CUBAN COLOR CLASSIFICATION AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION: OLD TERMS IN A NEW WORLD

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Cuban Color Classification and Identity Negotiation: Old Terms in a New World

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This thesis analyzes how the Cuban Revolution's transnational discourse on blackness positively affected social attitudes, allowing color identity to be negotiated using color classification terms previously devalued.

In the Caribbean and Latin America, most systems of social stratification based on color privilege "whiteness" both socially and culturally; therefore, individuals negotiate their identities with whiteness as the core element to be expressed. This dissertation examines how this paradigm has been overturned in Cuba so that "blackness" is now the featured aspect of identity. This is due in part to the popular response to the government's rhetoric which engages in an international political discourse of national identity designed to situate Cuba contextually in opposition to the United States in the global politics of color. This shift has occurred in a dialectic environment of continued negative essentialized images of Blacks although blackness itself is now en vogue. The dialogue that exists between state and popular forms of racial categorization serves to recontextualize the meanings of "blackness" and the values attached to it so that color classification terms which indicate blackness are assumed with facility in identity negotiation.

In the past, the concepts of whitening and *mestizaje* (race mixture) were employed by the state with the goal of whitening the Cuban population so that Cuba would be perceived as a majority white country. Since the 1959 Revolution, however, the state has publicly claimed that Cuba is an Afro-Latin nation. This pronouncement has resulted in brown/*mestizo*/mulatto and not white as being the national ideal. The symbolic use of *mestizaje* in Cuban society and the fluidity inherent in the color classification system leaves space for manipulation from both ends of the color spectrum and permits Cubans from disparate groups to come together under a shared sense of identity. The ideology of the state and the popular perceptions of the symbolism that the mulatto represents were mediated by a color continuum, which in turn was used both by the state

and the populace to construct, negotiate, maintain, and manipulate color identities. This study demonstrates that although color classification was not targeted by the government as an agent to convey blackness, it nevertheless does, and the shift in how identity is negotiated using racial categories can be viewed as the response of the populace to the state's otherwise silent dialogue on "race" and identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Acknowledgements

Introduction: Mulatas del Caribe

During the summer of 1997, while visiting a friend at a *campismo*, the Cuban version of a vacation get-away, I went down to the beach in search of relief from the heat. As I stood waist deep in the Caribbean sea, a friendly dark haired teenager approached me and struck up a conversation. Initially, I did not want her to know that I was from the United States so I answered her mostly with smiles interspersed with the occasional head nod. She seemed content that I was listening if not somewhat participating in the conversation. Her mother and younger sister were playing a short distance away from us and for all intents and purposes we were alone as we talked laconically and paddled around in the ocean.

Eventually she heard enough of my accent, and realized from my non-talkative manner, that I was not Cuban but a foreigner. Her first guess identified me as a Brazilian. In her attempts to contextualize my identity, she failed as she named several different islands in the Caribbean, none of which I belonged to. Finally, I put her out of her misery and told her that I was from the United States. She expressed some surprise that I was an "American" because I "looked so Cuban." Undeterred by the discovery of my American identity she later commented that: "*Somos mulatas del caribe*" (We are mulattas of the Caribbean). I thought it curious at the time that she employed the word *mulata* (mulatto) to describe us both, but I agreed with her and we continued conversing.

Later on that day, as I sat in my room, her phrase ran like a refrain through my mind. By Cuban norms she was considered to be white, or more accurately, she was described as a *trigueña* (tan skinned/wheat colored or brunette). Despite this she had chosen neither white nor *trigueña* but rather *mulata*, a general signifier of mixed "race," but more specifically a mixture of black and white, with which to identify. Her ability to transform herself into a *mulata* was reflective of several overlapping factors particular to Cuba. One was the flexibility of "racial" identity and color classification. This flexibility allowed for more than one possible identity construction. As a North American of color, I was accustomed to being mostly classified as a

mulata within the Cuban form of color classification; yet I was unprepared for the confluence of identities which allowed my young friend to contextually situate us together in the same category and employ *mulata* as a transformative device despite our "color" differences. What influenced this young lady to choose the color classifier *mulata*, and not youth, politics, or any number of identifying factors; and how did this sense of brown commonality operate with forms of classification that were clearly a legacy of enslavement and white supremacy?

Her simple statement provides a valuable insight into the Cuban "racial" paradigm because through this paradigm she linked us in a shared metaphor of transnational "race" that subsumed both culture and class. Her simplicity of statement and the ease with which she positioned us together made me question the processes and dynamics of "racial" construction in Cuba. Within this context I set out to explore why the term "mulatto" was embodied as a powerful signifier that could unite two people from disparate backgrounds and phenotypes into both a local and international context through a sense of shared brownness.

As an ethnographer in Havana, being brown complexioned enabled me to blend in well with the Cuban population. In fact, as an investigator, I had certain advantages over my white skinned colleagues. I could "pass" for Cuban on the streets and my "Cubanness" was rarely questioned based on appearance alone. This was particularly advantageous as I was usually able to get around the city very inconspicuously. Because I did not immediately appear to be a "*yanqui*" with money my appearance generally reduced the danger of the occasional mugging. In close quarters and under intense scrutiny my "otherness" could become apparent through clothing styles, mannerisms and accent, but this was not readily perceptible at first glance.

"Oh, but you look so Cuban." and "Are your parents Cuban?" were frequent comments made by new acquaintances or government officials. The perception often was that if I was not native born to the island then I must be Cuban by way of ancestry. My parentage was always a question when passing through immigration. When attempting to enter hotels negative responses to my Cuban appearance included quite frequently being mistaken for a Cuban prostitute (*jinetera*). I was frequently stereotyped as a Cuban *mulata* when trying to enter the hotels to

12

meet with North American acquaintances. Hotel security often greeted me with suspicion and sometimes hostility. Many times they accused me of falsifying my accent and using it as a clandestine method to gain access to tourists in the hotels.

As my colleague, Paul Ryer, pointed out, foreignness and the "other" in Cuba are constructed as "real whites," while Cubanness is structurally designated as non-white, partially white, or "Cuban white" in comparison. My young friend at the beach and others incorporated and located my identity into the axis of Cubanness because I could structurally fit into the Cuban ideal of non-whiteness on both a somatic and ideological level. My African-American identity, when discovered, was also central to my placement as I was not perceived to be part of the political polemic of the United States.[1] Many other non-white visitors to the island spoke of similar experiences of being perceived as Cuban. "White" North American or European visitors to the island were rarely conferred with a Cuban identity based on appearance because their whiteness structured them as part of the "other." Conversely native Cubans who were white skinned could sometimes "pass" as tourists.

The commodification of "blackness" through tourism and the political saliency of "blackness" to internal Cuban politics have collaborated to transform Cuba's national identity from a trope of "whiteness" to trope of "blackness." This pivotal transformation of Cuban identity involved not only changes in the projection of national identity but in inter-personal identity choices. My young friend's statement reveals this relational juxtaposition of "race," color and *cubanidad*.[2] Currently blackness/brownness has become an acceptable identity choice despite essentialized images and notions of Blacks. This relationship can be analyzed through an examination of the contested constructions of color identities as reflected through the use of color terminologies.

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[1] The African American dynamic of my identity was a crucial aspect of my non-white Cuban persona and connected me to Cuba both politically and ideologically as Cuban politics had aligned itself specifically with African-Americans against the imperialism of the polity of the United States.

[2] All things uniquely Cuban.

For at least a century, the discourse on "race" and "racial" identity in Cuba has played an intrinsic role in shaping ideologies surrounding national identity. In an effort to achieve unity and common ground, Cubans continue to confront the subtext of "racial" hierarchies as a dynamic dimension of their "multi-racial" heritage. At times the very rhetoric of unity has meant the silencing of Afro-Cuban voices that contest their position in the hierarchy.

Discourse on "racial" equality and democracy is utilized as an internal and external political device employed to both "racialize" and "deracialize" the ideology of national identity. A "deracialized" perspective allows for the belief that "racial" equality and democracy exists. This "myth" enabled the "white elite" to structurally and discursively subordinate Afro-Cubans while simultaneously marginalizing and excluding them from the unified image of *cubanidad* (Helg 1995, Kutzinski 1993). Yet as Alejandro de la Fuente (1998) points out, this interpretation of the "myth" fails to address the contested nature of these ideologies and attributes minimal agency to Afro-Cubans' dialogue on their position in the "racial" paradigm of Cuba.

Although a dominant discourse of "racial" unity privileging "whiteness" has been a core element in the ideology of "*mestizaje*"[3] as presented in Latin America, this ideology in Cuba has been renegotiated into a discourse which privileges "*mulatizaje*"[4] or blackness as a desired element to be expressed. In the 1930s, a fundamental shift in national identity occurred that included *mestizaje* and the cultural symbols of blackness into a new paradigm of *cubanidad* and national identity (de la Fuente 1988). Further enhanced by the 1959 Cuban Revolution, "blackness" became the epicenter of political rhetoric, ideology and policy towards African, the Caribbean and African-Americans. This dissertation seeks to give active voice and agency to inter-personal "grassroots" interpretations of Cuba's inclusionary ideologies of the "racial" paradigm as represented in color classification.

In the first chapter I will examine the concept of "race" as a social construct, including the literature on the paradigm of "race" in Cuba and its significance to color classification. The

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[3] The process of race mixture
[4] Race mixture which emphasizes the mulato or black aspect of the mixture.

second chapter contextualizes the advent of "race" and establishes the historical context in Latin America and the Caribbean for color classification. The third chapter provides a cognitive map of color classification terminology and the sites and contexts in which it is employed. Furthermore, the structure and multiple forms of classification are identified as state and popular identity constructs are compared and contrasted. In addition color classification's fluidity and flexibility is examined. A fourth chapter provides the social and interpretive context. It also explores the background in which classification operates, and investigates the values, stereotypes, and statuses associated with classification. The fifth chapter demonstrates the mechanisms of identity negotiation and assesses the expressions of *mestizaje* and *cubanidad* through "grassroots" narratives of self and ascribed identity negotiation. It further examines the engendered dynamics of color classification as it relates to the Cuban woman.

Collectively, these chapters will demonstrate how previously devalued color terms have been reconfigured socially to indicate instead of deflect black identity. This pioneering transformation has been possible due to the political and ideological stance of the Cuban government.

Chapter One: The problem of *race*

<u>Problematizing *Race*</u>

In Cuba the dialectic discourses of "race" and nation intersect at the juncture of *mestizaje*. There are many viewpoints as to the "racial reality" of Cuba. By some estimates it is a predominately white country by others it is predominately black. Still others formulate it as predominately *mestizo* (mixed) in nature. Describing and determining "race" is a subjective process that is neither scientific nor free from personal prejudice or experience. Cuba's ambiguous construction of "race" and the multiple forms and functions of color terminology make it difficult to determine its "racial reality." The following section will describe why "race" is a problematic concept for anthropologists.

Although anthropologists realize that race is only a socio-cultural construct with no biological validity (Smedley 1993; Wagley 1994; Gregory and Sanjek 1994; American Anthropological Association 1997), societies, particularly those in the Americas, are socially designed around the concept of race and it's supposedly entailed "natural" differences. In multi-racial societies such as Cuba, race, and the ideologies and characteristics associated with it, converge to determine a group's place in the social hierarchy (M.G. Smith 1956). These classifications and their corresponding social implications result in various degrees of associated negative or positive social status. Over time as the various groups in the hierarchy intermingled, classification became even more ambiguous. In some cases, as in the United States, a dichotomy emerged in which two groups were recognized and people were rationalized as being either some form of black or white. This form of classification does not allow for an ideological middle ground. In Cuba, an antithetical form of classification emerged as a result of color gradient evolving from the middle ground.

Various systems of classification exist. Some, similar to the United States are based on the concept of race; others use religion or geography as the selective criteria. In the United States, classification is structured around organizing people into fixed racial groups based on skin color

or ancestry. This form of classification is accompanied by a rule of hypo-descent such that the offspring of a person from the structurally subordinate group (i.e. African-Americans) and a person of a structurally super-ordinate group (i.e. European-Americans) will be assigned to the category of the subordinate group (Degler 1971). Many taxonomies, such as those found in Latin America and the Caribbean, are structured around classifying people into permeable categories that allow for racial mobility. Cuba's classification system compares to that of the color-class system used in Brazil (Degler 1971). Two distinct features of this model distinguish it from the one used in the United States. First, is the absence of the rule of hypo-descent. Without this rule, children of mixed descent can be structurally positioned with the parent who comes from the dominant group instead of automatically being positioned with the parent from the subordinate group. Second, the system is based on phenotype and physical appearance rather than a "biological" definition of race (Booth 1976:133). Categorizations are based on the combined characteristics of facial features, skin color, and hair texture. Unlike the system in the United States, Cubans do not see themselves as belonging to fixed racial groups, but as falling into nodes on a continuum that may or may not represent race. Race, as it is conceptually structured in Cuba, is generally defined using physical appearance and not ancestry. This flexible form of classification is also hierarchical, with the majority of those with lighter skin tones concentrated at the upper levels of the society and the majority of those with darker skin tones at the bottom. As represented in color classification, the social hierarchies of race as they exist in Cuba reflect the status of "whiteness" and "blackness" as identity markers. Throughout this work, I will occasionally refer to color classification as a "system," despite it not truly being a system in the way that it is constructed or operates. There is no single definitive or systematic manner in which classification is employed. Color classification in Cuba only comes close to being systemic when it is employed by the state and even so its very employment is achieved non-systematically.

The concept of race and its terminological employment is an ideological problem for this study. The term as it is employed in the context of this work theoretically situates my discussion

in a framework in which race and ethnicity are acknowledged as separate concepts. The categorical terms used in this work, such as "white," "black," and "brown" are meaningless in and of themselves, but these terms were not formed in a vacuum and to a certain extent are racialized and racializing. Although conceptually and ideologically race is a term frequently used throughout the world, its context and definition vary contextually. Race as conceptualized and defined in the United States varies compared to other countries such as Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, or Indonesia. There is a full body of literature which attempts to comprehend race, its relationship to racism, and the hierarchical structuring of societies.

Designed to divide human populations into different groups, the concept of race is applied everyday in a milieu of circumstances. Though we employ it almost daily, its consistency and meaning varies. Race is defined and constructed based on radically different social expectations and circumstances. Foremost in his field, Banton (1983) chronicles the concept of race and explains how "race," as we understand it, has shifted in both its mode of expression and meaning over time. His historical overview of "race," which I employ here, explains how these changes have been both functional and contextual and have affected both the significance of race as a concept and its importance to those it labels. The difficulty in grasping race lies in the confluence of divergent and diachronic interpretations of its meaning. Thus, while the function and context of race changes it continues to simultaneously maintain and conflate previous associations and meanings.

Banton's discourse on race divides the concept into distinct historical time periods each associated with different ideologies and frameworks. He further divides the function of race into several distinct contextual modes which organize race into perceptual categories. These categories delineate how race is discussed and include some of the following conceptual frameworks: folk, biological, sociological, and legal or administrative (Banton 1983).

Contrary to popular perceptions about the origins of the concept of race Banton and others (Sanjek 1994; Wade 1997) date the idea of race as a form of classification that pre-dates the interactions of Africans and Europeans in the Americas. These scholars believe that the

contemporary concept of race took shape in the 1400s. During this time, Western Europeans began their outward exploration of the world and encountered people that looked and thought considerably different from themselves. The initial structuring of race was based on comparative physical appearance, geographic location, religion, and the civilization of the "other" in comparison to the European. Race in this sense was structured to have both a biological and cultural component.

Race evolved as an ideological concept whose purpose was to explain the phenotypic distinctions found among the world's populations. As an explanatory label, it designated a type of difference, without generalizing it to extend into the social characteristics of the group. Traced through a distinct line of descent race was a concept utilized to explain phenotypic variation. Race was not essentialized and there was no association of social characteristics, such as criminality, connected to skin color or eye shape.

The folk or popular explanations of this concept employed biblical references and other creation narratives as a map to trace human descent from a common ancestor, i.e. Adam and Eve. Banton himself used the example of the "race of Abraham," in this sense "race," genealogically traced back the line of descent for a group to one common ancestor. The dominant paradigm of variation within this framework was further explicated by geographic and environmental adaptations and the moral condition of the descendant's forefather. For example, blacks were enslaved because their ancestor, a son of Noah, "viewed" his father nakedness and this "morally bankrupt" act "cursed" his descendants. Explanations within this context were not biological or scientific and relied on history and creation narratives to clarify phenotypic differences.

According to Banton, the first major shift in the established paradigm designed to explain the manner in which race was crafted and framed occurred with the scientist Linnaeus and the acceptance of his taxonomic model as a system of classification. Linnaeus' classification system was designed to sort and group plants and animals not people. The grand debate on race originated simply as a question of where to locate human beings in the classification scheme. With the rise of taxonomies as modes of classification to explain and order the universe, the

19

word race merged with biology and the natural sciences. In the resulting taxonomic schemes that developed, the debate focused on how humans fit into the classification system. The paradigm of race revolved around trying to establish when and how a species became part of a different genus. Within the initial taxonomic systems that tried to rationalize humans place in the world, race was still connected with the notion of a common descent. In other words, humans belonged to the same species but they were phenotypically distinct. At this point in history it was implausible to consider that humans derived from separate lines of creation. The concept of God as creator was central to these original taxonomic schemes. As God became less of a factor in taxonomy it became plausible to suggest that diverse groups of humans arose from separate evolutionary lines and therefore, could be considered inherently distinct from one another.

In the 16th century, Banton describes a conceptual shift in which there was a rise in what he labels the "typological theory of race." He credits this theory to have commenced with Cuvier, a French anatomist, who "divided (human kind) into three main sub-species: Caucasian, Mongolian and Ethiopian" (Banton 1983). Yet despite his divisions, Cuvier still considered phenotypically distinct humans to be a part of the same species albeit with different physical environmental adaptations. In addition, Cuvier felt that human groups differed in aptitude due to unexplained biological differences. It was at this point that the biological definition of race became essentialized and converged with sociological factors. This new version of the typology system credited the behavior of individuals as innate to their group. Thus, conceptually in classification, there was a genetic affiliation constituted between phenotype and social attributes. This model of classification was to be supplanted and elaborated upon by Darwinian thought.

The next transformation in function of the word race occurred during a time of intense social contact and intermingling of diverse populations which had previously been isolated. Arising from the intense culture contact and inter-mingling that occurred under colonization and imperialism, the paradigm of race scrutinized whether certain groups of humans were of the same species or a subspecies as issues of miscegenation, slavery, and the efficacy of social engineering. Theories, such as Social Darwinism, or what Banton refers to as Selectionism,

ensued from an elaboration of the Origin of Species in which the races of men were organized into a socio-evolutionary model. Stronger races were justified in their conquest of weaker races via a process of "natural selection." Race "naturalized" social conditions and ranked positions of groups within the colonial and imperial order. It also permitted and justified the conquest and subjugation of the "other" based on an arrogant and a contrived sense of evolutionary superiority.

The major conceptual shift in this taxonomic schema was that it was agnostic. The use of religion and folk narratives were not central to the explanation of cultural and phenotypic variation. Therefore, the religious checks and balances that had limited scientific thought from creating separate lines of creation for human beings was no longer a barrier to the taxonomic imagination. According to Banton, this mode of thought attributed the unequal social conditions which existed between Europeans and the "other" as a biological function of "racial" differences and not to a deliberately established social hierarchy designed to maintain power in the hands of the colonizer or imperialist.

Banton goes on to describe the rise of what he calls Selectionist Theory (Social Darwinism). Relying on a concept of race that is biological in nature, race can be created, selected and improved upon through selective breeding programs. This type of thought became central in constructing a Latin American identity as intellectuals such as: Jose Vasconcelos' envisioned the evolution of the "Cosmic Race," in which negative African and Amerindian characteristics could be eliminated while their positive physical characteristics (i.e. physical strength) would be manifested. Central to Banton's outline of race is his framing of the race paradigm based on perceptual categories. The importance of these categories lies in the social consequences resultant from the perception of differences through an ideology of race.

When viewing race in a sociological context, arbitrary social or cultural criteria are used to designate or assign it. Variously its construction uses nations, ethnic groups, religions, skin color and other social criteria to divide and assign differences to populations. Based on these arbitrary

divisions populations are ranked and given hierarchical value. High status is usually assigned to the dominant group, whom has the official control in creating these artificial categories.

Structural relationships of dominance are created and maintained when race is employed by governments in a legal or administrative context. This occurs as states struggle to internally define their population and externally define their place among the international hierarchy of races. Within this context we find the census and other forms of identification and documentation where people's everyday racial realities are constructed and contested. This government construction of race has consequences for how populations are legally defined and what rights differentially defined groups can appropriate or are denied access to (Forbes 1988).

The roots of categorization based on the concept of race as we know it today arose not from the mere labeling of diverse peoples but rather from the ranking of these different groups into a hierarchical social structure. Based on an evolutionary model, this structure places Western Europeans at the end of the evolutionary process and "other" groups at the beginning or intermediate stages of European civilization.

Conquest and colonization furthered this process of dividing "new" populations into ranked races. As a successful strategy, it rationalized and justified the exploitation and dehumanization of the "other" while reinforcing itself through enslavement and other forms of subjugation by Europeans for economic purposes. Therefore the social construction of the ideology of race was based on a social hierarchy founded on physical and cultural attributes of Europeans equated with and symbolic of high social status and intellectual and cultural superiority. Similarly physical and cultural aspects of subjugated populations were also marked but their traits were denigrated and equated with low status. These divisions were used as justification and rationalization for the enslavement, subjugation, and atrocious brutalities committed against African, Native American and other colonized populations. Race evolved as a method to socially divide human populations to create inequality and to socially advantage the dominant ruling group to the distinct disadvantage of the "subjugated" others.

The social construction of race and designation of racial categories has been an arbitrary process. Criteria used in creating races vary from country to country. In some countries, like the United States, skin color and ethnic heritage became a primary determinant. Other ways of dividing race include religion, hair texture, or any other number of arbitrary attributes. What is relevant to racial categorization is its hierarchical nature and the belief that possession of certain characteristics or traits designate one group as inherently superior or inferior to another.

In the United States, many people characterize and perceive race as an inviolable biological construct which subdivides the human species into distinct groups based on physiognomy or other biological characteristics. This belief in the biology of race is erroneous because there is no single trait that is exclusive to one group of individuals. Hair texture, skin color, eye shape, and other physically and non-physically expressed traits overlap in all populations. Though some traits may be found in higher frequencies in certain populations these same traits can be found in other populations at lower frequencies. The belief in biological difference is an old one that persists even though we recognize that on a genetic level humans share more commonalities across the spectrum of humanity than differences.

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986), race is defined as all of the following:

> a division of mankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinct human type; syn; usually implying a distinct physical type with certain unchanging characteristics, as a particular color of skin or shape of skull although sometimes, and most controversially, other presumed common factors are chosen, as place of origin or common root language.

From this definition we can discern that the "distinguishing characteristics" of race have been arbitrarily assigned. Sometimes physical characteristics are marked, other times it is language, religion, or region of origin. The dictionary definition itself supplies an array of biological,

geographic, and cultural characteristics, any of which can be and have been used to define and categorize race.

The concept of race is perceived to be biologically real and is so ingrained in American society and thought that it has taken on a life and language of its own. The very infrastructure of American society was forged on designating and exploiting differences amongst human beings. It is so prevalent in American thought and consciousness that it continues to be the basis of many pseudo-scientific activities as scientists with a racist agenda attempt to keep markers of race. These denounced activities persist, as evidenced by books such as The Bell Curve, which attempts to link intelligence to group genetics. To combat this pseudoscience, the American Anthropological Association created a statement[5] addressing the concept of race and disputing its scientific validity as a biological construct. The statement addresses the fallacy of racialized thinking. It further espouses that at a genetic level, most populations have more variety and differences within their population group than they do outside of their population group. This statement was created to help discredit the myth of race and the correlating fallacy that distinguishing physical and biological traits inherent to and found only in certain populations exist. Instead it has been established that the range of so called "distinct" physical traits can be found throughout many different populations. Thus features typically associated exclusively with certain groups such can be found in different associated combinations among disparate groups. The arbitrary nature of the characteristics which define the concept of race leads us to realize that race is little more than a social category. Therefore in referring to race it is appropriate to frame the concept as socio-races which explicitly reminds us that race is not a biologically empirical reality but rather a social one.

Although the biological concept of race is not a valid category, its conferred social status and consequences are lived realities for millions of people. As Sanjek (1994) eloquently outlines, the pitfalls of not employing the language of race can be a tool of the dominant class employed to

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5 American Anthropological Association Statement on "Race" (http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm)

obscure social inequities and disguise racism. This seriously disadvantages certain groups based on markers not used in other forms of social division such as ethnic identification. According to Banton (1983), the study of race is the observation of a social phenomenon of "repressive exclusion." To understand the divisions and differences of race and the consequences of those divisions we must be cognizant of the language being employed and what is being addressed and excluded. Accordingly, throughout this study, *I use the racially constructed language and terms as they were given to me to discuss and describe differences as they are perceived in Cuba.* I will present the terms in the discursive manner in which they were employed to maintain the integrity of my informant's perspectives, but their employment of terms does not correspond with my own. The use of these terms in this document in no way legitimizes the concept of race. In fact I will show through my study just how weak biological and social determinations of race are. Additionally, I occasionally employ Afro-Cuban to refer to persons individually designated as mulatto and black, and also as a group reference for people considered to be of African heritage by Cuban standards. This designation is mostly used by academics but not employed by Cubans. In Cuba race, as a conceptual category, was not a primary definition of self as it is with certain groups in the United States.

Some of the color classification terms that are currently active in Cuba are not perceived as being particularly racial, especially when intermediary terms are being discussed. For example, white and black were considered and describe as races at certain levels of understanding, but mulatto, though it was a separate category from the other two, was not always considered to be a separate race. In contrast, a term in the intermediate category that was partially racialized *jaba* (light-skinned mulatto) was described as raceless; yet certain specific characteristics were associated with this term in the same way that they were associated with the terms white (*blanco*) and black (*negro*). It was its raceless status which distinguished it from mulatto and made it equally racializing.

Race as a concept is difficult to define because of the conflation of meaning from different historical periods. Banton's historical overview enabled us to better understand the scope and

depth of racial classification. The social construction of race based on a flexible continuum, as found in Cuba and Brazil, led to the myth of "racial democracies" in both Latin America and the Caribbean (Tannenbaum 1948; Klein 1967; Degler 1971; Harris 1964). The ideology of racial democracies established within these systems maintains and obfuscates sometimes blatant inequities based on the concept of race (Solaun and Kronus 1973). Literature on the racial realities of Cuba generally examines race as it concerns race relations. As such, diverse research tools are used to measure race relations and the differential levels of social status accorded to each race. These studies incorporated various innovative methods including observation of interracial marriage patterns (Martinez-Alier 1974; Fernandez 1996), economic differentials (Mesa-Lago 1974), educational differentials and other social demographic factors (De la Fuente 1995) to indicate the level of racial inequities based on the degree of success and acceptance of Afro-Cubans in Cuban society.

The paradigm of race in Cuba has always had a profound effect on the structure of Cuban society. This started with the late development of the plantation and the advent of slavery to the politics of Independence and the struggle against Imperialism. Each major stage of political development or transformation that has occurred in Cuba involved the dynamics of race. In the early 1900's, when the Independent Party of Color was formed, it explicitly represented the interests of middle-classed Afro-Cubans who struggled for equal representation against exclusionary policies within Cuba. Their disenfranchisement and marginalization in the political and economic sphere was largely due to the military occupation and intervention of the United States in Cuban politics. This effort of organizing politically along racial lines abruptly ended in 1912 when members of the Independent Party of Color were brutally massacred by the government.[6] Since this incident there has been a noted reluctance on the part of Afro-Cubans to politically gather together based on race.

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[6] For a detailed analysis of the Independent Party of Color and the resultant massacre see Helg (1995).

The debate on race in Cuba essentially revolves around the question of race relations and politics in terms of whether or not the socialist government has resolved the "race problem." The literature regarding this issue is substantial and scholars from a variety of fields have participated in the debate. Despite this productivity, a conceptual analysis of the debate is problematic because of the attached ideological arguments concerning the revolutionary government. The discourse is structured around an analysis of racism which focuses on class dynamics and the success or failure of socialism as a means to defeat racism. This scholarly debate on race in Cuba can be divided into several different camps each with the Revolution at the center of the discourse.

One prominent group of scholars, among them Ring (1961), Green (1985), and Serviat (1993), decreed that the Revolution itself was the solution to the racial problem because the transformation of the political and economic structure of race made significant progress towards its elimination. In this analysis, the political process itself was a major determinant in the existence of racism. It was believed that changes in how workers were exploited and competed against one another, eliminated or drastically reduce racism. This school of thought focused predominantly on economics as a primary factor in racism. Another school of thought, notably black radical thinkers such as Moore (1988) and Clytus (1970), claimed that although some changes in the overall racial climate occurred, racism was as prevalent under the Revolutionary regime as before the transformation in political structure. According to Moore, Afro-Cubans associating together based on race were accused of racism and persecuted when they tried to form intellectual groups to discuss their African history and heritage.[7] Social organization on racial lines was seen as a threat to worker unity. Furthermore, both Moore and Clytus measured the lack of success in Cuba's fight against racism based on the percentage of blacks that had been integrated into upper level positions in the government. They found that although blacks were more visibly represented in lower level positions they were scarce in the upper echelons of the

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[7] see Moore 1988

government, with one notable exception. In their opinion, Cuba could be a "raceless" society for blacks as long as their cultural identity was perceived as white.

An alternative argument, presented by a third group of scholars that included Casal (1979), Cole (1986), Booth (1976), McGarrity (1992), Helg (1995), Alvarado (1996) and Stubbs (1989), argued that while the Revolution was a key element in fundamentally altering the racial terrain in Cuba, many forms of discrimination, particularly interpersonal prejudice, still persisted. Booth (1976), and several others noted the prevalence of color prejudice in Cuba, as a remnant of former colonial and capitalist social structures. These interpersonal prejudices were considered to be largely outside of government control because personal preferences could not be legislated. Yet as Fernandez (1996) points out, the effects of personal preferences could have serious institutional consequences particularly when ignored as viable conduits of racism.

A fourth group of scholars, Masferrer and Mesa-Lago (1974), Domínguez (1978) and de la Fuente (1995), argued that the Revolution was only another step, albeit an important one, towards a historical trend of social, political, and racial integration in Cuba. They point to the politically necessary incorporation of blacks from the early days of the Republic which allowed Cuba to gain independence from Spain and maintain its independence and sovereignty. Although this incorporation was a political necessity it was not done without dissent and it did not end racist thought or discrimination.

Throughout the history of Cuba, the communist party, as pointed out by de la Fuente (2001), was the only political party that over time consistently maintained its position of racial equality in Cuba. Only under the communist party did significant changes occur which allowed for blackness to be viewed in a positive light and be claimed aggressively at both a national and interpersonal level. Although significant changes occurred concerning structural race relations, the ideologies that, contributed to racial asymmetry were not eradicated. This was partially due to the government's silence on the issue and the fact that these ideas were embedded within the consciousness of the populous. These ideas included the ideologies of "whitening" and the valorization of European over African culture.

Racism in Cuba has been analyzed using several different conceptual measurements. In her thesis, Fernandez (1996) points out how the scholarly debate in these camps of thought generally revolve around the question of whether or not the discrimination in Cuba is mostly structural (institutional) or individual (personal prejudice). The structural hierarchy assigned to these two forms of racism gives more weight to institutional racism as being more discriminatory and as the "worst" of the two. She contests this division stressing that it contributes to a false consciousness about the ideological structures of racism. This is significant because many of the arguments about the existence of racism in Cuba stress the institutional and not psychological structures of discrimination. It is particularly troublesome because the maintenance of systems of discrimination relies upon underlying principles of hegemonic dominance based on the socio-psychological landscape of attitudes and values designed to maintain the favorable position of the dominant class. Incorporated in this idea are value concepts which allow for the physical whitening of the population to the detriment of the dark-skinned elements of the populace.

The degree of racism in a society equates to the degree of separation found among the different defined "socio-racial" groups of that society. Several scholarly works have compared the concept of race and racial classification cross-culturally and examined the historical impact that conditions such as slavery, various political circumstances, and legal definitions, have on this concept. Among the scholars who have used race and classification systems as part of their analysis are Degler (1971), Helg (1990), and Marx (1996). Degler's classic study compared the color-class system in Brazil to the hypo-descent system in the United States as a measure of acceptance and tolerance of African descendant Americans. Degler rejected earlier theories by Freyre who suggested the benign nature of Brazilian slavery in comparison to that practiced in the United States, and Tannenbaum (1948), who argued that the Portuguese recognized the legal rights of enslaved Africans and this recognition mitigated the "harshness of slavery." He also proposed that the role of Catholic Church in Brazil ameliorated the condition of slavery with its humanistic approach to the enslaved Africans souls. Degler on the other hand focused on how differential race relations evolved from contrasting systems of racial classification. In his

estimation it was the category of mulatto that could be found in systems like Brazil's that provided the key difference in the two forms of classification. This became known as the "mulatto escape hatch." Degler's analysis was problematic in that it depended far too much on miscegenation as a means to disperse racial conflict. Subsequent studies revealed that though the mulatto class was employed as a buffer group by the dominant "whites" they also were a source of great tension between the racial groups particularly when they identify themselves as having closer ties to the subordinate rather than super ordinate parent (Sio 1991).

Helg's (1990) work also compared racial categorization systems. She focused on the parallel color class systems of Argentina and Cuba and the attached social values. She documented how negative perceptions and valuations of blackness led to each respective country's attempt to whiten their populations through various means. A subtle approach employed the psychological ideology of blanqueamiento (whitening), which she describes as a form of racial extermination. The second means, employed through legislative immigration policies promoted "white" and restricted "black" immigration. She explored the socio-psychological as well as pseudo-scientific racial thought which led to the modification of the racial classification system. In the case of Cuba, this entailed the definition of "white" being expanded to include darker hues than had been traditionally excluded from this category. This allowed for what Helg described as the traditional complexion of white to become more of a "matte olive." Despite the expansion of the "white" category, this system served only to maintain and preserve the social dominance of the dominant group.

Marx's seminal work on nation building also examined "race-making," focusing on South Africa, the United States and Brazil. He explored the manner in which state policies and the construction of race included or excluded certain populations as a means to maintain the viability of the state. He concluded that the construction of race in these countries emphasized "cross-class white unity" which maintained the dominant position of the ruling white elite. He also skillfully demonstrated how the degree to which racial identities were legally bound as concrete identities affected the levels of racial conflict between competing racial groups.

Dominguez's (1986) probe into Creole racial identity described the manner in which identities were legally negotiated and manipulated in Louisiana. Her insights were invaluable as she examined the values attached to these ascribed identities and how these values, meanings, and definitions of identities were reflected legally as societal values changed. She demonstrated how definitions of whiteness were expanded or constricted based on societal values. From this perspective we can see how the flexibility of color classification in Cuba is maintained by the state. The deliberate maintenance of classification ambiguity by the state allows for broad flexibility in identity choice. Further, the identity choices that are made are reflective of the social value assigned to the color identity chosen.

Martinez-Alier (1974) connected color-classification to the social structure when she conducted a study on sexual values and social inequality in Cuba using the frequency of interracial marriage as a measure of positive or negative interactive race relations. This study was ground breaking, focused on interracial relationships and only described race relations and the classification system as they existed in the 19th century. Her study provides us a historical foundation on which to base the assigned colonial values of different classification terms. In this manner historical shifts that have taken place in the assigned values of the terms as they concern identity negotiation are more visible than before.

Casal (1979) conducted a study on images of Cuban society among pre and post-revolutionary novelists. Her informal interviews assessed post revolutionary attitudes towards interracial marriage among other topics. She found that "interracial" marriage, which has been used as an indicator of racial tolerance, was becoming more socially acceptable in Cuba. Fernandez' most recent "interracial" study (1996) confirms this trend. In all three of these studies the focus was on "interracial" relationships as the measure of with which to gauge the racial climate in Cuba.

With an intrinsic understanding of the social status of race the idea of race and the nation state emerges. De Castro (2002) examines the establishment of an international hierarchy of nation-states built upon the construction of nation consisting of one race and one language. He

assesses the European model of identification of nation with one race and one language and finds that this model could be applied in the Americas due to the plurality of the societies involved. A hybrid (*mestizo*) unifying identity would be needed for nation building to take place under pluralistic conditions. The concept of nation and nationality in the Americas was built around 19th century hegemonic notions of race.

The utility of a nation-state based on hybridity came forth from thinkers like Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos and his notion of a "cosmic race." Yet the idea of plurality and miscegenation was tempered by an essentialized idea of race and the fear that the negative cultural characteristics of Africans and Amerindians would lend themselves to a corrupt and degenerative group of people who would not be able to govern themselves.

In the international hierarchy of races, Latin America and the Caribbean often fell short of the standards of whiteness needed to be in the upper levels of the racial hierarchy. Miscegenation as a nation building tool was first proposed by Latin American scholars as a purposeful means to "whitening" their countries. Since then, it's been characterized as a benign form of extermination (Solaun and Kronus 1973; Helg 1990). The dominant elite would promote European immigration while limiting immigration from "undesirable" countries. It would be these immigrants who were expected to contribute to the miscegenation of the nation. In this manner the elite could maintain the white status that they had gained without further darkening and jeopardizing their class position. This planned miscegenation with "white" immigrants in Cuba was encouraged to "whiten" and culturally assimilate Afro-Cubans into the Cuban nation (Schmidt-Nowara 1995).

Although this was a prominent ideology, the negative status of miscegenation and *mestizaje* needed to be changed in order for it to become an effective tool of nation building. De Castro (2002) stresses that the conceptual shift involved in using hybridization as a means of nation building is seen in the shift of terms used to convey the idea of race mixture. The term "miscegenation," which was associated with the moral and physical degeneration of the species, was dropped from use. *Mestizaje* replaced it and was conceptually constructed to reflect a more

viable positive image of race mixture. The discourse of *mestizaje* sought to fuse "white," "Amerindian" (red) and black races into a new consolidated whole which would promote unity and solidarity in these plural societies.

Within this transformed concept of *mestizaje* the hierarchy of the races was still maintained. Thus emphasis and higher status was given to mixtures which resulted in lighter, i.e. whiter, children. Mixtures that were constituted of Amerindians and Blacks were at the bottom of the hierarchy and at different points in time were legally prohibited from occurring. At the end of the 19th century the discourse of *mestizaje* began to conflate the ideologies of race and culture. This meant that physical mixing was not necessary in order to have *mestizaje*. Cultural characteristics of *mestizaje* became an important aspect of identifying with *mestizaje*. Ideologically this led to the possibility of immediate gratification of status change. With physical mixing it is not the parent but the child who enjoys elevated status. The thought is with the intention of the family eventually benefiting "down the line" by having lighter children who have better privileges and access to the social privilege of whiteness. With this new concept of *mestizaje* the cultural acquisition of whiteness became easier.

This conflation in the discourse of *mestizaje* of race with culture and class is apparent today. Often *mestizo* status in Latin America is based on dress and education rather than physical appearance. It is the ambiguity and blurring of race with culture that allows *mestizaje* to flourish as a nation building technique. In this sense, all are allowed to participate in the national discourse of *mestizaje*. The problem with the paradigm of *mestizaje* is that it celebrates diversity but only through the hierarchical lens of whiteness. Within the parameters of *mestizaje*, whiteness is still the goal and position in the hierarchy is dependent on one's relationship to whiteness. De Castro (2002) corroborates this point when he elaborates and problematizes the discourse of *mestizaje*. He argues that "national culture" does not correspond to a fusion of cultures as presented in the discourse but rather it is a reflection of the hegemonic elite. In other words, it is a method of silencing and exploiting Amerindian and Black populations under the guise of incorporation.

The discourse of *mestizaje* also utilizes symbolic representations of power and dominance over the "other." This is evident in the portrayal of the *mulata* (feminine form of mulatto) as a symbol of national identity. The symbolism of *mulata* defines beauty as an image of exotic sexuality and raw animalism. Her conception occurred with the structural violence against black women. Her very sexuality maintains and validates the purity of the white woman. She is coveted by all men but her traditional relationship to white men keeps her away from black men and marriage while subordinating her to the role of mistress with white men. Though she is victimized and exploited she is blamed for her own exploitation by the sexual nature attributed to her. As encapsulated by the Cuban novel Cecilia Valdés, she fits in nowhere and her own liminal state leads to her downfall. The stereotype of the *mulata* symbolically perpetuates racist myths and ideology while psychologically restructuring the power dynamics of plantation cultures.

Discourses of *mestizaje* are structured by the forms of color classification which enables a disparate group of social actors to participate in negotiating a miscegenated identity. The structure of color classification pre-dates the Cuban Revolution and is not unique to Cuba. It has also been imbued with both popular and governmental perceptions about the ideology of race and as such constitutes a viable means of examining contested ideologies of self and nation. In the majority of circumstances where color classification has been used, it has been employed to claim and emphasize "whiteness." In societies like Brazil, South Africa, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, where being Black has negative consequences on life chances and opportunities, negotiating identities into whiteness has proven to be a successful strategy for some to achieve social advancement while the "white elite" maintains their position of untouchable prominence. The importance of color terminology to the societies in which it is a prominent feature of identity construction has been emphasized by scholars like Lovell (1998), Nicholls (1996), Trouillout (1994), Marx (1996), Dominguez (1986), and Helg (1990). Those for whom it is possible to negotiate lighter and whiter identities are able to move up the social

ladder. In addition, this flexibility in the system actually allows the "white elite" to rule safely while giving the appearance of racial amicability and democracy.

Most of the literature on color classification focuses on the processes of whiteness and how the manipulation of whiteness in identity negotiation benefits the "white elite" as the masses strive to attain the social currency of whiteness. My study is different on several points and not only does it fill a proverbial gap in the literature but it takes the next step as it relates to color classification and identity negotiation. First, I inverse the discourse of *mestizaje* and focus on the processes and dynamics of blackness in a socialist context as a means to provide an equalizing effect between "white elites" and the "colored masses." Second, in Cuba current conditions stress a never before seen promotion of blackness as an essential part of Cuban identity, instead of analyzing "interracial" sexual relationships as an indicator of racial climate I analyze the discourse of color identities as they are chosen and ascribed using the wealth of terms available in state and popular color classification. Third, through this analysis I investigate multiple forms of classification found in Cuba and how they interact to 1) give the semblance of a systemic form of classification and 2) create the flexibility which allows classification itself to be employed as a gauge of the effects of the state's transnational discourse on race. Finally, this study will assess the manner in which color classification acts as a forum for the subliminal and conscious discussion on race between the state and the popular consciousness. Through this forum we can analyze the effects of Cuba's transnational dialogue on race and the contested identity of blackness as a negotiated response by Cuba's citizenry to the shifts in values that have occurred with these color terminologies.

Field Setting

The island of Cuba is composed of a diverse population whose physical composition varies regionally across the island. Traditionally characterized as having a higher proportion of darker to lighter Cubans, the eastern half of the island (Santiago) is an area heavily influenced by West Indian immigrants. Also known for its large maroon communities, the perceived darker

complexions in this region are remarked upon in the folk culture by the belief that a person identified as *negro* (black) or *mulato* (mulatto) in Havana would be identified as *blanco* (white) in Santiago. The central region of the island (Holguín, Camagüey, and Las Villas) is perceived as whiter and composed of fewer persons considered to be *negro* or *mulato*. The western half of the island (Havana, Matanzas, and Pinar del Río) is characterized as having a more equitable fusion of both dark-skinned and light-skinned Cubans. Havana, which is one of the oldest cities in the Americas and the capital of Cuba, has a more phenotypically diverse population and an urban flair which makes it a desirable migratory destination for those seeking economic, cultural, and educational opportunities.

In Havana, the eye is greeted with white, black and brown-skinned people of various hues and hair textures walking side by side and interacting seemingly without many of the confluent tensions and social separations that define life in the United States. In Cuba, rigid social separations based on color are not the norm and it is rare to have a social gathering that is visually all "white" or all "black." When this occasionally occurs, it is more by accident than design. Every type of grouping ranging from family gatherings to office parties is a montage of white, black, and brown that is both casual and refreshing. Despite the social integration commonly found in the majority of both public and private venues, Cuba is not a racial paradise and there are still some areas in which spatial separation does occur. It is at the nexus of these separations that the paradigm of race is conspicuously silent and the dialogues of contested identity are most apparent.

In terms of housing, darker-skinned Cubans can be found concentrated in certain historically black or "mixed" areas. They are also overwhelmingly associated with poor housing conditions and arrangements such as *solares*, which are large houses, or buildings that have been divided and subdivided into rooms or sections in which several different families may live and share a common bathroom. Locales of high black concentration include *barrios* (neighborhoods) such as Cerro, which is dilapidated and other inner city *barrios* like Central and Old Havana which are characterized as racially mixed with large phenotypically black and mulatto populations.

Predominantly white areas include *barrios* like Vedado and Miramar, which were traditionally areas in which the rich and famous resided. In fact, Miramar is still a prominent location which houses diplomats and other people of social import.

Another area of spatial separation is located in sites of cultural negritude. Although many Cubans enjoy and participate in Salsa,[8] there is an overwhelming predominance of Afro-Cubans who can be found consuming and relating to African-American culture through American Rap, Hip Hop and Reggae music. In fact, for the clubs that are dedicated to playing these musical genres, the clientele is overwhelmingly dark-skinned. I have personally observed various clubs with almost no one in attendance who would be described as white by Cuban norms. *Moñeras* (Cubans who are dedicated to the Hip Hop musical genre) emulate and practice language, dance and clothing styles from the American Hip Hop scene to the best of their ability. In this medium they break their silences on the rhetoric of race and construct a grassroots discourse and site for black consciousness that largely remains underground.

These polemic sites of discourse are areas in which racial identities are contested and are not readily apparent because they are hidden in plain sight. On the streets of Havana a true human mosaic of colors is visually displayed and consumed. There are dark-skinned girls with long wavy hair considered to be *moras* (a dark-skinned classification type), and light-skinned girls with blonde afros described as *jabas* (a light-skinned classification type). People walk by with various combinations of thin noses with full lips and broad noses with thin lips. Curly, straight, frizzy, wavy, soft, and coarse hair abound. Those with epicanthic folds or straight black hair regardless of color were referred to as *china/o*. It was quite common to see light-skinned or "white" children walking with dark or brown-skinned relatives or the reverse. Not much attention was drawn to physically interracial Cuban couples who walked hand in hand.[9] It is here in the street and in the privacy of Cuban homes that encounters with and confluences of the

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[8] A musical genre considered to have originated among Afro-Cubans.
[9] The exception to this is when Cubans perceive the couple to be comprised of a foreigner and a Cuban. Then the black or mulatto member of the couple may be perceived to be a *jineterá* (prostitute).

ideologies of race are negotiated through the ascription and claiming of color identities as expressed through the various forms of color classification.

My research was located in and around the centralized *barrios* of Havana with the bulk of the investigation concentrated in the four principle *barrios* of: Central Havana, Vedado, Old Havana, and Cerro. These were the principle sites where the majority of informants were recruited. Minor sites included Miramar, Santiago de las Vegas, and Municipio Monaco. Most of the informants recruited had educational levels comparable with the middle classes here in the United States but for a variety of reasons they lived in socio-economic conditions that were not reflective of their educational levels.

Before the Revolution, many of the *barrios* were separated by class structure and, by default, color. Pre-1959, the majority of the middle and upper classes were considered to be white and the majority of the poorer and lower classes were considered to be black. Though the class structure has been transformed, some of the residential patterns have remained the same. For instance, those *barrios* which were predominately white before the revolution have remained so today. Areas such as Vedado, La Playa, and Miramar had high concentrations of Cubans defined as white and areas such as Central Havana, Old Havana, and Cerro had high concentrations of Cubans defined as black with Cerro having the highest proportion of all. These dimensions are relatively similar although there have been population ebbs and flows.

Central Havana is a section of the city where there are hotels, clubs with cabarets, and shopping areas for the tourists,[10] the national ballet and a few government offices. Old Havana is marked by colonial style buildings and extremely narrow streets. It is one of the historical districts with places famous for hosting Hemmingway and other noteworthy people. A section of this neighborhood has buildings that have been newly renovated, and there is an effort underway to restore many of the old buildings to their former glory.

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[10] Until recently although Cubans were not restricted from entering "dollar" stores the majority of them did not have access to dollars to spend on the luxury items sold in the stores.

Cerro is poorer than the other *barrios*, evident by the crumbling buildings and the air of neglect. It has numerous sea ports, which permit the passage of oil tankers and other commercial sea vessels, as well as several large and unsightly factory buildings, including an electrical plant, and railroad station. This is in contrast to the *marinas* which were once country clubs that can be found in Vedado, La Playa, and Miramar and mostly support non-commercial craft. Vedado houses the *la plaza de la Revolución* (Revolutionary plaza) which features a large metallic display of Ché Guevara on the upper half of one of its surrounding buildings. This is the site of many political rallies, speeches, and government ceremonies.

The sites of contestation of color identities are construed at the interlocutions of emic and etic color ascription and election. These identities are ascribed at both the formal and informal loci of identity construction. The formal structures of ascription are found in obligatory administratively controlled modes of identification. In contrast, informal configurations of ascription are situated in the nodes of interpersonal interactions and convey information based on the significance of these exchanges to the participants involved. Elected identities are located at the junctures of national and interpersonal ideologies of Cubanness and either contest or concur with ascribed classification.

Cuba's political stance on race has re-contextualized both the international and its domestic paradigm of race and has provided an alternative to Brazil's failure as a relevant working model of "racial democracy." Government rhetoric actively engages in national identity construction in which symbolic blackness situates Cuba ideologically in opposition to the United States in the global politics of color. This study examines the hierarchies of color status and the extent to which blackness and not whiteness has become a prominently featured aspect of identity. This paradigm shift has occurred in a dialectic environment in which the imagery of blackness is still negatively valued although blackness itself is popularly and politically favored. Categorization

in this context frames specific aspects of Cuban identity and highlights its connection to *mulatizaje*.[11]

Also, this study connects Cuba's external dialogue of blackness to the recent phenomena of Cubans from disparate positions in the racial hierarchy uniting together through the common utilization of the national trope of *mestizaje* to claim a "shared" historical blackness. This is particularly significant as most constructions of national *mestizaje* identity associate claims of *mestizaje* with the elite "ruling" class/middle class and not the subjugated. Particularly relevant is that it is not *mestizaje* but specifically *mulatizaje* that is highlighted. It is through the ideology of the state and the popular perceptions of the symbolism of blackness that the color continuum is mediated.

This research has several social policy implications for multi-cultural societies which seek to facilitate racial democracy and look for successful methods of inclusion. I demonstrate how the present ambiguities of color classification, as maintained by the state, enables a variety of participants to construct multiple identities, of which brown/black is a possibility, through the trope of *mulatizaje*.

Historically systems of color classification were constructed as exclusionary devises which provided for the restriction of socio-economic mobility of the subordinate segments of the population without the need for legally defined boundaries. Since the Cuban Revolution, Cuba has officially and actively discouraged institutional expressions of racism. The reasons for encouraging racial tolerance were varied and conjoined to the socialist ideology that the new republic fostered. Two of the foremost reasons have been the confluence of practical politics and socialist ideology. Politically, tolerance cemented national solidarity and as a nation building technique minimizes differences and accentuates similarities by creating a sense of "brotherhood" among disparate phenotypic groups. Ideologically, this effort was part of the nation's socialist agenda to eradicate the consequences of institutional racism, sexism, and

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[11] "Race" mixture concerning "whites" and "blacks" with an emphasis placed on "blackness."

classism within the society. Part of this process included improved access to job and educational opportunities that were formerly denied to people based on their position in the racial hierarchy. This process has been at the forefront of the Cuban government to attempt to eliminate racism through socialist reform and enable Cuba to become an alternate model to Brazil in the construction of a "racial democracy."

Despite the reform measures designed to address and correct the problems of racism, color classification, which had been used in conjunction with other factors to limit social mobility, was not targeted for reform. Currently classification no longer serves the explicit purpose of being a barrier to socio-economic mobility, yet clearly, remnants from when it served this function have survived to the present day. Negative valuations and attitudes towards blackness have remained despite the government's transnational projection of blackness to the world. This external projection of race in a global context results in a silent internal dialogue of race occurring between the state and its citizenry, the latter of whom have contested government structures of ascribed identity through informal ascriptions and opposing elected identities as a response to the assigned classifications.

Negotiating identity into the nodes of Cuba's color continuum provides us with a natural laboratory in which to examine color classification and to articulate the differences in state and popular forms of classification. Interpersonal assumptions of identity in conjunction with identity ascription are the sites in which significant shifts in meaning and value are located.

I utilize Cuban color classification as a lens through which to garner a clear perspective of "grassroots" constructions and accepting "blackness" as an identity marker regardless of phenotype.   These identity negotiations can be construed as responses and interpretations of government rhetoric which has involved the external promulgation of negritude. This paradigm shift is amazing in that it has taken place within a relatively short period of time in an environment that still attaches negative social meaning to blackness.

Prior to the establishment of the 1959 revolutionary government, color classification and class status functioned together and the classification system itself served as one of the barriers

that limited social and economic access to the majority of the dark-skinned segments of the population. This barrier was an expression of color prejudice against those of darker hues. Many Cubans who were at the lower end of the racial hierarchy found it particularly advantageous to (re)negotiate their color identity (Helg 1990; Booth 1976; Martinez-Alier 1974). These historical forms of negotiation are discussed later on by my informant Juan Carlos when he describes how negotiating whiteness enabled him to get a job at an American factory. Negotiating lighter terms of classification was a bargaining mechanism which allowed access to social and economic venues. This dialogue of negotiated identities occurred at sites of entrance to social and economic venues (employment, social clubs, and residential areas). Negotiation mechanisms were embedded in the terminology of classification and perception of the terms employed conferred or denied access to social whiteness.

Since the socialist reform in access to education and job opportunities was instituted and conjoined with the political rhetoric of blackness, the negotiation of color categories employing terms which indicate whiteness, is no longer perceived as necessary. At the sites of identity construction, there has been a demonstrable shift in the employment of terminology which favors terms connoting blackness. This study focuses on terminology in the contested discourse of identity and the manner in which identity is reconciled under the restraints of historically contrived status symbols of color.

Conducting Fieldwork in Cuba

Conducting fieldwork in Cuba is difficult as one must negotiate the minefield of U.S.-Cuban relations and foreign policy. My fieldwork was punctuated by various international events which forced me to be extremely resourceful in getting my investigation accomplished. By the time I had made my first trip to Cuba in the summer of 1996, there had been several European and North American researchers allowed into Cuba to conduct investigations.

During my first visit, I had arrived during a time of heightened tensions between Cuba and the U.S. Earlier that year, Cuba had shot down a plane belonging to Brothers to the Rescue, an

anti-Castro group based in Miami. This resulted in the Helms-Burton law, which legislated a further tightening on the embargo and stricter sanctions against Cuba. On the streets of Havana there was major pro Cuba anti U.S. propaganda campaigns going on. The UJC (*Union de Jovenes Communistas*, Union of Young Communists), had organized several political cartoons specifically aimed at the Helms-Burton law to be strategically painted onto buildings and billboards in the tourist areas of Havana. Many of the cartoons spoke of Cuba's continued ability to sustain itself against the "political tyranny" of the United States.

I arrived in Cuba mere months after this international crisis. Cuba was still deep in the grips of the special period, named for the crisis the country was experiencing due to the Soviet collapse and further exacerbated by the U.S. embargo. As a researcher associated with the University of Pittsburgh, I was able to get permission from the Treasury Department to go to Cuba. Though the previous government administration had been very reluctant and sketchy about giving approval for research in Cuba I had no problems obtaining a license. I did not need any special permission to enter Cuba as I had come on a tourist visa, which at the time lasted 70 days. I had hoped that during my trip I would be able to garner the contacts I needed to get a special one year student visa so I could do my fieldwork in Cuba. This was to prove to be a trickier proposition than I thought. Many of the research institutes were reluctant to take on the official responsibility of a North American researcher.

During that summer I stayed in Cerro, one of the poorest *barrios* (neighborhoods) in Havana. Almost daily we experienced at least one blackout in the morning and sometimes a second blackout at night around 6pm. The blackouts sometimes caught me quite by surprise when on some of the hottest nights I awoke covered in sweat the moment the fan stopped swirling. Most of the people got around by biking, so I bought myself a bike manufactured in China and managed to propel myself all over Havana. That summer I did some preliminary legwork into the possibilities of future fieldwork in Cuba and by the end of my stay I knew that Cuba would be my future field site.

In the summer of 1997, I returned to Cuba to construct my project and secure my research visa. This time I stayed in Central Havana. My home was ideally situated in one of the older sections of the city, less than half a block away from the Almejeras hospital which before the revolution had been a bank. In fact the vault underneath the hospital was still operational and in use. This was to prove to be a blessing, because the lights never went off in that section of the city. It was explained to me that this was due to the neighborhood's proximity to the hospital and the fact that the electrical grid to that area of the city was so old that if it the lights were turned off they might not come back on again.

I had learned on my previous visit that in Cuba things move swiftly when one had face-to-face contact with the people who could get things done. After much negotiating, Lourdes Serrano at the Institute of Anthropology in Cerro agreed to sponsor my student visa. I was told that I could conduct my research on the color classification system. During my stay I developed contacts with students at the University of Havana and met several scholars such as Tomas Fernandez Robaina, who put me in contact with potential informants. By the end of the summer, I had lain the groundwork for my upcoming fieldwork and had conducted several preliminary surveys and pilesorts designed to elicit information about the color classification system. By the end of the summer I only needed to obtain a grant to fund my research. Unfortunately, because of the embargo, research funds for scholars who wanted to do work in Cuba were limited. Fortunately, I was able to secure research funds from the Provost's office at the University of Pittsburgh.

I was not able to return to Cuba until May of 1998. Unlike my previous visit, this time, within one week I had my student visa. I stayed in Cuba until the end of August. In total, I spent 8 months conducting research in Cuba but not all in one continuous period. This actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise as I was able to make some comparisons due to the time lapse that I would not have been able to do otherwise. The majority of my research was conducted over the period of a year and a half through several different trips starting in June of 1997 and ending in December of 1998. The investigation took place in Havana, because as a centralized

metropolitan area it had representatives from many of the provinces, and tended to be racially diverse and had representatives of all of the racial "types" to be found in Cuba.

During the course of my fieldwork I stayed with a Cuban family in their home in Central Havana. It was through them and other friends that I had made in 1996 that I built up a network of friends and informants. My everlasting gratitude goes out to this family who allowed me to participate in their daily lives and whose frank answers to my many questions proved to be enlightening. My informants were recruited from the University of Havana, various job sites, and through contacts established during pilot research conducted during the summer of 1996 and 1997. The most successful method that I used to locate informants was through the Cuban custom of visiting.

Due to the lack of phones, most people would make unplanned visits to relatives and friends. When these visitors came, all activity ceased, and the "host" family set about attending to their guests. Many informants were people who came by for a visit, either at home or in the home of someone I was interviewing. I also met people at conferences, the library, and at various social functions. I also interviewed my neighbors and their friends and relatives. Wherever I went I brought along my cassette recorder, some questionnaires, and my pilesorting cards. I asked almost everyone I came in contact with to interview with me and I was hardly ever refused because the interviewees were always very interested in the topic and in seeing my photos. Although data was collected through a snowball and convenience sample, every effort was made so that the respondents to my questionnaires were phenotypically stratified and varied by sex, age, and occupation in an effort to assure a representative sampling of the population. I tried to ensure that my sample was representative and made it a point to interview an equal number of Cubans classified both informally and formally as black, mulatto, and white. The sample was slightly biased towards educated Cubans due to the snowballing effect but I made a special effort to interview people of various different educational, economic, and phenotypic profiles. Cuba itself also has a highly educated population and the majority of my informants had obtained at least a high school education.

Conducting research in Cuba, particularly when official diplomatic relations with the United States are lacking proved to be challenging but not impossible. My informants had no reservations about relaying to me their opinions about the sensitive issues of race. As an African-American my identity was always an interesting point of discussion as people tried to contextualize me locally. Both dark-skinned and light-skinned Cubans were very open and offered sensitive and insightful information about color classification. Although racism is not the central theme of this study, it is discussed somewhat in the context of race relations because of its close association to the classification system. After all, it was racism's dynamic relationship to color classification and categorization which enabled color classification to be employed to structurally separate the colonizer from the colonized both socially and economically.

Methodology

In order to fully explore the diverse forms of color classification in Cuba I utilized several methods of data collection to get the most accurate picture possible. These methods included freelisting, pilesorting, and a variety of questionnaires, both semi-structured and open ended interviews, participant observation, and archival research.

The majority of my interviews took place in four of the central *barrios* of Havana: Centro Havana, Vedado, Cerro, and Havana Vieja. My informants had a cross section of social, economic, and political circumstances. They originated from all over the island although the majority of the younger respondents had been born and raised in Havana. Most of the older respondents had been living in Havana most of their adult lives. The majority of my informants had been well educated and had participated in occupations that would define them as middle class in a U.S. setting. My study is limited to the dynamics of the system as it exists on the western half of the island in the cosmopolitan city of Havana. The eastern half of the island, particularly Santiago de Cuba, tends to negotiate classification differently due to the strong West Indian and Haitian influence. In fact, the people from Havana said that those from Oriente had

different thresholds in terms of how they categorized white (*blanco*), black (*negro*) and *mulato*. There were several demographic and social reasons for this difference.[12]

The terms used in the questionnaires were based on a freelisting exercise which I had conducted in 1997. In that exercise, respondents were simply asked to list all of the terms that they knew. I then compiled the terms, using the most frequently used in the questionnaire and asked the respondents to mark the terms they were familiar with and could provide a description. Respondents were also asked to identify the qualities that they associated with each of the terms they claimed they knew. Finally respondents were asked to describe the stereotypes associated with the terms *blanco*, *negro*, *chino*, and *mulato*, which were the terms most frequently employed in state classification.

For this study, I designed several different questionnaires, each aimed at unveiling different aspects of the color classification system. The following is a chronological table of my data collection techniques involving informants.

Table 1: Chronological Table of Data Collection Techniques

Method	Sample Size[13]	Purpose
Freelisting Exercise	61	To elicit basic "color" categories.
Questionnaire Survey	80	To elicit basic information about color classification and identity.
Questionnaire Survey	68	To understand genotype/phenotype relationships.
Pilesort Exercise (Terms)	41	To elicit cognitive relationships among color terms.

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[12] The eastern half of the island is where the majority of the free black and maroon communities thrived because of the rugged terrain. It is also where the majority of the black migrant workers from neighboring Caribbean islands were employed. A person who could be considered white in Santiago would be considered *mulato* in Havana.

[13] Informants consisted of a convenience sample of citizens of West Havana.

Pilesort Exercise Photos	51[14]	To elicit cognitive relationships among phenotypes.
Semi-Structured Interviews	36	To elicit life histories and narratives involving color terms and identity negotiation.

For one of the questionnaires, 80 respondents living in Havana were asked to answer questions designed to elicit background information about the construction of color identities within the family as compared to outside of the home. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first was designed to draw out demographic information (such as respondent's age (date of birth), gender, occupation, mother's occupation, father's occupation, income, household income, marital status, residence, history of employment and religion). The second section was designed to elicit further information about the differences between "official" or formal and the "popular" or informal forms of classifying the population using color terminology. Questions asked included information on: *carnet*[15] identification of self (state assigned identification), spouse, parents, children and in-laws. There was also a question of comparison which asked about popular or folk classifications (assessments made within the family or among friends and neighbors) of self, spouse, parents, children, and in-laws. In addition informants were asked to describe classification terms that they used or were aware of. The questionnaire further probed sociological values of terms and stereotypes associated with the terms. These were open ended questions with a space provided for a detailed description. I administered the questionnaire in Spanish and remained on hand for questions. Some of these informants were also selected to complete more in-depth interviews.

I also conducted a separate survey which involved requesting 68 respondents to list which specific combinations would produce various classification types. This was done to assess the

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14 This includes a sampling of six medical personnel.
15 State issued citizen identification card.

importance of genotype and phenotype to color classification. It also demonstrated broad categories and their associated types. Furthermore the boundaries and thresholds of these categories were mapped and explored.

In addition, two sets of free pile sorting exercises were conducted. This was done to develop a cognitive map of the color classification system. In the first pile sorting exercise, terms that had been collected from the free listing exercise were entered onto separate cards and given to the respondents. Who were then asked to put them into piles based on how similar the terms were to each other and to label the resultant piles.

In the second set of free pile sorting exercises, 51 respondents were asked to put a series of photos into similar piles and to consequently label the resultant piles. Within this group was a subset of six medical doctors. This exercise was conducted using photographs containing images of persons largely unknown to the respondents. The photographs represented both genders and denoted various physical types and age groups. Socio-economic clues such as clothing were obscured so that this information would not affect the classifications rendered. Informants were asked to sort the photographs into as many similar piles as they saw fit. When the sorting was completed, reasons for creating the piles, and the color classifications associated with the piles were collected.

Finally, thirty-six semi-structured 45-120 minute taped interviews were collected to elicit further information about the color classification system and contextualize race relations through life histories. The interviews largely transpired in the homes of my informants. At times the informants agreed to meet with me at another location for their convenience. Informants were drawn from both within and outside of the questionnaire sample. These interviews were an important guideline for contextualizing the color gradient system through ethnographic text.

Archival research was conducted primarily at La Biblioteca Nacional and El Instituto de Literatura y Ciencia in Cuba. Other research was conducted at Hillman Library at the University of Pittsburgh. Census statistics were found both in Cuba and at Hillman Library. Information about the identity booklet (*carnet de identidad*) was gathered through an interview with an ex-

official who had worked for in that department and also through the process of examining respondent's *carnets* to confirm their official designation by the state. The information gathered through these means was used to compare how the color gradient system was officially codified and validated over time and how the state's definition of its population had been accepted or negated, expressed and codified.

Data analysis was accomplished with the aid of QSR Nudist and ANTHROPAC, certain statistical computations were done by hand. NUDIST was used to analyze qualitative data such as interviews, while ANTHROPAC was used to analyze the pilesorting and freelisting quantitative data. Other information from the questionnaires was compiled by hand.

The next chapter provides an overview and puts in historical context race and color classification in Latin America and the Caribbean. Explored are the significant differences between these two cultural areas which have affected the expression of the color continuum at a structural level even though they both appear to share the superficial language of categorization.

Chapter Two: Historical Context of Color Classification in Latin America and the Caribbean

The era of colonization and enslavement in the Americas and the resultant large scale intermingling of populations led to new forms of conceptualizing and categorizing race. New relationships between labor and categorization developed in the context of a slave-based plantation economy and provided the impetus for new conceptual forms of classification and social stratification. In this milieu of change and population contact, the seeds of Cuban color classification flourished.

Understanding the current dynamics of color classification in Cuba depends on an exploration of its origins. Systems of classification evolved and proliferated in the New World as people tried to make sense of the ever shifting boundaries conceptualized through race as previously isolated populations mixed together in unprecedented numbers. The social stratification that developed in Latin America and the Caribbean were differentiated from each other based on demographic circumstances and the intricate individualized relationships of plantation economies and colonization.

Dynamic forms of classification developed in the Caribbean and Latin America and shifted contextual meaning and significance over time to reflect relevant changes in their societies. Though all of these taxonomies shared some common factors such as a formal tripartite form of organization, each developed their own terms, specific to the context in which they found themselves. These hierarchical forms of classification organized the colonists at the top rung of the pecking order and the colonized and enslaved at the bottom. A multitude of terms developed to describe the interconnections between race, color gradation, and class status. These systems were differentiated based on three factors: 1) the acculturation policies of the specific colonizer, 2) integration of the enslaved and indentured into the system (Klein 1967), and 3) the specific demographics of the population. Demographics, and the colonizers' perceptions of the colonized

provided major contributions to the differentiation of and usage of the terms found in these systems.

In parts of Latin America, large indigenous populations were not decimated by European disease and warfare as they were in the Greater and Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean. In these countries, the classification systems predominantly focused on the relationship between Amerindians and Europeans, most of whom were Spaniards. Therefore the systems that evolved mainly describe the derivations between these two main groups. The third group to form a triad relationship between these two groups was the *mestizo*.[16] Outside of this triad there were also peripheral groups that were socially, politically, and economically marginalized, especially in comparison to the main group subjugated. These peripheral groups were marginally accounted for in the system. In Latin America, the outlying groups were primarily Africans and mixtures of Spaniards or Amerindians with Africans. Africans were in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in places like Venezuela, Argentina, Peru and Mexico. These countries engaged in massive importing of enslaved Africans for labor on plantations and to alleviate the stresses on the Amerindian population. Yet, despite this early African presence in Latin America, these populations have now become virtually invisible due to aggressive immigration, deportation, and outright genocidal policies aimed at whitening their respective countries. (Jackson 1975) The importance of this early African proliferation is still reflected today in the classification systems which included terms such as *zambo*[17] and *mulato*.[18] Yet these groups of Africans, for all their early proliferation, are not major players in the current composition of the classification system.

In the Caribbean, in countries like Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Guyana, Haiti, and Brazil, the racial mixture and interaction primarily occurred between non native populations, specifically between Old World populations in Europe (Spaniard, French and

[16] The offspring of a European and an Amerindian. These mestizos were almost all derived from European males and Amerindian females.
[17] The offspring of an African and Amerindian.
[18] The offspring of a European and an African.

Portuguese) and Africans (Yoruba, Dahomey, etc...) In the Caribbean, Africans continue to

numerically dominant, thus making them a primary factor in the classification system. Mixtures

of Europeans with Africans produced *mulatos*, from the gendered interactions of African women

with European men. In these systems of classification the peripheral groups consisted of the

Amerindian indentured servants from the Yucatan Peninsula and Asians (Chinese), who entered

the system after it had been firmly established and in operation for a substantial amount of time.

These laborers were imported into the Caribbean to ease the labor shortage brought on by

emancipation, such as in the cases of Cuba, Trinidad and Guyana, these groups were

differentially incorporated into the society based on their numeric strength. In the case of

Trinidad and Guyana, significantly large numbers of these groups entered the system and were

included as major players in the existing system, whereas, in Cuba these new groups were

marginal and absorbed into already existing categories.

As a principal form of socio-political acculturation by the colonizers in Latin America and

the Caribbean, race mixture occurred during two distinct stages of culture contact. During the

first stage Europeans formed political marriage alliances with the Amerindian populations that

would eventually provide the elite foundation of the *mestizo* class. Also, official alliances

between Africans (mostly but not exclusively *mulatas*) and Europeans created the legitimate elite

section of the *mulato* class. It is important to realize this elite *mulata* class because of the status

associated with their European fathers. After the colony was well established, the second stage

of racial mixture, primarily unofficial, was a major contributor to the *mulato* masses. It involved

unrecognized, intimate contact between European men and women of color[19] which resulted in

the illegitimate majority (Esteva-Fabregat 1995). The political necessity of marriage with

Amerindians disappeared due to subsequent European control of the population. The state

(colonial administration) then demonstrated an "aversion to interracial marriages" (Martinez-

Alier 1974). This official aversion extended to the politically and socially disadvantageous (for

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[19] Amerindian and African

these women of color), condition of concubinage (Knight 1974). The lack of legal protection represented by marriage, put Amerindian and African women at a distinct disadvantage. At a latter stage in the republic, the most common form of replicating the *mestizo* or *mulato* class became the combination of *mestizo* and *mestizo* or *mulato* and *mulato*. There was no inherent illegitimacy associated with this form of class replication, but the image of the *mulato* class had already been established based on concubinage and other illegitimate short term unions.

European perceptions of the politically and socially subordinate location of Amerindians and Africans on an evolutionary scale had implications for how and where in the hierarchy they were positioned and articulated by the colonizers. A clear example is demonstrated by the low social status that Africans had in comparison to Amerindians. Both Africans and Amerindians were considered to be savage and uncivilized, but Africans were perceived as being on a lower evolutionary rung than the Amerindians. Hence, Amerindians were later became the "noble savages," distinguishing them from the "other" "ignoble" savages.

An advantage seen in race mixture was the creation of a truly unique and improved man taking the best qualities from both groups. On the other hand, a degenerative view of race mixing was visualized as combining the worst qualities of both races. Thus, the least amount of social prestige was given to those racial combinations of Amerindians and Africans. Their racially mixed offspring were perceived as not possessing any redeeming qualities and representative of an evolutionary regression. These mixes acquired an even lower status in the racial hierarchy than either of their parents.

The undiluted or "pure" European man occupied the top position on the evolutionary scale of man. In the process of race mixture, white women and black men were theoretically absent from the process. The creation of the mulatto presumably only occurred in a structurally asymmetrical pattern of dominance between white men and black women. Black men and white women were involved in this process, but represented a lower numeric frequency because such unions resulted in harsh consequences meted out to the participants involved. Depending on what time period is being discussed, white women lost status and black men lost lives. In all, racial classification

systems reflected the social hierarchy in which the numerically predominate group, Amerindians in Latin American and Africans in the Caribbean, were pressed into a socially subordinate position in the hierarchy by the numerically smaller group.

These racial classification systems were a form of social stratification that arose from the need for a systematized form of social control to keep numerically subordinate Europeans uppermost in the hierarchy and in control of the large populations of enforced laborers of color (Hall 1971). This control accomplished through physical force and psychological manipulation, helped maintain the delicate balance of power. One aspect of maintaining control incorporated mulattos into the system with intermediate social status act as a "buffer" group between the Europeans and Africans/Amerindians (Degler 1971). This intermediate group's social and political status differed and separate from their parents in that they did not gain as high a social or legal status as their white fathers but certainly did not possess as low a status as their black mothers. The creation of this group was gendered in that it involved the sexual subordination of women of color to the sexual dominance of European men. This new "class" of *mestizos/mulatos* was largely illegitimate because of the unprotected position of their black mothers in society (Esteva-Fabregat 1995). These mulattos were allowed relatively easy absorption into the white group because of their intermediate position. The psychological bases for their incorporation into an intermediate position encouraged mulattos to feel more loyalty to their white paternal group and less to their black maternal group. In this manner the dominant group tried to bolster its numbers by putting more social distance between the blacks and mulattos than between the mulattos and whites.

Early stratification, in its most simplistic form segregated the population into three tiers based on colonizer, colonized and/or enslaved, and the offspring of the intimate exchanges between these two groups. This tripartite hierarchy, where it evolved, gave high status to the European colonizer, intermediate status to his mixed raced offspring, and low to no status to the Amerindians or Africans. A mixture of racial and color descriptors describe and encode this hierarchy. Position in this hierarchy determined social status. Some basic terms included white,

Indian, black and *mestizo/mulato*. As second and third generations of admixtures occurred, more elaborate forms of describing the hierarchy developed and expanded the categorizations to an extreme level, exemplified in the following chart from colonial Mexico:

Spaniard with Indian produces Mestizo
Spaniard and Mestiza produce Castizo
Spaniard and Castiza produce Torna a español
Spaniard and Negra begets Mulato
Spaniard and Mulata begets Morisco
Morisco and Spaniard, Albino
Albino and Spaniard births Torna atras
Mulato and Indian begets Calpamulato
Calpamulato and Indian begets Jibaro
Negro and Indian begets Lobo
Lobo and Indian begets Cambujo
Indian and Cambuja begets Sambahigo
Mulato and Mestisa begets Cuarteron
Cuarteron and Mestiza, Coyote
Coyote and Morisca births Albarazado
Albarazado and Salta atras begets Tente en el aire[20]

The production of these charts were mainly academic exercises as intellectuals tried to grapple with the social complexities represented from people stepping outside of the neatly drawn categories. Administratively this system was difficult to maintain, particularly because human variation defies phenotypic prediction. As seen above, the children of specific unions were classified on their presumed genetic admixture. Despite the physical varieties that resulted from these mixtures, these charts did not take into account the variety of phenotypes available for each type. This sort of genotyping was not practical. In addition, most of these charts were designed by the curious to illustrate the possible racial crosses in the colonies and had no basis in the social reality of race management (Mörner 1967:59). These forms of classification eventually became less based on genetics and more determined by phenotype, particularly when the mixture went beyond the first generation of *mestizo/mulato*. Further elaboration of the system based on phenotype was reserved for the informal sector.

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[20] Barradas 1948:184-185

Officially, most systems operationalized three to five official categories and all subsequent mixtures were lumped into these groups. An example of these broad official categories would be: European descent or white (*blanco*), Indian (*indio*), *mestizo*, African or black (*negro*), *mulato*, and *zambo*.[21] These charts also illustrate how successive mixtures may eventually lead to the possibility of a "return" to an acceptable phenotypic whiteness.

Descriptors, dependent on the physical presentation of the colonized population and the languages of both the colonizer and colonized, also differentiated each system. Similar terms like *mulato* or *mestizo*, were generally applied to basic combinations of Spaniard and African and Spaniard and Amerindian, but depending on the country further derivations of these types maybe named differently. Therefore in Mexico, a Spaniard and *Mulata* would be a *Morisco*, whereas in Cuba this combination could result in either another *Mulato* or *Pardo* because the term *Morisco* is specific to Mexico.

All derivations of the racial classification system were stratified with perceived dark complexions at the bottom of the hierarchy and perceived light complexions at the top. A correlation between color and socio-economic status also existed in that dark-skinned individuals, those at the bottom of the hierarchy, were also associated with lower status. Light skinned individuals were more likely to be at the top of the social and racial hierarchy.

Socio-economic positions in the color hierarchy were developed and determined as a consequence of plantation economies and their relationship to power and subordination (Maingot 1994). These systems, flexible and unlike the dichotomous color caste system found in the United States, allowed individuals to make vertical moves in the color hierarchy dependent on social status, whereas, in the United States position in the hierarchy was circumscribed for life. Due to the flexibility of these systems a largely phenotypic concept of classification arose primarily based on physical appearance more so than ancestry. Thus a child's classification was

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[21] Offspring of an Amerindian and African.

independent from its parent's. For example if a child was born and appeared Caucasian, regardless of the classification of their parent s/he would be classified as white.

<u>History of *racial*/color categorization in Cuba</u>

Cuban color classification, while sharing its basic tenets with the types of classification found in mainland Latin America, is most similar to those forms that evolved in the Caribbean under the following conditions: enslavement,[22] the lack of a large native population, and the principal actors being of African and European descent.

Racial classification in Cuba went through several changes that loosely correspond to the different economic systems that developed throughout the history of Cuba. Classification is seen as undergoing four distinct structural changes. During times of change, an overlap in the structure of classification existed because of shifts in its use became accepted by the populous and recognized by the state. Structural changes in classification determined the manner in which classification terms were accepted or rejected by the system. The census demonstrates these structural changes in classification, while shifts are visible in the instances where competing terms existed and official terminology changed over time. For example, in the 1846 census one section uses the terms *blancos* (white), *pardos* (brown), and *morenos* (black) while another section uses the competing terms *blancos*, *mulatos* (brown) and *negros* (black). The competing terms were included for the mixed race (*pardo* and *mulato*) and black (*moreno* and *negro*) categories. Each modification in the structure of terminology was associated with a corresponding transformation in Cuba's economic system. This resulted as the system struggled to express and differentiate free or enslaved status. This close association between the economic and color classification system relates with the linkages between the economic exploitation of the labor force and the concurrent social status of that labor source.

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[22] Who could be enslaved and who had been enslaved was a major determinant of socio-economic status.

Further modification of classification came about during Colonialism. During the colonial period, there were two economic systems in operation: plantation and post plantation economy. Modification of color classification occurred in four separate periods. The first occurred after the Haitian Revolution with the advent of increased sugar production and the expansion of the sugar plantation. The revolution sent shock waves through slave plantation society when free blacks and mulattos united with their enslaved brethren in a bloody coup and ruthlessly wrested control of the country from the ruling white minority. White survivors of the rebellion fled to parallel plantation societies like Cuba and spread the fear that similar violence reoccur in other slave societies where blacks were the majority. With this major historical occurrence we observe how resultant fixed social mobility led to the linkage between color, status, and occupation. The second modification occurred after Emancipation and with the introduction of indentured laborers. During this time the new laborers were rationalized into the system through absorption into the existing categories rather than the creation of additional separate categories because it maintains the tripartite nature of state classification. The third modification occurred under Capitalism and incorporated the time of a completely free wage market society up to the 1959 Cuban Revolution. At this point classification in Cuba most closely resembles the system in Brazil in that those with wealth had access to lighter classification terms regardless of actual color. The final modifications to transpire are recent and have occurred under Socialism and the Castro regime. In this stage there is a modification in the hierarchy so that ideological "brownness" replaces "whiteness" in importance. Visible within each phase are the distinct meanings and characteristics associated with the color descriptors used in racial categorization reflecting societal values and attitudes.

Distinct modes of classification in Cuba can be further analyzed based on formal and informal modes of classification. The formal mode is defined and recognized by the state through legal and administrative means of classification. Racial classification was first legitimized in the formal sphere by three different sources: the church, the state, and the plantation. The first two sources addressed legal definitions and statuses while the last dealt with

social conditions. The system of classification was developed by the colonizers as a formal means of stratifying the population because it allowed them to maintain control. The informal mode is the acknowledgement, use, and expansion of the formal use of classification terms by the popular consciousness. This dialogue, between the state and its citizens, is what creates the lived reality of classification.

The Era of Conquest and Colonization

Cuba's long history of population mixture and color classification begins with the Amerindians who were the native inhabitants of the island. These Amerindians consisted of the Ciboney, the Arawak, and the Caribs (MacGaffey 1962:33). In 1511 the island of Cuba was forcibly taken from these Amerindians groups by the Spanish. At this point in the development of the classification system, a biological form of lineal descent predominated.

Military not agricultural reasons motivated the settlement of the island. Cuba was important because its geographical location was considered advantageous in protecting Spain's interests in the New World. Under explicit orders from the Queen of Spain, the colonists were prohibited to enslave Amerindians with the exception to this was to be made for the "troublemakers" who resisted the Spaniards. These rebels who were not outright killed became prisoners of war and were enslaved. The system of enforced labor in which the Amerindians were obliged to participate was de facto slavery because they were never compensated for their labors (Claypole 1989). Due to harsh conditions, exposure to European diseases, and the atrocities and cruelties committed against them by their colonizers many Amerindians were decimated. By 1550 the surviving Amerindians were officially declared free and could be found in small enclaves on the east end of the island. Although these populations existed they were not officially acknowledged.

The first population mixtures that took place in Cuba after European arrival occurred between Amerindian women and Spaniard men.[23] As elsewhere in Latin America, this intimate sexual contact occasionally led to marriage but mostly it did not. These unions resulted in "racially" mixed children called *mestizos*. Unlike other Spanish colonies, several factors contributed to the lack of elaborate classification based on Amerindian and Spaniard interactions in Cuba. A primary factor was that the Amerindian population had dwindled so drastically within forty years of the conquest that Africans were introduced as laborers in an attempt to prevent the total extinction of the Amerindians, and more importantly, to replace the labor force they represented (Humboldt 1856:235). Minimal intermingling transpired between these two groups because the rapid decimation of the Amerindian population prohibited recovery and stymied reproduction, even with the unwanted assistance of their conquerors (Humboldt 1856:233). The scant mixing that did occur under these circumstances was absorbed into the Spaniard population and these small numbers of first generation *mestizos* were accepted and labeled as Spaniards (MacGaffey 1962).

The introduction of Africans to Cuban soil began as early as 1501. The first enslaved Africans were called *ladinos*[24] and the trade of these *ladino* slaves was restricted to only those who had converted to Christianity (Williams 1971:41). As early as 1534, Cuban officials were requested as many as 7,000 Africans to replace the Amerindian labor force (Humboldt 1856:235). These enslaved *ladinos* were brought to the colonies for two reasons: first, they came as the domestic servants of white European settlers, and/or to replace the Amerindian labor force working in the mines and agriculture. With the removal of the restrictions limiting slave importation of Christianized Africans, the slave trade began in earnest with enslaved Africans being imported directly from Africa. Once the slave trade opened up, Africans were differentiated by whether or not they were Christian: *ladinos* or savage: *bozales.*

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[23] MacGaffey 1962:33. Also see what is said on pg. 34 about how the Indians were assimilated due to the scarcity of Spanish women and the resultant mixed marriages.
[24] Christianized Africans who spoke Spanish.

During this time was sporadic European immigration into Cuba. The level of difficulty in maintaining settlers on the island and keeping it populated was so high that the settlers were threatened with death if they attempted to leave (Hall 1971:8). The introduction of Africans to the island sparked the creation of color classification. Unlike elsewhere in Latin America, terms like *zambo*, which referred to mixes between Amerindians and Africans, did not develop because mixing between the African and Amerindian populations was so insignificant. By the time the bulk of the Africans had arrived and settled in Cuba, the Amerindian population was practically extinct.[25]

In terms of mortality rates, Africans replacing the Amerindian labor force did not fare any better than their Amerindian brethren. Their slight advantage in survival, from previous exposure and resistance to Old World diseases, was nullified because they were treated equally cruelly thus their death rates were just as high. The difference between the two groups was in the ability of the colonists to replenish the African labor force when they became victims of the harsh conditions they were subjected to, whereas the Amerindians were limited in supply and could not be replaced. The combination of enslavement and the plantation society that emerged with increased sugar production possibly shaped and founded the Cuban color continuum and early race relations in Cuba.

During the early part of the conquest, European settlers in Cuba lived on small cattle and tobacco ranches. At this point, and up until the first half of the eighteenth century, the number of enslaved Africans in Cuba was small because most of the production on the island was done on a small scale for internal consumption. For the early settlers, the predominant source of financial gain was found in the tobacco and cattle markets (Knight 1970:4). Many of the early farmers and ranchers worked side by side with their enslaved laborers cultivating the tobacco and raising the cattle. This blurred the distinction between enslaved labor and "free" labor. At this point, the large plantations that were to be characteristic of Cuban society did not yet exist (Knight

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[25] The available early census records had no terms to identify Amerindians so for all intents and purposes they did not exist legally.

1970:4). Eventually this would change with the massive importation of enslaved Africans for sugar production, however during this early period in Cuban history there was no clear association between race and occupation. Race relations at this time were comparatively less brutal than they would become due to the lack of economic stimulus on the island. Once sugar became a major export of the island this would completely change.

The early mode of classification, as it existed, was based on the concept of race as a line of descent, as such it had descriptors which included terms for whites (*blancos*), blacks (*negros*), and the offspring of the two which was *mulato*. The only term to designate Amerindians was *indio* but at that point Amerindians were not a viable aspect of the population.[26] Additionally several terms which specifically addressed a lineal rendering of descent abounded. These terms included the following: *mestizo*,[27] *cuaterón* (quadroon),[28] *saltatrás* (jump back from white),[29] *quinterón* (Quintroon),[30] and *ochavón* (Octoroon).[31] All of these designations, "scientifically" constructed and concerned with taxonomy, concentrated on determining to the nth degree the quantity of African and European "blood."

The Plantation Era

In the late 18th century, this mode of classification was to be modified with the precipitation of the Haitian Revolution. Under the cloud of the Haitian Revolution, Cuba entered into a mode of classification in which race was essentialized and linked with social status. In this mode a "society of castes"(Mörner 1967:53) evolved. Skin color became the major determinant of class and social status but race and color became linked with social condition. Ideas of innate racial

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[26] Humboldt 1855. Humboldt shows that Amerindians were considered to be extinct as early as 1539.

[27] Offspring of white and a black (*mulato*). Stephens 1999:154

[28] "Offspring of white 75% and mulatto 25%. Offspring of white and mestizo. Mulato with good, not kinky hair." Stephens 1999:89

[29] "Offspring of quadroon and a mulatto; person whose parents are apparently white but whose recessive traits identify him or her as having black anccestry. / Offspring of a cuaterón and a mulato; person whose skin color approaches that of a black." Stephens 1999:224

[30] "Offspring of a mestizo and a quadroon." Stephens 1999:214

[31] "Octoroon. Offspring of a white and a quadroon. / Offspring of a white and a cuaterón de negro/ Offspring of two Quadroons." Stephens 1999:191

inferiority and superiority began to surface, leading to three major societal transformations. The first was an increase in the importation of enslaved Africans to Cuba as sugar production intensified to affect the slack left by the Haitian revolution. The second dealt with the emancipation of the enslaved Africans. The third transformation involved the importation of Chinese and Yucatecan Amerindians to replenish the anticipated labor deficit from black emancipation.

Up until the Haitian Revolution, Santo Domingo had been a dominant force in the sugar market. The Haitian Revolution had a widespread affect on the entire Caribbean but particularly Cuba. An immediate effect was Cuba's conversion from small scale agricultural production and ranching to large scale sugar production designed to meet the demand disrupted by the revolt in Santo Domingo. Cuba easily engaged in the sugar export market because of the space left by Santo Domingo's conversion into Haiti and many of the fleeing sugar planters from Haiti immigrated into Cuba, bringing with them their specialized knowledge of large scale sugar production.

These planters also brought with them a harsher view of how enslaved Africans should be treated. The rise in sugar production in Cuba led to a change in race relations because as the demand for laborers grew it became necessary for the massive importation of enslaved Africans. This increased occurred despite the fear of becoming another Haiti. This change made the racial categories more fixed and less fluid than before. Under this new society slavery, blackness and class were linked in a way that they had not been before. The relationship between color, labor and class became set. Whites were on top, mulattos in the middle and blacks at the bottom of the hierarchy. With the increase of the enslaved black population there was also an urgent need to control this numerous and unwilling labor force.

During this period, because tensions between Africans and Spaniards were high, to prevent another serious slave revolt, strict measures were adopted to maintain control over the unwilling labor pool and an effort was made to increase white immigration. The resultant tensions would determine and affect Cuban politics throughout the rest of the century. Slavery under these new

conditions became even more brutal. The average life expectancy of a slave on a sugar plantation was 3-5 years. Instead of preventing a slave revolt, these conditions fueled the atmosphere of rebellion and increased the number of insurgencies and runaways. Maroon societies, which were communities of ex-slaves who had run away, formed on the eastern half of the island as the enslaved sought to escape their bonds.

Cuba also wanted to be perceived as a whiter nation, even though the ratio of Africans to whites was not favorable for that impression. They hoped a whiter image would prevent investors from withdrawing because of perceived socio-political instability from the potentially explosive racial tensions. The fear of the African population grew in direct proportion to the disproportionate amount of blacks to whites on the island. This fear would grip white Cubans and maintain its hold long after emancipation, and delayed Cuban independence because of the fear that a black run state would emerge.

Color classes

The colonial Cuban population contained many divisions and statuses that defined colonial society (Mörner 1967:54). Some of the divisions included: native born vs. foreign born, landowner vs. legislator, slave vs. free, urban vs. rural, black vs. white. Both Africans and Europeans were classified and divided by birthplace. White Cubans were divided into two groups, the *Pennisulares* and *Criollos*. The *Pennisulares* were born in Spain and controlled the government while maintaining close ties with the motherland. The *Criollos* were born on the island and tended to be landowners. Birthplace also determined to a large extent political affiliation. *Pennisulares* politically identified with the motherland and *Criollos* with the colony. A further breakdown of white Cubans consisted of those landless Cubans who either managed property or worked for other property owners. Within the whole system itself, white Cubans were at the top of the social ladder. The internal division of the white population put the *Pennisulares* on top, followed by the property owning *Criollos*, and finally the landless *Criollos*.

The African population contained even more divisions and categories than their white counterpart because it followed the divide and conquer rule. The more divisions that could be imposed upon the enslaved population, the less likely they were to unite against the ruling minority. In Cuba, Africans were divided into three categories: *bozal*, *ladino*, or *criollo*. A *Criollo* was also an African who was born on the island. Further divisions included the all important differences of being enslaved or free, black or mulatto, landowner (of which there were few) and landless. In terms of status, Africans status was parallel to that of the Whites. *Criollos* were better regarded than *ladinos,* and *ladinos were* better regarded than *bozales* who had the least amount of status among Afro-Cubans.

The society was defined as one of castes but this was a misnomer as it more closely resembled a class system where possibilities to move vertically between the castes existed. The different castes were based on several dichotomous divisions that occurred within Caribbean colonial society (Mörner 1967). European born (*pennisulares*) or African born (*bozales*) vs. American born (*criollos*), civilized vs. savage, master vs. slave, European vs. African. Between these groups there were mixed "raced" progeny, which at first were absorbed into the parental groups until they became a large enough constituency and then formed their own separate category. As we can see with the *Código Negro Carolino*, Cuban society was deliberately structured so as to employ a divide and conquer strategy because the Europeans were the numerically smaller group. Although color could not change, class classification could shift even if the negative status of color followed.

The *Código Negro Español* of 1789 (Hall 1971:103) was a law from the Burbon Reform but never put into effect in Cuba, yet it was known to the administrators of Cuba. This legislation established rules and regulations for the treatment of the enslaved population and was banned from being published for fear that the enslaved peoples would rebel. This code was an adaptation of the 1785 *Código Negro Carolino* established and sent to Santo Domingo. This mandate legally created a pigmentocracy (Mörner 1967:54) to maintain and control the population of color. It legally established the combinations of racial mixture necessary for the

racially mixed to revert or become "white." This was true for Santo Domingo and the same administrators ruled over Cuba. The difference between the two was that in Cuba the black population did not exceed the white population.

It was under these conditions that ethnicity and race started to be subsumed by color as an identity marker. All Europeans, regardless of class and birth origin, were united by white color. This whiteness had social power which could only be obtained indirectly by Africans through their children from sexual liaisons with whites. Color and being the right shade was all important. In this way, the concept of whitening spread among the African population, in that it represented the delayed gratification of the parental generation with the hope that the subsequent generations could benefit from racial mixing.

Two correlations based on color began to emerge in Cuban society. The first was the negative association of blackness with slavery and whiteness with freedom. Regardless of socio-economic status whites as a group were all free. Mulattos or lighter skinned blacks had greater access to freedom than their darker skinned compatriots because their white fathers tended to grant them their freedom. Though this was not always the case, it did contribute to creating a substantial part of the large free class of mulattos. The second correlation was the economic association of manual labor and enslavement with low socio-economic status and blackness. This did not occur until after the sugar revolution took place and white Cubans became disassociated with manual labor and all labor of this type was done by slaves.

Amongst the black population there was a distinction between enslaved and free that became largely associated with skin color. The lighter in skin color, the higher the possibility that the associative conditions of slavery would be removed. There was also a further division between urban domestic labor and rural field labor. Urban areas were seen as providing more freedom of movement and access to freedom than the rural areas. Free blacks also found work mostly in urban centers where their skills and abilities were needed since whites shunned manual labor.

Under the pressure of these divisions, color classification was firmly established as the primary form of division in Cuban society. There were at least four ways in which classification

was executed. Individuals were classified officially, by the state, the church, and the plantation; or informally in the street or home. Official classifications, which I base on the census categories, demonstrate that the government recognized the categories of white, mulatto, and black despite the existence of other categories. Mulattos and blacks were further sub-divided based on whether they were enslaved or free.

Of the three official means of codifying color terminology, the first utilized the slave registry to determine classification based on plantation owners perceptions. In their records they designated whether a slave was *criollo*, *bozal*, or *ladino*, and further classified the enslaved African based on a color category. In this way it was determined or recorded if the enslaved should be considered black or mulatto. How Africans and their descendants were perceived by the plantation registry could determine their eligibility for various occupations on the plantation. The worth and price of an individual was also based on the category assigned. The plantation established the conditions of slavery and the rules that were to be adhered to. Those assessed as mulattos were more likely to be assigned domestic tasks than those labeled black. Either position possessed its advantages and disadvantages. Those labeled black and assigned to field labor experienced the brutality of intense physical labor that led to an extremely shortened lifespan. Due to their close physical proximity those labeled mulatto and who worked in the house, were more vulnerable to the sexual advances of whites.

The colonial government reified color classification through legal documents and the census but the institution most responsible for reifying color classification was the church. The church's system of registries helped to further codify and reify color classification by maintaining records denoting color. This classification was ascribed from the top down. Categorizations were imposed, recognized, and legitimized by the ruling authority.

The classification system that had developed by this point had both legal and social consequences. One's legal status could be higher or lower than one's social status. Legal status, primarily defined by the state through the census, consisted of legal documents or court actions. The church augmented this status through parish registries, baptismal, marriage, and death

certificates. The church divided the population into three groups, *blanco* (white), *pardo* (mulatto), and *moreno* (black) each with a corresponding registry (Martinez-Alier 1974:72). The church's authority and accuracy in defining race could be challenged and superseded by the government's classification (Knight 1974:208). Church classifications were not always perceived as legitimate by the state. Several methods of declaring race were applied to church registries which could gain a whiter or higher "white" status for interracial children. White fathers often registered their mixed raced children in the white baptismal registry and omitted the black mother's name (Martinez-Alier 1974). Similar to the church, the state also separated the population into three groups: *blancos*, *pardos*, and *morenos*. Legal "whiteness" could also be obtained through the courts by petition. The state also registered foundlings as white, though in some cases, their "whiteness" was called into doubt and there were reprimands issued about the legality of giving foundlings white status (Martinez-Alier 1974). Although legal "whiteness" was granted to the Chinese and Yucatecan laborers, socially these laborers were accorded the same social status as blacks (Martinez-Alier 1974:77).

Though officially the population was divided into three categories, further subdivisions and more elaborate terms were informally used. Based on the elementary tripartite division of the population, a social caste system evolved in which the population was "classified and restricted economically and socially within the group to which they had been assigned"(Levine 1980:128). These restrictions included differential access to education and career options. Marriage across caste, particularly black and white, was very difficult and at times prohibited. Those in the white caste needed to obtain permission to marry those in the mulatto or black caste. Both legal and social forms of discrimination occurred against the lower castes (Mörner 1967:65). These same prohibitions did not always apply to other castes when whites were not involved.

The social caste system in the latter years of colonialism was based on color. Position in the system, determined by socio-economic status, led to differential access to opportunities. Elaborate rules were devised to determine the clothing and jewelry that each caste was allowed to wear or own (Hall 1971). Whites were at the top of the hierarchy, followed by free mulattos,

then free blacks, and finally mulatto and black slaves. Slavery was further stigmatized and associated inferiority with skin color. Being white meant freedom and gaining whiteness was part of the process of eradicating the stigma of slavery.

Pigmentocracy/ Whitening

With the advent of an increase in degree and type of admixture the threshold of the social castes system was breeched and it collapsed and morphed into a pigmentocracy (Mörner 1967:54). A pigmentocracy is a form of categorization in which skin pigmentation or color predominates in the classification. In this form, certain skin complexions were given more status than others. Within the pigmentocracy was an ideology of whiteness in which white and light skin tones were favored and had more value than brown, black and dark tones. This system emerged because the social caste system became too bulky and complex to manage all of the admixtures and categories that arose from multiple admixtures.

These diverse modes of classification emerged in stages. Eventually these stages would overlap and become less precise and more ambiguous. At first, classification in Cuba was based an individual's genotype or the status of the parents. As it developed, classification in Cuba became less based on parentage or genotype, which is what the caste system represented, and more based on appearance or phenotype/sociotype. In researching color classification in colonial Cuba, Martinez-Alier (1974) found a system in which at least twelve types of distinctions were made, nine applied to free people of color and three were accorded to those who were enslaved. Amongst the free people of color, categorization depended on the individual's skin color, the skin color of the parents, and the individuals status (slave or free) and how far removed from slavery one was. The following is a list of the categories she reported:

pardo,[32] white on one side, free born
pardo, white on one side, ex-slave
pardo on both sides, freeborn
pardo on both sides, ex-slave

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[32] Mulatto

chino, freeborn
chino, ex-slave
moreno[33] criollo, freeborn
moreno criollo, ex-slave
moreno de nación, ex-slave

In addition there were three categories for the enslaved:

pardo slave
moreno criollo slave
moreno de nación slave

As discussed before, the extensive records of different racial types were mainly stored and maintained by the church. These records were considered important in maintaining the social order because physical appearance could be misleading in determining a person's status. Records on parentage were kept to try and prevent blacks from "passing" or crossing over into whiteness. Color status was vital in determining access to opportunities; people went to great lengths to get their status and their children's changed. As mentioned before, a change in color status could only occur if the person already possessed the right complexion and wanted to be legally elevated to "real" whiteness.   This process involved ascribing terms which legally indicated white skinned without black heritage.

The conjugal status of one's parents was also an important determinant of status. The legitimacy of the mulatto population was always in question because the majority of the mulatto population was created through illicit unions outside of the marriage bed. This created a belief that to be mulatto was to be illegitimate and the ability to prove one's legitimacy added to one's credibility and status.

With the advent of emancipation, new forms of discrimination were introduced and designed to maintain the position of Afro Cubans as a captive labor force. Under the guise of preparing them for a trade, Afro Cuban laborers were forced to become apprentices and required to work without remuneration for a mandatory number of years. By the time the Chinese and Yucatecan Indians entered Cuba the color caste system was well established. This meant that their position

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[33] Negro

and status would have to be newly created or absorbed into the pre existing categories. The matter was resolved by categorizing all non African laborers brought into Cuba as white (Knight 1970:116). This provided the indentured servants with elevated legal status but socially and economically they were equal with blacks. Their black social status was demonstrated by the lack of legislative restrictions leveled against them in terms of intermarriage with blacks in comparison to European derived whites (Martinez-Alier 1974). Though legally the Chinese and Amerindians were not enslaved, they endured many of the same dehumanizing conditions of the enslaved blacks. Although legally white, many of the Yucatecan Amerindians who were in Oriente (the Eastern half of the island) were registered by church officials in the books for *pardos* (mulattos) and *morenos* (blacks) (Martinez-Alier 1974:80). Their contradictory classification between church and state further indicates their social blackness.

Although on the census Amerindian indentured workers were classified as white, the state determined their legal social status to be *pardo* (light-skinned mulatto). *Pardo* and *chino* (Chinese) were both terms in existence before the arrival of the Chinese and Amerindian workers. *Pardo* was expanded to include Amerindians who were considered to be a light shade of brown. *Chino*, priorly used as a reference to blacks, was expanded to include the Chinese indentured laborers (Ortiz 1975). With the arrival of these indentured laborers old terms were incorporated and infused with new meaning. In both cases the prior meaning and definition of the terms became conflated with a meaning designed to be both representative and inclusive of the newly immigrant population. Inscribed within color classification was the development of an essentialized concept of racial superiority and inferiority in which racial type was perceived to determine moral and intellectual capacities.

The classification system in this phase looked very similar to its previous state with the exception of some modifications in meaning. The following terms circulated at this point in history: *blanco, pardo, mulato, moreno, negro, mestizo, chino, cuaterón, saltatrás, quinterón, and ochavón*. Remnants of a conceptual linear form of descent are evident with the use of the last four terms. The initial seven terms could be found in formal settings and would survive to

the next phase of classification, the others *cuaterón*, *saltatrás*, *quinterón*, and *ochavón* would not. These divisions by "genetic" percentage were no longer useful because it was extremely difficult, with the extent of admixture that had occurred, to physically impart a person's precise percentage of admixture without knowing their family history.

In the 19th century the majority of these terms remained on the books. A shift in definition took place for some terms and others became obsolete after emancipation and enslavement were no longer major determinants of status. Classification at this point took on an altered cognitive role. These terms later developed into important expressions of socio-economic status.

The Era of Capitalism

Under capitalism, which followed emancipation, the terms that had been implicit references to enslaved or free status disappeared from the formal setting; yet the ghost of enslavement remained in the low status accorded to the recently freed. In addition, classification became even more rigid under the influence of the U.S. military and its occupation in 1898 and 1906. At the time the public education system was not segregated but the private high schools would only rarely admit a person of color, even if there was money to pay the school fees (Helg 1990:53). Although the discrimination against people of color did not reach the levels it did in the United States, as codified by the Jim Crow laws, segregation and discrimination abounded socially. In an effort to physically whiten the appearance of Cuba, the U.S. imposed a law in 1902 which "prohibited Chinese immigration and restricted that of nonwhites" (Helg 1990:54). Cuba itself also sought to use legislative policy to whiten its population through the Law of Immigration and Colonization of 1906. Previously, in the 1840s, it sought to increase its white population through the recruitment of white immigrants from the Canary Islands (Helg 1990:54).

This influx of white immigration and restriction of non-white populations, particularly those from neighboring Caribbean islands, was part of the process of blanquiemiento (whitening). This process was further justified in the Afro Cuban community through the concept of "*adelantar la raza*" (advancing the race). Part of this process involved the selection of mates

73

based on the lightness of their skin color so that resultant children increased their possibility of being lighter colored than the darkest parent.

At this stage, the pigmentocracy was still greatly influenced by wealth because it could buy social whiteness. Though money and social position could overcome social blackness, black skin color could never truly disappear. Even the light-skinned *mulato* president of the country, Batista, was excluded from one of the top white social clubs despite his high political office. His lack of "full" whiteness left him vulnerable to the public snub. Although he had a considerable degree of social whiteness he was still not white enough for club. The differences between black and mulatto were fluid, yet mulattos' lighter-skin color enabled them to fare better overall than blacks.

Color alone could not effectively change status, wealth was the necessary ingredient. Class determined status in this time period. A wealthy black would likely be considered mulatto because of his economic status. Yet a poor mulatto, due to his impoverished condition, was more likely perceived as black. Regardless of economic status and the ability to modify one's classification, one could never overcome physical blackness. Thus, a rich mulatto failed to supplant the physical whiteness of a poor white. Cuba has moved from this phase into another that has allowed it to become the new model for racial democracy.

The Era of Socialism and Castro

The current phase of color classification, which is being investigated in this study, formed under the influence of socialist theory. Subtle but dynamic social changes occurred in classification. As a major factor in negotiating color categories, actual wealth is no longer used. Symbolic wealth of culture and education replace it as important determinants in negotiating class categories. Therefore, those who are well educated, rather than wealthy, may advance in the system. What is a move up in the classification system has been modified, but it still depends on context. One major modification is that whiteness is no longer the ultimate goal when negotiating identity.

The concept of "advancing the race" through whitening still operates, though it is muted by the ideology of *mulatez*[34] which ranks terms associated with brownness as the ideal color. As the social context in which classification operates is modified the meaning of the terms shift to adapt to the change. This conceptual shift reorganized the color hierarchy with shades of brown at the top and though black is still at the bottom, it is now more desirable and sometimes advantageous to be able to claim blackness.

This is represented through the symbolism of national identity which incorporates and exploits the concept of *mulatez* as the emblem of Cuba. In conjunction with the fluidity of color classification the emblem allows for Cubans to meet at the juncture of *mulatizaje* and participate in blackness regardless of placement in the classification system. The folklore surrounding *mulatizaje* also increased the viability of a *mulatizaje* identity. Particularly important are the semantic similarities in the words *mulato* and *mestizo* in Cuba. When *mestizo* is used it is expressed as a euphemism for *mulato*. Many of my informants did not distinguish between the two terms and used them indiscriminately and interchangeably.

Color terminology as it exists today in Cuba functions on two systemic levels, the formal and informal. Official classification is controlled by the state but informed by the popular consciousness. Informal classification is harnessed by the state but defined by the popular consciousness. These modes of classification are not separate but complimentary and interconnected.   It is informal classification that feeds and defines formal classification, promulgated by the agents or other representatives of the state who use their informal knowledge (gained in the home) to frame and perpetuate the state form of classification. This is a particularly salient point since formal training is not provided within the framework of state identification.

Color terminology, or what I call pigmentology, arose from the significance placed on color and appearance in colonial society. Pigmentology is a system of terms which uses color or

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34 Mulatez is the process mulattoization.

degree of melanin as a primary basis of classification along with hair texture and facial features as secondary characteristics to further classify people into colored groups loosely based on shared phenotype. Classification transformed as race and ethnicity became submerged under color as a classificatory method. Reasons for this change include: the association of freedom with whiteness or light color, and economic status used to renegotiate classification terms. This process began in slave plantation societies in the Americas through the dual processes of assimilation and dehumanization. Ethnic groups of Europeans and Africans were assimilated into a pigmentocracy, which allowed for color to subordinate ethnic and biological classifications in determining socio-economic position. Thus all those of European descent, Spaniards, Greeks, Poles, etc. were all assimilated into a common whiteness under the *blanco* designation. All those of Africans descent, Congolese, Carabalí, Yoruba, etc. were absorbed into the *negro* designation. Skin pigmentation became a major determinant of position in society in such a way as to be likened to a caste system. White and light colors were at the top, brown complexions in the middle, and dark complexions at the bottom. These associations evolved into a symbiotic relationship between skin pigmentation and socio-class status.

Because whiteness was associated with freedom, those who had access to it had an inborn social currency of whiteness unlike those of dark skinned African descent. Blackness represented a loss of social status because of its relationship with enslavement. Whiteness was equated with elevated social status because of its relationship with freedom. Thus, while a black person could be free no "real" white person could ever be a slave. Negative status was attached to blackness and positive status attached to whiteness. To "*adelantar la raza*" or "advance the race," was the process of becoming whiter not only physically but culturally through strategic intimate relations with those of a lighter skin hue or higher economic position in society.

Once, skin color superceded race and ethnicity as relevant factors in society the terms used to describe color came to have the dual identity of both racial designators and color descriptors. The racial designators were loosely based on genotype and the color descriptors were based on phenotype. The different meanings of these terms merged over time so that *mulato*, as a color

descriptor meant brown skinned; which was the median color between the black and white parents. These terms because of their connection to social status, also evolved to determine the negative or positive social, class, and economic status of those belonging to certain categories. Mainly the positive association was connected with whiteness and the negative with blackness. The few exceptions to this rule were most often called mulattos.

The current terminology found in classification is the product of the efforts to categorize and classify humans using race or color and it remained a salient form of identification to the present day. To define the current form of classification on the level of the state, census records, *carnet* booklets, and medical personnel were used to identify and construct the past and present terminology. To uncover how classification is arranged in the popular consciousness, I conducted interviews, pilesorts, and devised several different questionnaires.

The following chapter arranges classification into a cognitive map to clearly outline the context in which color terminology operates. The differences in ascribed formal and informal classification are also outlined and compared. Furthermore, fluidity and flexibility of color classification is illustrated through an in-depth examination of the function and meaning of specific color terms.

Chapter Three: Terms of Classification

In Cuba, there are two predominant forms of classification that operate in tandem. The first is the overarching formal or state form of classification, implemented and structured by the government; the second is the informal or popularly perceived form of classification, which is part of the internal Cuban psyche. This chapter focuses on these various forms of color ascription.

At the level of the state, formal color classification resembles a triad because it revolves around three historic social groups. In formal ascription only a select terms are employed to assign membership to these set groups. These terms determine where the boundaries of formal classification are set. Validation of classification is attained through the repeated employment of certain terms found in official documents, such as, police records, identification booklets, employment and school records, and the census. These documents and the agencies that utilize them shape the government's definition of classification through the terminology employed in the language of categorization. Within these documents the state recognizes and divides Cubans into a minimum of three and a maximum of four basic categories. These categories are white (*blanco*), mixed[35] (*mestizo/mulato*), black (*negro*), and Asian (*asiatico*).

In the following, I will examine three important spheres in which formal classification transpires: the census, the *carnet* (identification booklet), and the medical establishment. All three of these mediums identify, ascribe, and organize people into color categories. It is most commonly through these agencies that the state authenticates and codifies its position in terms of color classification.

<u>Settings</u>

The Census

Melissa Nobles (2000) and Jack Forbes (1993) have both argued that the census is not just a passive tabulation of statistical data but rather a complex, politically sensitive document that not

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[35] The mixed category is comprised of two separate terms.

only reflects but helps to form the categories of difference that mold perceptions in any given society. Their in-depth investigations of the U.S. and Brazilian censuses revealed the subtle importance of census categories in creating the racial world or reflecting the racial climate. Reviewing the census in Cuba is pertinent because it represents the image of race that Cuba wants to present to the outside world as well as the government's statistical framework of race and classification. This agency of the government, as well as the other two mediums of classification, assigns categories with little or no input from the individual being classified. The government considers its form of subjectivity to be more objective than the individual's subjective judgment of themselves.

An overview of the census records reveals that the Cuban population has formally been divided into three overarching social groups: *blanco*, *negro*, and mixed (*mulato/mestizo*). These three groups and the language surrounding them are the basis of Cuban pigmentology. The first group was broadly categorized as *blanco*. This category was comprised of people considered to be *blancos* (whites) who were initially Spaniards but subsequently included other Europeans and people socially defined as white. The second overarching category was comprised of people labeled as *negros* (blacks) who were originally Africans, but subsequently included African descendant peoples from other areas of the Caribbean. The third overarching category was for people who had phenotypic characteristics of the first two groups and they were labeled as the *mulato/mestizo* group, initially the result of the intermingling between the first two groups, but presently representing a variety of cultural, social, and physical mixtures. These three broad categories have been employed consistently over time, but as the official definition of race shifts to accommodate changing ideologies, so has official ascription of membership into each group.

Different political and historic time periods had different boundaries and requirements of social group membership. After the Haitian Revolution in 1790, it was important for Cuba and other Caribbean slave societies to "whiten" their population because "whiteness" demonstrated political stability and control of the enslaved masses, while "blackness" was concurrent with rebellion and strife and a challenge to the control of European powers. Whitening the population

also meant expanding the definition of whiteness to be more inclusive of other people who had previously belonged to other phenotypic groups. This process can be seen in the conflict between the legal and social definitions of whiteness. Martinez-Alier (1974) demonstrated how the legal and social definitions of color categorization in colonial Cuba determined group membership. She reviewed cases of people whose whiteness was legally challenged and who eventually were officially declared to be *mulatos/mestizos*. Conversely she also reports cases of people formally classified as *pardos*[36] who were legally declared white due to their elite social circumstances. The measurements employed to determine legal membership and access to these social groups have differed over time. Critical to membership and social access to colonial definitions of whiteness was social distance from the condition of slavery. The degree of distance translated into the amount of social respectability. Currently, the criterion for whiteness still includes social respectability in the form of education and participation in "high culture." The boundaries between each group are determined in large part by the degree of social and legal separation that exists between the groups. Thus the degree of flexibility and plasticity in membership is a reflection of race relations and perceived spatial distance between the groups.

The table that follows charts the formal divisions employed by the state for census collection. These historical divisions involved only three overarching categories: white, mixed race, and black and were in effect for over 100 years (until 1899) before a fourth Asian category, also expressed as *chino*, *amarillo* and *asiatico*, was established. The reason for the introduction of a fourth category was tied to the military occupation of Cuba by the United States and was a reflection of U.S. rather than Cuban racial ideology. The marginal position of this fourth category is reflected in its appearance and disappearance as a category on the census.

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[36] *Pardos* were part of the *mestizo/mulato* group.

Table 2: Census Terms

	Blancos	Chinos	Mulatos		Negros	
1774-1827	Blancos		Mulatos libres	Mulatos esclavos	Negros libres	Negros esclavos
1841	Blancos		Pardos libres	Pardos esclavos	Morenos libres	Negros esclavos
1846	Blancos		Pardos libres	Pardos esclavos	Morenos libres	Morenos esclavos
1846[37]	Blancos		Mulatos		Negros	
1861-1862	Blancos[38]		Pardos libres	Pardos esclavos	Negros libres	Negros esclavos
1899	Blancos	Chinos	Mestizos		Negros	
1919	Blancos[39]		Mestizos		Negros	
1943	Blancos	Amarillos	Mestizos		Negros	
1953	Blancos	Amarillos	Mestizos		Negros	
1970	Blancos	Amarillos	Mulatos		Negros	
1981	Blancos	Asiatico	Mulatos o Mestizos		Negros	
2002[40]	Blancos		Mulatos o Mestizos		Negros	

The important characteristics of classification that are captured on the pre-emancipation census differentiate between three shades of color and enslaved or free status. These were the important aspects of social and legal color distinction in colonial Cuba. From 1774 until 1827 the terms employed to describe these three categories were *blanco* (white), *mulato* (brown, mixed raced),[41] and *negro* (black). Though the above three terms were first chosen to represent these categories on the census their parallel terms of *pardo* for *mulato* and *moreno* for *negro* were also employed on subsequent censuses and in other official documents such as baptismal, marriage and death certificates (Martinez-Alier 1974). Enslavement and ancestral association with the condition of slavery was a bar from the *blanco* category while enslavement was practiced (Martinez-Alier 1974). However, black ancestry itself was not a bar from the *blanco* category if the person was sufficiently socially distant from the condition of slavery.

The use of specific terms on the census is significant because these terms are politically sensitive and represent the government perspective and the reigning social etiquette regarding classification. In the censuses from 1774 to 1827 the term *mulato* was used on the census to represent a person of mixed descent regardless of condition (enslaved or free). The same held true for the term *negro*. The usage of the terms changed in the 1841 census. This change was

[37] These were terms found in the footnotes and explanatory text of the census. See appendix D.
[38] This includes: Europeans, Asians, and Yucatecans.
[39] This includes Chinese
[40] Based on 2002 census form.
[41] Refers specifically to the offspring of one white and one black parent.

representative of the importance of the condition of freedom as social currency. During this time period, as the condition of the person altered, so did the color term used to classify him/her. In table 2 we see that in 1841 free people of African descent were classified as *morenos* whilst those enslaved were labeled as *negros*. Condition, in this case enslavement, impacted color status especially for those of darker skin tones. There was no term chane based on condition for the other two categories. There was also no shift in how the term *pardo*, another term which indicated African heritage, was used. With *pardo* the term was employed equally regardless of free or enslaved condition. Those who could be classified as *blanco* were legally and socially detached from the condition of slavery.

Colonial distinctions of social value and status revolved around three markers: freedom, slavery, and skin color. As such, the term *negro* was not only a marker of skin color but of the condition of slavery. The terms *pardo* and *mulato* were not only references to an intermediate skin color but to racial mixture, implied illegitimacy, and access to freedom (if not actual freedom because of their physical and familial association with whiteness). Children categorized as *mulato* and born to white mothers were automatically free because the child followed the condition of the mother. This was not the case with *mulato* children born to black women, many of whom were themselves slaves, because the children took on the enslaved status and condition of their mothers. In the cases where the fathers were white they were oftentimes in the position to confer freedom to their offspring. Martinez-Alier (1974) notes how many white fathers, in an effort to improve the social condition of their offspring, concealed the black mothers of their mixed raced children when their children were registered in the baptismal books of the church. In this manner, most *mulatos* due to their parentage had more access to whiteness than *negros*.

Moreno was a higher status term within the colonial context because it was associated with freedom and whiteness, not through descent, but rather through an implied social association and connection to whiteness and freedom. The term *negro* often implied pure African ancestry and less opportunity for and access to freedom. In was not just enslavement but the social "blackness" associated with the condition of slavery that was being recorded on the census.

Blackness and the term *negro* were firmly linked with slavery in a way that the term *moreno* was not. The association of *pardo* and *moreno* with freedom becomes apparent when we examine the terms used to declare and prove emancipation. Only the terms *pardo* and *moreno* were used on the official writs of freedom[42] which granted manumission from enslavement.

The first post-emancipation census in 1899 also reflects the social status associated with specific term usage. It was no coincidence that after enslavement ended *moreno* was no longer employed as an official term on the census. This official distinction in condition for dark-skinned individuals was no longer necessary. The terms *pardos* and *mulatos* were also abandoned in favor of the term *mestizo*, which made its debut appearance in this census. The use of *mestizo* in lieu of *pardo* and *mulato* is further evidence of an official disassociation of this category from blackness and slavery. *Mulato*, which specifically states African heritage, does not reappear as a census category again until after the Cuban Revolution when blackness was being lauded as a valuable part of Cuban identity.

Despite the many changes in terminology that occurred in the mixed race and black categories, in the formal articulation of the *blanco* category only one term has been employed officially despite its inclusion of phenotypically diverse members; including: Asians, Yucatecan Amerindians, and light-skinned blacks. This poses a contrast to the other overarching categories which have had more descriptive terms. Informally the *blanco* category has been less reserved and includes terms such as *trigueño, rubio,* and *castaño*. Though Asians and Amerindians were legally included in the white category, because of their indentureship, they were regarded as socially part of the *mulato/mestizo* or black category (Martinez-Alier 1974). Legal or social membership in the *blanco* category has generally indicated a disassociation with enslaved status and access to the privilege of "whiteness."

In contrast, the *negro* category was represented in formal classification colonially by two separate terms, both *negro* and *moreno*, of which only *negro* has survived presently as the

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[42] See appendix B

official term, while *moreno* has been relegated to the informal realm of classification. Other informal terms employed in the *negro* category include *negro colorado*, *negro azul*, and *moro*. When both terms were in official use their point of divergence in connotation was in association with enslaved or free status.

The "mixed race" category has been even more variable. In total three descriptors, *pardo*, *mulato*, and *mestizo* have had official recognition. The term *pardo* was dropped from the lexicon as both a formal and informal skin color classifier during the colonial era although presently it still appears when describing eye color. M*ulato* and *mestizo*, have competed with each other for official favor in Cuban documentation. Neither has achieved official favor as currently they are employed simultaneously as descriptors of this category. The similar cognitive employment of these terms masks their vastly different social connotations. Stephens (1989), found two definitions of *mestizo* in Cuba, one for colonial and one for the twentieth-century Cuba, in each case mulatto is given as the primary definition of the word. Despite the synonymous use of these two terms in Cuba the term *mestizo*, when used, implies a lighter, whiter physical result than does *mulato*.

Although the term *mestizo* was somewhat privileged in official usage, the term *mulato*, as a result of the pervasive national and historical symbolism it holds, remains the preferred designation in most colloquial usages and familiar settings. Its stubborn popularity marks a determination in the Cuban psyche to reclaim and acknowledge its African heritage. The presence of *mulato* on the past three censuses was also reflective of an official acknowledgement of the informal preference in use of *mulato* instead of *mestizo*. In informal classification there exist a profusion of terms that can be used to mark African heritage, such as *trigueño, capirro, jabao*, *jabao capirro*, *blanconazo*, and *mulato blanconazo*.

Though not expressed in table 2, the black and mixed categories on the census have sometimes been combined for statistical purposes under the rubric of "*gente de color*" (people of color). Despite the occasional fusion of these categories, people designated as *negros* and *mulatos* in Cuban society have had largely distinct social and political identities. The divergence

in perception between the U.S. and Cuban authorities is revealed by the inclusion of Asians in the "people of color" category under the U.S. occupation. This is contrasted by Cuban officials positioning Asians in the *Blanco* category both prior to and after the U.S. occupation. This manner of categorizing Asians in the *Blanco* category continues presently and a separate Asian category does not appear on the 2002 census.

Despite the occasional official recognition of an Asian category, it is the triad of *blanco*, *negro*, *mulato* that is uppermost in the Cuban psyche. The majority of the academic and political discourse on "race," both inside and outside of Cuba, focuses on these three groups. Therefore, Asians can be said to play a small but mostly marginalized role in the classification system, and as such they are contributors to but not at the core of the system.

The census clearly marks the formal degree of spatial separation between the three categories. Over time the census has demonstrated that in formal classification the boundaries between categories have became more flexible as the spatial distance between blackness and whiteness has lessened. The early addition of the term *mestizo* to the mixed category was an official attempt to disassociate this category from the *negro* category during a time when U.S. racial ideology was prevalent in Cuban census construction. The term *Mestizo* allowed dark-skinned whites or light-skinned blacks, depending on perspective, who were not acceptable "whites" to be enumerated in this category without a complete loss of social status. The steady increase in the "white" population and decrease in the "black" population marked by the census can be attributed to how whiteness and blackness are assigned in Cuba. The process of formal categorization on the census is passive. These categories were assigned by a third party and assignment of these categories reflects formal governmental ideology and is not a reflection of how the population perceives itself. The census thus is a reflection of ascription into formal group membership but is not a reflection of how the population itself chooses to identify.

The Carnet

The cornerstone of routine state identification can be found in the Cuban identification booklet or "*carnet de identidad*." This booklet is an internal passport that Cubans are required to carry at all times. At one point in the history of the *carnet*, the official position of the government held that race/color was not important. This ideological perspective is evident on earlier versions of the *carnet*, issued in the 1970s, which lack a section about or information regarding skin color. This position is also reflected on the 1970 census, in which the data on racial categories was collected but never tabulated. Later this perspective on the usefulness of color categories changed and these categories were reintroduced to the *carnets*. Information about color surfaces in the subsequent 1980 census and these statistics were collected and tabulated.

In the *carnets* race and color were wrapped together tightly into a single highly ambiguous entity. Four official classifying terms were employed but only three categorical distinctions were made. Among my informants nobody informally identified as Asian had a *carnet* which formally designated them as Asian. Three formal categories were distinguished through the employment of four identifying terms: *blanco*, *mulato/mestizo*, and *negro*. The categorization terms used in the *carnet* were not considered to be explicitly racial because the terms were found under the title: *color de piel* (skin color) and not "*raza*" (race). On the surface, the explanation of this section as just pertaining to descriptive skin color appears to be true because Cubans of Asian descent were often designated as white in their *carnets*.[1] It is the presence of *mestizo* as a *carnet* category that proves this explanation false and indicates how race is constructed and implicit within this skin color section.

According to my informants, *mestizo* was a term used to indicate racial mixture, be it between *negro* and *blanco* or any "other" type of mixture. It was not a term typically used to describe skin color, yet it was a term employed on the *carnets*. In the data collected on physical

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[1] According to Martinez-Alier 1974, the Chinese have been viewed legally as *blanco* (white) since the mid-1800's.

descriptions of different terms *mestizo* was rarely given as a color descriptor. *Mestizo's* color association was vague and not fixed; it ranged in skin color from the lightest end of the scale to the darkest. When *mestizo* was employed as a point of differentiation between *mulato* and *mestizo*, *mestizo* indicated lighter colored skin or straighter hair or finer facial features in comparison to the *mulato*. *Mestizo* as it appeared in the dictionary also had no color associated with it. The other three terms, *blanco* (white), *negro* (black), and *mulato* (brown), were terms that referred to color as well as race. The strongest proof that the *carnets* were constructing racial categories and not merely implying skin-color was the fact that racialized terms with no explicit skin-color equivalent were used. Thus, *mestizo* which socially implies color but is not a an academically recognized color term, could be used under the rubric of skin-color.

The flexible nature of formal Cuban classification is apparent in that formal classification did not always coincide with actual skin color. Those with white skin color were not always labeled as *blanco* but sometimes as *mestizo* or *mulato*. Equally, those who were brown-skinned or a median color between white and black were not always labeled as *mulato* or *mestizo* but as *blanco* or *negro*. The visual cues of classification were not based on skin-color alone but considered other socially relevant information.

Carnet officials described that skin color was not the only factor considered when assigning the skin color category in the *carnet*; but of equal importance were hair texture and facial features. This reliance on factors other than skin color demonstrates that the boundaries between the super categories were permeable and that it was the ascription of social race and not simple skin color that was being described and assigned. The inherent ambiguity of these terms comes from their dual nature of being used at different times and for different purposes as either color or racial classifiers, in addition to being indicators of social condition and as terms of affection. It is this ambiguity and flexibility of use in informal classification which allows the terms to be used formally in the *carnet* under the rubric of skin color.

Informal forms of categorization also generated subcategories of classification based on the officially defined categories. The descriptive terms employed in forms of informal

categorization ranged from the broad and expansive to the narrow and highly specific. All of the descriptive terms employed, whether formally or informally, were imbued with meaning and symbolism that were indicative of social and oftentimes economic status.

Both the state and the general population employed some of the same methods to assign the category a person belonged to. For both, hair texture, skin color, and facial features all played an important role in distinguishing which terms went into which categories. When compared to the four categories found in the government's form of classification I found that informally there were six basic terms and a host of auxiliary terms that made finer distinctions based on color, facial features, and hair texture. These basic terms consisted of: *blanco, trigueño* (bronze or wheat colored), *mestizo, mulato, negro,* and *chino* (Chinese). The general population recognized these terms as falling into a minimum of three broad categories and eight or more finely tuned categories.

In an 80 person survey that I conducted, the majority of the participants employ the above six basic terms to self-classify. The exception to this was the term *chino*. Though three people of Asian descent participated in the survey, none of them self-categorized as *chino*. All three categorized themselves as *blanco* in accordance with their *carnets*. Two of the women of Asian descent responded that they did not consider themselves to be "legitimate" Chinese. They explained that their "illegitimacy" was due to their lack of an Asian last name and that they were not "full blooded" Chinese. The third, a male, carried the dual identity of *blanco* and *chino*. His first response when asked was that he was *blanco*. He stated that he considered himself to be Chinese because both of his parents were Chinese and that for him; his *carnet* was just an indicator of skin color. In follow up interviews, the neighbors of these three individuals (re)categorized them as *chino* and not *blanco*. In fact, *chino/a*, was the nickname given to the three in their neighborhoods.

The disparity between state and informal ascription of people into an Asian category is indicative of several aspects of color classification particular to Cuba. First, it demonstrates that there is no regulated accord in classification between the state and the popular consciousness.

Second, it reveals the power of the state to affect and structure an individual's perception of identity, for the two women in my sample who were informally considered Asian; it was the formal and not informal form of classification which most influenced their identity choice. More importantly, these individuals were not given any other options on their *carnets* to construct an Asian identity, even if they want to be identified as such. Furthermore, the term *chino* or *asiatico* was not employed on the *carnets* because they are clearly racial and not color terms. If they were employed as category it would collapse the racial ambiguity so necessary to maintain the flexible structure of classification.

Recently new developments in identity ascription in the *carnets* have been instituted. In 1999, the government began to issue identification cards instead of the booklets. These new cards appear less like passports and more like driver's licenses. On the new identification cards, a change in flux is evident in the categorization of the "mixed" category. Whereas in the past people could be classified as either *mulato* or *mestizo*, on the new cards instead of writing out the whole word for *mestizo* or *mulato* an abbreviation is currently being used. In the case of *mulato* and *mestizo* there is no way to distinguish which term is actually being employed. In both cases an "m" is used and it could stand for either *mulato* or *mestizo*. There is no way to tell which term has actually been issued or which term will eventually be preferred for official use. A young lady who recently went in to get her identification card updated and had previously been called *mestiza* expressed surprise to me that there was no differentiation in the initial "m" used to represent both categories. This ambiguity allows for an official yet silent transition of this category to become either completely *mestizo* or *mulato*. It is a further merging of the two categories into one.

The majority of the participants surveyed did not recognize a meaningful difference between *mestizo* and *mulato*. The most common response given indicated that functionally they were one and the same. Most of the people classified as *mestizos* were also considered to be *mulatos* since the principle mixture on the island is characterized as between black and white. When describing overall black and white mixture in the family the most common term employed was

89

mestizo, but when a specific label to denote self was used both *mestizo* and *mulato* were employed with *mulato* having a higher frequency of use.

The *carnet*, unlike the census, is a document the population has had repeated and frequent exposure to. Its government ascription of identity is explicit and has to be confronted by the individual each time the document is accessed. The formal construction of identity as found in the *carnet* does not allow for identification outside of the basic triad. According to state ascription, Cuban identity is formally confined within the realm of the triad. Only foreigners are issued identity cards which identify them by nationality and not skin color and they are therefore conceptualized as outside of the triad. To establish Cuban identity outside of the triad can only be accomplished through the informal realm of classification.

The Medical Establishment

Another perspective on government ascription was the routine categorization that the medical establishment participated in. On medical forms, race was a required section. As with the *carnet*, these terms were assigned to the person and not self designated. These were forms the doctors completed for internal medical records. As with the *carnet* officials, doctors divided the population into three broad categories: *blanco*, mixed, and *negro*. According to one doctor whom I interviewed, "there is just black and white and everything in between is a *mestizo*." The primary determinants frequently employed by the doctors were skin color combined with other factors such as facial features, and hair texture. Those of Asian descent were categorized as white, black or *mestizo* depending on their skin color and degree of or lack of mixture with another group. Doctors were not formally trained in terms of how to categorize their patients. As one doctor informed me: "Nobody teaches you how to categorize, it is something done intuitively." Medical professionals broadly classified their patients based on a form of classification they learned informally but implemented in a formal setting.

To further appreciate the embedded importance of the triad in state classification an experiment was conducted in which six medical professionals consented to pilesort photos and

classify the pilesorted pictures as they would during their routine activities in the hospital or clinic. Five of the six doctors were male and one was female. The doctors ranged in age from twenty-six to thirty-eight and were all raised under the Revolution. Half of the doctors were classified as *blanco* on their *carnet* and the other half were classified as *negro*. The pilesort cards consisted of 70 photos of Cuban faces with clothing markers obscured. The faces were of males and females of various ages and representative of a broad range of phenotypes. The doctors were requested to construct as many or as few groups of similar individuals as they desired. Afterwards they were asked to label the groups they had created. Without exception all six doctors sorted the photos into three distinct groups.

Figure 1

#70   #41

Figure 1 represents two of the photos that were sorted by medical professionals. These two individuals #70 and #41 respectively, were not ascribed their own separate category by the doctors but rather included into one of the super categories. Among the doctors there was a split in terms of how number 41 was categorized. Three of the six doctors labeled him as *mestizo/mulato* and the other three doctors labeled him as *blanco*. His *carnet* classified him as *blanco*. Number 70 was categorized as *mestizo/mulato* by four of the six doctors and as *blanca*[43] by the other two. Her *carnet* also classified her as *blanca*.

When the pilesorts of medical professionals were analyzed separately from those of other informants, Asians did not appear as a separate classificatory category, but rather the two

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[43] One doctor labeled his *blanco* category as *jabao*.

pictures that were identified as Asian by the general population were positioned as members of other categories. This was particularly remarkable in light of the pre-printed medical forms that the doctors must fill out which sometimes have a designated space for Asians (*Amarillo*)[44]. Conceptually, this demonstrates the primacy of the triad in the state form of classification which is most clearly embedded and employed in the doctor's superstructure of classification.

Depending on the politics at the time, people of Asian descent have historically been absorbed under the *blanco*, *mestizo* or *gente de color* categories as indicated on the census. In this way they have officially been rendered invisible. Despite occasional appearances on the census and a presence as a category on medical forms, in other official forms of classification such as the *carnet* or in the actual classification rendered by doctors, Asians were generally subsumed into other categories and the original structure of the triad was maintained.

The ambiguity of classification started at birth. An obstetrician/gynecologist interviewed described how he classified newly born infants. "At around 10am the next day after we deliver the baby we go around to the mother's bed and fill out the paperwork for the birth certification. We mark down the mother's race and then we classify the infant based on the appearance of the mother." Though the doctor was obligated to note the race of the infant he expressed doubt as to the accuracy of his classification. He confided that the fathers were usually not present and he doubted the accuracy of classification based on just one parent. He further noted that the infant was in a phenotypically amorphous state and "true" classification could not take place at this point.

Despite the obligatory noting of the child's color on his/her birth records this was not a binding designation and usually changed when the child was (re)classified as a teenager. Medical professionals and *carnet* officials both perceived children to be "raceless" and colorless up until at least the age of 16, which is when they usually registered to carry their own *carnet*.[45] Up until this point their junior *carnets* were devoid of any categorization. The junior *carnet* was

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[44] Yellow
[45] Some individuals waited until they were 18 before they assumed the responsibility of an adult *carnet*.

also different from the adult *carnet* in that there was no photo attached to it. The obstetrician/gynecologist interviewed confirmed this point of view. He stated that only when a person was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two could he (the doctor) officially define a person and say "this is a person with these set characteristics and phenotype." When a child is born, it is the race of the mother which determines the race of the child. This point of view, that children were unformed racial entities, was also expressed to me in my interviews with the general population. Carlos, a young academic, informed me that "children and old people are raceless." I was told that a child's hair texture and skin color could shift or change during childhood and that one could never be sure as to the final outcome. These shifting characteristics attributed to children meant that they were not seen as set racial entities until they reached their majority and even then there were still possibilities for change. Examples were usually given of children having different hair texture or color or lighter skin color and having that change at some point in their transition from childhood to adulthood. Francesa, the seventeen year old neighbor of one of my informants, still used her junior *carnet* and refused to change it for the adult one. She explained that by maintaining her childhood "raceless" status she appeared less suspicious when she was walking in tourist areas than if she had an adult *carnet* labeling her as *mulata*. The elderly also seemed prone to lose identifying racial markers as they aged and their skin color or features became less distinct.

The majority of state classification was usually assigned by a government official who determined to which category the person belonged. This assessment was made when a person appeared at either the *carnet* or doctor's office, and could only be made after face-to-face contact. It is important to note that when I inquired why their self-ascribed category was sometimes different than the one assigned to them in their *carnet*, the response uniformly was that the people in the *carnet* office were incompetent when it came to assigning classification and they did not know what they were doing. This attitude about the public officials that assigned categorization seemed to be prevalent and widely shared by my informants. The subjective process involved in assigning the terminology almost guaranteed a lack of uniformity. In fact, it

was this very subjectivity in state classification which allowed for the maneuverability of the terminology and contributed to the ambiguity of the system. Official color identity could change particularly with people who had membership characteristics that pertained to several groups at once. Cubans could have several overlapping identities at once.

Official "identity" could be shifted through several venues. When a *carnet* was re-issued an official with a different perspective from the original issuing officer could shift a person's assigned category in many cases without the person even realizing that a shift had occurred. In addition between the *carnet* official, the medical professional, and the census enumerator lack of agreement could vary assigned designations from agency to agency. The doctor does not cross check his patient's *carnet* when issuing his identification nor does the *carnet* official cross check medical documents when issuing a *carnet*. Only because of the prolific nature of the *carnet* did this mode of identity construction carry more impact on personal identity than did other official forms of identity construction. The insistence of the state's reliance on subjective third party identification rather than individual self identification maintains flexibility in color classification and extends a certain amount of government control over the construction of identity.

Cognitive Categories of Color Classification

In Cuba, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, it is the predominance of this classic triad of white, black and mixed which shapes the underlying structure of color classification. The heavy presence of an African descendant population and its co-mingling with the Spaniards distinguishes the pigmentology system in the Caribbean from those systems found in mainland Latin America, where the presence of a large Amerindian population has influenced the terminology created and definitions used.

In Cuba, at the state level, the rendering of broad categories is employed by the census, *carnets*, and medical professionals to make quick general classifications of people. The following is a rendering of the broad categories employed formally on the census, *carnets*, and medical documents and the labels assigned to them.

Table 3: Formal Labels on Documents

<u>2002 Census</u>:   Blanco (White)   Mulato/Mestizo (Mixed)   Negro (Black)

<u>Carnet</u>:   Blanco (White)   Mulato/Mestizo (Mixed)   Negro (Black)

<u>Doctors</u>:   Blanco (White)[46] Mulato/Mestizo (Mixed)   Negro (Black)   Amarillo (Yellow)[47]

Due to the subjective nature of categorization there was no official consensus between the three different forms of classification. Thus, someone labeled as *blanco* on the census could be categorized as *mestizo* on their *carnet* and *mulato* or *negro* on their medical form. Confusion was not generally this intense, but differences in labeling have been noted to exist between official documents. Figure 2 is a multidimensional scaling diagram indicating the high degree of agreement in the medical professionals' categorizations.

Figure 2
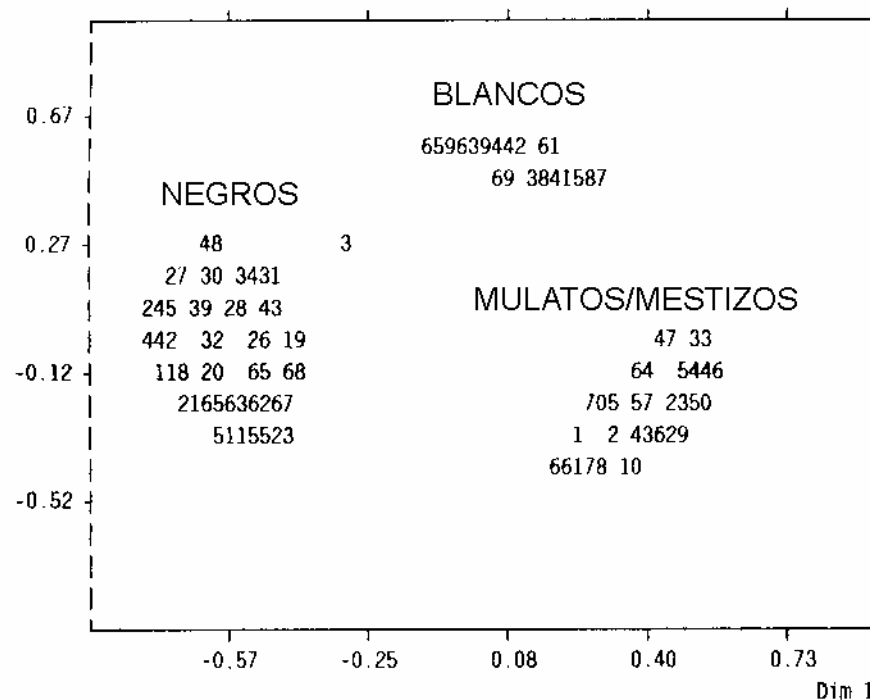
Stress = 0.238 in 2 dimensions.

Elapsed time: 1 second. 12/3/2002 11:54 PM.
ANTHROPAC 4.983/X Copyright 1985-2002 by Analytic Technologies.

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[46] Laurence a forty-two year old doctor sorted his cards into three groups as the other doctors but he chose to label the white skinned group as jabao.

[47] Exists on medical forms but was not given by the doctor's as a category in study.

When the formal renderings of categorization from official documents: the *carnet*, the census, and medical forms were compiled and compared I found that there was an overwhelming bias in official categorization in favor of maintaining the original triad superstructure of color classification. This bias becomes obvious in figure 2 which demonstrates the agreement among medical professionals in producing three distinct categories. Despite the marginalized existence of a fourth category, its utility is negligible when its presence is removed from the census, particularly when it is notably absent from the regularly and frequently used identity booklet.

The popular stance on color categories is quite complicated and nuanced, going far beyond the relatively simplistic tripartite divisions that characterize the various official views. In order to elicit and better understand the way ordinary people categorize others, the following exercise was conducted. Informants were asked to pile sort 24 classification terms derived from two separate questionnaires. The first questionnaire was completed by 61 informants and provided a blank space where informants could list the terms known to them and provide a physical description of each. The second questionnaire was derived from the first; informants were shown a prearranged list of terms and were requested to mark off all of the known terms to them and give a brief physical description of each. The terms were then culled and placed onto small cards. The following table 4 represents the classification terms that were garnered from the freelisting exercise. Included are the abbreviations that will be seen in table 5.

Table 4: Descriptive Color Terms[48]

Rubio (rubio)	Amarillo (amari)	Blanconazo (bnazo)
Blanco (blanc)	Pardo (pardo)	Blanco Capirro (bcapi)
Trigueño (trigu)	Moro (moro)	Negro Azul (nazul)
Castaño (casta)	Jabao (jabao)	Negro Colorado (ncolo)
Albino (albino)	Negro (negro)	Moro Achinado (moach)
Indio (indio)	Colorado (color)	Mulato Blanconazo (mbnaz)
Chino (chino)	Mulato (mulat)	Mulato Achinado (machi)
Mestizo (mesti)	Moreno (moren)	Negro Achinado (nachi)

---

[48] See Appendix A for full definitions of the terms used.

The above table represents the variety of descriptive terms in color classification identified by informants as a means to describe and categorize individuals. Informants were asked to pilesort the cards with these terms into as few or as many similar groups as they wanted. They were then asked to label the piles they had produced and give the reasons why they felt particular labels were suitable to mark their chosen clusters. This method found a variety of terms that were not in employed in formal classification but were widely known and utilized informally. In informal classification the variety of terms allowed for more categories to be formed than in formal classification which had a limited number of active descriptive terms. Table 5 represents the collaborative clusterings formed from the pilesorts of informants grouping the descriptive terms found in table 4. As demonstrated some terms cluster tightly together and are associated strongly with one another while other terms are clearly in a position of associative overlap. This points to the flexibility in informal classification for terms to be associated simultaneously with categories that in the United States are considered to be mutually exclusive.

Table 5: Cognitive Map of Terminology
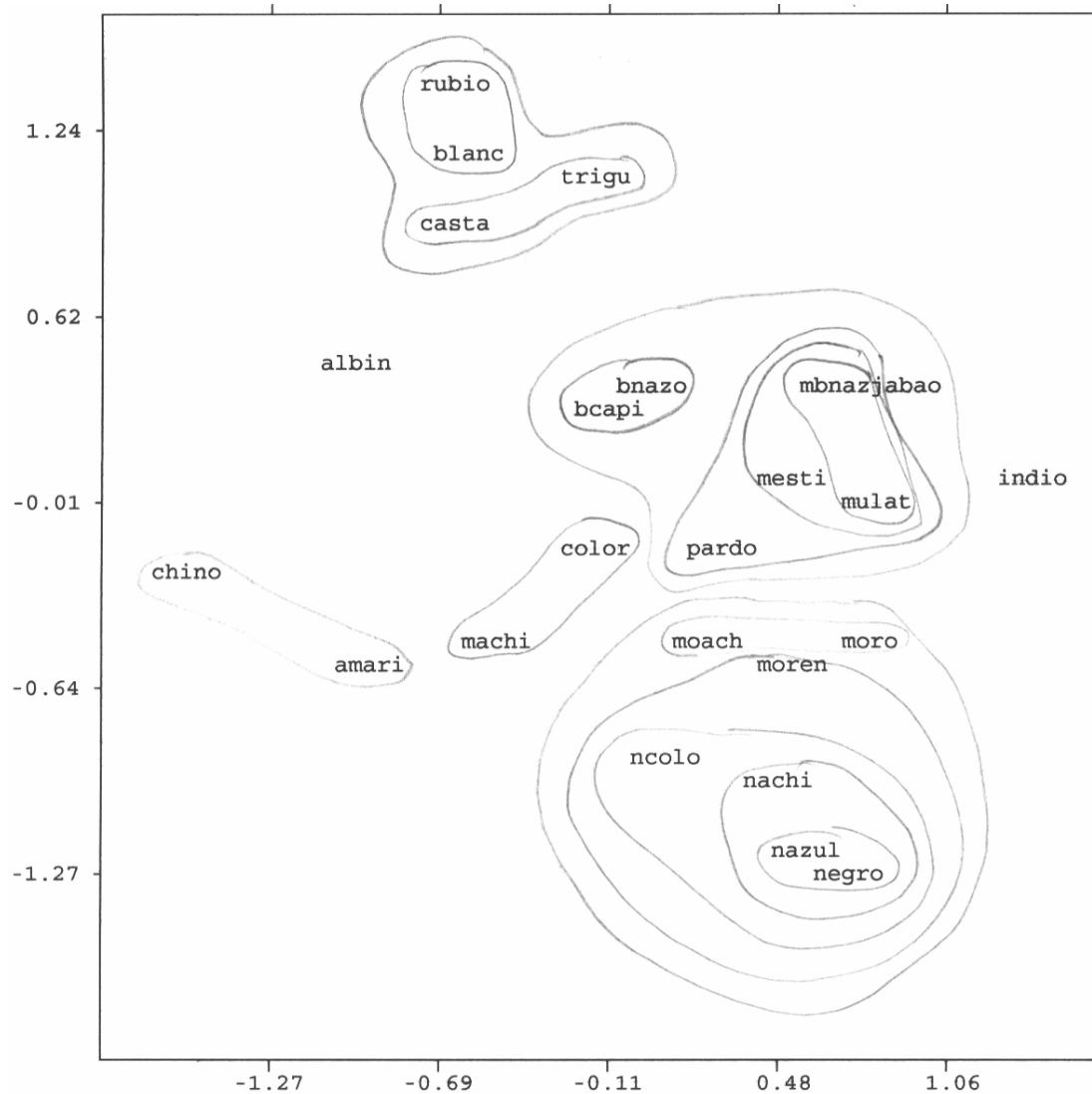
Stress = 0.141 for proximity matrix AGPROX.DAT

The flexibility in informal classification can also be demonstrated in the manner in which informants labeled and grouped the pilesort photos. A significant number (37%) of informants formed only three piles which they labeled variously as seen in table 6. Those who added a fourth category (25%) to the basic tripartite structure included either Asians or *Jabaos* with the basic three.

Table 6: Labels of Pilesorting Groups

<u>Three Piles</u>

Blancos, Mulatos, Negros

Blancos, Mestizos, Negros

<u>Blancos, Mulatos/Mestizos, Negros</u>

<u>Blancos, Chinos, Negros</u>   **37%**

<u>Four Piles</u>

Blancos, Jabaos, Mulatos, Negros

Blancos, Mulatos, Negros, Chinos

<u>Blancos, Mestizos, Negros, Chinos</u>   **25%**

Five Piles

Blancos, Mulatos, Mulatos Oscuros, Negros

Blancos, Jabaos, Mulatos, Negros, Chinos

<u>Blancos, Trigueños, Jabaos, Mulatos, Negros</u>   **18%**
<u>Six-to-Ten Piles</u>   **20%**

The informal classification terms employed by the general population were not fixed. In contrast to official classification the majority of informants (63%) surveyed employed more than three categories. Informally there was more flexibility and room to substitute other terms as labels or make additional divisions than in official classification. Of the respondents who identified and labeled three broad categories, only one designated *chino* or *asiatico* as an actual super category. When a fourth or fifth category was created they were mainly subdivisions derived from the *mulato/mestizo* category.

Regardless of the terminology used to label the three groups, they usually consisted of two parent groups (black and white) and a version of the mixed group. This was consistent with the structure outlined by state classification. Twenty-five percent of the respondents produced four categories. In some cases (4%) the fourth category was labeled as Asian. In other cases the fourth category was essentially a subdivision of the mixed category. Upon further analysis of table 5 we discern that the subcategories which are distinguished when more than three groups are produced are further divisions of the super categories primarily focusing on perceived

lightness or darkness of skin color. This demonstrates how a color continuum is formed in the psyche of the Cuban population. Accordingly, though *trigueño* (tanned skinned, dark hair) is given as a separate category it is actually a subdivision of the *blanco* category. Its cognitive placement associated with the *blanco* category is illustrated in table 5 where it is grouped with other terms which indicate "whiteness." Placing *trigueño* into its own category separate from the *blanco* category moves it closer to the *mestizo/mulato* category.

Exactly which classifying terms are employed to illustrate a formal or informal category is of importance as each term has certain associated social characteristics and statuses attached to it. These terms when employed in relation to other terms and in particular social circumstances conveyed not only the relative lightness or darkness of the person, but also their perceived social position vis-à-vis the speaker. Informal classification primarily marks the majority of its distinctions based on intra-categorical shading, hair texture, and facial feature differences, whereas formal classification marks inter-categorical distinctions. Therefore, although 37% of the population informally employed the triad as structured by the state, the rest (63%) of the population negotiated color classification on their own terms. Hence, the additional categories listed in informal categorization demonstrated the flexibility to be found in classification and the ease with which subdivisions of the triad could be created.

In official categorization the classifying terms employed were fixed but the category to which membership was assigned was flexible. Although there was a limit to the terms that could be used in official categorization, membership ascription was not set because there was no systematic agreement between classifying agencies. In informal categorization the classifying terms were variable and thus more flexible allowed for people to create multiple identities which enabled them to manipulate classification to their own ends. Formal categorization was circumscribed but one could flex the boundaries of ascription in either direction depending on which classifying term was employed.

Whenever formal classification occurs all possible terms that could be used to describe a category are subsumed under the official representative classification term. Within informal

classification these terms could represent subcategories. *Trigueño* for example was not typically perceived as separate from the *blanco* category in formal categorization, but in informal classification it was formed into a subcategory more so than the other terms associated with the *blanco* category. This separation moved it conceptually closer to a definition of *mulatizaje*. Different rules were applied in terms of how categories could be divided. Most divisions were based on degree of light or dark skin tone, such as when an informant divided her mixed group into *mulatos claros* (light mulattos), and *mulatos oscuros* (dark mulattos). Other kinds of divisions relied on concepts which not only judged membership by skin tone but by hair texture and facial features and attached social value to these characteristics. A prime example would be how one informant divided her mixed group into *mulatos* and *mulatos adelantados* (advanced mulattos).[49] In the absence of subdivision the whole spectrum of skin tones ranging from light-skinned to dark-skinned could be found in the mixed category.

The following figure demonstrates the frequency of main categories used in informal classification.

Figure 3

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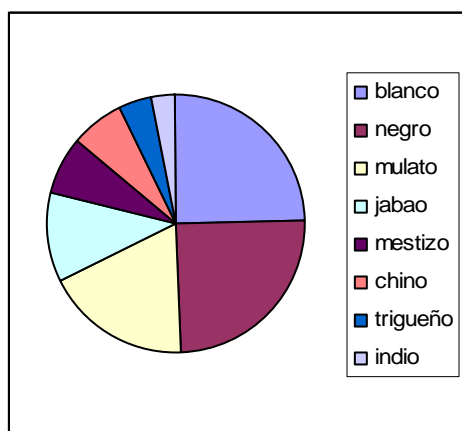
[49] Advanced in this context signifies light skinned with refined features.

Table 7: Percentages of Informants Employing Particular Classification Terms

blanco	**96%**
negro	**96%**
mulato	**71%**
jabao	**45%**
mestizo	**28%**
chino	**26%**
trigueño	**16%**
indio	**12%**

The overwhelming majority, ninety-six percent, labeled *blanco* and *negro* as categories. Another seventy-one percent distinguished *mulato* as a category. This further corroborates the essential division of three broad categories, *blanco*, *negro*, and *mulato* as the most widely employed categories used in classification. Other terms were employed less than fifty percent of the time. In table 7 it is also clear that *mulato* which was employed as a term in seventy one percent of the cases was the preferred term for categorization as compared to *mestizo* at twenty eight percent. The term *Chino* was only employed in twenty-six percent of the cases which confirms its marginalized status in informal classification. Though *blanco*, *negro*, and *mulato* were the most commonly used terms in both formal and informal forms of classification they were by no means the only terms employed in classification.

In the following table we can see how the classification terms were cognitively linked in the Cuban psyche.

Table 8: Johnson's Hierarchial Clustering

```
                  a i b r t c c a c m   m m n n n n j b b m m m p
                  l n l u r a h m o a m o o c e a a a n c e u b a
                  b d a b i s i a l c o a r o g z c b a a s l n r
                  i i n i g t n r o h r c e l r u h a z p t a a d
                  n o c o u a o i r i o h n o o l i o o i i t z o

                  0 0 0 1 0 1 0 1 1 2 1 2 1 1 0 1 2 0 1 1 0 0 2 2
      Level       9 8 1 4 2 5 7 6 0 1 2 2 1 8 6 9 3 3 3 7 4 5 0 4
      -----       - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
      36.000      . . . . . . . . . . . . . . XXX . . . . . . . .
      35.000      . . XXX . . . . . . . . . . . XXX . . . . . . . .
      31.000      . . XXX . . . . . . . . . . . XXX . . . . . XXX .
      30.000      . . XXX . . . . . . . . . . XXXXX . . . XXXXX .
      27.000      . . XXX XXX . . . . . . . . XXXXX . . . XXXXX .
      26.000      . . XXX XXX . . . . XXX . XXXXXXX . . . XXXXXXX
      24.000      . . XXXXXXX . . . . XXX . XXXXXXX . . . XXXXXXX
      23.000      . . XXXXXXX XXX . . XXX . XXXXXXX . . . XXXXXXX
      22.000      . . XXXXXXX XXX . . XXX . XXXXXXX . XXX XXXXXXX
      19.000      . . XXXXXXX XXX . . XXX XXXXXXXXX . XXX XXXXXXX
      18.000      . . XXXXXXX XXX . . XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
      16.000      . . XXXXXXX XXX XXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
      15.000      . . XXXXXX XXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
      14.000      . . XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
      13.000      . XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
      11.000      XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
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The above table is based on a pilesorting activity in which respondents were asked to pilesort terms into similar groupings. The resulting chart reflects the agreement among the population in terms of the proximity of the terms to one another. The agreement among informants of which group terms belonged to was highest among the terms that had been or were currently employed in official classification. *Mestizo* (04), *mulato* (05), *mulato blanconazo* (20), and *pardo* (24) all clustered together. *Blanconazo* (13) and *blanco capirro* (17) were also part of this group but at a lower frequency. These classifying terms were elastic in terms of which super-category they were associated with. Informally they were perceived as belonging more to the *mulato* cluster than the *blanco* cluster, although formally they were usually placed into the *blanco* category. This is demonstrated on the above table with *blanconazo* (13) and *blanco capirro* (17) linking closer to the *mestizo* cluster than the *blanco* cluster. The lightness of their skin color was a stronger determinant of classification for official classification than it was in informal classification. It was this difference in emphasis that helped to create and maintain the plasticity and fluidity between super-categories

The *negro* cluster consisted of *negro* (06), *negro azul* (19), and *negro achinado* (23). Respondents placed *negro colorado* (18) in the *negro* cluster more often than in the *mulato* cluster. Although this occurred when pilesorting the written terms, in interpersonal relationships those categorized by informants as *negro colorado* in the photographs were most often placed into the *mulato/mestizo* cluster. *Moreno* (11) is also part of the deep structure of the *negro* category. This term did not have a separate physical description from *negro* which corroborates its use as a euphemism for the word *negro*. *Moro* (12) and *moro achinado* (22) were structurally part of the *negro* cluster but there were characteristics, probably hair texture, which set them slightly apart from it.

Despite the state's attempts to rationalize *chino* into the *blanco* category among the popular consciousness, *chino* (07) and *amarillo* (16) were not tightly clustered *blanco* terms. In this schematic *trigueños* (02) are construed as being primarily part of the *blanco* cluster but not as primary to the same degree as someone classified as *rubio* (14) (blonde). This can be explained by the conceptualization of *trigueño* as being darker and implying a certain *mulatez.*

This picture varied only slightly when 51 respondents were asked to pilesort 70 photographs. Their agreement of the proximity of terms and where they belong is spatially represented in figure 4.

Figure 4

```
JOHNSON'S HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING
ÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄÄ

Input dataset:        C:\AP\AGPROX
Method:               AVERAGE
Type of Data:         Similarities

HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING
```



```
Partition-by-actor indicator matrix saved as dataset PART

Elapsed time:  1 second. 3/4/2002 10:33 PM.
ANTHROPAC 4.97/X Copyright 1985-1999 by Analytic Technologies.
```

   The cluster formed to the left in figure 4 represents pictures of people placed in what I label
as the *negro* cluster. The cluster on the far right represents the pictures labeled as *blanco*, and
the middle group represents the *mulato/mestizo* cluster. Figure 4 demonstrates that the strongest
overall agreement on categorization was when ascribing membership to the *negro* category. The
least amount of agreement occurred within the *mulato/mestizo* category.

Color descriptors were used both as labels for the categories and to make more acute classifications between and within the categories. These descriptors branched off from the principal categories and created sub-groups within the categories which delineated the subtler differences between the terms. The following figure is an example of an idealized form of the color continuum using a few select terms. It demonstrates how the descriptors work to label the categories and make finer distinctions within the categories.

Table 9: Color Continuum

blanco	trigueño	blanco capirro	blanconazo	jabao capirro	jabao	mulato blanconazo	mulato	mestizo	Negro colorado	negro	negro azul

This continuum as represented above has lighter skin colors to the left, darker skin colors to the right and a blending of intermediate browns ranging from light to dark in the middle. There were multiple continuums in existence, some represented skin-color, and others represented facial features or hair texture. These characteristics were usually scaled from European to African, but when the three characteristics were not represented separately but jointly they did not fit neatly into a continuum. A person could have a hair texture from the left end of the hair scale but skin color from their right end of the color scale or vice-versa. Where persons were ascribed in informal classification depended on an individual's idealized continuums. Some individuals rationalized their color continuums with *jabaos* perceived as lighter on the scale of whiteness than *blanconazos* and others perceived that *mulato blanconazos* were lighter on the scale than *jabaos*. A relevant yet invisible scale consisting of an often mentioned category marked in contrast to blanco was that of foreign whiteness. This "invisible" space at the extreme left of the continuum will be discussed in further detail in chapter five.

Figure 5
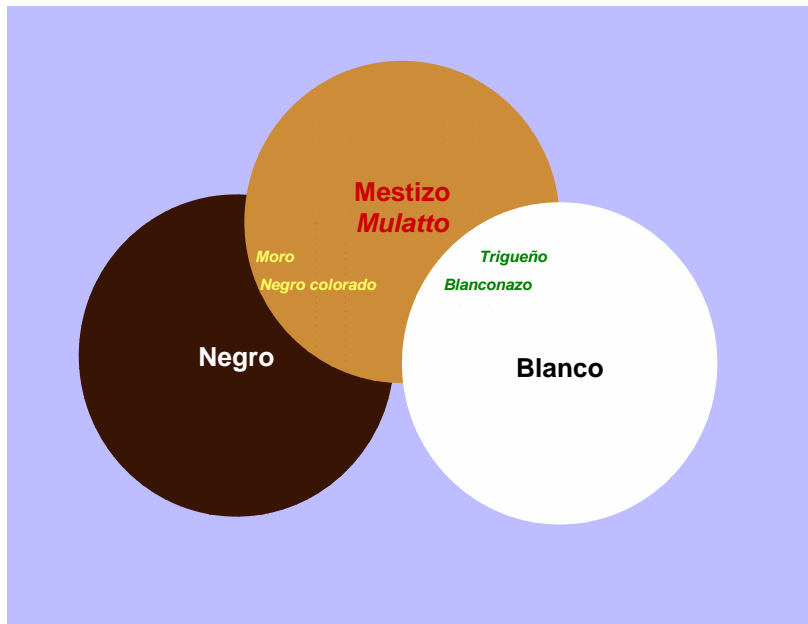
Above is a representation of the three super categories found in formal classification and the fluidity of informal classification terms as represented in the shaded areas between the shared areas of the categories.

Table 10: Informal Descriptors

BLANCO	MULATO/ MESTIZO	NEGRO	CHINO
blanco	blanconazo	negro	chino
trigueño	mulato blanconazo	negro colorado	asiatico
colorado	blanco capirro	negro azul	amarillo
blanconazo	jabao capirro	moro	achinado
blanco capirro	jabao	moreno	
mulato blanconazo	mulato		
	mestizo		
	indio		
	moro		

These terms when employed as descriptors in the informal sector could also be further enhanced with the inclusion of certain qualifiers and modifiers. In the formal sector the limits of basic usage is of particular importance because some descriptors were pejorative or could have

pejorative connotations. The foundation of the pigmentology system distinguishes individuals based on three characteristics with varying degrees of importance. These characteristics are: skin color, hair texture, and facial features. Each of these characteristics is weighed differently when determining which descriptor to employ.

Features of Classification

When informants were questioned about how they made fine discriminations between ambiguous types it was found that skin color was one of the primary sources of distinction in classification and that theoretically it carried the most weight in the overall determination of a descriptor. However, skin color itself is not a simple attribute to determine. It seems to be based on the visual perception of melanin, the tonal qualities of the skin, and the varying degrees in shades of lightness and darkness of color. Though this feature of classification was found to be the most important it did not act alone. Informants discriminated between the terms based on a combination of factors which included hair texture and facial features.

Whether the distinguishing marker was skin tone, hair texture, or facial features these designations were highly variable depending on the informant. The factors determining categorization were also given different priority depending on which characteristic the speaker was trying to emphasize. Some classification terms had defining features. For example, intrinsic to ascribing the term *jabao*, was hair texture (usually an afro) and sometimes hair color (generally blondish). In general, hair was regarded as either "good" (mostly associated with the *blanco* or *mestizo/ mulato* categories) or "bad" (mostly associated with the *negro* category).

Table 11: Common Descriptors for Hair Texture

Pelo bueno: "Good Hair"	Pelo malo: "Bad Hair"
crespo : crispy, curly	pasas: raisins, tight kinky curls
ondiado: wavy	duro:hard
fino: fine	enroscadito: tight kinky curls
lacio: straight	
suave: soft	
malogaso: a texture in between "good" and "bad" hair	

All terms fell under the two broad bi-polar categories of good hair (*pelo bueno*) and bad hair (*pelo malo*). These terms were common euphemisms for the straight hair commonly associated with Europeans and the tight curly hair commonly associated with Africans. The "better" the grade of hair the closer in texture to a "Caucasian type," conversely, the "worse" the grade of hair the closer to an "African type" it was. "Good" hair was also relative as most "good" hair types could be considered "bad" and most "bad" hair types could be considered "good" depending on point of reference. One of my informants, who described herself as a *mulata blanconaza* and had a hair texture that was generally considered, by other informants to be "good," stated that she had "bad" hair because in her own words "it wasn't 'straight enough.'" She said this as she was trying to explain why she did not consider herself to be white despite being classified as such by her *carnet*. Most people with loose curly or wavy hair were similarly able to claim *mulatez* by classifying their hair as not "good."

Hair texture was also employed by informants to distinguish who could move into the nebulous borderlines which divided the categories. In this way it sometimes superceded color in importance. It also marked intra-categorical differences, especially within the *mulato/mestizo* and *negro* categories. Sometimes the perceptual difference between two terms such as with *negro colorado* and *mulato* or *negro* and *moro* was not skin color because there was little or no delineation in skin color among these types, instead the identifying hallmark lay within the

variation of the hair texture. Hair texture was also used to point out *mulatez* in whites. This was often done in the case of any white who did not have straight or fine hair. A lack of straight or fine hair was perceived as an indicator of mixed ancestry. Regardless of physical attributes all of the terms could be socially manipulated so that the physical types associated with the terms could vary widely.

Figure 6

For example, the above females were frequently labeled as *mulatas*, but the woman on the left is the classical physical representation of *mulata* whereas the woman on the right can be called *mulata* or *negra colorada*. When *negra colorada* is used to describe the woman on the left it is as a reference to her hair texture. The social reasons for why they could both be classified as *mulata* instead of separated into two distinct identities will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Finally there were also descriptors which used facial features to make classification distinctions.

Table 12: Common Descriptors for Facial Features

European	African	Asian
Fina: fine	Tosca: coarse or broad	Achinada: epicanthic eye folds or other perceived Asian traits.
	Grueso: thick	
	Ñata: flat nosed, pug nosed	
	Bembon: thick lips	

These physical characteristics were seen as distinguishing traits that were more common in certain racial groups than in others. For example, except for the term *fino* which was a reference to classical whiteness, and *achinado* which was a reference to Asians, all other terms were assigned to blacks and were used socially to indicate blackness. Thus all physical traits that were not within the extreme bounds of "fineness" were considered to belong to and be indicators of the *mestizo/mulato* and *negro* categories.

In addition to the primary attributes employed, there were also modifying terms. Many modifying terms could stand alone such as: *prieto*, *blanconazo*, *negron*, *tizon*, and *achinado*. Common usage would describe persons as being *prieto* or *colorado*. Some terms like *negron* and *tizon* were used as nouns as in "Jenny is a *negrona*," and "The man on the corner is a *tizon*." The above table just loosely outlines what categories the terms are in implied association with. These associations are not absolutes.

Table 13: Common Modifying Descriptors

Whiteness	Asianness	Mestizaje	Blackness
Claro/a: light	Achinado: Asian like	Blancuso: whitish	Prieto/a: blackish, black
Fino/a[50]: fine		Blanconazo: whitish, opaque	Negron/a[51]: very big and very black
Colorado: reddish, red		Capirro: red, implies black ancestry	Azul[52]: blue
Lavado/a: washed			Oscuro/a: dark
			Tizon[53]: charcoal black
			Quemado: burnt

Most commonly informants often made the compound terms as follows in table 14 from many of the terms found in table 13 above to make further distinctions. Each of the modifying descriptors above referred to some distinct ideological physical or cultural space on the color continuum. Thus the term *fino* referred to a sense of cultural whiteness and *claro* to physical whiteness, while *blaconazo* and *capirro* implied a physical *mestizaje* and *prieto* physical blackness. The social implications of these terms will be further discussed in chapter four.

Table 14: Common Compound Terms

Blanco capirro: reddish white

Mulato blanconazo: whitish mulato

Negro fino: fine black

Negro colorado: reddish black

Jabao capirro: reddish jabao

Negro azul: blue black

Trigueño lavado: washed (light skinned) trigueño

Mulato achinado: mulato with Asian physical attributes

---

[50] Also a social indicator meaning refined, cultured, educated.

[51] Pejorative

[52] Only used in combination with *negro* (ie. *Negro azul*: blue black)

[53] Pejorative

In compound form, as presented in table 14, these terms conveyed additional social information. *Trigueño lavado* (a washed *trigueño*) conveyed either whiter ancestry or whiter skin color than the average *trigueño*. Likewise *negro fino* conveyed either Europeanized physical features found on a black person or a black person who was cultured and well educated. The implication was that this black was different from the average black. Given all of the possible classifying terms and their modifiers there is wide variation in how any given person could be described.

Table 15: Descriptive Labels

Descriptive Characteristics	Blanco	Mestizo	Negro
Hair color	trigueño, castaño, rubio, pelirojo	jabao, albino	
Skin color	colorado, blanco-capirro, trigueño	indio, moro, albino, blanconazo, mulato blanconazo	negro, negro-colorado, negro-azul
Hair texture	Blanco-capirro	mulato blanconazo, blanconazo, jabao,	moro
Facial Features		jabao	moro

Some descriptive terms were used to qualify the type of *blanco, mulato,* or *negro* with specific reference to their hair color. Other terms made reference to skin color or actual hair texture. A few qualifiers were confined to certain categories, such as *rubio* (blonde) which was usually employed in the *blanco* category. Some terms, such as *colorado* (red), could travel between categories. As such, *Colorado* was employed as a reference to both whites and blacks.

Depending on the subject and circumstances different terms could emphasize different characteristics. Thus, *moro* (dark-skinned with wavy hair texture), which focused on hair texture and facial features in the *negro* category, focused more on facial features when employed in the *mestizo/mulato* category.

The layer of meaning in classification terms that uses phenotypic color as its primary denominator is one of the most complex as it provides the background and backbone for the whole system. As such it uses primarily skin color to describe and group individuals, i.e.: black (*negro*), brown (*mulato*), white (*blanco*), and yellow (*amarillo/chino*). These terms roughly correspond to racial classifications but are not necessarily racial in meaning or intent. As an informant told me in reference to the descriptive terms found in informal categorization, "these are not races."

Color terminology is fluid, flexible, and robust because terms have more than one usage. Terms can be employed strictly as a descriptive device, for endearment, to avoid insult, as recognition of elevated social status, and as a compliment of beauty for women. As a descriptive device, color terminology distinguishes individuals, in the informal sector where a plethora of terms abound. One can describe the man on the corner as a *blanco*, *mulato*, *jabao*, etc., in much the same way as describing a man, who had on an overcoat or jacket, but with more serious social consequences and association attached.

As terms of endearment *negro*, *mulato*, *chino*, and *jabao* were all used affectionately and in the diminutive (*negrito*, *mulatito*, *chinito*, *jabaito*) to indicate an intimate relationship with another person. These terms were gendered in that their usage was most commonly applied as nicknames to women and children. One did not actually have to be a physical representative of the term used for the term to be applied. The fact that *blanco* is absent from these terms is indicative that their origins were based on the asymmetrical power dynamic of master and slave or master and indentured servant that arose during the enslavement era of the country. Despite the origins of these diminutives they were usually used positively as monikers. *Negrito* and *chinito* were the most popular of the diminutives and were applied to individuals across the color

continuum. An example of the mass appeal of these terms is presented by the famous black singer, *Bola de Nieve* (Snowball), whose lullabye affectionately repeats the lyrics "go to sleep *negrita*" in Africanized Spanish. This song was applied to and sung to many Cuban infants regardless of color. In contrast to the other diminutives, when *blanco* was used in the diminutive (*blanquito*), it had a derogatory connotation.

Certain terms could also be perceived as pejorative. Most of these terms were associated with dark skin color. Though *blanco* could be used pejoratively, this was not commonly done. To avoid insult, euphemistic terms were used in lieu of the possibly insulting word, thus *moreno* was used in lieu of *negro*. The pejorativeness of a term depended on the individual and their perception of the term. Some did not like to be called *jabao* and preferred *mulato*, some did not like *mulato* and preferred *mestizo*, some did not like *mestizo* and preferred *mulato* etc.

In addition, certain terms could be used to imply an elevation of social status. Sometimes *fino* (fine) was attached to certain negative terms to elevate the cultural standing of the individual. *Negro fino* was frequently used in this way, indicating that a person was higher in the color hierarchy than they actually were. Ambiguous classificatory types were labeled as white or *mulato* if they displayed certain cultural attributes.

Furthermore, as with terms of endearment, *mulato* was also used as a way to compliment a woman. To name a woman *mulata*, even when she was not, was a form of calling her beautiful because the *mulata* had traditionally been employed as a symbol to epitomize and exoticize the beauty of women of color.

Constructing Identity

Official color classification in Cuba is composed of three and sometimes four basic categories dependent on whether Asians are being absorbed or separated out in the system. To understand how flexibility and ambiguity of color classification has led to unity in national identity we must first analyze the structure of color classification and how ambiguity is inherent to classification. An analysis of how the four fundamental broad categories were constructed

115

will demonstrate the overlap involved, which allows Cubans from superficially disparate categories to claim the same mixed raced identity.

Blancos

According to Thomas Stephens' (1989) dictionary on racial and ethnic terms, *blanco* in Cuba was defined as a white person and *negro* as a "pure" black person. Notice that a person considered to be *blanco* was not defined as a "pure" white person. This classification was based primarily on physical appearance and was only given the loosest association of biological attributes based on genotype. Thus currently, if a person had a white appearance, even if they were not of two "pure" white parents, they were considered to be white. Anyone other than "pure" black theoretically was either a *mulato*, *mestizo*, or in some cases, a white. According to my informant Gladys, there were two types of people considered to be whites in Cuba. The first was what she coined "the legitimate white," one who originated from Spain. The second type of white was what she called "an illegitimate white," which was the *criollo* or Cuban-born white. The use of "illegitimacy" as a defining characteristic of Cuban whites also hails back to the idea that those who were not "pure" white in Cuba were historically so because they were not involved in legitimate i.e. marital relations. In addition the concept of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" whiteness is linked to the practice Martinez-Alier (1974) uncovered in colonial Cuba of differentiating the *blanco* category based on those who were "held to be white" and those who were "truly white." Those "held to be white" were classified as white socially but there was a doubt about their origin and their legal status of legitimate whiteness was in question. Those who were "truly white" were both legally and socially white with no doubt as to the legitimacy of their white status.

The general definition of the *blanco* category in the popular consciousness seems to be inclusive of but not exclusive to white skin color as a determinant. My informants, Arnaldo, a twenty-three year old biochemist classified as *mulato* in his *carnet*, and Gemina, a fifty-five year old history professor classified as black on her *carnet*, both gave similar physical descriptions of

the term *blanco*. Within their definitions, white skin color appears to be a standard qualification for the category. Arnaldo described it as follows: "*Blancos* are those in general who have white skin, fine features and straight hair." Gemina gave a very similar description, "*Blancos* have light skin, fine features and straight hair." Though this was the accepted standard definition the category was actually much broader. Who is considered to have white skin color is relative. Whiteness, as with the other colors employed in Cuban classification, operates within the concept of a continuum in that it is not located at just one point of the continuum but at various points, therefore, white could be defined as someone "light-skinned" but not necessarily white-skinned.

Whiteness of skin was considered to be a relative measurement, and could include darker skin pigmentations. I was constantly informed that the whites in Cuba were darker than North American whites. Furthermore the whites in Santiago, the eastern half of Cuba, were considered to be much darker than the whites in other regions of Cuba. This darker "whiteness" was sometimes explained away as a function of the sun, but at other times it was explained as a function of racial mixture. This was encapsulated by the ever popular idiom "there are no 'pure' whites here." Many of the terms used to describe "whites" in Cuba were terms which implied racial mixture and black heritage.

Terms such as *trigueño, colorado, blanconazo, blanco capirro*, and *mulato blanconazo* were considered to be socially and physically indicative of racial mixture. Some of the terms indicated degree of darkness based on skin pigmentation such as *trigueño, blanconazo, blanco capirro*, and *mulato blanconazo*.[54] In this case, physical "darkness" in skin pigmentation was mostly any degree of whiteness that was not fair with a pinkish undertone. In the hot Cuban climate this was a difficult state to achieve. Other terms could also be indicative of racial mixture based on what were considered to be Africanized features or hair texture (i.e. "kinky" hair) such as with *blanconazo, blanco capirro*, and *mulato blanconazo*. The latter three terms

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[54] All of these terms had been employed by informants looking at pictures or discussing neighbors to describe people who were categorized as *blanco* in their identification booklets.

and to some extent the term *trigueño* could be used to indicate blackness or *mulatez*. The same term could be used to indicate any of the three different features of classification or all three at once dependent on what the speaker wanted to be emphasized.

Blackness as an inherent characteristic of Cuban whites was a popular theme. Many of my informants were very explicit and insistent about this point. Glenis, a black film production artist in her forties, and Lillian, a white housewife in her thirties, both illustrated how whiteness was qualified and contextualized as being a part of blackness.

> Glenis: "A well defined *blanco* does not need to be blonde. For example, this white man (referring to a picture), when he goes to Europe or travels to another country, he realizes that he is *mestizo*. That is Latino, not white. I am aware of this, I tell colleagues of mine when they have traveled...here (in Cuba) they are white but this (through the process of travel) is how they discover that they are *mestizo*."

> Lillian: "*Blanco* has white skin, fine features and very straight hair although he can have curly hair. They are people who have similar characteristics to the Caucasian race, but 'pure'; there aren't any."

Glenis noted how this difference becomes obvious in an international context when a Cuban white travels abroad and accordingly may realize that in a global context they are not as "white" as they thought they were. Glenis' statement also implied that there was something different about Cuban whiteness than foreign whiteness. Comparative whiteness was frequently explained within a global context by my informants. This further corroborated Paul Ryer's thesis that whiteness is always constructed as "other" and foreign in the Cuban context. To include Cuban whites as part of a Cuban identity, 'pure' whiteness is constructed as the "other" and it is through the 'impurity' and mixed quality of Cuban whiteness that their Cuban identity is validated.

The following photos are examples of people considered to be *rubios* (blondes). In comparison to people perceived as *trigueños* (tan-skinned brunettes) they are considered to be

both fair-skinned and blonde. The fact that they were blonde seems to make them "whiter" in the eyes of some informants.

Figure 7

When asked what possible parental "types" would produce *blancos*, the overwhelming response was *blanco* with *blanco*. But *blanco* with *trigueño* was also mentioned, and still others gave their response as *blanco* with *mulata blanconaza*, *jabao*, or *mulata* indicating that these combinations also produced "whites," depending on physical appearance.

The term *trigueño* has several meanings, but primarily it was considered to be a white person that was wheat colored, bronzed, or tanned white. This color was attributed to being in a warm and sunny climate and some level of *mestizaje*. According to my informants, it appeared that the characteristics associated with the term *trigueño* were black hair, whether or not it was straight or curly, and a tanned skin color. The following are photos of people described as *trigueños*.

Figure 8

The subjects varied both in skin tone and hair texture. There were many different opinions as to what exactly characterized a *trigueño*.

Josue, a college professor in his mid-twenties classified as white on his *carnet*, described *trigueños* as the following:

> They are white with black hair, although people also utilize the expression *trigueño* to refer to skin color. There are people who use *trigueña* skin color to refer to a skin color that is very burnt by the sun or because his natural pigmentation is darker, like that of the Indians. Many refer to Asians as having a *trigueño* skin-color.

Josue employed several different criteria to his definition of *trigueños*. For him *trigueño* could be a referent to hair color, such as a brunette, or skin color. Within this context those described as Asian could fall into this category. Glenis also described her perception of *trigueños* as being white people with dark skin tones. "You can say a white, but his skin is black. When you see the people from Andalusia, you realize that they are (*trigueño*). This term *trigueño* I don't believe that you can say very black but, well, burnt white." Haille, an eighty-three year old retired *mestiza* teacher who currently organizes children's activity programs, describes *trigueño* using the same color descriptors as for *mulatos*. "a white person who is considered to be white but has skin color that is more like that half cinnamon tone, a little darker, this is what they call *trigueño*."

Trigueño, for all it's implications of race mixture and blackness, was considered to be "white." A doctor in his late thirties, classified as black on his *carnet*, informed me that he may label people classified as *trigueños* as white but from his perspective they are really *mestizos*. This was important because, as we shall see later, *trigueño* was also used as a term for whites to claim *mulatez*. The term *trigueño*, which implied a lack of a white or pinkish skin color, was clearly within the range of who could be considered as white. This term was also sometimes used to refer to light-skinned blacks. Roberto, a pastry chef in his thirties, said that for him, "The *trigueño* is between *blanco* and *mulato*." Though this was not a common rendering of the term, it was acceptable, and shows how robust this category can be. It was not hard to see how *mestizaje* could also be claimed through this term, particularly when whiteness was not exactly

the physical presentation of white skin color. This was in contrast to the position held in the United States, where "truly" white people have very white skins and very white parents.

Mestizos, Mulatos and Mestizaje

The "mixed race" category was the most expansive and least well defined category containing more informal terms than any of the other three categories. Due to the permeable borders between categories it was theoretically possible for nearly all Cubans to rationalize themselves into the "mixed race" category and it was through this category that national identity was constructed and symbolized.

Skin color in this category ranged from white to dark brown. Therefore some of the terminology included in this category was sometimes utilized in the other categories. There were even some terms that seemed to bounce back and forth between the *blanco* and *mulato* category and the *negro* and *mulato* category. According to the speaker, the utilization of the term could indicate someone who was *blanco* or someone who was *mulato/mestizo*. Some of these mutable terms that floated between the white and mixed category included terms like *blanconazo*, *blanco capirro*, and *mulato blanconazo*. *Blanconazo* was most commonly explained as a person considered to be white with some apparent African heritage visible in their features. The definition of who was considered to be *blanconazo* varied. It was generally agreed upon that the term *blanconazo* was employed to describe a particular milky white skin color. *Blanconazo* could also be a description in and of itself or it could be employed as a modifying term. As a modifying term *blanconazo* was used in conjunction with *mulato* to form the compound term *mulato blanconazo*. Thus *mulato* transforms to mean something resembling the following: a light skinned almost white *mulato* with just a hint of African ancestry or a light skinned almost brown white with just a hint of African ancestry. The following are some examples of people informally classified as *mulato blanconazos*.

121

Figure 9

These women both identified themselves as *mulata blanconazas* even though their state classification identified them as *blanco* (white). Their friends and neighbors also identified them as *mulata blanconazas*, and when their pictures were shown to people unknown to them they tended to be categorized together.

Many people did not just use *blanconazo* as a stand-alone term because they felt it was more of an adjective than a noun. Both Rosena, a lawyer in her forties classified as black on her *carnet*, and David, an electronics engineer in his early thirties classified as black on his *carnet*, indicated in their interviews that for them, *blanconazo* could not be employed alone and was to be used in conjunction with *mulato*. When Rosena was asked to define *blanconazo* she stated that: "*Blanconazo* is a *Mulato blanconazo*." David also made a similar reply: "In Cuba they say *mulato blanconazo*, because you don't know if the person is a *blanco* or *mulato*. It is a very light *mulato*." The conflict inherent within the terms depended on the word being modified. He finally settled on the *mulato* category which was a common occurrence because conceptually, the category *mulato* had more space for ambiguity than the *blanco* category.

According to Haille, when a person was characterized as *blanconazo* it was, "a white, but it's one of those sayings that we do not use nowadays. Perhaps when I was younger my grandmother would use the word *blanconazo*, it is a very white *mulato*, but now the term is not used anymore. It is the same to say *mulata blanconaza* as it is to say *mulato*." For Haille's family this term was employed in the past as a stand alone term but now was employed to modify *mulata*.

Blanconazo for other informants indicated a person of mixed race belonging to the *mulato* category. Darla, a fifty year old architect classified as black on her *carnet*, and Gemina, both agreed that though the person described may have white skin it was not the skin color alone that was the determining factor. Darla stated: "within the mixture of *blanco* with *negro* comes people who are light enough (in terms of skin color) but you know they have black in them." This African heritage is indicated through facial features or hair texture. The perception of who had African heritage was broad and included any number of features or characteristics that are not exclusive to or necessarily associated with Africans. Gemina stated: "It's a *mestizo* or very light skinned *mulato*." Glenis used the famous character Cecilia Valdés to illustrate her point: "(*blanconazo*) is a *mulato* that could pass for white. Here there is a famous person, Cecilia Valdés, she is a *mulata* but her origins are African. Her hair is straight but you realize by the color of her skin that the African root is knocking on the door, and also there is the white root." Glenis indicated that it was the very milky whiteness of Cecilia's skin that indicated her African roots. Thus, *blanconazo* was a term for whiteness which through its cloudy milky color bespoke of mixture and indicated a whiteness that was not "pure".

Though hair type was also used as a marker for this category there was not always agreement on what hair type a person should have. For example, although the majority of the respondents thought that the hair of a *blanconazo* was straight there were a few that used a different hair type in their description. Glenis mentioned straight hair as typifying the *blanconazo*. Isaac, a librarian in his mid-twenties and classified as *mulato* on his *carnet*, and Iris, a housewife in her early thirties classified as white on her *carnet*, concurred with this assessment. Isaac summed up his position by stating that a *blanconazo* was: "a *mulato* that is white and has fine features....he is white and has features of blacks with straight hair." Iris stated that a *blanconazo*: "has very white skin. It is very white like milk with straight hair and features that are also fine." Yet for some, straight hair was not diagnostic. Frances, a sixty year old spiritualist classified as black on her *carnet*, along with Julie, a thirty-four year old union representative classified as black on her *carnet*, both gave different hair textures as their typification of *blanconazo*. Frances described a

blanconazo as: "white skinned but his hair isn't legitimate. It needs to be processed because it isn't original hair," and Julie described it as, "It is the white. White like a *jabao* with light skin but with hard hair (African textured hair)." Apart from the physical descriptions associated with *blanconazo*, the term was primarily employed as an indicator of African ancestry.

Unlike *blanconazo*, a *blanco capirro* was described as an off-white color rather than milky white. According to Roberto, a thirty-six year old baker classified as *negro* on his *carnet*, "*Blanco capirros* are white but with skin a little, like we say here in Cuba, the skin *empercudida* (dirty white). It is not a legitimate, legitimate, legitimate white." Julie also described the skin color of *blanco capirro* as not a "clean" white. She said the following for *blanco capirro*: "It's a dirty white, seems black, it isn't a light skinned white." According to Darla, "*Blanco capirro* signifies that it is a white that has something of the *mulato*, something of the *negro* and you note it sometimes in the lips, in the nose or in the hair. Here in Cuba they have very strange hair, they have hair that you see is hair of blacks or the lips, it's something you always notice." Glenis also mentioned how there was something implicitly black in the term *blanco capirro*. She described *blanco capirro* in the following terms: "It's a white that has something hidden, it's not like the *mulato* where you can see that they have a white root, it's a white but something there is hidden something that would be black."

Isaac gave a physical description of *blanco capirro* that included hair type: "It is white skin, but a person with hair that isn't straight. It is hair that we call "bad". They do not have straight hair. They have white features but with bad hair." According to both Isaac and Darla it was the hair type that determined the blackness of a *blanco capirro*. In addition both Alberto, a telephone technician in his thirties classified as black on his *carnet*, and Gemina gave *blanco capirro* as a type of *jabao*, which was a type of *mulato*. Alberto said: "*Blanco capirro*, is a *jabao*," and Gemina concurred by saying that: "It's a white that isn't very light, a white that tends to be *jabao*."

Overall, the categories of *blanconazo* and *blanco capirro* indicate that in Cuba one could be categorized as white due to skin color, but still be considered to have black ancestry. The

majority of my informants regarded the use of these terms to be linguistic indicators of black ancestry. This statement is supported by the fact that these terms were mentioned by informants as existing within both the white and mixed race category simultaneously.

Within the "middle range" of the *mulato/mestizo* category were terms that indicated intermediate color. The "ranking" of terms was difficult to establish because the status of terms was always relative. There was no definitive measurement which declared hair texture to be more important than skin color or skin color more important than facial features. General consensus held that *mulato* types were considered to be most attractive but it was hard to "rank" a *mulato* against a *mestizo* in terms of status because the terms and preference for use were so subjective. Some of the terms found in the middle range of the *mulato/mestizo* category were: *pardo*, *blanconazo*, *mulato blanconazo*, *blanco capirro*, *jabao*, *jabao capirro*, *mulato*, *mestizo*, *indio*, and *moro*. To some extent most of these terms were indicative of some black/white mixture.

The term *pardo*, currently obsolete, during colonial times meant the offspring of a white and an Indian or of a white and a *mulato*. Most importantly, *pardo* was also a term used to indicate a free *mulato*. In my first survey, done in January of 1998, of the eighty participants only five respondents knew *pardo* as a racial reference. In general, *pardo* was only used to refer to brown eye color. The five respondents who used the term were thirty-five or older, with one being thirty-five, two in their early to mid-forties and the last two over seventy. When I returned in May, 1998, of the forty-one people surveyed twenty-eight knew of the term *pardo* (light-skinned *mulato*) as a racial term, probably due to a current *novela* (soap opera)[55] which focused on Cuban slavery and had a *pardo* character who was referred to as being a *pardo*.

Yanet, a twenty year old housewife classified as black on her *carnet*, made an explicit reference to the *novela* as the site where she had learned about the term *pardo*.

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[55] This *novela* started after the first survey was completed.

> The *pardo* in fashion now is Juan Tomas. In the characterization of Juan Tomas in the soap opera, you see that he isn't *jabao*, *mulato* or *blanco*. The classification that they give him is *pardo*, because his mother was a *mulata* slave and already had her mixture because she was a French *mulata*, and the father, who the world assumes was Cristobal, he is a white *criollo* and from this came that *mulato*. But what is a classification of *mulato*, for me, it's like confusion. I can't give you specifics, from my perspective I don't know how to define this classification of *pardo* very well.

Ian, a thirty year old language professor classified as black on his *carnet*, and Darla also made references to the antiquity of the word and how currently it was *mulato* and not *pardo* that was used. According to Ian, "*Pardo* is an old term. *Pardo* seems to me to be *mestizo*, it was one thing or another, *pardo* was the union of whites and blacks and was a term used so as not to sound pejorative." Ian also addressed the use of the term *pardo* as a word employed so as not to sound pejorative.

Darla also addressed the replacement of the term *mulato* and what the stylistic difference between the two terms was. "The *pardo* is the *mulato* that before was called *pardo* and now is called *mulato*. *Pardo* and *mulato* are the same, in antiquity they were called *pardo*. The *pardo* is the *mulato* that the Spaniards called *pardo* that is the mix of the *negro* with the *blanco* that is the *pardo*. It is a light *mulato* with good enough hair." According to Darla, *pardo* also indicated a lighter-skinned *mulato*. This was one of the reasons both terms existed at the same time during colonialism. *Pardo* was also an indicator of freedom. Therefore when Felix, a music teacher in his mid-twenties and classified as black on his *carnet* stated, "a *pardo* is a category very similar to the *mulato*," he meant that the differences between the terms *pardo* and *mulato* were subtle and these differences lay in the context of their situational usage.

Currently *mulato* and *mestizo* are used interchangeably with only slight differences between the two. Due to the lack of Amerindians, the term *mestizo* in Cuba, was associated with black and white mixtures rather than white and Amerindian mixtures. Darla had a more expansive definition than most of what mixtures fell under the category of *mestizo*:

> *Mestizo*, well it's the same as always. The *mestizo* is the mix of two races.
> In general, the people think that the *mestizo* is the mix of the *negro* with
> the white and that's not it. *Mestizo* is the mix of two races as well as *negro*
> with Chinese, Chinese with white, white with other people and like this;
> these are the mixes that I consider that are *mestizos*. The definition of the
> *mestizo* is when two people mix the *negro* with the white, but that's not the
> truth. M*estizaje* is to mix with the African that is why we are Cubans, we
> are *trigueños*, mixed with black Africans that is equally *mestizo*.

Amerindian and white mixtures were so uncommon in Cuba that Darla did not even mention it as a specific mixture, though we might consider it to be included in the white with the non-specific other that she mentions. She also pointed out how the majority of the general population equates *mestizo* with a black/white mixture. She indicates that many other Cubans do not differentiate between *mestizo* and *mulato*. In addition, she sees people classified as *trigueños* as participating in racial mixture. She clearly utilizes the term to describe herself when she states "that is why we are Cubans, we are *trigueños*." Here we see a clear example of a term usually reserved for the white category being co-opted to include broad-based membership outside of that specific category.

 Lionel and Raul, two young professionals in their mid-twenties classified as white on their *carnets*, and Felix, all mentioned how *mulato* and *mestizo* were interchangeable terms. Lionel stated: "*Mulato* and *mestizo* are the same, the mix of black with white" and according to Raul, a *mulato* was a *mestizo*. "For me, everyone in Cuba we are *mestizos* because he that doesn't have a little something from the Congo has a little something from the Carabalí, for example, my grandmother was *mulata*." In fact *mulato* and *mestizo* were so interchangeable that Felix explicitly stated it in the following: "It is a category that is synonymous with *mulato*." *Mestizo* is synonymous with *mulato* because of the symbolism found in Cuban *mestizaje*. Not only is Cuba's racial mixture primarily defined as white and black, but as Raul stated, he considers all Cubans to be *mestizos* because in his opinion in one form or another all Cubans have African ancestry.

The term *Mulato* was by far the most favored term employed to indicate the offspring of a white and a *mulato* and the offspring of a *mulato* and *mulato*. *Mulato* also indicated a person who had some black ancestry but the exact mixture was not necessarily known. In addition, it was a term used to denote any beautiful woman whether she approximated the physical description of *mulata* or not.

According to Darla, "The true *mulato* is considered within the colonial era, it's when the mix among blacks was born. The *mulato* as a classification is that between the mix of black with the Spaniard that gets you *mulato*, that is a person with fine features, straight enough hair, that you can comb it with comfort, that is the *mulato*." There were several types of *mulatos* though the original *mulato* was the first generation mixture of white and black. Other definitions of *mulato* were more phenotypic and less specific such as the definition given by Arnaldo, himself classified as a *mulatto*, "The *mulato* is the most discussed of all because there are people that for them the *mulato* has to have straight hair. I don't think so, but well, there are *mulatos* that have light skin and features leaning towards the white's hair which isn't so bad." The following are photos of people considered to be typical phenotypic *mulatos*.

Figure 10
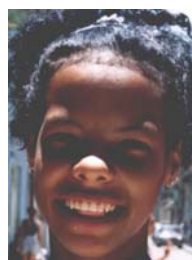
Mulato is an inclusive term that could incorporate many physical types, but the above are considered to be "classic" representatives of the category. There was usually wide spread agreement over the "classic" representatives of this category and these four people were all assigned *mulato* as a physical descriptor by my informants. The distinguishing characteristic that

they share is an intermediate hair texture, while their skin color ranged in tone from a light to a medium brown.

Ana, a housewife in her late thirties who was classified as *mulata* on her *carnet*, defines *mulatos* as "Cinnamon skin toned. Some have straight hair and negroid features, others have frizzy curly hair and finer features." This was the same skin tone description given earlier by another informant for the term *trigueño*. Josue's definition was even broader and sounded more like the definition for *mestizo*. "It's all the people that you can't say that is white or that is black." This definition of *mulato* demonstrates how the terms *mestizo* and *mulato* approximated each other.

Other terms similar in meaning that were under the *mulato* category were *jabao*, *jabao capirro* and *mulato blanconazo*. A *jabao* was considered to be a very specific type of *mulato*. The typical person classified as *jabao* could range from a type of *mulato* with a white skinned complexion, African textured hair, and light colored eyes, to a reddish brown skin tone with brown eyes. The following are photos of people classified as different types of *jabaos*. People classified in this way usually ranged in type from light skinned to "red" skinned, strongly African featured to only a hint of African ancestry, kinky haired to wavy haired.

Figure 11

Informants considered the most distinctive feature of people classified as *jabao* to be the combination of white to light brown skin color with African textured hair. Informants who pilesorted the term *jabao* chose the second and fourth pictures above as being most

representative of this category. The hair color of a *jabao* was usually described as blondish or light colored. Distinctive light colored eyes were commonly mentioned but not diagnostic.

> Natalie[56]: "*Jabaos* are people with yellow caramel colored skin. They have caramel skin but with yellow tones, and the hair they have is curly but with a caramel color. They have caramel colored hair and can have black, caramel, green or blue eyes."

> Darla: "The *jabao* is the person that is a *mulato*, but with light colored eyes. Here they call it yellow hair, but it is not yellow, it's light hair, very light tending towards light caramel. The color of his skin is a strange light caramel color."

> Ian: "*jabaos* here in Cuba have light-skin and very curly hair or as we say vulgarly little raisins. It's said that in the hair the black (African texture) is well preserved. He can have coarse features or fine features, the important thing that dominates is the light-skin and black (African textured) hair, raisins."

> Vivian[57]: "*Jabao* is what they call a *mulato* but the *jabao* is when the *mulato* has bad hair."

According to informants, the most striking difference between a *jabao* and a *mulato* was the hair texture. According to Glenis, "the *jabao* is a black person with light-skin but it isn't the *mulato* because in general the *jabao* has hair like raisins." *Mulatos* were distinguished from *jabaos* by a *malagaso* (intermediate between straight and curly) hair type. Phenotypically persons classified as *jabao* tended to have what Arnaldo referred to as "black features." "It's the basic mix of black and white that comes out with bad hair but yellow colored hair. The skin is light but with the features of a black."

A particular type of *jabao* would be a *jabao capirro*, explained by Arnaldo: "*Jabao capirro* is a *jabao* so advanced that he seems white, but you know that it is a *jabao* by the hair. The hair

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[56] Natalie was a housewife in her late thirties classified as white on her *carnet*.
[57] Vivian was a retired University professor in her mid-sixties who was formally classified as white.

is bad, but the skin is so white and the features advanced." *Jabao capirros* were persons who, depending on phenotypic expression, could also be placed in the white category.

Mulato blanconazos, according to Natalie, were lighter skinned *mulatos*: "*Mulato blanconazos* are people that are also of the union of white with black but they are lighter than the *mulatos*. They are a light caramel skin color and are confused with *trigueños*, understand. They can have frizzy curly hair, but they can have straight hair and generally fine features, but they (the features) can be a little thicker also." From Natalie's definition we can see that *mulato blanconazos* were so light in skin color that they were seen as either dark-skinned whites to be classified as *trigueños*, or light-skinned *mulatos* in which case they were classified by her as *mulatos*.

One of the distinguishing features the informants gave of *mulato blanconazo*, as with *jabao*, was the hair texture. However, there did not seem to be consensus about what characterized the type. Arnaldo commented on how the hair texture was perceived to be straighter than an African texture but not quite straight enough to be considered a European texture. "It is a *mulato* that has light-skin, fine features and straight enough hair although it's not straight hair." In contrast, according to Darla, "*mulato blanconazo* is a *mulato* that is almost white but the hair is bad and hard and the color of the skin is a little light but isn't white." Frances states: "Its not either white or *mulato*. His race isn't defined because he doesn't have hair that's good or bad." For Frances, the most important qualifier was hair texture and not skin color. For Josue, who said, "It is a very light *mulato* but not so much so that they seem like a *jabao*," it was the shade of skin tone that aided him in distinguishing between the two types.

The term *Moro* was also considered by most informants to be representative of another kind of *mulato*. Although a *moro* was in the dark range of *mulato*, and actually sometimes thought to be as dark if not darker than some *negros*, it was the hair texture that placed *moro* more in the *mulato* than *negro* category. The man below was considered to be *moro*.

Figure 12

As with many of these types, the boundaries are fuzzy. Felix stated that "*Moro* is a *negro*

with very beautiful hair and on many occasions has features very similar to that of whites."

Raul, an electrician in his mid-twenties classified as white on his *carnet*, also agreed with this

analysis when he stated that a *moro* was "a black that has better hair than a *negro*." Rocio, a

student in her twenties and classified as white on her *carnet*, further concurred with this opinion:

"*Moro* is dark, dark complexioned, I'll tell you what I call *moro*, he is dark with good enough

hair." Rosama, a seventy-nine year old retired union professor classified as negra on her *carnet*,

considered a *moro* to be a little lighter than what the previous informant stated. Rosama: "here

they call the *moro* the dark *trigueña* people with hair[58], they call them *moro* when they have

good hair.....A *moro* has black skin and good black hair. When I was in the university some

people called me *mulata* and others *mora*. They called me *mora*, because I have good hair." Her

rendering of a *moro* as a dark *trigueña* puts it more in the lighter range of the *mulato* category

than the other respondents. Lionel also saw *moro* as lighter than *negro*, whereas everyone else

viewed it as the same complexion or darker. He stated that a *moro* was: "a black that is less

black." *Moro* was also used so as not to refer to people as *negro*. In those cases, the assignation

was based on either Europeanized features or education or a combination of the two.

Indio was another term that could indicate someone who was brown-skinned but with

straight black hair. Below are two people described as *indios*.

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[58] With hair is an expression that indicated "good hair".

Figure 13

Indios were also considered to be dark-skinned with a skin tone likened to that of some East Indians. Ana gave the following definition of *indio*: "The *indio* has skin that is not very dark like the *negro* nor like the *moro*, it is something lighter, like reddish. That copper colored tone. Their hair is very straight, black, fine. In general they have fine features." Roberto also gave a very similar definition: "The *indio* is a person with very fine skin but it is as if they were a *mulato* but their skin is a little stronger. They have very straight hair and very fine features." The girl on the right was also considered to be a *mulata* by some informants.

Negros

The third broad category, *negro,* encompassed all of those who had dark skin color and African textured hair. Arnaldo gave the definition of *negro* as the following: "They are all those that have very dark skin and raisin hair." Roberto's definition included facial features: "*Negro* is a person with dark skin and very coarse features." Iris, a twenty-six year old schoolteacher classified as white on her *carnet*, gave a similar definition of *negro*. "*Negro* has black skin, a wide nose, thick lips and tight frizzy hair."

Figure 14
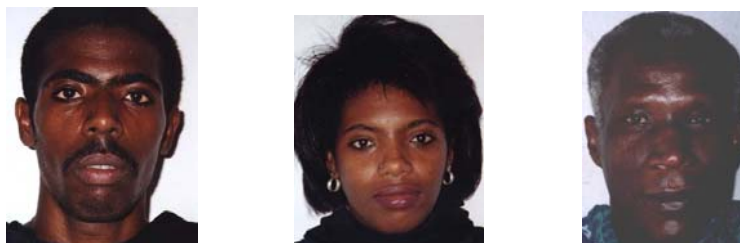
In the pictures above the two individuals on the left are considered to be *negro* and the individual on the right is classified as a *negro azul*. Within the *negro* category itself, the different classification terms were employed based on lightness or darkness of color and not hair texture. Hence the term *negro colorado* (reddish black), which was defined by Roberto as: "The *negro colorado* is a *negro* but not very black, it's between the *mulato* and the *negro*." Ian also defined people considered to be *negro colorado* using skin color and not hair texture. "*Negro colorado* is a black, a little lighter with features of blacks, they came from Africa the same but with a slightly lighter skin color." *Negro colorado* is not used often. Other informants would simply call such people *mulatas* if they were females or *negros* if they were males.

Moreno was a term used to indicate a dark-skinned person of African descent. It was also a term that, during enslavement, indicated a free black person. Presently the term is used to refer to blacks in groups. Frances said that: "*moreno* is the same as *negro*. It is the way that we Cubans have to call someone black." *Moreno* was also used so as not to offend as Rosena illustrated. "*Moreno* is a way of not saying *negro*. *Negro* is a nickname, because *moreno*, a *trigueño*, tanned, but there are *negros* that are racists and you could offend them if you say *negro*." Because of the negative stereotypes associated with the term *negro*, some people preferred to be called *moreno*. Those who did not like to be called *moreno* and preferred the term *negro* were racist in Rosena's eyes.

Lionel also showed in his simple statement how *moreno* was just another term to describe people considered to be black: "It's a black." An alternative definition for *moreno* was presented by Rosama: "*Morenos* here are what we call *negros*, also they say *moreno* is used for *mulatas* that are dark with (good) hair." Even with Rosama's definition dark color still prevailed as a pertinent characteristic.

Negro azul was a term describing the darkest ranges in the *negro* category. According to Arnaldo it was defined as the following: "blue black is a *negro* that has skin so dark and brilliant that it seems blue." This classification was pejorative and was rarely used to someone's face.

Chinos

The *chino* category was by far one of the most interesting and complicated forms of classifying that I came across. On the current census, it has been deleted as a category. As a classification term it traditionally meant the child of a *negro* and *mulata* or vice-versa (Ortiz 1975). This was its meaning before the substantial Chinese immigration took place. Today its popular usage can be seen as a synthesis of its traditional meaning fused with the reality of Chinese immigration. Thus, the term *chino* was applied to anyone of perceived Asian ancestry, anyone who has what is considered to be a straight Asian-like hair type, or anyone with slightly epicanthic eye folds regardless of skin color or actual lineage. The following are people classified informally as *chino*.

Figure 15

It is important to note that none of these individuals are classified formally as *chino* or Asian by the state. The individual on the left is called *chino* as a form of affection. Danielle, a thirty year old librarian classified as black on her *carnet*, defined *chino* as the following: "The Chinese belong to the yellow race, their features are *achinados* (pertaining to Chinese) and their hair is straight enough." The most important feature in defining who was designated as *chino* appeared to be the eye shape. Even those with slightly elliptical eyes were labeled *chino*. That is another reason why the young boy in photo to the far left bears the nickname *chino*. He was four at the time the photo was taken. One day I was standing in front of his home talking with some adults outside, when his neighbor jokingly asked him what he considered his classification to be. His

reply to the amusement of all was "*chino*." This was his nickname in the neighborhood. Another neighbor then asked him, "Well then where are you from?" He thought about it for a minute and said "Japan". He looked a little distressed about this as he had obviously never thought about it before. Pablo, another one of the adults standing next to him clarified the question for him. "No where are you from, what is your patrimony?" His face then brightened up and looking relieved he said "Cuba."

The boy had been called *chino* all of his life. Like the adults he did not differentiate between different Asian ethnicities or countries. This was why he could be considered to be *chino* but come from Japan. *Chino* as a term of affection was also quite common and on par with the term *negrito* but without many of the negative associations. This probably stemmed from the subservient role of Asians as indentured laborers and Africans as enslaved laborers during the early part of Cuba's history.

Cuban singer Isaac Delgado demonstrates how *china* is used as a term of endearment in one of his songs. The lyrics of the song speak about a woman who was more interested in money than the purity of love and he affectionately dubs her as *china*. He croons "*china* todo en la vida se paga" (*china* everything in life must be paid for) and "El amor y el interes se fueron al campo un día, mas puro el interes que el amor me ha tenido la *china*." (Love and ambition went to the country one day, purer was her ambition (for money) than in the love *la china* had for me.)

There were two basic opinions as to the status of the Chinese in Cuba. The first was expressed by Vivian, "Yellow is a race as in the yellow race. Pure (Chinese) don't exist here. Only the Chinese that came (from China) are pure. Their descendants aren't (pure) because almost all of the children of the Chinese here are *mulatos*. The Chinese married with black women, *mulata* women, their children come out beautiful. Though they are called Chinese, they are *mulatos*." For Vivian there were no pure Chinese in Cuba. Historically, because of the unbalanced sex ratio among indentured Chinese laborers, there was an overwhelming sex imbalance of Asian males to Asian females. This imbalanced ratio created spaces for intimacy to form between Chinese men and women of color in Cuba. The definition of *mestizaje* was

extended to include the Chinese because of the historic mixing that occurred. Due to its marginalized role within classification the majority of those that are informally classified as *chino* were formally absorbed into the other three categories.

The second, more formalized opinion, addresses the official status of the Chinese in Cuba. Though formally there are four broad categories found in the classification system, in practice only three of those categories are commonly employed. Even in cases where people identified themselves as Asian they were not identified as such by the state.

In the language of color classification the specific terminology employed was significant. Although the terms themselves were representative of certain phenotypes there was variety in terms of how those phenotypes were perceived and interpreted. Due to this variety the terms were not employed uniformly either in formal or informal classification. Formal classification appeared more systematic because there were fewer terms to choose between than in informal classification but the same flexibility existed.

In both the formal and informal forms of classification membership into the different categories was permeable. The fluidity and plasticity of these super-categories allowed for shifts in ascribed classification, which was accentuated by the lack of consensus between governmental classifying agencies. Despite official control over formal color classification and terminology, the informal perception of color categories, which was maintained in the Cuban psyche, constantly made its presence known and even helped to define the parameters of official categorization. Those who were ascribing categories did so by locating the informal familiar terms they had learned at home into formal sites of identity.

It is through informal classification that the population is given its shared sense of identity. The large majority of the classification terms found in informal classification were structured to acknowledge and indicate African heritage as part of identity. Thus persons classified informally as *blanconazo*, *trigueño*, *capirro*, and *jabao* could formally be found categorized in the *blanco* category. Most Cubans, even those who were blonde, could be informally categorized with a term indicating African heritage. This practice gave validity to the statement that "in Cuba there

are no 'pure' whites here." Those Cubans who were formally ascribed as black could share in the mixed race nature of the society through informal classification. The terms used could indicate racial or cultural whiteness.

The arbitrary and subjective nature of classification was due to the differential emphasis placed on categorization based on whether classifying occurred for formal or informal purposes. Although the terms could be highly variable in both formal and informal forms of classification, they shared a common validity and legitimacy. The official concept of the triad provided color categorization with a sense of stability while informal categorization provided it with plasticity and the ability to cross boundaries. When used in tandem, formal and informal classification provided rich options for identity negotiation.

In this chapter I have described the foundation of both the formal and informal forms of color ascription of classification terminology. Although Cubans have flexibility in color classification these classifications are not made in a social void. There are many differing opinions as to whether or not a color term is considered to be pejorative or the relative positive or negative social value assigned to the term. In the following chapter I will discuss the social background in which these classifications occur and examine 1) the social significance of the terms, 2) the associative social characteristics and stereotypes attached to color terms, and 3) the current shifts in meaning of once pejorative terms.

Chapter Four: The social significance of classification:

Reasons for selecting specific classification terms over others varied, because terms functioned on one level as physical descriptors and on another as indicators of social status. Many social characteristics are attributed to the races at large and the individuals perceived to belong to these groups. In a myriad of ways, the attributes affect the manner in which Cuban actors negotiate their color identities.

Despite their flexibility, classifactory terms did not possess equal social weight. Much of the white bias found in state classification results in the use of traditional terms that embody the ideology of "whitening." Government classification assumed more traditional status to the terms. Under this ideological constraint it was better to err on the side of whiteness than on that of blackness. The categorizing agency felt fewer would protest being classified into a lighter category than into a darker one. Thus, in state classification the ideology of whitening and positive social status prevailed more than the current positive associations of blackness. With informal classification current positive leanings towards blackness were recognized.

Currently, the majority of the social characteristics or stereotypes associated with the *blanco* category are positive. Descriptors like hard worker, intelligent, educated (also meaning cultured), soft spoken, and refined repeatedly appear in my surveys and interviews regarding *blancos*. *Blancos* favorable portrayal possessed a historical foundation. Although the context of whiteness had changed, the positive characterization of whiteness had not. Natalie discussed how the historical social depiction favors individuals described as white:

> The whites are also very decent people. There are also those whites who are problematic, people of a low social level, but this is not the general case. When you speak of a white family, almost always you get an image that they are decent people although they might not be, you understand? At times they raise a ruckus also, but when you talk of whites through history you say ah, you understand? Ah, yes these people are decent. Although in the worst case scenario, they are not really like that.

Natalie clarifies how whites who did not fit the mold of "decent" people are labeled as exceptions and aberrant from the norm. Despite the traditional image of whiteness being very positive, the current image also equated whiteness negatively with racism. This was partly due to the government's equation of the United States with "pure" whiteness, imperialism, and racism, in contradistinction to Cuban with blackness, socialism, and racial democracy. Racism and whiteness were analogous, in fact, some respondents of color, like Felix, referred to racism as an affiliated characteristic of people classified as whites:

> The *blancos* traditionally are very studious people. They are people who have always been characterized as very intelligent, well prepared, ambitious, calculating, racist. They are people who have always cared for their families.

Even though Felix remarks on negative qualities of whiteness, this is balanced with positive traits such as, caring for their families and intelligence, which rarely occurs when describing the characteristics of people classified as black. Felix, who identifies himself as *negro*, tries to balance his self-image of blackness with popular perceptions.

> *Los negros*, well, the *negro* is the other half of the *blanco*. Not really, not in our country. In our country there are blacks and blacks. These two categories are similar but different. We have had the opportunity to study and develop ourselves, and live with all racial types. We have absorbed experiences from the white race and from the *mulatos*. There is a tradition and I suppose a culture also that we are *guaracheros*[59]. In general we like women, we like to enjoy life, and we are ambitious, which is a characteristic of whites. When I refer to blacks and blacks I'm referring to the black who is put down in society for being black. The one who tries to be a person who succeeds, because in reality not all men know the difference, he tries to do what he can. He is the black who studies, who has another mentality, who has another type of education. He tries to develop himself socially or find a way to be a person who takes a different path. The path of truth, the path of the cross, the path that everyone can't arrive at only those who are privileged, who struggle, who are the most

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[59] A person who enjoys himself and likes to party.

resistant, those who are believers, those who are the strongest. This is the difference between a black and a black.

As an Afro-Cuban, Felix, internalized the stereotypes linked with people classified as blacks, and tried to disassociate himself from some of them. His duality of blackness, was reminiscence of Dubois' "two-oneness," attempts to reconcile his positive self image with the internalized negative images of blacks that exist in Cuban society. On one hand he endows blacks with positive characteristics, yet these traits are not perceived as being inherent to blacks as they are with whites. Images of hard work and sacrifice to overcome the difficulties of blackness are predominant in his statement.

Few positive characteristics are associated with the category of *negros*. People classified as *negros* were frequently described as being from Oriente (the eastern more rural part of the country), also implying that they were unsophisticated and provincial. In physical terms, they were also overwhelmingly depicted as inherently excellent athletes. Raiza, a man in his mid-thirties who expressed positive feelings towards blacks, is married to a black woman, considers himself to be of African ancestry, and is classified as white on his *carnet*, stated the following common perception of inherent physical characteristics associated with blacks:

> …the same as with sports. Blacks and *mulatos* have a special aptitude for it. The white has a head for thinking but not for playing. Physically they are distinct. Their strength is distinct. I don't know if you have noticed but here in Cuba you can look at sports and just about everyone, no everyone, in the majority, 100%, 98%, 99% of all the sports you always see blacks. In baseball you see blacks, in basketball you see blacks, in Karate, in Judo, in swimming, and you will always see blacks. The majority of the sports participants in Cuba are black.

People ascribed as black are associated with physical strength and those ascribed as whites with mental aptitude. Blacks were rarely associated with intelligence, education, or high culture, except when discussing a "*negro fino*" or a "*negro para salir*," exceptions to the characteristics generally associated with the term *negro*. Blacks were frequently described as too loud and

scandalous. As with *mulatos*, they were considered to be good dancers and musicians but only interested in living for the moment, particularly lazy, and not willing to work.

Explaining blacks lack of "advancement" in society, Arnaldo, a self described *mulato*, described this condition in the following:

> Poor *negros*. It's not that they are bad because they want to be bad, but they have stopped being slaves only hundreds of years ago. Since then they have been last in the social race and the revolution did not do anything to level them out. The only thing that it did was to stop the watch and begin the race again. But it didn't make them equal, they live in the worst conditions, they are the poorest, they are the one's that work the hardest to get everything. To get a job, to get married, to have a home, they don't have a sense of family, they don't have a sense of the importance of education, aside from that it's difficult to educate them because historically they don't have the tradition of having books in the house…

Although Arnaldo is sympathetic to the social conditions that face blacks, he has also internalized the negative stereotypes about them. Classified as *mulato*, he can completely disassociate himself from these stereotypes which he feels applies to blacks and not himself. Many respondents, most of whom were not considered to be black, expressed similar beliefs. Arnaldo's was not a common analysis of the position of *negros* in Cuban society, many other descriptions I gathered placed the blame for their social condition on blacks themselves. Even well educated Cubans, some classified as black, accepted the essentialized stereotypes of blacks as true.

Mulatos, generally described as separate from both the *blanco* and *negro* categories, were characterized as possessing an intermediate mix of positive and negative social characteristics. Even though *mulato* was considered to be a very attractive category, its dual nature impacted its prefererence for use. Felix illustrates the dual characteristics associated with *mulatos* in the following:

The *mulatos* are people that are descendant from both races. They are almost perfect in that they have taken the positive aspects from each race. The *mulatos* enjoy life, in other words they like good music and good drink. Of all of those who enjoy life they are the ones that people like to stick close to. They are naturally beautiful and intelligent. They like to be prepared. They are always in fine form, their own beauty gives them this advantage. They are almost always accepted by the two groups.

Although considered intelligent and hard working, and preparedness in life, *mulatos* were also equated with involvement in illegal businesses, laziness, and rowdiness. *Mulatos* were also viewed as being party animals, loud talkers, prostitutes, good dancers and musicians. Similar to blacks, *mulatos* were perceived as being very sexual to the point of being over-sexual. Their positive characteristics are attributed to their white genes, while negative to their black genes.

The duality of *mulatos* also allowed for a varied response to their identity, specifically on their ability to "imitate" whites. Darla addresses how *mulatos* were perceived as embodying the positive qualities of the whites through imitation:

In general, the *mulatos* have always had the problem of always wanting to imitate those that are white, and escaping their black skin color. Really, thanks to the triumph of the revolution, the whole world lives collectively. It has done a very grand job. These things have gone away little by little. It isn't so much a problem like it was in antiquity.

For many, what was a positive or negative characteristic depended on the person. For some, "behaving" white was a positive attribute. This "behavior" often meant the acceptance and enactment of the values of the socially dominant group, which in this case are people classified as whites. In Darla's opinion, this behavior is negative because it is a denial of blackness. Furthermore, according to Darla, the ability to escape the "stigma" of blackness is no longer a necessary option because she perceives the Revolution as being pivotal in alleviating the racism which necessitated this behavior. Regardless, essentialized notions of white, black, or *mulato* characteristics and behavior only reinforced and maintained stereotypes of racial groups.

Asians, were commonly assigned neutral or positive characteristics. They were described as good workers, legal or legitimate businessmen, methodical, disciplined, stanedoffish and unassuming. The quality most negatively perceived was being standoffish, which was a "negative" trait within the gregarious Cuban society.

According to Pérez Alvarez (1996), the mechanisms of racial prejudice in Cuba are reproduced in the stereotypes, be they positive or negative, attached to classification terminology. These stereotypes and associations are learned subconsciously in the home and in the surrounding social environment. The strength of the stereotypes and prejudices depends on the amount of interactive social contact between an individual and the "other." Groups who had regular sustained interpersonal contact with one another were less likely to stereotype all members of a group based on the actions of one or two individuals.

Darla emphasizes social mixing among the races as one of the most important accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution. She comments on the importance of social interaction and its effects on interpersonal relationships and perceptions of race.

> These things in life are very complicated and depend on the social medium where one develops. I studied my career at the University and truly there were very few blacks; at least in the career that I studied. In my class there were 70 or so students and two or three were black. At times there was one woman and two men or two women and one man. The other people were *mestizos* and *blancos*. So what has happened is that my best friends are white. My closest friend, we are like family, is white. I also have friends that are black. My *comadre*[60] is black. I don't discriminate against anyone nor are there differences in how I treat one or the other but unfortunately my social relations are a product of these things. Here Cuba is truly multiracial in this way.

Darla describes how her close and intimate friends are of different classification types from herself. She was cognizant that being part of an intimate social environment allowed her to form close friendships with people she designated as *blancos*. Yet, as her testimony attests, casual

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[60] Co-mother or godmother.

144

contact does not easily erase prejudice from the consciousness, especially when there were numeric differentials in the contact. A common phrase that resulted from these unbalanced contacts and served to maintain stereotypes and prejudice was the expression "*un/a negro/a fino/a*" (a fine black). This colloquial phrase indicated that a particular black person was an exception to the rule, thus it was a way of maintaining the negative stereotypes about blacks while indicating that not all blacks behaved in stereotyped ways. The lack of numerical concentration of blacks in certain fields enabled people to maintain their prejudices, while separating and redefining one or two persons as different. Glenis, who is classified as black and is married to someone classified as white, confirms this practice.

> A little while ago Javier told me that he saw a co-worker of his and this co-worker asked him "How is your wife?" He told him that I was doing well. His co-worker replied, "Of course she always was a *negrita fina*." Do you know why he said this to Javier? It's because I am with Javier and he is white. Javier is blue-collared but he is very descent, genteel, and his co-worker knows this. But of course (in his perception) I wouldn't be with a black, I would look for a white, because of this I am a *negrita fina*.

Several things become clear about the stereotypes Javier's co-worker had about blacks in his designating Glenis as a *negra fina*. The first is that Javier and Glenis were perceived as a couple who were socially "advancing" themselves. Javier "advanced" because he was a "genteel" white blue-collared worker who had married a woman, although black, well educated, so he gained prestige through the marriage. Glenis, who was a very well educated black woman, also advanced because although her husband was blue-collared, he was white and that itself still carried a certain amount of prestige. Many dark-skinned Cubans in interracial relationships were perceived to gain status through their relationship and closeness to whiteness.

I myself was urged by my Cuban friends to look for a suitable marriage partner. I was advised that I should marry someone who would be "reflective" of my status as an educated woman. When I asked who would qualify. I was told a *trigueño* or *mulato* but not a black. His

color would be a positive reflection of my success. Glenis, one of the few black people in her profession, was perceived as "different" from other blacks because she was successful, well educated, and well mannered. Another informant classified as black, David, further identified this trend. He related that fellow students and other white colleagues referred to him as a *negro fino* because he attended the University. Employing this and similar phrases not only maintained stereotypes, but was another means of elevating or indicating status without changing a color classification term.

Glenis further elucidates the social implications in this and other similar phrases: "*Negrita fina*, is a person who has achieved an education… this was used way back when I entered the University. They also called me, *una negra para salir* [a black that you can present in society.]" These phrases were commonly directed at people classified as *negro* or *mulato* who were well educated. To be a *negra/mulata para salir* was an axiom which indicated that although one was black, one was well educated, and presentable enough to be seen with in public. The implication was that those who were not "good enough" were dated in secret and away from public view. This phrase and the sentiment behind it had no parallel for men or women considered to be *blanco*. A further implication of the term was that the person being discussed came from a "decent" family was "light" enough to be seen with. Because fine and educated behavior was considered to be the norm, those classified as white who behaved outside of these parameters were in turn termed: "*que blanco mas chusma*" (what a trashy white). It was a common expression to indicate whites who displayed behavior usually associated with blacks.

Color classification in Cuba was primarily based on physical appearance but since terms had overlapped in physical descriptions, people could possess multiple classifications especially if functioning as social "status" symbols. In addition, each individual had their beliefs about classification and though most people agreed upon the basic physical descriptions of the major terms there was definitely no consensus on who should be classified as what. Using myself as an example, I was classified by the majority of the people as *mulata*, yet I was also classified as a *negra*, *negra colorada*, *china* and even *mulata blanconaza* (white skinned *mulata*). For each

146

person, depending on the situation and circumstances, different characteristics took prominence when categorizing either themselves or another person. For some it was hair texture, for others it was facial features, while others took lineage and social status into consideration. The individual's relationship to the person being characterized also played an important role in which term was used, such as with Glenis and Javier. When someone wanted to emphasize my Cubanness I was called a *mulata*. When social status was being emphasized I was a *mulata* or *mulata blanconaza*. If someone wanted to emphasize my blackness I was a *negra* or *negra colorada*. When I was referred to with affection or complimented I was called *mulata* or *china*. The term employed and its function usually depended on the level of intimacy in the relationship between the speaker and the person being classified.

Contested classifications

Regardless of the reason for classification, informally ascribed terms often fell within the realm of possibility. However, at times some aspect of classification was objected to and the person felt that this was not a term that they could identify with comfortably. In the questionnaire participants were asked if they had ever been classified by a term that they felt was not applicable to them. When the answers were compared a very interesting pattern emerged. The overwhelming majority of the respondents who experienced this circumstance were females. Only one male claimed to experience this. The majority of the respondents who alleged that they had been classified outside of their type did not generally object to these informal classifications. Almost all had been identified by terms that were not necessarily self-employed, as it was a very common practice to employ these terms euphemistically.

One respondent, a twenty-one year old female student who was classified as white by her *carnet*, made the following observation. "On many occasions I have been called *china*, *trigueña*, and even *mulatica*, especially by men in the street who are giving me a *píropo*[61]." Although she

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[61] A catcall like compliment given on the streets mostly by men to women who they consider to be attractive.

did not feel that these terms accurately described her, she depicted the social context of usage as being complimentary. In another case, a thirty-eight year old female who was classified as *mestiza* on her *carnet*, stated the following: "This happens frequently because I'm *mestiza*. They call me *china* or *mulata* or *jaba*. It really doesn't bother me. I am the fruit of the union of many races." Her reaction was typical. Most people were not disturbed at being classified into a different category especially if they felt that the term was a compliment or meant in a positive way.

Molly, a twenty year old female secretary who was also classified as white on her *carnet*, recounts a time when she was referred to as a *mulata*. "One time I was called a *mulata* but my hair was very curly and messed up because of the salt." Even though she did not agree with the classification, her response indicates that she "understood" and perceived the reason it was assigned.

In cases where classification was perceived to be pejorative a great deal of tension could arise, as in the situation of twenty-four year old Satia, a student classified as *negra* by her *carnet*, who recounted the following story:

> When I was in primary school I had a friend that would always call me *jaba*. For me this was offensive because I've always been proud to be a *mulata*. One day I asked her to not call me that anymore. She thought I was joking until the day I got into a fist fight with her about it. She never called me *jaba* again.

Satia's narrative is remarkable not only because she was quite offended by the classification of *jaba*, a lighter-skinned term than *mulata*, but that she perceived herself to be *mulata* although her *carnet* classified her as *negra*. The offense in the term *jaba* was in reference to the negative social milieu surrounding it. The socially undesirable characteristics associated with the term *jabao* sometimes outweighed any perceived benefit from the lighter skin color.

Jasmine, a fifty-three year old retired publicist who is classified as *negra* by her *carnet*, relayed a plethora of terms often applied to describe her. "They have called me *china, mulata*,

mulatica, *mora*, and *negra*." Both dark-skinned and light-skinned women were apt to be

"classified" with terms that were lighter or darker than the terms they chose for themselves.

Rana, a twenty-five year old female housewife classified as *blanca* on her *carnet*, related the

following: "I am white and one day in a conversation with some neighbors one of my neighbors

told me that I was *mulata*." *Mulata* was quite commonly used on all physical types of women

and generally perceived in a complimentary fashion. The only man to say that he had been

called a term that he considered to be outside of his type was Rafael, a twenty-six year old

librarian who was classified as *mulato* on his *carnet*. "I have been called *chino* and I explained

to the person that I consider myself to be *mestizo*." This was the only term he apparently

objected to because in an earlier part of the survey he said that he was usually classified as one or

all of the following *jabao*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, and *negro*.

Because terms had multiple definitions and functions there was no set formulas that

determine if a term would be perceived as offensive or complimentary. Even terms, such as

chino, which was used with relative benign positiveness given the right circumstances could be

offensive.

Although flexible, these terms were also somewhat essentialized and associated with certain

characteristics, used to express specific meaning. For example, the word *moreno* was often used

in lieu of the term *negro*. It was often used when referring to groups of black Cubans,

particularly if another black person was within hearing range. Darla explained the two levels of

meanings for the term *moreno* as follows:

> *Moreno* is what you call a *negro* whose skin and hair is a little "better" as
> if it were like yours, with a darker complexion. *Moreno* is also what they
> say to whatever *negro*. When I was a girl we would say *moreno* to the
> *moros*. *Moreno* isn't a skin color. *Moreno* is a way to say *negro* without
> saying *negro* so that the word isn't so harsh. It is so that you don't sound

so strong. It softens the sentence, *moreno, morenito* or *morenita*. A *moreno* is a *negro*. It is not a skin color. *Moreno* is *negro*.

Moreno was used to physically describe a dark skinned person with "good" hair or as a euphemism for saying black. Although for Darla *moreno* really didn't exist as a separate classification from its usage as a polite way to say *negro*, she recognized that it was polite because it implied that one is of mixed descent through the hair type. There is an avoidance in calling someone *negro* because it is considered to be an insult. For many people who are classified as *negro*, its insulting nature makes it more of an insult. Gemina, did not have any positive feelings about the use of the word *moreno*. She stated that for her, *moreno* "is a pejorative form of naming a black person." She believes that using *moreno* in lieu of saying *negro* is a form of discrimination and that discrimination against blacks is taught and learned at home. Using her own family as an example, she explains further.

This is my granddaughter, the one I showed you when she was younger. Well, the things she says it's because she hears them from her father's side of the family, they are white. She says 'I am blonde,' and I tell her 'You are *jaba*. You aren't blonde.' She says 'I am not *negra*.' I tell her, 'Yes you are *negra*. What, when I'm out on the street you aren't going to say hi to me because I am your grandmother and I am black? You are black too.' Well she has this complication is her life and she is only four. 'Don't call me *negra*.' she says, as if it were an insult. You have to be clear in this. It depends on the education that one gets. Her father's family is white. There are people that marry with *negros* for example, they married. He married my daughter who is evidently a *negra*. I don't want to say that this was a mistake. They discriminate against blacks. He got together with her because he liked her, because he wanted to, but that doesn't mean that race and color don't exist. They still discriminate and my granddaughter without realizing it is being inculcated with this. Because of this when she is here I always tell her. Now she doesn't cry when we tell her this and my husband calls her *jabaita*. He tells her 'You are *jabaita*, look at us, we are *negros*. What color am I?' She says 'You aren't *negra*, you are caramel colored.' We tell her 'We are *negros* and you are *negra* also. You are of our family.' This is the big conflict.

Gemina is very clear that to learn either black pride or prejudice against blacks it has to be learned in the home. The construction of *negra* as a pejorative word is felt to be perpetuated in the home. Haille described an incident in which a child in her neighborhood had already learned to associate negative behavior with blacks. She said that this type of association had to have come from the parents. She recounted the following story to me when she was explaining about the different meanings associated with calling a person *negro*.

It's according to the tone that you use when you say it. You can say, '*negro* come here,' 'Listen *negro*, but it's been a long time since I saw you!!' That *negro*! I'm going to tell you something, listen here. Two days ago, my grandson was studying here and I was writing over there. This was a Sunday. Two girls stopped in the portal, two white girls: one shouted to the other that was near the front and it seemed that they were friends or family, the other said, 'Listen, don't shout you seem like a black girl and you are white.' This I heard on Sunday. My grandson and I were seated right here. Pay close attention, I was so curious to see who it was. I saw that their arms were white, so my grandson raised his head, he looked at me and he told me, 'I'm going to throw out the garbage' but nevertheless, now that we had heard the conversation we couldn't concentrate. I went in back and opened the door and looked to see who it was, and it was two little girls. According to who had been speaking one was twelve and the other fourteen. Girls in elementary school. White girls of, ummm the name escapes me at the moment, who live in this place with a person who I'm telling you isn't rich. A person who has money, a person that lives with blacks, with *jabaos*, with Chinese who lives in this medium of life and well, she said to the other, listen, don't yell because you seem like a black and you are white. Now I want you to know that the racial concept is that although the law says that we are equal, deep down this racial concept has not disappeared and these girls who are in elementary school who live in an environment that isn't something else [that isn't racist]. They consider that white is better than black.

Depending on your tone of voice and the context of when it is used, *negro* can be used in several ways and not all of them are pejorative. The negative attitudes which are pervasive towards the term *negro* are described as lingering affects from a previous era. Other words associated with dark skin color are also considered to be pejorative and insulting when used in certain ways. Words such as *negro azul* (blue black), *tizon* which is someone who is charcoal

colored, or *negron* which implies someone who is not only dark-skinned but of a very strong

built, were almost always used in a negative, pejorative fashion. Negative behaviors were often

associated with blacks and blackness.   As illustrated by Haille's two young neighbors, loud

voices and vulgar behavior are characteristics associated with blacks and by extension the term

negro.

Josue in the following explains some of the social subtleties that are inherent in the

classification terms:

> In Cuba I imagine that the same thing has happened (with color
> classification) that occurs in Alaska with snow. There is such diversity of
> human groups, such a profusion of mixture among the people that you can
> describe them exactly and imply their social and cultural order in relation
> to where they are in the society. I can consider myself to be white and
> everyone else to be black, not *mulatos*. I can divide the world into whites
> and blacks. It doesn't matter to me because I'm in the privileged group.
> But for a *mulato* with green eyes it could be important to be described as a
> *mulato* with green eyes to differentiate himself from a *mulato* with black
> eyes, because to be a *mulato* with green eyes is closer to the privileged
> group. For a poor black it could be important to be *moro* and not *negro
> azul*. For a *jabao* it could be more important to be *jabao* than *mulato* and
> it could bother him if someone calls him *mulato* and he would say "I am
> not *mulato*. I am *jabao* because I am blonde and I have blue or green eyes
> and my skin is almost white." A mother could describe her daughter as a
> *mulata blanconaza* because it's said that a *mulata* is almost black so she
> prefers to call her daughter *mulata blanconaza* that is the same as saying
> almost white. I know of many cases like this of *mulato* parents that don't
> want their children to have relations with *negros* because they have a
> theory of bettering the race that is absurdly racist. But they desire their
> *mulato* son to marry a white woman or their *mulata* daughter marry a
> white man so that in the third or fourth generation their grandchildren
> could be almost white or could pass for white.

Josue's addresses some of the multilayered responses individuals have for different terms.

For various people, a term could have positive or negative associations depending on context and

where they perceived that term positioned them in the social milieu. Seen as a negative term by

some, *negro* for Haille, Gemina, and Darla possessed positive characteristics and they worked

hard to pass along a positive attitude to the next generation. Their success depended on many factors, the perceived prestige of a term being one of them.

Most people preferred to identify themselves with terms that they felt conveyed important messages about their status or their social and/or racial status. People often classified by their neighbors were categorized into darker terms than they would have selected. The opposite occurred with state classification in that individuals were usually classified into lighter terms. By relying on the ideology of *mestizaje* as a way to equalize the status differences found in the terms, this social process functioned as a mechanism utilized to level social relations. It conveyed the meaning that everyone is mixed therefore no one is better than another because of the type of mixing that occurred.

It was also perceived that though the Revolution worked hard to eliminate prejudiced attitudes against blacks, the family and other members of the community played a fundamental role in teaching the associated values of color classification. Within this circle the meaning and significance of the terms were learned. One would grow up being called terms like *jabao*, *mulato*, *blanco*, *negro*, or *trigueño*. These terms were used casually in either an affectionate or deprecating manner. As a child's world expanded the same or different terms were used by schoolmates or neighbors. One became known as the *jabao* of 227 or the *mulato* barber. Cuban children learned to make positive or negative associations regarding certain terms based on their experiences with them. For example, *jabao* could have a positive or negative meaning depending on the perspective. For both Gemina and Josue, *jabao* could be viewed from a positive perspective but it was positive for different reasons. For Gemina, *jaba* was positive because it allowed for her to emphasize her granddaughter's blackness. In Josue's example it was a preferred because it implied and emphasized whiteness.

There was also certain personality traits associated with the word *jabao* that gave it a socially negative connotation. *Jabaos* were considered to be *pesado* (difficult to get along with). They were also considered to be sneaky, hot-tempered, troublemakers, and untrustworthy. *Jabao* was structurally related in this sense to the terms *blanco*, *negro*, *mulato*, and *chino*. These were the

153

only terms that had specific social characteristics associated with and assigned to them. Other terms such as *moro*, *indio*, and *mulato blanconazo* did not have specific social or personality traits associated with them.

Stereotypes and Social Status

The social status associated with the categories of *blanco, chino, mulato, negro,* and *jabao* has changed more than the social characteristics associated with them. Despite its slight increase in negative association with the *blanco* category, it maintained its overall positive overtone. Negative stereotypes were still attached to the *negro* category but people still continued to claim blackness. Largely claimed through the *mulato* category, blackness had higher social status juxtaposed with the negative characteristics of perceived over-sexuality. Although *mulatos* were viewed in a positive light as being extremely sexually attractive, beautiful, and sexy, these were also qualities that could take on a negative connotation. Thus, they could be viewed as over-sexed or "wild" in certain contexts. The maintenance of these negative associations showed the difficulty in eradicating and changing ways of thought that persisted for hundreds of years. Although having some blackness was desirable, having too much was still undesirable.

Despite a shift towards blackness in identity negotiation, the following everyday axioms demonstrate how negative stereotypes have persisted in everyday language. The first is the colloquial saying of "*tener que ser negro*" (It has to be a black). It often explained loud disturbances outside, fighting, or some other kind of noisy or visual public display that had occurred, especially if a misdeed was committed. When the perpetrators were unknown, this idiom allowed for the identity of the criminal to be assumed; it was also used as an assumption of guilt and many times said with weary resignation if the perpetrators were known. In the following Rosama explains the sentiment behind "tener que ser *negro*":

> What does this mean? When you commit an error one says it must have been a black, if it's a black. But there are blacks that are good, very honest, very valorous, very educated, very useful to society. Look at the

secretary of the province of Habana; he is a *negro* that seems like a gorilla.
He is black, dark black, almost blue but nevertheless he is the secretary of
the province of Habana.

Although she was a person of color, and she tried to defend blacks as a group, she was obviously a little prejudiced against the term *negro*. She compliments the secretary of the province of Havana for being an educated black man in a very high position in the government. Then she very casually and without blinking an eye likens him to a gorilla because of his dark skin color. Like her, many equate animalistic features to blacks, particularly those of darker skin tones. As part of her denigration she emphasized how black he was and that it was in spite of this that he is secretary of the province. Leandra, an informant's daughter, made a similar reference to a dark-skinned business associate of her father's. She gave him the moniker of Donkey Kong. Her parents did not correct her and this passed on negative associations and stereotypes from generation to generation, despite the promotion of blackness by the government and the acceptance and claims of blackness by her family.

Others actively fought against the negativity associated with this phrase. Darla revealed the following:

Well for me to be *negro* is my race, it's my color, my principles, my family, it's what they taught me. Children are also taught this. They teach them this, from the time they are little, to identify with their color and not deprecate it. To know that it is part of who he is and to feel proud of this. I never considered this to be something pejorative or that it was a curse of life. There are some that consider it to be a curse to have been born *negro*. This depends on the family in which one has been born into and if they define it like this.

The importance of the family and its role in perpetuating or dismissing negative stereotypes is a prominent theme throughout the interviews. In addition Glenis recounted how the term *negrita* was viewed as negative and provided examples of other terms that her co-workers used to avoid calling her *negrita*. "When I started at ICAIC, they never said to me 'ah, the *negrita*

that started at ICAIC,' they would call me the *morenita*, the *mulatica clara* [light little *mulata*],"
and one time a colleague of mine had a hard time trying not to call me the *negrita* or the *negra*."

There were a plethora of terms that denoted blackness and were used in a negative fashion,
one such term was "*tizon*" (charcoal). In searching for the meaning of the word, Haille explained
to me that its presumed origin developed during the enslavement era. "I believe that old slaves
talked like this. Those are words that my grandmother would use. People from that era were
black, 'black is charcoal and the charcoal is black' it's a saying of older folks." Luis, an
electronics engineer in his thirties classified as *mulato* on his *carnet*, was more succinct in his
explanation. He stated the following: "It's the contemptuous way to say *negro*. It is a gross word
against the black race." *Tizon* was contemptuous because it was used as a reference to dark skin
color often took on negative meanings.

In addition to dark skin color, super physical fitness and athleticism was also associated with
terms which indicated blackness. These terms also exemplified negative perceptions. A
"*negron/a*," which referred to physical as well as social characteristics, means big blackness or
more blackness. Darla, who is dark-skinned, described *negron* in the following way: "Well,
negron is what they call a vulgar person who is a *negro*. *Negron* is a pejorative and
contemptuous word. *Negron* is a very pejorative and contemptuous word, it sounds
contemptuous." Mina, a black ballerina in her mid-thirties, further explained the nature of the
term:

> When you say *negron* you are not only talking about color, you say negron
> because it's independent of being black, it's big, it's strong, it's too showy
> and you say he is a *negron*. It's not a *negro* or a *negrita* you say. You
> look for this terminology of *negron* for the size the weight and all of
> theses things. A *negrona* is the same it's a big black female, with a lot of
> body, backside, I don't know, an exaggerated person in size and weight is
> what I consider *negron* (and) *negrona*. For example, my husband Eddy,
> the whole world says that he is a *negron*, but not *negron* because he is blue
> colored, or because he is a *tizon* but because he is *negro*, tall, corpulent
> and you say *negron*, you are not referring specifically to color.

Although at one level *negron* carries a negative connotation, it may also be innocuous and simply mean a big person.

Conceptual terms such as *adelantado* (advanced) and *atrasado* (throwback) were used to describe one's relative color status in relation to the status of one's parents. If the child appeared lighter than the parents then he or she was considered to be "advanced." If the child was darker than his parents he or she was considered a "throwback." Darla explained how this worked in the following example.

> Well, suppose in my family if you were my daughter and I was black like this and Jorge also was *negro* like this. They would say to you that you came out a little advanced (*adelantadita*), that is *adelantado*; a throwback would be if I were your mother and I was married to a white or light *mulato* and we birthed a little black (*negrito*), like throwback, this is the classification of advanced and throwback.

The use of *adelantado* (advanced) and *atrasado* (throwback) provides us with a glimpse into the prestige associated with light skin color and the devaluation of dark skin color. These terms did not just refer to color alone but facial features, and hair texture, but more importantly they were seen as predictors of character. To be "advanced" was always associated with lighter skin color and European culture, civilization, and charcteristics. Culture represented physical manifestations of self. A *mulato* exhibited a mixed culture, whichever features were prominent, those were the characteristics that he/she would take on. This arcane and essentialized notion of race is present and clearly expressed in Vivian's response: "The *mulato* who is closer to white who has in his organism the biggest number of white genes, he behaves like a white, those who have the grand majority of black genes behave like blacks. There are *mulatos* who are very dignified in Cuba, Antonio Maceo was a *mulato negro*, but a *mulato* of tremendous character...." Antonio Maceo was dignified because of his mixed nature. There was a belief that the social

157

characteristics of races were inherent and that the "good" characteristics came from the white inheritance just as the bad characteristics came from the black.

Shifts in meaning and preference of terms

The Cuban government's change in attitude towards race and the Afro-Cuban population led to a similar change in color terminology. A shift in preference of terms used to indicate race or skin color demonstrates this change. During the colonial era and up until the Batista regime, negotiating one's identity or that of one's offspring into a lighter category was advantageous for personal and economic advancement within the society. Selected to emphasize whiteness *mestizaje* was highlighted to demonstrate European heritage. As the biography of Reyita[62] demonstrates, whiteness was a commodity, desired to avoid economic and social discrimination. Before the Revolution it was favored to use classification terms that indicated lighter skin color. "Black" terms like *negro* were viewed as offensive to some because of the negative associations attached to it. Other terms like *moreno* and *moro* were used to avoid calling someone a *negro*. Even when terms possessed synonymous meanings like *mestizo* and *mulato*, lighter meaning terms were the preferred choice. My interviews indicate that a shift in social climate and the preference of employing terms that denoted a lighter skin tone or implied more whiteness has diminished in informal classification though not entirely faded.

I analyzed four sets of terms understand their current application. Historically, three sets of these terms are employed to indicate lighter skin color and higher status. The first set of terms consisted of *mestizo* and *mulato*. Traditionally, these terms in Cuba shared similar meaning but with *mestizo* occasionally indicating a physically lighter mixture. *Moreno* and *negro* comprise the second set of terms. Both of these terms were also used synonymously, but *moreno* moreso as a courtesy term to avoid using *negro*. The third set of terms was *moro* and *negro*. *Moro*, as with *moreno*, could also indicate a "better" hair type. *Moro* and *moreno* could imply and infer a

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62 Rubiera Castillo 1996

racial mixture which was determined based on the hair type rather than skin color. The fourth set of terms was *jabao* and *mulato*. *Jabao* was a type of *mulato* that had a lighter skin color but more Africanized features. In comparison, *mulatos'* skin color was darker but had more Europeanized features.

The first set of terms, *mestizo* and *mulatto*, were often used interchangeably amongst Cubans. Although both represented admixture, *mulato* focused on a black white mixture, whereas *mestizo* could include other types of mixture leading to a lighter skin tone. Most people employed the terms interchangeably because they considered *mestizos* to mainly consist of black and white mixtures.

When questioned about which term Cubans themselves preferred to use, I received several responses indicating that the preferred term was *mulato*. Those who selected another term to specify *mestizaje* perceived *mulato* as colloquial and informal. Several people indicated that *mestizo* was the term to use officially, while *mulato* was the common or vulgar term. Josue believed that "nobody uses *mestizo* outside of the official papers of the identity card." Luis also defined *mestizo* as a word to use formally, "*mestizo* is a technical word that is used when it's time for official documents."

Rocio explained, "We [Cubans] use *mulato* more than *mestizo*. We almost don't use this word if it's not on [official] papers. That is where we put *mestizo*. Nobody puts *mulato* down although you can now put an "M," you don't know what you want to say, skin color "M."" Rocio points out the trends that I found, in terms of the frequency and in what capacity, these two words were employed. *Mulato*, by far the more common term, was preferred over *mestizo*. She also addresses the change in the *carnets* from using the terms *mulato* or *mestizo* to using the initial "M" to represent both of the terms. The question on the new *carnets* was trying to figure out whether it was *mulato* or *mestizo* being recorded or if the category was collapsed and merged into one identity. A young informant who had recently received her new identity card told me that her classification for skin color was *mestiza.* Upon glancing at her new card "M" filled the space for skin color. On her old card, her skin color was *mestiza* so she assumed that the "M"

stood for *mestiza*. Another informant whose old card indicated *mulato* also had an "M" on his new card. The ambiguous use of "M" demonstrates how *mulato* and *mestizo* are further merged by the state. A person is categorized as either a *mestizo* or *mulato* without their knowledge. With just an "M" marking their skin color, two different terms are validated "M" to satisfy both claims. At this point only the officials understand the future of this category and which term will prevail as the category title.

A pervading sense among some younger Cubans was that the use of *mestizo* was antiquated and not commonly used. Arnaldo related how *mestizo* is a formalized version of *mulato*: "Well, academically *mestizo* is a term but nobody uses it." Older Cubans were more likely to use the term *mestizo*. According to Ian, *mulato* was the current and hip term to use:

> *Mestizo* is a term that is already in disuse. It is not used much. *Mulato* is a term that is en vogue, it is in the street. The people prefer to be called *mulato* before *mestizo*, and I don't believe that they have anything against (the use of) *mestizo*. It's just that *mestizo* is in disuse.

One out of three Cubans preferred to use the word *mulato* rather than *mestizo* even though *mestizo* implied a lighter skin toned mixture. The emerging preference for *mulato* over *mestizo* reflects a societal change. Although *mestizo* indicated a variety of mixtures, *mulato* specified a mixture with African heritage. Despite its broader framework, neutral social status, and favor in formal usage, *mestizo* was not preferred over *mulato* in an informal context. Self classification and informal ascription also favored terms implying rather than obscuring African heritage. This current trend in informal ascription and self classification contrasts with social patterns of previous eras.

A similar pattern emerges when comparing the terms *moreno* and *negro*. *Moreno's* primary social function lay in its ability disassociate blackness from the condition of slavery. In addition it implied a cultural or physical closeness to European heritage, despite the dark skin color affiliated with Afican heritage. Alberto succinctly summarizes *moreno's* social function as

a euphemistic device: "It is softer to a *negro* or *jabao* if you could say *moreno*. To a *mestizo* to whomever you can say *moreno*, because it is softer." *Moreno*, in Alberto's opinion, could be applied as a less abrasive terms to avoid employing other terms denoting blackness. *Moreno* was frequently applied to groups of mostly male Afro-Cubans.

When tracking favored terms, slightly more people preferred to use the term *moreno* than *negro* in polite intercourse. Less than half preferred to use the term *negro* and the rest described the terms as synonymous and did not have a preference. Most participants responded that "*moreno*" was a euphemism for *negro*.

Determining which term to use was analogous to tiptoeing around a minefield. Josue explains how either term could be construed as offensive;

> I don't believe that *moreno* is marked as contemptuously [as *negro*], but if you are going to call [out] to a *negro* it can seem mocking because *moreno* is *moreno* and *negro* is *negro*; but if to a *negro* you say *moreno* he can think that you called him in this way so as not to say *negro* and then for him it [*Moreno*] can also be a contemptuous term.

The characterization of the term depended on how the social information contained in the term was read. *Moreno* could be offensive to a Cuban of color if he thought it was to avoid calling him *negro*. Similarly, using *negro* and not *moreno* could also be offensive because of the negative social status assumptions associated with it.

Moro and *negro* had a similar dynamic relationship to each other, but *moro* was generally used to refer to individuals and not groups. Rocio defined *moro* as having, "better hair and finer features" than a *negro*. *Moro* was a good euphemism for *negro* because according to Luis, "they call the *negro moro* because, he also has dark skin." People described as *moros* were often characterized as having skin color as dark as or sometimes darker than *negros*. The function of these terms as euphemisims was because they implied ideological if not physical *mestizaje*. In contrast to *moreno*, *moro* could stand alone, and was considered to be an actual physical type. *Moro* was a more individualized, personal term to use.

Despite the informal use of these terms, they were not part of formal classification. People informally classified as *moros* were not classified as such in their identification cards. Officially they were categorized as either *negro* or *mestizo*. Informal use of *moro* also revealed the ascribers perspective on social status. Classifying individuals as *moro* was the social equivalent of calling them *negro fino*. This cultural refinement was also considered to be physically expressed by hair texture and "fine" facial features.

The final set of terms analyzed was *jabao* and *mulato*. Individuals classified as *jabaos* were sometimes characterized as both physically and socially coarse. Even though people would classify themselves as *jabaos*, it was a problematic term to use. Many respondents shared Ian's opinion that, "*jabao* has a negative connotation. There is a myth that the *jabaos* are bad." Though people classified as *jabaos* were lighter complexioned than *mulatos* they were not a preferred type. Julie illustrates why, "The *jabaos* don't like that you use *jabao* and the *mulatos*, they like that you use *mulato* because *jabaos* have coarse features, the color could be light but the hair is hard." *Mulato* was considered to be a more physically refined mixture than *jabao*.

When questioned, the overwhelming majority of people felt that *mulata* was the preferred classification term to use in polite discourse. More negative characteristics were associated with the term *jabao* than *mulato*. People described as *Jabaos* were considered to be "*atrasado*" (throwbacks). Their features, particularly their hair (most people characterized as *jabaos* often had afros and not "wavy" hair), were frequently portrayed as too Africanized.

The biggest difference between *jabaos* and *mulatos*, according to Isaac, is that "*jabaos* have more black than white." Though *jabaos* were a type of *mulato*, they too heavily favored their African heritage. The negative status attached to *jabaos* has not changed. Their in-between status is not celebrated and in fact they were considered by many to be "raceless." This "raceless" status of not belonging to either race positioned them outside of the *mulato* category, even though technically they were members. Many times skin color was too white to be considered black and features too Africanized to be considered white. Not "belonging" to either the black or white category, and being a marginalized type of *mulato*, *jabao* was not a desirable

classification term. The most important aspect of color classification was in belonging and *jabaos* did not "belong."

I have outlined some of the current and lingering stereotypes associated with a politically outdated ideology of whitening. In light of this climate, it is remarkable that both formal and informal ascription and self-classification shifted to favor illustrating and expressing African heritage. Belonging simultaneously to whiteness and blackness, yet favoring African heritage is behind the ideology of *mulatizaje*. Social status of classification terms revolves around the relative value of physical attributes such as hair type, skin color, and facial features, and also socially valued characteristics, such as high culture, intelligence, or education. Even terms with positive physical value and social status, are not necessarily valued. Although whiteness is positively valued, as we shall see in the next chapter, too much of it is negatively weighed. Regardless of color, to be defined as Cuban is to participate in a national ethos of *mulatizaje*.

The pejorative or complimentary status of terms is dependent on such factors as tone of voice, social context, and apparent level of intimacy between the two social actors, which determines how a term is received by the recipient. *Negro* was not "bad," nor *blanco* "good" in all contexts. Contextual value could and did shift often depending on circumstances.

Changes in associative status and value of classification are because of popular perceptions of *mulatizaje* and *cubanidad*. In this chapter we examined the social background of classification and perceived changes in the status and value of blackness and whiteness linked with certain color terms. In the next chapter we will investigate 1) popular perceptions of *cubanidad*, 2) popular awareness of and responses to the images of *cubanidad* presented to and consumed by tourists and, 3) *mulatizaje* and *cubanidad* in identity negotiation. This chapter will demonstrate the mechanisms of identity negotiation and the expressions of *mestizaje* (race mixture) and *cubanidad* through the use of *mulato* as an identity marker. It will further explore the gendered dynamics of color classification, as projected through medium of the *mulata* woman.

163

Chapter Five: Mulatizaje and Cubanidad

"...to be Cuban is more than black, more than white, more than mulatto." Jose Marti

The discourse of a *mestizaje* national identity in Cuba is unique among the array of Latin American dialogues of *mestizaje* in that it endorses a paradigm of blackness instead of whiteness as the center of *mestizaje* identity.   In general, most other countries (i.e. the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and so forth) with similar racial demographics have glorified and promoted *mestizaje* for its ability to "whiten" its population. In contrast, the Cuban, discourse of identity currently stresses the commonality of brownness through *mulatizaje*. That Cuba promotes *mulatizaje*, and that this promotion simultaneously exists alongside a historical ideology of "whitening" is unparalleled.

The ideological construction of *mulatizaje* as a significant aspect of national identity did not begin with the 1959 Revolution, but instead was sown much earlier. Throughout Cuban history, the paradigm of race and the representation of race through *mestizaje* played a crucial role in nation building. Race was such an important issue during the first half of the twentieth century that the fear of racial conflict erupting led to a pivotal delay in Cuban independence during a time when most other colonies were throwing off the yoke of colonization (Frank Taylor 1988:24). This fear was a key factor in the construction of the young nation's identity as Cuba vacillated between the need for independence and the deep rooted fear of becoming a black republic like Haiti.

This concern over race was psychological as well as economic, making it extremely important for Cuba and other sugar producing islands in the Caribbean to reassure financial backers of their political stability. Exporting an image of dominant white control over the black elements of the population became paramount to Cuba's economic success. Thus, during colonial rule, constructing a national identity entailed the need to portray a nation that was as white as possible. This continued after the colonial period as whiteness remained an important aspect of Cuba's identity in terms of its position in the international hierarchy of "races."

According to Edensor (2002), there are several tropes that are employed in the construction and portrayal of national identity. This identity is formed through the dialectic of formal and informal discourse between the state and its citizenry. This dialectic is manifested in the official historical portrayal of a "white" Cuba by several factors. In the colonial period, one factor which contributed to the promotion of as part of an overall Cuban identity was legislation which made access to whiteness an asset and a privilege. In the early nineteenth century, "whiteness" had become somewhat flexible in definition, and to be "white" was a legal status that could be granted or revoked by the courts. The criteria of legal color were based largely on social position rather than skin complexion. Thus, a light skin hue did not necessarily grant one access to whiteness, nor did a dark skin hue automatically disqualify one from being classified as white. Nevertheless, someone who was not of a "pure" white background had a better chance of being declared legally white if he or she came from a family with wealth and high social standing than from a poor socio-economic background (Martinez-Alier 1974). However, being declared legally white did not guarantee the social acceptance of white status. In Cuba, one could be legally white, physically mixed, and socially black. According to Martinez-Alier (1974), foundlings who were not obviously black were legally classified as white, but because their parentage was unknown there was doubt as to the "purity" of their whiteness. In these cases, complexion and other attributes were examined to ascertain status. Furthermore, access to whiteness through marriage was legally restricted through laws enacted to control interracial contact (Martinez-Alier 1974). A non-white person considering marriage to a white person either had to be declared legally white, or granted special permission to marry between "races." Conversely, white women who were involved in interracial relationships were sometimes socially transformed into *mulatas* from the "taint" of the relationship (Kutzinski 1993).

During the period of the end of enslavement and beginning of emancipation, legislation was enacted that restricted non-white immigration while promoting white immigration to the island. Black laborers from neighboring Caribbean islands were specifically discouraged from immigrating to Cuba, while whites (mostly Bizcaino and Canary islanders) and Chinese were

encouraged. Indentured laborers from China were seen as an ideal cheap labor replacement for enslaved Africans, because they were plentiful, cheap, and would work where the emancipated slaves refused to work. These Chinese immigrants were absorbed into the white category and counted as white on the census. The legislature's attitude towards non-white Cubans, as it concerned a national identity, indicated that they were not regarded as a relevant part of the citizenry until it was clear that their assistance would be needed to gain independence for the island.

One of the most prominent means of depicting a "white" Cuba has been through the census which has shown a steady increase in the "white" population and a steady decline in the "black" population up until emancipation occurred. Scholars continue to debate the accuracy of the numbers in the colonial and current censuses. One of the central disputes over the census lies in how race is defined in Cuba and abroad. While most foreign observers define Cuba's black population as including anyone of visible African descent regardless of skin color, Cuba does not automatically assign people of visible African descent membership into the black or *mestizo/mulato* categories. In the last three[63] official Cuban censuses (1953, 1981, 2002), race was not self reported, but rather was determined by the enumerator's opinion of the person being observed. By means of this method of demographic determination, the racial composition of the population in 1981 was officially estimated at 66% white, 12% black, 21.9% *mestizos/mulatos* and 1% Asian.[64] According to Moore (1988) and other noted Cuban scholars, within the parameters of a Cuban definition of blackness, the Afro-Cuban population in Cuba can be estimated at between 55% and 66% black. The more important question lies not in how the government classifies its population, but how the population classifies itself. Informants' perceptions of Cuba corroborate the latter estimates. In contrast to the 1981 census, I have found that most Cubans in my study favored brown/black terms when they self-identified outside of

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[63] Not including the 1970 census in which "racial" statistics were gathered but not published.
[64] Due to the manner in which the census was conducted, it is not an accurate gauge of how Cubans would identify themselves if given the opportunity. The state, for a variety of reasons, has a white bias when classifying its population for statistical purposes.

official purposes. This is evident through the majority of respondents who were classified as white on their *carnets*, yet identified either explicitly or implicitly with terms to indicate *mestizo/mulato* status. Employing terms such as *trigueño* and *blanconazo*, informants also pointed out and ascribed certain aspects, such as nose width, lip shape and size, or hair that was not straight or fine, as "black" characteristics. These characteristics were not necessarily considered to be markers of "blackness" in all circumstances, but were used in specific contexts to show *mulatez*. Although there is a prominent white bias in classification by the state, the 1981 census reflected an increase (21.9%) in the state's classification of the *mestizo/mulato* category from the 14.5% recorded in 1953 (de la Fuente 2001).

The white bias in classification by the state has a sociological as well as psychological component. As has been documented in Brazil and other countries with similar methods of classification, there is a socio-economic dynamic to classification which involves the tendency for well educated people and those holding prestigious jobs to be ascribed into whiter categories. Cuba's well-educated population could very well be contributing to the "white" bias in categorization by census enumerators. Despite its statistical representation of national whiteness the Cuban state has been gradually leaning towards an identity of *mulatez*.

Mulatizaje is expressed in Cuba through several different venues. Evidence for the existence of *mulatizaje* can be found in the popular culture, such as in idiomatic expressions and idealized representations of Cubanness, and in the manner in which color identities are negotiated and ascribed. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of *mulatizaje* in the popular culture and its acknowledgement and support through state rhetoric can be viewed as a crucial step towards a true racial democracy.

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Mestizaje, Mulattoization and Cubanidad

In order to forge an independent Cuba, the post-emancipation "race problem" was submerged under a national umbrella of *cubanidad*.[65] Questions of race were ignored as the cultural ideal of whiteness pervaded the national consciousness despite the "multi-racial" nature of the society. *Cubanidad* has conceptually encapsulated a multitude of visions, each determined to define a national ethos symbolic of "authentic" narratives as metaphor for Cuban culture. As such *cubanidad* is not static and represents many contested realities. At a time when the young nation struggled to define itself amidst conflicting interest the initial constructions of *cubanidad* promoted "whiteness" and "high" (European) culture as the ideal. This "whiteness" was reinforced by a dominant national image of the "Cuban" as a *criollo* (Creole), which was originally defined as a person of non-racially mixed "pure" Spanish descent born on the island (Davis 1997:86). Nevertheless, this *criollo* was more of a representation of elite whites than of the masses, and this elitism did not allow for the non-white or the members of the lower classes to be acknowledged as active contributors to Cuban identity. The educated, the privileged, and the white constructed these particular representations of *cubanidad* (Duany 2000).

This early projection of the *criollo* as the image of *mestizaje* employed "whiteness" at its epicenter, and its objective in the paradigm of "whiteness" was to culturally and physically whiten the population. Solaun and Kronus (1973) have described this goal as a non-violent approach to genocide. Through this process, the nation would advance through successive generations of admixture with the final result being white individuals, and the gradual elimination, through benign neglect, of the "darker" elements of the population. This process of *mestizaje* was envisioned as not just physical but cultural as well. Many of the great thinkers of that time could not conceive that Europe, which they considered to be the pinnacle of civilization, could be any other than the progenitor and overwhelming contributor to "culture" on the island. They chose to ignore or accept as "tropical" the strong African influence on

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[65] For the purposes of this study cubanidad can be defined as the intersection of national and interpersonal identity. In this sense it also refers to all things uniquely Cuban.

cubanidad. Avoiding blackness as part of Cuban heritage and identity was due in part to the stigma associated with slavery. José Martí and other intellectuals challenged this long-standing concept. By projecting and expanding upon a "multi-racial" image of Cuba, the Cuban imagination and promoted a deracialized image of *cubanidad* which included of non-whites. In his vision, the societal divisions of race were to be ignored and eliminated as all Cubans united around the same goal, an independent patrimony. In spite of the apparent "multi-racial" character of Marti's ideology, some scholars have proposed that Martí's vision was an effective means of silencing dissent and not addressing the race issue, because of its failure to deal with relevant ways in which racism created schisms in the society.

In light of the uniting aspect of *cubanidad*, the cultural ideal of whiteness represented by the *criollo* was expanded to be more inclusive, but not to include non-whites. Instead it incorporated the image of the white peasant (*guajiro*) in a new vision of the *criollo*, attempting to unify whiteness across the different social and economic classes on the island. This dual imagery was proposed by the Hispanicists, a group of intellectuals, who viewed Cuba as being part of a de-racialized *mestizaje* (Duany 2000). *Mestizaje* as espoused by the Hispanicists glorified Spanish cultures, and viewed the *criollo* as the blending of different white cultures. If physical mixture occurred, it was represented as an amalgamation of whiteness, for example: Spaniards with Andalusians. This "whitewashing" of the *criollo* image emphasized the importance of a white European heritage while excluding and negating people of color from its definition. Under this kind of whitewashed "*mestizaje*" the "purity" of the *criollo* ideal was maintained while obscuring the "impure" multiracial reality (Davis 1997:85). By emphasizing the *criollo* as essentially white, Cuban identity was perceived as being non-racialized and non-problematic.

The Hispanicists' definition of *mestizaje* held sway up until the 1959 Revolution. Although these intellectuals included black leaders such as Antonio Maceo in their definition of *cubanidad* their emphasis was on Maceo's white Hispanic ancestry which was seen as contributing to his intelligence and strength of character (Helg 1990). The construction of what would be the precursor to a national *mulatizaje* identity had its origins in the 1930s among another group of

intellectuals, the Afro-Negristas, who also used the imagery of *mestizaje* in their ideal conceptualization of the nation. Their representation of *cubanidad* included the *criollo*, but it was the *criollo* racialized and transmuted into the mulatto. This conscious racialization of Cuban identity was perceived as necessary due to the "multi-racial" nature of the society. Whereas the *criollo* of the Hispanicists ignored the African contribution to Cuban society, the *criollo mulato* of the Afro-Negristas highlighted it.

Both the Hispanicists and Afro-Negristas used the works of José Martí to support their positions on the composition of the nation. Additionally, though both sought to unite Cuba based on anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and a concept of national identity which focused on *mestizaje*, each had a slightly different stance on the meaning of *mestizaje* (Duany 2000). For the Afro-Negrista's these contributions were physically and culturally embodied in the mulatto as the national symbol of a Euro-African past.

The competing images of *cubanidad* as representative of national identity juxtaposed the *mulato* and the *guajiro* (Davis 1997). These two diverse images, each with different (his)tories and trajectories, represented the internal struggle to have a racialized or deracialize national identity. The evocation of the mulatto as a marker *cubanidad* used the idea of mulattoization, through the symbol of the mulatto, to represent a physical, cultural, and ideological *ajiaco* (Cuban stew) of the Spaniard and African. The iconography of the *mulato*, whether it was tragic, threatening, sexual or unifying, has been present in all aspects of Cuban society from religion, literature, entertainment, and the media, to the political arena. In this context, the mulatto would become part of a broad-based definition of *cubanidad*. Yet this image would not be successfully incorporated into the national consciousness as a genuine representative of national identity until years after the 1959 Revolution. It was then that the political and ideological conditions converged, allowing the Afro-Negristas' image of a *mulato* nation to be recaptured and employed as a national symbol of *cubanidad*.

The process of constructing national identity, according to Edensor (2002), involves the process of "staging" tropes of identity through the use of icons and symbols. The most

accessible images of *cubanidad* can be found most often in public venues as represented by the externally projected image of Cuba constructed for the tourist, and the internally constructed image of Cuba found in the popular culture. These different projections, one external and one internal, intersect on several axes bound together through the image of the *mulato*.

The *mulato* as symbol of the nation is possible because of its multiple meanings and functions in Cuban society. This entails being a descriptive device of lineage or phenotype on one level, and as a socially unifying symbol on another. *Mulato*, as employed by my informants, was an inclusive term which could incorporate many different physical and social types. The flexibility of color classification in Cuba generally allowed for a wide variety of people to claim or employ a *mulato* identity if they desired it.

Blackness and the *mulato* have been important factors in *cubanidad* and the "staging of the nation" through tourism. The nation is "staged" as each country competes in an international market advertising how it is distinct from others in order to entice business (Edensor 2002:84). In terms of tourism, Afro-Cubanismo is profitable and sells politically, religiously, and culturally, which are some of the reasons why people visit the island each year. Many flock to the island to see the "exotic" in action, including observing the island's political stance on racism, and participating in or viewing various Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies from Santería to Palo Monte. As representative of the "exotic," blackness also sells sexually in addition to all the aforementioned ways. White European and North American tourists coming to Cuba specifically look for "exotic" sexual experiences with women who fulfill their definition of women of color. This was often expressed in the popular belief that, although "all" Cuban women were attractive, the darker-skinned women were the most successful in forming relationships with foreign men because of those men's preference for black women.

Through the construction of a distinct "tourism" identity, there has been a commodification of "blackness" in terms of how *cubanidad* is represented to the "outsider." We will be examining the dual images of *cubanidad* as presented in the popular culture and encouraged by the state

through "national" icons, and the image endorsed by "the people" through representations of race as employed in Cuban terminology.

The state actively frames its image of *cubanidad* through the icons it employs to represent "authentic" Cuban culture. Through state iconography, the *mulato* has been made into an integral and highly visible part of national identity. In a country that by its own assessment is over 60% white,[66] the ideological image that the world has been given of Cuba is paradoxically black. The Cuban government, headed by Fidel Castro, brought with it the political desire, and to some extent, the necessity for a projection of blackness instead of whiteness as a national emblem. Cuba had several political and social reasons for wanting to convey to the world a connection with blackness. The results of exporting this image have been an internal shift in that acceptance of blackness as the populace responds to the state's rhetoric. To understand the dynamics of this shift, we need to understand why it was no longer advantageous for Cuba to maintain and promote the external white image it had spent a century cultivating.

One of the major reasons for Cuba's promotion of the black aspect of its identity has been Cuba's socialist stance on race relations. The Cuban government advocates harmonious racial relationships. Politically and historically, racism has been linked with ideologies and concepts that were considered to be anti-revolutionary and undesirable, such as capitalism, imperialism, and domination. Part of the socialist rhetoric concerning racism focused on racism as the structural result of worker competition; with competition between the social "races" eliminated, social position would be acquired due to merit and not race. This ideology espoused that with equal access to opportunity, racism would come to a halt.

In Cuba before the Revolution, whiteness was the social currency which underlay the very foundation of the society and those who did not have this currency were excluded from full participation in the social order. The longstanding social and economic intercourse among dominance, imperialism, capitalism, and social whiteness led socialist Cuba to put itself

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[66] Based on Cuban census figures.

ideologically in an opposite position from whiteness, allowing a political and cultural reclamation of blackness to occur. This "blackness" placed Cuba both politically and ideologically counter to the United States. The unique circumstances of the Revolution led to co-opting the mulatto as the ideal representation of national identity. Yet the Revolution itself did not set out to racialize national identity, though it would use race to its advantage. If anything, it wanted to solve the racial problem, so that it could erase race from the political milieu. In accordance with this philosophy, race-based groups and organizations were eliminated. According to Moore (1988), students interested in having Afro-Cuban study groups were discouraged and the students were "re-educated" about their ideas.

Despite this, the Revolution as an ideal held itself up as the antithesis of racism and imperialism, and aligned itself politically and contextually with the Third World globally. This included political relationships with African Americans and other minority groups inside of the United States as well as Third World populations. As such, Cuba employed an interesting political strategy of forming alliances with powerful countries like China and Russia while forging equally powerful political ties with other Third World countries and peoples in the Caribbean, Africa, and among African-Americans in the United States (Taylor 1988). This political strategy was a very deliberate effort on the part of the Revolution to align and identify Cubans and their struggle with that of other struggles involving Third World countries and people of color. In one of his speeches, Fidel Castro further emphasized his position when he announced that Cuba was an Afro-Latin nation (Taylor 1988:28). This official political statement of national identity had repercussions for Cuba's external politics and internal perceptions of *cubanidad*, as it embodied the *criollo* and *cubanidad* in racial terms, even though the Cuban government was remarkably silent concerning the continued importance of race within its borders. So even as the Cuban government gave political support to black radicals in the United States, it avoided and repressed black radicalism domestically.

The result of this external display of political blackness was to transform the conceptualization of a deracialized *mestizaje* identity, which focused on Spanish heritage, into

173

one of racialized *mulatizaje*. At this point in time, Cuba was politically focused on Africa and "black" causes, and began sending defense aid to Algeria, Guinea, and Angola, as well as joining in on the sanctions against South Africa (Taylor 1988:30). Cuba also verbally supported the Black Power Movement in the United States (Taylor 1988:27) and, as part of that support, Cuba opened her doors to African-American political activists in exile from the United States, most notably Assata Shakur. This support enhanced Cuba's external image as an Afro-Latin nation, particularly among African Americans in the United States and the Caribbean.

Changing the tropes of national identity from white to black involved actively replacing or enhancing the powerful icons and symbols of the nation in such as way as to be inclusive of all elements of the population. These symbols were affected by an external projection of Cuba as an Afro-Latin country, which would precipitate an internal shift of claiming blackness through mulattoization. This process of transformation the paradigm of whiteness to one of blackness involved four key steps. The first was a reconstruction of the experience of black enslavement through a revolutionary lens (Adams 2001). The second was recapturing the image of "*criollo mulato*" that had been proposed by the Afro-Negristas in the 1930s (de la Fuente 1998). The third strategy involved educating and creating national pride in the historical black figures of Cuba's past (de la Fuente 1998). Finally, imperialism, racism, and anti-revolutionary sentiment were linked to whiteness in contrast to the association of blackness with revolution, antiracism, and socialism. These four steps, taken collectively, were to further incorporate the ideology of mulattoization into the national consciousness.

Through public service announcements, television programs, billboards, and so forth, the government began to reconstruct the image of the slave experience on the island and to redefine it in revolutionary terms. Slave uprisings and rebellions were transformed into ideological events in which Afro-Cubans were constructed as participating in and initiating the struggle for nationalism and independence against Spain (Adams 2001). Enslaved Africans were portrayed as not just fighting for their physical freedom, but the ideological freedom of their nation, linking their actions to the current Revolution and its struggle against the psychological and socio-

174

economic "enslavement" of capitalism. In effect, Afro-Cubans were portrayed as the ideological and spiritual forerunners to the 1959 Revolution.

Historic Afro-Cubans were also recognized and presented to the public as national heroic symbols. The lauding and recognition of images of heroic Afro-Cubans in Cuba were contrasted to the second class status of African Americans in the United States. Cuba's construction of its antithetical relationship to the United States can be seen in a 1996 public service announcement that was aired on Cuban television. The announcement was aimed against the Helms-Burton act, which tightened the United States embargo against Cuba. The United States was depicted as a "racially" divided and violent country. Among the images shown were stark depictions of African-American citizens being hosed down with water cannons by white police officers during the Civil Rights Movement, and Rodney King getting beaten and brutalized by white police officers. These images played repeatedly on Cuban television, and the message depicted was clear, that the racist imperialistic Americans were barbaric, and this was the form of American democracy that they wanted to bring to Cuba. The state used these images and others to project the image of racial strife and discord in the United States as opposed to the relative racial harmony to be found in Cuba. In this manner the ideological "whiteness" of the United States was linked to capitalism, imperialism, and racism which were contrasted to the ideological "blackness" of Cuba's socialist, democratic and anti-racist policies.

The recapturing of the image of the "*criollo mulato*" occurred when Castro announced in his 1975 speech that Cuba was an Afro-Latin nation. This pronouncement continued the shift in the conceptualization of *mestizaje* from a trope of whiteness to a trope of blackness. The inclusion of race and Afro-Cubans in the definition of exported national identity was a crucial step in incorporating the image of the *mulato* as a symbol of *cubanidad*.

Although the state incorporated the image of *mulato* as part of national identity, it did not create affirmative action policies specifically designed to address racism. The racial redress policy employed in Cuba was based on orthodox Marxist theory, in which capitalism, as a system of production, is responsible for racism because it makes laborers compete based on

ethnic and racial classifications, and produces conflict between the socio-economic classes. The measures that were employed to end racism were not put into effect based on race but rather class. As such, Afro-Cubans, who were among the majority of the poverty stricken, benefited, but by default and not because of any kind of affirmative action or targeted race based policy. Thus, by addressing issues of worker competition and the socio-economic structure, racism could be removed. The Revolutionary government also stated that public discrimination would not be tolerated and would be considered counter-revolutionary. This public revolutionary stance against institutional and racism furthered the analogy between whiteness with imperialism and brownness with socialism. Administratively, there was an effort to end the interpersonal forms of racism and prejudice, and those labeled as racist were also labeled as counter revolutionaries.

The state also employed cultural and national icons such as Antonio Maceo, Nicolás Guillén, Fernando Ortiz and José Martí to project the physical and cultural fluidity and hybridity of *cubanidad*. Most average Cubans are familiar with these ideologically important figures from Cuban history, not only because they are exposed to them in school, but because they have been woven into the fabric of Cuban society as national icons. Cubans are familiar with the quotes and important literary works and deeds of these men, such as the quote of José Martí that "to be Cuban is more than black, more than white, more than mulatto." With this quote, we see one of Cuba's fundamental centralized ideologies on the perception of race and race relations. This quote is multilayered and multifunctioning, as such it has been employed not only by the Castro regime, but historically as a nationalizing rallying cry to unite Cubans together despite racial differences. The subtext of this quote is an outline of who Cubans are based on the societal divisions of race. In Cuban identity, as articulated by Martí, Amerindians and Asians are absented from participation.

The internal projection of *mulatizaje* as demonstrated through popular culture firmly locates the *mulato* as the site of *cubanidad*. Popular representations of the Cuban as *mulato* can be found in religious symbolism and other popular expressions of identity. Major religious icons in Catholicism include symbols such as the Virgin of Charity, which in Santería is considered to be

a representation of Oshun. Both are symbolically portrayed as *mulatas*, and sometimes they are conceptually merged into one identity. The lore surrounding Oshun states that she was black in Africa, but she was transformed into a *mulata* during the Middle Passage as she was transported to Cuba. This particular physical and symbolic transformation, contained within the process of mulattoization, has a multitude of meanings, including its reference to the exploitation of and sexual violence perpetrated against women of color during the period of enslavement. The sexual symbolism of the *mulata* cannot be detached from its birth in colonial relations of dominance. It is literally and figuratively through the *mulata* that race and nation intersect. As a representative of nation, the *mulato* can also be found in the fictional portrayal of *cubanidad* as found in the ever famous and tragic *mulata*, Cecilia Valdés. Thus, the process of becoming Cuban is canonized and represented as part of the process of mulattoization.

Representing *mulatizaje* and cubanidad, the *mulato* is also frequently seen in the music of popular culture. One form of this expression is located in the popular music genres that are presented as icons of *cubanidad*. One such group demonstrating this relationship is Los Van Van, a popular Cuban musical group that has been around almost as long as the Revolution itself. This band addresses a local Cuban and international audience with its gritty themes that encapsulate life in Cuba. Los Van Van, as a group, locates itself unequivocally within the symbolic space of *mulatizaje*. In their 1999 release "*Somos Cubanos*" (We are Cubans), they explicitly tie the concept of *mulatizaje* to Cuban national identity.

The first stanza of the song provides a historical narrative in which the byplay of colonialism, dominance, and race emerge as they describe the origins of Cuban society. In this song the representative of Cuban race and color is the *mulata* woman.

In 1400 Columbus arrived
And discovered this beautiful island
Where the Indian race lived
Which in due time he exterminated
The African race arrived
And they mixed it with the Spanish

The mulatto woman was born
La cubana
It was a different mixture
With a lot of swing[67]

Cuban identity is constructed based on the interaction between the Spaniard and the African. Early on in the history of Cuba, the Amerindian aboriginal population is summarily dismissed as a contributor due to their extermination by the Spaniards, while the Chinese immigrants are also dismissed as insignificant and rendered invisible though their complete absence of mention. What Los Van Van emphasizes, through their stress on the African as opposed to the Spaniard part of *mestizaje* is *mulatizaje* as the core of Cuban identity.

In addition, Los Van Van's songs often stress and make direct reference to Afro-Cuban musical genres and religious expressions, particularly when they refer to *mulatizaje* and an amalgamated Cuban identity. In fact, many of their songs pay tribute to the Afro-Cuban religious tradition through the repetition of popular prayer sequences and religious songs (De Castro 2002). Their 1996 song "*Soy todo*" grounds them in the Afro-Cuban religious identity of Santería and connects that to *mulatizaje* through the lyrics "*soy dos colores*" (I am two colors). It is here that the link is made between the ideological hybridization found in Santería and the physical hybridization attributed to the mulatto. Santería, as representative of *cubanidad*, is an integral part of their music, and they incorporate it into their songs in the same way it is incorporated effortlessly in Cuban culture. Moreover, when referring to race mixture in this song, as with "*Somos Cubanos*," once again only two elements of the Cuban race mixture are considered important. The speaker refers to himself in his statement, "I am two colors," embodying a particular Cuban identity of implied *mulatizaje*. The subtext of mulattoization is always present.

As expressed through rap music, the youthful voice of Cubans also demonstrates the same constructions of Cuban identity tied to *mulatizaje*. *Orishas*, a Cuban rap group whose name is

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[67] De Castro 2002:94

derived from the African religious tradition of Cuba, discuss their "roots" in their first album,

"*Represent*," in which the music becomes a parable for *mulatizaje* through the Afro-Cuban

musical genres they mention.

The history of my roots
Rumba, Son y Guanguanco[68]

Further along, they make another reference to *mulatizaje*, not just through the evolution of

what are considered Afro-Cuban musical genres, but embodied physically through the

"*mestizaje*" of the singer himself.

I represent my ancestors
all the mixes

The image of the *mulato* has been so firmly entrenched in Cuban iconography that the

national image of beauty is also exemplified by the *mulata*.[69] Little girls learn that, when they

are called *mulaticas* (little *mulatas*), there is an implication of beauty associated with the term.

This use of *mulata* as a marker of sexual attractiveness and beauty is also expressed by Los Van

Van in their song "*Mi Chocolate*."

Tell me, where is my chocolate?
Tell me, where is she? Where has she gone?
My chocolate is a *mulata*
Who has light eyes
With black hair
Mouth of a ripe mango…

Not only does this song reference the *mulata* as the epitome of an attractive woman for the

Cuban male, but it also makes sly reference to how the Cuban *mulata* woman is viewed as an

exotic sexual being by foreign visitors (e.g. men) to the island. This occurs later on in the song

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[68] These are all considered to be Afro-Cuban musical genres.
[69] For more information about the complexities of the *mulata*, see Kutzinski (1993)

when we find out that his "chocolate" married an Italian, who keeps her locked up and out of sight. Evident is the asymmetric power and control exerted by this foreigner over this woman of color.

The *typical* Cuban

The official state viewpoint sanctions these identifications of "Cubanness" with *mulatizaje* through their aforementioned promotion of political "blackness." Many of the participants in my study shared a similar perspective. Respondents repeatedly stated that Cuba was a country of *mestizaje* that specifically focused on black and white interactions. They emphasized this point stating that in Cuba, "El qe no tiene de Congo tiene de Carabalí" (He that does not have something from the Congo has something from Carabalí). This popular Cuban idiom implied a nationalized blackness in that all Cubans shared a black ancestor somewhere in their lineage. The Congo and Carabalí in the idiom are employed as references to place and ethnic identity for areas that supplied slaves for Cuba during the transatlantic slave trade. It is striking that no parallel idioms concerning whiteness exist. In this manner, all Cubans, regardless of color are linked through blackness. Other popular axioms also emphasized the population's link to blackness, such as, "there are no pure whites here." These two expressions were responses from both light-skinned and dark-skinned Cubans, and stress blackness as a part of every Cubans heritage, even when not visible.

Cuba's interlocution of a *mestizaje* identity is framed by some as a sign of "progress" because the existence of *mestizaje* is used to gauge the atmosphere surrounding race, and as such, it is employed as an indicator of how Cubans have progressed from the more "racist" race relations of the past. The *mestizo/mulato* population is perceived to be proof of improved race relations in Cuba. Some feel like Felix, who states increased *mestizaje* will inevitably lead to the extinction of the "extreme" types of dark blacks and light whites. In the following, he reflects on this phenomenon:

Today there is so much *mestizaje* in our country that the dark black and the white are not abundant types. The types that are more abundant are the *mulato* or the red-skinned black. The dark black and the white will not exist in the future. Nowadays, the mix between the light-skinned *mulata* and the black and between the white and the black is something that you see constantly. So racism from this perspective isn't very successful. I believe that the future Cuban population will be *mulatos* like the blacks and Spaniards dreamed about a century ago.

Clearly the last part of his statement constructs an idealized and imagined past. This statement is particularly romanticized, because according to Helg (1992), during the early part of the republic, the Spaniards did everything in their power to "improve" the Cuban population so it would eventually be viewed as white and not *mulato criollo*. Despite Felix's romanticized image of the Cuban past, his answer is representative of how many Cubans regard their population. When respondents were questioned as to which type was the most representative of the typical Cuban, the overwhelming majority of the respondents answered the *mulato*.

The general perception is that there has been a high mulattoization of the population; this perception is corroborated with the typical Cuban being characterized as *mulato*. The image of the typical Cuban has several dimensions, which are demonstrated in the majority response to who was considered the typical Cuban. The responses show the "representative" Cuban is perceived on two different levels. The first level involves the external image of Cubanness presented to the tourist or outsider. The second level addresses the internalized image of Cubans as a blended race. This ideology on the mulattoization of the population creates a national sense of unity that is more inclusive, and explains succinctly why the majority of the respondents stated the typical Cuban could be visually represented as *mulato*. Only a few informants claimed any Cuban could be representative, but even they indicated an awareness of the *mulato* as epitomizing the typical Cuban. Those who responded, "a black and a white" also were implying *mulato* because this combination was perceived as the origin of mulatto. The least common response was *blanco* and *trigueño*, yet even within this answer, the term *trigueño* indicated some level of *mulatizaje*. *Blancos cubano* (Cuban whites) were generally characterized and perceived

as being *mestizo* on some level. The flexibility of color classification in Cuba allows for a wide range of people to be ascribed as or claim *mulato* identity. Vivian explains how this occurs and the ideology which validates this practice:

> Sometimes here you'll find completely white families and then someone is born who is practically a *mulato*, very *trigueño*, *trigueño* with curly hair, in accordance with Mendel's law. These characteristic features maintain themselves. They [the features] come and go from the mix of *blanco* with *mulato*. There are surprises, the same if you come out *negro* as if you come out *mulato*, or come out *blanco*, you can come out whatever of the three and this is what happens...

In Vivian's statement, several dynamic processes are visible. First the term *mulato* is equated with *trigueño*. A *trigueño*, in Vivian's form of color classification, is described as almost a *mulato*. In addition, she discounts the physical whiteness of families as "real" and says past racial mixture will appear eventually. In her opinion, this will occur even if African heritage is not visible in the family. It is this conceptualization of whiteness which explains why *albino* (albino) can be employed by some as a racial classification. In this manner, every skin hue from light to dark can be described as a by product of racial mixture.

Informants, who varied in age, occupation, gender, and color, were asked to define their visual perception of a typical Cuban.   The image of Cubans as projected by the tourist industry is outlined by Ana, who identifies herself as a *mestiza*. Her response demonstrates how popular internal perceptions were shaped by the propaganda exported by the state to attract tourists. Accordingly Ana describes the typical Cuban as a *mulato*: "The characteristics of the *mulato* are seen the most in tourism and cabarets. The most representative figure is the *mulato*. It is the type which you see the most." Ana specifically mentions the cabaret as a visual site where Cubanness is expressed. Identity is "staged" here and young, attractive women are displayed, scantily dressed, where they dance mostly for the pleasure of tourists. Her reason for choosing the *mulata* category, is based on what she feels is a commonly portrayed image of Cubans for

tourists. The image of the *mestiza* or *mulata* as representative Cubans has its historic basis in the sexual exploitation of women of color, who are conceptualized as exotic and erotic. Women of color were perceived as more visible, not only in the tourist industry like the cabarets, but also as sex workers in *jíneterismo* or prostitution.

During a visit to Cuba in 1997, I encountered an employment advertisement posted in Old Havana seeking dancers for a cabaret. The ad specifically requested *mulatas* were needed to apply for the job. Not only were *mulatas* what tourists expect, but they were consciously displayed for consumption by visitors as representatives of "*cubanidad*."

Josue offers a different perspective, but one which ultimately results once again in *mulato* as the dominant image of *cubanidad*:

> This is very difficult to answer. I believe that there is no representative human type on the island. It would be false to put a *mulato* or *mulata* who is traditionally in the tourist propaganda, in the folkloric images or in the cultural pageant, but I believe that the representative type does not exist; and I would not dare to confirm that the majority of the population of the country is mixed or is white. Evidently it is not black. Although the majority could be mixed I would not dare to assert it. I believe that the representative type does not exist. It could be whatever a blonde almost Nordic, as well as a black.

Reviewing Josue's statement clarifies several points, first, despite his protests as to no representative type existing, he is very aware of what the projected image is, which he confirms as being the *mulato*. He even proposes that the majority of the Cuban population is comprised of *mestizos*, demonstrating that though the black and white, or as he articulates, the Nordic blonde types of Cuban, are equally Cuban, they are not part of the typical or common image portrayed of Cuba. Additionally, Josue situates the loci of *mulatizaje* as "tourist propaganda" and "folkloric images" found in the "cultural pageant." He connects these popular images through his protests, and links blackness with folkloric culture, and whiteness with a classical culture, of the tourist image of the *mulato*.

Another theme oft repeated by informants was the perceived lack of "pure" white Cubans in Cuba. They provided several reasons for this, but the most common was the perception of intense admixture such that even the whitest of Cubans contained some mixture within them whether it was obvious or not; hence "*el que no tiene de Congo tiene de Carabalí.*" Some Cubans perceived the most obvious sign of a previous type of mixture to be a swarthy or olive-skinned complexion as represented by those classified as *trigueño*.

Natalie, who referred to herself as a washed (meaning cleaned or light) *trigueña*, also made an analogous observation.

> For me it seems like a *mestiza*. I can pick a representation, for example the artist Daysi Granados. You've seen the film "Retrato de Teresa"? She is a *trigueña* woman, with (nice) thick hair, because we Cubans, we are not really white white, or rather, it's the Latina race that, you know, is dark. You could choose Daysi as a prototype of a Cuban woman. The bodies of Cuban women are a little fat, voluminous. They are not skinny, they are thick with meat and she is like this, she is a *trigueña*, strong and wrapped in meat.

She accentuates the "darkness" she feels exists in what she calls the Latina race. The perceived body type of Cuban women is also based on an image of race mixture. Accordingly, the *trigueña* is a *mestiza* based on a body type which incorporates African characteristics. Conchita, a music teacher in her late eighties who is classified as white on her *carnet* also refers to *mestizaje* as an intense dynamic process and offers the following as evidence:

> Well, there are more blacks than whites. There are almost no whites. There are very few of them. Nowadays, blacks and whites are marrying, even foreign whites come and marry black women it's true, this is what I have seen.

Two different concepts are outlined in Conchita's statement. First, her perception of Cuba as mostly composed of "blacks." Second she refers to interracial relationships as occurring among Cubans of different skin colors within the local population, and between Cubans, particularly

those of color, and foreigners. She was not alone in her assessment of the popularity of the black and *mulata* women to foreigners, many other informants also perceived black women as being particularly favored when it came to sexual liaisons with white foreigners. The stereotype of the *mulata* or *negra* prostitute was prevalent. People ascribed this popularity to the foreign men's preference for dark-skinned women. The song discussed previously, "*Mi chocolate*," by Los Van Van, acknowledged this folk opinion. Women of color with foreign men had a higher visibility for several reasons, and this was the root of people's perceptions of them. This higher visibility is partly the result of the greater visual contrast between the dark-skinned woman and the pale-skinned tourist which draws the eye. Secondly is the fact that an international hierarchy of sexuality exists in which an exotic and often animalistic sexuality is attributed to Third World women, particularly women of color, by predominantly white men from First World countries (Kutzinski 1993).

Historically, during the period of enslavement, the power dynamics were such that women of color were sexually exploited by white men. These women as a group were then blamed for their own exploitation and victimization by a society that labeled them as having an innately animalistic sexuality and lack of moral fiber to control their savage natures. A legacy of the history of slavery results in the existing power dynamics being reconstituted in a global context of sexual exploitation, where predominately white men from First World countries travel to the Third World for the purposes of sexual tourism. They arrive looking for sexual liaisons with "exotic" young girls and women of color. These structurally asymmetric relationships create dynamics that are fraught with "racial," imperialist, sexist, and classist overtones that cannot be overlooked or ignored. The women, who participate in these sexual arrangements with foreigners, are perceived by other Cubans as resourceful for using their sexual "popularity" to "resolve their problems" as they took advantage of their own exploitation, and were able to improve their living conditions through their access to a source of dollars**.** Another reason lies in the hiring practices of hotels which employ many more phenotypically white Cuban women in positions where they have more discrete assess to foreign men, such as maids or clerks. The

phenotypic imbalance found in these hotels is because of hiring practices in which lighter women are hired because they "appear to be more cultured." With these women, there is also less physical contrast in skin color to draw the eye, although Cubans are very adept at discerning foreigners from the local population.

Prostitutes range in color from white to black, but the women perceived as *negra* and *mulata* prostitutes tend to be the most visible because they have to ply their wares in less discrete more public venues. Their blackness, in comparison to their white-skinned sisters, also provides more of an immediate visual contrast on the street when paired with pale-skinned European or North American men. In addition, as both Nadine Fernandez (1996) and Alejandro de la Fuente (2001) point out, "white" women could be socially transformed into "black" women both by internal situational and contextual stereotypes of *jineterismo* in Cuba, and by foreigners who come to Cuba seeking an exotic experience with women who fit into their own definition of "exotic women of color."

In the following, Conchita continued her assessment of the mulattoization of the Cuban woman:

> Well I'll tell you something, before, black and *mulata* women had good bodies in the gluteus region and now white women are physically the same [as black women] and their gluteus region is as beautiful as the black woman's.

In the same vein as Natalie, Conchita also refers to the Cuban woman's body type as indicative of mulattoization. In Conchita's analysis, mulattoization has given desirable sexual physical traits to white women as a result of this mixing.

Darla frames her perceptions of the Cuban population with an inclusive paradigm of *mestizaje* centered not just on blackness or whiteness.

> Well, you cannot consider blacks to be the most representative of the island because blacks are a percent within the population. The most typical type on the island is the *mestizo*. For me *mestizo* does not mean to

be white and black. There are *mestizos* that are black with Chinese, white with Chinese, *mulato* with who knows, *indio* with whatever, the mix is very heterogeneous. I can't say exactly that the *mestizo* is the mixture. At the beginning [the mixture] was black with white. The black slave with the white that was his owner, but later came other mixes and [these mixes] behaved differently. Nowadays there are mixes of black with Russian, with Belgian, with German, with Polish, with Japanese. The mix is enormous; Cuba is a country that is called multiracial because there are people of many mixtures. Fundamentally, I can consider that here a pure race doesn't exist, what is left is a mixed race.

Although she discusses the historical mixture of black and white, she also defines *mestizo* so as to include other elements of the Cuban population that are sometimes ignored when discussing *mestizaje*. In fact, her primary definition of *mestizo* is as a reference to mixtures with the Chinese. A prominent Cuban scholar, Tómas Fernandez Robaina, in personal conversations also framed *mestizo* as a means of conveying Asian mixture. Darla confirms Conchita's earlier statement about the perception of black women being the most popular type for marriage and liaisons with foreigners. Her insights into current interracial relationships locate them as sites of black and foreign relations. Here she specifies blacks as participating in these relationships with Europeans. Imbedded in her statement were also the essentialized characteristics associated with the different social "races" in Cuba. The people who were first mixtures of black and white with the Spaniards are characterized as "behaving" differently from people who are the later mixes with these other Europeans. In her final pronouncement, there are no "pure" Cubans because most have participated on some level in the fusion of the Cuban population; therefore, the *mestizo* and *mestizaje* can be used to typify the Cuban population.

Framing her assessment of the typical Cuban through the lens of *mestizaje*, Vivian invokes the white creole, but clearly indicates that this is not the old creole of the Hispanicists

The representative is a Creole. The most logical is to be a *blanco trigueño* with curly hair. If the representative is a woman, then she has to have a big butt because it's the inheritance from the black. Yes, it's true; it's rare to find a white with a big butt. Then it could be a *trigueño* [male], with strong curly hair because the Caucasian race has straight hair, and the

curly hair that you see on a Cuban this is from the blacks. This hair type is not from the white race or the Chinese, because the Chinese have hair that's straighter than everybody else's. A *trigueño* is a man who in general has dark hair; it's almost always curly. He could have straight hair, although many times he has features that are not very fine. He is not like the black but also not like the whites. He is a strong person, happy, with blood in his veins that likes to party and dance and a man who likes women, this is the characteristic type. Now a pure Creole, here there is no purity of blood. There are three genealogical trunks; from this the Creole is formed, that is the black, the Chinese and the Spaniard.

Embedded in her statement is the unambiguous image of the *mulato criollo* proposed by the Afro-Negristas. As with the majority of the admixture discussed in my interviews, the creole is contextualized as between black and white, but there was also an acknowledged Chinese influence which expands *mestizaje* to be inclusive of more than just the black and white elements of the population. In Vivian's description of a *trigueño* as creole, she conflates the definition of *trigueño* with *mulato*. This time she links *mulato* and *trigueño* through the essentialized social characteristics usually associated with the *mulato*. These characteristics of being strong, happy, and dancing were more often associated with *mulatos* and not employed to characterized *trigueños*. Her statement demonstrates the verbal process of linking *mulato* and *trigueño*.

Mina, describes the typical Cuban as *mestizo*. Her answer demonstrates the interchangeability of *mestizo* and *mulato*.

Well, you could choose *mestizos* as being representative. Why? Because the *mestizo* has two parts, they have the native black, born of the natural black and the natural white. I'm not wrong about this union; from this, all of *mestizaje* is derived that you can come out *mulata* with light skin and very pretty hair with fine features, and you can come out a *mulata* with very pretty hair but very broad features, or rather, thick lips, a big spread nose, and broad features.

Mina mentions the physical variation found in terms describing who is regarded as *mulato*. For some the defining feature was hair texture, for others it was skin color, but in all cases it depended on the reference point of the individual.

With Vivian, Conchita and Natalie, it is obvious that the physical representation of *mulatizaje* is not only defined in terms of skin color or facial features, it manifests in the body of the Cuban woman. Men were not usually spoken of as physically embodying Cubanness in the same manner as women. Through the woman as the *mulata* that *mulatizaje* became representative of the nation. *Mulatizaje* and the woman have a symbiotic relationship which consequently constructs the *mulata* woman as the ideal physical rendering of *cubanidad*.

Another prevalent theme of *mulatizaje* was the concept of "lack of purity" as it was applied to white Cubans. Within the ideology of *mulatizaje*, all Cubans, regardless of genealogy or visible mixture, were construed as participating in m*estizaje*. Haille illustrates this sense of *mulatizaje* and Cubanness in the following.

> The principle mix was Spaniards with Africans and from these two came the *mulata*. The *mulata* is made from this mix; because of this, Fidel and other scholars say that Cuba is a land that isn't pure but it is a mixed land. Nicolás Guillén said everything is mixed; everything is mixed because everything is mixed. Here if you don't have a Chinese mixture you have some other mixture. You are mixed with Spaniard. Those of us who aren't mixed with Spaniard are mixed with the French, who also invaded us a left a little of themselves behind. It is said that the Indians were the ones that left behind the least mixture, because the poor things, they exterminated them, but nevertheless in the east of the island, they have some descendants. It is said that of every Cuban, maybe some are pureblooded, but you would need a blood test to find them.

Haille validates her beliefs by pointing to Fidel Castro and other scholars, such as Nicólas Guillén, who have called Cuba the land of mixture. Her interlocution of *mestizaje* is situated in government and iconographic constructs of *cubanidad*. She articulates this through her interpretations of state structured representations of *mestizaje*. Principle to *mestizaje* identity is the *mulato*, but articulations of *mestizaje* are also embedded in the concept of Cuban whiteness which is defined through "lack of purity."

Claiming Identity and Negotiating *Mulatizaje*

The primary, although not only, terms employed to convey race mixture is *mestizo* and *mulato*. Respondents did not markedly differentiate between these two terms and often used them interchangeably. Although these terms are somewhat distinguished by the state on the *carnets*, they belong to the same category. Aspects of function and meaning often overlapped in context and sentiment between the two. The category of *mulato* ranged in meaning from a simple color reference, encompassing light to medium brown, to specifically referring to an individual with certain facial features and hair texture, a reference to several different types of racial mixtures (*blanco* with *negro*, *blanco* with *mulato*, *mulato* with *mulato*, or *mulato* with *negro*), or to serve as a compliment of beauty towards a woman. *Mulato* and *mestizo* are possible subcategories of each other.

Mestizo refers to mixtures other than black and white. According to one informant, *mestizo* is employed because it is perceived more as a formal or refined term. Another informant summarized the difference as *mestizo* being an official term, while *mulato* was "vulgar" and "colloquial." Some responses addressed the orgins of the word *mulato,* which was believed to be a derivative of the word mule and therefore offensive. For others, *mestizo* implied more social whiteness expressed as a lighter skin shade or "better" hair texture than *mulata*; therefore it is the more polite term to use. Yet despite being considered the less deragatory term, it was not preferred.

When questioned about which type most represented the typical Cuban, the majority of the participants responded with *mulato*. *Mulato,* as a classification category, is cognitively represented as both a separate and overlapping category with *mestizo*. It further overlapped with both the *blanco* and *Negro* categories, incorporating many of their classification terms into that of *mulato*. This occurs with terms like *blanconazo, negro colorado*, and *moro*, which possess the social status of dual membership within *mulato* and another category. In this manner, *mulatos* refers to black, white, or any shade.

Mestizaje is significantly claimed through the manipulation of interpersonal color categories. A principle site in which identity is informally contested exists in the color category ascribed by the *carnet*. Of the thirty-five in-depth interviews, four participants owned old *carnets* without a skin color section. From the remaining thirty one respondents, six contested their classification. This lack of agreement came from several sources. The main source of disagreement is the inherent ambiguity of classification resulting from an extreme mixture of color and race that makes it difficult to separate the two. The *carnets* initiate this ambiguity in the section designating skin color, but also understood as identifying race. The differences in interpretation occur because, while the state might have been focusing on race, the respondent could have been responding to skin color or vice versa. In two cases, respondents self-classified as *trigueña* and *trigueña lavada* (washed), although they had older *carnets* with no classification section. The state will most likely classify them as *blanca* because of their phenotypes. While *trigueño* is not an official category, most people classified and recognized as *trigueño* are assigned *blanco* on their *carnets*.

Three people classified by the state as *blanco*, consisted of a self-identified *mulata*, a *blanco mulato* (white *mulato*) and *mestiza*. Two other people, classified *mulato* by the state, identified themselves as *negro*. In all of these cases, the self chosen classification was darker than the state's. Only in one instance did the state assign a darker classification than the individual's preference. The state identified the woman as *negra*, while she classified herself as *negra colorada* (reddish black). These cases are significant because they give evidence of the population's move towards a blacker definition of self.

One of the main auxiliary terms the general population employs to informally categorize people as *blancos* (whites) is *trigueño*. This informal classification usually corresponds with official designations of *blanco*. Emphasizing darkness of hair and skin tone, such as with brunette, *trigueño* implies *mestizaje*, as in the case of Laura who vacillated between calling herself *mulata* and *trigueña*. Early in the interview she called herself a *mulata* and later a *trigueña*. In reference to this, she clarifies her definition of *trigueño* by suggesting that "what we

call the *trigueño* is a person who is not white white. He's white but medium gold [colored]." Her alternating use of the terms *mulato* and *trigueño* is both rational and plausible, because niether term is fixed or static. There is no conflict because neither *mulato* nor *trigueño* are physically represented as very white.

Historically, the ideology of whitening influenced identity construction so it was perceived as advantageous to classify one's self into the lightest realms of the color continuum as possible. I found, however, that many people in Cuba today are as comfortable with deliberately classifying themselves informally to connote blackness or *mulatizaje*. For instance, many of those classified as *blanco* in their *carnets* described themselves as *mestizo* or even *mulato* informally. Some classified as *mestizo*, would instead employ the word *mulato* to describe themselves, a word which had a darker connotation. Those persons classified as *negro* rarely classified themselves as *moro* or *moreno*, except when others classified them. When asked which type was most representative of the island, the overwhelming response was not white or black, but *mulato*. Though people were willing to classify themselves into darker categories, their negative stereotypes about blacks remained. This made their claims to blackness even more significant.

Following is an extended case study of a particular family which illustrates Cubans' ability to claim *mulatizaje* regardless of state identification or physical appearance by negotiating the meanings and functions of the color terms. I follow these with briefer case studies on the same theme.

Extended Case Study #1

The Rodriguez family is a typical *mulato/mestizo* family in Cuba. They work hard and are relatively well off. They would be considered middle class in the U.S. The family is phenotypically diverse, claiming members that were blonde haired, blue eyed, and light-skinned as well as brown haired, brown eyed, and dark-skinned, with various combinations in between. The grandmother of the family was Conchita. Although she is in her eighties and past retirement

age, she is still active, and often plays the guitar while singing traditional songs in the hotels for tourists. In addition to her work at the hotels, she also rents out rooms in her home to help supplement the family's income. Physically she has an opaque light skin tone, brown eyes and bright red dyed hair.

She describes her family (extended as well as immediate) as being *mestiza*. Using her family as an example to explain whitness in Cuba, Conchita states that:

> The whites of Cuba never are....by coincidence you can find a white family. They always have an array of color. My father looked white, this included having straight hair, but his features they were a little thick. His nose was thick because his mother was *mulata*, no black, and his father Andalusian.

Officially her *carnet* designates her as white but she classifies herself as *mulata*. She was very quick to point out that her nose was broad and not straight, and her lips were somewhat full. She insisted that these characteristics revealed that she is not white but *mulata*. "They say I'm white, but I'm not white, because I don't consider myself to be white. They say that I'm white and I don't like it because I'm not." Her brothers and sisters are light-skinned with straight hair with the exception of one. This sister is literally the black sheep in the family; she is the only one not designated as white by the state, and she carries the nickname *negra* within the family. Conchita recalled an incident of being mistaken for white that occurred in her youth. She says that she could have passed for white to make her life easier but she chose not to. She frames this incident through her interaction with a visiting foreigner. This foreigner had invited her to go to the Tropicana (a famous night club). She relayed how she told him that she could not go because she was not white and they would not let her into the club. The man then looked at her in surprise and confusion, and asked her what she was if she was not white. She told him that she was a *mulata*. He conveyed to her that he did not think she would have a problem entering the club and she could pass for white. He was perplexed when she said she would not because she was *mulata*. "Why would I devalue myself [as a black]?" She commented to me about her refusal to pass. She then asked her friend if his knowledge that she was a *mulata* bothered him

or changed things between them. He said no and they continued their friendship. She also mentioned a rather painful incident with her darker-skinned sister, in which they went to a club and Conchita was allowed to enter but her sister was rejected at the door.

Other members of her family, like her younger brother Juan Carlos, found it advantageous to pass for white for employment purposes. He has blue eyes, straight white hair and a somewhat bulbous nose. He pointed out to me that his features (he pointed to his lips and nose) were somewhat coarse; when he deemed it necessary, he never had any difficulties passing for white, despite his "black" characteristics. He described how, before the revolution, the only jobs available to him were located in the foreign-owned factory. He explained how one of the bosses, who liked him, helped arranged for him to get the job. Yet getting the job did not guarantee that he could keep it; he had to be diligent that nobody at the job (i.e. the Americans) found out that he was not really "white," but rather "*mulato.*"

Conchita has been married twice, and has one son from each marriage. She shares a divided house with her youngest son Enrique and his family. Both of her sons were classified differently and she attributes their different personality types in part to their different classification types. Her eldest son, Roberto, she described as a *trigueño*, a beautiful person, who treated her well. She cried when she mentioned him and emphasized how different he was from her youngest son. Roberto had died in a car accident and she was miserable that she did not maintain much contact with his family. Her youngest son, who was born when she was forty, she describes as a *jabao*. Conchita has a somewhat tense relationship with Enrique which she often attributes to his difficult nature as a *jabao*. Most of the neighbors and people who know Enrique agree with her opinion that he is a typical *jabao* with a typical *jabao's* temperament.

Enrique is a highly trained computer programmer but he works in tourism. He is light-skinned with hazel eyes and a low cut afro. He loves the blues and what he calls "black" music. Physically he is the typical depiction of a *jabao*, which is how he is informally classified by his family and neighbors. His *carnet*, though, classifies him as a *mulato*. He had been married for twenty years to his wife, Maria Carmen. She has a medium to dark brown skin tone, and kinky

hair that she perms straight. Her *carnet* officially classifies her as *negra*, but Enrique refers to her as a "*negra para salir*" (a black you can take out) and more frequently he calls her a *mulata*.

Enrique's two children, a boy, Omar, and a girl, Lizandra, are both informally classified differently, although the differences were slight. Maria Carmen said that her son takes after his father, and thus is a *jabao*. Omar's skin tone is slightly redder and darker than his father's but lighter than his mother's. When Omar came of age to get his junior *carnet* he was officially classified as a *mulato*. Maria Carmen's daughter, Lizandra, is light brown-skinned with long wavy hair that came down mid-back. Though she is not old enough to have a *carnet*, she is considered to be the typical representation of a *mulata*. When Maria Carmen was questioned about the classificatory difference between her two children, she pointed out that her daughter had a "better" hair texture than her son.   Lizandra's hair type was described as "*malagaso*" (a wavy hair texture), while Omar's was designated as "raisins" (a description of African textured hair).

Maria Carmen informed me that on the television, there were not a lot of blacks to be seen. She also stated that in the ballet, a black person had to be extraordinary to become a ballerina. When her daughter wanted to become a ballerina, she advised her not to because, in her opinion, she would have to work twice as hard in order to become a star. She then signed her daughter up to learn how to do traditional Cuban dances. These dances are considered to be folkloric and can be observed in the cabarets and other areas of cultural production. Unlike ballet, these dances were considered vulgar and associated with the popular culture. They did not carry the same prestige as the ballet.

One day as Maria Carmen ordered Lizandra to put lotion on her legs, because they were ashy, she recalled an incident with Enrique's sister (on his father's side). Lizandra's aunt, who was just a shade or two lighter than Lizandra, appeared shocked one day because she had ashy skin. She commented to Maria Carmen, that she could not possibly be ashy because she didn't have any black ancestry. This comment upset Conchita and Maria Carmen who quickly pointed

out all of her traits, from hair to facial features, which showed, in their opinion, her black ancestry. They insisted that she was a *mulata*, not white.

At some point one evening while watching the news broadcast, I inquired about the anchorman and what classification type the family would ascribe to him. There was a distinct lack of consensus, with the points of contention focusing on his hair texture and skin color. Both Conchita and Maria Carmen insisted that the anchorman was a *mulato*. Conchita offered him as either a *mulato atrasado* (throwback) or a *negro avanzado* (advanced black). She based her opinion on his hair which she declared "wasn't all that bad." Both Omar and his father insisted that the anchorman was a *negro*. Lizandra then changed the dynamics of the discussion by commenting that the man was black like her mother. Her mother quickly censured her with her eyes and told her that she was getting fresh with her. Maria Carmen then skillfully refocused the conversation into a discussion on the whiteness of the neighbors. She mentioned that the Gomez family, her next door neighbors, "claimed to be pure white," and, although Mrs. Gomez's mother "appeared to be very white," her father gave the impression of mixture because he was a very "strong *trigueño* type."

On another occasion I urged Omar to describe his new girlfriend in front of his mother. Maria Carmen was trying to express how she would classify the girl, when Omar declared that his girlfriend didn not have any race. His mother insisted that she did, and that she was a *mulata* with "good" hair like her daughter's. Omar protested and said that his girlfriend had "good" hair, but it was not like his sister's it was "better."

On another occasion, Maria Carmen and I left the house to indulge in a walk along the Malecon. That night there was an inordinate amount of children playing in the street. When we returned from our walk, a young dark-skinned youth of about fifteen stood in front of Conchita's door accompanied by a younger light-skinned boy of about twelve. They were both neatly dressed and were not making any noise, but when we passed Conchita's front door, Maria Carmen reached in and pulled shut the door that had been left partially opened. She then called out to her mother-in-law and told her that there was a "black boy" in front of the house. The

presence of the older boy was the reason Maria Carmen gave as to why Conchita should lock the door. She did not mention the other young man that was standing with him, or the two young brown-skinned boys who were fighting in the street and making lots of noise.

The above is an account of social interactions that occurred in this family and frames the discourse of race and classification through lived events. Several themes are evident in this extended case study, first is the location of the sites of racism and the role of classification. Conchita and her brother Juan Carlos both discuss their manipulation of identity through confrontations with encounters of racism. For both siblings, the sites of racism were embedded in the past. Racism was perceived as being closely associated with the period before the Revolution, and with the foreign control of Cuban enterprise. As was common, Conchita and Juan Carlos' encounters referenced this pre-Revolutionary time frame. Conchita's narrative emphasized the aspects of social segregation she experienced, while her brother alternatively focused on the economic, rather than the social dimensions of racism.

Her placement of self in the Cuban context of whiteness shifted as Cuba's definition of whiteness changed. In the past she described, she could not have entered the club because, although she could "pass" for white in certain circumstances, she was not socially "white enough" to enter the club. In similar circumstances, Batista, the former President of Cuba, was denied entrance into an exclusive social club, although he held the highest ranking office in the country, because he was considered to be mulato, albeit very light-skinned. Under current perceptions of whiteness, Conchita has been (re)classified formally as white by the state, but she stresses that, despite the changes in identity perceptions by the state and the existent social milieu, she herself still ascribes to a non-white social identity.   She also stresses that although she "appeared" to be white to her foreign friend, she could only "pass" for white in certain contexts in Cuba.

Conchita defined her non-whiteness based on her differentiation of local and foreign whiteness. She defined Cuban whiteness as consisting of "an array of colors." Her narrative was a method of formulating her whiteness against "foreign" standards and demonstrating that they

were not identical methods of classification. Her foreign friend in this case, was surprised that she was not white because she "appeared" to be so to him. Conchita and Juan Carlos' narratives of whiteness demonstrate how whiteness was thought to be contextualized differently in a foreign context. Their whiteness was always marked and constructed against an outside standard of white. Conchita's brother, Juan Carlos, discussed how he had to "pass" for white so that he could work at the foreign owned factory, where racism was linked to the foreigners and not Cuba. In his narrative, because his Cuban boss aids and encouraged his deception, the underlying message was that it was not necessarily the white Cubans themselves who were racist, but the foreigners. He also conveyed his flexibility in identification through his ability to change his identity in different contexts. He felt that his identity could range from white to *mulato* in a Cuban context but that in an international context his ability to shift identities would be limited. He argued that his ability to claim "whiteness" in an international forum would be compromised because of how his "*mulato*" characteristics would be perceived in an international context as outside of the parameters of whiteness.

Conchita used classification terms to essentialize her sons' nature. She bases their different personality traits on their physical appearance. She rationalizes that her son Enrique is a good person, but it was his "nature" as a *jabao* that made him difficult to get along with. This characterization of people classified as *jabao* was common, as they were infamous for their waspish tempers, were not well trusted, and had a reputation for being sneaky and manipulative. Their somewhat ambiguous racial status resulting from having prominent characteristics of both groups (white and black), but not being the "right" mixture of either has left them somewhat outcast from both groups. Their African-textured hair and features, in combination with light colored eyes and a pale complexion, was not regarded as a desirable combination. *Jabaos* were perceived as being very roughhewn mostly because of the prominence of their African heritage.

The differences between who was classified as *jabao* and who was classified as *mulato* were subtle. For Maria Carmen, the slight difference in hair texture in combination with skin color was what made her son a *jabao* and her daughter a *mulata*. Despite her informal structuring of

the differences between the two, her son was still formally classified as *mulato* in his *carnet*. Most people informally classified as *jabaos*, depending on how light or dark-skinned they were, were formally classified as either *blanco* or *mulato*.

A further example of the essentialized perceptions of race was evident in Maria Carmen's suspicions that the dark-skinned child standing outside of her door was up to mischief. It was based on what she perceived to be the "nature" of blacks. She did not include herself in this characterization although she was formally classified as *negra* in her *carnet*. By nature of the young man's coloring, rather than any other evidence that he had any nefarious deeds in mind, she quickly shut the door.

Maria Carmen also illustrated how the sites of *mulatizaje* in the culture were spatially reinforced. Although she discouraged her daughter from joining the ballet dance group which she indicates is a site of whiteness, she did encourage her to join the folkloric dance classes, in which *mulatas* were spatially visible and perceived as belonging.

Mulata was a flexible category, and those who employed it to claim *mulatizaje* varied phenotypically. Maria Carmen, who was a dark medium brown, and Conchita, who was a creamy off-tan or off-white, could both legitimately claim *mestizaje* though through slightly different means. Conchita claimed it by trying to accentuate her African features and darker (off-white) skin tone. Maria Carmen claimed it by referring to herself as a *mulata*, and her husband corroborated her use of the term through his affectionate address.

Men often classified their loved ones as *mulata* or *china*. Both were terms of affection, and *mulata* specifically was considered to be a compliment to the woman, because *mulatas* were regarded as both beautiful and sexy. Even though she was not the classic physical depiction of a *mulata* like their daughter, Enrique referred to Maria Carmen as a *mulata*. In terms of how classification was ascribed, males were less likely than females to be classified as a lighter type through this means.

In a socialist system in which the equalization of material goods is paramount, blackness and whiteness as social value were equalized through mulattoization. Ascribing blackness to others

accomplished this. Color equivalence was created by ascribing blackness in the same manner that the Revolution "equalized" economic disparities. Thus, when Enrique's half-sister denies black heritage, she was phenotypically ascribed into blackness, which was used to invoke a sense of social camaraderie and negate the counter ideology of whitening. This method of equalization was particularly employed against lighter families, and it was in this sense that *trigueño* was applied to denote blackness.

Doubting the authenticity of someone's whiteness and being able to assign blackness to a variety of features was central to the overall ideology of *mulatizaje*. Though the theme of claiming blackness was strong in the Rodriguez family, *negro* still had negative characteristics associated with it, which is why Maria Carmen chastised her daughter for referring to her as black. Lizandra, in this instance, learned the negative social weight of blackness and that her mother felt it was an insult. In this way, the subtle significance and social meaning of different color terminology was passed on in the home.

Despite the fact that they participated in *mulatizaje*, they maintained the same prejudices against people of color that the population at large had. There is still a negative association of blackness with criminality. Boys and men who are considered to be black or *mulato* are suspect even when engaged in innocent activities, and girls and women who are considered to be black and *mulata* are characterized as loud and brash, and overly sexualized.

There are a variety of ways in which a *mulato* identity can be claimed. It could be based on actual physical characteristics, such as with Lizandra, or perceived achieved cultural status, such as with Maria Carmen. Also being well educated and versed in "high" culture could enable a change one's informally ascribed status from black to *mulato*. This ascription varied, dependent on the presence or absence of the person being ascribed. Maria Carmen's mother-in-law, Conchita, actually classified her as *negra* to me in private, but changed that classification whenever Maria Carmen was present; much in this same way, Afro-Cubans were referred to as *morenos* in the present of other Afro-Cubans and as *negros* in their absence.

There are a variety of characteristics employed to claim or ascribe *mulatizaje*. The contexts in which these traits are ascribed identify a person as participating in whiteness, blackness, or *mestizaje*. The social terminology itself is not real and there is no consensus, even among members of the same family, as to which term should be ascribed. The anchorman's social race was not real or fixed, as Conchita alluded, depending on perspective he was either a *mulato atrasado* or a *negro avanzado*. When Lizandra commented that the anchorman was "black like her mother," she was chastised for physically linking her mother to a color term and ignoring the social connotations. Color terminology no matter how benignly ascribed was never devoid of social implications.

Omar also objected to the classification of his girlfriend as *mulata*. That she "didn't have a race" was his way of articulating the arbitrary nature of color classification. His girlfriend was a light bronzish color with long black slightly-wavy hair and "intermediate" facial features. She was ambiguous in that she could have just as easily been classified *trigueña* as *mulata* because she had the social and physical characteristics of both. At the time she had a junior *carnet* so she had no formal classification.

Case study #2

The Matos family lives across the street from Conchita's family. The neighbors consider the family as *blanco*. Despite being very well educated and both parents being university professors, the Matos family is not as well off as their neighbors the Rodriguez's. Their family is composed of Sergio, Vivian, and Rocio, their adopted daughter. Rocio was unaware that she was adopted, and believed Sergio and Vivian were her natural parents. Vivian sold pastries and other small sweets to her neighbors to supplement her income.

Vivian is very similar in complexion to her neighbor Conchita. She classifies herself as a *mulata blanconazo*, but her *carnet* classifies her as white. Below, Vivian describes herself and her family:

I am a big mixture. You see me as white, but I am not white, because my grandmother was, not black, but a color like gray. She was that way because of her lineage. She was French mixed with black, with slaves. Her father and mother were a mixture of French and black. So the features of my grandmother were of a white person but with a gray color. She had a very fine nose and very fine lips. She was a very educated person, but with a gray face. My true father was Bizcaino and because of this, I look like I do.

Unconsciously, Vivian made a very clear link between European "fine" features and education (used in this context to mean cultured). Her grandmother's features in and of themselves were used as an indicator of her level of education and culture. The only blot on this was her somewhat ambiguous gray coloring which made Vivian further emphasized her educational status in relation to her features.

While speaking to me, Vivian asked her husband, a tall self-described *trigueño*, to look for her identity card. "*Negro*, look for my *carnet de identidad*. Mine [her *carnet*] I don't know what it says, I am *trigueña*, I imagine that it..." Her *carnet* was an older one, and it did not have the skin color section on it. She explained to me, that the state always classified her as white. She elucidated why in the following:

I am classified as white because what is prevalent is white, but I am not white. Look, Shawn, here in Cuba, if you do not have something from the Congo, then you have something from Carabalí, and he that doesn't have a little bit of Linga has Mandinga. How is the Cuban formed in Cuba? The Cuban is formed from these trunks, the Spaniard, the Chinese, and the African. From these three trunks comes the Creole. It's nothing more than the mixture, the union, of three races. Some prevail more than others, Chinese features are those that maintain and persevere from generation to generation, one generation to the next. The Chinese, the Chinese features, the eyes, the yellow color, all of these are Chinese characteristics. They are pervasive, but here in Cuba you won't find a white of the Caucasian race that is pure. No, you won't find one because the Cuban, the Creole comes from these three trunks. If you don't have a little in the first generation then you have it in the second or the third. Sometimes you will find a family where everyone is white, and someone will be born that is *mulato*, very *trigueño*, *trigueño*, with curly hair, according with Mendel's law. Still these characteristic features remain and can come out. That is why with the mix of a white and a *mulatto*, there are surprises. The same

way someone could turn out to be black, they could also turn out to be *mulato*, or turn out white. You could turn out to be any one of the three. That's what happens here. My mother was *mulata* and my father was a blonde white, they had a daughter who was blonde. I was blonde when I was small, up until I was seven or eight years old.

Here is a prime example of how many Cubans used the idiomatic expression: "he who does not have something from the Congo has something from Carabalí" to express the socio-genetic history with the enslaved Africans. Vivian not only denies "true" whiteness to herself, but to Cubans as a whole, a recurring theme in many my interviews. This also exemplifies how Cuban whites are recontextualized through blackness and situated in a Cuban context as different from foreign whites and whiteness. As proof of this lack of "purity," Vivian explained how African and Chinese traits endured throughout the generations and could show themselves at any time, much to the surprise of some white families. Here Vivian also relates how *trigueño* is a term equated with *mestizaje*; in her example she uses *trigueño* to establish a white identity which could be categorized by the state as *blanco*. Underlying this is the implication of a *mulato* identity which is how popular culture would categorize such a person.

Sergio also provided credence to the concept of *trigueño* sometimes being equated with the light-skinned *mulato*. He was almost defensive when he spoke of his grandmother on his father's side of the family. "I have a grandmother, on my father's side who is a dark *trigueña*, but very white, well defined, very straight hair." That she was dark-skinned, but had straight hair keeps her white in his mind. When discussing his wife, he had the same defensive reaction. "My wife is white, with some *mestiza* features, but she is white." Despite his wife's somewhat *mestiza* status, he defined her and his family as white. He did this even though he later told me that for him, *mulato* and *mestizo* were synonymous. In Cuba, this was not a contradictory evaluation of his family. Though she may have features which indicated mixture, her physical whiteness, her official classification as white, and her education all combined to make her socially white. Yet her *mestiza* features, her blackness, connected her in a concrete way to an overall mixed identity which firmly rooted her as a "typical" Cuban.

Sergio also explained how a family, using his own as an example, could be considered white, if the racial mixing was not strong or if there were not immediate racial crossings in the present generation. "In my family in general...there are some with skin a little whiter than others but there aren't these big crosses that exist, generally they are white. Some are a little more *trigueño* and others less." He went on to say that his side of the family does not have the same degree of mixture as does his wife's. In this same sense, his family could also claim general *mulatizaje* identity. According to Vivian, her family was white because "I have a white family because my husband is white. I have aunts who are dark *mulatas*, and I have cousins who are black, who have cousins who are blonde with light eyes. It's a mix because my grandmother married a white man from the Canaries." Whiteness or blackness can be claimed either way through association with others, and not because of personal physical admixture. She also legitimizes the whiteness in her family by linking to a white relative who came to the island but was not born there.

Rocio, described her mother in the following way: "She is a *mulata blanconaza* but she can pass for white, because she has white skin and good hair." Rocio's informal classification of *trigueña* allowed her to fit into a family in which she classified her mother as *mulata blanconaza* and her father as *blanco* (white). She shared her father's opinion of their whiteness as a family unit; and the claiming of *mestizaje* in the family did not make the claimants feel less white. Both Rocio and her father Sergio were informally classified as *trigueños*. The classification of *trigueño* was expansive and flexible enough that one could claim a generalized blackness, and be seen as participating in *mulatizaje* while still being categorized as white.

In her interview, Vivian explained how she perceived the manifestation of her *mulatizaje*:

> The features that are prevalent in me are of whites, because the Spaniard lightened up the race. The Spaniard cleaned the race, and because my mother was a light *mulata* and my father Spaniard, that which is most pervasive in me is the white, but I have my spark [piece of] of blacks also.

Vivian was quite explicit about not denying her either her European or African heritages. Throughout her interview, Vivian classified herself in several different ways. She fluctuated from *blanca*, to *mulata blanconaza,* to *mestiza,* to *trigueña*, and when she described her hair, nose, lips and skin color, her classification changed according to which characteristics, features, or attributes she wanted to highlight at the time.

The mutability of children's racial identity was also addressed. Using herself as an example, Vivian explained the plasticity of race in children, she was blonde as a child, but has become brunette as an adult. This change was framed as a racial transformation. This went along with the general ideology that both state officials and the masses expressed, regarding race as not static but dynamic, and children as uncertain racial entities that were not fixed, or at least fully formed racially, until adulthood. Racial transformations could also transpire in old age as skin lightened or darkened, hair texture changed, and features become less distinct.

Vivian considers herself an expert in the ascription of color categories:

> I have good vision for seeing the race of a person. I can tell you that this
> person is this type, because I have studied the characteristics of the races.
> I see what most prevails; it is this that determines the race of an individual.

In her opinion, determining categorization is complex because it involves ascertaining the degree and prevalence among several characteristics. Women tended to be more exacting in determining color classifications than men, and were inclined to provide answers that required more discrete categorization. For example, women were more likely to confer *mulata blanconazo* as a category rather than simply *mulata*.

Case study #3

The Ramos family represents a *negro* family. They were middle class and had some access to the U.S. dollar economy through contact with foreigners, particularly African-Americans. Darla is a fifty-six year old architect who lives with her two sons in Santo Suarez, and who

classifies herself, her husband, and children as *negros*. When pressed, she articulates that the racial mixture in her family is comprised primarily of *negros* and *mulatos*, with some Asian descent coming from her grandmother. She described her father as being of direct African descent, and her mother as a descendent of a slave woman and Asian man. She further portrays her brother and his children as black but with Asian features. When questioned about the difference, from her point of view, between a *mestizo* and a *mulato* she held:

> *Mulato* has been the mix here in Cuba since the colonial era. Since then it has been the mixing of blacks with white Spaniards. This is the true *mulato* here in Cuba. *Mestizo* is everyone that mixes with another race like Chinese or Arab, or even North American.

Darla was very proud to be black and expressed her pride in the following:

> To be *negro* is my race. It is my color, my principles, my family. It is what I was taught. Children from the time they are small are also taught to identify with their color and not deprecate it. You are taught to know who and what you are and to feel proud of this. I was taught to be proud of my skin color at home. I never considered my color to be something pejorative, or that it was a malediction in life. There are those that consider it to be a malediction to be born *negro*. It all depends on the family to which a person is born and how they see themselves.

Although conscious of the negative stereotypes that abounded about blacks, Darla still felt that African ancestry was the backbone of Cuban society, which she articulated in the following:

> Here in this country the influence of the black race is very strong although the people deny it a lot. In the end they have an uncle, a cousin, relatives, a grandparent, or ancestors where there is a black person in the family line. Yes, there are certainly people that are not mixed, who don't have any black ancestry, but if you look much of the population even if they are very white, they have a black relative.

While claiming a *mestizo* identity, Darla nevertheless expresses more of a black than *mestizo* identity when she was a university student. She conveyed this below.

These things in life are very complicated and depend on the social medium where one develops. I studied my career at the University and truly there were very few blacks, at least in the career that I studied. In my class there were seventy or so students, and two or three were black. At times, there was one woman and two men, or two women and one man. The other people were *mestizos* and *blancos*. So what has happened is that my best friends are white. My closest friend, we are like family, is white. I also have friends that are black. My *comadre*[70] is black. I don't discriminate against anyone nor are there differences in how I treat one or the other, but unfortunately my social relations are a product of these things. Here Cuba is truly multiracial in this way.

In the above case study, Darla was able to express two separate identities for two separate purposes. From the beginning she classifies herself as both *negra* and *mestiza*. As a *negra* she felt very proud of her African heritage, and she maintained her pride in the face of negative attitudes towards blacks. She believed that both pride in blackness and negative attitudes towards it were learned at home. She contextualized racism or prejudice as an individual, and not institutional phenomenon.

Darla's claims of a *mestiza* identity were based on her Asian heritage. Yet this was not the identity that she emphasized, particularly when she discussed herself in relation to her university experience. Isolated, with only two other black students, she identifies as black and not *mestizo*. In another statement she discusses the differences, as she perceives them to exist, between the *mulato* and the *mestizo*. For her they both represent race mixture, but the *mulato* is the mix of blacks and white Spaniards whereas the *mestizo* is every other mixture. When she conversed about her university education, her high-status socialization, and her isolation in this position, she deliberately shifted identity and disengaged herself from her *mestiza* identity. When she wanted to emphasize her interpersonal harmonious race relationships, she also discussed how Cuba is "multiracial." Her stress on the multiracial nature of the society at this particular moment indicated that *mulatizaje* and *mestizaje* was used as social facilitators. In addition, she

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[70] Co-mother or godmother.

emphasized *mulatizaje* for white Cubans. From her perspective, blackness was shared even when not visible, and could even be bequeathed through distant relations. Blackness from this standpoint could be conferred due to social interactions and circumstances.

Many families described as "white" elucidated their *mestizaje* through the discourse of blackness or "lack or purity." Because the discussion of *mestizaje* was perceived as a bidirectional paradigm, either whiteness or blackness could be employed to convey *mestizaje*. Individuals who described themselves as "black" recounted whiteness in their family tree in the same manner that "whites" described blackness or lack thereof in theirs. In addition, in terms of color classification, Cuban whiteness was not the extreme point on the color continuum, as that place was reserved for foreign whiteness.

Case study #4

Mina is a thirty-nine year old ballerina, who describes herself and her husband as black. She claims *mestizaje* for her family through whiteness in the following.

> My grandparents on my mother's side were descendents of Africans because my great-grandfather was a *negro* brought from Africa. My grandfather was born here in Cuba, the child of these Africans with a *negra criolla* from here. Of course, due to this, my mother is completely *negra cubana*. My father has *mestizaje*, because my great-grandfather was *gallego* [from Spain]. My grandmother was black, descendent from Africans. My father is *mulato* or rather *mestizo* and his parents, to see them, are *negros*. My father's parents are *negros* but my grandfather was white with blue eyes. My father came out a pretty light *mulato* with very fine features and regular hair. Hair that wasn't hard or soft. It was wavy. He has connection to the two parts: the white with the African and black with black, and from this branch we have *mulato*, we have *jabao* [what we call *jabao*] and we have *negros*. Well, because of all this mixture, I can say that I have a *mestiza* family. That's because the dark, dark black, nowadays isn't predominant. Generation degeneration. It's called degeneration when at times you find that someone could be born dark because they carry that in their blood but until now that hasn't happened.

In other words, we've maintained everyone in almost the same line, in the
same [skin] tone.

Mina fashioned her *mestizaje* through her white great-grandfather, and his whiteness was

"legitimized" because he was not a "white" from Cuba, but rather a *gallego* "white" from Spain.

This was a common practice. Many Cubans who identified as white would legitimize their

whiteness by locating it as originating outside of Cuba. Conversely she also employs blackness

to legitimize her *cubanidad*. Her mother is a "complete" *negra cubana* (black Cuban) because

her grandfather and grandmother were of African descent and born in Cuba. In addition, Mina

made a similar comment related to Felix's earlier discussion, in that she believed there were few

to no "extreme" types precisely due to mulattoization of the population. Her perception of the

composition of the population leaned towards *mestizaje*, such that the "extreme" types "white

whites" and "black blacks" were perceived as disappearing.

Case Study #5

Paula, a sixty-three year old retired secretary, who is both formally and self-ascribed as

white, framed whiteness through the concept of "lack of purity."

> The pure white doesn't exist. There are very few pure [whites], because
> when you look at the descent you see the union of the mix of races. My
> grandfather from my father's side was Biscaino, and the father of my dad
> was Isleño. When you look at my descent I'm not an original Cuban.

Although Paula articulated the lack of "pure" whites in Cuba, she located herself within that

"purity" by structuring her identity as originating from outside of the island. Therefore, although

she was Cuban and thus participates in *cubanidad* "racially," she was not an "original Cuban"

with an implicit characterization that they were not "pure," and she could stand separate from

mulatizaje.

> In my family I know who is white and who is *mulato*, because my family
> is correctly characterized as a white family; at least before the arrival of
> my nephews who married with *mulatas*.

Now that there were *mulatos* in the family, she categorized the family's white status into two time frames, one based on the before and after condition of her nephews marrying *mulata* women. Yet under Darla's definition of *mulatizaje*, the addition to the family of these *mulata* women, characterizes Paula's family once again within the Cuban ideology of *mulatizaje*.

Case study #6

Josue, a University professor in his late twenties who is classified as white on his *carnet*, also situated his "authentic" whiteness as originating outside of Cuba.

> My grandmother was Canary. She was born on one of the Canary Islands.
> My distant grandfather was also a descendant from the Canaries and of
> course my maternal grandparents were also descendants of Spaniards. All
> of them were white and I have nothing from here.

Although Cuban whites are miscegenated, Josue could claim purity because his racial antecedents were not from Cuba. In addition, any darkness in his family was attributed to the hot climate and the intense sun.

> In my family, by coincidence everyone is white. My sister's husband is a
> white from *oriente* [east of the island], so I define him as *trigueño*
> skinned. It is a burnt color because of the sun. His hair is very straight
> and black. My father is likewise like this because he works under the sun.

His brother-in-law, whom he described as a "white from *oriente*," can still be ascribed a white identity because his dark skin color was attributed to the sun and not a racial mixture. Although the sun was given as one reason for the dark color of Cuban whites, a "white from *oriente*" was usually perceived to be a light-skinned *mulatto*, because of high composition of Afro-Cubans on the east end of the island. Although Josue reasonably defended the white

identity of his family, his neighbors could still ascribe a *mestizaje* identity to Josue's family

based on the *trigueño* color of his father and brother-in-law.

Case study #7

Raiza, a thirty-one year old communal services engineer, described himself as a mixed white

and also as a white *mulato*. His *carnet* designates him as white. He depicts his family in the

following as being a blend of mixes:

> My sister is *mulata*, like your [referring to interviewer] color. *El Chino*,
> my brother is *trigueño*. His father is Japanese. Then the father of my
> sister is *mulato*. We are siblings with different fathers. The family has
> [racial] mixes. Now it has more mixes than before because I have an aunt
> whose name is Liliana, we are the same age. She was born in January but
> I was born in September. Well, she was married three times. Her children
> have different fathers. It wasn't with one man. She has a daughter that is
> *mulatica*, she has a son that came out very black, *negrito,* and her oldest is
> *trigueño* and the youngest is also a *trigueña*. She has four children two of
> whom are of color and two of whom are white.

Raiza's brother, whose father was Japanese, was referred to as *el chino*. Raiza did not

classify his brother as Asian, but classified him as *trigueño*, and this informal

classification was a common form of denoting and ascribing identity to persons perceived

to be of Asian descent. Formally, his brother is classified as white and not Asian by the

state. Raiza when questioned stated, "I am not a *trigueño* white. I am a mixed white, a

blanco mulato." In discussing Raiza with his wife, she described him as white, but she

immediately explained that he was not a "true" white because his lineage was mixed with

blacks. Raiza's case was very common in terms of how whiteness was ascribed and

defined by the state and contested by individuals. For Raiza, his definition of whiteness

through the term *trigueño* was expansive. Not only was his brother ,who was half

Japanese, ascribed a *trigueño* identity, but he also ascribed this identity to his niece and

nephew, whom he does not indicate as being mixed to the extent that he comments upon it. As a Cuban white he locates his and his brother's whiteness at a local level.

Case study # 8

Raina, a sixty-one year old retired secretary is classified as white by her *carnet,* claims both a white and *mestiza* identity:

> My father was white, he was an architect. My mother is an illiterate *negra* because she never finished anything that she studied. A black woman in the sense that her mother was *negra* and her father was *negro* but not black because of skin color, they were white-skinned. My mother is black but she doesn't have the black skin tone that here we would call black. She is the daughter of a black with a man who was white-skinned.

Raina grounded her identity in *mulatizaje*. Her negotiation of identity depended on what aspect of her family she was highlighting at the time. When questioned how she would classify her family, she responded with the following:

> My father who died and his brothers were all white, and my family on his side is white. I am white and I have cousins who are white with blonde hair and light colored eyes.

When the question was repeated, she replied by classifying herself differently:

> My father's side was white and my mother's side, they are the types that you are going to find here. There are people here that have whiteness on both sides of their family, but not with our family. I am *mestiza*, the daughter of a white and black.

Raina contextually negotiated her identity by emphasizing either her mother or her father's side of the family. During her interview, she also identified herself as a *mulata blanconaza*. For each identity chosen, different phenotypic or social factors were put forth to support her perspective. Although she later described both of her parents a phenotypically white, she constructed her father's whiteness as foreign and her mother's whiteness as Cuban. When asked who she thought was a "typical" Cuban she responded,

> A representative of Cuba couldn't be white or blonde, they exist here but they aren't the representation, here it's the black race. I'd choose a *mestizo*, more now because of the Revolution since there have been more crosses between white and black. Look at her [points to a neighbor], her children are mixed. They are not black. She is darker than they are, nevertheless, she must have told you that her family is white.

In Raina's statement, she encapsulated the general feeling that due to the Revolution an environment had been created in which the frequency and acceptance of interracial relationships has increased. She also implied that although her neighbor probably ascribed her (the neighbor's) family as white, it was a Cuban whiteness which involves *mulatizaje*. Her neighbor, who she called dark-skinned, (and in this case was ascribed a *mulata* identity), could still uncontestedly characterize her family as Cuban white.

Case study #9

Isaac, a twenty-nine year old librarian, classifies himself as a *negro*. His *carnet*, though classifies him as *mulato*. He belonged to the group of young Cubans who listen to American hip-hop and rap music and he defines himself as being pro-black. In this context, he negotiated his identity in a myriad of ways to reflect and incorporate this identity along with others. The following are some of his thought concerning racial classification:

> My father is a *negro chino*. His father was a *negro chino*. My mother is a *mulata china*. My grandfather on my father's side is a *mulatto*, and my grandmother a *negra achinada*. My great-grandmother was *china*, she was a *mulata china*. My great-grandfather was *mulato*. My grandfather on my mother's side was *mulato*. My grandmother on my mother's side was a *mulata china*, not original Chinese. My family is *mestizo*. In my family they classify me as *mulato*. I classify myself as *negro*. For my family, I am *mulato* because I have fine features, my color is a little lighter and that's the classification that they give me. The people in the street classify me as various types. There are some that say I am *mulato*, others say I am *jabao*. I think that I am *mestizo* because I have Chinese and black ancestry. I don't think I am *mulato* as my *carnet* says. Really, I am

black, the large and short of it is that we are black, and I believe that they will eventually stop all of this *mulato*, *jabao* or *mestizo*, as this means nothing. Anyone that is classified as *blanconazo*, *jabao* or *moro*, it the same type of classification for *negro*. I am convinced that the long and short of it is that Cuba is going to be a country of *mestizos* if it already isn't, it will become *mestizo*. This is because there is a lot of mixture. I think that the white as he is in Cuba practically isn't white he is *mestizo*. He is *blanco* because of skin color but his features are *negro*.

Isaac employed *mestizo* to indicate his Asian ancestry, and *negro* when he wanted to emphasize his black ancestry. He was also ascribed many different identities, including *chino*, which he did not mention here. He perceived most of the classifying terms to be extensions of the *negro* category, which emphasized the black aspect of *mulatizaje* implicit in these terms. In addition, as with other informants, he situated Cuban whiteness as an inherently belonging to *mulatizaje*.

Case study #10

Roberto is a thirty-six year old baker, who identifies himself as *negro*, with a *carnet* that also classifies him as *negro*.

My father is *negro* and my mother is *mulata*. My grandparents on my father's side were *mulatos*. My grandparents on my mother's side were white. My grandfather was white and my grandmother was white but with black ancestry. Her father was a *mulato* and her mother was *blanca*. My family is *mulato*. In Cuba there are many definitions for race and what is *negro*, *mulato* and so on. For example, for myself I am *negro*, for others, they say I am *mulato*. There are some people that say they are white but they aren't white. They are the whites that are a little *trigueño*. Here in Cuba the white white for me doesn't seem to exist.

Although Roberto classified himself as *negro*, he classified his family as *mulato*. While he concurred with his official classification, he acknowledged that informally he could be, and has been ascribed a *mulato* identity. He elucidated how this is possible through his statement that

terminology had multiple definitions relative to the perspective of the speaker. Additionally, he expressed how for him, "true" whiteness does not exist in Cuba.

Case study #11

Gemina is a fifty-five year old history professor. She self-classifies as *negra*, but her *carnet* is older and did not have a skin color category.

> My parents are *negros*, and because we have *mestizaje* here on my mother's side of the family, there are *blancos* and *chinos*. My maternal grandfather was *chino*, and the majority of my paternal family was *negro*. They were Lucumi. I also had a great-grandfather that was *gallego* and another great-grandfather that was Bizcaino. My grandmother was *mestiza*, but because she was the daughter of a *gallego* and *mulata*, she was a Cuban *blanca*. My husband also has this kind of *mestizaje*. It is very common here in Cuba. My family is *mestizo*. Once I knew a family in Spain, and the young lady showed me a photo of her grandmother and to my surprise I saw that the young lady was *mulata* and she has a brother who was *mestizo*. I asked her to explain how he could be *mestizo* and she said that he wasn't, but rather he was white.

Gemina negotiated her identity into the darker side of the color continuum. As with Roberto, this did not negate the *mestizaje* she associated with her family. She explicitly situated the Cuban white as *mestiza* due to *mulatizaje*. She also derived social agency in the paradigm of whiteness and the international hierarchy of "races" when she alluded to *mulatizaje* in Spain, and the lack of Spanish acknowledgement of this *mestizaje*. As such she reversed the paradigm of whiteness as it concerned the "purity" of whiteness being ideologically situated in Spain.

The above cases demonstrate the manner in which color classification is employed to negotiate *mulatizaje* identity or (re)contextualize the *mulatizaje* perceived as inherent in *cubanidad*. The paradigm of *mulatizaje* as employed in Cuba is not unidirectional, but bidirectional as identity is negotiated inward towards the middle from the extremes of the color

continuum and sometimes outwards from the middle. Although the paradigm of whiteness still exists, it is somewhat mitigated through the social agency employed in *mulatizaje*. Each individual had the ability to claim this identity or have this identity ascribed to them. *Mulatizaje* was a prominent feature in identity negotiation regardless of whether *mulatizaj*e was being ascribed, claimed or denied. Although white, black and mulatto appeared to be separate categories on the surface their flexibility, and multidimensional functions and definitions provides each family studied with the ability to reach beyond these terms to a shared sense of Cubanness. This ability to negotiate *mestizaje* regardless of physical appearance or presence of mixture was due to the perception of *mestizaje* as not an exclusively physical phenomenon.

   Mestizaje did not have to be visible, expressed, or real to be applicable; therefore it was easy to claim. Those who did not claim *mestizaje* for themselves were still perceived as being a part of *mestizaje* because it was considered to be an integral part of being Cuban. Thus as Darla declared, even if blackness or mixture is not visible, someone in the family is black, if only hidden or not immediately visible. Vivian also expressed this when she discussed how there was always the possibility of previous race mixtures becoming evident and expressed in later generations.

   The other contributing factor to the ability of Cubans to negotiate *mestizaje* is that there is no set absolute standard for color classification. For some *mestizo* was analogous to *mulato*, while for others it expressed Asian ancestry. Raiza, for example, thought *trigueño* was an adequate term to describe his brother, but the state felt that it was *blanco*, and for others it was *chino* as indicated by his nickname. Most people had multiple classifications that were applicable to them in different circumstances. This flexibility was encouraged and promoted by the state through the absence of any absolute rules to guide classification.

Traditionally a means to claim a whiter identity, color classification now enabled claims of *mulatizaje*. This is evident in the image of the typical Cuban described by the Cuban population as a *mulato/a*. The most visible image of the Cuban in popular culture, especially in music, was also the *mulato/a*. Although *mestizo* was frequently used interchangeably with *mulato*, people did not give it as a common response for the typical Cuban. The physical and ideological image of the *mulato* was not circumscribed, and the ideology of *mestizaje* allowed this image, although idealized, to be incorporated in multiple forms. Thus one could participate in *mestizaje* as a *mulato* without being brown-skinned.

However, identification was not negotiated without consequences. Most of the terms employed had social characteristics and values attached to them, which were demonstrated and validated through their frequent use both interpersonally and in popular culture. For example, in one of their recent songs, "*El Negro Esta Cocinado*" (The black man is cooking), Los Van Van crooned sexual double entendres embedded in the dual metaphors of blackness and food. In this case, the *negro* in the song is representative of the sexual potency attributed to Afro-Cubans which he demonstrates through his "cooking."

This chapter explored the popular opinions of *mulatizaje* as expressed through *cubanidad* represented by the cultural media of music, colloquial idoms, and perceptions of the typical Cuban as *mulato/a*. *Mulatizaje* was either ascribed or claimed contributing to the overall internalized image of a Cuba with significant African heritage not reflected on official statistics. Furthermore, the nature of *mulatizaje* was gendered, embodied, and idealized as the *mulata* woman. The following section will summarize the overall project and highlight various concluding themes interconnected all through this document.

Conclusions

Throughout this work, my intention has been to illustrate the multiple forms of color classification in Cuba, demonstrate their operation, and focus on how these forms of classification can be utilized to view the effects of a positive political promulgation of blackness on the interpersonal color identity negotiations of the population. As such, this dissertation locates national and self identity, through the construction of color classification, and employs these classifications as a gauge of societal attitudes towards both metaphorical and physical blackness through the use of marked identifying terms.

The theoretical framework of my study centers on the paradigm of race mixture as a unifying strategy in nation building and identity negotiation. My analysis focuses on blackness, expressed through *mulatizaje*, as an inclusive device in the formation of color identities employed by the state and its citizenry. This paradigm of *mulatizaje* is examined as an all-encompassing ideology which concentrates on the blackness of most people rather than what heretofore has been the whiteness of the Eurocentric elite. Blackness, although not the only alternative in identification, due to its past marginalization as an identification choice has made it an important means of analyzing the discourse of race between the state and its populace.

The definition of blackness, and the terms employed to convey it, in both formal and informal forms of color classification, are constructed in such a manner that they are fluid and malleable, which allows individuals from disparate groups to come together and form a shared sense of identity. This fluidity is maintained and reinforced by the lack of agreement between formal and informal classification between the state and the general populace, the flexibility of the terms incorporating different opinions of physical appearance and social status, and finally the conflation and shifts of meaning that the terms have experienced over time. Thus the

definition and descriptive employment of terms like *trigueño* and *mulato* share commonalities which allow for shared access by phenotypically different individuals and permits both light-skinned and dark-skinned Cubans to claim the same (mixed race) identity.

The complex social construction of race in Cuba exemplifies the invalidity of race as a construct and emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the divisions perceived as "natural" that are assigned and ascribed to human populations. Within the paradigm of race in Cuba, color classification has a significant role in determining which ideology, whiteness or blackness, will dominate the interpretation of national and self identity. Throughout the majority of its history, whiteness was the dominant theme in identity interpretation and negotiation. Based on this premise, the majority of Cubans stressed and tried to convey aspects of whiteness through color terminology. These choices privileged whiteness in the ascriptive communication of identity, such that terms which socially or physically indicated whiteness were preferred over terms signifying blackness. Thus, there arose the practice of elevating status through employing terms which socially cloaked blackness. As a result, in certain circumstances, *moreno* was employed instead of *negro*, and movement in the color continuum was generally unidirectional towards whiteness.

Within this discourse of whiteness, national Cuban identity was primarily articulated as a white *mestizaje* through the projected images of the white Cuban creole and the *guajiro* as representative of *cubanidad*. These images focused mainly on cultural and physical images of the European/Spanish contributions to Cuban identity while ignoring and silencing prominent aspects of African heritage. Additional practices privileging whiteness included essentialized and negative social characteristics attributed to black identities, biased immigration policies which allowed for white immigration to the country but restricted black immigration, and the

culturally accepted practice of trying to *adelantar la raza* (advance the race) through racial mixtures with lighter and preferably whiter individuals. The premise of this process was to "bleach" successive generations until phenotypic whiteness was "achieved." Solaun and Kronus (1973) referred to this process as benign genocide. The social currency of whiteness was highly valuable and the advantage of negotiating whiter identities provided better access to jobs, education, and improved life chances and opportunities as expressed by Conchita and her brother Juan Carlos in the extended case study on page 192. The benefits of whiteness made negotiations into lighter classifications the norm, and the further association of whiteness with higher and blackness with lower social status, reinforced the ideology of "whitening."

Color classification, under these conditions, valued terms indicating *mestizaje*, because it conferred whiteness to the darker elements of the population. Historically, flexibility functioned to enable people to move from the least desirable dark classifications (*negro*) to more desirable "lighter" classifications. The majority of shifts did not include radical jumps from *negro* to *blanco*, but rather incremental moves along the continuum, such as, from *negro* to *moro,* or *negra colorada* to *mulata*. These identity shifts transpired under a variety of social circumstances, but were mainly associated with vertical shifts in socio-economic or educational status. Vertical moves socially downward usually involved classification shifts from light to dark terms, and vertical moves socially upward usually involved shifts from dark to light terms. These moves were generally ascribed to the individual by others as recognition of their new status, and not necessarily made by the individuals themselves.

Up until the 1959 Revolution, Cuba had projected the image of whiteness to the world at large. This was in response to several mitigating factors, including slavery, the Haitian Revolution of 1790, the early US military occupation during the latter part of the 19th and early

20th centuries, and a cultural focus on Europe. With the change in government came the development of a new image for the country, one in which *mulatizaje*, which stressed African and not European heritage, became the focal point of the nation. This development is unique because it occurs in an atmosphere in which notions of black inferiority and the concept of "advancing" the race through whitening still exist.

The government has been directly responsible for this trend because of its efforts to form black political alliances, and due to a black political identity within which a subtext of whiteness is connected to global imperialism and racism, and blackness is linked to socialism and anti-racism. In addition, these linkages combined with the commodification of blackness through projections of *cubanidad* are packaged for consumption by tourists. These converging factors resulted in an increase in the discourse of blackness, and a muting of the discourse of whiteness, such that brown/*mestizo*/*mulato* as represented through *mulatizaje* is strongly articulated in the national image of *cubanidad*. The population in response to the cues it has received from the government and the realities of tourism has redefined which identity terms are considered to be the most socially and economically advantageous.

Multiple forms of color classification as they exist today reflect the population's dynamic response to the positive image of *mulatizaje* projected by the government and the changing social circumstances surrounding the economic viability of blackness. This response as demonstrated through color classification stimulates ascribed and self-ascribed notions of *mulatizaje* as essential elements of *cubanidad*. These are most visible through informal contestations of ascribed formal identity which still favor whiteness. In this manner, color classifications act as a forum for the subliminal and conscious dialogues on race between the state and the popular consciousness.

Government classification in the discourse of race involves classifications that are assigned and not self chosen. In some cases individuals who had been classified into lighter categories by the *carnet* officials informally chose to be identified by terms which (re)classified them into darker categories. Particularly striking was the fact that not only young individuals, but older individuals, participated in this trend. The popular culture wholeheartedly endorsed *mulatizaje* as representative of *cubanidad*, with the images of *mulatizaje* displayed through the cultural sites of music, and in various other interlocutions of *mulatizaje* found in the public eye. The acceptance of this image was evidenced by the majority of the Cubans in my survey who gave the *mulato* as their most common response to who was the most typical representative of Cuba as a whole. The main sites of *mulatizaje* were represented in images constructed for and associated with the tourist industry. It was through this medium that the nation "staged" itself for the benefit of outsiders, and this staging was in turn internalized by the actors, reinforcing it as a critical site of *cubanidad*.

The trope of *mulatizaje* was also intertwined with a folkloric Afro-Cuban image of Cuba, which differed from the folkloric image represented by the white Cuban peasant or the "*guarijo*." These sites of *mulatizaje*, which focused on Afro-Cubans, had previously been available but under utilized, now have exploded onto the public forum. Thus, Santería and other popular dances which started in the black community have become "en vogue." In addition, black and *mulata* women who had always been representative of the exotic and erotic experience of Cuba became an even more prominent part of the equation as sexual tourism to the country flourished. In one tour book, not written by a Cuban, there was even a paragraph dedicated to exalting the black woman's buttocks. In this manner the nation is ideologically represented with the symbolism of the *mulata* as the quintessential discourse through which *mulatizaje* is perceived.

In this dissertation, I have illustrated the gendered structures of identity negotiation through color classification. Women were effortlessly placed into a framework of *mulatizaje* in informal settings as a function of the asymmetric power relations between women of color and white men. This reflected the gendered employment of a *mulata* classification as a descriptive device, to express affection, compliment beauty, and to avoid insult. Furthermore, I connect the junctures of national and interpersonal identity through the representations of *mulatizaje* as symbolized in the iconography of the *mulata*. This identity can be established, as Edensor (2002) argues, through the loci of popular cultural representations found in the construction of national identity through media such as tourism. Thus, the international presentation of Cuban identity also incorporates the image of the *mulata* which the nation symbolically reflects subconsciously through this consciously projected image.

The multiple forms of color classification found in Cuba have been employed in this work as a reflective tool through which the social attitudes towards race are revealed. During the era of enslavement, color classification reflected the societal values of freedom and enslavement, and demonstrated the linkages that were forged between color classification and social condition. Through this medium, it has been possible to analyze the effects of Cuba's transnational dialogue on race and the contested identities of blackness as a negotiated response by Cuba's citizenry to the shifts in values that have occurred with these color terminologies. Analyzing the formal and informal forms of ascribed and self-classification has led to a new perspective on *mulatizaje*, and given agency to the otherwise silent sites of contested identities which are not reflected in the official statistics of race.

Times of great racial tension in the country are evident through the classification system. At one point, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the United States was dictating policy in

Cuba, there was great racial tension between the different social groups in Cuba. This was reflected in the color classification system as the color continuum was superficially collapsed and pushed into a two tiered instead of a three tiered system. This caused the *negro*, *mulato*, and Asian categories to be collapsed into one category labeled "*gente de color*" (people of color). Before this point in time, people classified as *negros* and *mulatos* were politically viewed as separate categories, and Asians belonged to the *blanco* category. This shift in classification was made during a time when the rights of Afro-Cubans were being curtailed, and would be followed by the 1912 race war in which an estimated 1-3000 Afro-Cubans, mostly of the middle and upper classes, were killed. Afro-Cubans after this event were prohibited by law to organize based on race.

Whereas before the discourse of blackness and *mulatizaje* became politically salient, black grandmothers were "hidden in the kitchen," they are now brought into the front room and prominently displayed. The classic axioms, "there are no pure white Cubans here" and "he that does not have something from the Congo has something from Carabalí" are examples of how blackness can be claimed through *mestizaje* by all categorical groups. Most families from all categorical groups were able to claim *mestizaje* through the flexibility and physical variability inherent in the classification terms. Thus, a person classified as *trigueño* could also be considered a very light *mulato*, and a person classified as a *negro colorado* could also be considered a very *dark mulato*, and all could claim *mulatizaje* even though from different ends of the color continuum. Racial categories are fluid and permeable even for the people at the extreme ends of the color continuum. In a sense "passing" for "black" has become the new trend in classification. Instead of color negotiation being a unidirectional phenomenon it has become a

multidirectional treatise of inclusion. This radical shift in the negotiating identity is only possible because it is perceived in some way as advantageous.

The observation of the cognitive map of color classification demonstrates where different terms are situated and how they are able to encompass more than one meaning to accommodate various definitions. These meanings are sensitive to changes in political climate. The fact that Cuba is a socialist country plays no small part in the positive shift in negotiating identity. Its political blackness has been a key factor in the changing discourse of *cubanidad*. As the government changed policies to accommodate the specific needs of Cuba's socialist strategy the icons and symbols of the revolution became blacker and blacker. This revolved around interpretations of national identity which involved a reincorporation of the Afro-Negristas position on *mestizaje*, a reevaluation of the Afro Cuban slave experience, a heavy reliance on tourism for economic survival, and a political rhetoric which positioned Cuba as the antithesis of a racist U.S. This occurred as the state found relevant Caribbean and African political allies, and redefined Cuba in a global context.

In light of the often negative associations accredited to people considered to be *mulatos* and *negros*, it was remarkable that people were negotiating not only their own but the classifications of others as darker than in the past. The claiming and ascription of *mulatizaje* was fraught with discretely placed landmines of rewards and punishments as the tensions between the ideologies of 'whitening' and 'browning' met. Those who tried to claimed lighter "whiter" classifications were privately and sometimes publicly put into darker categories by their friends and neighbors. Julie's following statement clearly illustrates the tensions involved in this paradigm shift:

> There are those who say 'I am white, but they are not white, they are *blancos capirros* who are mixed with (those) of color. You look back and the family is *negra*, *mulata* and *jabao*, and they make themselves like whites. I know a person

who says that he is white and nevertheless he is *mulato blanconazo*. His father is white and his mother is *mulata*, but his features are coarse.

Finally, the political strategy employed by the state to conceptualize blackness in a revolutionary context and situate whiteness in an imperialistic context was an effort put forth by the government to contrast Cuba and its politics with that of the United States. This effort resulted in shifting the hierarchy of race in Cuba so that brown and not white was at the apex of the pyramid. This shift is demonstrated by the population's negotiation of identity into the middle category. Though this category has traditionally been a reflection of ideologies of the dominant "white elite" towards color and class and maintenance of the status quo, it now reflects a move and emphasis towards folk perceptions of the country's proletarian blackness. The image and symbol of the *mulato*, while problematic, has served to mediate these changes, and it has been recontextualized to reflect the shift in national consciousness. This occurred and was situated under the revolutionary government; the end result of an emphasis on blackness was unintentional and not structurally designed, as evidenced by Cuba's internal discursive silences on the racial paradigm.

My focus on the color classification system attempts to connect symbolic representations of *mulato* identity accepted and reified by the state to the informal system of color and identity construction as a response to state construction of identity by the society at large. My research suggests that the racial problem in Cuba has not been solved but that the paradigm of race is situated in contrast to the alternative position of race relations as organized in the United States. The analysis of local narratives on color classification invites a sensitized notion of how black identity is successfully negotiated given the negative social structure surrounding Afro-Cubans. Although the social circumstances surrounding race have changed, as is evidenced by ascribed and self negotiations of *mulatizaje*, some of the racist ideology continues. Given the current climate in which blackness is being negotiated as a central part of self and national identity, this is the time for the Cuban government to reevaluate its silence on race. In light of this process, when the young lady on the beach claimed us both as "*mulatas del caribe*," she could do so

because she had constructed our *mulata* identities based on several conditions; we were both females, as such we both had access to the *mulata* category, we were located on a beach in Cuba, and blackness was a common theme in the political rhetoric of the state. Through the ideology of *mulatizaje* and *cubanidad*, she was able to negotiate the site of our identities as "*mulatas del caribe*." This is particularly relevant in light of Cuba's position as a vanguard model for "racial democracy." Unlike most ideologies of *mestizaje*, Cuba's model of *mulatizaje* is not based on a paradigm of whiteness and demonstrates inclusivity rather than exclusivity. This grassroots ideology was incorporated and promoted by the government and then re-circulated back to the masses further reinforcing and establishing its legitimacy. The social and political impact of the Cuban Revolution in the broader global context cannot be overlooked, as the positive steps that Cuba has deliberately and unconsciously initiated towards racial equality signals hope for the future. The Cuban model demonstrates under which circumstances racial attitudes can be transformed and emphasizes the dynamic role of the state and its people in effecting this change. The emergence of a paradigm of *mulatizaje*, as articulated in Cuba, has broad implications for the African diaspora and beyond as it describes important mechanisms for forging unity in multicultural/racial/ethnic societies. This is particularly salient as cross-cultural analysis of the construction of race is necessary in order to combat the multiple and insidious presentations of racisms around the world. More importantly, it is the manner in which *mulatizaje* functions that offers the hope of being an ideology which promotes a non-elitist approach to unifying disparate groups and forming true multi-racial democracies.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glosses of Color Terms

Term	Gloss
Achinado/a	Oriental features or hair type.
Blanco/a	White person; person who has white skin color but is not necessarily all white by descent.
Blanco/a achinado/a	A white person with Oriental features or hair type.
Blanconazo/a	Person who is classified as white but appears to have some African heritage because of some African characteristic[71].
Blancuso/a	A pejorative term used by blacks towards whites.[72]
Bozal	A term used during colonial times to indicate an African that did not speak Spanish and had recently arrived from Africa.
Blanco/a Capirro/a	See below.
Capirro/a	Red-skinned or red-headed white. A term used to indicate mulatizaje due to African textured in the hair.[73]
Chino/a	Offspring of a black and mulatto during colonial times; Asian slave; [74] anyone with epicanthic folds; anyone of Asian descent; term of endearment.
Colorado/a	Person with reddish skin color
Cuaterón	Quadroon. Offspring of a white and mulatto[75]. ¼ African ancestry.
Indio/a	Any person with skin color or physical appearance of and Indian.[76]
Jabao/a	Person who is mulatto with reddish skin tone and reddish hair color;[77] Person of mixed race who has hair and skin color of a white person and kinky hair texture or other physical features of a black person; the mulatto offspring of a black and white whose skin color is yellowish and who has light or blonde colored hair (usually an afro).[78]
Jabao/a capirro/a	Mulatto with reddish skin tone who appears white but has slightly kinky hair.
Ladino/a	Enslaved African that was assimilated to European culture because he/she spoke Spanish and was Christianized.
Lavado/a	Washed; Person whose skin color is lighter and facial features more Caucasian than others.
Mestizo/a	Any person of mixed race.
Moreno/a	Dark brown; a free black; a black person; a way of referring to blacks without saying the word Negro

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[71] See Ortiz (1974)

[72] ibid.

[73] ibid.

[74] Stephens (1989)

[75] ibid.

[76] ibid.

[77] Ortiz (1974)

[78] Stephens (1989)

Moro/a	Dark skinned black with fine features and sometimes a wavy hair type.
Mulato/a	Offspring of a black and white or of a mulatto and mulatto; a term indicating beauty; Person whose skin color ranges from light to medium brown.
Mulato/a achinado/a	A mulato with Oriental features or hair type.
Mulato/a Blanconazo/a	A mulatto that is very white but still has some African features that indicate African heritage.
Negro/a	Person with very dark brown skin. A descendant from Africa.
Negro/a achinado/a	A black with Oriental features or hair type.
Negro Azul	A person whose skin tone is so dark that it takes on a bluish cast.
Negro/a colorado/a	A person who has medium brown skin color and kinky hair.
Negron/a	A physically large black person.
Ochavón	Octoroon. Offspring of a white and a quadroon. Offspring of two quadroons.[79] 1/8 African ancestry.
Pardo/a	Brown. A mulatto. Offspring of a white and black; Free mulatto.[80]
Quemado/a	Burnt. A person with dark skin color.
Tizón	A person with very dark skin color.[81]
Trigueño/a:	Tanned skinned, wheat colored. Person whose skin color is somewhat darkened or similar to the color of wheat.[82]

[79] Stephens (1989)

[80] Ortiz (1974)

[81] Stephens (1989)

[82] ibid.

Appendix B: Census Enumeration of Writs of Freedom

CARTAS DE LIBERTAD
EXPEDIDAS A ESCLAVOS EN LA ISLA EN EL QUINQUENIO DE 1858 A 1862.

DEPARTAMENTOS.	AÑOS.	PARDOS.			MORENOS.			TOTAL.
		Varones.	Hembras.	SUMA.	Varones.	Hembras.	SUMA.	
OCCIDENTAL.	1858	163	201	364	573	732	1.315	1.169
	1859	143	176	319	537	708	1.245	1.564
	1860	143	262	405	463	657	1.120	1.525
	1861	156	185	341	448	614	1.062	1.403
	1862	195	247	442	521	651	1.172	1.614
		800	1.071	1.871	2.542	3.362	5.904	7.775
ORIENTAL.	1858	20	31	51	139	197	336	387
	1859	27	50	77	138	213	351	428
	1860	29	42	71	126	197	323	394
	1861	29	31	60	61	105	166	226
	1862	33	42	75	73	104	177	252
		138	196	334	537	816	1.353	1.687
	Total de ambos Departamentos	938	1.267	2.205	3.079	4.178	7.257	9.462
	Año medio..........................	187'6	253'4	441	615'8	835'6	1.451'4	1.892'4

Appendix C: Racial Categories of 1827 and 1841 Censuses

CENSO DE 1827

(Esta tabla aparece en los censos de 1841 y 1907)

RAZA	Total	Varones	Hembras
Total....................	704,487	403,905	300,582
Blancos..........................	311,051	168,653	142,398
Libres de color..................	106,494	51,962	54,532
Esclavos.........................	286,942	183,290	103,652

CENSO DE 1841
Población

RAZA	Total	De 0 a 15 años de edad	De 16 a 60 años de edad	De más de 60 años de edad	Casados	Viudos
Total........	1,007.624	326.466	657,821	23,337	80,060	25,550
Varones Blancos......	227,144	88,617	133,054	5,473	43,329	4,174
Hembras......... Blancas......	191,147	83,862	103,460	3,825		9,920
Pardos Libres.......	43,658	19,001	23,720	937	4,532	491
Pardas........... Libres........	44,396	17,923	25,541	932		1,225
Morenos Libres.......	32,045	8,987	21,488	1,570	4,293	511
Morenas......... Libres.......	32,739	9,078	22,449	1,212		1,585
Pardos Esclavos.....	5,868	2,959	2,870	39	100	10
Pardas........... Esclavas.....	5,106	2,499	2,565	42		30
Esclavos Negros......	275,382	51,556	216,911	6,915	27,806	4,148
Esclavas. .... Negras	150,139	41,984	105,763	2,302		3,456

El censo de 1841 también dió las cifras que vienen a continuación, referentes a la distribución de la población entre las poblaciones y los distritos rurales. Se dividió la Isla en 226 poblaciones y 279 dis-

Appendix D: Census with Conflicting Terminology

SOBRE COLORES DE LA POBLACION.

	Blancos.	Mulatos.	Negros.	Diferencia de los blancos á los de color á favor de aquellos.	De blancos á mulatos á favor de los primeros.	De blancos á negros á favor de los primeros.
Intramuros	19283	3786	14491	1006	15497	4732
Razon que tienen				100 á 94,7	100 á 19,8	100 á 75,1
Estramuros	37275	6623	25510	5142	30652	11765
Razon que tienen				100 á 86,2	100 á 17,7	100 á 68,4
En lo general de poblacion	56558	10409	40001	6148	46149	16557
Razon que tienen				100 á 89,1	100 á 18,1	100 á 70,7

La poblacion general de la Habana tiene la proporcion siguiente: por cada 100 personas 56 son blancos, 8 mulatos y 36 negros.

SOBRE ESTADOS.

BLANCOS.

	Varones de 16 á 100 años.	Hembras de 16 á 100 años.	Casados.	Casadas.	Viudos.	Viudas.	Varones solteros de 1 á 100 años.	Hembras solteras de 1 á 100 años.	Matrimonios.
Intramuros	9170	5609	6348	5857	939	2887	24999	15528	1415
Estramuros	15220	10433					4999		

SOBRE CONDICION.

	Total de blancos, mulatos y morenos libres.	Total de esclavos mulatos y negros.	Diferencia á favor de los blancos y da los de color libre.
Intramuros	84,980	21,988	62992

La anterior nota demuestra que de cada 100 personas 74 son libres y 26 esclavos.

NOTAS.

1ª Del número de habitantes que aparecen en los conventos, son religiosos 35, y 120 religiosas.

2ª De los que aparecen de mas de 80 años hay en la ciudad de intramuros, 6 varones de 94 á 100 años y 3 hembras de 90 á 96. En los barrios de estramuros hay 15 varones y 25 hembras de 90 á 100 años.

3ª Aunque el total de este censo se refiere solo á la ciudad de la Habana, y sus 6 barrios estramuros hasta el puente de Chavez, observando que en los censos anteriores se incluyen los partidos de Casa-blanca, Horcon, Cerro, Jesus del Monte con el partido del Luyanó, que le era anexo y Regla con el de Guasabacoa, todos en el litoral de la bahia, se ponen á continuacion los totales de dichos partidos anexos á la Habana, y que en realidad con aquellos forman un conjunto de poblacion, sin embargo que se hallan detallados en su lugar respectivo.

Casa-Blanca		996
Cerro		3459
Horcon		6282
Jesus del Monte		4112
Luyanó		993
Regla		6662
Guasabacoa		522
Suma		23036
Habana y estramuros		106968
Total		129994

4ª En los 39698 varones y 31316 hembras de 16 á 60 hay

Varones.	Blancos.	Libres.	Esclavos.	Total.
de 16 á 40	19161	5527	7725	33013
de 41 á 60	3825	1387	1473	6685
Total	23286	7214	9198	39698

Hembras.	Blancos.	Libres.	Esclavos.	Total.
de 16 á 40	11903	8616	7046	27595
de 41 á 60	3338	2495	888	6721
Total	15241	11141	7934	34316

5ª En los 1266 varones y 1510 hembras de mas de 60 hay

Varones.				
de 61 á 80	668	370	148	1186
de mas de 80	55	10	15	80
Total	723	380	163	1266

Hembras.				
de 61 á 80	731	501	105	1337
de mas de 80	69	92	12	173
Total	800	593	117	1510

1ª El número de mulatos esclavos en toda la poblacion es de 9,298 y el de libres 1,111, resulta que de cada 100 mulatos 89 son libres y 11 esclavos.

2ª El de negros libres es de 19724 y el de esclavos 20,877, resulta que de cada 100 negros son 51 esclavos y 49 libres.

3ª En los blancos varones que hay en la ciudad y sus barrios estramuros, son 713 de mas de 60 años y en las 23802 hembras, lo son 800; están par consiguiente los primeros en la proporcion de 2½ á 100 y las segundas á 3½ por 100.

4ª En los blancos los varones de 1 á 15 son 8092 y las hembras 8035, resulta la generacion igual pues la diferencia de 57 pueden contarse ultramarinos.

5ª El número de mulatos libres de 1 á 15 es de 1832 y el de hembras 2011; ganan estas el 10 por 100.

6ª El de mulatos esclavos de 1 á 15 es 249, y el de hembras 295; ganan estas el 11½ por 100.

7ª El número de varones blancos de 16 á 40 es de 19461 y está en la proporcion de 593 á 100 con el total de 32,182 que hay: el de 40 á 60 es de 3,325 y está en la proporcion de 11⅓ por 100 con el mismo total sujetivo.

La anterior nota resulta que de cada 100 varones blancos de 16 á 100, 26 son casados 33 viudos y 70½ solteros; y de cada 100 hembras tambien de 16 á 100 36½ casadas, 18 viudas y 45½ solteras. De 100 personas viudas las 32½ son varones y las 67½ hembras.

Clasificacion por castas, sexo, condicion y edades de los habitantes de la ciudad de la Habana y sus barrios estramuros.

CLASES.	INTRAMUROS.									ESTRAMUROS.									TOTAL GENERAL DE HABITANTES.
	VARONES.				HEMBRAS.				Total de varones y hembras.	VARONES.				HEMBRAS.				Total de varones y hembras.	
	De 1 á 15 años.	De 16 á 60 años.	De mas de 60.	Resumen.	De 1 á 15 años	De 16 á 60 años.	De mas de 60.	Resumen.		De 1 á 15 años.	De 16 á 60 años.	De mas de 60.	Resumen.	De 1 á 15 años.	De 16 á 60 años.	De mas de 60.	Resumen.		
Blancos	2334	8842	328	11504	2170	5233	376	7779	19283	5758	14835	385	20978	5865	10008	424	16297	37275	56558
Pardos libres	577	594	20	1191	668	1247	51	1966	3157	1255	1431	56	2742	1343	1995	61	3399	6141	9298
Morenos libres	503	1304	65	1872	628	2055	161	2844	4716	1981	3885	249	6115	2129	5844	320	8298	14408	19124
Pardos esclavos	110	148	3	291	140	191	7	338	629	109	116		225	127	130		257	482	1111
Morenos esclavos	1067	4026	74	5167	934	3632	42	4608	9775	1235	4517	86	5838	1215	3981	68	5264	11102	20877
TOTAL	4621	14914	490	20025	4540	12358	637	17535	37560	10338	24784	776	35898	10679	21958	873	33510	69408	106968

CLASIFICACION POR ESTADOS.

CLASES.	Solteros.	Solteras.	Casados.	Casadas.	Viudos.	Viudas.	Total.	Número de matrimonios.
Blancos	24999	15528	6348	5857	939	2887	56558	4951
	3351	4502	409	475	173	388	9298	356

Clasificacion de la poblacion blanca por las naciones ó paises que la componen.

NATURALIDAD.	Varones.	Hembras.	TOTAL.	NATURALIDAD.	Varones.	Hembras.	TOTAL.
De la Península	10992	1565	12557	Suma anterior	15238	3809	19047
De Canarias	2339	1349	3688	De Austria	1		1
De Puerto-Rico	48	43	91	De Bremen	1		

233

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