de CV.*

Comic books present additional evidence of the racism that exists in Mexico.

Memín Pinguin was a popular comic book published from 1943 to 2004. The stories were written by Yolanda Vargas Dulche, a Caucasian woman. The comic books narrated the lives of Memín, a young black boy and his mother, both of Cuban descent (not Mexican) living in poverty in Mexico, in a neighborhood where they were the only people of color. The family consisted of Memín (pickaninny) and his mother (mammy, with a clear Afro-Cuban women stereotype). The figure of the father is absent. Memín was a young boy who always got into trouble, and for whom the disadvantages and racism he experienced on a daily basis had a high degree of normalization. Figure 20 illustrates six covers of the Memín comic book, depicting abuse, violence, and poverty. Note that one of the covers includes an image of Virgen de Guadalupe, marking a similitude with Casta paintings.

¹³⁸ Commercial packaging, web source, <https://lauramartinez.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/negritob.jpeg>, <https://files.merca20.com/uploads/2015/05/adrenalina-radio-dud-luis-angel-escalante-activando-tus-sentidos-el-nito-o-negruto-panque-pastelito-bimbo.jpg>.



Figure 20. Six covers of Memín Pinguín comic book.¹³⁹

The first one includes an image of Memín with Yolanda Vargas Dulche, the author. Source: Yolanda Vargas Dulché and Manelick De la Parra Vargas, Grupo Editorial Vid and EDAR.

¹³⁹ Yolanda Vargas Dulche, “Memín Pinguín,” *Grupo Editorial Vid*, published between 1952 and 1961, issues 2, 4, 19, 54, 134, and 334, https://www.ebay.com/b/memin-pinguin/bn_7024926767?_pgn=2.

The way television programs in the twentieth century depicted the African population in Mexico is no different than the comic books. “El Negro Tomas” (Tomas the Black Boy) is a television character from the 1980’s. The character is of a black boy named Tomas who lives near the coast with his mother. The character is played by Mexican actor Hector Suarez in blackface¹⁴⁰. Twenty sketches were examined, and all follow the same narrative: Tomas wears simple clothing, speaks in stereotypical black argot, moves in exaggerated ways (many times placing his hand over his head and with body movements in a clear imitation of an ape), tells his mother double-meaning jokes that seem vulgar and offensive. Episodes always end with the mother saying that her son is *pure and white* (Spanish: “Blanco y Puro”). The characters wear oversized prosthetic noses and exaggerated lips (see Figure 21).

¹⁴⁰ NMAAHC (National Museum of African American History and Culture) is clear on this: “Minstrelsy, comedic performances of ‘blackness’ by whites in exaggerated costumes and makeup, cannot be separated fully from the racial derision and stereotyping at its core.” See Harmeet Kaur, “This Is Why Blackface is Offensive,” CNN, February 7, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/02/us/racist-origins-of-blackface>.



Figure 21. Image taken from the Mexican television show “Que Nos Pasa.”¹⁴¹

This popular television show aired in 1986 with actors characterized as Cubans of African Descent. Source: Televisa.

This racist style of television entertainment continues to be popular in Mexico (as seen in the image above from “Que Nos Pasa”), demonstrating the dissemination of racial discrimination in Mexican mass media.

¹⁴¹ Hector Suarez, “Que Nos Pasa,” Negro Tomas, Posted on YouTube December 23, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk2qCpiYF3M>.

Chapter VII.

Conclusions

By exploring examples of mass media and religious representations of the mestizo population from 16th to the 21st centuries in Mexico, this thesis contributes to the understudied area of ethno-racial discrimination in Mexico. My work explores various ways that valued art forms such as the casta paintings along with the imagery developed by the Catholic Church plus contemporary mass media representations have contributed to ethno-racial discrimination for centuries. This thesis also demonstrates that the process of mestizaje did not have an equalizing effect but, to the contrary, mestizaje has been a catalyst of ethno-racial discrimination in Mexico.

The ways the indigenous and the African populations are portrayed by the Catholic Church and mass media in Mexico has for the most part, changed little in the last 400 years. The discrimination that Mexicans with darker skin tones (PERLA five and darker) suffer has been constant since the colonial inception of the image of the mestizo. There is an evident socio-cultural acceptance of media and religious stereotypes about race and race mixture indicating that many Mexican media companies are merely expressing what the collective believes. Mexican journalist Rosario Bedolla says it best when she claims that Mexican racism is “more subtle because it is a racism against

indigenous and brown people in general. [It is] a racism of exclusion.”¹⁴²

¹⁴² Rosario Bedolla, “México: El Racismo Que No Se Nombra,” *Masiosare. La Jornada*, November 19, 2005, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2005/11/19/mas-gargallo.html>. Translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes.

Chapter VIII.

Limitations and Future Research

This research is limited to the Spaniard (or peninsular), criollo, mestizo, African and the indigenous populations in Mexico.

Elementary public education in Mexico needs to be critically examined for the ways it continues to convey the propagation of racist and discriminatory messages against Indios and African Mexicans. The mandatory textbooks provided to all elementary school children by the Mexican government continue to carry the racial biases I have examined in this thesis. My concern is that this form of ‘mass media’ continues to racialize in derogatory ways the social and cultural formation of Mexicans from an early age.

Future studies should examine how elementary school education and beyond continue to send racist representations and narratives about many Mexicans, thus forming a shared social bias against peers and fellow students (Gary, Hall et al.). Most importantly, it would be valuable to examine how children learn about race, and if the narrative of the social classification based on skin tones is also being communicated in the classroom. This is an area that requires further study in order to identify to what extent the examples I examined in this thesis continue to diminish the humanity of Mexican children, adolescents and adults; see Appendix II for an example. Future research on textbook imagery and messages can complement the findings of this thesis.

Appendix I.

Children and Race

In 2012, 11.11 Cambio Social as part of their Racism in Mexico (English: Racism in Mexico) campaign conducted a research with Mexican children to document children's attitudes related to race and ethnicity, with questions that include perception about self and others¹⁴³. This study is valuable for the purposes of this thesis because the children that participated in the study were asked questions about positive or negative attributes related to race and included a question about self-identification.

Methodology

Eleven children were presented two dolls, one with white skin (corresponding to PERLA skin color palette number one), and one with dark skin (corresponding to PERLA color palette number 11). Figure 22 illustrates the dolls used.

¹⁴³ Cambio Social 11.11., *Viral Campaña "Racismo en México,"* YouTube, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bYmtq2fGmY>. Disclaimer: the parents of all children that participated in the study gave their consent to Cambio Social to publish the video.



Figure 22. Images taken from Cambio 11.11 video.¹⁴⁴

Images taken from the Cambio 11.11 video illustrating the two dolls used to conduct the experiment. The PERLA color palette numbers have been added for reference.

Figure 23 includes images from the eleven children that participated in the study, For the purposes of this thesis, I have added PERLA color palette¹⁴⁵ numbers to each individual image.

¹⁴⁴ Informativos.net, “Viral Campaña Racismo en México,” YouTube, January 21, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bYmtq2fGmY>.

¹⁴⁵ See Figure 2 in the Methodology section for PERLA reference.

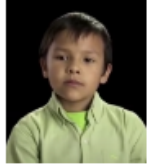










						
La Perla	6	7	6	2	7	7
						
La Perla	7	6	7	6	7	

Figure 23. Images of Cambio 11.11 Children that Participated in the Study.

Note that 90 percent of the children have a skin six or seven, and one has a skin tone two.

Children were asked questions related to beauty and personality traits. See Table 3. I created this table to show the percentage values based on the total number of responses:

Table 3. Cambio 11.11 Summary of Responses.

Question	Doll One	Doll Two	None
1. Which doll is pretty?	100%		
2. Which doll is ugly?		100%	
3. Which doll us good?	100%		
4. Which doll is bad?		91%	9%
5. Which doll do you like	100%		

Reported percentages calculated by Beatriz Fuentes based on total number of responses.

Children were asked questions about beauty, goodness, and self-identification.

The following question paraphrases the responses provided by the children that participated in the study:

1. Question “Why is doll number one bad or ugly?”:
 - “Doll one is ugly because he is moreno.”
 - “Because I don’t like the brown color.”
 - “Because I fear the morenos, they *hit* (as of aggressiveness).
 - “Because moreno is ugly.”
 - “Because blacks are bad.”

2. Question: “Why is doll number two good or pretty?”:
 - “I like doll number two because it is white.”
 - “Because white people are trustworthy.”
 - “Because its eyes are beautiful and its race too.”

3. When asked the question “which doll you identify yourself with” children struggled with the realization that they resembled doll one, and showed a consistent tendency of elaborating arguments as of why they looked more like doll two. This demonstrates the tendency of respondents in reporting a lighter skin tone when being asked the self-identification question, thus it can be concluded that people with darker skin tones aspire to have a lighter skin tone.

To conclude, for the purposes of this thesis, the results of 11.11 Cambio Social specifically related to self-identification, provide evidence of the shortcomings of INGEI’s 2020 Census because INEGI asks Mexicans to self-identify when answering the

ethnicity question. Since culturally darker skin tones are perceived negatively, respondents will tend to self-identify with a lighter skin tone than the real one.

Appendix II.

Public Education and Racism

“Indian Boy

Indian boy from the grasslands,
come play with me.
All the children of America
must always love each other.

Indian boy of the forest,
come sing with me.
All the children of America
will make a single home.

Indian boy, Indian boy,
I will teach you to read.
All the children of America
want to learn
because ignorance enslaves
and knowledge will set you free.”¹⁴⁶

- *Gastón Figueroa, 1959.*

Figure 24 is taken from an elementary school textbook in Mexico and illustrates a story about two children, one mestizo and one Indian, interacting with each other. The text, meant to teach students how to read, was first published by the Mexican Ministry of Education in 1959 as a mandatory book for all students in all schools, private and public. Note that the Indian child is not in the school, and that the Mestizo child has to teach the Indian boy to read Spanish, which can mean that the Indian child does not have access to education. Also, the Indian boy is said to live in the grasslands and the forest. And lastly,

¹⁴⁶ Secretaria de Educación Pública, *Grade 1 Textbook*, Mexico, 1959, Translated from Spanish by Beatriz Fuentes.

note the difference in skin tone (the Indian boy has a darker skin tone, and the narrative and illustration communicate a lower social status than the Mestizo child).



Figure 24. Pages from the First Edition of Mexico's Grade 1 Mandatory Textbook.¹⁴⁷

These pages are visual representations of a mestizo child and an Indian child.

¹⁴⁷ Mexican Ministry of Education SEP, *Libro de Texto Gratuito, Primer Grado* (Mexico, 1959).

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