

COLORS OF MEXICO: A STUDY ON DISCRIMINATION BY RACE IN MEXICO

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Introduction

This project addresses the problems associated with race in Mexico. **Race is defined as a group of people who share similar and distinct physical characteristics.** Race in Mexico is not as clear cut as it is in The United States of America because Mexico had not had as much immigration or racial separation as the United States. Where laws in the U.S. once banned racial mixing, Mexico's earliest European settlers immediately mixed with the natives. Although the Caste system in Mexico classified people based on very specific skin colors and bloodlines, once it was abolished, the lines became more blurred and difficult to analyze. However, it possible to analyze racism in modern day Mexico. There may have been hundreds of Castes in Mexico's past, but this project will be focusing on 4: White Mexicans, Native Mexicans, Mestizos, and Afro-Mexicans. By researching this topic, we will not only understand the history of the caste system and racism in Mexico, but also its effects on modern-day Mexico.

Background and Literature Review

The Spanish Caste system was a societal structure that placed worth in one's heritage and skin color, determining the types of job one could have and what one could own. White Europeans were at the top of the system, and black slaves were at the bottom. There were over 100 different castes, and how you were placed within them was determined by your parents' ancestry and your skin color (if you were much lighter than what your parents' caste dictated, you may have been able to move up a minor caste).



The first photoset above is a composite photo of what the "average Mexican face" looks like. The second photoset is that of two prominent Mexican actors. With light hair, skin, and eyes, it is clear that, at least for these two actors, the "pop figure" does not represent the Mexican population.

Research Question and Rationale

What were the racial impacts of the Spanish Caste System and how do they affect modern day Mexico?

- Mexico does not take a racial census; therefore, groups of people that are potentially discriminated against based on skin color may have no one in the government advocating for them due to a lack of information and governmental awareness of how race affects the country.
- Many different outlets in Mexico claim that there is racial discrimination in both the entertainment industry and politics.
- The four races that are still possible to study in Mexico are: White, Mestizo, Indio, and Afro-Mexican.
- This project will examine these four different races in Mexico to determine if the hierarchy of races that prevailed in the caste system structure is still in place.

Methods / Research Design

1) I will survey people who have lived in Mexico for a long period of time about their views on race. I will show them pictures of people in the same clothing, with different skin color, and ask what type of occupation they might have. This portion of the survey will help us understand subconscious race issues in Mexico. I will administer a second portion of the survey where I will ask the participants if they think there is any discrimination based on skin color in Mexico, and how and if they have experienced any of this racism in Mexico.

2) I will also look into the time periods immediately after the caste system was destroyed in order to see how race played a factor in Mexican life throughout history. I will also use scholarly research about race in Mexico in the past and present that others have published to supplement my own research. Several articles include estimates of race percentages in the population while others analyze the European population's cultural prominence.

3) I will interview at least two professionals in the field: one, a Latin American History specialist, and the other, a collegiate Spanish teacher who is passionate about Mexican rights and history. I will ask them about their opinions on race in Mexico and how they think it makes an impact on society. I will also ask them if they think that Mexico needs to reform or at least explore the impacts of race in Mexican society.

Race	Percentage of Population
White	9%
Mestizo	60%
Amerindian	30%
Black	Less than 1%

Significance and Conclusion

This study could be highly significant if it reveals a large amount of racism in Mexico that still needs to be addressed. The problem with race in most countries today is that it is simply not addressed because most people seem to think it is not an issue today. Even if the survey reveals that the participants do not think that racism exists in Mexico, but they make choices in the subconscious part of the survey that indicate otherwise, we can attempt to draw attention to the racial issues in Mexico, and the next step would be to try to create a system wherein opportunity would be more equal for people of every skin color. The very first step to solving any problem is to prove that there is a problem, and that is what this project will attempt to do.

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Peninsulares	Spaniards born in Spain
Creoles	White Spaniards born in Mexico
Mestizo	Child of a Spaniard and Indio.
Pardos	A child with Spanish, Indio, and African blood.
Indios	Native Mexican (Amerindian).
Mulattos	Child of an Indio and African.
Zambos	Child of a Spaniard and African.
African Slaves	African descent or directly brought from Africa.

One study by Alejandra M. Leal Martínez (2011), showed that European features in Mexico are generally associated with upper-class, well-educated people. While this study analyzed the role of European features in Mexico, it did not differentiate between other races such Native, Afro-Mexican, and Mestizo. Many different pop culture news outlets make claims that people with more European features tend to become more famous or have more power in Mexico. This project will attempt to see if this hypothesis is correct.