“AND YOUR GRANDMOTHER, WHERE IS SHE?”:
REPRODUCING FAMILY, RACE, AND NATION IN CUBA

By
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TO MY FAMILY,
especially Ouida, Wendell, and Ian,
AND
TO ALL THOSE WHO ALLOWED
ME TO TELL THEIR STORIES
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This dissertation examines historical changes in the racially-selective reproductive practices and the articulation of genealogical memories associated with the construction of Cuban identity. As Cubans presently ask the ironic question, "Y tu abuela, dónde está?" (And your grandmother, where is she?) they define an alternative national memory of family and spurn a compatriot’s attempt to deny African ancestry. The phrase indicates that the former rejection of the family of color and secrecy surrounding race mixture are no longer tolerated. It gives the black grandmother a renewed genealogical acknowledgment. Yet, despite this popular phrase’s assertion of a common Cuban identity based in race mixture and of a challenge to a belief in white racial purity, the two views of racial identity remain in continuous tension. My dissertation analyzes the
historical conditions under which each position respectively advanced or declined. Its analysis is conducted by treating “race” as a member of an inseparable trinity that also includes the concepts of "nation," and “family.”

I argue that the evolution of the place of race in Cuban national identity has been closely associated with the value assigned to people of color and their modes of family formation. As their families gained greater acceptance, the very meaning of cubanidad acquired greater racial complexity. Earlier in the colonial period, families of color were initially defined in terms of their potential contribution to the production and pacification of an enslaved labor force. As Afro-Cuban intellectuals began to project a more collective mission of community uplift in the wake of final abolition, they asserted a new role for the family of color as a component of national development.

Such tendencies were alternately suppressed or affirmed in connection with variations in the dominant international ideologies on race. At various points, Spanish colonialism, late nineteenth-century Cuban nationalism, early twentieth-century modernizing nationalism, and revolutionary socialism each have provided distinct racial images of the suitable family and nation. The prevalence of race mixture further complicated the impact of the ideologies, forcing greater adaptation to the particulars of Cuban society. From this starting point, this study reveals Cuban women and men making racially-oriented choices in family formation that frequently denied the power of these dominant ideological positions, while they adjusted to the structural constraints engendered by these beliefs. Ultimately, I read the private and public levels of practice and discourse as competing sites for the creation of racial identification.
CHAPTER 1
EXPLORING RACE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE RACIAL
CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY, IN CUBAN AND LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

Introduction

At first glance race relations in present-day Cuba may fascinate the North
American observer for their outward signs of equality. People with varying degrees of
recognizable African descent are present in every level of political and economic life, as
high-ranking politicians, professionals, teachers, and small vendors. And in the realm of
sexual relations, interracial couples are not unusual. Amongst themselves, Cubans also
have a sense of their nation as created from the historical intermingling of distinct races.
A popular saying goes, "Who does not descend from the Congo, descends from the
Carabalí." Invocation of these two African ethnic groups may reflect an acceptance of
African descent as an important factor in the ethnic identity of modern Cubans and a

1For two critical, yet brief, journalistic discussions of this theme, see Mirta Ojito,
"Best of Friends, Worlds Apart" part 2 of the series "How Race is Lived in America,
New York Times, 5 June 2000, A1; and Betty Winston Baye, "Discrimination Outlawed
in Cuba, But Attitudes Persist," The Louisville, Kentucky Courier-Journal, Forum
Section, 2 March 2000, 7a.

2Nadine Therese Fernández, "Race, Romance, And Revolution: The Cultural
Politics of Interracial Encounters in Cuba," Ph.D. diss., University of California,
Berkeley, 1996 indicates that despite their increased visibility these relationships are not
unproblematic. See chapter 10 below.
belief that even the most phenotypically "white" Cuban could possess a trace of African ancestry.

This modern recognition of African ancestry greatly contrasts with the pronounced rejection of "blackness" that the traditional historiography notes for the colonial period, which was typical of any slave-holding society in the Americas. However, both the acceptance and rejection of African ancestry continue in popular Cuban thought. These sentiments are revealed in the satirical question, "Y tu abuela, dónde está?" ("And your grandmother, where is she?"). Cubans presently use this expression in the hope of shaming their lighter-skinned countrymen who attempt to hide or ignore their African ancestry. My dissertation asks several critical questions based on these tensions. How and why was the glorification of whiteness found in the colonial

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4 In addition to Cuba, this saying is commonly found throughout Latin-American regions with significant populations of African decent. See the poem "¿Y tu agüela, a'onde ejtá?" by Puerto Rican poet Fortunato Vizcarondo, reprinted in *Personalidad y literatura puertorriqueñas*, eds. Hilda E Quintana, María Cristina Rodríguez, and Gladys Vila Barnés (Madrid, Editorial Plaza Mayor, 1996)195-196.
period displaced in favor of a newer assertion of racially-mixed descent? Was this transformation purely rhetorical or was it founded in a socio-demographic reality? Was this transformation driven by a uniquely Cuban context or was it shaped largely by more global changes in international perceptions of race?

The answer to these questions can be found by placing such struggles over Cuban national identity in a historical context that is both local and international. This study suggests that the concepts of family, race, and nation form an inseparable trinity in identity construction, with only differences of scale between them. An examination of the Cuba variants demonstrates how these elements reinforce one another. This study argues that the foundations of a Cuban national identity that is closely associated with race mixture were established in the nineteenth century, during its late colonial period. However, since that time, these tendencies have been alternately suppressed or affirmed in connection with variations in the dominant international ideologies on race. The two sayings above provide insight into the contradictory use of personal family history, or genealogy, and general notions of race mixture in the public discussion of Cuban identity. They reveal tensions between the racial identity as expressed at the personal level versus those portrayed for the national level. The first of the above sayings engages only the national. It suggests that any Cuban could say of his or her compatriots that they all share a common heritage, regardless of personal differences in ancestry. The second saying, on the other hand, combines these two realms of personal and national and even brings into the discussion a gender component. It acknowledges personal genealogy,
only to position the common heritage with greater importance. Revelation of the
once-hidden black grandmother rhetorically binds all Cubans.

The present dissertation does not attempt to affirm a particular racial identity for
the Cuban nation. Instead it accepts the fluidity of identity construction and outlines
some of the variety contained in the historical discussion of the intersection among
"family," "race," and "nation" in Cuban thought.

Changes in race relations brought by the 1959 Revolution have been the subject of
numerous studies. Some proclaim its ameliorative role, while others reject it. Instead of
entering that debate, this project considers a broader sweep of change. It links the
changes associated with the revolutionary to earlier periods of transformation. The
nineteenth century was one such point of major upheaval and a central emphasis of this
study. It contained both ideological and demographic shifts with respect to the concept of
race. For example, in the wake of the Haitian Revolution and several smaller revolts in
Cuba, colonial officials began to view free people of color with increased suspicion. A
number of previously available opportunities were closed to them and forms of racial
discrimination were heightened.  

5Alejandro de la Fuente, "Race and Inequality in Cuba, 1899-1981," Journal of
Contemporary History 30 (1995):131-167, provides a useful overview of the then-extant
literature. Important recent works include Sandra Morales Fundora, El negro y su
representación social: Approximación a la estructura social cubana actual (Havana:
Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001); Alejandro de la Fuente, A Nation for All: Race,
Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 2001); and Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds, Afro-Cuban
Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba (Gainesville: University of Florida
Press, 2000).

6Robert Paquette, Sugar Is Made with Blood: the Conspiracy of La Escalera and
the Conflict Between Empires over Slavery in Cuba (Middleton, Conn: Wesleyan
Demographics transformation in this period also played a role in determining race relations. By 1800, the numerical advantage of the white population had been undercut by people of color, both free and enslaved. A majority population of color was maintained until approximately 1860. At this point, the official termination of the slave trade, heavy Afro-Cuban population losses in the wars of independence (1868-1878 and 1895-1898), and the continuation of Spanish immigration combined to permit the reemergence of a white majority. Moreover, the gradual abolition of slavery and the related importation of Chinese and Yucatecan workers transformed racialized aspects of labor relations.

However, beyond redefining the demographic and labor significance of race, these events also brought changes in the emergent Cuban national identity. This was especially true when these events were linked to other political exigencies. As of 1868, the wars of independence required at least a semblance of a united front of all who defined themselves in nationalist terms as "Cubans" in opposition to continued Spanish rule. Euro-Cuban patriots minimized the public image of racial differences in favor of a national solidarity, while challenging the leadership of Afro-Cuban patriots behind the

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scenes. In fits and starts, by the beginning of the twentieth century, legal definitions of Cuban citizenship would be expanded to include all adult males born on the island or who participated in the armed struggle. At least in this arena, poor and non-white men were formally incorporated into the civic aspects of the nation and state. Yet, race relations in the early twentieth century would remain so unsettled as to become points of contention with revolutionary politics. Again, since 1960 Fidel Castro has proposed that the elimination of racial discrimination has been one of the revolution's successful objectives.

Yet these changes in the racial politics do not fully explain other transformations to the racial aspects of Cuban identity. Discussions of the value of race in Cuban society cannot be left only in the domain of formal politics. Its values extend to the very characteristics by which Cubans define themselves and then decide their political actions. The interactions among the notions of race, family, and nation have been central to political life. These elements are in constant flux, not only in demographic terms, but also in basic questions of identity. A historical analysis of the racial dimensions of family formation can provide an insight into the base of Cuban political action. With this premise, this present study examines the historical construction of Cuban identities as it


10For limitation of this inclusion at the end of the colonial period and in the early years of the republic, see Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share, The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); for analysis that concentrates on the twentieth century, again see de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race;* and for consideration of Castro’s political use of race in both the domestic and international arenas, see Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California at Los Angeles, 1988).
relates to family formation, especially amongst people of African descent. The project asks a few challenging, yet essential, questions. Who are the people who call themselves Cubans? With what characteristics do they define themselves? Have these characteristics changed over time? The answers have lain in a complex constellation constructed around the variable meanings given to "race," "nation," and "family." The fluidity in both the processes of race mixture and racially segregated mating have been key in the formation of these concepts. Ultimately, the examination of these processes shifts the historiography of race relations in Cuba, and more generally in the Americas, away from narrowly defined political activity and broadens it to reveal the political nature of personal choice.

This dissertation uses the rubric of "family," in terms of both practice and discourse, to analyze such changes. Its goals are:

• to examine the manner in which changes in and interaction between the state, the Church, and the social controls on the family have affected the role of race in constructing familial and national identities in Cuba;

• to investigate the changes in the discourses on race mixture in the transition between the emergent Cuban nationalism of the late colonial period and the post-revolutionary era (that is to review the shift between one that elevated the importance of whiteness and a newer version that values a multiracial identity);

• to demonstrate that the bonds of interracial kinship challenged the dominant racial hierarchy in the colonial period;

• to interpret racialized reproduction and race mixture as both discourses and processes that have been differentiated by the gender and class of the participants; and

• to indicate that the study of race relations must also consider the historical forces that have contributed to racially distinct styles of family formation.
All of these goals are linked to a historical unpacking of Cuban concepts of family. The use of the concept of "family" as a tool for interpreting national identity has had roots in the anthropological study of cultural difference. In attempting to classify cultural groups, nineteenth-century anthropologists described the elaborate systems of kinship that conferred community membership. Their findings were useful in revealing relativist views of kinship and family. Group membership could be socially constructed in variety of forms, not always based on biological relations and legal models. More recent scholarship has found earlier methods problematic for their unfortunate acceptance of Eurocentric, evolutionary schemes, with the western nuclear family placed at its zenith.11

Historical study of the family began as a means through which to relate questions of demographic and economic change. For example, the analysis of links between nineteenth-century industrialization and proletarianization of the labor required examining transitions from earlier family structures and means of production.12 Within American historiography, this type of structural-functionalism took on a racial dimension.


It became actively expressed in the narrow study of the degrees of assimilation versus social isolation of African-descended populations in relating to the dominant society. The historical treatment of the family of African descent in the English-speaking Caribbean has been similar to that of the United States in its emphasis on the recovery from slavery.\(^\text{13}\) With the patriarchal family implicitly positioned as the norm, scholars of this region have stressed an exceptional structure of Afro-Caribbean families. Their greater tendency for matrifocality and a suggested male marginality were important themes. Within Latin American history, non-white families have been given minimal attention in comparison to that shown to the critical role of leading creole families in political and economic development. Here again the patriarchal family has been presented as the point of departure.\(^\text{14}\)

Only recently have social historians left their functionalist roots and begun to ask questions which delve into the meaning of "family" and consider its ideological change over time. In his now classic treatment of the topic, Lawrence Stone examined the changing meaning and structure of the family as a reflection of "some massive shifts in world views and value systems" occurring within 300 years of English history. He


\(^{14}\)See chapter 2 below.
succinctly describes the value of studying family history in conjunction with other social
and cultural transformations.

The ways members of the family related to each other, in terms of legal
arrangements, structure, custom, power, affect, and sex provides insight into how
individuals thought about, treated, and used each other, and how they regarded
themselves in relation to God and to various levels of social organization, from
the nuclear family to the state. The microcosm of the family is used to open a
window on this wider landscape of cultural change.¹⁵

Thus, he envisioned the concept of family and the styles of its formation as the entry
point into the review of many other social relations.

Feminist historians have taken this method further by giving greater consideration
to the role of the family construction of gender and race. They then presented the family
as the idiom through which national, racial, and gender identities have been constructed.
Previously, the family had been framed by such a false naturalness that allowed it to
define nation, race, and sexuality in exclusionary terms. Feminists began to dissect this
naturalness and reveal the ways in which "family" existed as another site for the unequal
exercise of power. This occurred not just in terms of gender. It was place where many
forms of identities all impinge on and reinforce one another.¹⁶ The normative visions of
the family, as defined by the dominant social sector, became imagined as real,

¹⁵Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New

¹⁶In addition to the items in notes 11 and12 above, see Teresa De Lauretis,
"Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness," Feminist Studies
16, 2 (1990): 115-50 and Hazel Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of
the Afro-American Woman Novelist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), who
highlight this problem.
meaningful, and politically essential.\textsuperscript{17} In this way the dominant culture proscribed the range of social behaviors. Members of the dominant social sectors reinforced their privileged status by defining their own behaviors as positive and civilized, while categorizing other groups as primitive and uncivilized. In the Americas, whiteness and the patriarchal family defined acceptance. Many of its regions were imaged as culturally Hispanic despite the presence of non-white majorities or significant minorities. Additionally, the social value of women remained subordinated to men.

Cuba in the colonial period represents just such a case, officially imagined with terms of whiteness, despite a large population of color. The white family was elevated to a level of political importance, while those of all others were ignored or only recognized with respect to addressing the labor supply.\textsuperscript{18} However, as the sayings which opened this discussion indicate, Cuba at some time in its history experienced a significant change in the racial representation of its national identity. This present study examines the social aspects of this change. At issue here is racial identity of the imagined national family, varying over time and reflected in the practices at distinct official, elite, and popular levels that controlled family formation.


Triumphs and Failures in the Literature on Race Mixture in Latin-American History

As the construction of national identity varies over time, so too does the racial basis on which it is formed, from both a phenotypic and ideological perspective. The historical literature on race mixture and its social consequences is central to the exploration of such transformations. The ideas of race and race mixture arose simultaneously as expressions of Europe's imperial expansion into Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Distinctions in phenotype and culture became interpreted as proof of the existence of racial difference. The historical evolution of race relations both in the United States and in other cultures (as distinct from studies of minority experiences or slavery) has been a fascination of American historians since the 1940s.

A long line of these historians has asked what distinguished the allegedly less contentious interaction between whites and people of color in Latin American from the situation of racial animosity seen in the United States. In 1939, C.E. Marshall published one of the first North-American, historical treatments of the topic of race mixture, or mestizaje, in Latin America. He attributed its frequency in the colonial period

\[\ldots\] in no small degree to a humanitarian spirit which found its roots in the tenets of the Catholic religion, the principles of Roman jurisprudence, the philosophy of natural rights, and the nationalistic pride in things Spanish, which was developed to such an intensity by the struggles against the Moors and Jews in Spain. This spirit, which was particularly strong during the first century of Spanish colonization impelled Spain to look upon the natives as beings to be converted and assimilated to Spanish civilization spiritually, culturally, and racially...\[^{19}\]

He continued by demonstrating that interracial sexual relations and reproduction were an integral part of this process. Importantly, Marshall also demonstrated the clear distinction that existed between Spanish perception of relations with Indians and those with African-descended people. While the Spanish crown did not actively promote race mixture with either group, it discouraged African-European intermarriage. The latter was considered more threatening to the colonial labor scheme.  

Despite the value of Marshall's contribution, the work of American-trained, Brazilian social theorist Gilberto Freyre is generally credited as the historiographical origin of Latin American race-relation studies and creation of the concept of "racial democracy." Ever the nationalist, Freyre addressed his attention most directly to highlighting those characteristics which made Brazil a unique society. He found his answer in the cultural adaptation and social relations developed on the slave plantation, with close, almost familial, relations between slave-owners and their charges. For Freyre, the differences in slavery and post-abolition race relations between Brazil and the American South were also in part the result of differences in the masters' language, race, and religion. And he even suggested that the Africans arriving in Brazil were more advanced than those sent elsewhere. He attributed the qualities of both Brazilian whites and people of color to cultural explanations that went beyond the biological (racial)

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determinism.\textsuperscript{22} This view was an important departure from the works of earlier social scientists.\textsuperscript{23}

Another component of Freyre's work that has had lasting historiographic significance was his emphasis on sexual relations between white men and women of color and the resulting mulatto population. Freyre saw miscegenation as invaluable for lessening racial antagonisms and propelling Brazil's "march toward social democracy."

The once distinct elements of the African, European, and Amerindian pasts were brought into harmonious relation through miscegenation and cultural inter-penetration. But most importantly for Freyre, miscegenation allowed the European to conquer a hostile tropical environment that was incompatible with his physiology. A relatively peaceful Brazil emerged amongst these three groups as "the friction here was smoothed by the lubricating oil of a deep-going miscegenation."\textsuperscript{24} It created "the Brazilian, the ideal type of modern man for the tropics, a European with Negro or Indian blood to revive his energy."\textsuperscript{25} This is an exceptional point given the then common, negative academic view of interracial reproduction. Freyre explicitly noted that his book was a direct challenge to the theories


\textsuperscript{24}Freyre, \textit{The Masters and the Slaves}, 182.

\textsuperscript{25}Freyre, \textit{The Masters and the Slaves}, 71.
of the nineteenth-century French writer Gustave Le Bon, who viewed miscegenation as "harmful to so-called human progress." Instead Freyre hailed race mixture and intermingling of cultures as Brazil's glory and source of its civilization and social harmony.

However, the sexualized vision of racial harmony developed by Freyre was not without its problems. As indicated above, Freyre continually equated the "Brazilian" with the male who closely approached a European phenotype, with only a slight hint of other racial backgrounds. All others (Brazilians of color and Brazilian women of European phenotype) were left to appreciate existing in his shadow. It is obvious in the manner in which Freyre described the other cultures with which Portuguese "civilization" blended as "primitive." He glorified the peaceful aspects of cultural exchange, displaying a novel acceptance of the contributions non-European cultures made to many aspects of Brazilian life. On this point, he emphasized foodways, humor, music, dance, and arts.

As Freyre praised the social benefits of race mixture, he also noted the often brutal nature of the unequal power relations in which they were often immersed. Freyre describes interracial sex as if it were a birthright for the white male and a socially necessary act to which women of color were forced to consent. One academic retrospective reveals the relationship between sadism and sexuality in Freyre's work.


Freyre ties sadism, sexuality, and racial domination together both explicitly and implicitly, in a gendered account in which the Brazilian white male creates Brazil through a dominating intercourse atop women of color, an intercourse that Freyre writes of as natural and creative but what might now be perceived as rape. These women are objectified into willing, sensuous creatures made for sexual gratification. They are accessible by their nature and by their natural position in the social hierarchy. Sadism comes in by way of hierarchy-Freyre notes it in two explicitly related activities: sexual relations and servile relations. The white male child learns to look to servants of color for sensual gratification and sadistic pleasure. Power, penetration, and punishment were naturally arranged from the top down.29

This emphasis on the sexual possibilities of white men allowed Freyre to ignore the negative impact of white male control of the sexuality of black women or its impact on sexual relations amongst people of color generally.30 He was expressing a belief popular within certain segments of Brazilian society and shaped it into the academic theory. Miscegenation was both desirable and inevitable. He accepted that all white males could avail themselves of these relations and all women of color were accessible. This reflects one of the general shortcomings of Freyre's works. He did not examine the process of miscegenation with methodological precision. He set a pattern by relying on highly personal sources for this discussion: anecdotal, personal observations and highly problematic secondary sources. The use of demographic material for determining the nature of race mixture was almost nonexistent.

According to Freyre’s definition of the Brazilian patriarchal family and his elevation of it to prominence as the determining factor in national order and progress, the white male patriarch magnanimously guided his lesser charges into contributing to the

29Needell, “Identity, Race, Gender, and Modernity,” 70.

30Ada Ferrer, "Gilberto Freyre."
development of Brazilian civilization. For the post-imperial period, Freyre does not discuss the existence of ethnic communities outside a general, national identity. Afro-Brazilian communities remained invisible and Brazilian-Amerindian communities remained to be brought into the true light of civilization. Freyre acknowledges that these groups continued to experience discrimination since many other Brazilians only perceived their utility in terms of service to white, Brazilian civilization. A perception of their perpetual infantile state also fed a view that they needed and welcomed the authority and supervision of the more evolved white male. This is the basis from which Freyre explained the upward mobility of those mestiços and blacks who had achieved some levels of social respect, particularly those who won the white patronage necessary for entry into a profession or the military. Thus, Freyre promoted the idea of racial democracy that recognized the social mobility of a few men of color while it maintained a patriarchally-ordered and racially-hierarchal society in which whites legitimately retained control.

I have suggested that the Republic of 1889 brought about considerable progress in ethnic democratization, not so much in creating new opportunities as in extending those social and political opportunities which already existed to persons of color who had made themselves worthy of advancement through education, economic position, or through military service on behalf of the new regime.31 Yet beyond the fusion of selected cultural elements from the various racial groups, this was a democratization that also still was defined by the sexual conquest of all categories

31Freyre outlines his view that Brazil was moving toward racial democracy most explicitly in his work treating the social developments in Brazil’s early republican era, Order and Progress: Brazil from Monarchy to Republic. trans. Rod W. Horton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, original 1959) 198, also 169 and 171.
of women, and the subordination of men of color to patronage (read more precisely as domination) of elite white men.

These extended comments on Freyre are relevant for the present study in several ways. He shaped much of the later North-American academic discourse on race relations and race mixture in Latin America and shaped comparisons with the United States situation which implicitly suggested that solutions lay in the imitation of Brazilian strategies. Also the comparisons between Brazil and United States that focused on the importance of the slave society in the creation of subsequent race relation and race mixture can serve as a useful point of departure for the study of the Cuban case. It is obvious that slavery was profoundly important in all three cases. However, the subsequent American commentators on Brazilian race relations who immediately followed Freyre's lead chose two distinct paths. As early as 1947, the American historian Frank Tannenbaum followed a view first mentioned by Marshall (noted above) and emphasized the cultural dissimilarities of the ruling classes as the sources of difference in the United States and Latin American situations. Again, these differences were most readily apparent in the legal systems that supported slavery.32

In the flurry of North-American scholarship on race relations that arose in the late 1960s, anthropologist Marvin Harris and historian Carl Degler concentrated on the intermediate status of the mulatto population. Each accepted that Brazilian racism was relatively mild in comparison with that of the United States. Harris attempts to reinterpret Freyre from a more materialist standpoint, with greater attention to race as in

related to questions of the labor supply. According to Harris, Brazilian slavery was vigorously implemented before the rise of intermediate or lower white social classes. Therefore, the white elite needed an intermediate group between themselves and those they enslaved, so as to minimize the potential of rebellion and attack from the latter. Free mulattoes and blacks served this purpose. They became socially positioned differentially from the enslaved masses. As miscegenation continued amongst whites, blacks, and Amerindians a complex racial continuum emerged, which reflected the indefinite blurring of racial categories. Although a specific individual could be classified as White, Indian, or Black, these categories did not exist as bounded entities or socially separated racial groups. Thus unlike the U.S. system of racial classification which highlighted descent from the oppressed group, in what Harris labels "hypodescent," Brazilian racial classification was much more mutable. *33*

Harris can be read as emphasizing the result of miscegenation, instead of the process. He overlooks all of the discussion of relations between white men and women of color so central to Freyre's vision. His concern is more for examination of the upward mobility of select men of color. He acknowledges the existence of racial prejudice and discrimination, but indicates that class is much more relevant than race in determining social possibilities.

For Degler, discrimination was based on color, not on racial origin, per se. More explicitly, in Brazil although people may have similar racial origins, discrimination will present itself increasingly as a person is darker. This indicates a social preference for the

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more white. However, the "mulatto escape hatch" explains the presence of, at least, a small number of men of color at the upper levels of Brazilian society. He also noted that this phenomenon mitigated against racial solidarity amongst blacks and mulattoes.  

Identity in both Harris's and Degler's readings remains unproblematic, with working-class Brazilians aspiring to the status of the upper class. This reductionism misses other racialized aspects of Brazilian social life. Like Freyre, Harris and Degler draw their conclusions from impressionistic data and unevaluated secondary sources. Harris even fails to examine shifts in post-abolition demographic patterns, such as large-scale European immigration and the internal migration of all races of laborers from rural, agricultural production to urban, industrial production, and the subsequent rise of racialized competition. In both authors' works, women of color remain outside the discussion. Their focus is given to the social mobility for the mulatto (read as male) through the differential access in comparison to the black male to education and employment. Yet, each of these analyses leave the preference for whiteness in the realm of aesthetics, where they suggest that its acceptance has remained unquestioned.

The aesthetic issue in race relations in the Americas is a theme boldly undertaken by Harry Hoetink. In his analysis he maintains the legal-cultural distinctions in race relations developed in former colonies of north-western European colonizers and those

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created in Iberian ones. However, he goes a bit further in also outlining the importance of the "somatic norm image" and the "somatic distance" in the contrasting evolution of these relations. Hoetink describes "somatic norm image" as the ideal of beauty to which a culture subscribes. In European societies and colonial areas in which Europeans held political and social dominance that "somatic norm image" corresponded to supposedly European features, such as fair skin, straight hair, etc. Possession of such characteristics distinguished the dominant from the subaltern groups. The concept of "somatic distance" explains the distance in "somatic norm images" between two or more components of such a segmented society.

For Latin America, Hoetink sees a "somatic distance" that is considerably shorter than that found in those areas subjected to north-western European dominance. He suggests that Iberian populations of Latin America demonstrated greater acceptance of people of color because they were themselves phenotypically closer to these non-European peoples than were northern European settlers. For the regions in which the latter settled, religious justifications were often necessary for maintaining segregated societies. Despite these differences, both views of race uphold the superiority of whiteness. Ultimately, the Latin American view of whitening has been "a manifestation of latent or camouflaged prejudice against Blacks."

Another view of the construction of racialized identities in Spanish America is found in the works of Magnus Mörner. Mörner discusses the creation and legal

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affirmation in the colonial period of the "sociedad de castas," in which different social strata were recognized and named, their social rank determined primarily by degrees of racial mixture of the people within these categories. For example, he notes that Indians and African-descended people were subjected to tribute, while mestizos and whites were not. In his analysis, this régimen de castas (caste system) was the transfer of the non-racial feudal hierarchies of Spain to the racially differentiated space of the Americas. He clearly demonstrates that race and color had significant social meaning, locating a person in a specific status and defining a particular relationship as subjects of the Spanish Crown. Iberian colonialists also created and highlighted differences between themselves and non-whites.37

From this initial situation, Mörner agrees that Latin-American societies developed as "pigmentocracies."38 "People were classified in accordance with the color of their skin, with the white masters occupying the highest stratum. Theoretically, each group that could be racially defined would constitute a social stratum of its own."39 Throughout the colonial period, limpieza de sangre (initially European, Christian purity of blood) was transposed from a medieval Iberian rejection of Jewish and Muslim ancestry to also reject African ancestry. It remained a prerequisite for the attainment of elite social status.

However, he demonstrates that race mixture was an omnipresent factor in Latin American social relations. This fact led to discernable differences in the geography of

37Mörner, Race Mixture.

38This idea originated in Sergio Bagú, Estructura social de la Colonia: Ensayo de historia comparada de América Latina (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1952).

39Mörner. Race Mixture, 54.
physical features and racial identities amongst Latin American populations. The Caribbean (except for Puerto Rico) and the northeast of Brazil "is an Afro-Latin America." A "Euro-Latin America" is found in Argentina, Uruguay, southernmost Chile, Puerto Rico, and the south of Brazil (due to intense European immigration from the late nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century). The rest is "mestizo America". This last category, unfortunately ignores significant regions of majority indigenous populations.

Mörner emphatically dismisses the biological importance of race mixture, but concentrates on its social impact. In his view, the importance of miscegenation "lies in its intimate relationship with two social processes: acculturation, the mixture of cultural elements, and assimilation, or the absorption of an individual or a people into another culture."40 He suggests that mestizaje can be useful in the promotion of both. It is at this point where Mörner's work is most useful for the present study because this directly concerns the social construction of identity. However, Mörner's emphasis on cultural change diminishes the continued relevance of race and color in a civil setting, where even acculturation and assimilation may not negate the effects of racial prejudice and discrimination.

Mörner is also of significance for the attention he directs at gender difference and family formation. Citing Freyre, he speaks of the Iberian conquest of the Americas as a "conquest of [indigenous] women," because from the moment of initial contact, this allowed for the control of the reproduction of a socially intermediate group that was loyal

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40 Mörner. Race Mixture, 5.
to colonial interests. Mörner notes that in the first several decades of contact, mestizos were considered as Spaniards. However, by the end of the sixteenth century this perception had changed. The "mestizo" label was increasingly associated with illegitimacy and social marginalization from both indigenous and white social groups. Mörner implies that mestizos were ostracized from both sides of their families and left to form a independent social group. "It is a simple sociological fact that persons of mixed origin tend to be absorbed by either parental group when they are few in number. When they are numerous, though, they are likely to form a group of their own." Thus, he implies that the colonial laws that specifically referred to these individuals reflected but did not create the social autonomy of this group.

Those scholars of Latin American race relations writing in the mid-1970s rely heavily on earlier studies of the Brazilian case. However, a few began to consider that the idea of *mestizaje* was not a panacea for racial conflicts. For example, historian Thomas Skidmore described the rise of racist sentiments amongst Brazilian whites as slavery declined. Yet, Brazilian notions of race mixture would never equal that found in Anglo-American views. Skidmore offered that Brazilian acceptance of race mixture equated with an endorsement of whitening that derived from a need to reconcile the racist theories emerging from late nineteenth-century Europe with Brazilian demographic history. Similarly, sociologists Mauricio Solaún and Sidney Kronus revealed that racial discrimination remained a persistent occurrence within Latin America. They

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suggest that changes in the economic environment might increase the possibilities of racial conflict. The conflicts can be expressed as competition, discrimination, and segregation. But a lack of collective racial identities permits the avoidance of racial violence.\textsuperscript{43}

Since that period, subsequent generations of Latin Americanists have continued to write new challenges to generally-accepted visions of racial harmony and unproblematic \textit{mestizaje}.\textsuperscript{44} Their country-specific studies provide great depth in demonstrating both the process and result of \textit{mestizaje}. For Brazil, George Reid Andrews provides additional evidence that prevalence of race mixture does not necessarily mitigate against a history of racial discrimination. From the moment of Brazilian abolition through to the 1980s, the "mulatto escape hatch" as perceived by Degler did not translate into a reality of occupational or economic attainment. Both black and mulatto Brazilians continue to experience significant levels of racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{45}

Similarly, in the Colombian case, there has developed an image of a nation with a significant history of race mixture. However, racial discrimination continues to exist along with this acknowledgment. In explaining this phenomenon, Peter Wade makes an

\textsuperscript{43}Mauricio Solaún and Sidney Kronus, \textit{Discrimination Without Violence: Miscegenation and Racial Conflict in Latin America} (New York: John Wiley \& Sons, 1973)


\textsuperscript{45}George Reid Andrews, \textit{Blacks and Whites in São Paulo}. 
important contribution to the study of Latin-American *mestizaje* by distinguishing modern practices from those of the colonial era. He indicates that one of its modern feature is an adherence to a "moral topography," in which regional economic development and racial population concentrations are linked. As people of color migrate from marginal regions where they are concentrated into economically-advanced, white regions they begin to decrease their economic disadvantage vis-à-vis whites, white perceptions of their inferiority also decreases, and race mixture becomes more likely. Therefore, in Wade's reading of the process, both ideological and economic grounds lay behind the acceptability and occurrence of *mestizaje*. 46

With an emphasis on ideological factors, Winthrop Wright ties national-period political positioning to the manipulation of the racial components of Venezuelan identity. He indicates that despite the cries for non-racial national solidarity found in the early nineteenth-century independence movement, white political and economic elites continued to differentiate between themselves and the people of color whom they dominated. It was only as of the mid-1930s that an image of Venezuela as a racially-mixed, "café con leche" nation was developed by newly emerging political parties who opposed the traditional elitism of whites. Under the guidance of these new parties, the political importance of class difference replaced an earlier concerns for racial difference. Venezuelans could then identify with a racially-mixed national heritage although racial

discrimination remained an important facet of their society. Such a use of political activity in fostering an acknowledgment of and emphasis on a national history of miscegenation has important parallels in the Cuban case, which the present study will highlight.

Recently, studies by Jeffrey Gould, Charles Hale, Thomas Abercrombie, Mariol de la Cadena, Carol Smith, and Florencia Mallon in the Mestizaje special issue of the Journal of Latin-American Anthropology (Fall 1996) continue with similar analyses of the concept. Each of these case studies indicates the complex conflicts that have existed between the official views of mestizaje created by leaders of the states and those meanings constructed as counter-hegemonic discourse. All such struggles intertwine the concepts of race, culture, and gender in the effort to discursively control and express a "national" image that both unifies the citizenry and glorifies the national cultures with respect to external forces. The intellectual discourses utilized in these efforts define nation as a "natural" cultural and political reflection of a presumed biological reality. National heritage becomes expressed as the collective memory of the combined noble and virile elements of the Indian and/or African past supplemented with the essential and irrefutably-positive white contributions. The process produces an idealized "nuestra raza," "nuestra gente," or "nuestro pueblo" (our race or our people). The presumed

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negative features of the respective components are understood to be destroyed in the process. 48

Most recently, anthropologist France Twine has offered a critique of the Brazil situation that moves beyond analysis of the intellectual manipulation of the ideas of race and nation to consider the everyday practices that define race relations. She too reveals the presence of several contradictions between ideology and practice that allow for the continued belief in racial democracy despite the persistence of racism. Whitening remains the national ideal, with a desired disappearance of African phenotypic characteristics and the erasure of African ancestry. Afro-Brazilians respond to racism by seeking “strategic sexual alliances” with lighter mates while generally continuing a practice of social self-segregation from potentially discriminatory contact with Euro-Brazilians. And Euro-Brazilians are often resistant to the possibility of mestiçagem for themselves, family members, and close associates. 49 Ultimately, these contradictions allow Brazilians to


49France W. Twine, Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), compare with the discussion of “reproductive freedom” found in Susan A. Mann, “Slavery,
highlight a national history of race mixture, while individual families and their histories are whitened. Elite whites project the positive image of whitening, while holding themselves aloof from it. On the other hand, the poorer social segments actually engage in the practice. It is on this point that we return to the Freyrian legacy. While it is obvious that Freyre’s visions of benign race relations and racial democracy have been overturned by additional research, he correctly associated national attitudes toward race with views of the family and sexual reproduction. It is the critical site for defining both personal and national identities.

The Historiography on Race and Family in Cuba

Despite the fundamental importance of Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz’s contribution to the Cuban discourse on mestizaje (to be discussed in the final chapter), since 1959 the Cuban historiography on race mixture has remained somewhat outside the debates developing amongst other Latin Americanist scholars. The Revolution promoted Cuban scholars who emphasized the static, negative nature of race relations prior to 1959 and the progress of the revolutionary agenda in this area. Revolutionary politics also limited the possibility of historical research on race relations by foreign scholars. Only recently have Cubanist historians begun to examine race relations (but not race mixture) from the primary sources from the island.

Within the earlier period of limited historical investigation, one important exception appeared in the work of German scholar Verena Stolcke (formerly Martinez-

Alier). Her *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (1974) entered the debate about the type of race relations engendered under slavery not by focusing on this institution as such, but on the family concerns that it generated. She demonstrated that for nineteenth-century Cuba the colonial state was decidedly racist in its attempts to control marital selection. This behavior sprang from Spain’s desire to maintain a social order that perpetuated slavery. In bringing this policy to light, Stolcke touches on the debate of whether Hispanic racism was as potent as its North American counterpart, concluding that while the controls were distinct, colonial racism in the Hispanic world acted repressively on both free and enslaved people of color.

Although the issue of race mixture is not the central topic of her work, in discussing the limits on intermarriage, Stolcke also outlines some of the characteristics of interracial relationships. Most remained out-of-wedlock. She highlights the gender differences in frequency of interracial relations, while rejecting the disparities in sex ratios by race as the explanation of their prevalence. She notes that petitions winning state approval for interracial marriage were most often from white men seeking to marry *parda* women, of combined African and European ancestry. *Pardos* rarely pursued the legitimation of such relations with white women. Stolcke demonstrates the possibility of status advancement for African-descended people over successive generations through a strategy of progressive whitening. Unfortunately, Stolcke discusses this process in a manner that perpetuates the belief that whitening was a desire of all non-white adults. If this were indeed the case, the reader is left to question the modern presence of Cuba’s
population of color. Shouldn’t we see evidence that they will eventually go the way of the Afro-Argentines, extinguishing themselves through the process of race mixture as described by George Reid Andrews? Moreover, even as she stresses the desire for whitening, Stolcke leaves racial categories fixed and does not allow for the situational negotiation of identity associated with that process.

While *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* is an essential reference for the present study, the two are distinct in their objectives. As she emphasized the importance of colonial Spanish racism, Stolcke left unexplored the question of how Cuban society moved from active proscription against race mixture to expressing racially-mixed heritage as the norm. In examining that issue, this present study foregrounds the concept of family as a variable, but foundational, social element through which competing discourses on the nation have been articulated. It will show that Cuban families have been structured in a variety of socially recognized forms. Stolcke accepted only marriage as the basis for family formation and did not consider the value of large numbers of consensual unions. Such a view dismisses the sociological importance of large segments of the Cuban population and focuses solely on an elite sense of the legitimate family.

Stolcke also did not concern herself with the concept of nation, as it was evolving in Cuba of that period. She emphasized the Spanish colonial state and viewed it as a fixed entity that made only subtle changes in its relationship with its subjects. However, for late nineteenth-century Cuba, there were ever increasing struggles for control of the

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state and its relationship with the people. As Cubans questioned the relevance of Spanish government, they also began to question the value of the institutions through which its authority was exercised. In this way, the Church and its control of legitimate marriage also become problematic.

**New Theories and Historical Methods**

If we turn again to the popular expressions that opened this discussion, beyond race and nation, a third element in identity formation is readily apparent. Family (along with genealogy, as the selective process of remembering ancestry) joins these other elements to form an inseparable trinity in identity construction. In both sayings, a struggle to control the memory of biological descent is present. They place family history, or genealogy, and notions of race mixture at the center of public discussion of Cuban identity. They also allude to the tensions between the racial identity expressed at the personal level versus racial identity portrayed at the national level. "Who does not descend from the Congo, descends from the Carabali" engages more with the national. It suggests that all Cubans are united with their compatriots by a common heritage, regardless of personal differences in ancestry. "And your grandmother, where is she?," on the other hand, offers a clearer combination of the realms of the personal and the national. It acknowledges personal genealogy only to position the common heritage with greater importance.

These popular allusions to the strong association between the concepts of family, race, and nation are supported by new treatments of nationalism appearing within the U.S. academic literature. For example, in a very insightful essay, anthropologist
Brackette Williams notes the manner in which each of these concepts is wielded as a classificatory device that links perceptions of "the flow of blood," or "shared biogenetic substance" to "the spread of rights," or social authority. She outlines how family, race, and nation are each created through similar processes of selection and rejection of the "facts" of biological reproduction. In expressing certain "facts" as natural and permanent, power is transmitted to one group and estranged from others. In her reading, the concepts of family, race, and nation only differ in scale, but mutually reinforce one another.\footnote{Brackette F. Williams, "Classification Systems Revisited: Kinship, Caste, Race, and Nationality as the Flow of Blood and the Spread of Rights," in \textit{Naturalizing Power}, eds. S. Yanagisako and C. Delaney (New York: Routledge, 1995) 201-236.}

These observations touch two related theoretical points. First, there is question of the distribution and use of power. How is ideological hegemony (what Williams describes as the "dominance of a discursive terrain") established? Second, there is the issue of the quest for national unity. How is it achieved or disrupted? In both areas, the discursive creation, maintenance, and even expansion of social unity rest in the acceptance of commonality by individual members of the group. For theorists such as Williams, this commonality is created by the expression and acceptance of "natural facts," or unquestionable social ideologies.

Like Williams, this study accepts a mutually constructive relationship between the material and the ideal. In the particular case under review, Cubans are not defined and reproduced simply in relation to the material fact of their insular geography. Instead, they are (re)produced by active processes of selective reproductive choice and contestations of identity that have been imposed over their geographic reality. It is the
specifics of these processes of reproduction and definition which will be demonstrated here. This study suggests that these specifics are found in racial value given to various family forms. As we shall see below, often competing social groups have attempted their own hegemonies within the Cuban nation by assigning differential value of these family forms. In analyzing the assertion of these hegemonies, this study reveals that structural concerns must be analyzed alongside the discursive. And consideration of the structural should also include both the productive and reproductive arenas.

In this project, the structures in question are racially-oriented reproductive restrictions and choices. Race and race mixture should not be considered as exclusively discursive productions. It is better to view them as forms of socially recognized distinctions that impact upon the actual exercise of reproductive behavior or practices. One mode through which races become socially real is as women and men, for whom social-structural differences are phenotypically defined, exercise reproductive choices with respect to these differences. In so doing, they either reinforce or reshape the meaning of family, race, and nation. Again, it is important to note, that these social actors do not operate in an unrestricted fashion, but acted in relation to the limits placed upon them by international, local, and personal forces. For the Cuban case since the late

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52 Here, I use the term hegemony to indicate the on-going effort at social dominance, which is often incomplete. For further development of Gramscian hegemony into theories of nations as the sites of multiple hegemonic struggles, see W. Roseberry and J. O'Brien, "Introduction," Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History (Berkeley: Universities of California Press 1991) 12-14 and the essays in G. Joseph and D. Nugent, Everyday Forms of State Formation (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) especially F. Mallon, "Reflections on the Ruins," 69-106.

53 This view is informed by Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of family and inheritance. The Logic of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990,
nineteenth century, many of these limits were obvious ones: first those associated with slavery and, after its termination in 1886, those associated with the modernizing drive of the early national period. However, the existence of other limits and options remain much less apparent. This project will bring to light their specifics, concentrating on the interrelation between shifts in the racial structure of the Cuban family and both the private and public meaning of race and race mixture.

Many of the unexplored particulars of Cuban national identity creation deserve a thorough study which balances both structural and ideological concerns and offers a sociological history blending theoretical rigor with empirical investigation. Few studies have analyzed the shifts in Cuban racial self-representation. A colonial and early republican repression of blackness is assumed, while the proponents of the 1959 revolution present an image of liberation from racial discrimination. This study suggests that there is much more variety in this situation. The complete dominance of either pole of racial identification was never achieved. It argues that since the late nineteenth century, Cubans have recognized the power of race mixture to disrupt the structures of racial dominance. However, this rupture occurred first at the personal level before it became a catalyst forging national unity. For example, the emergence of images

54 Many of the works of the late Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz discuss the importance of racial and cultural miscegenation in the rise of modern Cuban society. However, Ortiz provided no details of the process. See, for example, his Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar (New York, 1947, original Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar, 1940).

of the mulatta (racially-mixed woman) as national symbol in the 1930s was not just an ideological response to American imperialism but was also an idiom for previously private family practices. It is the convergence of both imagery and practice that forges new identities. The black grandmother is brought out of the kitchen and openly given a seat at the family table.

Project Outline

The central theme of the family as the root of the Cuban nation and the various interrelated forms of representing both will unfold in the next seven chapters and will be summarized with a concluding chapter. The temporal boundaries of this study remain fluid, rejecting the traditional, historiographic divisions of colonial and national periods so as to highlight important social continuities. Therefore, the wars of independence, again 1868-1878 and 1895-1898, independence in 1902, and the socialist revolution of 1959 are accepted as significant political transitions, but not as abrupt changes in daily social practices.

The second chapter begins a series of four chapters that analyze the viability of the families of color during slavery. This issue is relevant to the issue of race relations in terms of the opportunity and desire that people of color had to reproduce themselves as a distinct social group. It engages the question of how social divisions were reproduced through the processes of family formation under slavery. Some of the mechanisms were obvious, while others were less so.

56Compare with Verna Kutzinski, Sugar's Secrets (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993).
This chapter examines the earliest period of Cuban slavery, in which the legal foundation of the system was set. It ends in 1762, with the British occupation. Chapter 3 covers two distinct periods: 1763 to 1789 and 1790 to 1820. The first was a period of transition as the Cuban economy was invigorated. After 1790, there was a dramatic increase in the slave trade that transformed the modes of reproduction amongst free and enslaved people of color. Chapter 4 treats the period between 1820 and 1868. 1820 marked the end of the legal slave trade. 1868 saw both the termination of the illegal slave trade and the start of the final abolition process. Chapter 5, the last in this group, considers the impact on Cuban family formation of both the late-nineteenth-century crisis in Spanish colonial government and the abolition of slavery. Some of its concerns will be the demographic aspects of the wars of independence and gradual abolition, and their social consequences. It will also note how increased immigration of Canary Islanders, Italians, Chinese, and Yucatecans broadened the meaning of whiteness.

These chapters are based on an analysis of baptisms and registration of *hijos naturales reconocidos* (children born outside of wedlock who received legally recognized paternity) not only as statistical records of the frequency and characteristics of reproductive interracial relations, but also as access to another level of discourse on family and nation. Here we also have access to two additional actors in this discourse: the popular testimony and the recorded, reproductive behavior of people of color. These elements stood in contrast to the religious view of marriage advocated by the Church. In fact, in this area, one sees in the Church conflicts between its role as arm of the state and its own moral objectives. Its preference for interracial marriage over interracial
consensual unions leads to much flexibility in the exercise of its control of jural racial identity. And finally in the recognition of hijos naturales by men in all racial categories, abolition of slavery appears to have been a critical juncture for many families. These chapters heavily utilize a variety of archival sources, especially baptismal records.

Chapter 6 moves back to a specific examination of the meaning of race mixture for people of color and the possibilities of legal whitening for elite mulattoes through the legal process of reassigning legal status, known as gracias al sacar. It attempts to eliminate much of the ambiguity that still exists surrounding the discussion of race mixture as a tool for social mobility amongst people of color. For example, we consider the debate about whether mulattoes achieved a social position superior, equal, or inferior to blacks. This chapter blends archival sources and published secondary sources. This study will use the nineteenth-century, antislavery novel Cecilia Valdés (1882) (the central text in modern Cuban imagining of its social history in the late colonial period) as a point of departure from which to address this them. Cecilia Valdés brings focus to centrality of race mixture. However, it does so by emphasizing the more brutal aspects of race relations, belying the diversity of the situation.

The seventh chapter highlights the growing nationalist intellectual environment amongst Afro-Cubans emerging after the end of slavery in 1886 and explores their articulation of the issues of family, race, and nation. This study reveals a shift from imagining the family color as a potential source of labor to envisioning it as part of the revolutionary family in service to the embryonic nation. It also discusses the differences and similarities amongst other categories of Cuban intellectuals in the treatment of these
themes. Royalist and patriotic white male writers are now joined by white female and Afro-Cuban writers in the literary version of the hegemonic struggle to control the image of the nation. For many, the white patriarchal families remain the basis of the nation, but new space is allowed for increased female independence and the acknowledgment of people of color as individuals, but not as family members. Amongst white Cuban intellectuals (from Arango to Martí) there is a transition from the vision of one type white nation to another type of white nation. The intellectual contours of Cuba changed from emphasis on phenotypic race to cultural race. This chapter relies heavily on published primary sources.

Chapter 8 returns to issues related to the contested formation of the new nation under U.S. supervision (1899-1902) and in the early years of the republic. The national state becomes less involved in the jural assignment of race and the surveillance of racial factors in marriage. Soon after independence racial designations in civil and ecclesiastical registries are completely removed. Early republican period also see several challenges to the older patriarchal norm of family formation, as reflected in national debates on women's rights, legality of divorce, and the rights of children born outside of wedlock. We explore Afro-Cuban participation in these discussions. Here secondary sources are supplemented by oral family history and genealogies, as elderly, Cuban women and men discussed the significance of class and race in their families.

The ninth chapter examines the rise in the 1930s of the national image of multiracial family, where the nation is defined by its mixed families and individuals. This reflected a new Cuban intellectual movement, _negrismo_ which stated that no Cuban is
racially pure, despite his or her color. All are culturally, if not biologically, mulatto. Despite its title, it was the affirmation that the mulatto is superior to the black. However, in the same era the official image of family remains defined in inheritance, marriage and divorce laws which rewarded white patriarchy relations at the expense of consensual, interracial unions. This demonstrated a increasing dichotomy between elite and popular images of family and nation. Beyond the more public discourse on race and race mixture, this chapter considers some of the more hidden, personal operations of race with individual Cuban families. Here, oral family histories collected during 1999 are linked to other ethnographic sources.

The study concludes with a brief consideration of the changes in race relations brought by the 1959 Revolution. It suggests that the Revolution built on previously less public concepts of race in constructing many of its ideals and programs. Both racial and family politics became important themes within the revolutionary agenda. Racial equality was projected as one of its objectives and Fidel openly proclaimed Cuba as an "Afro-Latin" nation. Additionally, black men also more openly participate in the sexual reproduction of a mixed nation, with public relationships with white women. New official family policy gave greater attention to rights of women and less concern for formal marriage. Ultimately, concepts of race and race mixture remained contested areas through which Cubans defined themselves. This study clarifies the critical, historical moments shaping these definitions.
CHAPTER 2
SLAVERY AND AFRO-CUBAN FAMILY LIFE: POTENTIAL AND LIMITS, TO 1762

Introduction

In 1857, Cirilio Sánchez, a Lucumí from what was then known to the English-speaking world as the west African “Gold Coast,” beat the odds faced by his counterparts in Cuba. He was a free African in a slave society who was able to raise a free family. Its members were legally united and were not someone else’s chattel. Cirilio’s Lucumí wife and Cuban-born children also had gained their freedom. Based on documentation of similar experiences, this chapter and the three that follow it evaluate the potential for and the limits to the reproduction and family formation of Cuba’s enslaved population. They address two important questions. How did Afro-Cubans reproduce themselves while

1 Arzobispado de la Habana, Fondo de Legitimaciones y Reconocimientos (Hereafter “Reconocimientos”), Legajo 4 expediente. 5, 1859.

2 Compare with Christine Hünefeldt, Paying the Price of Freedom: Family and Labor Among Lima’s Slaves, 1800-1854, trans. Alexandra Stern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Also to clarify, this study uses the term “enslaved people” in preference to slave to highlight the fact that this condition was not an intrinsic characteristic. Instead it was one constructed with some flexibility. See chapter 7 below for discussion of the various means of acquiring freedom. Additionally, the racial terms such as “Mulattoes,” “Blacks” and “Whites” are capitalized as a way of emphasizing the derivation from “African-descended” and “European-descended.”

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living with and under the institution of slavery and how have their various forms of social reproduction affected emergent definitions of Cuban identity and race relations?

These questions are not as simplistic as they first appear. In asking them in this particular manner, this study suggests that any analysis of reproduction should not be based solely on demographic calculations. Instead, it must also consider both the structural constraints on biological viability and the politics of group representation. The original questions thus can be refined. How was membership in Cuba’s various socio-demographic groups defined and how was the demographic success of these groups either encouraged or inhibited? In studying the case of Afro-Cubans, these four chapters contemplate the ideas and behaviors which rewarded or prevented their social unity and highlight the creation of both internal and external boundaries. They assume that only with an understanding of social identity as a constructive process can one analyze the physical or demographic factors acting on Afro-Cuban survival.³

The meaning and nature of "family" provide useful sites from which to address the joint concerns for the politics and the demographics of racial reproduction. As a fundamental building block for social relations, “family” represents the sense of collective identity and continuity given to selected reproductive acts. It provides the basis of ethnic and racial identities, defining those who belong to the group and those excluded from it.⁴ In this chapter, an examination of the racial meanings given the


⁴Compare with Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 148
concept of family during the initial era of Cuban slave-holding reveals the basis from which the Afro-Cuban population has had a wider influence on Cuban national identity. Here, the reproductive value of those people enslaved in Cuba is given greater significance than their labor value. That value is not simply measured in terms of rates of natural increase, but in terms of the determinants of social differences and stratification. These next four chapters further the overall goal of this study by considering the stages in Cuban reproductive history through which the offspring of the Africans brought to Cuba did not just become free gente de color (people of color), but were also accepted as Cubans.

The review of the historical experiences of Afro-Cuban reproduction and family formation has fallen through the proverbial cracks, having received little scholarly attention. This oversight can be explained by several reasons. A number of analysts concentrate on the distinctiveness of Cuba in comparison to other regions of Latin America. Beyond this attention to Cuban exceptionalism, one of the more engaging questions in Latin American history has been to what extent class has had greater influence than race or ethnicity in the determination of social stratification, especially as these societies experienced the transition to capitalism. In this debate, Cuba and Puerto

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Rico represent temporal anomalies for two reasons: the pervasiveness of capitalist economic structures well before independence and the ascendance of slavery in the early nineteenth century. These considerations lead many to conclude that race remained the greatest determinant of social status in these countries. Verena Stolcke contributed to this perception by demonstrating the governmental restrictions on interracial marriage. Without the lessening of the social distance between whites and non-whites provided by this mechanism, the social marginality of Afro-Cubans remained a key scholarly assumption. Only recently have challenges to this assumption appeared.\(^7\)

Other academic interests with important parallels with the Cuban social situation have been the anthropological and sociological literatures on Afro-Caribbean family forms. Much of this literature offers explanations for the Caribbean deviation from white, metropolitan norms of family structure and formation. The classic debate regarding the structure of black families in the Americas developed based on the contrasting positions espoused by Melville Herskovits and E. Franklin Frazier. Although both recognized the destructive force of slavery on the formalization of monogamous

sexual unions and the assertion of parental authority over the resulting offspring, they differed in their understanding of the family forms found in post-abolition societies.\(^8\)

Herskovits highlighted the retention of African cultural forms. He attributed what he perceived as the general African-American family characteristics (weak conjugal bonds, strong maternal attachments, and the extensive material support given to adult children by the family of origin) to the force of such retention. He rejected the suggestion that they were simply maladaptive interpretations of European family forms.\(^9\) Frazier emphasized the complete erasure of African cultural forms amongst black populations in the Americas and the structural limitations which drove them to establish deviant family forms. The early imbalances in slave population sex ratios, post-abolition poverty, under education, and racial discrimination accounted for the continued marginalization of the African-American family.\(^{10}\)

In a valuable work, sociologist Raymond T. Smith has shifted the emphasis in African-American family studies away from proving what was the standard mode of family formation. He rejects the analysis of kinship solely in European terms, with the

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tracing of consanguines and affines, as he also rejects the idea that the household is the basic unit of kinship. It thus becomes inconsequential to classify Afro-Caribbean families as “nuclear,” “joint,” and “extended.” Instead Smith accepts that child-bearing and rearing outside of marriage is standard and he remains more interested in the methods through which African-American genealogies have been constructed. He suggests that these processes were distinct during slavery and the post-abolition period. The former influenced the latter, but it did not establish immutable patterns.¹¹

In this context, the Afro-Cuban situation is problematic because of the island’s very large white population, the high incidence of race mixture, and associated difficulties of establishing a demographic separation of the entirely “black” family. Here, again, the work of Verena Stolcke takes the lead. In analyzing the official mechanisms used during the nineteenth century to protect the racial integrity of white families, she also offers an implicit suggestion that people of color concerned themselves more with blanqueamiento, or whitening, then with establishing families amongst themselves. She states explicitly that “the constant endeavours on the part of the coloured population to advance socially by whitening themselves through marriage, or rather through informal affairs with lighter if not white people” was a essential force in Cuban social relations.¹²

Unfortunately such a view pushes the enslaved Afro-Cuban family into the academic margins.


This omission was compound by an additional factor. While studies of the Caribbean family have generally been the terrain of anthropologists, for Cuba, their engagement with this topic has been very limited. Preference is given to analysis of more "folkloric" matters. Under this treatment, Afro-Cubans generally continue to have value in areas such religion, music, and dance. However, their place in more developed sociological research was minimized. This may have occurred as a consequence of a general abandonment of the study of race within Cuban academic institutions stemming from the revolutionary project of minimizing racial difference in all aspects of Cuban life.¹³

Over the next four chapters, this study ends this academic marginalization. It inserts Afro-Cubans and their reproductive choices in the center of a sociological history that examines the place of race in general Cuban visions of nation and its genealogical roots. It discusses that process as it begins in the interplay between slavery and Cuban family life on three levels: racial demographics, social control, and personal attitudes. It concludes that the challenges faces by enslaved Afro-Cuban families were great, but not insurmountable. They survived to the extent that slaveholders allowed for family formation amongst their charges and enslaved people themselves found the means to recognize and maintain family bonds. However, it becomes difficult to speak exclusively of the Cuban slave family when one acknowledges the frequent interactions between the free and the enslaved in the realm of reproduction. Due to Spanish colonial policies, Cuban families could be comprised of both free and enslaved members. The concept of

¹³For discussion of this approach, see Pérez Sarduy and Stubbs, eds. *Afro-Cuban Voices*, xi-xiii.
the slave family also becomes more problematic as one acknowledges the significant level of publically-recognized race mixture that was common within these families. This limited the social distance between Whites and non-whites, although, it did not completely eliminate it.

**Enslaved Africans and Creoles**

The historiography of Afro-Caribbean family forms during slavery has drawn attention to the relation between family structure, culture, and fertility levels. Much of the older literature suggests that slavery completely denied the humanity of the enslaved, eliminating many of the possibilities of classic families, those represented by stable households of long-term, monogamous couples and their offspring. Sociologist Orlando Patterson, in his review of slavery in Jamaican society, claims this lack of stability produced an environment full of "sexual abandonment" and "ruthless exploitation."

However, most importantly, slavery insured the "natal alienation" of the enslaved, making them "genealogical isolates" with little contact with or mutual commitment to ancestors or living family members.\(^{14}\) Patterson later expands:

> I prefer the term "natal alienation," because it goes directly to the heart of what is critical in the slave's forced alienation, the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations. It also has the important nuance of a loss of native status, of deracination. It was the alienation of the slave from all formal, legally enforceable ties of "blood," and from any attachment to groups or localities other than those chosen for him [sic] by the master, that gave the relation of slavery its

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peculiar value to the master. The slave was the ultimate human tool, as imprintable and as disposable as the master wished.\footnote{Patterson, \textit{Slavery and Social Death}, 7-8.}

A similar view is at times suggested of sugar-plantation slavery in Cuba. Renowned Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals indicates a similar position by viewing slaves almost exclusively as the elements of production “equal to an equipment, machine, or beast of burden, they lose their humanity and personalities.”\footnote{Manuel Moreno Fraginals, \textit{El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar}, 3 vols. (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978) 2:14.} This point of view is also used to reinforce acceptance of the inability of the enslaved population to reproduce itself. A well-respected scholar of Latin American family history explains the lack of sexual differentiation in labor amongst Cuba’s slaves based on the absence of maternal possibilities for enslaved women.

...In nineteenth-century Cuba, where because nobody expected women to reproduce, practically no sexual asymmetry existed. Female field-hand slaves on sugar plantations experienced no inequality with their male peers: they did not experience a sexual division of labor, for they were expected to perform the same work as males, side by side with males...and they usually refused to become mothers, practicing abortion or infanticide instead.\footnote{Muriel Nazzari, “Sex/Gender Arrangements and the Reproduction of Class in the Latin American Past,” in \textit{Gender Politics in Latin America, Debates in Theory and Practice}, ed. E. Dore (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997): 135.}

Her exaggerated conclusions on slave reproduction leaves one to wonder, if Cuba’s enslaved people did not reproduce amongst themselves what reproductive processes gave rise to the present Afro-Cuban population?

Other scholars of slavery envision it as a less rigid experience, without such absolute repression of the human spirit and reproductive possibilities. These scholars are...
much more apt to reveal examples of the social agency of the enslaved, including their success at reconstituting families. A number have demonstrated the values of sexual morality, marriage, and child raising expressed amongst the enslaved people of the United States.¹⁸ A similar literature is developing for Latin America.¹⁹

For the British Caribbean, Barry Higman addresses the belief that the severity of sugar plantation life caused low fertility and instead argues that reproduction amongst enslaved people can not be understood simply in terms of the labor regime. He tests the traditional thesis on slave fertility, which linked levels of natural increase in the slave population with sex ratios, family instability, and casual mating practices. He concludes that the stage of sugar production development, diversity of agricultural production, and degree of white settlement were the most important determinants.²⁰ Such factors have yet


to be tested with respect to Cuba’s changing, historical experience with sugar plantation slavery.

While debates over a slave population’s ability to naturally reproduce itself can provide important insights into the comparative quality of slave regimes, statements that indicate that slave populations did not naturally reproduce themselves confuse various levels of collective action. While collectively, the Africans imported into Cuba did not achieve replacement levels, with their mortality out pacing natality, certain families succeeded in reproducing creole children and they in turn also achieved a measure of reproductive success. More simply put, it is quite obvious that some significant quantity of Africans reproduced creole children, who in turn also reproduced creole children. At some point in this reproductive process, these offspring did not just become gente de color, but also defined themselves Cubans. While it is impossible to calculate the exact demographics of this process, given the lack of Cuban nineteenth-century life cycle sources, this study will consider some of the additional factors in Afro-Cuban reproduction. It links aspects of racial representation to definitions of demographic success in reinterpreting Afro-Cuban significance in the formation of Cuban national identity.

Controls and Documentation of Family Formation

Slavery in Cuba varied considerably over its nearly four centuries of existence. Cuban slavery can be divided temporally into five distinct periods: prior to 1762; 1762 to 1789; 1790 to 1820, 1821 to 1867; and 1868 to 1886. This periodization is derived from the study of the distribution of Afro-Cuban population and its influence on the formation of Cuban national identity.

21 The author’s periodization is informed by those offered in Antonio Saco, Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los...
from the changing visions of slavery created by colonial authorities and slaveowners, which in turn led to adjustments in their treatment of enslaved people. This study discusses the first period (1515 to 1762) in this chapter. The next chapter combines the periods, 1763 to 1792 and 1793 to 1820. Chapter four treats the period between 1821 and 1868. Chapter five addresses the critical era of the gradual abolition, from 1868 to 1886.

Cuban slavery in the period prior to 1763 is generally explained as a relatively low intensity form of bondage in comparison to later periods. Cuba’s economy existed in a state of unfulfilled expectation and had not yet become so intensely concentrated in sugar production. Diverse employment of enslaved people was the norm. They were utilized in a variety of urban occupations, in any task believed to be below the dignity of whites. Many were domestics, street vendors, or prostitutes. In Havana, enslaved people were the manual supports for the massive military and administrative apparatuses of the colonial government. In the countryside, agricultural production was based on a mix of small-farm subsistence, production for local markets, and limited export activity. Sugar production was not extensive, based mostly on ingenios (sugar plantations) of small size and workforce. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the major agricultural export was tobacco. It too was grown in small farms with the owner assisted by one or two enslaved people. In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, cattle ranching and mining also heavily utilized enslaved men. Slave owners in both rural and urban areas also developed a practice of allowing their charge either to be rented out or

make their own labor arrangements at a set fee. This practice provided a relative level of autonomy for slaves from their owners.\textsuperscript{22}

Historians generally accept that slavery in this period was less severe than it would later become in the golden age of plantation sugar production of the nineteenth century. Little is known of Cuban slave demographics for this period, as the first official census of the island was not completed until 1774. By 1700, as much as forty percent of Cuba’s population was enslaved.\textsuperscript{23} Several estimates suggest that 60,000 Africans were forcibly imported into Cuba prior to 1763.\textsuperscript{24} However, the local economy’s orientation toward production for domestic consumption placed less value on slave-derived output.\textsuperscript{25} Individual owners generally enslaved few people and thus enjoyed more direct and personal relationships with their charges. Despite their bondage, slaves were permitted to


\textsuperscript{23}Levi Marrero, \textit{Cuba: Economía y sociedad} 5:30.

\textsuperscript{24}Aimes, \textit{The History of Slavery in Cuba}, p. 36, citing Humboldt, \textit{Ensayo sobre la Isla de Cuba}, 142, and José Antonio Saco, \textit{Colección de papeles científicos, históricos, políticos y de otros ramos sobre la isla de Cuba}, ya publicados, ya inéditos, (Paris: Impr. de d'Aubusson y Kugelmann, 1858-1859) 1: 164.

maintain a level of their humanity and legal personality. With their owners' permission, they could enter in contractual arrangements, such as owning property and marrying. 26

The period prior to 1763 provided the foundation for the later development of the institution. The legal structure of Spanish-American slavery is its most well-studied aspect. 27 Spanish colonial law featured several protective measures for slave families. The groundwork for such concerns had been lain in medieval law, especially with the thirteenth-century Siete Partidas. These regulations permitted enslaved people to marry freely with both the enslaved and the free. The free partner had to be informed of the other's status. Slave owners could not prohibit the marriages of their charges, nor could they separate couples by selling one spouse away from the other. The Spanish crown also recommended that slave owners foster slave marriages in order to control rebelliousness and tendencies to flee from bondage. A royal cédula, or decree, of 1526 suggested that once married, enslaved people were expected to “trabajar y servir a sus dueños con más voluntad” (work and serve they owners with more willingness). 28 Additionally, marriages between the enslaved and the free were permitted without restriction. However, the Crown pointedly declared that, upon such a union, the enslaved partner would not automatically become liberated, as some had previously believed. 29

26Klein, Slavery in the Americas, 96.

27Klein, Slavery in the Americas, and Hall, Social Control.


29See cédulas of 11 May 1526, "Que no sean libres los esclavos negros que se casen, ni los hijos que tuvieron," and 26 October 1541, "Que los negros se casen con negras," in Konetzke, ed., Colección de documentos, 1:81-82 and 210; and José María
The respect that Spanish colonial law demonstrated for the conjugal bonds of enslaved people was not extended to other aspects of family relations. The bonds between parents and children were much more tenuous. The only absolute was the legal dictum of *partus sequitur ventrem*, the condition of the child follows that of the mother. Thus, children born to enslaved women were themselves condemned to enslavement. Enslaved fathers had little parental rights or responsibilities. The stability of these relationships were left to the owners’ discretion. They could choose to separate enslaved parents from their children by way of sale, personal grant, or dispersion in a final testament.

In colonial Spanish America, in general, the Catholic Church also played an important institutional role in the practice of slavery. One of the first steps in legally assigning a slave’s social position was baptism. For an enslaved person in colonial Cuba, baptism was a double-edged social act. It ascribed a specific legal personality, while it also often stripped him or her of socially-recognized ancestry. The colonial church held that the salvation of the soul of an enslaved person was of equal importance as that of the free. Therefore, church officials insisted that slave owners make the sacraments available. Enslaved people were to be taught the catechism, baptized, and allowed to marry like any free member of this very Catholic society.

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Newly-imported Africans, or “etíopes” and more commonly “bozales,” should have received Christian instruction as soon as they arrived in port. They were to have been questioned if they were previously baptized either “antes de su partida de Etiopia, en el mar, o en qué otro sitio” (before their departure from Africa, at sea, or at another site) and “si la recibieron en alguna de las partes principales del cuerpo” (if baptism had been received on one of the principal parts of the body). They were to haven been questioned if they had any understanding of baptism, “aunque sólo imperfecta y bárbara” (even if only imperfect and barbarous). If not, they were to have been baptized again. Adults were not to be baptized without understanding Christian doctrine: the sign of the apostle, or the articles of faith; the Lord’s Prayer; the Ten Commandments, and the sacraments. However, Africans who “para su poca pericia y su rudeza” (because of their little sense and crudeness) were still ignorant of these after two or three months of instruction would have been baptized also. This was done so as to avoid the possibility of their deaths before their souls were presumably saved.32

If newly arriving Africans were not baptized in a timely manner, the owners had to petition for special permission to perform the delayed baptisms. Planters would baptize en masse. For example, in the case of the San Martin and Echeverria sugar plantations, their owners had to petition directly to the Bishop of Havana for permission to baptize thirty-six black infants. These children were between the ages of 7 and 14

months. Their action demonstrates either continued concern for the spiritual welfare of their charges or the recognition that the baptism of infant, creole slaves provided legal proof of ownership.

Several important considerations may have contributed to a less than optimal number of baptisms. Masters had to allow a priest to perform this sacrament and then pay for it. Therefore despite, the Church’s concern for saving souls, slave owners’ attention to the spiritual welfare of their charges ultimately determined the extent of the relationship between the enslaved and the Church. Additionally, the availability of priests impacted the number and frequency of baptisms. Parishes were not created to specifically serve the enslaved population. To the contrary, they were established to mission to the spiritual needs of the free community, especially whites. Clerics were concentrated in urban settings and relatively few served the rurally-concentrated slave populations. Support for this point is offered by a later traveler’s account that suggested that baptism and Christian burial were the only sacraments that enslaved people fully enjoyed. A nineteenth-century visitor, Richard Dana observed:

The rule respecting religion so far observed is this, that infants are baptized, and all receive Christian burial. But there is no enforcement of the obligation to give the slaves religious instruction or to allow them to attend public religious service. Most of those in the rural districts see no church and no priest, from baptism to burial. If they do receive religious instruction, or have religious services provided for them, it is the free gift of the master.

33Reconocimientos, Leg. 35 Exp. 65, 1874.

34Franklin Knight, Slave Society in Cuba, 106-110.

35Richard H. Dana, To Cuba and Back: A Vacation Voyage, new ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960, original 1859): 124, and this opinion was seconded by Anthony Trollope, The West Indies and the Spanish Main (New York:
Baptism marked one’s entry into the Catholic community of colonial Cuba. One did not have a legal identity without it. This applied to slaves and non-slaves alike. The belief that all slaves were baptized is indicated by the recommendation of one local priest that illegal slave importation could have been easily identified through the investigation of baptismal records.

Although with baptism the enslaved “secured a whole series of relative rights such as sanctity of marriage, parenthood, fraternization, and so on,” they obviously were admitted as the most junior members of that community.36 Despite the Church’s concern for the souls of the enslaved, their appearance within baptismal documents significantly differed from that of Whites. As with many regions of Latin America, from the late seventeenth century, in many Cuban parishes, the registries of baptism, marriage, and burial for whites were segregated from those of Indians and the African descended, in libros de españoles (book of Spaniards) and libros de pardos y negros (books of mulattoes and blacks), respectively.37 For Whites, it was especially important to record ancestry, listing the two prior generations. Information about the parents and each set of grandparents was usually recorded. These documents would then determine civil status with respect to family of origin. For enslaved people, the baptismal documents emphasized their status as property.

Harper and Brothers, 1860) 134.

36Marrero, Cuba: Economía y sociedad, 3: 41.

Such documentation of ethnic/racial differences within ecclesiastic registers can allow modern historians to trace changes in the meaning of race within colonial Latin America.38 While on the surface the classificatory schemes changed little over the almost four centuries of colonial administration, appreciable nuances are embedded in their modes of inscription. Through the certificates of baptism one received a juridical label such as blanco, negro, indio, pardo, mestizo, or esclavo (white, black, Indian, African-mixed race, Indian-mixed race, or slave). These designations had existed since the earliest moments of Spain’s colonial projects, but their significance and ascription varied. They formed the basis for the establishment and maintenance of the Spanish American regimen de castas (caste system), associating color and descent with social position. However, as we will see below the canonical system for documenting race never achieved uniformity and was open to various forms of social intervention. The concepts of family held by Church and government officials contended with those of the polity to shape how the ecclesiastic registers would be used. Any modern, historical reconstruction of the families of Cuban slaves must acknowledge these struggles.39

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Africans did not list or were not allowed to list the names of their parents on their baptismal documents. Instead the name of the owner was listed most prominently. The plausible argument that Cuban lack of familiarity African languages caused these omissions can be greatly qualified if one considers that Chinese immigrants arriving as early as the 1840s onward did list, on occasion, their parent's names.\textsuperscript{40} In one very exceptional case, a free African did succeed in recording his parentage. In the 1876 baptism of his daughter, Luis Santochi Dovi-Yalena declared himself to be a prince of the Araraes Sabalu people and listed his parents as Acovejachi Dovi Yalenn and Fume Glono.\textsuperscript{41} Yet, the typical elimination of parentage from vital records of Africans was an example of denying their history, marking them as people without a clear heritage or legitimate genealogy, and enforcing an element of "natal alienation." Official recognition of their family heritage would only begin with the moment of enslavement in the New World, as the Church blessed them with the name of the slave master. As we will see below, creoles experienced a similar pattern with the exclusion of fathers' names of in the cases where the parents were not married.

The baptismal certificates of Africans did make an exception to this enforcement of natal alienation in one area. A hispanicized version of a specific African ethnicity was

\textsuperscript{40}See examples of Chinese fathers exerting their ancestry in Archivo de la parroquia Espíritu Santo (hereafter AES), \textit{bautismos de gente de color}, libro 58 entry 439, 1895 and Reconocimientos, Leg. 80 exp. 2, 1884.

\textsuperscript{41}AES, \textit{libro 55 de bautismos de gente de color}, entry 116, 1876.
generally recorded. Early twentieth-century Cuban criminalist turned ethnographer, Fernando Ortiz, encountered ninety-three African ethnic labels in an ethno-historical review of mid-nineteenth-century Cuban literature and oral culture.42 African slaves and freed people maintained the usage of these labels as ethnonyms. Plantation records and other documents listed many a “María Congo” or “José Mina.” Of the multitude of African ethnicities that might have been present in Cuba. The most important were known as the Lucumí (from the coastal areas of modern Benin and western Nigeria), their Arará and Mina neighbors to the west, the Carabalí (from eastern Nigeria), the Congo (of what is now Angola), and the Mandinga (of today’s western Mali).43 However, these labels may have also represented Hispanic attempts to categorize cultures which were incomprehensible to them and may not have reflected actual African forms of self-identification. This occurrence was in part due to the slave traders’ practice of labeling their captives’ origins as the point of purchase, instead of the point of capture, which might have been several hundred miles into the African interior.44 Nevertheless, once freed, Africans and their descendants would organize themselves along ethnic line into mutual-aid societies, or cabildos, that were distinguished by these same labels.45


44 López Valdés, El componente africanos, 51-52.

Expanding the Data on Early Family Patterns

The existing analysis of the familial and reproductive experiences of Cuban slaves in the period prior to 1763 has been very limited. Presently, we do not have any data on fertility, mortality, or manumission rates for Cuba's enslaved population in this period. However, some understanding of the conditions for enslaved people on sugar plantations can be inferred from surviving tax records. Again, the size of slaveholdings remained relatively small. Of the sixteen sugar plantations on the outskirts of Havana reporting in 1602, the largest possessed only twenty-eight enslaved people. Another listed only two. All displayed a disproportionately male sex ratio. In the worst case of sex ratio imbalance, plantation owner Juan Maldonado revealed that of his twenty-three enslaved people, none were women. By contrast, Diego Ochoa de la Vega indicated that amongst the twenty-eight people he owned, eight were women. Better still, Hernando Despinar reported that women accounted for four out of twelve of his slaves. Collectively amongst the reporting plantations, enslaved men outnumbered their female counterparts six and a half times.46

Such imbalance obviously limited the options for reproduction and family formation, but, given the diversity of Cuban slavery in that period, it must be acknowledged that sugar plantations represented only one facet of that experience. A major study of the central Havana parish, La Catedral, in early seventeenth-century begins to examine the relationship between jural identity and marriage patterns for an urban population of color. There, of 3,190 marriages amongst all races between 1585

46 Relación de los dueños de ingenios de azúcar de la ciudad de La Habana en la isla de Cuba (1610) reprinted in Marrero, Cuba, 4: 4-5.
and 1645, Cuban historian Alejandro de la Fuente reveals that marriage was as significant a practice for enslaved Africans as it was for Whites. The number of slave marriages was slightly higher than that of Whites. This statistic appears quite remarkable when considered in conjunction with an estimate of the Havana’s entire black and mulatto population that stood at thirty percent of the total.

A high rate of African marriage is even more remarkable when one also considers the prohibitive costs associated with marriage. In 1680, the minimum cost for marriage amongst enslaved people was sixty six pesos, only fourteen pesos less than the cost for whites and free people of color. While de la Fuente does not explain this exceptional marriage rate, he supports the view that official policy of considering slave marriages as a means of pacification against rebellion may have allowed for their greater frequency. Critical factors in these high rates of urban slave marriages also may have been the traditionally higher proportion of black and mulatta women living in such a setting and the possibility of remunerated labor permissible even for enslaved people. In either case, Havana’s enslaved population was marrying at rates not generally seen in slave-holding regions of the Americas at the time.

De la Fuente’s study is also useful in presenting the emergence of reproductive differences amongst Cuban people of color. The 1,224 marriages involving enslaved people analyzed in his study occurred largely amongst Blacks, as opposed to Mulattoes.

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47 De la Fuente, “Los matrimonios de esclavos,”

48 Marrero, Cuba, 3: 56.

49 Marrero, Cuba, 4: 135.
De la Fuente found few Mulattoes or Mulattas amongst the marrying population of enslaved. No enslaved mulatta women were married to black men, either enslaved or free. De la Fuente attributes this to the purportedly high manumission rates of mulatta women. And he did not examine the marriage patterns of free people of color. Also, de la Fuente might have considered the proportion of creole to Africans within the enslaved population. If the proportion of creoles was low, then the number of mulattoes would also remain low. Only five Mulattas and thirty five Mulattoes were found within his sample.

Table 2-1 Slave and Mixed-Status Marriages at La Catedral Parish, 1585-1645

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Mulatta</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulatto</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: de la Fuente, "Los matrimonios de esclavos..." 519, 525.

He did find other marriages that crossed color categories. Of the Mulattoes in the sample, thirty married black women and one married an Indian woman. In the same period, sixteen white men married black women. Oddly no marriages were found between white men and Mulattas. Again, this discrepancy would indicate either an error created by the small sample size, the disproportionate African population, or a lack of desire for or access to marriage by mulatta women.

De la Fuente also notes a marked difference between African and creole marriage patterns. Fewer creole marriages were registered. However, he notes without explanation
that enslaved creole men generally married African women and not creole women. Amongst African couples, there was a notable attempt at group or regional solidarity. In dividing the ethnic origins of the partners into six geographic regions (Senegambia y Cabo Verde; Sierra Leona y Costa de Oro; Costa de los esclavos y Congo; Angola; Mozambique, and criollos), de la Fuente finds that 61.9% of marriages were of people of the same region.⁵⁰

Table 2-2 Marriages involving People of Color, Santo Angel de Custodio, 1693-1715

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>1693-1715</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African slave</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black slave</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parda slave</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free Black</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free Parda</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free African</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slave No Color</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Status</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio, *Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros*, v. 5 1693 a 1715.

*In this instance, “Black” refers to African-descended creoles with no mention of race mixture.*
It is interesting to compare de la Fuente’s findings with an examination of a more restricted sample taken from the smaller neighboring parish of Santo Angel del Custodio between 1695 and 1715 (see Table 2-2). Its records suggest a more qualified view of the near exclusion of enslaved “pardas” from Havana’s seventeenth-century marriage pool demonstrated by de la Fuente’s findings. This data set of 158 entries comes from the now exclusive registry of mulatto, black, and Indian marriages and therefore does not record marriages solely amongst whites. Six of these marriages involved an enslaved women listed as “parda.” In all these cases, the women married pardo men, of equal color classification, most of whom were free. In only one of these pardo couples were both partners enslaved. This evidence supports the perception of marital hypergamy for pardo women. They selected or were chosen by partners of higher social status.

Enslaved, pardo men appeared slightly more frequently, in ten marriages. Their marriages crossed color categories, but they did not cross ethnic categories. While none of these men married African women, they married free and enslaved morenas criollas and pardas at similar rates. Black creole men also demonstrated a rejection of African partners in their marital choices. Only two out of twenty six married African women. Therefore, while pardas experienced marital hypergamy, African women had the opposite experience. Few married mates of higher status.

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51A 1691 census of parishes of Havana indicates that the main central parish of Catedral had a population of 4,756 persons (44% of color) and Santo Angel had 1,631(19% of color), cited in Marrero, Cuba: Economía y sociedad, 5: 56.

52Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros. v. 5, 1693 a 1715.
This sample also confirms the preference for ethnic endogamy amongst enslaved Africans. For twenty-four cases in which African ethnicity was ascribed to at least one of the partners, only in six were the mates’ ethnicities not listed as the same. The Mina, Arará, and Congo were the most frequently listed, and the Lucumí, Carabalí, and Popo appeared less often. These findings suggest that cultural commonalities were valued by enslaved people, and marriage within the same or similar cultural background may have facilitated African retentions.

While ethnicity appears to be a strong factor in the selection of marital partners amongst people of color in this period, status was less significant. Six percent of the marriages studied by de la Fuente demonstrates intermixture between status groups, with free people marrying the recently liberated and those still enslaved. However, this figure is taken from a pool of all races. In the much smaller sample discussed above, where only people of color were present, twenty out of 158 marriages involved partners of differing status. Interestingly, within this group, the majority were unions between free black women and enslaved men. This provides another indication of the need to add gender to the markers of position within a slave society. Women and men experienced life under this institution differently. Even when free, black women in Cuba did not or could not distance themselves from slavery in the selection of partners. Black men had even fewer options. The near absence of free black men in this marriage sample also reenforces this image.

53 Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. *Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros.* v. 5, 1693 a 1715.

The close association between slavery and social identity remained strong for free blacks to a greater extent than it did for *pardos*. Free *pardos* and *parda*, on the other hand, distanced themselves from the stigma of slavery and rarely chose enslaved black partners. Only those enslaved persons of the same color category made acceptable partners. However, despite the obvious color and status preferences revealed within these records, these marriage patterns would suggest a difficulty in speaking exclusively about either free families or slave families for African-descended populations of colonial Cuba. Their families could be free, enslaved, or a combination of the two at any given moment.

Herbert Klein, in a more general study of Cuban slavery, notes that between 1752 and 1755 in the town of Santiago the marriage rates of enslaved people and Whites differed only slightly. Klein uses these data to conclude that cultural differences between the two groups were not that significant, at least with respect to marriage. Moreover, the same sources reveal that the people enslaved in Cuba consistently had much higher marriage rates when compared against free blacks. This evidence suggests that neither African cultural traditions nor enslavement mitigated against marriage.

While the sample from Santo Angel does not contain information on marriage rates amongst Whites and can not be used to structure comparative rates, it can provide useful insight into how such a comparison would be undertaken. Records in this registry suggest that rates of second marriage must also be accounted for in such a comparison.

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55 Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. *Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros*. v. 5, 1693 a 1715.

Thirty four marriages, or twenty-three percent, of Santo Angel’s 158 amongst people of color involved a widowed partner.\textsuperscript{57} In these, two thirds were cases of widows remarrying. This would suggest that people of color in pre-plantational Cuban society achieved comparably high marriages rates as a result of relatively high male mortality rates. A woman of color had greater opportunity to remarry over the course of her lifecycle. Similarly, remarriage rates for white Cubans were exceptionally high due to the distortion in their sex ratio.\textsuperscript{58}

Another factor that may have influenced marriage rates amongst the enslaved was the owners' influences. Of the fifty-seven cases from Santo Angel in which both partners were enslaved, in the vast majority, each had a different owner.\textsuperscript{59} Only in one case were the spouses owned by the same person. This evidence may suggest that these owners allowed their charges at least some opportunity for social independence. Moreover, certain owners may have encouraged marriage. Take for example, Doña Catarina Xaquez. Between 1695 and 1715, six enslaved people in her ownership wed.\textsuperscript{60} This number is exceptional when the average number of slaves per owner was 4.5 between 1645 and 1648.\textsuperscript{61}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{57}Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. \textit{Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros.} v. 5, 1693 a 1715.

\textsuperscript{58}Johnson, \textit{Social Transformations}, 24.

\textsuperscript{59}Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. \textit{Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros.} v. 5, 1693 a 1715.

\textsuperscript{60}Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. \textit{Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros.} v. 5, 1693 a 1715.

\textsuperscript{61}De la Fuente, “Los matrimonios,” 511.
Because both de la Fuente and Klein are concerned with marriage amongst the enslaved population, their studies discussed above give only slight attention to the process of race mixture, or mestizaje. Undoubtedly miscegenation was a considerable occurrence throughout Cuban history, as the continual increase in the mulatto population will attest. As was the case throughout colonial Latin America, in Cuba this population generally grew out of non-marital, consensual relationships between white men and women of color. Yet as noted above, interracial marriages were undertaken in small numbers. In this period, the low frequency of all interracial marriages can be attributed not to legal restrictions, but instead to a number of social constraints enforced largely by the white population.

Throughout colonial Spanish America, marriage to social inferiors was subject to disdain and this belief probably contributed to the prevalence of interracial concubinage. Moreover, white women were discouraged from all types of sexual relationships with

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63Saco, Historia de la esclavitud, 2:48-50, notes the lack of legal prohibitions to interracial marriage.
casta men.64 According to the nineteenth-century Cuban historian José Antonio Saco (1797-1879),

...It is just to recognize, with respect to the morality of women of the Hispanic-American race, that the transition from African to white has not been done by the interaction of white women with black men, but on the contrary, it is an extraordinary phenomenon that a white woman concedes her favors to a black or mulatto.65

Both the records analyzed by de la Fuente and the author of the present study demonstrate the absence of these types of marital unions, while those formed by white men and women of color occurred in small numbers.

However, at least in the case of one late seventeenth-century marriage registry from the Havana parish of Santo Angel, the presence of interracial unions were not always easily determined. At this time, there was no universal indication of whiteness within ecclesiastic documents. Only members of the elite used the honorific titles of “Don” and “Doña.” Those Whites of lower ranks were described only by their names and


65“...bien que es justicia reconocer, en honra de la moralidad del sexo femenino de la raza americo-hispana, que el tránsito de la africana a la blanca no se ha hecho, ni se hace, por el enlace del sexo femenino blanco con el masculino negro, sino exclusivamente al contrario, siendo fenómeno extraordinario que una mujer blanca concediese sus favores a negro o mulato,” Saco, Historia de la esclavitud, 2: 50.
region of origin. A focus on region of origin allows for the rapid identification of peninsular Spaniards and foreign whites. But the racial category of “free” Cubans was not always evident. By contrast, markers of color for foreigners of color were often present in the documents. Creole whites, on the other hand, are more difficult to identity. Take for example two separate records from Santo Angel. While Juan de Mendosa was clearly identified as a “pardo libre, natural de la ciudad de Sevilla” (free pardo, born in the city of Seville) when he married a parda libre, Eusebio Romero was identified only as legitimate and native of Havana. No indications of the latter’s color or status were provided, in a style typical of the manner in which whites were recorded. So for the marriages from Santo Angel, how can one classify the sixteen women and twenty-four men who like Eusebio Romero appeared without any indication of color or labor status? Do they participate in the formation of interracial unions or simply represent errors that omit the color for a mulatto or black? If one accepts them as simple errors, then no interracial marriages between white creoles and people of color occurred, a marked contrast to the small number of marriages involving Spaniards and women of color. Or if these omissions reflect interracial unions, then they represent a significant portion of the marriages involving persons of color. One has to believe that the truth lays somewhere between these two extremes.

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67Parroquia de Santo Angel de Custodio. *Libro de matrimonios de pardos y negros*. v. 5, 1693 a 1715, entries 19 and 112.
These problems in determining the prevalence of race mixture can lead one to question how best to categorize social distance between colonial Cuba’s major color groups (blanco, negro, pardo). It has been described by some as “caste-like,” with little mobility between them. The continuation of marital endogamy from the late seventeenth-century to the mid-nineteenth century offers evidence that a later intensification of slavery and the implementation of legal restrictions on the choice of marriage partners were only partially responsible for these patterns. The examples above suggest that any labeling of such patterns as indicators of the existence of a caste system should be done with significant qualification. The documentary record contains sufficient uncertainty to leave open the possibility of a appreciable number of interracial marriages that would challenge the perpetuation of caste in the reproductive domain.

Conclusion

The Africans who were brought to Cuba as slaves were allowed to keep only some semblance of their ethnic identity. No other aspect of their heritage received any social acknowledgment within the standard vital documents. Yet, to equate this with a complete “natal alienation,” is problematic. It does not allow for their possibilities of building new families and establishing a new heritage for future generations. The notion of the natal alienation of enslaved people assumes two things: the inability to form families and their permanence in servitude. Neither was true in the Cuban case. Even if

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69 Compare with Martínez-Alier. *Marriage, Class and Colour*.

70 The methods for the acquisition of freedom are discussed in detail below in chapter 7.
one were to limit the concept of family solely to the union created by legitimate marriage, then, at least in urban areas, Cuba’s enslaved people may have found a great deal of success in this arena. The evidence suggests that their marriage rates were comparable to that of Whites. Therefore, the institution of slavery, in its earliest period, did not prevent family formation. In fact, marriage rates appear to have been lower amongst free people of color. But, slavery did complicate these processes. Marriage amongst enslaved people remained valued by themselves, their owners, the Church, and the Spanish Crown. Additionally, the blended economy of this period, based on both agricultural production and urban labor, allowed the enslaved people of Cuba the social space necessary for their reproduction.

Marriages in the urban samples for this period were largely endogamous. Most couples were of similar background. This observation does not differ from the findings of earlier studies. However, considering marriages beyond those exclusively amongst slaves reveals important exceptions. The crossing of social boundaries was not uncommon. The free married the enslaved. The black married the white. Yet some selections also remained rigid, especially when one considers gender. The documents reveal that African women almost exclusively married other Africans, pardas rarely married enslaved men, white women never married men of color. Except for this last pattern, men selected partners across a wider range of choices than did women. Therefore, a caste-like definition of early colonial Cuban society is only possible if these exceptions are also acknowledged. But more importantly, the patterns of family formation and marriage established by people of color within Cuba before 1762
influenced later aspects of family formation. However, as significant shifts in the labor regimes and racial and ethnic demographics occurred, Afro-Cuban family styles were also transformed.
CHAPTER 3
SLAVERY AND FAMILY FORMATION DURING CUBA'S ECONOMIC
AWAKENING, 1763-1820

Cuban Transformations 1763-1789

The next period in the familial experiences of those enslaved in Cuba began in 1763, after the ten-month British occupation of Havana.¹ This event ushered in a new era of military reform and increased commercial activity for the relatively stagnant Cuban economy. During the occupation, the British brought long-requested slaves into a region starved of an adequate labor supply. The estimated number of legally imported slaves during this period remains a matter of debate. Hubert Aimes has suggested 10,700 entries, while Hugh Thomas has revised that figure down to 4,000.² In either case, the

¹Many authors view the period between 1763 and 1791 as transitional. See for example, Saco, Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana, 2: 231-232; and Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio, 35; Aimes clarifies the role of the British occupation, "It has often been asserted that the license enjoyed during the English occupation [1763] was the cause of the awakening and economic development of Cuba. The claim can be accepted as one instance of Anglo-Saxon self-glorification. It has been shown above that the real development of Cuba began much earlier, and that the plans which were later carried out were conceived long before in the minds of both French and Spanish rulers. The occupation helped the Cubans, undoubtedly, by giving them supplies of cheap goods and slaves, but the period of time and amount of goods were alike too small to have been factors of any importance" A History of Slavery in Cuba, 33.

²Aimes, A History of Slavery in Cuba, 33 and Thomas, Cuba, 50.
number represents a substantial increase from earlier rates of importation. After the British withdrawal, Cubans continued to pressure Spain to liberalized trading practices and allow for the entry of more slaves. The Spanish government initially made few modifications to the slave trade. It only slightly increased the number of imports and lowered prices within the long-established *asiento* system, or exclusive trade contracts.³

Several engines drove Cuba's economic growth in this period: the military reform, population increase, and new attention to agricultural exports. Spain invested heavily in Cuba's defensive fortification and augmented the size of the military garrisons. These military expenditures impacted more than the immediate defensive objectives. They greatly contributed to the society's economic base, providing capital for other areas of expansion. Moreover, military families collectively became the foundations for growth in other directions. As many of these men settled permanently on the island, they brought their wives from abroad or married Cuban women. This increased population required greater production for their own survival and in the effort to generate export profits.⁴ Slaves provided the labor to meet these needs.

Between 1763 and 1789, 41,604 enslaved persons legally entered Cuba. While this number was later dwarfed by the importation rates after 1791, the rate of entry was significantly greater than entry estimates for the previous two and a half centuries.⁵


⁵Aimes, *Slavery in Cuba*, 36-37
Cuban society had to adjust to these increases. New demographic patterns emerged. By the time of the first semi-reliable census in 1774, in a total population of 171,620 persons, whites numbered 96,440 (56.2%), free people of color 30,847 (18.0%), and enslaved people 44,333 (25.8%) (See Table 3-1). By 1792, all these populations had grown rapidly. The number of whites increased to 133,559, a growth of forty-eight percent. The free colored population stood at 54,152, a seventy-six percent increase. But the rise in the slave population was even more dramatic. Their numbers jumped to 84,590, up by over ninety percent.  

Economic interests combined with notions of gender to influence the purchasing patterns of Cuban slaveowners. They showed an overwhelming preference for African male laborers. Women were present to a much lesser extent. The 1774 census gave the first official glimpse of the significant imbalance in the sex ratio of the enslaved population throughout the island (see table 3-1). This proportion nearly reached a ratio of two enslaved men for every enslaved woman.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3-1 Race in the 1774 Cuban Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enslaved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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This gender imbalance was also readily apparent on the sugar plantations. The 1764 inventory of the plantation Señora de Regla plantation just outside of Havana in Guanabacoa provides an example of this situation. It listed a holding of twenty-one African men and no women. Their ages ranged from 90 to 35, with an average age of 60. The level of care required to achieve such longevity speaks to the less harsh nature of slavery in this period in comparison to the severity of later ones. Moreover, the fact that the slave trade in this period flowed at a trickle may have encouraged owners had to protect their investment in Africans. One of the plantations owned by the Society of Jesus fared slightly better in its gender distribution. In 1767, the San Ignacio de Río Blano plantation in rural Havana held 153 enslaved men and 63 women. This ratio reflected the order’s commitment to promoting families and limiting the practice of homosexual relations within a system of slavery that it thought as perverting the norms of Christian behavior.

Again, the size of the slave population was limited by Spanish trade policies. Cubans did not yet have direct trade with African slaving regions. Before 1790, the limited legal trade forced Cubans to seek other sources. Many enslaved people had been

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7“Inventario de un ingenio en el año 1764,” reprinted in El curioso americano 3, epoca 5, año 1 (1907) 46-47.

8Mercedes García Rodríguez, “Presencia Jesuita en la economía de Cuba: Siglo XVIII” Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad de La Habana, 1999, 94-95. It is interesting to compare this gender distribution for those enslaved people purchased by the Jesuits to the entirely male populations found at the plantations donated to them, San Juan Bautista de Poveda and Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu de Barrutía.
illegally transshipped from other Caribbean islands and North America. It is likely that these transhipments were predominately male, especially as neighboring British West Indian planters were using enslaved women in a significant portion of the field labor. One indirect example of such transhipments is found in Havana’s baptismal records. In 1766, eight-year-old José Antonio was brought from Jamaica and purchased by the marquis Don Manuel Manzano. Other Jamaicans were also recorded as parents in the baptismal records. However, it is not possible to determine if their entries were illegal or if they had arrived during the English occupation (1762-1763).

Just as this type of baptismal document has the potential to uncover a hidden trading practice, it can offer insights into the reproductive lives of Cuba’s people of color. In the next four chapters, this study shifts attention away from marriage records to baptismal registries in order to examine these reproductive processes more broadly. They can also reveal the social construction and dissolution of racial boundaries. Baptisms, unlike marriages, record both legitimate and illegitimate families. Marriages reveal only the dominant ideal and practices. Here, the dominant sector defines the legitimate and the

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11 AES, *Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos 1759-1767*, entry 1621. Other documents involving Jamaican slaves include entries 1394, 1600, and 1777.
normative. Important exceptions to norms of family formation can not be found in marriage records that, by their very definition, possess little room for the acknowledgment of divergence. They exclude subaltern ideas and behaviors, with few exceptions.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, the exclusive use of marriage records for determining the subtle shifts in the notions of race is especially problematic in a society such as Cuba, where other indicators suggest a significant proportion of reproduction occurred out of wedlock.

The study of baptismal certificates, on the other hand, eliminates many of the external factors associated with marriage, such as the influence of cost and of religious piety. The appearance of both parents within the baptismal documents indicates their willingness to acknowledge both responsibility for their offspring and their own sexual relationship. This alternate form of familial recognition is just as sufficient a basis for designating the connection between the three components of a "family" (man, woman, children) as is a marriage.\textsuperscript{13} Even if one does not accept a "union" between the man and woman, then two families are seen. One exists between the man and his children. The other is formed by the woman and her offspring.

This present study analyzes reproductive behaviors of Afro-Cubans by giving special emphasis to the vital registries found at the intermural Havana parish of Espiritu

\textsuperscript{12}Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality} 1 (New York: Vintage, 1980, [original 1978]) 37-38.

\textsuperscript{13}One drawback of using baptismal records in any comparative way is that they frequently did not document the births of children who died within a few months of birth. Therefore, it becomes difficult to measure how differences in early infant mortality rates may have impacted racial demographics. However, I will remind the reader that this study is less concerned with demographic issues than it is with the changing ideologies of race and family formation, especially as reflected in articulation of reproductive behavior.
Santo. From its founding in 1638 through the present, the percentage of its black and mulatto parishioners has been notable. Examination of the manner in which they have discussed their families and racial identities within these records allows one to consider some of the specific moments in which Cuban racial identities have been articulated and contested.

One unsurprising fact of Afro-Cuban family formation that is readily apparent in a review of baptismal certificates of children of color recorded there between March 1765 and August 1767 is the coexistence of both marital and non-marital families. These 643 infant baptisms also reveal the extent to which the families were formed across the social boundaries of status and color (see table 3-2). These records indicate that while sexual endogamy remained prevalent, a measurable level of family formation occurred between persons at distinct social stations. However, there were areas in which the transgression of social boundaries did not occur. Most notably, *pardo* men and Whites acknowledged no interaction with Africans. And white women acknowledged no relationships with men of color. This repeats the same behavior demonstrated in period before 1762.

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14See for example, José María de la Torre, *Lo que fuimos y lo que somos* (Havana: Spence y Cia, 1857) 92; and Manuel Fernández Santalices, *Las antiguas iglesias de La Habana: Tiempo, vida y semblante* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997) 33 who note that Espíritu Santo was founded from a congregation of free Blacks.
Table 3-2 Parental Status in Baptisms of Children of Color, Espíritu Santo Parish, 1765-1767

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>African Slave</th>
<th>Black Slave</th>
<th>Parda Slave</th>
<th>Free Black</th>
<th>Free Parda</th>
<th>Free African</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African slave</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Father</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black slave</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardo slave</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Pardo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free African</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole (no race listed)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Archivo de la parroquia Espíritu Santo (hereafter AES), Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entries 1317-2083.

In 1760, Espíritu Santo had some 11,000 parishioners. The parish contained a mix of all classes and colors. Some of Cuba’s early nineteenth-century leading political figures, such as intellectuals José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862) and Antonio Bachiller y Morales (1812-1885), were baptized at its altar. That the number of

15De la Torre, Lo que fuimos, 92; and Manuel Cuadrado Melo, Obispado de la Habana, su historia a traves de los siglos (Havana: np, 1970) 290 both state this figure as 1,100. This is corrected to 11,000 in Johnson, Social Transformation, 21. This latter number is much more plausible given that Espíritu Santo was one of Havana’s four parishes and according to Jacobo Pezuela, Diccionario geográfico, estadístico y histórico de la Isla de Cuba, 4 vols. (Madrid: Mellard, 1863-66) 3: 52, all of Havana in 1773 contained a population of 75,648.

16Cuadrado Mel, El obispado de la Habana, 292.
baptisms of children born to free women of color slightly outnumbered those registered with enslaved mothers, at rates of fifty-one to forty-nine percent, suggests that the parish’s free black and mulatto populations were sizeable.\textsuperscript{17}

The registration of a greater number of children to free women of color than to enslaved women also suggests that during this period Havana’s creole children of color were just as likely to be born into freedom as they were to be born into slavery. In addition to those children born of free mothers, a small number were baptized as free despite their mothers’ enslavement.\textsuperscript{18} The mothers’ owners in these cases consented to the children’s free status, but there is no indication of whether this freedom was purchased or given as a gift.

Free \textit{parda} women were the greatest single category of mothers. They shared children with also every category of men, except black creole slaves. Most of these children were born within marriage. Yet, out-of-wedlock births to \textit{pardas} only slightly exceeded those of enslaved African women. As separate groups, enslaved and free black, creole women were less than half as fecund. Yet, if these mothers are grouped solely according to color to the exclusion of status, then black creole, \textit{parda}, and African women presented similar numbers: 199, 224, and 234 respectively.\textsuperscript{19} This was in a period in which \textit{pardas} accounted for 37\% of the female population of color, island wide. The

\textsuperscript{17}AES, \textit{Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, 1759-1767, entries 1317-2083.

\textsuperscript{18}AES, \textit{Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, 1759-1767, entries 1364, 1622, 1805, and 1932.

\textsuperscript{19}AES, \textit{Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, 1759-1767, entries 1317-2083.
distribution between African and creole women of color in this period is unknown (see Table 3-3).

Several possibilities may account for this near equal distribution of births by color of the mother. If one compares the births to free parda women with those in all other categories, then the greater frequency of manumission for these women may be a plausible explanation. This phenomenon has been widely documented in other slave-holding regions within Latin America.\textsuperscript{20} Pardas outnumbered black women within Cuba’s free population of color (see Table 3-3). Moreover, a self-determined choice of the “parda” label, as opposed to “negra,” within the baptismal record may have been made more frequently.

The possibility of such racial shifts is increased when one considers the near equivalence in the number of free pardos to free pardas. Given the greater manumission rates for women, the number of free pardas should have exceeded that of their male counterparts. Remember, this population was almost solely creole and not augmented by immigration or the slave trade. Therefore, there was no external factoring likely to cause a gender imbalance. This leads one to question how their equal proportions were maintained. It is probable a great deal of slippage occurred between the parda and blanca categories. In this way, a woman could distance herself and any offspring from the stigma of slavery (see chapter 6 below).

Table 3-3 Gender and Racial Distributions of the Cuban Population, 1775

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Free White</th>
<th>Free Pardo</th>
<th>Free Black</th>
<th>Black Slave</th>
<th>Pardo Slave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54,555</td>
<td>10,021</td>
<td>5,959</td>
<td>25,256</td>
<td>3,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40,864</td>
<td>9,006</td>
<td>5,629</td>
<td>13,356</td>
<td>2,206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Within the enslaved group, the proportion of African women in their child-bearing years probably exceeded that of their black creole counterparts. Partial evidence for this point comes directly from another aspect of the baptismal record. The “adult” African women baptized at Espíritu Santo in this period were listed with ages ranging from 12 to 25. 22 These are ages that closely corresponded with women’s most reproductive years. Creoles, by contrast, had to survive childhood before entering this stage. High rates of infant and childhood mortality may have slowed this process. And again, manumission and self-purchase may also have reduced the number of black creole women in the slave population. Additionally, studies of other Caribbean slave systems reveal much less fertility of African women in comparison to creole women. 23 So to achieve a relatively

21 According to Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba*, 26 the 1774 census is more reliable and therefore used on pages 81 and 82 above. However, von Humboldt’s figures for the 1775 census provide distinctions by color category not seen in the 1774 data and differ only slightly.

22 AES, *Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1768*. Sixteen baptism of “adult” African women were registered in the period, with ages reported for eight. See entries 1352, 1401, 1410, 1412, 1414, 1424, 1684, and 1784.

equal number of births between these groups, the proportion of African women probably had to be high. Further research is needed to investigate this point.

In this urban setting, childbirth continued to be the greatest source of the new slave population. Despite significant increases in slave importations in comparison to earlier periods, only thirty eight “adult” baptisms were registered at Espíritu Santo between March 1765 and March 1768. This was only six percent of the parish’s total amongst people of color. Most of the children born into slavery in this period had African mothers. This evidence suggests that slavery in this era was not yet a multi-generational situation. The majority of enslaved Cuban families had not at this point experienced bondage over several generations. This pattern is consistent with findings for other Caribbean regions prior to the intensification of the plantation labor regime associated with increased sugar production.

Fathers also had a significant presence in the baptismal record of people of color in this period. For births in both free and enslaved categories, fathers were documented in an overwhelming majority. Only in twenty-six percent, or 169 out of 643, of the cases were fathers not identified. Even women designated as enslaved *pardas*, a category that was absent from de la Fuente’s seventeenth-century slave-marriage sample, are found in this much smaller sample having children in legitimate marriage. Seven such marriages were recorded, covering all of the baptisms in which both a *parda* and an acknowledged

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father were listed.²⁶ Yet it is true that the rate of out-of-wedlock births to parda women was higher than any other group. However, across all categories of infant baptisms to women of color at Espíritu Santo, the parents were listed as legitimately married in an overwhelming seventy-one percent of the entries.²⁷

What accounts for such incredibly high legitimacy figures? Unfortunately, the documentation does not include any material that might suggest an answer. However, this evidence does confirm the theory that African cultural difference did not prevent the free and enslaved people of color in this period from accepting Catholic marriage. Nor were urban slaveowners obstructing these unions. Perhaps they even encouraged them? If one looks closely at the example set by Carlos III, the King of Spain, all births registered to the mothers he owned were legitimate. Not one of these twenty-nine children was born out of wedlock.²⁸ This raises the possibility that the Crown discouraged out-of-wedlock birth amongst its enslaved people, behaving in accordance with Church moral dictates. However, additional sources reveal more material concerns and suggest that Crown promotion of slave marriages and procreation in this era was

²⁶AES, Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entries 1398, 1431, 1504, 1567, 1737, 1748, and 1787.

²⁷AES, Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entries 1317-2083.

made “urgent to prevent flight and compensate for the scarcity noted on the coasts of Guinea.”

However, encouragement of marriage does not necessarily equate to a restriction on out-of-wedlock births. Additional research beyond this current study will have to differentiate the two interpretations of the Crown’s actions and investigate its influence on other owners. Nevertheless, additional pressure for legitimate family formation amongst enslaved Afro-Cubans came from other sources. A contemporary report indicated that the Jesuit and Bethlehemite religious orders also promoted slave marriages and natural reproduction. These orders also encouraged other slave owners to learn from these examples. At the Jesuit sugar plantation San Ignacio de Río Blanco, fifty-nine married couples were found within an enslaved population of 153 men and 63 women. Almost all of the women had mates. Only one single woman was recorded, while three others were widows. Moreover, plantation documents noted that all of the twenty-six

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29 Código negro carolino, Cap. 25 quoted in Hall, Social Control, 94. On royal slaves see Reglamento para el gobierno, militar, político, y económico de la Compañía de Artillería compuesta de negros de S.M. y sus familias (Havana: D.Blas de los Olivos, 1768) reprinted in El curioso americano época IV - año 4, no 1 (January-February 1910): 22-28. The men in this company were encourage to marry and have large families. “...el Intendente bugará negras para casarlas con estos [negros], a fin de obviar los desordenes á que están expuestos” and “tendrán libertad el negro y negra casados que llegaren a tener doce hijos vivos...” (26).

30 Dictamen sobre las ventajas que pueden sacarse para el mejor fomento de la Isla de Cuba, cited in Marrero, Cuba, 12:188. Marrero attributes this undated document to 1766.
slave children born there were legitimate. The Jesuits were clearly implementing practices that discouraged out-of-wedlock births.

In the Espíritu Santo records of this period, slightly more than a fourth of all children of color were born outside of wedlock. They were simply recorded as “hijo de” (child of) the mother, with no other annotation of illegitimacy. Only in seventeen cases did both parents appear while the child was not recorded as legitimate. In one such case, the baptismal certificate explicitly stated that an enslaved African father “declaró que sea su hijo natural.” This was a rarity. The term “hijo natural” (natural child) was used only in a few cases where both parents were listed but unwed. More generally, these children were simply listed as “hijo de” both parents.

We shall see in the next chapter the greater usage of the label “hijo natural” during the nineteenth century. It was a designation that went beyond paternal recognition. It had legal implications. Since the medieval era, Castillian law had uses the label exclusively for children born outside of marriage, where no legal or religious impediment prohibited the union of the parents. In designating a child as a “hijo natural,” the father accepted the responsibility and the cost of “subsistance, nurturing,

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31 García Rodríguez, “Presencia Jesuita en la economía de Cuba,” 95. Also note that the marriage rate for the enslaved of this plantation reached an incredible 56% of adults.

32 AES, Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entries 1375, 1445, 1465, 1472, 1493, 1507, 1530, 1608, 1620, 1622, 1626, 1644, 1647, 1743, 1819, 1932, and 2054.

33 AES, libro 6 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entry 1620. The mother in this case was a free black creole.
and education." The child also gained the right to a maximum of one fifth of the paternal estate. Although enslaved men might not have had the ability to fulfill these obligations, free men had to concern themselves with the legal ramifications.

The unwed fathers who did appear in the documents were mostly free men of color. Only four were enslaved, two Africans and two black creoles. And in two of additional records, the fathers were listed in a way that suggests they were white. That is, similar to what was reported for the pre-1762 period and unlike what was typical for pardo and moreno men, no color or status was registered for these men. And in all of the records where the fathers were described by peninsular origin, the honorific title of “Don” was not present. Again, at this time, its use was reserved for the noble class. Thus, the documents only noted that they were “natural de esta [ciudad]” or “natural de Cartagena” (native of this city or native of Cartagena) respectively. With the exception of these two creole men of this category, white men were listed as the legitimate husbands

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34 See for example, Reconocimientos, Legajo 105, exp. 38, 1891.

35 References to the Ley de Toro 11 on this point are found in José Portuondo de Castro, La filación (Havana: np, 1947) 7 and Enrique Gacto Fernández, La filación no legítima en el derecho histórico español (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1969) 81, 131, and 140-141. The process is distinct from the legitimation by gracias al sacar described by Ann Twinam. The former was a procedure controlled by local ecclesiastic authorities and the latter required Crown approval. See Ann Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 16, passim.

36 AES, Libro 8 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 1759-1767, entries 1620, 2054, 1507, 1743, 1448, and 1445 respectively.

37 Confirmed by the absence of “Don” for most fathers listed in a contemporary white registry from a neighboring Havana parish, Archivo de la parroquia de Guadalupe, Libro 5 de bautismos de españoles, Oct. 1763-1765. See Marrero, Cuba, 13: 61-63 for discussion of the limited usage of “Don” amongst Cuban whites of the 1780s.
of parda women. Again, this demonstrates that while limited, interracial marriage remained acceptable.

Beyond the legitimate and "hijos naturales," another category of children also appeared within the baptismal record children "de padres no conocidos" (of unknown parents).38 Seventeen such children were baptized at Espíritu Santo between 1765-1767. Half had the additional notation of "al parecer pardo" (appears mixed) in their registration. This comment did not occur for children who at least were recognized by their mothers nor in cases where the father was reported as white Spaniard. Also no equivalent comment of black appearance was registered. One is left to wonder what motivated the inclusion of this comment.

Parish records from the period do not give any indication of the situation under which these children "de padres desconocidos" were brought before the Church. However, they were generally placed in the care of free women of color, for whom any potential biological relation to the children is impossible to determine. It is interesting to speculate what classification as "hijos de padres desconocidos" meant for children of color in a slave society. Were they simply the abandoned children of free mothers? Or

38No mention of the status of these children is made in Spanish law before the eighteenth century. See D. Federico Puig Peña, "Hijos de Padres Desconocidos," Nueva Enciclopedia Jurídica (Barcelona: Editorial Francisco Seix, 1962) 10: 9-10. However, the Actas del Concilio Provincial de Santo Domingo (1622-1623) mandates that abandoned children be labeled "exposito" and their baptismal records reflect the homes in which they were placed. Exposicion del Ayuntamiento de la Habana al Escmo Senor Ministro de Ultramar acera del establecimiento municipal de las Reales Casas de Beneficiencia y Maternidad (Havana: P.Fernández, 1890) 14-16 and Ondina González, "Abandoment in Havana: The Response of the State and the Church, 1700-1750," paper presented at Latin American Studies Association 2000 meeting, trace eighteenth-century royal, clerical, and elite efforts to found an orphanage for the abandoned children of Havana.
were some the children of enslaved mothers? And, if the latter, was this a mechanism through which their freedom was guaranteed at the price of their further loss of recognized ancestry? Or for that matter, could white women have borne such children without suffering social dishonor? And did their fathers’ status play a role in their abandonment? Although the available data do not begin to address these issues, the abandonment of children of color represented an area with great potential for social boundary crossing. In chapter six of this work, we shall discuss how the institution of the Real Casa de la Maternidad functioned as a site in which the racial classification of abandoned children was frequently obscured.

Cuba’s families of color in this period were composed in a variety of legal and racial forms. Some were determined by marriage, some by the recognition of offspring. Social endogamy remained the general rule, yet other possibilities existed. As in earlier periods, the free joined with the enslaved, the creole with the African, and the white with those of color. One noticeable difference between the marriage sample from 1698 and the baptismal sample above is the small number of relationships between mixed-race women and African men. That situation had not occurred in the earlier seventeenth-century sample of this study, nor the much larger one from de la Fuente. Five baptismal records noted Africans and pardas acknowledging the children they shared. All of the couples were united in legitimate marriage.39

White men and women of color established both consensual and legitimate unions. Interracial marriages between white men and women of color were accepted early

in the period, although they became increasingly restricted. Preapproval of potential brides was required for high-level bureaucrats and military men. Women of color were not viewed as appropriate choices. Some of the early limitations placed on the marriages of military men stem from a 1687 complaint by colonial officials in Santo Domingo, protesting the high numbers of soldiers choosing mulatta wives. The response of the Spanish crown was not to prohibit such unions, but to prevent the advancement of the military men who formalized them. The royal pragmatic on unequal marriage of 1776 further restricted the legitimation of these types of relationships. While this limitation may have caused an increase in illegitimacy rates, it did not necessarily prevent public acknowledgment of interracial families (see chapter seven below).

Yet, at least for urban Havana, Cuba's population reproduced itself largely through the birth of free children. Africans were not yet the greatest source of the group's new members. The majority of its children were also born to legitimate unions. Free pardos united with most frequency. Unions between African slaves were next and followed by unions between free black creoles. These proportions indicate that the distinction used by people of color amongst themselves that can only be understood if status and color are explored in conjunction with one another.

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41 Rout, The African Experience, 140.
1790-1820: Family Formation in the Greatest Period of Slave Importation

It was only after the Spanish liberalization of the colonial trade in 1778, the 1789 “opening” of slave trade to the Spanish Caribbean, and the fall of sugar production in the French colony of Saint Domingue that the majority of enslaved Africans were brought to Cuba.42 Demand for slave labor increased dramatically after 1795, as indicated by a sharp rise in slave prices.43 Between 1790 and 1820, an estimated 325,000 African arrived on the island.44 By 1817, the enslaved population stood at 225,121 and had increased proportionally to 38.9% of the island’s total.45 Over the course of the sixty odd years between 1790 and 1850, Cuba’s slave trade far exceeded that of the previous three centuries and yet it would rise and fall with the demands of Cuba’s sugar economy and the vicissitudes of international politics. The trade was officially ended by treaty between Spain and Britain in 1820, although a substantial illegal trade continued at least through 1866.46

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42Aimes, History of Slavery in Cuba, 49; Knight, Slave Society in Cuba, 11; and David R. Murray, Odious Commerce: 10-13.


45The statistics stated by both Alexander von Humbolt and Ramon de la Sagra are rectified and cited in Kiple, Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 5, passim. Again, Johnson urges caution with the estimates of the white population as white military men were probably excluded from the count, Social Transformation, 24.

46The most extensive treatments of the clandestine trade are found in Aimes, A History of Slavery and José Luciano Franco, Comercio clandestino de esclavos (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1996, original 1980).
The nature of Cuban slavery changed in conjunction with the greater number of imported Africans. In anticipation of an accelerated importation of Africans into Spanish America, the Spanish government attempted to reformulate the regulations on slave life.\textsuperscript{47} These regulations were collected into one document, unofficially known as the \textit{Código negro español}, and circulated in Spain by a \textit{real cédula} in 1789. Its was intended to replace the scattered and inconsistent regulations that had controlled slavery previously. In the new law’s preamble, the Spanish Crown revealed that it was motivated by concern for the welfare of its enslaved subjects.

In fourteen chapters, the \textit{Código negro} set minimal standards for many aspects of slave education, treatment, and labor. Enforcement of the regulations became the responsibility of the newly created office of the \textit{Procurador Síndico}, or the protector of the enslaved. The feature of the legislation that was most germane to the topic of reproduction was its recommendation that slave owners purposely hinder the establishment and continuation of illicit sexual relations amongst enslaved people. However, despite the Crown’s reformist intentions, Cuban planters solicited and won suspension of the new law’s implementation.\textsuperscript{48} Real reform would have to wait until 1842, when Spain’s then more liberal government implemented legislation that placed concern for the treatment of the enslaved above planter interests.\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47]Knight, \textit{Slave Society in Cuba}, 124-125.
\end{footnotes}
The expansions of sugar production and the slave trade went hand in hand. Annual sugar exports almost tripled between 1790 and 1820, moving from 77,895 to 215,953 boxes. The forced arrival of Africans in Havana increased approximately six fold in the same period, from 2,534 in 1790 to 15,147 in 1820.\textsuperscript{50} Great ingenios developed with large slave labor forces, many of more than 200 men. The labor regime for slaves engaged in sugar production became much more intense in comparison to urban and other agricultural activities. They worked at clearing forests for new fields and fire wood, and planted, harvested, and milled the cane. The processing of the cane often involved dangerous night-time labor in order to make the sugar before the fermentation that could rapidly set in. The living arrangements for enslaved people on sugar plantations were changed to facilitate increased productivity. Instead of small bohios, or huts for a few individuals or families. Enslaved people were housed in larger collectives, barracónes.\textsuperscript{51}

Yet, despite the intensified labor regime associated with sugar production, the Cuban utilization of its enslaved population remained diverse. In estimated averages over this period, only twenty-five percent of enslaved people were confined to sugar ingenios. Another twenty-five percent worked on coffee plantations. An equal percentage were involved in other agricultural efforts (including tobacco). And the remainder were employed in urban occupations.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{51}Moreno Fraginals, \textit{El ingenio}.

\textsuperscript{52}Bergad, García, and Barcia, \textit{The Cuban Slave Market}, 27.
Again, information on the familial experiences of enslaved people in this period is rather limited. What little data exist indicate that their sex ratio continued to be severely unbalanced. In 1790, men were 66.25% of African entrants. In 1798, the percentage peaked at 85.73%. However, by 1815, the percentage of male entrants returned to 66.14%. The Cuban preference for male laborers is reflected in the consistently higher prices paid for male slaves in the early nineteenth century. This imbalance only changed with the end of legal slave imports in 1820. The disproportionate masculinity of the enslaved population was important for its potential effect on the group’s overall reproductive capacity. The crude birth rate (births per thousand of the total population) will naturally decrease as the sex ratio increases.

An additional factor in the sex-ratio imbalance amongst imported Africans was the changing international control of the slave trade. It was not until after 1792 that Spanish traders directly entered the market. Before that time the asientos had been in foreign hands. Spanish traders began their participation relatively slowly. Initially, the average number of slaves per voyage remained low. After 1809, Spaniards re-oriented themselves toward African ports and increased the number of Africans per voyage. They eventually carried the second highest total, after the Portuguese. The slave trade to Cuba also had both intra-Caribbean and African origins. Klein refers to this situation as causing “special distortions which should be taken into account,” when examining the sex


ratio. He concludes that while the African trade was 68.8% male in the period between 1790 and 1820, the intra-Caribbean trade was even more imbalanced. It stood at 79.0% male.56

Yet, other scholars suggest that such statistics should be used with caution. Eltis and Engerman view the sex-ratio issue as over blown. After all, slave populations in North America achieved reproductive success despite the same arriving sex ratios for Africans. Eltis and Engerman also demonstrate that sex ratio within the transatlantic slave trade did not differ greatly from that of the voluntary immigrant groups who came the Americas. For example, men represented 63.1 percent of the non-indentured persons coming from Britain between 1773 and 1776. For German indentured servants arriving between 1745 and 1831, men were 67.1 percent of the total.57 And, as mentioned above, the sex ratio calculated from a small sample of seventeenth-century Cuban sources differed little from a sample from early nineteenth century sources.

Reproductive success amongst enslaved populations was more closely bound to mortality rates. Interestingly, while overwhelming anecdotal evidence of high mortality rates exists for men enslaved in Cuba’s sugar plantations, less certainty exists for enslaved women and men laboring in other areas. Demographic historian Jack Eblen


suggests that these factors should lead to a reconsideration of natural increase in Cuba’s population of color.\textsuperscript{58}

At the level of economic usage, Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals’ review of the inventories of fourteen “new-style” sugar plantations existing between 1798 and 1822 revealed an average six to one ratio in the presence of enslaved men to women.\textsuperscript{59} However, this ratio was approximately equal to what similar data revealed a century and a half earlier.\textsuperscript{60} Although this evidence is very restricted, it would suggest that despite increased slave importation rates in the period, changes to their sex ratio were not significant with respect to other modifications in the reproductive experiences of the enslaved population.

The increased proportion of Africans to creoles within the enslaved population may have had greater impact on reproduction. Moreno Fraginals calculates that plantation labor was almost 96\% African in the three decades between 1791 and 1822.\textsuperscript{61} These high proportions probably had a sizeable, negative impact on fertility. In other Caribbean countries, enslaved African women demonstrated much lower fertility rates than creole women due to the trauma of forced adaption to a new environment, an intense labor regimen, and the contraceptive influence of their traditionally longer practice of


\textsuperscript{59}Moreno Fraginals, \textit{El ingenio}, 2:39.

\textsuperscript{60}See chapter 2 page 65 above.

\textsuperscript{61}Moreno Fraginals, \textit{El ingenio}, 2: 86.
infant lactation. These observations support the image of minimal reproduction on Cuba’s sugar plantation in this period. However, to draw a more comprehensive picture of Cuban slavery one has to look beyond the sugar plantations.

Although we have to depart from the analysis of baptismal records for a moment, the marriage rate again provides some comparative indication of the social differences between Cuba’s various status groups. The data demonstrate that often, but not in every region, marriage rates had begun to differ markedly with respect to color and status (see Table 3-4 below).

Table 3-4 Average Marriage Rates by Race and Region, 1791-1796

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bahía Honda</th>
<th>Jesús, María y José</th>
<th>Jibacoa</th>
<th>Yaguaramas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Mulattoes</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Black</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enslaved</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated figures reported in Archivo General de Indias, Cuba, Legajo 1470.

For example, between 1792 and 1795, the averages of marriage rates from the extramural Havana district of Jesús, María y José, a neighborhood adjoining the one served by the parish of Espíritu Santo, were fairly consistent for the respective groups of people of color. Whites from that area demonstrated slightly higher marriage rates. However, in the tobacco-producing district of Bahía Honda west of Havana, marriage rates for Whites were much greater than those for people of color. Moreover, there was much greater

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variation among the latter groups. The central Cuban, cattle-raising district of Yaguaramas also reported such variation. However, in this case, free Mulattoes recorded the greatest average marriage rate. Free Blacks in the district of Jibacoa, an eastern region of Havana province that was turning more toward sugar production, surpassed the other groups in their average rate of marriage. The most obvious trend suggested by this information was a significant decline in the marriage rates of the enslaved population.63

Later, island-wide data also indicated that, in fact, the rates among free people of color experienced an even more noticeable slump. The 1827 census demonstrates that one marriage occurred for every 194 Cuban, one for every 166 Whites, one for every 236 free Mulattoes, one for every 347 free Blacks, and one for every 207 slaves in that year. Comparably, in France there one marriage for 134 people, in Britain one to 133; and in the Netherlands one to 131.64 Historian Herbert Klein explains the differing marriage rates between the free people of color and the enslaved with the suggestion that “the high slave marriage rate as contrasted to that of the free colored population is apparently due to the fact that the slave population was accountable to a master, and through him to the local church, and was therefore more completely under the influence of the local parish

63These average rates were calculated from a series of population reports (padrones) that noted civil status submitted by each district. These reports were originally sent to Cuba’s Captain General and then forwarded to crown officials in Spain. The originals are now located at the Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville, Spain. Copies are located in the Levi Marrero Collection of Florida International University Libraries, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1470. For Bahia Honda, the reporting years were 1791-1795. For Jibacoa, the years were 1791, 1792, and 1794. For Yaguaramas, the years were 1791, 1792, 1794, 1795, and 1796. I thank Sherry Johnson for making these data available. These averages were calculated to minimize significant variations in the original data that were presumably caused migration and reporting inaccuracies.

64Sagra, Historia económico-política, 24.
priest.”  Franklin Knight refines this interpretation by returning to the contrast between urban and rural experiences of slavery. In his analysis, clerical influence was likely greatest on those enslaved person held by the older, urban elite who had not become heavily invested in agricultural production. The concentration of priests in Havana and other cities allowed these owners to provide a religious influence on their enslaved. Those in rural settings did not enjoy such access.

These explanations can be supplemented by three additional factors in low marriage rates amongst people of color. If the above statistics on the number of marriages within a given population are determined by the total size of the specific population categories, then they are useful only if the respective sex ratios are comparable. Otherwise, distortion of the sex ratios would leave a significant proportion of these populations without the ability to find marriageable partners (see Table 3-5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Free Pardo</th>
<th>Free Black</th>
<th>Pardo Slave</th>
<th>Black Slave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>130,519</td>
<td>30,512</td>
<td>28,373</td>
<td>17,803</td>
<td>106,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>109,311</td>
<td>29,170</td>
<td>26,003</td>
<td>14,499</td>
<td>60,322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However with 53,215 more men than women amongst people of color, marriage remained unobtainable for many, but not most enslaved men. This was especially true in an era when divorce was not permissible. Nevertheless, high mortality rates amongst

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65Klein, *Slavery in the Americas*, 96 and 97.

66Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 106.
enslaved men and the possibility of relationships outside of marriage increased the potential for pairing over the course of an individual’s lifecycle.

Yet, again the demographics provide only part of the picture. Cost was another factor. Many free people of color simply may not have had the ability to pay for the sacraments. Owners covered the cost of marriage for enslaved people that free people of color were not able to afford. Additionally, the new restrictions on interracial marriages created by a royal pragmatic of 1778 and clarified in 1805 meant that it became increasingly difficult to legitimate such unions. Verena Stolcke remains vague on the date by which the policy was actually enforced. Her review of 199 petitions, both for and against such marriages, begins in 1810. She finds primarily cases brought through parental objection prior to the 1830s. Earlier examples have been encountered in a variety of sources. Despite, such policies, interracial relationships between white men and women of color continued to be prevalent. This only added to the number of single adults within the population and increased the rates of illegitimacy. So if, for example, in the case of retired soldier Victor Pérez, whose 1811 petition for a license to marry the

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68Allusion to a 1791 case is found in Richard Konetzke, ed. *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1810*. 3 vols (Madrid, 1953-62): III:2 p. 695. Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio*, 1:36 refers to a 1802 case, documented in the Archivo General de Indias, Sección Cuba, legajo 11, expediente 1956. Also, two cases from the 1780s reveal inconclusive accusations of mixed-race heritage in support of parental objections to marriage. See ANC, Fondo Audiencia de Santo Domingo, Leg. 101 no. 8, 1781 and Leg. 26 no. 6, 1787.
*morena* Guadalupe Carrión was denied, the relationship did not necessarily end. It may have continued in illicit form.69

Again, relations composed of black men and white women were rare, but existent. One example of such a relationship is found in the requests to permit interracial marriage. In one 1840 request, free *pardo* Antonio Soto acknowledged that his ability to marry a *parda* woman was compromised by the fact that his 1805 birth certificate falsely listed him as white. Since his mother was white and his father remained unnamed, Antonio had lived with white status for 35 years. But the restrictions on interracial marriage forced a change. In a report on the background and conduct of the mother and son, the local priest stated that he does not personally know María Paula Soto, but according to other witnesses,

...si que pertenece a la clase de blancos plebeyos, y que el hijo de ella que ha promovido estas diligencias es el resultado de su unión con un hombre de color como lo indica su fisonomía, y por consiguiente que siempre ha sido y es reputado por mulato (yes, she does belong to the class of poor whites and her son, who opened this investigation, is the result of her union with a man of color as indicated by his phenotype and, for this reason, has been and is reputed to be mulatto).70

Similar to Antonio Soto’s situation, another, more famous example of the union of men of color and white women is seen the circumstances surrounding the birth and childhood of the poet Plácido, or Gabriel de la Concepcion Valdés. He was the son of a mulatto wigmaker, Diego Ferrer Matoso and a Spanish ballerina from Burgos. Plácido

69ANC, Fondo Asuntos Politicos, Leg. 213 no. 118, 1811. No resolution of the petition is present in the record. More detailed discussion of interracial relationships is found in chapter 6 of this study.

70ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg. 906 no. 31309, 1840.
was born out of wedlock in March 1809 and baptized at the Real Casa de Maternidad. In this practice, he receive honorary legitimacy, honorary whiteness, and the last name Valdés. After a few days he was retrieved by his father, with whom he lived until at least age ten. These cases provide some indication of the alternate family forms constructed under the social pressure to obscure interracial relationships from the legal record.

The Testimonial Evidence

Beyond the collective, statistical views of Cuban slave life during this period of intensification, we are fortunate to possess the only extant autobiography written by a Latin American slave. The life of Juan Francisco Manzano provides insights into some of the reproductive possibilities open to the enslaved people of Cuba in this period. However, his life was exceptional in his literary achievements and for the important connections he forged with Havana’s most famous, contemporary intellectuals.

Manzano was born in either 1793 or 1797 on the outskirts of Havana to a married, creole couple. Although they were both enslaved, Manzano recalled his parents’ privileged status with pride. His father, Toribio de Castro, had been trained as a tailor, and his mother, María del Pilar, was a respected lady’s maid. Both were owned by the wealth planter family of the marquess Doña Beatriz Justiz de Santa Ana de Manzano.

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73 On the discrepancy in Manzano’s date of birth, see Ivan Schulman, introduction to Manzano, *The Autobiography of a Slave*. 
Like much of the planter elite of that period, the marquess maintained homes both in Havana and on a rural plantation. For this reason, the family lived both in the capital and in rural Matanzas. Manzano notes that his parents’ marriage was not typical among his mother’s cohort of enslaved female domestics. The others had married free men of color, gained their freedom, and subsequently resided in the cities of Havana or Matanzas. Manzano suggests that his parents were atypical for marrying another enslaved person owned by the same master.  

Despite the active presence of both his paternal grandfather and father in the earliest stages of his life, instead of being baptized his father’s name, Manzano was given the surname of his mistress’s husband. This act began the many incidences in which the slaveowner would usurp his father’s parental authority. In her old age, the marquess pampered the young Manzano. No other person was permitted to discipline him. After one occasion in which his father attempted to do so, the marquess cautioned that she retained the full authority of the “mother” and the father’s rights were limited. She allowed Manzano to attend school at the home of his godmother, Doña Trinidad de Zayas. In this way, he eventually obtained a level of literacy few slaves of the time could even imagine.  

As far as Manzano was aware, his mother had five additional pregnancies after his birth. Two resulted in still births. One sister died in infancy. A younger brother and a

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pair of twins, a boy and girl, survived into adulthood. These numbers reflect both a low birth rate and a high rate of infant mortality. Although it is difficult to generalize from one case, this family’s case is insightful. Considering the family’s privileged position within the institution of slavery, similar measurements amongst their fellow slaves in less fortunate situations would almost certainly compare less favorably.

Because of their owner’s generosity, Manzano’s twin siblings were born free. This generosity was also extended to Manzano’s parents in a more limited form. At his birth, Doña Beatriz stipulated the price at which they eventually might purchase their freedom, expecting 300 pesos each. In setting this price of self-purchase, or coartación, it became more difficult to separate the couple through sale. However, this status did not extend to the children already born enslaved. Manzano was never guaranteed continued contact with his parent. Upon Doña Beatriz’s death, Manzano was willed to his godmother and separated from his family. However, he would eventually return to live with his parents after five years.

In fact, the family’s experience was marked by frequent transitions between rural and urban environments, especially as their owner traveled between city and plantation homes. Manzano experienced these transitions more deeply than did other members of his family. As he matured, he was frequently ripped from the relative comfort of the city

77Manzano, *Autobiography*, 44.
and sent to labor in the fields as punishment for even the slightest transgression.

Manzano explained the disturbance to his family caused in one of these occasions.

...A question, a hundred threats, the appearance of the plantation clothing, a sugar mill so dreaded in those days because of its overseer...whose name alone caused terror in the house when it was used as a threat—all of that heaped onto my scarce sixteen-year-old shoulders so that I did not know how to how to respond except to plead and cry...they took me to my prison cell. I was there four days and nights, with no end to my arrest in sight...During this whole time I ate only what my brother and some other boy slipped under the door. Once outside, I was dressed in my plantation workers' clothes...I awaited the moment when we would all be gathered together with all the luggage to set out by sea for Matanzas. From the foot of the stairway, my brother stared at me with teary, red eyes. Under his arm he held one of my old capes and his little straw hat. He had not stopped crying since he found out about my fate. We loved each other so much that he never ate half an orange without my taking the other half. I would do likewise. We used to eat, play, run errands, and sleep together. Thus this union, bound by the indissoluble bonds of fraternal love, was broken. Not just for a few hours as on other occasions, but for much more than I or anyone else dared imagine. 79

This occurrence reaffirms just how dependent slave families were on the actions of their owners. Both in life and death owners controlled their destiny. These owners were free to disrupt these families at any moment. Some sufficiently valued family unity not to do so, other were not as considerate.

Additional insights into nature of earlier nineteenth-century slavery are found in the writings of one of the leading spokespersons for the Cuban bourgeoisie, Francisco de Arango y Parreño (1765-1839). He provides some to the most developed considerations of this area. Arango was a major proponent of large slave imports, viewing slavery as essential for the expansion of Cuba's export economy. As Spain negotiated with Britain for the termination of its slave trade, Arango vehemently argued in opposition. Much of his argument rested on a positive comparison of the nature of Cuban slavery in contrast to

79Manzano, Autobiography, 77.
practices found in the British Caribbean. He viewed the Cuban form as emphasizing a range of cultural races, between the advanced white and the "uncultured" African. For Arango, such distinctions were absent in the English system. The latter was therefore more brutal and contrary to natural laws. By contrast, according to Arango, slavery in Cuba was openly acknowledged as a necessary evil with built-in forms of amelioration. The forcibly-imported Africans would eventually assimilate into Cuban society while continuing to contribute their labor. All parties benefitted from this arrangement, the slave by receiving access to true society and Christianity and Cuba for maintaining a reliable supply of labor.\(^8_0\)

While Arango positively compared Cuban slavery to that of the British Caribbean, he also criticized Cuban practices which endangered what he perceived as the necessary supply of slave labor. He was troubled by policies which liberally fostered freedom, even for those Africans he labeled as "unfit." He suggested that while their descendants might one day become culturally prepared for such liberty, some Africans never would. Too readily achieved freedom would encourage an increase in the free population of color that was much less useful for the agricultural labor that drove the early nineteenth-century Cuban economy.\(^8_1\)

Arango was also concerned with the slave population's inability to reproduce itself, blaming this largely on an imbalanced sex ratio. He saw rural slave owners placing too great an emphasis on the purchase of men. Women were less desirable agricultural


\(^8_1\)Francisco Arango y Parreño, *Obras*, 2:162.
laborers. Arango even suggests that this difference was due to Catholic beliefs about the domesticity of women.\textsuperscript{82} Between 1790 and 1820, only twenty-nine percent of enslaved persons arriving at the port of Havana were female.\textsuperscript{83} In any case, the Africans forcibly brought to Cuba were disproportionately male as noted before. Indeed, though the percentage varied over the course of the nineteenth century, the male predominance never wavered.

**Conclusion**

After 1761, Cuban society experienced an economic awakening. New priorities were placed into defense and the development of commerce. Population growth coincided with these efforts. Yet, the social transformations that accompanied them were not immediate. Instead, they evolved very slowly. With respect to race relations, the importation of enslaved Africans slowly accelerated and these Africans were initially inserted into the pre-existing patterns of the slave system. For the period between 1762 and 1790, they labored in diverse settings. The harsh labor regime of the sugar plantation did not dominate their experiences. Indeed, slavery was constructed in such a way that still allowed enslaved people to develop family lives, as they entered marriages and bore children. There is some evidence to suggest that the formation of their families even received encouragement from slaveowners.

\textsuperscript{82}Francisco Arango y Parreño, *Obras*, 2:166.

Just as with earlier periods, family formation amongst people of color was not just that undertaken separately by slaves and free people. Nor was it solely a result of brutal sexual violence perpetuated on women of color by white men. All of these forms were present and marital endogamy remained the norm. However, these forms were also augmented by acts that crossed the normal social boundaries of status and color. Families of color were defined by their varied structure. Most were legitimate. In others, fathers formally acknowledged their offspring. And in a minority, children received no legal recognition of paternity. Beyond color and status, the statistics indicate that these families differed little from their white counterparts.

This situation would change dramatically after 1790. The importation of enslaved Africans accelerated rapidly. The labor regime to which they were subjected also intensified as sugar production experienced a “boom.” Unfortunately, for this period, this study has been unable to obtain the data required to consider the reproductive potential of Cuba’s population of color at the micro level. We are still left with only macro-level census data and anecdotal evidence. On a whole, this period was marked by declining attention to slave families by Crown and colonial officials. Their attention was increasingly directed toward the suppression of potential separatist efforts and toward expansion of agricultural production, especially sugar.

The creation of new plantations was a labor intensive process, involving the difficult tasks of land clearing and infrastructure construction. Rural slaveowners preferred African men for such labor and were less concerned with the conjugal relations of their charges. In the earlier periods, attention toward slave families had been derived from two considerations: a knowledge that family could foster less rebelliousness and a
sincere Christian conviction in spiritual importance of marriage. Additionally, in earlier eras, the division between town and countryside had not been as great. Thus, the traditional sex ratio imbalance in favor of women in urban, domestic occupations and in favor of men in agriculture had been less significant. As rural production pushed further into the interior and away from the urban centers, enslaved people had fewer possibilities of establishing relations that crossed these distances.

However, several critical questions still remain. For example, in what settings did the African women imported into Cuba labor? Although they represented a significant proportion of African arrivals, 20 to 35%, the areas into which their labor were committed have not been adequately documented. What proportion entered sugar production versus the proportions who were designated for less severe labor regimes. In either case, were these women able to successfully reproduce? Everyone agrees that after 1790 there was an intensification of the slavery with increased attention to sugar production. However, the harshness achieved in this domain over the subsequent thirty years cannot be used to define the entire experience of Cuban slavery or the reproductive experiences of people of color within it.
CHAPTER 4
SLAVERY AND FAMILY FORMATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ILLEGAL SLAVE TRADE, 1820-1867

Statistical Changes

1820 marked another important transition in the nature of Cuban slavery. As of May 1820, the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1817 criminalized the importation of enslaved Africans into Cuba. The British had successfully pressured the Spanish Crown, again under the absolutist rule of Ferdinand VII, to move toward modern labor relations with this act. The treaty’s signatories hoped that slavery itself would gradually fade into insignificance and end without a constant resupply. However, the treaty was implemented without adequate means of enforcement by Spanish colonial officials. Cuban slave imports continued clandestinely, supplying the labor for the expanding economy.¹

This economic boom continued to be driven by ever-increasing sugar export production. While there were 400 sugar plantations on the island in 1800, according to

¹Franco, Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos; Corwin, Spain and Abolition of Slavery in Cuba (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967); and Murray, Odious Commerce.
the 1857 census that figured had multiplied almost four times to 1,570. Feeding this growth, the slave trade eventually even surpassed its pre-1820 levels by 1827 and Cuban owners adjusted to the more restricted environment. They found less open, secretive, and corrupt methods to bypass the law. Their methods became widely known within the planter class. Illegally imported Africans remained available to this set. One American assistant on a Cuban plantation casually recalled the effort to secretly obtain illegal Africans. In November 1821, he received news of a slaver off the coast of Matanzas and quickly went to speculate on new slaves. To his disappointment, by the time he arrived, others had purchased the lot.

In the period between 1811 and 1867 inclusively, David Eltis estimates that approximately 637,700 Africans were imported into Cuba. In an earlier study of the slave trade, Phillip Curtin had estimated that the greatest import volume occurred during the period between 1827 and 1840, with the period between 1851 and 1860 also having noticeable high imports. Eltis refines this time frame to indicate that the highest import levels occurred just after the 1817 treaty but before the 1820 date determined for termination of the trade. The period between 1836 and 1840 also shows another dramatic

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increase in imports. And a final, brief upswing occurred between 1856 and 1860. After
1860, import levels experienced a dramatic decline.\(^6\) With the large importation of
Africans, the enslaved population increased by sixty-five percent between 1817 and 1861
from a total of 225,121 to 370,553.\(^7\)

However, the question remains as to how this illegal slave importation influenced
reproduction for Cuba’s people of color. Most obviously, the illegal slave trade allowed
for the maintenance of a high proportion of Africans within that population. The
proportion of Africans to creoles likely contributed to the low fertility rates of sugar
plantations. Nineteenth-century Cuban sugar plantations had large concentrations of
Africans prior to 1868 and the end of the illegal slave trade. The figures of Moreno
Fraginals already presented above for the period between 1791 and 1822 revealed
populations who were 96% African. This figured declined to an average of 53% between
1827 and 1867.\(^8\) Even this lower percentage may have had a detrimental effect on birth
rates. Brute natality levels on sugar plantations stood at 19% and 28%, respectively for
the periods 1835 to 1841 and 1856 to 1860.\(^9\) Although these numbers reveal significant
improvement over time, they are exceedingly low in comparison to the high fertility rates


\(^7\)Kiple, Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 5-7, 34-37, 63. Cuban historian Juan Pérez de la
Riva offers higher estimates of the nineteenth-century slave trade, suggesting the arrival
of 1,110,000 Africans. See his “El monto de la inmigración forzada en el siglo XIX.”
Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí. Año 65, 3ra época, v. 16, n. 1 (Jan.-April

\(^8\)Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio, 2: 86.

\(^9\)Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio, 2: 88.
that characterized the pre-colonial west-African populations from which these enslaved people were sent.\textsuperscript{10}

The illegal slave trade allowed for the continuation of the sex ratio imbalance within the enslaved population. The sex ratio within the population of Africans still being illegally imported into Cuba after 1820 can be inferred from the documentation related to Africans “rescued” from slaving ships. In the wake of the 1817 trade-abolition treaty, a new method of managing the presence of such Africans was needed. By 1825 Captain General Antonio Vives had begun to shape the policy under which these \textit{emancipados} would find an appropriate place in Cuban society. Under this elaborate system, they would eventually gain their freedom following seven years of “tutelage.” At the end of that period, they were to receive their accumulated wages.\textsuperscript{11}

Corruption plagued this system almost from its inception, and \textit{emancipados} were often sold with almost complete disregard for the law. They often became the objects of back-door arrangements between colonial officials and interested buyers.\textsuperscript{12} Nevertheless, until the removal of the type of classification in 1864, the presence of the 26,026 \textit{emancipados} forced into Cuba became an important new feature on the social


\textsuperscript{12}Roldán De Montaúd, “Origen, Evolución y Supresión” and Knight, \textit{Slave Society}, 29, 102-103.
landscape. In addition to their importance in transforming the institution of slavery, as we will see below, they also played a role in the reproduction of the Afro-Cuban population. However, amongst the *emancipados*, in 1831 65.27% were male. In the next decade, this statistic worsened to 77.25%.

Again, the largest discrepancies in the sex ratio were found on sugar plantations and in the sugar-producing regions. For example, in 1846 the sugar provinces of Matanzas, Cárdenas, and Mariel, men were 63.4%, 66.8%, and 61.2% respectively, of the populations for people of color in their reproductive ages between 16 and 40. A traveler’s observation adds to these official statistics. An Englishman visiting three sugar estates in provincial Havana in 1849 noted, “the total number of females on the three estates we visited amounted to 108; the total number of men, 243.” Thus, the male proportion was 69.8%.

Here again, the caution suggested by Eltis and Engerman appears valid. These figures do not differ greatly from contemporary European immigrant groups. Moreover, the image of the sex ratio imbalance becomes more complex based on additional data. If one examines contemporary baptismal data from the rural town of Placetas, they reveal increased parity in the sex ratio of newly-baptized Africans, those who probably escaped

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17 See chapter 3.
official oversight and categorization as *emancipados*. Forty-five percent of the 493 Africans baptized there in the period between 1817 and 1886 were women.\(^\text{18}\) Similar patterns were found in an urban setting. Returning to the baptismal records of the Havana parish of Espíritu Santo, ten-year interval samples taken between 1847 and 1877 reveal great fluctuation in the sex ratio of newly-baptized arrivals. African women were 44%, 55%, and 40% of adult slave baptisms, respectively for the years 1847, 1857, and 1867.\(^\text{19}\) What is interesting here is that there was no significant difference between the rural and urban proportions. A difference may have been expected based on the greater use of women in domestic employment in urban areas. One is left to speculate if African men were kept in urban Havana in larger than expected numbers or perhaps they were baptized before sale to more rural, agricultural settings?

Despite the continued contraband trade in Africans, the continuing sex ratio imbalance, and their negative effect on fertility, there is some indication that during the nineteenth century both creole slave and free colored populations of Cuba experienced natural increases. First we return to the estimates offered by historical demographer Jack Ericson Eblen. After isolating the effects of the slave trade and manumission, he has used model life tables to determine that Afro-Cuban reproductive rates were very similar to those of African Americans in the same period.\(^\text{20}\) While his insights are suggestive,

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\(^{19}\) AES, bautismos de pardos y morenos, libros 48, 49, 52, and 54.

\(^{20}\) Eblen, “On the Natural Increase of Slave Populations.”
they should be used with caution. They only apply to the creole population and continue to accept the low natality and high mortality rates for Africans. Second, Kenneth Kiple, another scholar of the demographics of people of color in the Caribbean, also concedes that Cuban slaves not living on sugar plantations and free blacks and mulattoes probably achieved levels of natural increase at least for the two periods 1855 to 1868 and 1878 to 1895. However, he suggests that much of this increase was hidden by a "a certain amount of 'whitening' of the population." Finally, Moreno Fraginals similarly accepts that after 1860, the birth rate amongst the enslaved would finally surpass the mortality rate, a situation that was almost coincident with the true termination of Cuba's slave trade.

**Shifting Policies and Practices**

To some extent, additional colonial oversight and increased owner regard for the health of the enslaved may have contributed to any such gradual improvements. By the early nineteenth century, the Spanish crown had recognized the potential end of the slave trade to Cuba and realized the expedience of natural replacement. It encouraged the placement of a greater number of African women on sugar plantations until they were married,

...letting the owners know that aside from thus accomplishing a duty of justice and conscience, there would result for them the benefit of increasing the number of their slaves and improving their species, without the constant disbursement of

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their capital in buying *bozal* [newly arriving Africans] Negroes to replace those who die.\(^{23}\)

Here, the crown indicates a desire to maintain the institution of slavery. However, in its view, the process was not to rest with the continued import of Africans, but would survive through the improved treatment of the existing slave population. The Cuban *Reglamento de esclavos de 1842* implemented many of the protective procedures that the Crown had originally intended to establish in the late eighteenth century. It regulated the feeding, clothing, and labor regimen of the enslaved population, with special attention to infants and other children. Article 9 mandated a type of daycare for these children, with older women minding them while their mothers worked. Article 10 required the mothers of sick children to be relieved of their labor so that they could attend more directly to their young.\(^{24}\)

Calling again on the comments of Francisco Arango y Parreño, he demonstrated his belief in natural reproduction as a substitute for the slave trade by encouraging child-bearing amongst his slaves. He proudly spoke of the nearly balanced sex ratio achieved at his La Ninfa sugar plantation in 1829. One hundred and twenty-eight female laborers worked alongside 154 men. Women represented the majority of cane cutters, with only two men out of a team of seventy. Such proportion offered better opportunities for these enslaved people to find sexual partners and bear children. Arango reported this plantation

\(^{23}\) Hall, *Social Control*, 26, citing a royal order of April 22 1804.

had some measure of success, with 58 births of enslaved children.\textsuperscript{25} However, this evidence remains only anecdotal. The absence of additional time-series data on this plantation's total population makes it impossible to determine if this strategy continued to bear positive results in the long run.

Other Cuban administrators and planters also began to accept that the slave trade would eventually cease. They turned to more pro-natal policies and improved health care to attempt to maintain the size of the enslaved population. Women were encourage to bear more children with promises of freedom after the healthy birth of a specified number of children. An American touring the island in 1829, Abiel Abbot, noted a shift in planter concern for the reproduction of their enslaved populations.

As difficulties are thrown more and more in the way of importation of slaves from Africa, a greater attention is paid to pregnant females, to preserve the stock of the plantation. I trust there is with many, I know there is with some, a commiseration of female slaves in that delicate condition. They are exempt from labor for a month before and after the birth, to nurse themselves and the child, and have hours of the day for months after for the same purpose, during which others are at work.\textsuperscript{26}

In his visit to a large sugar plantation, Abbot found thirty creole children born to the labor force of 170 enslaved workers. Continuing on to a coffee estate, he was told that the births of six healthy children would earn an enslaved woman freedom from labor and her maintenance on the estate.\textsuperscript{27} The potential grant of freedom after six children was a

\textsuperscript{25}1829 plantation inventory reprinted in Moreno Fraginals, \textit{El ingenio}, 2:16-17. Paquette, \textit{Sugar is Made with Blood}, 59, citing Arango, \textit{Obras}, 2:238-41, incorrectly does not subtract the number of children in reaching the number of the adult work force.

\textsuperscript{26}Abiel Abbot, \textit{Letters Written in the Interior of Cuba} (Boston: Bowles and Dearborn, 1829): 41.

\textsuperscript{27}Abbot, \textit{Letters}, 42 and 142.
significant reduction from the twelve required of royal slaves in the middle of the
eighteenth century.28

For the first time, observations of plantation life made explicit mention of
“hospitals” that nursed ill slaves back to healthy conditions. In his 1821 diaries, Joseph
Godwin, the American manager of a Cuban plantation, expressed true concern for the
health of his enslaved workers. On several occasions, he noted the medical attention they
received. Additionally, both Godwin and the plantation owner were especially concerned
that enslaved women bear healthy children.29

Captain-general Gerónimo Valdés (1841-1843) encouraged the correction of sex
ratio imbalances in rural areas and improved treatment of enslaved infants and pregnant
women.30 This type of concern was also found in an 1862 plantation manual that
suggested that immediately following childbirth, enslaved mothers should receive a forty
to fifty-day break from arduous tasks.31 And in 1865, Cuban planter José Luis Alfonso,
one of the most prominent members of his class, boasted that one of his sugar plantations
had had twenty-nine marriages that year. He explained that this success was due to
"Christian persuasion" and a prohibition on extramarital sex caused by forcing "que

28Reglamento para el gobierno militar, político, y económico de la Compañía de
Artillería compuesto de negros de S.M. y sus familias (Havana, 1768), reprinted in El

29Joseph Goodwin, Diary.

30Paquette, Sugar is Made with Blood, 149.

31Cartilla práctica del manejo de ingenios ó fincas destinados á producir azúcar
(Irun, 1862) 82-83, cited in Paquette, Sugar is Made with Blood, 59-60.
duerman juntas y encerradas en un gran salón todas las negras jóvenes" (young women to sleep together, locked in the same large room).³²

A European traveler to Cuba in the middle of the nineteenth century also described a few instances of successful slave families in the countryside. Fredricka Bremer wrote of one such couple. She spoke with a newly-wed female domestic. "Cecilia is only lately married to a young man of her own color; she is happy in her marriage and happy as the slave of good owners."³³ She also saw some of the young children born on the plantation. She acknowledged that, while they were not as numerous as on American plantations, they were received with love and care.

The little ones are not here familiar and merry as they are on the plantation in America; they do not stretch out their little hands for a friendly salutation; they look at the white man with suspicious glances—they are shy; but the very little Bambinos, which are quite naked, fat, and plump, as shiny as black, or black-brown silk, dance upon their mothers’ knees, generally with a blue or red string of beads around the loins, and another around the neck; they are the prettiest little things one ever saw...³⁴

On the selection of mates within the plantation, Bremer found little stability. "Men and women live together, and part again according to fancy or whim. If a couple, after having lived together for some time, grow weary of each other, then one will give the other some cause of displeasure, and they separate. In case of any noisy quarrel, the majoral is at hand with his whip to establish peace."³⁵ If such instability were

³²Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio*, 2: 44.


³⁴Bremer, *The Homes of the New World*, 335.

³⁵Bremer, *The Homes of the New World*, 335.
generalized throughout the population, it could have interfered with reproduction. Again, data from other Caribbean slave societies suggest that fertility rates were much higher for stable, if not married, couples than they were for single women.\textsuperscript{36}

On the other hand, when Bremer asked about the existence of enduring and faithful couples, her host presented her to one remarkable example. This amazing couple were both about fifty years old. They had met in Africa and had been together since their youth.\textsuperscript{37} Their ability to survive the travails of initial enslavement in Africa, the horrors of the Middle Passage, and forced labor within a Cuban plantation speaks of a resilience few can imagine. Another of Bremer’s encounters demonstrates the different tensions affecting the slave family. Here, an enslaved couple were prevented from marrying at the discretion of the woman’s owner. The couple had a child. The man’s owner had pity on him and gave him a peso a week towards the purchase of the woman and child if he withheld himself from his addiction to alcohol.\textsuperscript{38}

For a later period, travelers’ accounts of Cuban slavery can be supplemented by the images taken from one exceptional slave’s experiences. In recounting very personal aspects of his enslavement, Esteban Montejo (1872-1976) spoke of the harsh methods one planter used to increase slave births.

Los [niños] de raza costaban unos quinientos pesos. Eso de los niños de raza era porque eran hijos de negros forzudos y grandes, de granaderos. Los granaderos


\textsuperscript{37}Bremer, \textit{The Homes of the New World}, 336-337.

\textsuperscript{38}Bremer, \textit{The Homes of the New World}, 385-86.
eran privilegiados. Los amos los buscaban par juntarlos con negras grandes y saludables. Después de juntos en un cuarto aparte del barracón, los obligaban a gustarse y la negra tenía que parir buena cría todos los años. Yo digo que era como tener animales. Pues bueno, si la negra no paría como a ellos se le antojaba, la separaban y la ponían a trabajar en campo otra vez. Las negras que no fueran curielas [muy fertiles] estaban perdidas porque tenían que volver a pegar el lomo. Entonces si podían escoger maridos por la libre. (Children of color cost $500 pesos. They [were valued] this much because they were the children of powerful, big black men, the large ones. The breeding slaves were privileged. The owners sought to mate them with large, healthy black women. After leaving them together in a separate room of the barracón, they were forced to enjoy each other and the woman would have bear a child every year. I say that it was like having animals. Well then, if a woman did not have children like the others, [the owners] got mad at her. They took her away and put her to work in the fields again. The women who were not fertile were lost, because they had to return to hard work. But they could freely select their partners). 39

In speaking of the last years of Cuban slavery, this anecdote highlights the extent to which planters would go to retain the labor potential of this dying institution.

However, Montejo also illustrated another significant disincentive of this type of reproductive arrangement. He reminds us that enslaved children did not belong to their parents. Instead they belonged to their masters and could be sold at any moment, despite the existence of laws prohibiting such practices. Faced with this possibility, enslaved families faced an intrinsic destabilizing force. As Montejo noted, "¡Quien se iba a ocupar de un hijo que no es suyo!" (Who would worry themselves over a child that was not theirs). 40 While many may have made such choices not to bond with their offspring, as we will see, others chose to recognize their children despite the insecurities of slavery.

Yet simply reproduction was not the only familial goal slaveowners had for their charges. Some encouraged the establishment of legitimate families amongst the enslaved

39Barnet, Biografía de un cimarrón, 38.

40Barnet, Biografía de un cimarrón, 38.
based on a true commitment to the institution for moral reasons. A striking example is seen in the baptismal records of Espíritu Santo. All the enslaved seven children baptized at there in 1847 under the ownership of the heirs of Doña Ysabel Zuazo were born to married African couples.\footnote{AES, \textit{libro 49 bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entries 109, 110, 111, 154, 173, 178, and 220 (1847).} This suggests the owners discouraged out-of-wedlock births, following a model demonstrated for the slaves of the King Carlos III in the eighteenth century discussed above.\footnote{See chapter 3 of this study.} Another direct example of owner involvement in the formalization of slave marriages occurred in the rural town of Palacios in 1877. Upon learning that his Congo slave, Pedro Belaza, had fathered children out of wedlock with an enslaved creole woman, priest Don José Ylarreri bought the woman and allowed the couple’s free children to live in the same house. He then celebrated the couple's marriage and assisted them in legitimating their children.\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg. 46 exp. 63, 1877.} Obviously, some owners actively encourage marriage, but the prevalence of such practice can not be established based solely on existing data.\footnote{David M. Stark finds for eighteenth-century Puerto Rico approximately half of slave marriages involved the pairing of enslaved people to the same owners, “Discovering the invisible Puerto Rican slave family: demographic evidence from the eighteenth century,” \textit{Journal of Family History} 21, 4 (Oct 1996): 395-421. Similar studies of the Brazilian experience have found much higher occurrences of this practice, see Stuart B. Schwartz, \textit{Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 383 and Alida C. Metcalf, \textit{Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de Parnaiba, 1550-1822} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 169.}
Indeed, despite some encouragement of reproduction and, in certain cases, of marriage, amongst the enslaved, marriage rates continued the declines seen in the previous period. Census data indicate that for 1827, 1841, 1846, and 1860, their marriages represented 38%, 34%, 23%, and 8% of the total, respectively.\textsuperscript{45} In these same years, enslaved people represented 41%, 43%, 36%, and 27% of the entire island’s total population.\textsuperscript{46} These data also suggest that as the percentage of creoles within the enslaved population increased with respect to Africans, their marriage rates declined. Unfortunately, the data are inconclusive on this point. However, one may again note the example of other Caribbean islands, where the greater African participation in marriage has been established.\textsuperscript{47}

One factor in this decline in marriage rates may have been a simultaneous decline in access to Catholic education. While the Africans brought to labor in the Cuba were familiar with their own cultural forms of marriage, they were obviously unfamiliar with the Spanish institutional means of formalizing marriage. Education in this facet of their social lives would have come through contact with Euro-Cubans (planters, plantation administrators, wage laborers, and priests) and already assimilated people of color. Of this first group, priests had the greatest responsibility for educating slaves of the spiritual and social significance of marriage. However, the ratio of clerics to the general population had been decreasing since the late eighteenth century. Between 1774 and

\textsuperscript{45}Levi Marrero, \textit{Cuba: Economía y Sociedad}, 14: 43 and 47.

\textsuperscript{46}Calculated from Kiple, \textit{Blacks in Colonial Cuba}, 5-7.

\textsuperscript{47}Higman, \textit{Slave Populations}, 373, speaks of co-residential unions; Craton, “Changing Patterns of Slave Families,” 2, 17.
1846 the number of clerics in Cuba decreased from 984 to 440, while the population grew five times.\textsuperscript{48}

The majority of these priests were concentrated in urban areas and ministered largely to whites. By 1860, the number of clergy had increased again to 779. However, with over 401 living in Havana, the rural population was left with little spiritual guidance. In some areas the ratio of clergy to enslaved people reached incredibly low numbers. For example, in the sugar producing region of Cárdenas, there was one priest for every seventy-five hundred slaves.\textsuperscript{49} Additionally, owners of large plantations no longer retained priests exclusively for their holdings and religious education there was all but abandoned.\textsuperscript{50}

Beyond the scarcity of clergy, additional factors, such as the cost of the ceremony, further limited access to and desire for the Catholic marriage amongst rural slaves. Exceptions to this neglect occurred on occasion as priests infrequently visited rural areas to minister to the enslaved people. On one occasion in 1878, missionary Jesuit priests married some thirty-two enslaved couples on two plantations in the town of San Juan y Martínez.\textsuperscript{51} In another example of the positive influence of the clergy on marriage amongst rural slaves was seen in the case cited above of the priest Don Ylarrei, exhorting


\textsuperscript{49}Knight, \textit{Slave Society}, 107-109.

\textsuperscript{50}Hall, \textit{Social Control}, 43-50.

\textsuperscript{51}Reconocimientos, Leg. 52 Exp 15, 1878.
his slave to marry in order to redeem his soul, and the honor of his children born out of wedlock.\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg. 46 exp. 63, 1877.}

**Interracial Sexual Competition**

Enslaved men had additional limiting factors on their reproduction beyond the imbalanced sex ratio. Despite the fact that marital endogamy remained the rule, enslaved men also faced high levels of reproductive competition from free men of all colors. In the late colonial petitions to clarify paternity, it was not unusual for the father to be a free man, while the mother was enslaved. The Bishop of Havana received at least 87 such petitions between 1860 and 1893.\footnote{Reconocimientos, legajos 1 through 116, 1860-1893.} The case of *pardo ingenuo* (free-born) José de las Nieves Chamizo and his enslaved African wife, María del Carmen Avila, was one interesting exception to the general pattern of marriage within similar class and color categories. José de las Nieves had been born free, as the son of white man and an enslaved creole woman in the rural town of Ceiba Mocha. There he met María del Carmen, and together they had a child in 1843. By 1848, the couple was living in the provincial capital of Matanzas, and José de la Nieves was earning a living as a meat vendor. They married in the same year, although María del Carmen remained enslaved.\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg. 21 Exp 76, 1870. María del Carmen is alternately listed as Mandinga and Carabali.}

Although marriages between enslaved women and Asian men were extremely restricted, with Asians being classified as whites for marriage, consensual unions did occur. Take for example the case of Joaquin Abreu. He came to Cuba as one of the

\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg. 46 exp. 63, 1877.}

\footnote{Reconocimientos, legajos 1 through 116, 1860-1893.}

\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg. 21 Exp 76, 1870. María del Carmen is alternately listed as Mandinga and Carabali.}
142,000 Chinese indentured laborers arriving between 1847 and 1875. In 1862 he petitioned colonial authorities for permission to marry an enslaved parda. It is not clear what position the government took on this matter. Others bypassed marriage altogether and created legal family only with their children. In 1870, Casimiro Rivero asked the Church to recognize his paternity of his son Abraham. Abraham had been born a few months earlier to the enslaved morena Cristina on the sugar plantation Conchita. That Casimiro had also labored on the same plantation is indirectly supported by the contemporary observation that the sugar plantation Conchita was one of the largest on the island using a significant number of Chinese laborers.

The competition between enslaved men and newly arrived Chinese is even more starkly demonstrated in the case of Julio Fernández. Julio had been enslaved on the sugar plantation Santa María de Neda, after being shipped from the Congo. In 1883 after gaining his freedom, he petitioned the Church for the acknowledgment of his paternity of children Eduardo and Aurelia. In supporting Julio’s case, witnesses testified that he and the children’s mother, Leocadia, had lived as man and wife on the plantation, raising the children together. However, when Leocadia gained her freedom, she immediately left

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56 ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil (hereafter “Superior”), Leg. 925 no. 32318, 1862.

57 Reconocimientos, Leg 19, no. 81, 1870.

58 Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio, 1: 308.
Julio and the children to run off with an Asian fellow laborer from the same plantation. Although the fact that Chinese men came to Cuba with few female counterparts fostered an environment for establishing relationships with Cuban women (Mulattas, Blacks, and Whites), their acknowledgment of the mixed-race offspring was derived from their personal choice.

Given their numbers and superior social position, the competition from white men was another point of frustration faced by men of color in colonial Cuba. As in all slave societies in the Americas, white men in Cuba also engaged in sexual relations with enslaved women. Social taboo, elite denigration, and governmental restriction limited the possibility of converting these unions into legitimate marriages. However, the men participating in these relationships often differed from their counterparts in former English areas of the Americas by at times publicly recognizing and accepting parental responsibility for the resultant children. Don Pedro Tribarre y Goicochea owned the morena slave Caridad and had a child with her in 1874. Due to the Law of the Free Womb, the child was born free. A few years later in 1877, Don Pedro formal recognized the child in a notarial document. Later still, in 1880, Caridad herself petitioned the Church for the annotation of this recognition on the child’s baptismal certificate.

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59 Reconocimientos, Leg. 75 exp. 59, 1883.

60 Other recognitions by Chinese men of the children they had with enslaved women are found in the same source leg. 21 exp. 24, leg. 24 exp. 26, leg. 31 exp. 19, leg. 39 exp. 53, leg. 41 exp. 16, leg. 41 exp. 74, leg. 44 exp. 84, leg. 45 exp. 93, leg. 49 exp. 89, leg. 50 exp. 33, leg. 51 exp. 29, leg. 55 exp. 8, leg. 77 exp. 19, leg. 78 exp. 9, leg. 80 exp. 2, leg. 82 exp. 27, leg. 84 exp. 87, leg. 89 exp. 87, leg. 105, exp. 4, and leg. 114 exp. 73.

61 Reconocimientos, Leg. 58, no. 20, 1880.
In other cases, the relationships between white men and the women they held in slavery appeared more enduring. In 1885, Don Agustín Barroso y Hector asked the Church to recognize his paternity of ten children that he had fathered with his former slave, morena Dominga. The first two of these children had been born in 1843 and 1847 while the mother was still enslaved. However, each was baptized as free. Dominga was granted her freedom with the birth of her third child in 1849. Together, she and Don Agustín have seven other children. A similar situation occurred with Don Tomás de Rocha y Martel and his parda slave Dominga. Between 1862 and 1876, the couple had eight children. The six born before the 1870 Law of Free Birth were baptized as free by a grant from Don Tomás. However, by 1878 when Don Tomás asked the Church to recognize his paternity of these children, he still had not granted Dominga her freedom.

The choices made by enslaved women for a white mate may have developed from the expectation of freedom for bearing children with their masters. Take for example a 1859 case from Puerto Rico. Here, an enslaved black woman, María Balbina, complained to a local magistrate of her owner’s deception and failure to free her, despite their long-term sexual relation.

On the promise of freeing me, when I was barely a teenager, my master made me the mother of his three children, born one after another. But now, unmindful of his given word and the lamentations of his conscience, he intends to sell me.

62 Reconocimientos, Leg. 83, no. 76, 1885.
63 Reconocimientos, Leg. 73, no. 43, 1883.
The quote should also remind the reader of the violence and oppression to which women of color were often subjected in their sexual relations with socially dominant, white men. María Balbina clearly did not want to enter this relation but was coerced into doing so. For some women in similar positions, the coercion was the promise of freedom or improved material conditions. For others, the coercion took on much more violent forms.65

Besides relations with their owners, enslaved women also found mates more broadly within the white population. Both the rural and urban settings provided such situations. Juana Fundora was a young parda slave on the Callajabos sugar plantation owned by one of leaders of Cuban society, Ricardo O'Farrill, when she entered a relationship with José Luciano Ramos, a white farm worker. In 1856, he was 32 and she was just 17 when they had the first of their six children. After ensuring that this child was born free, Juana gained her own freedom, as demonstrated by her “free” inscription in the baptismal certificate of the next child. The couple would live together “maritally” until Don José Luciano’s death in 1885. Shortly before which, he provided paternal recognition of these children.66 A similar situation occurred in Havana for Don Rosendo


66 Reconocimientos, Leg. 90 exp. 38, 1887.
Martínez and María de las Mercedes de Castro. When they began their relationship, she was a domestic slave. They had a child in 1870, for whom they purchased freedom (unaware of the 1870 law mandating freedom for children born to slave mothers after Oct 1869). By the time their next child was born in 1872, María de las Mercedes had also gained her liberty.\textsuperscript{67} So for some enslaved women relationships with white men did prove to be a successful strategy for the acquisition of their freedom. Yet, the question remains as to what proportion failed at such attempts. The available sources do not provide any insight on this point.

**Beyond Sugar**

For men of color the constraints imposed by slavery, the sex ratio imbalance, and competition from men in other racial categories were difficulties that were not insurmountable. The establishment of the family of color was severely restricted, but in limited ways they were achievable. Early in this period, slave marriages generally still occurred more frequently than those amongst free people of color. And while they were generally less frequent than those of whites, there was one region in which the reverse

\textsuperscript{67}Reconocimientos, Leg. 88, exp. 12 (1886). For other recognized children of enslaved women and white men, see leg. 4, exp. 83 (1861); leg. 5, exp. 49 (1862); leg. 23, exp. 27 (1871); leg. 28, exp. 14 (1872); leg. 30, exp. 67 (1873); leg. 34, exp. 54 (1874); leg. 36, exp. 56 (1875); leg. 43, exp. 26 (1876); leg. 45, exp. 20 (1876); leg. 46, exp. 56 (1877); leg. 48, exp. 12 (1877); leg. 51, exp. 17 (1878); leg. 53, exp. 17 (1878); leg. 53, exp. 87 (1878); leg. 58, exp. 20 (1880); leg 62, exp. 94 (1881); leg. 65, exp. 90 (1881); leg. 66, exp. 90 (1881); leg. 71, exp. 28 (1882); leg 79, exp. 18 (1884); leg. 80, exp. 11 (1884); leg. 83, exp. 76 (1878); leg 85, exp. 61 (1886); leg. 88, exp. 25 (1886); leg 89, exp. 77 (1887); leg 90, exp. 13 (1887); leg. 93, exp. 1 (1888); leg. 101, exp. 7 (1890); leg 103, exp. 62 (1890); leg. 103, exp. 63 (1890); leg 105, exp. 22 (1891); leg 110, exp. 59 (1892); and leg. 114, exp. 68 (1893). Due to the author’s funding constraints, these data exclude recognition petitions made between 1863 and 1867. Further discussion of interracial relationships is found in chapter 6 below.
was true, the central department of the island in 1827. There, one out of every 66 enslaved persons was married, significantly larger than the one out of 215 whites.

Table 4-1  Marriage Rates by Region and Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crude Marriage Rate</th>
<th>Population 1827</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Free colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. western</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. central</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. eastern</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: De la Sagra, *Historia ecónomica-política*, 25 and *Cuadro estadístico...1827*, 58i, 79i, and 90i.

De la Sagra attributed this difference to the decreased morality of the white population of this region and its maintenance amongst the enslaved.68 But this explanation opens the question of why no similar phenomenon appeared in the other departments. Other structural differences deserve consideration. A major difference in economic production between the central region and the other two was the relative lack of importance of sugar production in the former at that time. Instead, cattle raising remained at the center of its economy.69 The lifestyle and control of the enslaved population associated with this type of production was much less intense than that associated with sugar, possibly allowing for greater freedom to select a partner. The central department was also the only area in which the white population exceeded that of color in the period. While neither of these observations can be confirmed as the cause of such high marriage rates for the enslaved of the central department, they should be considered in conjunction with other reasons.

Such observations also tend to suggest that the analysis of reproduction within Cuban slavery should not over-emphasize the role of the sugar plantation. Its prominence


in Cuba's nineteenth-century economy has led to an historiographic stress on its role in structuring other elements of Cuban social relations. The sugar plantation is often placed at the center of nineteenth-century society with all social and economic activity radiating from it.\(^7\) And it is true that sugar production had a notoriously harsh effect on slave mortality and fecundity. This is explained both by their intense labor regime and the demographic distributions of origin and sex of their laborers. Few Cuban planters followed the British West Indian model of a female predominance in sugar cutting. Most of Cuban sugar plantations had the exceedingly high sex ratios mentioned above.

Sugar plantations may have been the productive center of the Cuban economy, but other agricultural and non-agricultural interests also heavily utilized slave labor. Sugar never utilized fifty percent or more of Cuba's enslaved population. It is estimated that in 1862, slightly less than half (47\%) of the enslaved population lived and worked on sugar plantations.\(^7\) Tobacco farms, coffee plantations, and livestock pens also employed a significant proportion of the rural labor force. In 1862, they combined to employ thirty percent of the island's enslaved people.\(^7\) Along with sugar, coffee, tobacco, live-stock production had boomed in the late eighteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, coffee farming began a dramatic decline, while tobacco and live-stock continued

\(^7\)Amongst the leading proponents of this position see Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Azúcar y población en las Antillas* (Havana: Cultural, S. A, 1927) and Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio*..


\(^7\)Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 12.
to expand. The labor regimes and living conditions of all three were described as much less stringent than sugar production.

The classic nineteenth-century novel *Cecilia Valdés* makes much of the contrast between the labor regimes of sugar and coffee plantations. While Cirilo Villaverde describes the brutality involved in making sugar, he presents the coffee plantations as an almost idyllic setting. The administrators and owners related to the slave with a benign paternalism as work continued at an unhurried pace. The noted Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz constructed a similar contrast between sugar and tobacco. Despite the white purity of sugar's final stage, it is created from brutality, *con sangre se hace* (with blood it was made). In comparison, tobacco as the dark, native product, is the result of the loving cultivation of the small farmer assisted by a few familiar slaves. Unfortunately, in regard to the theme of reproduction, investigation of the non-sugar activities remains in its infancy, hindered by an historiographic overemphasis on sugar and the scarcity of primary sources.

Life was somewhat less harsh for enslaved families living in urban areas even though they still faced many of the difficulties associated with bondage. The greatest contrast between rural and urban slave populations was their respective labor regimes. Those in urban areas were employed in a variety of occupations as domestics, day laborers, craftspeople, and light industrial workers. Many worked directly for their


74Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint; Tobacco and Sugar* (New York, A.A. Knopf, 1947) and Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, 56.
owners, while others were rented out. In terms of family formation, urban slaves enjoyed a much more balanced sex ratio and access to mates of a variety of social categories.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{Afro-Cuban Families in the Documents}

Returning to the archival documents under study, the simple stories from the lives of enslaved people reveal the extent to which they valued family. The documents reveal the several connections between the rural and urban slave experiences in the process of family formation. For example, in 1863 when the Congolese man Juan Pascual petitioned the Church to recognize his infant daughter, she was living with her enslaved Gangá mother, María Ortol, in Havana, some twenty miles from his home in Bacuranao. While, it is unclear where Juan and María Ortol began their relationship, the distance did not prevent him from establishing a legal connection with his child.\textsuperscript{76} In another case, Cristobal Baró began his life enslaved in Matanzas. Similarly, his wife was a creole slave from Callajabos. They both eventually were allowed to settle in Havana. They had a child in 1867, for whom they immediately purchased freedom. Four years later the couple married and eventually became enslaved to the same owner. It was only after these events that they were finally able to legally establish their son’s true paternity.\textsuperscript{77}

In a more dramatic example, Ambrosio Pedroso was brought from Africa and enslaved on one of the plantations of the Conde de Casa Pedroso in Bacuranao. His wife was a creole slave born in Callajabos. They had several children and then married sixteen

\textsuperscript{75}Knight, \textit{Slave Society}, 78-77.

\textsuperscript{76}Reconocimientos, Leg. 6 exp. 53, 1863.

\textsuperscript{77}Reconocimientos, Leg. 22 exp. 95, 1871.
years after the birth of the first child that they later legitimated. Both eventually had
gained their freedom by the time of their marriage in 1867.\textsuperscript{78} These case might be the
exceptions but they demonstrates that enslavement on a Cuban sugar plantation did not
necessarily relegate men to the natal alienation that Orlando Patterson so eloquently
described. While confirmation of this point will have to await data sufficient to
reconstruction the lifecycles of a much greater proportion of the enslaved population, the
evidence from which it is posited moves beyond what has previously been available.
These cases suggest that Afro-Cuban families were formed and maintained, even through
the most difficult of circumstances.

This example also highlights that it is only with the grouping of the family records
in the Church’s legitimation file that becomes possible to recognize Ambrosio’s previous
bondage and his paternity of the couple’s first child. Otherwise, from the baptismal
documents alone, Ambrosio’s paternity would never have been noted. Unfortunately
however, we are still left to speculate on Ambrosio’s status when his first child was born.
Since Ambrosio was African there are several possibilities. He might have arrived in
Cuba before 1820 and thus legally held as enslaved. If he had arrived after 1820, he
might have either served his requisite seven years as an \textit{emancipado} and then gained his
freedom, or he might have continued in forced labor, unaware of his legal rights. Again,
on this point the historiography suggests that there was no major distinction between

\textsuperscript{78}Reconocimientos, Leg. 24 exp. 114, 1868.
slaves and *emancipados*. Nevertheless, by 1851 this family was on its way to freedom by ensuring that their children were baptized as free.

In another case, it was the mother who gained her freedom prior to the recognition of the children by the still enslaved father. The first child of María de la Luz Carabali and Ramón Mina was born in Güines in 1826 when she was enslaved to Don Francisco de las Cacigas. Ramón was not listed on the baptismal certificate. Another child was born in Havana in 1838 with the mother enslaved to a different owner. By the couple's 1872 recognition of both children, María de la Luz was now free and Ramon was then enslaved to María de la Luz's last former owner. So it appears that as one parent gained freedom, the family began the process of legalizing their familial ties or publicly recognizing kinship.

Another extraordinary case exemplifies that while the documentation of kinship was generally limited for rural slave families, some managed to gain freedom and financial independence and then correct their family records. The family history of Celestino Nodal and María Joaquina Machado demonstrates how this functioned worked at its best. Both had arrived as African slaves in rural Cifuentes some time before 1840. He was Mina and she was Carabali. By the time they married in 1840, they were both free and had previously had at least four children, who were all baptized as free. However, none of these children had been baptized with their father's name. They were not legitimated until after his death in 1867 when his death certificate and final testament

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79 See for example, Rebecca Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 70.

80 Reconocimientos, Leg. 29 exp. 94, 1872.
clarified their paternity. By this point, Celestino owned several small properties that he left to his family. Some forty-three other enslaved and formerly enslaved couples submitted similar legitimating petitions to the Bishop of Havana between 1868 and 1893. Most made their petitions after the termination of slavery. While this number is not large, it does suggest that rural slavery was not an insurmountable obstacle to family formation.

Yet, legitimacy rates continued to decline. The baptismal record from Espíritu Santo reflects an overall decline in paternal recognitions across all categories of people of color. For the thirty months between 1765 and 1767 studied above, no father was listed in only 169 of 643 baptisms, or 26% (see chapter 3 above). For 1847, this statistic increased to 143 of 306, or 47%. In the samples of 1857 and 1867, an average of less than one-third (30%) of children were baptized with the names of both parents.

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81 Reconocimientos, Leg. 42 exp. 3, 1876.

82 Reconocimientos, Leg. 18 exp.79, Leg. 21 exp. 41, Leg. 21 exp. 47, Leg. 21 exp. 76, Leg. 22 exp. 95, Leg. 24 exp. 114, Leg. 29 exp. 94, Leg. 31 exp. 40, Leg. 35 exp. 21, Leg. 35 exp. 94, leg. 36 exp. 79, Leg. 36 exp. 40, Leg. 38 exp. 22, Leg. 41 exp. 94, Leg. 42 exp. 3, Leg. 42 exp. 20, Leg. 46 exp. 23, Leg. 46 exp. 82, Leg. 49 exp. 62, Leg. 52 exp. 58, Leg. 61 exp. 70, Leg. 61 exp. 88, Leg. 62 exp. 25, Leg. 63 exp. 58, Leg. 67 exp. 61, Leg. 67 exp. 78, Leg. 68 exp. 93, Leg. 71 exp. 38, Leg. 73 exp. 51, Leg. 73 exp. 61, Leg. 76 exp. 25, Leg. 77 exp. 39, Leg. 77 exp. 55, Leg. 79 exp. 99, Leg. 81 exp. 76, Leg. 82 exp. 53, Leg. 84 exp. 33, Leg. 91 exp. 13, Leg. 93 exp. 17, Leg. 97 exp. 55, Leg. 101 exp. 77, Leg. 101 exp. 78, Leg. 105 exp. 39, Leg. 106 exp. 69, Leg. 107 exp. 58, Leg. 108 exp. 72, Leg. 111 exp. 67.

83 AES, bautismos de pardos y morenos, libros 48, 49, 52, and 54.
Table 4-2 Parental Status in Baptisms of Children of Color, Espíritu Santo Parish, 1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>African Slave</th>
<th>Black Slave</th>
<th>Parda Slave</th>
<th>Free Black</th>
<th>Free Parda</th>
<th>Free African</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Father</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Slave</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black slave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardo slave</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Pardo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free African</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African (no status)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No status</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AES, Libro 48 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 793-868 and Libro 49 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 1-268, 1847.

The decline can also be distinguished by the social category of the fathers. The proportion of African fathers decreased from 26% to 14%. The decline was even worse for pardo fathers, from 26% in 1765-1767 to 10% in 1847. Most obvious from the table of baptisms above is the near absence of white fathers. Only one was registered, the Spanish-born mate of a free parda.\(^{84}\) This stands in marked contrast to the eight Spanish and ten probably white creole fathers who appeared in the 1765-1767 records. The impact of the pragmatic sanction of 1776 against unequal union clearly made itself felt in this

\(^{84}\)AES, libro 49 bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 25, 1847.
manner. Only black creole fathers had a greater presence in the baptismal records, increasing from 17% to 23%.\textsuperscript{85}

Several factors may provide some cursory explanations for these changes. The cost of marriage was one such factor. At mid-century baptisms were priced at only one peso. By contrast, the marriage ceremony was a minimum of seven and one-fourth pesos, excluding the additional costs associated with certification of identity and previous marital status. When balanced against the average wage of eight pesos a month received by free, manual laborers of color, their difficulty in affording marriage is more easily seen.\textsuperscript{86}

The loss of religious instruction and associated decline in Afro-Cuban marriage rates commented on above may have been the most central explanation. The entire society experienced a decline in religious commitment, associated with the acceptance of more secular, Enlightenment ideals. A 1867 report to metropolitan Spanish authorities lamented this situation and its implications for less, presumably positive social relations within slavery.

As time passed, there came to Cuba the anti-Christian doctrines, the product of the school of Voltaire and the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately the clergy and the highest stratum of the society accepted them, and propagated them among the people, fostering religious indifference. The chapels were abandoned; religious zeal disappeared; and the relations between master and slave

\textsuperscript{85}AES, \textit{Libro 48 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entries 793-868 and \textit{Libro 49 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entries 1-268, 1847.

\textsuperscript{86}For wages and the price of marriage in the middle of the nineteenth century see María Dolores Pérez Murillo, \textit{Aspectos demograficos y sociales de la isla de Cuba en la primera mitad del siglo XIX} (Cadiz: Universide de Cadiz, 1988) 199 and 205-209.
lacked any other motivation than that of material interest, [but] somewhat modified still by the acquired habits and customs.\(^{87}\)

That only 29% of the black and mulatto children baptized at Espíritu Santo were born outside of wedlock in the period from 1765 to 1768 represents a marked difference to the situation in the mid-nineteenth century.\(^{88}\) In 1847, only 19% of these children were born to married parents.\(^{89}\)

The decline in marriage rates appeared to be generalized for Havana. Here, white marriage rates also experienced a decrease, but not one as large as seen amongst people of color. For white men living in Havana, marriage rates decreased from thirty-eight percent in 1828 to twenty-six percent in 1862. A slightly smaller, but measurable decline in the marriage rates of white women (from 43.5% in 1828 to 35% in 1862) suggests that this phenomenon was not simply due to the later mass immigration of single men from Spain and the Canary Islands.\(^{90}\) These data should make it difficult to attribute the decline in

\(^{87}\)Informe presentado a la junta informativa de ultramar...Madrid: J. Peña, 1869, quoted and translated in Knight, *Slave Society*, 112-113.

\(^{88}\)See chapter 3 note and AES, *libro 8 bautismos de pardos y morenos*, entries 1317 to 2083 (1765-1767).

\(^{89}\)AES, *libro 48 bautismos de pardos y morenos*, entries 793-868 and *libro 49* entries 1-268 (1847).

\(^{90}\)Statistics for 1828 are found in Manuel Pastor, ed. *Año de 1828, Censo de la siempre fidelísima Ciudad de la Habana, capital de la siempre fiel isla de Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta del Gobierno y Capitanía General, 1829) 10. Statistics for 1862 are calculated from Centro de Estadística, *Noticias estadísticas de la isla de Cuba en 1862* (Havana: Imprenta del Gobierno, Capitanía General y Real Hacienda, 1864). Both are based on populations above age 15. The situation in Havana differed from that in the rest of the island, with increases in marriage rates between 1827 and 1862, from 42% to 48%. Also see *Cuadro estadístico de la siempre fiel isla de Cuba correspondiente al año de 1827* (Havana: Arozoza y Soler, 1828) 60); and Martínez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour*, 60.
marriage for Cuba’s slave population primarily to an intensification of the labor regime associated with sugar production.

Justification for the separate decreases in the listing of *pardo* and African fathers is more difficult to determine. Census data indicate that *pardos* were decreasing their proportion within the population of color. It had been 25.2% in 1776 and by 1841 it stood at 17.3%. The declining African presence can only be inferred from their price on the open market. However, there also are indicators that the African proportion of Havana slave sales remained high until 1845. No unqualified conclusions can be drawn from these observations.

The absence of marriage did not equate to the absence of other socially recognized family forms. Consensual unions increased in frequency for people of color, a situation that was not without its vehement opponents. Other modern scholars have used the steady complaints from church leaders to demonstrate the frequency of these consensual relationships. Both Verena Stolcke and Cuban historian Levi Marrero have highlighted the example of the mission by Antonio María Claret y Clará, the Archbishop of Cuba (1851-1857) to eliminate what he perceived as the problem of consensual relationships. He was so committed to this project that over the six years as leader of the Cuban church he married more than 12,000 previously-illicit couples. Many of these were mixed-race

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91 Based on data found in *Cuadro estadístico de...1827, 26; Resumen del censo...1841...* (Havana: Impr. del gobierno, 1842) 20 and Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba*, 3.

92 Bergard, Iglesias García, and Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market*, 44-47, 85. These authors urge caution on this point, emphasizing the sale of African was illegal after that time.
couples who had not married earlier because of the restriction imposed by the 1776 pragmatic or whose white, male partner had not wanted to cross the social taboo of interracial marriage. In his departing instruction to the Cuban clergy, he urged them to admonish...

those who live in illicit union, chastising them verbally to leave such sinful life. But if they continue to ignore your parental warnings, then turn to the Captain of the county, so that he may use his authority castigate this disobedient. If he proves too weak, uncommitted, or does not know how to amend and correct this problem, we give the parish priest leave to report to higher authority and end the scandals. We will not accept excuses from these priests if these illicit unions and other scandalous behavior continue in their parishes.93

Despite these warnings, it would be a mistake for modern scholars to continue to emphasize the illicit, or marginal, nature of the relationships. However condemned by the Church and by law, they were common, indeed more common than marriage, and presumably accepted by many Cubans. These unions were marginal only in that the dominant members of late colonial Cuban society exercised greater control over the sexual potential of their women and hypocritically frowned upon those who did not.

Most families also formed through alternate legal or social forms. As discussed in chapter 3 above, the declaration of “hijo natural reconocido” remained an option. Ninety-five such declarations appeared for the children of color baptized at Espíritu Santo in 1847.94 This number was almost double the fifty-nine legitimate births registered. The declaration of “hijo natural” may have become a substitution for legitimacy for parents

93Antonio María Claret y Clara, Carta Pastoral, quoted Spanish in Marrero, Cuba, 13:29.

94See for example AES, libro 48 bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 801, 805, and 812.
who desired recognition of the paternal bond, without the permanent ties between the two mates or the cost of marriage.

Both free and enslaved families engaged in this practice. Here, parental endogamy remained to a great extent, but less so that in earlier periods. The baptisms of children of color found at Espíritu Santo registered to enslaved mothers were fifty-three percent of the total of color in 1847 and forty-three percent in 1857. In the majority of cases found in the Espíritu Santo documents, thirty-one free, black creole couples made such declarations. Free pardo couples made nine recognitions. The remainder were couples mostly comprised of partners of dissimilar color or status. For slave fathers, there appears to have been less access to legal recognition. Only in five of the ninety-five recognitions declared in the baptisms was the father clearly listed as enslaved, all in cases were both mother and father had the same owner. Since the status of the father was relatively much less significant than that of the mother, it is not surprising that the status of the father often went unreported. Yet, the recognitions cited above demonstrate some such families had to await a less restrictive legal environment in order to make their civil presence known. Many of these cited families were legally recognized as Cuban slavery was coming to a close, although they had been conceived many years earlier.

95AES, libro 48 bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 793-868 and libro 49 entries 1-268, 1847 and libro 52 entries 184-400, 1857.

96AES, libro 48 bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 842 and libro 49 entries 27, 64, 114, and 248.

97See note 82 of this chapter.
Conclusion

There is no doubt that Afro-Cubans were in a constant struggle for survival in colonial Cuba. Slavery and its associated elements—an uneven sex ratio, high mortality rates for children and adults, violence, and lack of social flexibility—impinged on Afro-Cuban efforts to reproduce themselves. Despite these odds, they managed to create families who would have lasting significance to Cuban social experiences. Marriage was only one of many options for establishing these relationships. It was as of the end of the eighteenth century that Cuban family formation under slavery followed the patterns in most American slave societies. Until that time illegitimacy was not the norm into which enslaved children were born. But in the nineteenth century, most were baptized with their fathers listed as unknown. For a variety of reasons, many fathers would wait until well after the baptisms of their children to legally recognize or legitimate them. Some could not afford to do so earlier. Others were culturally unaware of the Spanish systems of acknowledging families. Still other simply chose not to participate in these practices. They also enjoyed the publicly acceptable alternative of consensual unions, which while they left little documentary evidence were often quite enduring.

The vicissitudes of slavery shaped the potential and limits for family formation and survival. Cuban slavery evolved through several stages. In each, the opportunity for family formation amongst the enslaved varied. From the first moments of contact, Spain transferred the institutional aspects of slavery from the Old World to the New. The slaves maintained a legal personality beyond simple chattel, possessing both duties and rights. They were expected to receive religious instruction and baptism so as to become accepted into Catholic society as junior members. In terms of family formation, slave marriages
were legally protected. The permission of the master was not required to undertake that sacrament. However, the requisite clerical fees may have deterred the fulfillment of that process. The stability of slave families was also threatened by a lack of their parental authority over children. Slaveowners retained all rights in this area, and their financial exigencies would determine the integrity of the familial relations amongst enslaved people. The Spanish Crown also encouraged slave marriages as a means of limiting any rebellious tendencies. Enslaved men with women and children to consider were thought less likely to revolt against their masters or escape away from their vigilance.

Relations between slaveowners and the charges were largely determined by the uses to which the latter were placed. Cuba’s underdeveloped, yet diversified, economy prior to the nineteenth-century sugar boom utilized slave labor in many sectors: military construction, domestic service, undesignated manual labor, mining, cattle ranching, agricultural production (foodstuffs, sugar, tobacco, and coffee). The close geographic proximity of urban and rural settings up to the close of the eighteenth century permitted enslaved people some flexibility. The practice of renting out slaves in both areas added to their possibilities. In some cases, male manual laborers could easily interact with female domestics, creating families of various styles. In the urban centers of Havana and Santiago, enslaved people married at rates similiar to whites. The only discernable difference was between creoles and Africans. The latter tended to marry more frequently than the former. This observation undermines any lingering claims that African cultural practices influenced the lower marital rates found within twentieth-century Afro-Cuban populations.
The expansion of Cuba’s export-oriented, agricultural production in the nineteenth-century profoundly affected the nature of slavery. Plantation size increased dramatically, both in terms of land and personnel. The largest holdings would possess several hundred slaves. The sex ratio also increased its male imbalance. As rural slaveowners concentrated on productive output, they placed less value on the conditions of enslaved people. They neglected their obligation to provide religious instruction to their charges. Urban slaves were moved into more profitable rural labor. Large, sexually-segregated barracks became the standard housing for these workers. The rigors of their labors intensified with the long hours required for profitable sugar production. Although suitable statistical evidence is unavailable, both adult and infant mortality probably increased under these conditions, just as fertility also experienced a likely decline. The struggles for family formation increased as creoles and African slaves faced these extreme obstacles. However, this difficult situation did not absolutely preclude their success.

The legal termination of the Cuban slave trade marked a pivotal point for Afro-Cuban family formation. Although the illegally importation of Africans continued, plantation owners became more concerned with the self-preservation of their laborers. They then fostered better conditions for slave reproduction. Pregnant women were given less difficult tasks and rewarded for a number of successful births. Slave owners again considered the promotion of marriages as favorable to their financial bottom line for their potential to promote labor stability in both the quantitative and behavioral sense.

The interactions between the distinct social elements of late nineteenth-century Cuba are revealed in the analysis of the patterns of family formation within slavery. For
example, the distance between the free and the enslaved becomes less rigid when examined from the vantage point of the family, instead of the individual. As Cuba’s African descended population made the gradual transition between slavery and bondage, they were affected not only as laborers, but also as family members. The Spanish institution of slavery allowed for some legal avenues of escape. The road to freedom often began as a family project, with conscious decisions to purchase the liberty of mothers and children at specific moments. Fewer children were therefore born into slavery than the system had the potential to create. After 1820, the presence of a small *emancipado* population also contributed to these possibilities. As they were legally free, their offspring were also legally classified as such. Corruption would obviously impact the exercise of these options, but *emancipados* remained one step ahead of the totally subjugated slaves who possessed fewer legal recourses.

The public recognition of families formed by enslaved women of color and white and Asian men also decreased the social distance between Cuba’s social groups. As in the situation just described above, it becomes difficult to speak of the slave family when some of the members are free and other continue in bondage. This becomes even more problematic when white and Asian men accepted their mixed-race children born to enslaved mothers. These relationships offered a variety of outcomes. Some of these fathers would ensure these children gained liberty. Others did not have the resources with which to fulfill that possibility. And still others had little desire to do so. Nevertheless, these relationships suggest a blurring of the lines between the groups. Absent is a clear white dismissal of slaves and former slaves as members of their own families.
Finally, it is obvious that Cuba’s enslaved population did not often meet the idealized standards of the patriarchal family. However, this group did achieve a limited level of reproductive success. They were not as alienated from humane dimensions of family relations as much of the earlier literature would suggest. They would establish families and kinship in a variety of forms. And more significantly, their children would survive to participate in their own struggles for inclusion in the idea of Cuban identity.
CHAPTER 5
THE GRADUAL ABOLITION OF CUBAN SLAVERY AND FAMILY FORMATION

Introduction

In 1891, Alejandro Martínez petitioned the Catholic Church in Cuba for the correction of his son’s birth certificate. He noted that the child’s birth into a legitimate marriage had been incorrectly omitted from the document. In making his request, Martínez briefly recounted what he knew of his son’s genealogy. His own mother, Rita, had arrived in Cuba from the Congo to be enslaved just across the harbor from Havana, in Regla. Although his baptismal certificate listed him as mulatto and *hijo natural reconocido* of a white man, Alejandro himself had been born into slavery. It was only as an adult in 1867 that he was able to gain his freedom through self-purchase. His wife, Victoria Montoto, had shared a similar experience. She too had been born into slavery. Her Congolese father and Carabali mother had been enslaved on the rural coffee plantation Amistad at the time of her birth. Unlike the illegitimate relationship from which Alejandro was born, Victoria had been born of the legitimate marriage of her parents. At some point during her enslavement, she eventually moved to Havana, where she married Alejandro in 1871. They purchased her freedom in January 1874. When their son José Secundino Alejandro Martínez y Montoto was born in Guanabacoa six
months later in July, 1874, he became the first of three generations of this Afro-Cuban family to never suffer the chattels of slavery. The same sources that give us insight into this one family’s experiences also allow for the recovery and analysis of a more general history of the Afro-Cuban family experience as slavery came to a gradual close.

The period between 1868 and 1886 marked the final era of Cuban slavery. With the end of slavery in the United States, Cuba and Brazil remained the only regions of the Americas with large, legal slave populations. With the loss of this last vestige of meaningful North American support for the institution, many in Cuba began to accept slavery’s almost inevitable demise. Cuba’s separatist Ten Years War (1868-1878) against Spain furthered the process, as leaders on both sides used the abolition issue to garner popular support and enlist formerly enslaved fighters. With the war, a gradual process of abolition began. It occurred in several stages: the freeing of enslaved combatants; the true closure of the contraband slave trade; the Moret Law, which freed the enslaved elderly and newborn; and finally, the patronato system for slowly easing enslaved people into freedom and free-wage labor. The slave population decreased by almost one half (45%) within a decade, going from 363,288 in 1867 to 199,094 in 1877 (See Table 5-1). All of the paths to freedom combined to make this period one of great social transformation. These transformations went beyond the economic and labor

1Reconocimientos, Leg. 104 exp. 5, 1891.

2Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba.

3Scott, Slave Emancipation in Cuba.

4Scott, Slave Emancipation in Cuba, 86-87.
changes upon which the earlier historiography had focused. For the enslaved, these changes affected not only their mode of employment. They also influenced their style of family formation.

Table 5-1 Cuban Population 1862-1887

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White Men</th>
<th>White Women</th>
<th>Free Men of Color</th>
<th>Free Women of Color</th>
<th>Slave Men</th>
<th>Slave Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>468,107</td>
<td>325,377</td>
<td>113,746</td>
<td>118,687</td>
<td>218,722</td>
<td>151,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>491,512</td>
<td>341,645</td>
<td>121,708</td>
<td>126,995</td>
<td>203,412</td>
<td>141,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>576,272</td>
<td>386,903</td>
<td>128,853</td>
<td>143,625</td>
<td>112,192</td>
<td>86,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>607,187</td>
<td>495,702</td>
<td>275,413</td>
<td>253,385</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ortiz, *Los esclavos negros* (1917) 22-23.

Studies in other slave-holding societies in the Americas suggest that both during and immediately after abolition, a number of alterations occurred in family structure and modes of family formation for people of color. For example, in many of these areas, marriage rates amongst formerly-enslaved populations increased. The limitations on marriage formerly imposed by slavery had been removed and people of color expressed their newly-gained freedom by adopting marriage as a sign of personal maturity. Both for the freedpeople, themselves, and the historians and sociologists who later studied them, their modes of family formation became a measure of conformity with the norms of the dominant society.

The speed of emancipation in the United States did not allow enslaved people to rearrange their lives and families in anticipation. Their adjustments were delayed until final abolition. At that point, they began to stabilize family life. Formal marriage became more common. “Upon their emancipation most...ex-slave families had two
parents, and most older couples lived together in long-lasting unions."

For most of those enslaved in the United States, monogamous, nuclear families were not new. They had been the predominant family form through the nineteenth century. What was unprecedented were the ability to legalize the relationships and the removal of the master's potential intervention into black family life. The removal of this disruptive presence also allowed its members to have choices, such as residence, the creation of extended, multi-generational households and long-distance kinship networks.

Final emancipation also contributed to the lessening of the color distinctions amongst people of color. Free blacks in American slave communities were, in fact, often mulattoes who distanced themselves from their darker, enslaved counterparts. The post-Reconstruction intensification of white racial animosity towards all other racial categories reinforced the once-tenuous bonds between more privileged mulattoes and the darker freedpeople.

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In other areas of the Americas, gradual changes to the families of freedpeople occurred both before and after final emancipation. This distinction was due to the fact that the final emancipation processes outside of the United States were gradual. In Brazil after emancipation, the Afro-Brazilian family formation patterns closely mirrored those of whites. Urban São Paulo saw increased expression of "the value placed by 'black society' on the rules followed by the society at large, including virginity and marriage, if possible with all the formal trappings." Similarly, post-abolition marriages occurred more frequently amongst Blacks on provincial Rio's rural coffee plantations. Marriage rates of people of color initially approximated those of whites before slowly diverging by the middle of the twentieth century. Marriage rates for Afro-Brazilians in São Paulo was 96.6 percent of that of their white counterparts between 1881 and 1890. By 1930, that proportion had fallen to 91.5 percent. Yet one has to bear in mind that marriages for the general population remained low. Only 23 percent of Rio's population of marriageable

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age were married in 1872, but by 1890 that percentage had increased to 31 percent and then to 40 percent by 1906. 12

Similarly, the post-abolition practice of marriage also increased in the British Caribbean. Under the influence of Christian missionaries, freedpeople pursued the models of the English middle class. Marriage and female withdrawal from public labor were key aspects of that model. 13

How did the situation in Cuba compare to these transformations elsewhere in the Americas? Before attempting to answer this question, one must realized how differences in the social context and in the availability of investigational sources have shaped the study of post-emancipation transformations. For the United States, the newly emancipated were faced with the disruptions caused by the Civil War. The federal government actively supervised the reconstruction of southern society in its wake. As a result, the records of the Freedmen's Bureau provide access to the thoughts and actions of former slaves. 14 Much later in the late 1930s, the interviews of formerly enslaved people


undertaken by the Works Progress Administration augmented the supply of first-hand accounts of the transition to freedom in the United States.\textsuperscript{15}

For the British Caribbean and Brazil, abolition was a peaceful and gradual process, with little government oversight. However, in the former, Christian missionary societies obligated themselves to the moral socialization of the freed people. Their archives hold a wealth of material on the family matters of freedpeople.\textsuperscript{16} Studies of Afro-Brazilians modes of family formations were possible to the extent that race remained a marker of identity within Church and civil vital registries.\textsuperscript{17}

Family formation during the Cuban abolition process was not documented by records similar to those in the United States and British Caribbean, although it did have some other similarities with other emancipation processes. Again, like the United States, Cuban abolition was shaped by war. For people of color, the Ten Years' War brought both destruction and mobility. Yet, Cuban abolition was also a gradual process, comparable to that in Brazil and the British Caribbean. However, neither the Spanish government or the Catholic Church concerned themselves with the social adjustments to

\textsuperscript{15}For discussion of how slow American historians generally were to utilize these sources see, Norman R. Yetman, “The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection,” \textit{American Quarterly} 19, 3 (Autumn, 1967) 534-553.


\textsuperscript{17}See note 11 above.
freedom. Therefore, today, no historical materials speak directly to the experiences of Cuba’s former slaves. Fortunately, however, like Brazil, ecclesiastic records can provide a glimpse into their familial experiences in the transition from slavery to freedom. Again, baptisms continued to mark admission of new members into the community. The legal or familial status of infants and arriving Africans were ascribed with this process. Additionally, these records were supplement petitions for clarification of status, as people of color returned to the Church to clarify jural identities for themselves and their families. So as with earlier chapters, here this study uses documents to begin the process of reconstructing this transitional moment in Cuban race relations.

**The Continued Arrival of Africans?**

Before returning to the question of family formation, the late colonial records of the Cuba Church are useful in another area. Cuban historian Juan Pérez de la Riva has questioned the generally accepted termination date for Cuban slavery. He challenges the most well-respected works for too readily accepting the 1867 date established in English sources without investigation of the Cuban and Spanish records. These authors generally accept the final records of the Anglo-Spanish Mixed Commission of 1867 as sufficient evidence that no later slave importations occurred. Pérez de la Riva presents data giving a later termination date. He notes a 1873 trial in Cuban courts of a captured, illegal trader. ¹⁸

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Evidence from a range of ecclesiastic sources suggest a reconsideration of Pérez de la Riva's claims. The archives of the Bishops of Havana are valuable in this regard. For example, in 1887, an African woman sought re-certification of her 1865 baptism. María de Rosario Gonzalez claimed to have been approximately ten years old when she was brought from Africa in 1865 and forced into labor on the sugar plantation Purísima Concepción, owned by Don Hilario González. An older African, who had also lived on the same plantation, testified in support of María del Rosario’s assertions and indicated that she had been part of a group brought to the plantation and baptized at the same time. Her petition gives no indication that her group had been officially identified amongst emancipados, or those freed by legal recognition of the illegal nature of the continuing slave trade.¹⁹

There are two meaningful interpretations of these data. On the one hand, it is possible that members of María del Rosario’s group were indeed late-arriving emancipados who had some how become lost in the system.²⁰ As a ten-year-old child, María del Rosario may not have been aware of the legal distinction between her situation and that of the enslaved. On the other hand, the group’s presence suggests that even at this late date Cuban planters had successfully evaded international restrictions on the trade and continued to bypass detection by Mixed-Commission patrols. If such evasion occurred, then the Mixed-Commission reports are not reliable sources from which to

¹⁹Reconocimientos, Leg. 89 exp. 55 (1887).

²⁰Historian Franklin Knight listed the last capture of 140 emancipados on the “Pato” expedition of 1865, Knight, Slave Society, 199.
defined the date of the termination of the contraband trade and the date indicated by Pérez de la Riva becomes more acceptable.

Indeed, another example of such late enslavement in this region is found from the archdiocese records. In 1889, a thirty-nine year old African resident of Placetas requested of the Church a recertification of his baptism. Benito Camejo claimed to have been bought to the area as a teenager and enslaved to a Don Pio Camejo and there was no indication that he had ever been designated as an emancipado.21 If his age is correct, then like María del Rosario, it is likely that his enslavement was not recorded by the Mixed Commission. Late baptisms of Africans also occurred at the Havana parish of Espíritu Santo. Its 1867 registry contains the baptisms of fifteen new Africans. Most were noted with their emancipado status, including numeric identification and the names of the ship on which they arrived.22 The ships from which they were “rescued” included “Casilda,” “Segundo Neptuno,” “Santa María,” “Cabo Indio,” “Manaca,” “Guira,” “Lezo,” and “Tercer Neptuno,” which were captured between 1860 and 1864.23 Thus, their baptisms were delayed from between three and seven years of their rescues. However, two Africans were baptized in 1867 without such emancipado designation and simply labeled as slaves.24 Again, these were situation that escaped the attention of the  

21Reconocimientos, leg. 96 exp. 26, 1889.


23Knight, Slave Society, 199 reports the capture dates for these expeditions. The ship he listed as the “Aguica” likely corresponds to the “Guira” described in the baptisms.

24AES, libro 54 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 318 and 402, 1867.
Mixed Commission. Similarly, data collected by Cuban researchers reveal the late baptismal of *bozales*, or newly arriving Africans, as late as 1882 in the central Cuban region of Placetas.\(^{25}\)

The archives of the Bishops of Havana also reveal at least three other, suspiciously late baptisms of Africans. In 1869, a local priest from Guantas asked Church officials for permission to baptize a group of "emancipados," noting that the administration of their sacraments had been delayed for over a year.\(^{26}\) Again, this is at odds with the year generally presumed for the last of this type of African arrival, again dated to 1867. Moreover, in a 1874 petition to baptize thirty-six black infants on two plantation in Guantas, well after six months of their births, a priest also lamented that he had not been able to baptize some *emancipados* even though he had tried to do so for over two years.\(^{27}\) It is suspicious that he used the term *emancipado*, when the institution that gave rise to their existence was officially terminated in 1869. At that time, all persons constrained under this category were to be granted their liberty. So here, five years later, such persons were still nebulously existing outside the standards of legal documentation. In a similar manner, in 1878, a Jesuit mission to the sugar plantations Guacamaya and Las Tunas in the town of San Juan y Martínez notified the bishop of its baptism of two


\(^{26}\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 18 exp. 59, 1869.

\(^{27}\)Reconocimientos, leg. 35 exp. 65, 1874.
"morenos de nación."\textsuperscript{28} This case is suspicious because it is an exception to the general pattern of late adult baptisms in which the person seeking baptism would have testified to an earlier spiritual conversion or previous incomplete interaction with the Church. However, without their ages or indication of an arrival date, it is difficult to count this reference as a clear indication of a later slave trade.

It is true that these sources, in and of themselves, cannot prove conclusively that an illegal slave trade continued after 1867. Yet, they do reveal a suspicious pattern that warrants more systematic investigation. Ultimately, this evidence suggests that if illegal imports continued after 1867, they were infrequent and generally confined to areas outside Havana, so as to be largely removed from the scrutiny of foreign observers and governmental sanction. Yet, such Africans suggest the ongoing African character of the population considered here and the possibility that these \textit{bozales} would have been amongst those contributing to Cuban family formation through the end of the nineteenth century.

**Families in Transition**

Ecclesiastic registries from this period also reached beyond the issue of late, contraband arrivals, to other experiences of Cuba’s people of color. As discussed for the early period in Cuban slavery, one of the major challenges Afro-Cubans faced in this era was fostering family stability. In the transition out of slavery, that challenge also underwent transformation. For example, the 1870 Moret Law ended the legal application

\textsuperscript{28}Reconocimientos, Leg. 52 exp 24, 1878. The term \textit{morenos de nación} loosely translates as Africans.
of the conception of *partus sequitur ventrem*, where a child's status equaled that of the mother. Hereafter, the children of enslaved women would enjoy legal freedom. They were to remain with their mother’s master until they reached maturity at age twenty one.\(^{29}\)

The new policy created situations in which several family members would continue in enslavement, but the youngest would be nominally free.

This was not an unproblematic experience. Because the law was retroactively applied to children born after August 1868, a few cases appeared before Church officials in which owners and parents disputed the dates of birth and baptism for children born to enslaved mothers. For example, in 1875, Don Ramón Sánchez petitioned the Church to clarify the baptismal certificates of the two sons of his former slave, Juliana. The children, Pablo and José Dolores, had been born in March 1868 and September 1869, respectively. Don Ramón had subsequently sold Juliana to Don Juan Solis. However, he retained the rights to Pablo. In her attempt to hold on to her child, Juliana claimed that Pablo had been born in August 1868, instead of March. Don Sánchez sought verification from the baptismal records of his rights. The Church responded with an acknowledgment that Pablo had been baptized with Don Sánchez as his owner and should remain in his charge. The other child, José Dolores, was free.\(^{30}\)

A similar case also demonstrates some of the initial confusion over the Moret Law. In 1875, Don Prudencio López requested a change in the baptismal certificate of one of his charges. His former slave, Luisa de Zayas, had used an error on the baptismal

\(^{29}\)Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 63-69.

\(^{30}\)Reconocimientos, leg. 36, exp. 47, 1875.
certificate of one of her children, Clara, to claim the child was rightfully free. Clara was born in May of 1868 and originally listed as free on her baptismal certificate. Don Prudencio now sought the sale of the child and could only do so if her correct status of enslavement was properly noted on the baptismal record. The Church honored that request. Over the period between 1868 and 1886, these types of conflicts obviously decreased as the percentage of enslaved mothers declined. As of 1877 only twenty-five percent of the baptisms of children of color found at Espíritu Santo were registered to enslaved mothers. This is less than half that found in 1847 of fifty-three percent, or the forty-three percent of 1857.

With respect to the canonical acknowledgment of paternity, the baptisms after 1876 reflect a change from the previous requirement for notarial recognition of paternity prior to its registration in the baptismal certificate. Parents now had the possibility to declare “hijos naturales reconocido” outside the presence of a notary if they declared this status at baptism. However, declarations made after baptism still required the certification of a notary. Despite, this less rigorous approach to the acknowledgment of paternity, fathers still did not appear in the majority of baptisms for children of color. In 1877, just more than a third (38%) of the children of color baptized in that year at the parish of Espíritu Santo were either legitimate or hijos naturals (fifty four of 138

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31Reconocimientos, leg. 33, exp. 64, 1875.

32AES, bautismos de pardos y morenos, libro 48 entries 793-868 and libro 49 entries 1-268, 1847; libro 52 entries 184-400, 1857; and libro 55 entries 55-198, 1877.
baptisms). By 1887, the percentage of fathers found in these baptismal certificates had risen to 43% (sixty-five of 150 baptisms). These figures were significantly higher than the 30% reported for the same parish in both 1857 and 1867 and suggests that legal recognition of paternity within the Afro-Cuban population recovered to a degree with the approach of abolition.

Unfortunately, official census data are not clear on this subject. Censuses were undertaken in 1861 and 1877 by Spanish authorities and in 1899 by the U.S. government then occupying the island. Each makes no mention of extra-matrimonial declarations of paternity. Instead they focus on marriage rates. For people of color, only 6.2 percent married in 1841. This statistic increased slightly in 1861 to 8.1 percent. No such data were reported in 1877. The 1899 census indicated a return to the 1841 rate. Any changes associated with the process of abolition remained unexplored with the thirty-eight year interval between the 1861 and 1899 censuses. Moreover, none of the census data included information on parental status at birth.

The incidences of ecclesiastic recognition of paternity after the initial baptism also experienced a slight increase as final emancipation approached. Records from the headquarters of the Bishops or Archbishops of Havana held the first of this type of

\[\text{AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 55 to 198, 1877, excluding six baptisms of children with both parents listed as “Don” and “Doña” found within that range.}\]

\[\text{AES, libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 199 to 348, 1887.}\]

\[\text{Departamento de Guerra, Oficina del Director del Censo de Cuba.} \text{Informe sobre el Censo de Cuba, 1899} \text{ (Washington: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1900): 133.}\]
recognition for people of color as of 1859.\textsuperscript{36} For whites, paternal recognitions were listed as early as 1804.\textsuperscript{37} In the first year of such documents for a child of color, one legitimization was reported. In this case, a free African couple recognized and legitimized the two children they had had prior to their marriage of the same year.\textsuperscript{38} By 1871, the number of these later recognitions of paternity for children of color had risen to twenty, and there were six legitimizations reported. Some of the recognitions occurred in the same year as the child’s birth, but most occurred much later, by an average of nine years.\textsuperscript{39} In one of the more tardy of these cases, a free moreno father acknowledged paternity twenty years after the birth of his daughter, born to an enslaved morena woman. Interestingly, that child had gained her freedom by age twelve, according to a marginal note on her baptismal certificate, while other transitions for the parents are not documented.

\textsuperscript{36}The Diocese of Havana was not raised to Archdiocese level until 1925. Prior to an undetermined date in the middle of the nineteenth century, the majority of re-certifications of ecclesiastic identity documents, of which paternal recognitions and legitimizations were subsets, were probably held in the island’s archdiocese headquarters in Santiago.

\textsuperscript{37}Reconocimientos, Leg. 1 exp. 2, 1804.

\textsuperscript{38}Reconocimientos, Leg. 4 exp. 5, 1859. This record provides few details. Therefore it is not possible to determine under what situation this African couple achieved their freedom. They may have been \textit{emancipados} for that system did function as designed or they may have purchased their own freedom.

\textsuperscript{39}Reconocimientos, Leg. 21 exps 92 and 118; Leg. 22 exps 4, 11, 17, 28, 56, 65, 95, 97, 98, 99, and 102; Leg. 23 exps 18 and 27; Leg. 25 exps 93, 96, and 98; Leg. 26 exps 15,34, 68, 74, and 81 (1871).
Parental legitimizations of children were generally delayed much later than legally recognizing paternity. The former was a much more complicated procedure. For example in 1871, legitimation averaged 11 years after the birth of the couple’s first child. In the most protracted case of 1871, two morenos ingenuos, or blacks born into freedom, married and legitimated their four children, who had been born out of wedlock. The first child had been born in 1844, some twenty-seven years before her official legitimation. The couple, José del Carmen Luna and Loreto Manzano, had married as early as 1863, but had not asked the Church to change the status of their children until nine years later. Unfortunately, this record does not contain any explanation of these delays. The couple only indicated that they were poor, and they married to fulfill their commitment to their Church, themselves, and their children.40

This record had another unique feature. Although the Loreto had been initially baptized in 1824 with her parents unknown, in the baptisms of two of the children, maternal grandparents were then listed. The same occurred for one the children. Third child had been baptized in 1849 with the listing of “padres no conocidos.”41 This alludes to a practice suggested above. Earlier in the nineteenth century, certain priests would not register the name of either parent for children born out of wedlock.42

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40Reconocimientos, Leg. 26 exp. 81, 1871.
41Reconocimientos, Leg. 26 exp. 81, 1871.
42Reconocimientos, Leg. 1 exp. 85, 1845, here a parish priest received clarification on how to annotate “hijos naturales.” The names of the parents were not to be excluded, as some priests had been in the habit of doing. See chapter 2 above.
As the Church imposed official checks on the baptismal indications of parentage, people of color found other ways to use these documents to suggest heritage. In a few cases, relatives of the omitted fathers presented themselves as godparents. This practice is revealed in subsequent documents of parental recognition. In several of these cases, fathers explicitly stated that their relatives had been the godparents of their children and in others similarities in last names are suggestive. For example, in 1881, when *pardo ingenuo* José Ochoa y Flores legally recognized his daughter twenty-five year old Justa Germana, the supporting documents reveal that both his mother and brother had acted as godparents to the child. But José was completely absent from the baptismal certificate.\(^43\) In another case 1885 case, *moreno* Pablo García testified to Church officials that his parents had legitimated their marriage well before their deaths and he had in fact acted as godfather to two of his siblings, although his father was never mentioned in the original baptism.\(^44\)

Church records also reveal the increased internal migration of people of color as slavery gradually declined. In 1867, only thirteen parents in 178 infant baptisms were registered with non-African, non-Havana origins. By 1877, that number had increased to thirty of 138 baptisms and in 1887 that proportion stood at forty five out of 150 baptisms. The 1867 migrants arrived from areas largely within the province of Havana. By 1887, their origins were much further afield. Migration from Trinidad was prominent within this group, followed by Puerto Príncipe and Bayamo. These towns had experienced some

\(^{43}\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 66, exp. 68, 1881.

\(^{44}\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 84 exp. 33, 1885.
of the greatest difficulties associated with the Ten Years’ War. The latter two had been especially hard hit.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Variations of Afro-Cuban Families in the Documents}

As slavery waned, Afro-Cuban families were constructed in various forms based on the status of the parents and their legal relationship to each other. Continuing a trend first observed after 1820, children of single mothers represented the majority of infant baptisms in this period. Yet, beyond this type, couples appeared in various arrangements. One example of these forms comes from the documentary record of the family of the “morena libre” Marcelina Cárdenas. She initially appeared in the 1877 baptismal records of Espiritu Santo as a single mother with this description of her color and free status.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, to describe this family as a single-parent one would have been erroneous. Six years after this first documentation of Marcelina, her mate, a man of unknown status and race, petitioned for the recognition his paternity of this child and another born in 1881. The associated documents also indicated that the couple shared a Havana residence.\textsuperscript{47} Therefore, based on the collected documents we have a co-residential couple and their offspring, who can now be easily reclassified as a consensual, nuclear family. Such classification would not have been possible without correlation of the family’s various appearances in the documents, over many years. Yet, Marcelina later baptized another

\textsuperscript{45} Ramón Guerra, \textit{La Guerra de los Diez Años} (Havana: Instituto Cubano Del Libro, 1972) 86-90.

\textsuperscript{46} AES, \textit{libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entry 2, 1877.

\textsuperscript{47} AES, \textit{libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entry 743, 1881 and Reconocimientos, Leg. 64 exp. 65, 1881.
child for whom the father remained unnamed. At this point it becomes unclear if that
child was born to the initial pair, or Marcelina had found another, unnamed partner.

On occasion, men of color appear in the recognition documents in association
with children of different mothers. Such in the case of the pardo ingenuo Clemente
Bergara of Matanzas. On June 15, 1871 he recognized three children. The first child,
José Clotilde had been born in 1857 and initially baptized as the child of unknown
parents. However, Clemente’s recognition petition would reveal that the child’s mother
was really the parda ingenua Yrene Rodríguez. The next two children were born in
1860 and 1864 to another parda women, Dominga Ferrer. In neither case did Clemente
marry the women.

In a similar case, the link between the free moreno José del Pie y Faura and his
female partners is not so directly obvious. His separate recognitions of paternity were
several years apart, although two of the children were born within a two month period. In
November of 1867, the enslaved morena Dorotea Domínguez gave birth to his daughter
Eugenia. This child was baptized at the intermural Havana parish of Santa Angel. Two
months later, in January of 1868, the enslaved parda Jacinta Campos gave birth to
another of José’s daughters, Luciana. The two families lived in different part of Havana.

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48 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 1175, 1884.

49 Reconocimientos, Leg. 22 exp. 97, 1871.

50 Reconocimientos, Leg. 22 exp. 98, 1871.

51 Reconocimientos, Leg. 24 exp. 98, 1868.
Luciana was baptized just outside the city wall at the extramural parish of Monserrate. Their proximity and approximate date of birth were not the only characteristics that Jose’s daughters shared. Even though both mothers were enslaved, both children were baptized as free.

Despite these similarities, the legal relationships the two girls had with their father differed. José provided legal recognition to Eugenia a little more than a year after her birth, in December of 1868. His recognition of Luciana was delayed by more than six years, occurring in September of 1874. At the same time, Luciana was also legitimated. Thus José maintained his relationship with Jacinta on a permanent, long-term basis with marriage. The couple had other children in 1872 and 1881. It is not apparent what happened to José’s relationship with Dorotea.

The documents also reveal how the moreno ingenuo Francisco Sesabier from the town of Regla also killed two birds with one stone, with respect to paternity. In February of 1884, he declared paternity of three children. The first and third were born to the free morena Ciriaca Medina, in December 1873 and April 1875, respectively. The second was born to another woman of color in November of 1874. These dates suggest that Francisco’s relationships with these women overlapped each other. Interestingly, the documents reveal that while Francisco did not live with either of the women, they lived at #66 and #88 of the same street in Regla.

52 Reconocimientos, Leg. 26 exp. 79, 1874.

53 Reconocimientos, Leg. 26 exp. 79, 1874.

54 Reconocimientos, Leg. 79 exp. 84, 1884.
Another family type was one in which the couple first recognized children born out of wedlock, later married, and had additional legitimate children. The family of Simón Carsi and Anastasia Sánchez was of this form. Five of their children were baptized at Espíritu Santo between 1876 and 1883. The first of their children encountered in the record was registered shortly after her birth as the couple’s “hija natural.” There Simón was listed as a free, black creole and Anastasia was described as a free African from the Congo. 55 Anastasia subsequently had twins, who were registered solely in her name. Simón was absent from both baptismal certificates. 56 But in 1881 and 1883, the couple had two other children that were by now legitimate at the time of their baptisms. 57

Other families also demonstrated this pattern. The family of pardos libres Joaquín Díaz and Susana Osma was another one in which the first born child was not legitimate, but recognized as a “hijo natural” by both parents. This daughter was born in 1873. 58 The couple later married by 1876 and their next five children were baptized as legitimate. 59

55 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 7, 1876.

56 One was baptized as a still-born child and the other was baptized two months later, AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 246, 1878 and entry 308, 1878.

57 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 785 (1881) and 991 (1883).

58 Reconocimientos, Leg.42 exp. 69, 1876.

59 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 26 and 27 (1876); 417 (1879); 908 (1882); and libro 56 entry 132 (1886).
In other situations, either the mother or father of a recognized child would later marry someone else and have other legitimate children. While it is impossible to determine to what extent the relationship between the first child and the parent continued, a legal obligation still existed. Such was the case with the pardo Manuel Mantilla. He first appeared in the Espíritu Santo baptismal records as the father of a “hija natural” born to an unclassified woman in 1876.\footnote{AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 65, 1876.} He then reappeared six years later in 1882 as the legitimate father of another child, born to a woman of parda classification like his. That couple would have two more children before disappearing from the records of Espíritu Santo.\footnote{AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 976 (1882) and 1160 (1884); and libro 56 entry 469 (1888).}

A similar situation also occurred for the family of the morena Beatriz Acosta. She first appeared in the baptismal records of Espíritu Santo as an enslaved mother at her daughter’s baptism in July of 1878. No father was recorded at that time.\footnote{AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 291, 1878.} Two months later, the same child was baptized for a second time under a different name. This time, Beatriz’s parents were listed by the same names, but she herself was described as free. Additionally, a father “natural” also presented himself.\footnote{AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 302, 1878.} The bishops’ archives indicates that in that same month, the free, black craftsman Jorge Gómez had petitioned the Church...
for the acknowledgment of this child and another daughter he had fathered with Beatriz in 1875. Yet, it is also clear from the documents that the couple lived separately.  

Beatriz Acosta next appeared in 1879 in the baptismal record, again as a single mother. However interestingly, the maternal grandmother did not have the same name as with the previous children. The name now listed for the maternal grandmother was the same as that previously listed as the mother of Jorge Gómez, although he was not mentioned directly. This hints, without proof, at his continued involvement with the family. In either situation, their union did not continue. Beatriz made a final appearance in the 1882 baptismal of another daughter. By then her civil status had changed. This child was born of the legitimate marriage of Beatriz and a new man, Remigio Díaz.

The baptismal records became more complete with time. For example with the first child of the parda Rosario Cárdenas to appear in the record in 1876, only her name and that of her mother appeared. With the next two children born in 1878 and 1881, both maternal grandparents were listed, along with their origins. In the registration of the last of her children found in the record, the father had provided recognition of his paternity. The black, creole father, Esteban Azpeitia, was listed, along with the names

64Reconocimientos, Leg. 51 exp. 28, 1878.
65AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 410, 1879.
66AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 410, 1882.
67AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 33, 1876.
68AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 249 (1878) and 779 (1881).
and regional origin of his parents. A final important piece of information found in the baptismal registration was that both parents lived together, along with the maternal grandmother.69

When the family of Polonia Mendíola first appeared in the baptismal records of Espíritu Santo in 1857, only a few facts were noted. She was an enslaved _parda_ who had managed to have her daughter baptized as free and Polonia’s owner was the Señora Doña Lorenza Mendíola de Croza.70 Twenty years later, a 1878 request to re-certify her baptism indicated that Polonia had been born to an enslaved black woman in 1831. By the time of the request Polonia had gained her freedom, again following the pattern of the majority of Cuba’s formerly enslaved people.71

Polonia next appeared in the documents in 1888, as her son, Ricardo Mendíola baptized the first of his legitimate children present in the records of Espíritu Santo. Since this occurred after final emancipation, it is not certain that Ricardo had shared the fortune of his sister in being baptized as free. But he did list himself with one of the more respected professions then open to people of color, coachman. Polonia at this time lived with Ricardo and his wife.72 At the baptism of another of their children in 1895, Polonia was now listed as deceased, the name of Ricardo’s father was listed for the first time, and

69AES, _libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos_, entry 266, 1887.

70AES, _libro 52 de bautismos de pardos y morenos_, entry 255, 1857.

71Reconocimientos, Leg. 52 exp. 32, 1878.

72AES, _libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos_, entry 405, 1888.
Ricardo reclaimed his surname, Croza.\textsuperscript{73} The family had gone from an enslaved one in which only matrilineal links were recorded, to a free one in which paternity was consciously reasserted.

Such reassertion of family links took various forms. Of the approximately 4,000 baptismal records reviewed for this study, one unusual case of non-marital, paternal recognition found in this period deserves special mention. In the 1876 baptism of his daughter, a free African, Luís Santochi Dovi-Yalena, presented himself as a prince of the Araraes Sabalu nation and listed his parents as Acovejachi Dovi Yalenn and Fume Glono.\textsuperscript{74} This is the only case of this type, which affirmed both the specific names of the African grandparents and asserted royal heritage.

The story of the family of Luciana Peñalver also demonstrates legal recognition of family bonds became more complete in later documents. Luciana experienced several transformations as slavery ended. She was first recorded in the baptisms of Espíritu Santo in 1874 simply as an enslaved, single mother. The only other marker of identity was the name of her owner, Don Isidro Domínguez. No other information about her family was offered. Her next child was born in 1876 and Luciana was found in the same situation.\textsuperscript{75} The 1877 and 1878 baptisms of other children found Luciana with a new owner, Doña Antonia Silva. And with the 1878 child, the maternal grandparents were

\textsuperscript{73}AES, \textit{libro 57 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entry 461, 1895.

\textsuperscript{74}AES, \textit{libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos}, entry 116, 1876.

\textsuperscript{75}Reconocimientos, Leg. 71 exp. 83, 1882.
listed for the first time.76 But with the baptism of a child born in 1879, she was free, following the pattern of many of Cuba’s formerly enslaved people who gained their freedom well before final emancipation in 1886.77

The other major transformation in Luciana’s life was the acknowledgment of the paternity of these children by the free, black cook, Melchor Peñalver. He had first mistakenly appeared as the legitimate father of one of their daughters in 1880, although the couple was not actually married.78 In 1882 Melchor officially declared paternity of this child, a son born in 1881, and the three born in 1874, 1876, and 1877. The child born to Luciana in 1879 was not mentioned, suggesting that the couple avoided the expenses of recognized a deceased child or Melchor was not the father. The couple married at some point before 1884, when first of four other, now legitimate children was baptized.79 The collection of documents demonstrates the complexity of the family’s relations as it left slavery and undertook the steps for legal acknowledgment of the bonds between its members.

In recognizing his children born out of wedlock, Melchor Peñalver, Luciana’s partner, may have followed a tradition established by his brother. In 1874, the free born, black craftsman, Luis Peñalver also recognized his paternity of several children, just as

76AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 157 (1877) and 309 (1878).

77AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 436, 1879.

78AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 615, 1880.

79AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 1177, 1884; libro 56 entries 247, 1886; 329, 1887; and 493, 1889.
his brother Melchor Peñalver would do eight years later. The sibling relationship amongst the two men comes out in their separate appearances in the baptismal records of Espíritu Santo and recognition documents of the bishop of Havana. Both had the same parents, Gregorio and Ygnacia Peñalver. In fact, both men named the first of their reported children after their father. Luis’s daughter Luisa Gregoria was born in 1867 and Melchor’s son, Gregorio Vicente was born in 1874.

Yet, both of these children were baptized only in their mothers’ names, without the initial acknowledgment of the fathers.\(^8^0\) However, the two brothers differed with respect to marriage. Melchor and Luciana eventually married. But for Luis and the mother of his children, Teresa Rubio, the documents do not indicate that they did. Luis only petitioned for the legal recognition of these children. In this case, like that of Luciana, Teresa had once been enslaved. However, the date by which she gained her freedom was not clear. In the baptism of Luisa Gregoria, her status was not listed. The next child born in 1868 was registered with “padres reservados” (the names remained guarded). For two subsequent children, Teresa appeared in the documents as a _parda libre_. Knowledge of her enslavement only comes from a copy of her baptism included in the file of her children’s recognition, which indicated she was born to an enslaved mother in 1848.\(^8^1\) As an additional unique feature of this recognition process, Teresa used the moment to reassert her family’s surname. Teresa had been known at various times by the

\(^8^0\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 35 exp. 20, 1874 for Luis’s petition for recognition of paternity. Reconocimientos, Leg. 71 exp. 83, 1882 for Melchor’s petition.

\(^8^1\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 35 exp. 20, 1874.
surnames Zayas or Lavin, which may have been associated with previous owners. At her birth, her mother had been enslaved to a Don Manuel Zayas. With the recognitions, Teresa then claimed that her family name was really Rubio, the surname of her mother.

The family of Luisa Mazona also demonstrates the manner through which the transition out of slavery occurred as a family event. In 1877, both Luisa and her mate, Justo Cárdenas, declared their son as their “hijo natural.” Both parents were simply described as enslaved creoles, belonging to the same owner, the Conde de Casa Barreto, a well-established figure within the Cuban elite.82 When they next appeared in the record in the 1879 baptism of other child, only Justo was still enslaved. Luisa was now described as a parda libre.83 During her enslavement, that reference to color had been absent. By 1882, Justo was no longer listed as the father of Luisa’s next child.84

The family of the two Africans, Francisco Sevillano and Victoriana Sánchez, experienced similar dramatic changes in the final two decades of Cuban slavery. The couple first emerged in the documents with the 1876 petition to recognize and legitimate their children born out of wedlock. Francisco described himself as an enslaved African from the Macua nation. His wife was also African, from the Ganga people. Unlike Francisco, Victoriana was initially registered as an emancipada. Their first child was born in 1869 and baptized at the Havana parish of Pilar, outside the old city wall. Only the mother’s name appeared on the certificate. The same was true for the next two

82AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 141, 1877.
83AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 457, 1879.
84AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 892, 1882.
children. However, in those cases, the family was registered at different Havana parishes, first at Espíritu Santo and then at Santo Angel. And Victoriana’s condition differed each time. For the second child born in 1871, she had gone from being an emancipada to "morena libre" consigned to a white patron, a captain in the infantry. With the third child, of 1875, she was simply a "morena libre," without further qualification. The couple returned to the parish of Espíritu Santo and married in December of that year. Yet Francisco remained enslaved. And his condition had not changed by the time of his final appearance in the documents, the 1877 baptism of the next, now legitimate, child.

These above cases are exceptional in that they allow of the tracing of changes in parents partners. In cases where the mother is listed solely and her parents are not named, it is difficult to establish the relationship between persons of similar names. Thus it becomes easier to trace, families in which both parents and both sets of grandparents appear. With single mothers predominating in the registries, the task becomes more difficult. One family stands out as the only case amongst Afro-Cubans in which only the father was named. The documentary record for the family of the free-born pardo Rafael Suárez was a very unusual one. In 1878 and 1879 respectively, he baptized children with solely his name. In both instances, the mother remained unlisted, with the annotation "madre reservada."

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85 Reconocimientos, Leg. 41 exp. 94, 1876.
86 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 195, 1877.
87 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 214 (1878) and 470 (1879).
Historian Ann Twinam has demonstrated that such ascriptions were not infrequent within the white populations of colonial Spanish America. She attributes their occurrence to a general desire from fathers to protect the honor of mothers, by guarding that latter's anonymity from potentially judgmental public scrutiny. The honor of a white woman would have been threatened in cases of out-of-wedlock birth, racial difference, and parental dissent.88 But, such considerations for the honor of women of color was less frequent, not unknown. Therefore, the mother of Rafael Suárez's children could have been from any social category.

For Espíritu Santo and in the records of the Cuban bishops of this period, only a few baptisms clearly linked a father of color to a mother with the Doña title generally reserved for whites. In this 1885 baptism, pardo Manuel Cabada y Gómez declared a "hijo natural" with Doña Fermina Valdés. However, since no parents were listed for Fermina, she was likely an orphan of questionable racial background.89 In another case, the mother's white identity is much less ambiguous. In 1884, from the rural town of Batabano, the free-born pardo Lorenzo Cortes recognized his paternity of a son born to Doña Serafina Pérez. Both of the mother's parents were listed as Don and Doña, respectively. This declaration had waited thirteen years after the child's birth, the death


89 AES, libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 78, 1885.
of Serafina, and the marriage of Lorenzo to a _parda_ wife.\textsuperscript{90} Perhaps with her death, Serafina’s honor was no longer at stake.\textsuperscript{91}

It is unusual that a few families in which all the family was listed with the honorific titles of Don and Doña appeared in the baptismal records of people of color at Espíritu Santo in 1877. Five consecutive cases of such baptisms were registered in January 1877. In none of these cases does the family appear later in the record. Nor was there any marginal correction to a possible error in racial categorization, as frequently was done when such errors occurred.\textsuperscript{92} One can only speculate on their social status. Perhaps they were families of color who gained such notation with some advanced social position. Yet, that their children’s baptisms remained confined to the book of color suggests that their juridical advancement was limited.

Another family of this type is insightful on this point. Late in 1877, another such registration of a child with Don and Doña parents and grandparents occurred for the Solano and Álvarez family. Yet, when this same family later baptized another child in 1879, the person previously listed as Don Pedro Solano, became "_pardo libre_" Pedro Solano. And the same occurred for his wife, who was listed earlier as Doña Juana

\textsuperscript{90}Reconocimientos, Leg. 78 exp. 40, 1884.

\textsuperscript{91}See chapter 9 below for additional evidence of these types of relationships.

\textsuperscript{92}For example, AES, _libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos_, entries 56-60, 1876.
Álvarez. 93 And even though, the family’s racial identity was now known the parish’s officials, no revisions were made to the earlier baptism.

The family of Eulogia Montalvo presents one exceptional example of the complexity of Afro-Cuban families within the combined ecclesiastic documents, demonstrating transitions of status, race, and generation. Eulogia first becomes known in the 1867 baptism of her daughter, Mercedes Genara Tavira. Mercedes was registered as the legitimate child of José Loreto Junco and Eulogia. Both parents were enslaved blacks owned by Doña María Dolores Tavira. Thus the child was also an enslaved “morena” and received the surname of the owner. 94 Yet, the next time Mercedes appeared in the records in 1889, she had dropped her former owner’s name and now returned those of her parents, Junco and Montalvo. At that time, Mercedes baptized her legitimate daughter Magdelena, born to her marriage with the black cook José Matilde Santa Cruz de Oviedo. The couple’s two other children would later appear in the record under the legitimate names of both parents. 95

Outside of her listing as the grandmother of Mercedes’s children, Eulogia also had an active presence in the records as mother to other mixed-race children. After the baptism of daughter Mercedes in 1867, Eulogia had at least five other children beginning in 1872. Unlike Mercedes, these children were initially baptized solely in their mother’s

93 AES, libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 174, 1877 and 463, 1879.

94 AES, libro 54 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 387, 1867.

95 AES, libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entries 514, 1889; and 757, 1891; and libro 57 entry 328, 1894.
name. But they shared maternal grandparents with Mercedes. Interestingly, all were
categorized as pardo, in contrast to their mother’s morena status. This classification was
later explained in 1881, when these children were recognized by their Spanish father.
While clarifying the children’s paternity, the couple explained that they had not married
earlier specifically because of a legal “impediment that prohibited it.”96

Yet, their paternal recognition was not the only element of family identity that
was valued by Eulogia. She also took steps to ensure that the ancestry on their maternal
ancestry was also properly recorded. Just before the status of these children was changed,
Eulogia also petitioned that their surnames would be changed from Gaston, which
belonged to one of her previous owners, to Montalvo, which her father had received after
arriving from Africa. This family thus made the transition from slavery by reclaiming
both the African and European side of its identity.97

The modes of family formation amongst Cuba’s enslaved people varied over the
course of the nineteenth century. As seen above, many families slowly entered into
freedom before final abolition occurred in 1886. When this fact is added to the frequent
occurrence of interracial family formation it becomes difficult to speak of Cuban “slave
families” in the final decades of slavery. Instead, there were families in which some
members experienced slavery and others did not. However, all were deeply affected by it.

96Reconocimientos, Leg. 66 exp. 90, 1881.

97Reconocimientos, Leg. 61 exp. 87, 1881. More discussion of interracial family
formation is found in chapter 6 below.
As a final example, when Domingo Rueda was illegally carried from Africa to Cuba, he was initially doomed to enslavement. But by 1877, he was a 59 year-old free man working as shoe repairer. That year he married a free creole morena, Salomé Abad and began the process of formally legitimating their five children who had earlier been born out of wedlock. The first three had been born into slavery, following their mother’s status at that time. The latter two were born into freedom resulting from the law of 1870. In 1882, Domingo and Salomé together petitioned the Church for the annotation of their children’s paternity, signaling that slavery had not inhibited the creation of strong familial bonds.98

Conclusion

The available sources allow for only a few direct comparisons about the effects of abolition on family formation in Cuba against those in other slaveholding societies in the Americas. The Cuban census data indicate a decline in marriage rates amongst people of color during the emancipation process and in its wake. This was the exception to the general pattern of increased marriage rates found elsewhere in the Americas amongst freedpeople. However, marriage within Cuban slavery seems to have been initially more prevalent than the British-American experience. Hence, what in Cuba is seen as a decline compares to what was a new phenomenon of formal registration process in other areas.

Additionally, Cuban family formation was not simply limited to the choice between illegitimacy and marriage. The category of recognized children allowed for establishment of legal bonds between parents and children without the benefit of

98Reconocimientos, Leg 67 exp. 78, 1882
marriage. Therefore, even in light of the lower statistical frequency of marriage, it is difficult to indicate that Cubans of color were less committed to family. Many of their families had a unique status relative to those found elsewhere.

Finally, abolition in Cuba was not solely a process in which slave families became free families. Some of the families were composed of some members who never experienced slavery while other members had. So as children born free to slave mothers, African *emancipados*, and white men were found in respective unions with enslaved people, their families were neither completely enslaved nor completely free. These situations demonstrated the classificatory flexibility that continued to characterize Cuban families, as they commonly crossed the standard social boundaries. Although Cuban families of color did not conform to the model of their white counterparts, they did demonstrate many of the same elements and even included similar members.
CHAPTER 6
RACE MIXTURE IN THE CREATION OF LATE COLONIAL CUBAN SOCIETY

Introduction

The nineteenth-century Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés* is a classic of Cuban literature. It paints a picture of a society shaped by slavery and deformed by the meanings of race created within it. Its title character, a very fair, yet racially-mixed, woman was subjugated by her own ill-fated attempt to “whiten” her way out of a repressive racial hierarchy. She became the lover of the white, creole son of a wealthy Spanish slave trader and bore his daughter. Unbeknownst to her, her lover was also her half-brother and the intended heir to their father's fortune. She, on the other hand, was the unacknowledged bastard, relegated to live in poverty and aided only by her father’s clandestine gifts. Her only true family was her mulatta maternal grandmother, who raised her.¹

This novel is frequently cited as indispensable primary evidence of the nature of colonial race relations.² Its pages describe a society where white men led the society,  

¹Cirilio Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés, o, La Loma del Ángel; novela de costumbres cubanas* (Madrid: Anaya, 1971, original 1881).

providing economic, political, and cultural order. However, much of this order was ostensibly predicated on the brutalization of the island’s other inhabitants. Cirilo Villaverde (1802-1894), the novel’s author, demonstrates that in addition to the obvious brutality experienced by enslaved people, the sexual exploitation of women provided another negative component of white male authority. White women were both victims of, and indirect participants, in this brutality. As its victims, they were not appreciated in their own right. Instead they were valued mostly for their roles as female progenitors of the next generation of the creole elite. On the other hand as the participants in Cuba’s social brutality, they also often collaborated in the victimization of others. They performed this role either by ignoring the pleas of their servants or punishing these black and mulatto victims for the reprehensible actions of their own spouses.

People of color, enslaved or free, sustained the country by laboring under heinous conditions. Some women of color may have sought to escape from these situations by entering sexual relations with white men, hoping for their own material benefit and the social advancement of their offspring. However, in his fictional vision of this process, Villaverde described them as sowing the seeds of their own victimization. He implies that while such relations brought temporary gains and whitened children, these women ultimately found themselves in worse social and economic straits. They were left with two greater burdens, additional mouths to feed and the social stigma of dishonor. Cecilia, juventud cubana en su tiempo;” and Raimundo Lazo, “Cecilia Valdés: Estudio Crítico,” both in Acerca de Cirilo Villaverde (Havana, Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982). See Doris Sommer, Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 128, and Norman Holland, “Fashioning Cuba,” in A. Parker, ed. Nationalisms and Sexualities (New York: Routlege, 1992) 147-148, for critiques of such close readings.
her mother, and her grandmother had all become trapped in this vicious cycle of desire and disappointment. Only men of color are perceived more negatively. As the most marginalized sector within the novel, black and mulatto men were left frustrated and helpless. They possessed no real means of social advancement. They were even denied the whitening option through which women of color could pursue social mobility for their descendants.

This chapter will demonstrate that, beyond Cecilia Valdés, more factual sources can provide some useful insights into the familial meanings of race in colonial Cuba. Cecilia Valdés leaves an incomplete, if not stereotypical, picture. It addresses only a very limited range of the actions involved in the politics of racial reproduction. Racial identities were reproduced in a variety of familial arrangements that were ignored by Villaverde, missed by many generations of his readers, and left unexplored by subsequent generations of historians. The re-creation of racial identities was not as constrained as Villaverde had suggested, with women giving birth to children of more or less similar racial classification.

Again, Villaverde presented only those situations in which white women were forced by social mores only to marry and conceive children with white men. For women of color, regardless of with whom they conceived, their offspring were never to be recognized as white and thus remained at the social margins. White fathers of racially

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mixed children refused to publically acknowledge them. And, men of color were left out of the reproductive equation. This chapter takes exception to this picture, by revealing the means through which the multiracial family became a frequent and publically recognized entity in late colonial Cuba. This chapter will broaden the view that under the auspices of such multiracial families, the rigidity of racial classifications was broken. Women of color bore offspring who received white jural classification and white women bore children who were assigned a mulatto classification.

Villaverde was right to indicate that the multiracial presence within family relations was one of the keys to comprehending Cuban identity and nationalism. However, his concentration on the deformative aspect of these relations hid much of their actual transformative power. A more accurate picture is drawn by moving away from fiction and by using a methodology based on non-literary, archival sources. Such records are used in this study to tell the story of how race was reproduced within familial settings. Unlike the situations portrayed in Cecila Valdés, Cubans of that period had a wider range of possibilities open to them. While one must admit that the actions of nineteenth-century Cubans were severely restricted by the norms of social behavior, these restrictions were on occasion circumvented and the racialized boundaries on their behavior were often crossed.

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4 As will be demonstrated below, the concept of family is not limited to the unit defined by marriage. Other forms can exist and have existed. See chapter 1 above.

Although race was present in the process of Cuban family formation, Cubans gained the ability to manipulate the various methods of family formation to their advantage. As we have seen in the previous chapters, between marginalized illegitimacy and marriage, colonial Cuban families were formed in a variety of recognized social practices and legal actions. And each form in turn reproduced racial meaning as they were also shaped by race. Most significantly, the evidence from nineteenth-century records shows that all kinds of people in the Cuban colonial space, from ordinary citizens to the Spanish monarch himself, used various notions of family to undermine the very racial identities around which the society was presumably constructed. Shifting racial classifications for the individual, families, and, at times, whole society were such significant outcomes.

This chapter's objective is to use examples such as these to reconsider the meaning of class and race in late nineteenth-century Cuba from the perspective of the strategies of social reproduction and family formation. Here social reproduction is viewed as the processes that engage, reproduce, and modify the existence of perceived social structures, including class and race, through the various acts of family formation. While marriage has been considered as the ultimate strategy of this type, Cubans of the post-

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emancipation period also utilized several other means of socially reproducing class and racial meaning. These strategies included 1) the recognition of children born out of wedlock, 2) the labeling of mixed-race children as white, and 3) official designations of whiteness in orphaned children of questionable background. These methods constructed the distinct versions of family through which Cubans mediated social distinctions. The distinction between whites and people of color was negotiated at these points. At times, these means minimized distinction, and in others, they amplified them.

The focus on family and reproduction provides a new level of analysis of class and racial discourses that moves beyond macro-level politics into the level of individual action. I will argue here that in making procreative choices, individuals must contend with pre-existing systems of social categorization. They must either accept, reject, or modify them. The selection of with whom one bears offspring and the categories into which those offspring are placed unconsciously either support the maintenance of class and racial hierarchies, or contribute to their disruption. Procreative choices refers to the range of activities, beginning with sexual relations but terminating with some social recognition of offspring, through which people socially reproduce themselves, their families, and at times their races. In isolation these actions (particularly sexual relations) may not have lasting significance, but taken together, they provide the basis for new

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forms of social organization. In this chapter, small ruptures in the meaning of class and race are revealed as Cubans of the post-emancipation period created families in a variety of previously-unrecognized forms.

A number of methods of social reproduction have been ignored in the traditional literature that treats the meanings of class and race in colonial Latin American societies. That literature emphasizes a tripartite division of society that can be viewed from the perspective of a racial division of reproductive actions. White males controlled the reproductive potential of white women by linking honor to procreation solely in legitimate marriage. This (re)produced a racially defined ruling class. In the next stratum, white males obtained the reproductive potential of non-white women by creating images of their own social, if not economic, superiority. These women presumably saw greater personal benefit if they reproduced lighter children with white men. The offspring of these relationships benefitted from what Degler called the “mulatto [or mestizo] escape hatch,” achieving a limited mobility.  

Reproducing amongst themselves over several generations, persons in this category are perceived as intermediaries between a white elite and a less racially mixed lower class. In the lowest social level, insufficiently “adelantado” women and men, whose phenotypes do not reflect sufficient race mixture, had limited social and economic possibilities. The male reproductive potential in this category is defined by a lack of opportunity to mate with higher status women. The

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8Degler, *Neither Black Nor White*, 107, *passim.*
women of this sector desired and had some access to higher status partners, despite the generally low rate of legitimizing of these relationships.9

Thus colonial Latin American societies allowed for the coexistence of endogamous, or equal status, marriage alongside hypergamous mating for women of color, in contrast with the situation of the United States where the possibility of hypergamous mating for people of color was denied.10 Nevertheless, in neither case were shifts in the meaning of race recognized. In both, white and black are viewed as essential positions. For many North Americans making comparative studies of race relations, Latin American exceptionalism has been seen only in the recognition of the mulatto or mestizo intermediary role. They suggest and emphasize that the rules of racial reproduction remained as fixed as did the social meanings of each racial category. This chapter suggests that such essentializing views of race and social reproduction need to be modified in favor of a more process-oriented analysis of the social construction of social categories within the context of the family formation. At least in one colonial Latin American society, late nineteenth-century Cuba, there existed much flexibility in these areas. Rigid notions of class and race were corrupted by the alternate methods of social reproduction and family formation discussed below.

The recognition of procreative choice as one method of (re)producing social differentiation is derived from feminist theories which propose consideration of the

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9See for example, Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas*; Hoetnik, *Slavery and Race Relations in the Americas*; and Degler, *Neither Black Nor White*.

domestic, or reproductive, domain when determining the means through which systems of social oppression—especially patriarchy—have been maintained. Proponents of these theories found classic Marxist explanations of gender difference inadequate with their focus solely on the relations of production. Instead, feminists suggested that materialist approaches to social formations should be complemented by analysis of the reproductive domain as a source of differences. They focused on the conditions that reproduce members of the various classes: laborers, the bourgeois, or the elite.\footnote{See for example, Johanna Brenner and Barbara Laslett, “Social Reproduction and the Family,” in Sociology, from Crisis to Science? Vol. 2. U. Himmelstrand, ed. The Social Reproduction of Organization and Culture (London: Sage, 1986) 116-131 and Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, "Feminism and Materialism," in Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 1-10.}

“The term social reproduction is used by feminist scholars to refer to the array of activities and relationships involved in maintaining people both on a daily basis and inter-generationally. Reproductive labor includes activities such as purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and repairing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional supports for adults, and maintaining kin and community ties”.\footnote{Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor” in R. Joeres and B. Laslett, eds. The Second Signs Reader: Feminist Scholarships, 1983-1996 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 27-69, [originally published in Signs: Journals of Women in Culture and Society 18, 1 (1992)].} In these areas the gender division of reproductive labor becomes readily apparent. Others, specifically those concerned with women’s reproductive rights, also give further consideration to the factors in
biological reproduction. Their discussions center on women’s control of their own productive potential, decisions including when and how often to bear children.\(^\text{13}\)

Unfortunately, these concerns for women’s reproductive potential and actions are rarely ever united with possible study of biological reproduction of perceived social difference. The literature continues to highlight intra-class and intra-race procreation. In these analyses, working-class women continue to reproduce the working class and elite women reproduce the elite, with little boundary crossing. This emphasis lacks the awareness that one is not simply born into a particular social position, but entry into a specific category is a process which only begins with procreation and procreative actions themselves have the ability to transform social structure. It does not question whether men and women can choose to bear offspring that would be socially positioned quite differently from themselves or to reproduce their own social categories through the bodies of partners who do not share the same status. Moreover, with this literature’s focus on North American and European societies, the transgression of class and racial boundaries is left unacknowledged.\(^\text{14}\) Instead, one could posit a wider application of this


feminist analytical framework that views the social construction of gender in the reproductive domain. The constructions of class and race of the same domain would then become opened to a new level of critique. The domestic, or reproductive, sphere then can be understood as possessing a value comparable to the domain of (economic) production in the creation of perceived social structures.

As outlined above, the reproductive context of much of Latin America has been historically quite different from the United States and Europe. The importance of race mixture in forming these societies has been an openly acknowledged in many popular and academic settings. However, it was not accepted unproblematically. Within intellectual and elite circles, a whitening of these populations was perceived as the ultimate goal of miscegenation. Much of this ideology was founded in the early colonial situation. There, white men promoted a vision of social reproduction that allowed them to reproduce themselves, or bear white children, through the bodies of non-white women. In the sixteenth century with the absence of a significant white female population, the emergence of white society was often conceived through the bodies of indigenous and mestiza women. A number of the offspring of relationships between white colonists and native women were raised as privileged whites. With the increased presence of white women in the colonial environment, these cases declined. By the beginning of the

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seventeenth century, the offspring of subsequent interracial relationships were somewhat permanently relegated to the *mestizo* category. The rigid three-tiered social division that associated color with status became entrenched.\(^\text{16}\)

This chapter demonstrates that the transformations of social categories associated with reproductive choice were not limited to the early colonial context, but also appeared in late colonial Cuba. In this setting, white men possessed several options in how they chose to father and socially position the next generation: as white through the bodies of pedigree, white women; as white through bodies of women of color or women of questionable backgrounds; or as obviously racially mixed, or *pardo*. These practices were often institutionalized. Those which were not sprang from an individualized redefinition of the meaning of family. Ultimately, in late nineteenth-century Cuba, the tendencies to diminish the value of class and race were in constant struggle with those forces that strengthened their meanings. Only in detailed examination of the evolving nature of this struggle can we begin to understand the various terms by which modern Cubans define themselves.

**Restrictions on Interracial Marriage and Alternate Methods of Family Formation**

Cuba’s colonial administration perceived the maintenance of a racial hierarchy as central to its political interests. The restriction, and at times outright prohibition, of interracial marriages was one means through which it attempted to ensure that racial

differences continued to possess value. Beginning with the Military Ordinances of 1728, which required that military officers have permission from their superiors to marry, and continuing with the *Real Pragmática de Matrimonio* of 1776, race became a factor in the state’s sanction of marriage in colonial Spanish America. Additionally, in Cuba, an 1805 clarification to the *Pragmática* was often interpreted as a broad prohibition on all interracial marriage with persons of African descent. These policies effectively ended any subsequent formation of legitimate interracial families. The most intensive application of these restrictions coincided with the height of Cuban slavery, in the period between 1820 and 1860. Thus, in an institutionalized manner, interracial reproduction was relegated to illegitimate forms and the racial hierarchy was reinforced.

Verena Stolcke’s [formerly Martínez-Alier] now classic study of this practice rests on her review of 199 petitions for or against interracial marriage, brought before colonial officials. She uses these cases to indicate the colonial regulations that maintained the racial hierarchy. Unfortunately, this conclusion extends beyond her actual evidence. Buried in the footnotes, she reveals that only twenty-five of the records indicated final resolutions. She finds fourteen petitions were rejected, while eleven were accepted. And of those that were accepted, the whites were of undistinguished, common status. She supported these data, with an additional evidence from the marriage records

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of a parish in provisional Havana. She found no interracial marriages in the nineteenth-century *pardo* and *moreno* marriage registry at Santa María del Rosario parish, a small town thirty miles outside of Havana. At a parish in the town of Regla, just across the bay from Havana, she found only two.¹⁹

Stolcke’s data are questionable for several reasons. First, the number of resolved cases insufficient to prove that the regulations were consistently executed. Only slightly less than half of the cases she found resolved (or 44%) were accepted. Additionally, a review of the cases in conjunction with this present study finds another ten cases that in which the marriages were accepted, bringing the acceptance percentage to 66%.²⁰ More significantly, again, marriage speaks only to that segment of the population that accepted its social value. Many Cubans of the period did not. They accepted families formed in other legal and extra-legal forms. Stolcke also did not account for intentional changes to racial classification to avoid the limitations of racial inequality found in the law. The failures on these points are highlighted below, with data that demonstrate the viability of interracial families.


²⁰This study found interracial marriages allowed in the following petitions: ANC, GSC, Leg 888 no. 29871, 1813; Leg 888 no 29913, 1813; Leg 888 no 29969, 1814; Leg 890 no 30044, 1815; Leg 891 no 30091, 1816; Leg 893 no 30297, 1818; Leg 895 no 30472, 1820; Leg 895 no 30487, 1820; Leg 895 no 3052, 1821; Leg 897 no 30698, 1822; Leg 897 no 30724, 1822; Leg 899 no 30829 1826; Leg 900 no 30881, 1827; Leg 912 no 31671, 1849; Leg 913 no 31731, 1850; Leg 935A no 32840, 1853; Leg 935B no 32963, 1858; Leg 921 no 32129, 1859 (includes three approved petitions); Leg 924 no 32284, 1862; and ANC, Gobierno General, Leg 348 no 16760A, 1868. However, this admittedly did not review all the available records.
Examples of Cuban flexibility in racial classification began at the highest levels of the colonial administration. In 1786, the Marqués de Sonora, José de Gálvez, one of the most important officials in Spain’s colonial administration, as viceroy of Mexico and uncle to the governor of Cuba, petitioned the Spanish monarch to mediate an end to the social embarrassment experienced by a loyal Havana family by declaring the wife white. The unfortunate family had been the brunt of vicious public gossip that suggested that the wife, Doña Mariana, was actually the daughter of a previously enslaved parda women, who now worked in the Havana streets selling flowers. In rejecting these rumors, her husband claimed that nothing would have been further from the truth. Instead, the home of Doña Mariana’s honorable, yet unwed, grandmother had been frequently visited by a young parda slave with the same name and approximate same age as Doña Mariana’s mother and people had maliciously assumed that the two young girls were the same. However, now the family presented thirty witnesses, including clerics and the former owner of the slave women, who testified in support of their claims of whiteness. All attested that the family was an honorable one that did not deserve such a perpetual stain on its reputation.21

Yet, the testimonies were still open to skepticism. When the petition reached the Spanish court, the king’s advisors urged him to dismiss this request. They found it most irregular. Generally, people of quality and significant wealth would have first requested that an illegitimate child receive a royal legitimation through an aspect of the gracias al

sacar procedure. The relatives of the petitioner would testify to the claimant’s familial ties and his or her white racial purity extending back at least four generations. Failing the ability of family members to testify, an extensive genealogy based on ecclesiastical records would have been used to support the family's claims. Doña Mariana had neither the public testimony of relatives nor the documents from the Church proving her claim. Where were her parents or the documentary proof of their existence? Without either, court advisors felt the King should deny the petition. Moreover, they asked why was the royal declaration of Doña Mariana’s whiteness more important than the restoration of honor through her legitimization? Despite these objections and questions, King Charles III granted the request. He did so on the stated grounds that it was his desire to bring happiness to one of his subjects by removing this dark mark against the family and allowing it to continue to receive social distinction.

Doña Mariana's story could be interpreted as revealing one individual’s success at "passing," hiding any negative aspects of her ancestry. But we could also interpret the story more broadly by shifting the focus from the individual to the community. In this case, a number of good citizens and even the monarch had been willing to bend the rules of racial classification for the pleasure of one family. They valued the family more than they valued upholding racially restrictive law. They were willing to confer whiteness on

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22 For a good description of this and other forms of gracias al sacar, see Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets: 43.

Doña Mariana despite her lack of merit based on traditional measures. They engaged in what could be called a conspiracy in racial identification.

Yet the question remains: Did not the social benefit achieved by this one family also threaten the society’s entire racial hierarchy? If one woman of questionable background could enter the ranks of the honorable, could not others have done so? Significant fissures existed in the racial hierarchy promoted by the colonial state and the dominant class. As will be demonstrated below, it was possible for children born of illegitimate unions between white men and women of color to simply become baptized as white and enjoy that designation on a legal basis. Within the files of the central archives of the Catholic Church in Havana there exist several cases in which white men had their racially-mixed children baptized as white.

In one such case, in 1865, the free pardo Federico Mainolo petitioned the Cuban Church for the correction of his fiancée’s baptismal record so as to permit them to marry. According to Federico, his fiancée, María del Pilar Genoveva de Rosa y Acosta, had been mistakenly baptized as White, when in fact she was a free parda. She had lived her twenty-three years under the mistaken white classification, but she would have to be reclassified to the correct parda status if the couple was to legally marry. María del Pilar’s parda status was readily confirmed by her appearance before the local priest. But the Church inquired further. Her mother, the negra María del Carmen Acosta, came to testify on her daughter’s behalf and to explain the cause of the initial confusion. María

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del Carmen readily acknowledged that facts of maternal identity listed on her daughter’s baptismal certificate had been falsified. Although María del Pilar’s father had been correctly listed as the white Havana native, Don Manuel de la Rosa, the document incorrectly listed the mother as Doña María del Carmen Acosta and the maternal grandparents were also given the honorific title of Don and Doña to indicate their fictitious white status. María del Carmen’s own baptismal certificate revealed her to be the legitimate daughter of two enslaved Africans. Don Manuel had also falsified the racial identities of the couples’ two other children, similarly baptizing them as whites. María del Carmen claimed these distortions had been created by the now-deceased Don Manuel against her wishes. Faced with such evidence, the Church allowed María del Pilar to marry her pardo fiancé by agreeing to her reclassification as parda. However, it left the racial status of her siblings unchanged.25

María del Pilar’s various transformations in racial classification are just one set of examples of the multiple levels of intrigue surrounding social positioning in late colonial Cuba. Her experience reveals some of the various methods Cubans used to cross the boundaries of racial identity. Here, beyond just one individual, family members, the Church, and the state all participated in these actions. First, the state’s role had begun well before María del Pilar’s birth and continued into the time of her engagement. Again, with the 1776 Real Pragmática Sanción de Matrimonio and additional, early nineteenth-century controls on marriage, the state imposed racial limits to the selection of marital partners. Next, almost three quarters of a century later, the white father

25Reconocimientos, Leg. 11, exp. 5, 1865.
circumvented these limitations through a questionable act, baptizing his racially mixed children as white. This allowed him to both openly acknowledge his children and obscure their socially disadvantageous black ancestry. Finally however, the daughter chose to adhere to the restrictions of the Pragmática and displayed a certain level of respect for both the state and the Church. María del Pilar chose to enter a same-race marriage with another pardo rather than enjoying the legal whiteness she had achieved.

The archival record reveals the existence of similar shifts in racial classification. Another case indicates how two of the mixed-race children of French émigré Don Juan Bautista Susan had been baptized as white, with the mother unknown, while three others had been listed as orphans of color. To ensure all a share of his estate, the paternity of each of the children had to be clarified. The names of both parents were added to the certificates of the orphans. Yet interestingly, the entries for the children who had been listed as white were not moved to the baptismal registries for people of color and there is no clear indication that the mother’s name was added.26

In 1875, a white father, Don Francisco Franco returned to the Church to clarify his children’s paternity and admitted that he had aided the falsification of their baptismal certificates, listing them as white and with a fictitious white couple named as their parents. Actually, they were the children he had by a women he owned as a slave and with whom he had lived “maritally” for many years. He had wanted to give his children legitimacy, but the 1778 legislation prevented the couple from marrying. Despite this

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26Reconocimientos, Leg. 25 exp. 6, 1868.
obvious deception, what is even more interesting is that after this admission the Church
allowed the children to remain listed as white. 27

A comparable scheme was attempted by another interracial couple. In 1885,
Doña Bartolomea Blanco asked the Church to re-certify the missing baptismal certificate
of her illegitimate daughter, Celestina. They were gathering the requisite documents for
the daughter’s up-coming wedding. In written testimony, Doña Bartolomea and the
child’s father presented themselves as White. They also had the confirmation of several
witnesses. The Church quickly agreed to the petition. A local priest was about to present
the restored certificate to the father when he casually asked why the couple had not
married. The father answered that the couple could not marry because of the obvious
racial difference between them. With indignant reaction, the priest quickly contacted
higher Church officials, requesting the denial of the new birth certificate that listed the
child as white. However, the Church did not take action against the child’s white
classification. 28

Another example also demonstrates that even when local priests complained of
the falsification of white identities for a child of color, higher-level officials often did not
engage in the argument. In 1851, a priest initially baptized an infant as white because he
could attest to the whiteness of the father and the godparents. He was untroubled by the
absence of the mother, who remained listed as “madre reservada” (mother reserved) on
the baptismal certificate. This situation changed as the priest later discovered that the

27 Reconocimientos, Leg. 36, exp. 56, 1875.
28 Reconocimientos Leg. 81 exp 68, 1885.
mother was in fact a slave. He then called upon the Church to change a child’s classification from White to pardo. The Church responded that without documentation of her mixed-race ancestry no such change was warranted.\textsuperscript{29} In these cases, the Church’s lack of interest in the precise maintenance of racial categories aided the corruption of the very meaning of whiteness. The white jural label lost some of its validity.

In spite of the 1778 restriction and the historical value of race in maintaining political and social hierarchy, many people were moved by a variety of motives, such as love or material considerations, to change their jural classifications from white to racially mixed in order to marry someone of previously unequal social standing. In 1817, thirty year-old José Bonifacio Garcia had lived his entire life as legally White, but to Church officials he now claimed to be a fair-skinned pardo. He had been baptized as a white, orphan, who had not know his parents or grandfather. However, he had been raised by his mother’s brother. He now rejected his white status in order to marry his fiancée who was clearly parda. The white uncle strongly objected and plead with colonial authority to prevent the marriage.\textsuperscript{30}

Another 1847 case demonstrates the flexibility of Cuban women in assuming racial designations. One white man, Don Ramón Moya, attempted to prevent his wife’s sister, Doña Encarnación, from marrying her pardo fiancé, since that marriage would create an unacceptable stain on his family’s reputation. The young woman responded

\textsuperscript{29}Reconocimientos Leg. 2 exp. 6, 1851.

\textsuperscript{30}ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Legajo 892 no 30240. Another example is found in Legajo 906 no. 31309. Examples from Church records include, Reconocimientos, Leg. 69 exp78 and Leg. 7 exp. 97.
with claims that in reality her family was not white but racially mixed. Her grandmother had been a woman of color. And in fact, her fiancé was also her uncle. His mother and Doña Encarnación's grandmother were the same person. The fiancé had been conceived in her relationship with a man of color, while his older sister was conceived in a relationship with a white man. After the deaths of her parents, Doña Encarnación had been raised in the household of her fiancé's father. This was a situation that would have been truly exceptional for a young white woman of good social standing. To drive home her point, Doña Encarnación went even further with her revelations of pardo racial identity, challenging even her brother-in-law Don Ramón's claims of being white. She suggested instead that he was really the illegitimate son of a priest and a mulatta slave woman. Ultimately, colonial officials allowed Doña Encarnación to marry without further comment.31

Another challenge to the traditional schemes of race labeling came into play with the 1813 case of a young woman, Doña Angela Ferrer, who petitioned the Cuban colonial authorities for permission to marry her mulatto boyfriend. The father of the young woman insisted that this marriage was legally prohibited and would only bring dishonor to his family. He claimed his family was of pure Indian descent and enjoyed the right to live in the Indian “reducción” (dedicated territory), the eastern Cuban town of Jiguani. By law, members of his family were permitted to marry only whites or other Indians. Similar to the actions undertaken by Doña Encarnación above, Doña Angela countered her father’s

31ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg 910 no 31527, 1847.
claim by stating that her family was in fact *pardo*. Indeed, this case causes one to wonder if the family was truly Indian. There is evidence on both sides of the issue. Jiguani was indeed one of the last purely Indian towns founded in Cuba, established in the eighteenth century. Perhaps Angela's father maintained his position in order to ensure the family's continued access to land reserved exclusively for Indians. The official file does not provide a resolution to these questions.

An even more institutional strategy also allowed racially-mixed children to achieve a designation as White. This often occurred after they were deposited as orphans in Havana’s *Real Casa de Maternidad*, also known as the *Casa Cuna*. It had been created under the auspices of both the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church to protect abandoned white children, offering them a chance for adoption to a good family or the right to be raised in the name of the Spanish Crown with legal acknowledgment of a fictive legitimacy. In recognition of the *Casa Cuna*’s founder, Archbishop Jeronimo Valdés, the family name of Valdés was granted to all such children in support of this idea. However, below we will see that in practice, non-white children were often also accepted under the same circumstances as whites.

Children of all races would be left abandoned at various private doorsteps throughout the country, received by the Church, and baptized with the annotation

\[\text{\textsuperscript{32}}\text{ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg 891 no 30108, 1813}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{33}}\text{Thomas, Cuba, 1541.}\]

"appears to be white." In this way, anyone could receive a white jural classification. Considerate parents would then return to "adopt" or act as patrons to their own abandoned, but newly whitened and legitimated children. One mid-nineteenth-century priest noted it was not unusual for adults who were obviously mulattoes to receive copies of their baptismal certificates that listed them as white orphans. The most famous case of the value of the Casa Cuna in reproducing and transforming racial categories comes from the tragic heroine at the center of the nineteenth-century Cuban novel noted earlier, Cecilia Valdés. Cirilio Villaverde's fictional story presented her as the illegitimate daughter of a quadroon women and an elite, white man. Cecilia received her surname as the result of a temporary placement in the Real Casa in an ultimately useless attempt to hide her background. Her removal from the institution to the home of her mulatta grandmother ended any possibility of hiding African ancestry. In this case, even her fair complexion still did not allow her to enter the world of creole whites. Her racial background was an ever-present force in limiting her social mobility.35

The available sources do not indicate how successful this strategy was for similar real orphans. What they do suggest is that some continued to live as jural Whites, and others did not. One black mother petitioned the Church to change her son's record to reflect his true parentage. She argued that if he remained listed as White, it become so obviously false as to make him the object of ridicule. Other orphans requested deletion of their white identities as a result of an unfavorable application of the 1778 impediment against interracial marriage. Take for example the case of Juana Valdés and her desire to

35 Villaverde, Cecilia Váldez.
marry her *pardo* boyfriend. Initially, colonial officials had denied the couple permission to marry based on racial inequality. As a royally recognized orphan, Juana was presumed to be white. After the first official rejection of her case, Juana resubmitted the petition and went to greater lengths to prove that she was in fact mulatta and that she had always associated with other people of color. She presented the required number of witnesses to affirm that point. Only then were both the change to her racial designation and the marriage license approved.\(^\text{36}\)

Some of the orphans who received their legal whiteness from the *Casa Cuna* realized the dubiousness of these designations. Late in the nineteenth century, a small number of these orphans insisted on additional medical confirmation of their whiteness. They submitted themselves to physical examination in the process of verifying their anthropometric characteristics as belonging to the Caucasian race. The first record of this type appeared in 1879, on the eve of the initial abolition of slavery in Cuba.\(^\text{37}\) It is unclear what motivated these petitions, whether it was a declining prestige for the *Real Casa*, other local changes in the meaning of race associated with the close of slavery, or possibly, the spread of scientific racism in the Euro-American world. Of the twenty-four such petitions encountered for the period between 1879 and 1892, five were requested in 1880 as slavery was replaced by the *patronato* system. An additional ten were found for 1886 and 1887, as slavery was completely terminated.\(^\text{38}\)

\(^{36}\)ANC, Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg 935A no 32823, 1851

\(^{37}\)Reconocimientos leg. 55, exp. 81, 1879.

\(^{38}\)Reconocimientos Leg 52, Exp 52 (1878); Leg 55, Exp 81 (1879); Leg 59, Exp 87 (1880); Leg 61 Exp 45 (1880); Leg 61, Exp 65 (1880); Leg 66 Exp 79 (1881); Leg 78
The process of acknowledging paternity for children born outside of wedlock also provided another institutional form for reproducing the boundaries of race and class within the context of the family. This ecclesiastical procedure allowed single or widowed men and women to recognize previously unacknowledged children. These records in the Havana Catholic Church cover the period from 1803 to the present. This study encountered 754 such petitions made between 1860 and 1894. Even without marriage, the children recognized in this way occupied a special legal space between the bastard and the legitimate. These children had the right to support from the declaring parent until they reached the age of maturity and the right to inherit a designated proportion of their parents’ estates. Of the cases, 169 were declarations by white or Asian men, claiming paternity of their mixed-race children. The majority of these children were legally baptized under the *pardo*, or racially-mixed, label. These actions created publically recognized families that did not conform to the limits the state had placed on racial reproduction. Despite legal impediments to interracial marriages, these Cuban families transcended attempts to define family in racially exclusive terms, where legitimacy and social recognition were reserved for whites, and illegitimacy and marginalization defined the reproductive space of people of color.

The first interracial recognition encountered in the records dates from 1860. It contains the angry lament of a white father at the difficulties he had faced in attempting to

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Exp 72 (1884); Leg 78 Exp 100 (1884); Leg 79 Exp 93 (1884); Leg 88 Exp 78 (1886); Leg 88 Exp 93 (1886); Leg 89 Exp 35 (1887); Leg 89 Exp 38 (18870; Leg 89 Exp 41 (1887); Leg 89 Exp 46 (1887); Leg 90 Exp 78 (1887); Leg 91 Exp 101 (1887); Leg 92 Exp 44 (1888); Leg 92 Exp 72 (1887); Leg 95 Exp 33 (1888); Leg 109 Exp 29 (1891); Leg 109 Exp 48 (1891); Leg 109 Exp 86 (1892); and Leg 110 Exp 14 (1892).
legally recognize his *parda* daughter. Don Enrique Urbina noted that by a royal order of December 1, 1837, illegitimate children were no longer to be baptized with their parents labeled as unknown, as long as both parents acknowledged paternity to the officiating priest. Don Enrique could not understand why therefore a local priest had refused to annotate proper paternity for his daughter, Enriqueta Dorotea. The Church's initial response was to state that since an official impediment to the marriage of the parents existed, neither parent could be recognized on the baptismal document. This impediment sprang from their obvious racial difference and the royal *cedula* (order) of Oct. 15, 1805, which stated

que en la pratica ha venido observandose constantemente, no pueden celebrarse matrimonios entre personas de reconocida nobleza y limpieza de sangre, con la de la clase de negros, mulatos, o demas castas, sin que los Presidentes de las Audiencias, previos los informes conducentes concedan su permiso (that it has come into practice that marriage cannot be celebrated between people of recognized nobility and cleanliness of blood and someone of the black, mulatto, and other mixed races, unless the presidents of the municipal courts, after reviewing the evidence, grant their permission).39

Despite this negative reaction, the child's paternity was later annotated to her baptismal certificate without further explanation.40

From that time forward, a small trickle of white and Asian men chose to so claim their mixed-race children. In fact, in a subsequent 1861 petition, a Church official indicated that because “no concurrir impedimiento alguno para contraer matrimonio...” between an Asturian man and an enslaved woman, acknowledgment of their child's

39Reconocimientos, Leg.4, exp. 57, 1860.

40Reconocimientos, Leg.4, exp. 57, 1860.
paternity was accepted without further comment. These types of recognitions crossed many social boundaries. It occurred amongst Spaniards and Cubans and property holders and the penniless. Only the Cuban nobility were not counted within this set. The example of the Marquis de Esteban with which this section started is the only one of its type encountered.

The potential for this method of family formation to provide a site of class coalescence becomes apparent. The concept of class requires the people to populate and perpetuate it. It can not exist without a reproductive component. It is normally understood in endogamous terms, with working-class men and women giving birth to working-class offspring or elite men and women producing elite offspring. The cases discussed here reveal greater flexibility in this practice.

White Cuban men of various classes reproduced themselves in bodies that, by law, should have been unavailable to them according to race. An 1880 case reveals a white, working-class carpenter recognizing the child he fathered with a morena woman who he had owned at the time of the child’s birth six year earlier. While the documents do not indicate the extent of the relationship between the parents, the father accepted a legal responsibility toward his son and claimed him as a family member. In 1881, as a Spanish immigrant coach driver claimed the daughter he had with a previously enslaved

\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg 4, exp 83, 1861.}


\footnote{Reconocimientos, Leg 58 Exp 20, 1880.}
woman, he also contributed to this familial unification of the Cuban working class that extended beyond other racial differences.44

The Chinese and indigenous Mexican men brought to labor in Cuba also participated in this process. Witness the petition of Antonio Méndez Romero from Tabasco, Mexico. In 1882, he was a single, sixty-three year old day laborer when he recognized the two children he had with morena Felipa Pérez. Their daughters had been born in 1871 and 1872, while Felipa was enslaved in Batabano.45 Chinese men also recognized their children by white women. As in the case of farm worker, Manuel Rodríguez from Canton, who in 1882 claimed the children he had with Doña Gertrudis del Torro y Rodríguez. However, use of this style of family formation to decrease racial difference did have its limitations. Only in one exceptional case did a man of color claim a child with a white woman. In 1884, pardo sailor Lorenzo Cortes acknowledged his six-year-old son by Doña Serafina Pérez. The child originally had been baptized as white with father unknown. However, there is no indication that the Church ordered pardo racial designation after the recognition.46

While the use of this distinct family form to shape racial meaning and to foster interracial class unity was most prevalent in the working class, white men from higher social sectors also recognized their racially-mixed children. In 1880, just before he returned to Spain, captain Don Ramón Monesma y Casanova of the Spanish infantry

44Reconocimientos, Leg 62, Exp 94, 1881.

45Reconocimientos, Leg 70 Exp 15, 1882

46Reconocimientos, Leg. 78 Exp. 40, 1884.
acknowledged his son by a parda woman. In this way, the child would enjoy his father’s name, even though he did not enjoy his presence. Men who described themselves as property owners and merchants also claimed their *pardo* children. In 1882, Spanish businessman Don Andres Collazo y Reyes accepted the same responsibility for his children by his former *parda* slave, Ysabel Caro. That same year, medical surgeon Dr. Pedro Sánchez de las Cuevas recognized the children he had with *morena* Ysabel Duque Azrozarena. The couple appeared together before a notary and stated "que han tenido desde hace algunos años relaciones amorosas" (loving relations that had lasted for several years). The first of their five children had been born fourteen years earlier.\(^{47}\)

The number of such cases increased very gradually throughout the latter half of the century. The year 1860 saw the one case mentioned above, while in 1862 there were eight interracial recognitions. These admittedly low numbers peaked at two separate years, 1882 and 1887, with thirteen and fourteen petitions respectively. Interestingly, both of these years are just after major changes in race relations in the economic domain. In 1880, the Spanish government declared that those persons held in slavery would then transition into their freedom through the *patronato* system. In 1886, slavery was finally eliminated. The small increase in interracial recognitions in these periods suggests a link between the creation of the meaning of class and race in the productive and reproductive domains.

These cases should not, however, give the impression that interracial families formed through these acts easily overcame other situations in which the value of race

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\(^{47}\)Reconocimientos, Leg. 71 Exp. 95, 1882.
within the process of family formation continued to hold significance. Although the restriction on interracial marriages was officially lifted by the Spanish government in 1881, existing sources indicate only a modest increase in these types of marriages. A review of baptismal records for children of color in the Havana parish Espíritu Santo reveals only twelve children legitimately born to interracial couples in the period between 1881 and 1900. In the majority of these cases, a white man married a woman of color. In only four cases was a man of color married to a white woman, and two of these women were non-Hispanic. With the end of racial classification within the registries of this parish, the possibility of tracing changes in racial patterns of reproduction was lost. However, by itself, the discontinuation of racial identifiers may signal a major change in the value placed upon racial distinctions in the reproductive domain.

One final case of paternal recognition reveals just how far the association between familial legitimacy and race had shifted. Just after the end of Spanish rule in Cuba, in January 1899, an elite Havana resident, the Marquis de Esteban—Dr. Don Pedro de Esteban y González de Larrinaga—petitioned the Church to change his son’s baptismal certificate to indicate the child’s previously unacknowledged paternity. The child, Ricardo, had been originally baptized fourteen years earlier as the illegitimate colored son

\[\text{AES, \textit{libros de bautismos de pardos y morenos} 55, 56, 57, and 59.}\]

\[\text{49See Rafael Nieto y Cortadellas, \textit{Dignidades Nobiliares en Cuba} (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1954) 222 for a brief biography of Pedro de Esteban y González de Larrinaga. He was born in Havana, 12 October 1849 and graduated as doctor of civil and canon law at the University of Havana in 1879. He was granted the title of marquis by Pope Leon XII, which confirmed by royal order in 1885, and he became mayor of Havana in 1899.}\]
of a *parda* woman. With his father’s declaration, he entered the category of “hijo natural reconocido,” with the newly conferred rights to use his father’s family name and to inherit a small portion of his estate.

As was seen above, such petitions were not unusual in late nineteenth-century Cuba. At all social levels, many children were only recognized by their fathers well after their baptisms. What made this petition exceptional was that now a member of the Cuban nobility was claiming his racially-mixed child. The marquis was publicly joining white and black under the same elite name and demonstrating that for him the legal recognition of this family member stood above some of the social distinctions usually engendered by race. While sexual relations between noble men and women of color and the resultant offspring were probably common to colonial Cuban society, rarely were these relationships given legal standing. For the marquis, the secrecy previously associated with such actions appeared to be less significant. He did not hide the child’s race or paternity, but instead acknowledged him as an heir.

Despite these examples of the disjuncture between the policies of the state and the actions of the Church, at times the two converged, or at least the Church’s position appeared ambivalent. Take for example, the handful of cases in which single, white women petitioned the Church for correction of their mistaken *parda* identities found in their children’s baptismal records. In all cases, both mother and child had been initially

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50AES, *libro 56 de bautismos de pardos y morenos*, entry 11, 1899.
listed in the baptismal registries of people of color. With documentation of the mother’s white ancestry, the children’s records were readily transferred to the registries of whites.\textsuperscript{51}

The original listings and subsequent corrections suggest several explanations. One could easily accept that the initial \textit{parda} listings may have been simple errors. However, given the colonial association of whiteness and legitimacy, these petitions may suggest a tendency to record out-of-wedlock baptisms under people of color. Any possible reclassification of white mothers as \textit{parda} would have confused even further the meaning of whiteness in Cuba’s late colonial period by forcing “true” whites into the \textit{pardo} jural category. The other interpretation of these cases is that they represent more evidence of women of color successfully “passing.” Such a view would only further support my hypothesis that when requested, Church officials preferred to list someone as white and aided the construction of ambiguous racial identities.

With these possibilities in mind, if we return to the case of Antonio Soto discussed in chapter 3 above, greater uncertainty in his racial positioning is apparent. Remember Antonio was initially baptized as White, with his father unknown. He later changed his classification to \textit{pardo}. Yet, his mother’s racial category was not changed. If her status was true, then this in one of the few cases in which white women are present in the registers as mothers to \textit{pardo} children. This possibility is further suggested in the oral family histories that I collected in Havana.\textsuperscript{52} Of my twenty Afro-Cuban informants over

\textsuperscript{51}Reconocimientos, Leg. 19 Exp. 80, Leg. 46 Exp. 2, Leg. 68 Exp 61, Leg. 79 Exp. 54, and Leg. 93 Exp. 78.

\textsuperscript{52}See chapter 9 below.
the age of 75, three discussed knowledge of white grandmothers. One such case recounted the story of the grandmother's painful banishment from her white family when she chose a black spouse. In contrast, in the approximately 5,800 baptisms of color recorded at the Havana parish of Espíritu Santo between 1876 and 1904, only two white mothers were listed. While there is no direct correlation between these two data sets, their difference is suggestive. They may speak to a jural denial of the possibility of interracial reproduction between men of color and white women. No members of either group could reproduce publically themselves in the bodies of the racial other, a fact that stands in great contrast to the reproductive possibilities of white men and women of color.

The background of the well-remembered Cuban poet, “Plácido” Concepción Valdés also speaks to the existence of this practice. He was the son of a mulatto craftsman and a Spanish actress. Although he was raised in his father’s home, he was initially placed the Real Casa de Maternidad and baptized with the surname Valdés. What motivated this action? Did his parents wish to protect his mother’s honor, hide his father’s race, or both?

A final case recalls the various possibilities open to Cuban women in exercising their reproductive options. In defending her pardo lover, José de Leon, against charges

54 AES, libros de bautismos de pardos y morenos, 56-59.
55 Francisco Calcagno, Poetas de color (Havana: Militar de la V. de Soler, 1878) 9-10.
of kidnaping and rape, the White Doña María Navarro testified that they had intended to marry and that she had threatened him "that if he didn't do it [carry her to his home], he wasn't a man." And even more surprisingly, a local official supported the couple's plans. In a letter to the President of the Real Audiencia, he cited the example of the case against the pardo Juan Escalona for the alleged rape and kidnaping of Doña Eusevia Yzquierdo, where a license to marry was granted. The official suggested that based on this precedence José de Leon and Doña should have been allowed to marry.56

In addition to the patriarchal oppression experienced by these women, men of color also felt the impact of this discrepancy, as their pool of potential mates was greatly narrowed. Legally, interracial relationships between men of color and white women were permitted, but in practice, social taboo restrained their fulfilment. Pleas against these limitations entered the public arena early in the twentieth century as members of the Afro-Cuban Partido Independiente de Color commented on this injustice. They urged their fellow Cubans to accept the marriages of white women and men of color as naturally as any other union were accepted.57 In this way, race continued to have differential significance for men and women of color, just as it did for white women and men. The various ways in which they chose to shape family, at times, had the power overcome these differences and at others they only reinforced them.

56ANC, Fondo de Gobierno Superior Civil, Leg. 914 no. 31756.

57“Somos racistas de amor,” Previsión, 5 November 1909 and “Baterías de rebote,” Prevision, 30 September 1908, both cited in Helg, Our Rightful Share, 150.
Conclusions and Implications

The interpretation of the value of race in the formation of Cuban families of the late colonial period found in Cecilia Valdés is too static to offer a true picture of the reality. Actual families were created with much greater flexibility in respect to racialized reproduction than offered in the fictional account. Real-life “Cecilias” could find their escape from the racial structures to which the legendary heroine succumbed. Although race and class are not fixed social structures, they are often perceived as such. People often act on these perceptions in ways that reproduce them. However, within any society, there exist those who place greater value in other social experiences than they give to the ideas of class or race.

This chapter argues that, in choosing alternate family forms, a number of late nineteenth-century Cubans initiated unintended changes in the manner in which class and race were lived and perceived. At various points, the meaning of family crossed the traditional boundaries between classes and between races. The above examples reveal the existence of these dissident acts. Between the recognition white men gave to their racially-mixed children and the norms of reproductive isolation determined by class and race, several possibilities existed. Those of African ancestry could enter the ranks of the white and the white person could choose to reclassify himself as a person of color. In terms of class, the man of wealth could choose to bear his heirs with an enslaved woman. Also, the white laborer could choose to create family alliances with people of color, in an act that also fostered an intra-class unity that transcended racial categories.

The examples presented above also challenge earlier visions of Latin American race relations at several points. First, they demonstrate that any essentialized notion of
race is questionable. For although writers in this tradition, such as Degler and Skidmore, acknowledge that beyond ancestry, other socioeconomic conditions determine racial classification and for example, “money whitens,” they fail to recognize that the very definitions of racial categories were not fixed. All had been subject to internal transformations, expanded or contracted to fit a variety of socio-political situations. Even the “whiteness” that the dominant elements of Euro-American societies have held as paramount has undergone shifts in meaning.\(^5\) By the late nineteenth century, the purity by which it had been once defined was questionable. This uncertainty was not driven only by the actions of people of color. The person of color did not simply “whiten” or “pass” into whiteness by repeated, reproductive lessening of non-white physical characteristics accompanied by unproblematic socioeconomic advancement.\(^5\) Instead, the very definition of whiteness was conscientiously expanded to fit certain people of recognized mixed descent, and economic considerations were only one factor in that process. Additionally, “whitening” was a process that required active white participation, beyond the biological contribution. As the established historiography has tended to focus

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\(^5\)The economic advantages enjoyed by people of notable mixed-race descent have been attacked by several authors, most recently see Charles H. Wood and Peggy Lovell, “Skin Color, Racial Identity, and Life Chances in Brazil.” *Latin American Perspectives* 25, 3 (May 1998): 90-109.
on the intellectual discourse surrounding race mixture, it missed some of the nuances of the active process.

Second, the older scholarship assumes that all social actors were striving for advancement vis-à-vis the colonial state. All actions, including reproduction, are interpreted through this lens, understanding the procreative choices of the majority of subalterns as directed toward “whitening.” One can be critical of this perspective because of its emphasis on a unidirectional orientation and its dismissal of other possibilities in racialized reproduction.

Descriptions of whitening position either the individual or the nation as the unit of analysis. The nation whitens as the demographic presence of non-white individuals decreases. The dark individual whitens in the choice of lighter individuals as reproductive partners. As shown here, there could have been a great deal more at play. What of the choice made by the lighter partner? Since race mixture in colonial Latin American occurred most often in consensual unions between white men and non-white women, it has been assumed that these men did not have a social investment in the offspring and did not seek to reproduce themselves in the non-white bodies of either mother or child. The literature does not consider these relations as families, but defined this as concubinage or promiscuity, with diluted social value, and positioned the offspring as marginal, depending on if they have passed some threshold in white phenotype. Thus, according to the literature, the partner of color whitens, while the white partner remains unaffected by his or her reproductive choice.

While it is likely true that some dark individuals often did hope to whiten subsequent generations, viewing the process of whitening through the lens of the family
or the community instead of the individual makes its legal and social limitations more apparent. As we have seen, a few people chose to be *pardo*, rather than White. Thus, such a perspective would also suggest that an intermediate “browning” is just as likely an interpretation. In colonial Cuba’s interracial context, the social reproduction of race did not follow a unitary paradigm. The Latin American rejection of the U.S. type black hypodescent or “one-drop rule” did not only create an alternate mulatto hypodescent nor an inevitable whitening. Interracial procreation did not have a fixed result. The offspring of the same couple could have been labeled white or mulatto depending, not only on skin color and economic status but, on the various strategies employed by individuals to group themselves collectively into families.

Thirdly, one can be critical of the manner in which older studies tend to equate marriage with the height of social reproduction and expression of racial ideology. The number of interracial marriages is then read as the measure of the disappearance of racial preferences. With social reproduction occurring in a much more complex web of relationships than just marriage, counting the number of interracial marriages alone is an inadequate method for determining of the significance of race. Fourth, in the same vein, the older scholarship also neglects the situation that beyond the birth of children to legitimate marriage, other options existed for the social recognition of children and families in colonial Spanish America. The cases presented above of “orphans” and the

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intermediate status of “recognized” children demonstrate the existence of such previously unconsidered options. Ultimately, between reproduction and marriage, colonial Cuban families were formed in a variety of recognized social practices and legal actions. And each form in turn reproduced racial meaning, just as they also had been initially shaped by race.
CHAPTER 7
THE RISE OF THE AFRO-CUBAN LEADERSHIP IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

Antonio Medina y Céspedes was one of the leading Afro-Cuban figures of the nineteenth century. He was born in 1824 into a free pardo family of Havana, and he eventually distinguished himself as an educator, journalist, and poet. By the age of eighteen, Medina had become one of the earliest newspaper editors amongst people of color. He created the small paper, El Faro Industrial, in 1842. However, this was not the limit of his intellectual activities. He wrote for other papers and published his poetry and plays. His writings reflected his deeply Catholic morality and a commitment to the improvement of Cuban society. Yet, however impressive his literary accomplishments were, he was remembered more for his role as an educator. In conjunction with the Catholic Church, Medina operated Havana's Colegio Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados in the 1860s to instruct children of all classes. This institution eventually gained a reputation as one of the best schools in the capital, providing rare educational opportunities for the working class, especially children of color. One of his earliest
students, Juan Gualberto Gómez (1854-1933), went on to become the outstanding political voice of Afro-Cuba for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹

Medina was just one example of the growing value of the Afro-Cuban leadership of the nineteenth century. Men and women with backgrounds similar to Medina's represented the small numbers who articulated Afro-Cuban concerns. They spoke for a wider Afro-Cuban community that was not defined by any racially-segregated, spatial arrangement, as existed for their North American counterparts. Theirs was an informal, but self-conscious, community created, to some extent, by the reproductive isolation of free men of color, a tenuous unity required for the continued confrontation with racial discrimination, and varying degrees of adherence to African-derived religion.² Within this community, an emerging "class" of Afro-Cuban intellectuals who distinguished themselves from the masses. This group matured and slowly expanded over the course of the nineteenth century as people of color utilized familial strategies for the acquisition of freedom, sought the few available educational opportunities for their children, established political connections with whites, and began a new public discourse in which they articulated their own meanings of cubanidad.

¹Juan F. Risquet, Rectificaciones: La cuestión político-social en la Isla de Cuba. (Havana: America, 1900) 147-149; and Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, El negro en el periodismo cubano en el siglo XIX, Ensayo bibliográfico (Havana: Ediciones R., 1963) 9-10.

²The religions of African derivation continue to have strong presence in Cuban society. For treatment of this topic, see for example Miguel Barnet, Afro-Cuban Religions (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001) and Lydia Cabrera, El monte: igbo-findá, ewe orisha, vititi nfinda: Notas sobre las religiones, la magia, las supersticiones y el folklore de los negros criollos y el pueblo de Cuba, 7th ed. (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1983). However, this current study will not focus on them.
It is important to examine the rise of this Afro-Cuban leadership during Cuba’s slave-holding period in order to understand the evolution of some of its more significant, later political activities. Their participation in Cuba’s independence movements and their own struggles for greater racial openness in national politics in the early republican period were among the most important endeavors. Previous North American and Cuban analyses of this class and its activities have generally confined themselves to revealing its political views at a particular historical moment. Cubans Pedro Serviat and Tomás Fernández Robiana have created general studies of such activities. American Robert Paquette and Jamaican Franklin Knight separately discuss Cuba’s free people of color in the nineteenth century, in terms of demographics, their occupations, and political activities. Philip Howard offers important insights into the social and political contributions of the Afro-Cuban organizations of the nineteenth century. Ada Ferrer recently has clarified the role of Afro-Cuban intellectuals and military men in the wars of

\[3\] The obvious exception is the extended consideration of this group in Klein, *Slavery in the Americas*.


\[5\] Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*; and Knight, “Cuba,” 278-308.

independence, highlighting their efforts to maintain a patriotic image as they were confronted by accusations of racist goals.\textsuperscript{7}

Moving completely beyond the slave-holding period, Aline Helg reveals the depth of the Afro-Cuban attempts to gain greater political recognition within the early national period. Many of their veterans had not received the rewards they felt they deserved after the wars of independence.\textsuperscript{8} And, finally, Alejandro de la Fuente has examined the evolution of the same issues throughout the twentieth century. In contrasts with Helg, he demonstrates the value of race in creating political compromises throughout the republic. He argues that the Afro-Cuban population was a political force that could not be ignored. However, at the same time, it continued to experience racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{9}

The current study relies heavily on each of these works, but differs from them in an important way. Each of the works just mentioned has brought important attention to Afro-Cuban political interests. However, none has considered the modes through which the Afro-Cuban political class was (re)produced, that how they distinguished themselves within the Afro-Cuban population. This chapter begins with this theme and then moves on demonstrate how the survival of this group was not only influenced by high-level racial politics, but also by the racial construction of its members’ lives at much more personal levels. This chapter reviews the personal biographies of the Afro-Cuban leadership within the more general context of the group’s socio-political experiences, in

\textsuperscript{7}Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}.

\textsuperscript{8}Helg, \textit{Our Rightful Share}.

\textsuperscript{9}De la Fuente, \textit{A Nation for All}.
order to create a new vision of their specific processes of class formation and reproduction. This chapter also crosses the temporal divides typical in Cuban history, in order to demonstrate that the social transformations of Afro-Cuban identities can not be easily explained solely in accord with major political change. Additionally, it will be argued that the break between the colonial and national periods was not very sharp when seen from the perspective of social relations.

Returning for a moment to Antonio Medina, one sees in his family an example of the mechanisms that contributed to the creation of the Afro-Cuban leadership. This was a family formed by legitimate marriage and into which legitimate children were born. It was one form through which free people of color adapted themselves to what a Cuban historian has labeled the “patrones de los colonialistas” (colonial norms). In 1857, Medina married the free parda María Modesta Valdés y García.\(^\text{10}\) The couple had at least four children who survived into adulthood: Antonio, María de la Cruz, Catalina, and Manuel. After Medina y Céspedes died in 1885, the family continued to live in the Havana barrio of Jesús María and were members of the Catholic parish of Espíritu Santo. Three of the children celebrated their marriages and had their own children baptized there. Each member of this second generation married people of “su mismo clase” (of the same class), other pardos from free families.\(^\text{11}\)

The baptismal records of the Medina y Céspedes third generation reveal a very united family. At her son’s baptism in 1886, María de la Cruz and her husband lived

\(^{10}\) Risquet, *Rectificaciones*, 147-149.

\(^{11}\) AES, *Libro 56 de bautismo de pardos y morenos*, entry 150 and entry 582.
with her mother. Her brother Antonio and sister Catalina stood as godparents. Three years later at the baptism of his son, Antonio and his mother had the same address. His mother and brother Manuel stood as godparents. By this time, Antonio was listed with an occupation "del comercio" (in business) and Manuel was a student. Antonio followed in his father’s footsteps, teaching, and in 1894, reopened the school founded by his father decades earlier. Much later, in 1928, Antonio would become president of one of Havana’s black Catholic fraternal organizations, Purisima Concepción, one of the major instruments of black political life in the period. Racial coherence, social respectability, and political involvement were all themes that surrounded this family.

In sum, this family’s history highlights the upper limits of the accomplishments of free Afro-Cubans in the slaveholding era, as it also raises questions about the links between family formation and the articulation of social identities within this group. As we have seen in earlier chapters, several modes of family formation were practiced by Afro-Cubans. This chapter considers the extent to which familial experiences of free people of color in a slave society shaped the later political activities of its members and can be used in a historical study to provide more general insights into questions of

12 AES, Libro 56 de bautismo de pardos y morenos, entry 150.

13 AES, Libro 56 de bautismo de pardos y morenios, entry 582.

14 Helg, Our Rightful Share, 37.

national and racial identity amongst other Cubans. To this end, this chapter moves beyond an examination of family background to also explore the experiences that created commonality amongst the Afro-Cuban leadership. Below we shall see how some of this commonality was based on the acquisition of freedom during the late slave-holding period, advancement through educational opportunities, exile in times of political crisis, and insertion into a network of political writers (both white and of color).

**Familial Mechanisms for Establishing the Free Afro-Cuban Population**

For people of color in Cuba before 1886, the difference between living in slavery or freedom was obviously decisive. With several avenues toward freedom in place for the enslaved population, the free Afro-Cuban population was continually reinforced with new members. Adding to this process, their own biological reproduction augmented their numbers. In comparison to the rate of population decline found for enslaved people, a natural increase was found amongst free people of color. Their numbers grew accordingly. Approximately 30,000 free people of color populated the island in 1774. Their population increased to 114,000 in 1810 and to 153,000 in 1841. It then decreased to 149,226 in 1846, but experienced a dramatic increase to 232,493 by 1861. This increase among free Afro-Cubans parallels explosive increases in the enslaved population, so that by the late 1820s, free and enslaved Afro-Cubans outnumbered Whites. By the time of final emancipation the total Afro-Cuban population stood at 528,798. Before the final emancipation process began, the proportion of free people of color consistently represented between 15 and 20 percent of the total and in the early
1840s, 26 percent of the total free population were people of color.\textsuperscript{16} Island-wide, the presence of free people of color varied greatly. They were concentrated in urban areas and more in Cuba's eastern areas than in the west.\textsuperscript{17} One out of three lived in Cuba's four largest cities (Havana, Santiago, Puerto Príncipe, and Matanzas), with one out of five living in Havana.\textsuperscript{18}

The Spanish colonial government often perceived of free people of color as members of a potential buffer group against either slave revolts or against white insurrection. However, free people of color also had their own potential of rebelliousness, as they sought equality within a racially discriminatory system.\textsuperscript{19}

Socially, free people of color were closely linked both to the enslaved and to Whites. Previous chapters in this study demonstrated the reproductive interaction among these populations. However, this was done without a thorough discussion of the rise of the free black and mulatto populations. The current chapter rectifies that omission, examining these significant Cuban groups, which were notably complex in their origins. For example, by the time that complete emancipation was issued in October of 1886, some families had possessed freedom for several generations. The Medina y Céspedes described above were members of this class. Others experienced the gradual transition to

\textsuperscript{16}Kiple, \textit{Blacks in Colonial Cuba}, 26, 32, 47, 63, and 73.

\textsuperscript{17}Paquette, \textit{Sugar Is Made with Blood}, 106.

\textsuperscript{18}Paquette, \textit{Sugar is Made with Blood}, 39.

\textsuperscript{19}Paquette, \textit{Sugar is Made with Blood}, 104-107.
freedom over the course of the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{20} And a final component achieved it only at the ultimate moment.

Throughout Cuba's colonial period, but especially before the boom in the sugar industry in the late eighteenth century, there existed several mechanisms through which an enslaved person could legally achieve his or her freedom. First, owner-initiated manumission occurred under several circumstances. Several scholars read the high incidences of miscegenation common to Cuban society as the impetus for many manumissions. Such cases have been assumed to have involved situations in which owners would free their enslaved mulatto children born to enslaved mothers.\textsuperscript{21} Also, there were frequent cases in which an owner's good will led him to free his slaves out of gratitude for "eminent service" or "loyalty and good service."\textsuperscript{22} In addition, some unscrupulous masters also freed those ill or elderly persons whose service no longer profited them.

Second, several types of service to the Spanish Crown and colonial authority could earn freedom for an enslaved person. One could denounce acts against the government, including treason, counterfeiting documents and currency, and military desertion. This first situation had the potential for limiting conspiracies which involved enslaved people acting against the colonial government, as it created an environment in which co-conspirators could not trust one another. The identification of a master's killer

\textsuperscript{20}Scott \textit{Slave Emancipation in Cuba}; and chapter 6 of this study.

\textsuperscript{21}Knight, "Cuba." 282-283.

\textsuperscript{22}Castellanos and Castellanos, \textit{Cultura afrocubana}, 1: 78.
or avenging him could also lead to freedom. Even denouncing the rape or molestation of a virgin was viewed with favor. Finally, as mentioned in chapter three of this study, enslaved couples owned by the crown could earn freedom with the birth of ten children. The colonial government could also grant an enslaved person his or her freedom in certain cases of severe abuse by the master. Such was the case if a slave owner knowingly put an enslaved person into public prostitution. Additionally, historian Herbert Klein notes that...

...[other] means of freedom for the slave involved his being the recipient of some right through his relations with others or through his assumption of rights that only a freedman could hold, and therefore necessitating that he be made a freedman commensurate with his newly won rights and duties...if he became a member of the clergy...if a father appointed a slave as the guardian of his children...if he] became the heir of his master...if his master willingly agreed and consented to [the slave's marriage to a free person]...and if a master married his slave the slave was automatically freed.

One would suspect that the number of cases in these last categories were few. And, with the 1776 Real Pragmática de Matrimonio curtailing interracial marriage, the last option became almost completely unavailable.

The third legal means of obtaining freedom was coartación. It specified the methods through which an enslaved person could purchase freedom for herself or a family member. It provided that after seven years of labor or before the birth of a child, who would have been enslaved otherwise, a price could be agreed upon by both the owner and the enslaved, and thereafter, the enslaved made incremental payment of that

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23Klein, Slavery in the Americas, 63.

24Klein, Slavery in the Americas, 64-65.
amount. It was undertaken by enslaved people who earned money towards this goal by hiring themselves out with the consent of their owners, doing extra wage-earning labor on Sundays and holidays, and/or selling the products of their provision grounds.25

*Coartación* occurred with greater frequency in urban areas. Larger communication networks and access to greater markets allowed those enslaved persons in urban environments to have greater possibility of initially learning about the practice and to find the necessary additional money-earning activities to pursue it than did those rural plantation laborers who were isolated and overworked.26

Again, as we have discussed above, a fourth mechanism appeared only in the nineteenth century. The 1820 criminalization of the African slave trade led to the establishment of the *emancipado* system. This system allowed Africans “liberated” from illegal slavers to enter seven years of “tutelage” under the guidance of a worthy local resident in exchange for her or his labor.27 By 1866, some 26,000 persons with this classification entered Cuba.28 The corrupt nature of this system created an ambiguous space for these newly arriving Africans. Some of their patrons dutifully followed the regulations, treating these souls as protected laborers. Others were abusive, selling their

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26Louis Pérez, *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 64. The effectiveness of the strategy for other Spanish-American has been demonstrated by several authors: Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*; Hunefeldt, *Paying the Price*; Aguirre Beltran, *La población negra de México*.

27Roldán De Montaud, “Origen, Evolución y Supresión.”

charges into enslavement or working them beyond reasonable physical limits. Spain attempted to check these abuses with a 1854 royal decree establishing a policy of individually registering all of the island’s slaves and providing them with identification papers. However, efficacy of the policy was limited by another law preventing the entry of government officials onto plantations if their objectives were to confiscate illegal Africans.

The Cuban ecclesiastical archives contain a wealth of information demonstrating the actual utilization of these mechanisms. Baptismal certificates provide a snapshot of any family’s social condition at the moment the child enters the Church community. As mentioned previously in chapter three, these records generally list the status (libre, emancipado, esclavo), color, and origin of each parent and grandparent. On occasion, more detailed information is noted, providing occupation, age, and residence. When several siblings of the same parents are identified, over time a view of a family’s or parent’s changing status can be observed. Additionally, the documentation involved in the official parental recognition of children born out of wedlock often gathers the baptismal certificates of several siblings. Many concise histories of individual Cuban families can result. For Afro-Cuban families of the late nineteenth century, these records

29Roldán De Montaud, “Origen, Evolución y Supresión,”

30Kiple, Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 16-17; and Scott, Slave Emancipation, 80-82.

often reveal their transition to freedom. This study has identified eighty-four such family transitions from slavery to freedom prior to the Moret Law of 1870 (that subsequently freed the children born to enslaved mothers and persons over the age of sixty-five).

Take, for example, the case of Juan Bautista Pérez. He was not a major historical figure. Instead, he led an inconspicuous life. However, while his personal achievements remain unknown, a vision of his family structure emerges from archival sources. He was born a slave in 1793 in the small villa of Sanctí Espíritu. His mother and grandparents were also enslaved, Cuban-born blacks. These facts indicate that the family had arrived in Cuba before the agricultural-export boom of the late eighteenth century. Juan Bautista’s father remained unidentified. His first marriage ended with the death of his wife, the free parda Ana Antonia Quintero in December 1831. Her death certificate listed her as a thirty-two year old parda without any surviving children and the wife of the free pardo Juan Bautista. By 1839, Juan Bautista had entered a relationship with the woman who would eventually become his second wife, the free negra Ana Benigna Penton. Children were born to the couple in 1840 and 1841, before they were married. The couple married in 1846 and then pursued the legitimization of the children in 1868. The baptismal certificates of each child listed both parents as pardo libres. The categorization of Juan Bautista as libre in several documents would suggest that he had gained his freedom earlier in the century. It unfortunately remains unclear which of the methods he used.

32Reconocimientos, Leg. 24, exp. 107, 1868.
In other cases, governmental sources allow for more specific identification of methods utilized by Afro-Cubans and their families in the acquisition of freedom. Cuban historian Gloria García Rodríguez has recently published a collection of such cases sent to the office of the island’s supreme civilian Governor. Translated excerpts of a few are reproduced here. Because of the limited nature of these sources, they can only paint the broad outlines of the processes used to obtain freedom. Moreover, they often raise more questions than they answer.

THE CASE OF THE FREE BLACK, ROMUALDO GARCÍA, REQUESTING THE LIBERTY OF HIS FEMALE PARTNER, October 1837.
Romualdo García, a free black, formerly enslaved at the Santa Lutgarda (previously “La Iberia”) plantation to Don Joaquín and Don Manuel González Arango, appears before Your Honor and says: that because he has lost his sight and is now unable to work, his former owners granted him liberty at the price of 200 pesos. Also because he has lost his sight, he now lives in a terrible condition, having to beg for the kindness of caring people. But he finds himself without someone to look after him. This situation has prompted a few friends to lend him the money necessary to obtain the freedom of his partner, Damiana, who lives on his former plantation. Romualdo has deposited the money to free her in the power of the responsible sindico procurador.  

Romualdo had given his former owners 350 pesos, but they believed Damiana valued 450. Therefore, the case was brought before the governor. Damiana was granted her liberty a few months later. García Rodríguez is unclear regarding the final quantity paid. Here we see several very cynical, motivating factors at play. The slaveowners

33Gloria García Rodríguez, La esclavitud desde la esclavitud: La visión de los siervos (Mexico: Centro de Investigación Científica “Ing. Jorge L. Tamayo,” 1996) 108-109. The author of the current study provided the translation. The sindico procurador was the government official responsible for oversight of relations between enslaved people and their owners. They often assisted in negotiating the terms through freedom was obtained in individual cases. See Scott, Slave Emancipation, 75.

34García Rodríguez, La esclavitud desde la esclavitud, 108-109.
required Romualdo to still purchase his freedom, although he was blind. They would not grant it to him, despite the fact that he was of little utility to them. More interestingly, however, Romualdo found the ability to pay for his freedom, regardless of his condition. By the same token, Romualdo’s desire to liberate his female companion seemed largely based on his own needs. This prompted friends to assist him in the purchase of her freedom. It would have been interesting to know how Damiana responded to this situation. Was gratitude for liberation sufficient to bind her to Romualdo, as “wife” and helpmate? Unfortunately, additional information on the couple is unavailable.

Another case reveals the difficulty faced by an enslaved man as he tried to purchase his daughter’s freedom.

PETITION OF MIGUEL MORENO, BONDSMAN OF DOÑA MERCE
POLO, TO LIBERATE HIS DAUGHTER TOMASA, HAVANA, August 1853
....authorized by his owner and mistress, as stated in the enclosed license, [Miguel] presented himself before Coronel Miguel de Cárdenas y Chávez to try to liberate his daughter Tomasa, a black child of eleven years of age. This gentleman acceded to this emancipation at the sum of 600 pesos. This price is excessive when it is to provide benefit; this stands in opposition to her liberty. In light of this situation, Miguel has come before the síndico to request mediation. So far this prudent step has been in vain. Señor de Cárdenas y Chávez, despite having been called before the court, has ignored that citation. It appears that this situation can not be resolved without the Your Honor’s authority.
[Also included the license for freedom dated July 23, 1853] License to the slave Miguel to free his daughter Tomasa, of eleven and a half years of age, slave of Senor Coronel Miguel de Cárdenas y Chávez, It obligates me [Doña Merced Polo] to maintain and educate her as long as Miguel remains my slave.

Shortly after this additional petition, the síndico procurador “settled the matter to the satisfaction of all interested parties.”35 It is curious that Miguel was purchasing his daughter’s freedom before obtaining his own. This raises several questions. Perhaps the

35García Rodríguez, La eslavitud desde la eslavitud, 111.
child was less costly and in freedom she could work towards buying her father’s liberty. Additionally, Miguel’s owner, Doña Merced, promised to raise the child as long as Miguel remained in her service. This appears a bit unusual. Perhaps Doña Merced had provided the money to free Tomasa? Again the evidence is insufficient to make these determinations.

The petition by Juana Sánchez y Sánchez demonstrate one way in which an relationship was used to obtain liberty.

**JUANA SÁNCHEZ Y SÁNCHEZ, PETITIONS FOR HER FREEDOM AND THAT OF HER CHILD, Havana, August 1862.**

Juana Sánchez y Sánchez, born in the city of Santiago and slave of Don Gregorio Marsá, lieutenant of the militia and resident of the same city, with the most respect and submission states that her daughter Ángela is also that of this Señor Marsá. This is sufficient reason that they [mother and daughter] should acquire liberty...The sindico procurador Nicolás Azcárate indicates that this mulatta has sustained that she was seduced by her owner and that he is the father of her newborn child. However, even after she has presented the little girl, she still lacks the evidence to prove her assertion. Don Marsá, for his part, roundly denies this charge. But he has agreed with me that to avoid scandal he will declare the child free and set the price of freedom for Juana at 700 pesos, even though she cost him more than a thousand pesos.36

With this case, one is left to wonder if accusation alone of the owner’s seduction was a sufficient motive for the child’s freedom, and if such gain through accusation occurred in this case, could the same have occurred for others?

Just as parents petitioned for the freedom of their children, and lovers for the freedom of their partners, another case indicates that children did the same for their enslaved parents.

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36García Rodríguez, *La eslavitud desde la eslavitud*, 117.
THE DRAMATIC STRUGGLE OF DIMAS CHÁVEZ TO FREE HER MOTHER, Havana, December 1866

Dimas Chávez, native of Havana and resident of 53 Prado [Avenue] states: From last October, I have deposited 306 pesos with the sindico Ramón Betancourt with the intention of purchasing freedom for my mother Lorenza Chávez, who is owned by Pedro Acosta. He transferred my mother to the Los Atrevidos plantation, near the town of Colón. The sindico, in honoring his responsibility, published a edict calling Don Pedro to return my mother, but he has not appeared. Now, I am asking you [Governor General] to demand the presentation of my mother before the courts.

The drama of Lorenza’s case did not end there. Don Pedro refused to relinquish her. On one occasion he stated she was too ill for him to release her and force her to travel to Havana. The sindico then sent armed guards to recover her, but she had been hidden at another site. Lorenza’s mother and Dimas’s grandmother, Mercedes, who was also enslaved to Don Pedro, testified that Lorenza had been taken to an unknown location. The case was finally settled as neighbors of Pedro’s plantation told where she could be found. By March of 1867, her freedom was purchased for 300 pesos.37

This case is also curious for demonstration of the links between the rural and urban populations of color. The adult daughter lived in Havana, while the enslaved mother and grandmother worked in a rural setting. Thus, this case also reveals three generations of women of color, in which the youngest was free. She then worked to free her mother, while the grandmother remained in slavery. We can only speculate that the strategy was to earn freedom for the most economically viable member of the family first, then move to other family members down the economic scale.

37García Rodríguez, *La esclavitud desde la esclavitud*, 124.
Beyond the individual histories revealed in the documents, collective group practices can also be identified in the ecclesiastical sources. In the 1847 records of Espíritu Santo, twenty children were granted their freedom before baptism. Of these, the majority were identified as either legitimate or recognized hijos naturales of enslaved couples. By contrast, only one-third (seven) were baptized without an identified father of color. And of these, two were uniquely distinguished as pardos born to morena mothers.\textsuperscript{38} The implication of these designations was that the fathers were either white or themselves pardo. Thus, for this particular year, the often noted phenomenon of women of color earning freedom for their children with white men was of much less significance than the economic efforts of Afro-Cuban families. In these ways, the acquisition of freedom was often a family endeavor amongst people of color.

\textbf{Social Position and Mobility}

After obtaining freedom, the ability of the free population to sustain and reproduce itself was based on two important factors. First, a more favorable gender distribution existed for this group than it did for the enslaved. In fact, this population was slightly skewed in favor of women, since enslaved women were more likely to receive manumission from their owners.\textsuperscript{39} They, therefore, achieved a demographic situation which favored biological reproduction. Second, free people of color achieved a good level of economic assimilation into colonial society. They occupied all socioeconomic positions which did not require proof of pure Christian, European ancestry, or limpieza de

\textsuperscript{38}AES, \textit{Libro 52 de bautismo de pardos y morenos.}

\textsuperscript{39}Klein, \textit{African Slavery in Latin America,} 156-157.
sangre. Below, we more closely examine their possibilities for economic survival and social mobility.

The Opportunities

Free people of color were integral elements of the nineteenth-century Cuban economy, earning their livelihoods in a variety of occupations. Their social positions were not fixed, natural, or predetermined by ancestry. Instead, they possessed a limited degree of social mobility despite racially defined norms. Some were able to grasp or create opportunities for themselves, while many others could not. The free population of color was not a monolith. It contained many internal divisions, with which they created "class" and status distinctions amongst themselves, apart from the obvious color distinctions that were central to their legal categorization.

Although no longer enslaved, many free people of color survived by the most menial and inconsistent employment. They barely scratched out a living and were left in poverty. One nineteenth-century American traveler to Havana observed their pitiful conditions.

The blacks, bare-headed and bare-legged, with countenances, less expressive than many a brute, seemed sunk to the very lowest state of human development. Many of them had almost lost the aspect of humanity. Negro girls of seventeen or eighteen, that age usually so interesting, sauntered through the streets in rags and dirt, with one single robe, which seemed never to have entered the wash-tub, partially covering the person, exciting the deepest emotion of disgust mingled with compassion.⁴⁰

⁴⁰John S. C. Abbott, South and North: Or, Impressions Received During a Trip to Cuba and the South (New York: Abbey & Abbot, 1860) 47.
Another English woman was much more critical of poor, free people of color. "They look far less happy than their brethren in servitude." She also continued,

I do not think people in England have any idea of the idleness which characterizes the black people. Unless forced to exertion they will lounge about for hours, aimless and unoccupied yet they rise with the sun. For three hours this morning, since I got up, these women have been lolling and gossiping in my sight, and there they will be until they find the heat too great...\(^4^1\)

But this picture of idleness did not consider the impact of chronic unemployment. Nor did it speak of those who sustained themselves as street vendors, domestics, and day laborers amongst the free Afro-Cubans in urban areas.

Baptismal records offer a limited body of empirical evidence on the occupations of Afro-Cuban parents, but for a later period. The documents found at the parish of Espíritu Santo began to list the occupations of mothers and fathers of color only on the eve of final emancipation, in January of 1885.\(^4^2\) For that year, 153 baptisms were registered. In all but five of the forty-six cases listing both parents, the father’s occupation was noted. Seven were cooks. Five were coach drivers. Three were tailors. Two were listed in each of the following categories: tobacco workers; "jornaleros" or unskilled dayworkers, carpenters, butlers, shoemakers, plasterers. One father each was also presented as a gardener, "maestro de obras" or crew chief, and artist. Given the approach of final abolition, it is not surprising that only one father was designated

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\(^4^2\)AES, *Libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos*, entry 1253, 1885 recorded the occupation for a white father, as *dependiente*, or clerk. Subsequent entries also listed the occupations for parents of color.
“esclavo” or slave. Of the four white fathers noted, two were clerks, one was listed as "empleado" or employee, and one was a painter. The timing of the inclusion of these occupational labels suggests that type of employment now replaced the distinctions that had been previously made amongst people of color between esclavo, libertado, and ingenuo (slave, liberated, and freeborn).

The near absence of the jornalero category is surprising, given that many formerly enslaved men may have entered the wage labor market without a recognized skill, and the designation jornalero often served as a catch-all for manual labor. Not surprisingly, this absence suggests that such men were less likely to claim legal paternity, in comparison to men of the skilled labor sector. These distinctions in reproductive behavior or reproductive recording practices varied according to what a modern research may define as economic status and reveal one aspect of the process of class formation amongst people of color. The more skilled and often more educated had begun to practice familial forms less like their poorer counterparts of color and more like their white counterparts of the same class. Their economic status likely combined with ideological values in creating these differences in behavior.

Unlikely the analysis of male socio-economic positioning, it is difficult to determine to what extent the concept of class can be extended to women of color. Of the 153 baptisms of children of color recorded at Espíritu Santo in 1885, the vast majority were registered to single women. Yet the listing of occupation for mothers was not as

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43AES, Libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 1236 through libro 56, entry 66, 1885.
consistent as that of fathers. In fact, only ten were recorded. Six were costureras, or seamstresses, and four were lavenderas, or washerwomen. In many of the cases in which the mother’s occupation was not noted, the grandfather’s occupation was recorded instead. This may reflect a bias against women’s work and the inability to assign them economic significance. This begs the question of who created such omission. Was it the women themselves, avoiding recognition of necessity of work or Church clerks who did not recognize the value of female labor? Or perhaps, color remained the most valuable marker of social position for women of color. Given the available documentation, only speculation on this point is possible.

The emergence of class distinctions becomes more apparent as another mid-nineteenth-century English traveler claimed that free people of color in urban areas “live in comparatively comfortable circumstances.” He may have referred to those who controlled much of the nation’s artisan production. Free people of color represented the majority of butchers, sawyers, masons, midwives, mineworkers, soapmakers, stonecutters, tailors, wet nurses, coach drivers, undertakers, and cooks. Only a small proportion of whites worked in these fields. For example, undertaking was one field in which almost no whites participated. This allowed Afro-Cubans, such as Felix Barbosa,

44Ibid.


46Pérez, Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution, 92-93.
to amass enviable fortunes and social standing from that occupation.\textsuperscript{47} In addition to Barbosa, Cuban historian Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux lists a small group of forty-two successful free people of color, who gained considerable social standing within Havana society between 1800 and 1845. Their wealth was sufficient for them to leave sizeable estates for their families upon their deaths.\textsuperscript{48}

Herbert Klein's tabulation of 1861 occupational data also demonstrates that, at least for Havana, free men of color predominated in the skilled trades, such as masonry and tailoring, and were statistically under represented in the areas of unskilled labor.\textsuperscript{49} However, not all accepted this Afro-Cuban dominance of skilled labor without question. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, José Antonio Saco, a leading member of the Euro-Cuban intelligentsia, complained, "among the enormous evils that this miserable race has brought to our land, one of them is that of having separated our white population from the skilled trades."\textsuperscript{50} For Saco, this situation had the potential to maintain or deepen the dependence of Cuba's whites on the labor of people of color that he believed incompatible with civilized society.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47}Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, "Historia de la gente sin historia, el negro en la economía habanera del siglo XIX, el funerario Felix Barbosa y la burguesía de color," Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional "José Martí" 57, 4 (1966): 87-96.
\item \textsuperscript{48}Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, El negro en la economía habanera del siglo XIX (La Habana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1971) 1-4.
\item \textsuperscript{49}Klein, Slavery in the Americas, 202-204.
\item \textsuperscript{50}Quoted in Paquette, Sugar is Made with Blood, 119.
\end{itemize}
Yet, the success of free people of color in skilled trades saw no parallel in the professions. In the 1846 census, Afro-Cubans were severely under-represented in commerce, law, medicine, and the clergy.\textsuperscript{51} The near absence of Afro-Cuban professionals was created not by insufficient resources nor by inability. It was created through legal restriction. Since 1768, with few exceptions, people of color were legally prohibited from access to university education. This limitation was defined by the prerequisite for \textit{limpieza de sangre}, or pure blood that excluded non-Christians or those of greater than one-sixteenth proportion African descent.\textsuperscript{52} Only in 1876, did a revised Spanish Constitution officially eliminated this distinction. In 1878, the Spanish colonial government permitted the entry of young men of color into the University of Havana and secondary educational institutions.\textsuperscript{53}

On occasion, the Spanish Crown allowed for exceptions to these racially exclusionary rules. People of color with sufficient wealth could petition and pay for royal whitening of their legal status in one of a number of status changing steps, known as \textit{gracias al sacar}. Although this procedure was available, the number of people who had exercised it remains unclear. American historian Anna Twinam’s recent search of Spanish archives for such documents recorded between 1720 and 1820 reveals only 244

\textsuperscript{51}Paquette, \textit{Sugar is Made with Blood}, 107.

\textsuperscript{52}Konetzke (ed). \textit{Colección de documentos para la historia}, 3:1, n. 205.

\textsuperscript{53}Carmen V. Montejo Arrechea, \textit{Sociedades de instrucción y recreo de pardos y morenos que existieron en Cuba colonial, período 1878-1898} (Veracruz, Ver.: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura, 1993.) 47 and 48; Helg, \textit{Our Rightful Share}, 36.
requests for various forms of *gracias al sacar* throughout Spanish America. Of the twenty-three Cuban cases, none were related to the legal whitening of a person of color.\textsuperscript{54} On the other hand, Cuban historians indicate two examples. Jorge Castellanos and Isabel Castellanos report the status change granted to Havana resident José Francisco Báez y Llerena in 1760. King Carlos III granted him a dispensation from “el defecto que padece en su nacimiento” (the defect that appeared at his birth) so that he was authorized to practice “su facultad de cirugía” (his surgical skills). One can only assume that racial prohibitions had previously prevented Báez y Llerena’s exercise of this profession. It is unclear from the Castellanos’s report whether this dispensation extended more fully into other areas of his racial identity.\textsuperscript{55}

The Castellanos and historian Francisco Pérez de la Riva also allude to the purchased of whiteness in another case. In the late eighteenth century Cuban painter Vicente Escobar y Flores may have purchased in his transition from *pardo* to white for 500 Spanish reales.\textsuperscript{56} According to his death certificate, “Vicente Escobar, legalmente, nace negro y muere blanco” (Vicente Escobar, legally born black and dies white).\textsuperscript{57} This is an exceptional case. The very small number of Afro-Cuban men who did enter the professions in the early nineteenth century did not do so by self-petitioned *gracias al* 

\textsuperscript{54}Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets*, 16, *passim*.

\textsuperscript{55}Castellanos and Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana*, 1:90.

\textsuperscript{56}Castellanos and Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana*, 1:90; and Pérez de la Riva cited in Montejo Arrechea, *Sociedades de instrucción y recreo*, 46.

\textsuperscript{57}Archivo de la Parroquia Mayor, Catedral de la Habana, *Registro de defunciones de Españoles*, 75, quoted in Montejo Arrechea, *Sociedades de instrucción y recreo*, 46.
sacar. Instead, for example, in the early 1840s, a few free Afro-Cubans had been admitted into the professions and the priesthood as a long-delayed reward from the Crown for loyalty during the 1761 British occupation and for service against their Latin American neighbors during the Spanish American Wars of Independence between 1808 and 1825. 58

Many free men of color also created social distinction for themselves and their families by volunteering with their local militias. Segregated companies of *pardos* and *negros*, these militia groups supplemented the local police force and the Crown army in defending the colony against both foreign and internal threats. Two of their primary objectives were the prevention of revolution amongst white creoles and revolt amongst the enslaved. The first militia company had been formed early in the colonial period in 1586 with complete racial integration. However, slightly more than a decade later, the Governor of Havana formed the racially separated *Compañía de Pardos Libres* with 100 mulatto men. By 1700, Havana and the island’s other provincial centers had sizeable companies divided by color: white, mulatto, and black. At this time, these groups were not well organized, trained, or equipped, but they did provide their members an additional degree of social respectability. This was especially true for militiamen of color. In 1714, King Ferdinand VI recognized the value and “ancient and especially meritorious” service of *pardo* militias. He required colonial officials to protect men in these groups from insults and declared:

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He resuelto, que a la gente de ellas, se les de el buen tratamiento que merecen sus operaciones, considerandolos como a vasallos mios, de quien tengo entera satisfacción por la que siempre han manifestado en mi Real Servicio; por tanto por la presente ordeno y mando al Governador y Capitan General de la Isla de Cuba, y ciudad de San Cristobal de la Habana, Sargento Mayor Capitanes y demas gente de guerra de ella, y a los alcaldes ordinarios, regidores y demas Jueces, y Justicias de dicha ciudad pongan especial cuidado, en que los pardos libres de las expresadas compañias, sean atendidos con el buen tratamiento que se debe, sin permitir, que persona alguna los llame con nombres, indecorosos en odio, y vituperio de su nacion, usando, de los que cada uno tuviere, por que mi Real animo, y voluntad es, sean tratados con amor y buena corespondencia, sin que padezcan el mas leve ultrage ni ajamiento alguno. (I have resolved, that the people of [these militia of color] shall be given the good treatment which their operations deserve, considering them my vassals, in whom I have full satisfaction and in that which they have always manifested in my Royal Service; therefore I hereby order and decree to the Governor and Captain General of the Island of Cuba, and city of San Cristobal de la Habana, Sergeant Mayor Captains and other military officers, and to the ordinary councilmen, mayors and other judges and justices of this city that they put special care so that the free mulattoes of the expressed companies, are taken care of with the good treatment, without allowing, that anyone calls them by unpleasant names, in hatred, nor insult their birth, using the authority of my royal being so that they are dealt with love and good will, without suffering the burden of abuse nor any disgraces). 59

This type of royal valorization removed pardo and negro militiamen from a strict association of their color with a diminished social status. Therefore, while their segregated units and other racially differentiated treatment did not permit them to become the peers of their white counterparts, free colored militiamen did acquire a degree of official respectability.

As the value to the Spanish Crown of the militias increased during the late eighteenth century, especially after the capture and return of Havana by Britain in 1761, they all received rights to the full fuero militar, or privileged exemption from the

The status of militiamen of color became higher than ever. Their numbers also increased. By 1770, there 3,000 colored militiamen within a total insular force of 11,667. The one *pardo* company established in 1600 had been transformed into 3 full battalions and 16 separate companies of *pardos* and *negros* throughout the island.61

The benefits of militia service extended beyond these men of color to their families. They too were protected by the *fuero militar*’s exemption from civil judgements. Additionally, when their units were actively engaged, these men received salaries that were comparable to those of the regular army and if the former died in action, the widows and children received pensions measured at half salary. This may have aided the marriageability of militiamen of color, making them more desirable mates than their non-military counterparts. In any case, there is some limited evidence that “intermarriage amongst militia families led to the creation of interconnected kin and *compadrazco* networks that evolved into the equivalent of a free colored elite.” A few families (the de Flores, Álvarez, Sánchez, Pérez, Arenciba, and Díaz) “resonated throughout the eighteenth century as the most prestigious free colored members of Havana’s military community.”62


Similar circumstances would surround the most distinguished families of free people of color of the nineteenth century. Two such families from the eighteenth century were eventually joined by marriage. The first patriarch was Antonio Flores, “a veteran of the Florida campaign [against the British in 1761], who began as a common soldier and after three decades of service had risen to the position of first commander of the Battalion of Pardos Leales...” The other was Antonio de Escobar, captain of the same battalion in the first decades of the century. Their grandson joined the two families. The same Vicente Escobar y Flores named above for purchasing whiteness “was named in 1827 by the Royal Order of the Queen María Christina as honorary painter of the Royal House.”

The nineteenth century would see some decline in the acceptance and value of the militias of color. After the uprising of the free colored and enslaved people of Saint Domingue (later Haiti) in 1791, the Spanish Crown and colonial officials became suspicious of the rebellious potential of people of color. The colored militia were now viewed in a new light. Colonial officials questioned their loyalties and their potential to disrupt social order. Additionally, Spain reacted to the revolutionary wars in her mainland American colonies by increasing the size of the regular army in these areas and in the Caribbean. The island’s normal troop size of 3,000 to 4,000 men in the late eighteenth century increased to 15,000 to 20,000 by the 1830s. This force was maintained until the beginning of the first of Cuba’s own independence wars in 1868. The militias were less significant. Finally, an alleged conspiracy amongst free people of color to rebellion against the government in 1844, called the Escalera, became the

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63Deschamps Chapeaux, El negro en la economía, 63.
justification for the elimination of the free colored militia. They were officially
disbanded in June of that year. However, they were reinstated in 1854, although the
militia of free men of color would never reach the importance and size that they once had
in the late eighteenth century. 64

The militias of color may have served another purpose. During his visit to Cuba in
1859, Englishman Richard Henry Dunn explained the Afro-Cuban militias were also used
as a means by which the Spanish government pitted racial groups against one another.

When it is remembered that the bearing arms and performing military duty as
volunteers is esteemed an honor and privilege, and is not allowed of whites of
Creole birth except to a few who are favored by the government, the significance
of this fact may be appreciated. The Cuban slave-holders...see in it an attempt, on
the part of the authorities, to secure the sympathy and cooperation of the free
blacks, in the case of a revolutionary movement-to set race against race, and to
make the free blacks familiar with military duty, while the whites are growing up
in ignorance of it. 65

Moreover, members of the "Batallones de Pardos" and the "Batallones de Negros"
enjoyed other benefits beyond those attached to militia service. Certain free Afro-Cuban
militiamen controlled the granting of dockworkers' employment in the cities; these were
prestige positions with higher-than-average wages. 66 For example, before his death in
1833, Antonio Escobar was both a lieutenant in the Battalion of Morenos Leales of


65Quoted in Louis Pérez, ed. Slaves, Sugar, & Colonial Society: Travel Accounts

66Paquette, Sugar is Made with Blood, 108.
Havana and the chief of the dockworkers. His will indicated that his assets included a house valued at $4,195 and five enslaved people.67

Socially, the free men of color who served in the militia also frequently connected themselves to the leadership of Afro-Cuban cabildos, or fraternal organizations. Cabildos were organized based on the African ethnic origins of their members. Each ethnic group would establish its own cabildo. They functioned both as recreational groups and as mutual-aid societies, providing social outlets and economic assistance for their memberships. Women of color were also members, despite the organizations’ categorization as fraternal. Examples of their economic activities include assistance with health care, and funeral services, the extension of business and mortgage loans to members, and property management for disabled members. Later, in the nineteenth century, and especially after abolition, many of these groups were transformed into the less ethnically oriented sociedades de color (colored societies).68 It was also at this point that some differentiation based on color distinctions amongst Afro-Cubans began to emerge. Although “pan-Afro-Cuban” societies remained the norm, a few clubs catered exclusively to Blacks or Mulattoes, especially in the eastern sectors of the island.69

Through success in the skilled trades, service in the militia, and participation in the cabildos, an emerging Afro-Cuban middle class demonstrated a strong social

67Deschamps Chapeaux, El negro en el economía, 52 and 73.

68Howard, Changing History, 24, passim.

69Howard, Changing History, chapter 7 and Helg, Our Rightful Share, 30.
presence. A considerable number also attained sufficient wealth as to become property holders and slave-owners themselves. It was visible accomplishments such as these that led visitors to Cuba to conclude a certain degree of racial harmony had been achieved in Cuba, as compared to other places in the Americas. For example, in his travels throughout Cuba in 1801, Alexander von Humbolt found, "The position of the free Negroes in Cuba is much better than it is elsewhere, even among those nations which have for ages flattered themselves as being the most advanced in civilization."

Access to primary and secondary education was another important area that created distinction amongst people of color and defined the rise of the Afro-Cuban leadership. Since the Church controlled most of the schools in the colonial era and many of its distinguished institutions were not opposed to educating free African-descended people, those of adequate wealth received an education. Additionally, there were a number of small private schools that also received students of color, similar to the one established by Antonio Céspedes y Medina described above. Those few who could meet the educational expenses were exceptional since most free people of color could not afford to do so. In one case, the Belenist Fathers even included one enslaved boy among their 137 students in 1843.

70 Deschamps Chapeaux, *El negro en la economía*, 32.


The educational successes of people of color were limited by the discrimination they experienced. Although in 1793 the majority of the thirty-nine elementary schools in Havana had free colored female instructors who taught racially mixed classes, the 1809 Teachers Regulation Plan excluded people of color from receiving professional teachers' training. In 1841 a colonial directive explicitly prohibited the racial integration of students and teachers. From the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth the proportion of free Afro-Cuban elementary school students dropped from about 25 percent of the total to less than 5 percent. According to the census of 1846, none of Cuba's 298 elementary school teachers, 36 music teachers, or 16 teachers of mathematics were free people of color. The British Consul to Cuba and abolitionist David Turnbull (who was later expelled from the island when of accused of plotting the Escalera Rebellion) reported in his investigations into Cuban slavery and the lives of free Cubans of color in 1840 that,

Of primary schools there are, in the whole island, for white boys, 129; and for white girls, 79; for coloured boys, 6; and for coloured girls, 8...The whole number of white boys who attend these schools is 6025; of white girls 2417; of coloured boys, 460; and of coloured girls, 180...Of those who pay for their own education there are 3255 white boys, 1557 white girls, 371 coloured boys, and 142 coloured girls.

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74 López Valdés, *Componentes africanos*, 37.

75 Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, 119; and Rout, *The African Experience*, 299. It is difficult to determine the extent of implementation of this measure as other sources speak of mixed schools. See the reference to the enslaved student above.

He also noted that while the Cuban societies for economic development (*Reales Sociedades Economicas de los Amigos de Pais*) often paid for the education of disadvantaged white students, they did not extend such benefits to children of color. He does not indicate who supported those children whose families did not fund themselves. Whatever the circumstances surrounding the financing of their education, these children were distinctly positioned in relation to the majority of their peers of color. In some cases, they continued to be separated from white children, who were largely enrolled in discriminatory private institutions. Well into the late nineteenth century, few public schools existed. In 1883 only 553 were reported, although that number rose to 904 in 1895. Cuban public schools were not desegregated until 1893.

Education was one of the essential components in creating the Afro-Cuban leadership of the late nineteenth century. Only a select few received any measurable instruction prior to the expansion of public education promoted during the American occupation (1898-1902). In 1887 only 12 percent of people of color were literate. Still, a colored intelligentsia emerged to distinguish itself, particularly in the areas of poetry and journalism.

In the early nineteenth century, their ranks included several persons of

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77 Ibid.

78 Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 36.


renown, such as the poets Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés) and the former slave Juan Francisco Manzano, the artist Vincente Escobar y Flores, and the musician Claudio Brindis de Salas. Placido and Manzano were both accused of participating in the 1844 Escalera conspiracy of free people of color against the government. For his alleged leadership of this threat, Placido was executed. Both Manzano and Brindis de Salas received prison sentences.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, journalists were amongst the most outstanding of the Afro-Cuban intelligentsia. The newspaper El Negrito, founded in Sancti Spíritus in 1824, was one of the first to serve the small, literate class of Afro-Cubans. Despite the paper’s name, its explicit purpose was “de contribuir a la ilustración de los mulatos y pardos...” (to contribute to the enlightenment of mulattoes and pardos). The contributors to this and later papers directed towards Afro-Cubans demonstrated a very liberal political philosophy. Abolitionist and democratic sentiments which showed strong connection to contemporary European liberalism revealed themselves in their political writing. However, many of them went far past proposing a reformist agenda, instead desiring the complete abolition of slavery and the establishment of a more

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82 Castellanos and Castellanos, Cultura afrocubana, 2: 57.

83 Deschamps Chapeaux, El negro en el economía, 25, 108.

egalitarian social structure. An independent Cuba was also a part of the political vision of many Afro-Cubans who perceived a Cuban republic as better suited for their inclusion.\textsuperscript{85} 

**The Continued Experience of Discrimination**

Despite the social integration demonstrated with their limited occupational advances and militia membership, the existence of large numbers of free people of color within a slave-holding society was perceived as a potential threat to the social order. For this reason, they were subjected to continual discrimination. Colonial Cuba existed as a layered society of free castes, with three major divisions: White, Mulatto, and Black. Regardless of how much wealth a Black or Mulatto possessed, he would have to show deference and respect to even the most impoverished White. Similarly, when employment or income were comparable, a Mulatto was considered superior to a Black. Some describe such a social hierarchy based on skin color as a "pigmentocracy," where law, customs, and prejudices gave preference to fairer complexions.\textsuperscript{86} And, as we saw above in the founding of newspaper *El Negrito*, these tensions often aided the separation of Afro-Cubans according to color.

Additionally, the legal system also discriminated against people of color. Law regulated their public conduct in an extreme manner. For example, black and mulatto women were forbidden from wearing silver and pearl jewelry.\textsuperscript{87} At times, their men were prohibited from carrying firearms. And the punishments for breaking laws were often

\textsuperscript{85}Castellanos and Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana* 2: 154.

\textsuperscript{86}Castellanos and Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana*, 2: 87-89.

\textsuperscript{87}Castellanos and Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana*, 2: 91.
more severe for them than against Whites. In light of such practices, people of color were
excluded from directly influencing official policy on the colony's development.

Historian Gwendolyn M. Hall suggests, that largely as a reaction to the 1791
revolt by Blacks in Haiti, a tightening of the slave-holding regime occurred at the end of
the eighteenth century which greatly affected the lives of free people of color. She also
reveals a decreased possibility of manumission, due in large part due to the increased
slave prices caused by the official cessation of the trade as of 1820. Therefore, fewer
owners would agree to keep the self-purchase price fixed for several years. Hall then
posits a decline in the population growth rate for free Afro-Cuban.\textsuperscript{88} However, Kiple's
demographic data do not supported this theory. He demonstrates high rates of increase
for the free Afro-Cuban population between 1790 and 1817. This was followed by a brief
ten-year down turn and a strong recovery by 1827.\textsuperscript{89}

Hall's review of colonial policy indicates that by the second quarter of the
nineteenth century, the Crown saw the need to shift the population ratio to favor
Europeans. In 1817 a real cédula stated the Crown's intention to promote a more
European-descended population by granting land, slaves, and agricultural implements to
newly arriving immigrant who would settle in under-populated areas.\textsuperscript{90} In 1832, the
Crown explicitly questioned the size of the free African-descended population, asking the
Captain-General, "if the existence of the free colored population is convenient, and what

\textsuperscript{88}Hall, *Social Control*, 127.

\textsuperscript{89}Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba*, 79.

\textsuperscript{90}Hall, *Social Control*, 130.
rules are most desirable for their expulsion in the negative case, or what rules for the
security of the Island in the affirmative?"\textsuperscript{91} Free people of color were no longer perceived
with confidence, as useful intermediaries between the enslaved and white people. In
addressing the Crown's concern, Captain-General Francisco Dionisio Vives stated, "the
existence of free blacks and mulattoes in the middle of enslavement of their companions,
is an example that will be very prejudicial one day, if effective measures are not taken to
stop the advancement of their constant and natural tendency towards emancipation."\textsuperscript{92}

Colonial officials established several measures to control the rise of the free Afro-
Cuban population. They began to discourage the earlier, liberal manumission practices.
In 1837 a law was passed to restrict the entry of free people of color into Cuba.\textsuperscript{93} As of
1844, in the wake of the alleged \textit{Escalera} Conspiracy, there existed a policy of "reducing
the numerous free colored population by all possible means."\textsuperscript{94} Conspirators were served
the following penalties: 78 executions, 1,500 imprisonments, and 500 deportations.\textsuperscript{95}

After this point, exile became the sentence preferred by the Captain-General and
the judiciary of Cuba for "all free colored persons who by their conduct give reason to

\textsuperscript{91}\textit{Ibid}, 128.

\textsuperscript{92}Castellanos and Castellanos, \textit{Cultura afrocubana}, 1: 155.

\textsuperscript{93}Paquette, \textit{Sugar is Made with Blood}, 120.

\textsuperscript{94}Hall, \textit{Social Control}, 30.

\textsuperscript{95}Vidal Morales y Morales, \textit{Inciadores y primeros mártires de la revolución cubana}. (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1963) 12.
believe that they are prejudicial to the repose to the country.\textsuperscript{96} A free male of African-descent between the ages of twenty and sixty had to prove "he was married, had children of his marriage, regularly exercised a trade, or had a private capital of 30,000 pesos, had good habits, was submissive to the government, and had not been involved in seditious plots...and continued his civil and religious teaching and instruction" in order not to be subjected to exile. Additional restrictions of the movement of free people of color included a prohibition against carrying weapons without permission, and against meeting amongst themselves without the presence of a white person.\textsuperscript{97}

Despite, these attempts to control, if not diminish, the free Afro-Cuban population, it continued to grow through the nineteenth century until final emancipation came in 1886. In whatever their socio-economic situation, free Afro-Cubans remained integral elements in the development of Cuban society. For example, one area in which free people of color displayed a great level of influence was in the movements toward abolition and independence. The Aponte Conspiracy of 1812 provides one early example of a well-organized and far-reaching effort that combined anti-slavery and anti-imperial sentiments. In this effort, free people of color led an attempt by enslaved people and Whites to overthrow the Spanish colonial government, in a manner which was inspired by the American and Haitian Revolutions. However, colonial authorities discovered their plans before they were implemented, and executed the leaders of the conspiracy.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{96}Hall, \textit{Social Control}, 130.

\textsuperscript{97}\textit{Ibid}, 132.

\textsuperscript{98}Castellanos and Castellanos, \textit{Cultura afrocubana}, 2: 216.
swift repression of revolts and conspiracies of this type did not diminish misgivings amongst Euro-Cubans. Similarly, in 1844, suspicions of the Escalera Conspiracy led to the persecution of hundreds of people of color for their alleged promotion of anti-slavery and anti-government activities.99 And, finally, in fighting for their national independence in the Ten Years War (1868-1878) free men of color also dedicated themselves to the abolition of slavery.100

As a result of this war, abolition came as a gradual process, beginning in 1870. Ending in 1886, it opened a new era for the gente de color. The newly freed struggled to make social and economic advances after gaining "nothing but their freedom" with emancipation. No land, nor money, nor livestock were given them in compensation for the brutality of slavery. Since they had not been allowed the most basic education or training for skilled labor, most of the previously enslaved were doomed to remain at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. However, those who had lived as free people of color in a slave society now attempted to find social respectability that was color blind. They faced an intense struggle in countering the discriminatory, racist elements which did not disappear with emancipation.

Post-Abolition Changes

The process of abolition was obviously one of major social and economic disruption for every segment of the Cuban population. Those people of color who had previously lived as free members of a slave society experienced this situation in unique


100Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, chapter 2.
ways. The social distinctions between them and the formerly enslaved masses were no longer as great. As was stated above, jural distinctions based on status with respect to slavery (enslaved, freed, or freeborn) were replaced by occupational distinction. For example, in 1880 when Marcial Valdés baptized the first of his children found in the records of the Havana parish of Espíritu Santo, he was simply listed as a *pardo libre*.\(^{101}\) By the time of the 1885 baptism of another son, Marcial appeared with the designations as a *pardo* and as an *albañil* (plasterer).\(^{102}\) Similarly, José Bernabeu first appeared in the Espíritu Santo registries in 1856 as a *pardo ingenuo*.\(^{103}\) But for a child baptized in 1881, he was then listed as a captain in the fire brigade.\(^{104}\)

This increased value of occupational labels was occurring in a period when a few people of color were also reinforcing the significance of color distinctions by petitioning for certification as *pardos*, instead of *morenos*, in their baptismal records. For example, in 1884 María Ramona Menocal requested the Church correct the color registered on her baptismal certificate. To highlight the error of her *morena* classification, she presented a certificate from a medical surgeon, stating "Certifica que María Ramona Francisca Serafina Menocal, hija de morena Quintana Menocal, es parda, o mejor dicho mulata atendiendo a la clasificación científica de las razas" (certifies that María Ramona

\(^{101}\)AES, *Libro 55 de bautismo de pardos y morenos*, entry 449, 1880.

\(^{102}\)AES, *Libro 55 de bautismo de pardos y morenos*, entry 1274, 1885.

\(^{103}\)AES, *Libro 55 de bautismo de pardos y morenos*, entry 219, 1856.

\(^{104}\)AES, *Libro 55 de bautismo de pardos y morenos*, entry 518, 1881.
Menocal, daughter of morena Quintana Menocal, is parda, or better stated as mulatta, according to the scientific classification of races.\textsuperscript{105}

Yet, beyond such attention to jural classification, social position amongst Cuba’s people of color was not so simply defined. Other behaviors also contributed. In the late nineteenth century, especially after the abolition of slavery, the experience of exile or emigration became an additional factor in defining the upward mobility of Afro-Cubans. Those who left the island were driven by fear of expressing their separatist views, economic reasons, educational opportunities, or some combination of all three. Historian Louis Pérez explain these motives in terms of late nineteenth-century Cuban discontentment with the limits of their society.

Discontent also found expression in Cuban emigration to the United States. Developments in Cuba created a wide range of needs that could not be met on the island. Cuban educational necessities had gone far beyond colonial curricula. Cubans’ needs, principally the means to master the forces that were transforming their lives, including technology, science, and commerce, could be satisfied only in the north.\textsuperscript{106}

In another work Pérez adds, “Throughout the nineteenth century Cubans went to the United States by the tens of thousands...for education and employment, to escape political repression and plot colonial revolution.”\textsuperscript{107} While Pérez referred especially to the Cuban

\textsuperscript{105}Reconocimientos, Leg. 78 exp. 90, 1884. Similar requests are found in Reconocimientos, Leg. 37 exp. 49, 1874; Leg. 61 exp. 42, 1880, and Leg. 79 exp. 62, 1884.


whites, similar forces influenced the departures of Afro-Cubans. The social value placed on race, or more specifically on whiteness, made the discontentment felt by Cubans of color all the more acute.\(^{108}\)

They settled in New York, Key West, Tampa, and New Orleans, for what many initially believed to be temporary stays. Once established in these areas, Afro-Cuban émigrés at times found themselves socially isolated from African-Americans because of culture and from their white compatriots because of race. Conversely, a commitment to Cuba's liberation from Spanish rule often brought them into greater association with Euro-Cuban revolutionaries. That Afro-Cubans were important contributors in the formation and continuity of José Martí's pro-independence Cuban Revolutionary Party established in Tampa in 1892 is just one example of the political proximity forged in exile.\(^{109}\) In addition to whatever financial benefit Cubans of color might have gained during the time abroad, the connections created with white, future leaders of the independent nation also served them later. Friendship with and/or patronage from this latter group would be another factor in the creation of the Afro-Cuban leadership.

One could look at the high degree of Afro-Cuban leadership in the wars of independence as another point from which to measure Afro-Cuban social mobility in the late nineteenth century. Mulatto and black officers such as Antonio Maceo, Flor

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Crombret, Jesus Rabí, Guillermo Moncada, and Quintin Bandera were central to the independence effort and often were remembered as its heroes. However, only a few received any enduring status gains as a result. Many of officers and soldiers of color who survived into the republic did not receive substantial benefit. They did not inherit the spoils of war in the form of the status or the government jobs that were typically given to white officers. The army of liberation was disbanded with "each member given seventy-five dollars to return to homes that no longer existed and told that they were uneducated and therefore incapacitated for public jobs." In the transition to the republic, "countless veterans were sidelined and many noncombatants were rewarded." The majority of black and mulatto veterans of the independence wars had little to show for their efforts.

Those who were propelled forward as a result of the wars were those who possessed other intellectual talents that supplemented the often insignificant, immediate rewards received at independence. The men of color who saw sustained benefit were those possessed a greater degree of education and who could insert themselves more fluidly into republican-era politics. The biographies of four such leaders will be considered below, revealing the factors that contributed to their achievements. Besides

\[\text{\textsuperscript{110}}\text{Ferrer, } \textit{Insurgent Cuba,} \ 192.\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\text{Helg, } \textit{Our Rightful Share,} \ 12, \ 129, \textit{passim.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{112}}\text{Trelles, } "\text{Bibliografía de autores de la raza de color, de Cuba,}" 42-65 , lists forty-one Afro-Cuban politicians of the first three decades of the republic. This is figure is admittedly small in comparison to the number of their white counterparts. However, it suggests that a few were able to achieve at least limited success in this arena. \text{De la Fuente, } \textit{A Nation for All,} \text{chapters 1 and 2, studies the role of race in their political efforts in this period.}\]
sheer talent and intellect, much of their success can be traced directly to how their families of origins positioned them in a slave society in its last moments.

**Morúa Delgado, Gómez, Serra Y Montalvo, and D’ou**

Examination of the lives of late nineteenth-century Afro-Cuban journalists helps to reveal how the elements discussed above actually functioned. The backgrounds of members of this group had been better documented than other sectors of the Afro-Cuban population. The lives of Juan Gualberto Gómez (1854-1933), Lino Dou Ayllon (1871-1939), Rafeal Serra y Montalvo (1858-1909), and Martín Morúa Delgado (1856-1910) suggest the processes of social ascent and the creation of the Afro-Cuban leadership. They represent the generation that linked the last era of Spanish colonial control and the first decades of Cuban independence.

**Morúa Delgado**

Martín Morúa Delgado was born in the small town of Puebla Nueva in the province of Matanzas in 1856. His father, Don Francisco Morúa Seiz, was a poor Spanish baker from the province of Viscaya, who came to Cuba in 1840. Martín’s mother was an immigrant also. Unlike the voluntary arrival of Don Francisco, Inés Delgado’s presence in Cuba had been forced upon her. She arrived into Cuba as a slave, from the Ganga people of present-day Sierra Leone and Liberia. At some point, the Delgado family, to whom she had been enslaved, granted Inés her freedom.

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One of Martín’s biographers indicated that Francisco and Inés had married. However, this is questionable, given the existing restrictions on socially unequal marriage. In either case, Martín was born free. He was the second of the couple’s five children. This number of children indicates that Francisco and Inés’s relationship was not a brief one. Martín maintained a relationship with his father’s family. His uncle Fernando Alberdi provided Martín with his primary education. Martín did not attend any other formal educational institution. Like other children of his social position, as an adolescent, Martín was sent to learn a trade. He was thirteen in 1869 when his training began for the occupation of tonelero, or barrelmaker.

Martín political life began early. While he was still in his teens, he assisted in organizing his fellow workers. At the same time, he continued to educate himself and improve his writing skills. He later became involved in the patriotic activities and entered the world of Afro-Cuban journalism. It was in this capacity that Morúa Delgado went to Havana in 1879. There he became acquainted with other writers, like Juan Gualberto Gómez and Rafael Serra Montalvo. After a brief stay in the capital, Martín


115Additionally, a review of the nineteenth-century petitions to permit unequal marriage that are currently held at the Archivo Nacional Cubano, Fondo Gobierno General, leg. 329 no. 15787 through leg 450 no. 21942 and Fondo Gobierno Superior Civil leg. 888 no. 29875 through leg. 929 no. 32578 did not reveal the presence of any request under these names. However, the completeness of these records is uncertain.

116Baeza Flores, “Tránsito humano de Martín Morúa Delgado,” 32 and Horrego Estuch, Martín Morúa Delgado, 9. Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba, 124 lists Morúa as having been a tailor.
returned to his home in Matanzas and began publishing the small newspaper, *El Pueblo*. Additionally, he also committed himself to educating people of color, founding two schools.\textsuperscript{117} With the approach of final abolition set for 1888, Morúa Delgado saw the necessity of education for properly integrating the formerly enslaved population into Cuban society. He saw this and the end of racial discrimination as central to the future of Cuba’s people of color.

Hombres y solamente hombres existen. ¿Cómo, pues, [existían] distintas y ridículas CALIDADES? Nosotros no vemos más que dos clases, sin que hasta el presente no se nos hayan dado convincentes pruebas de que existen más: el hombre malo y el hombre bueno. Al primero le suprimiremos el NOMBRE, dejémosle al ARTICULO y EL CALIFICATIVO (Men and only men exist. How, then, [have existed] different and ridiculous QUALITIES? We do not see more than two classes: the bad man and the good man; until now we have not been given convincing proof that there exists more. First, we will suppress in him the NAME, leaving him with the ARTICLE and the QUALIFICATION).\textsuperscript{118}

The next phase of Morúa Delgado’s life was one of exile. His revolutionary activities had brought him to the attention of colonial authorities and he was briefly imprisoned in February of 1880. Upon his release, he fled Cuba for Key West, Florida and New York City. He supplemented stays in these areas with short trips to Jamaica and Panama. Exile provided him with further opportunity for political development and organizing. The bulk of the revolutionary leadership also found itself in exile. There Morúa Delgado interacted with leading patriots Máximo Gómez, Antonio Maceo, Salvador Cisneros Betancourt, and José Martí. Morúa Delgado’s personal life was also

\textsuperscript{117}Baeza Flores, “Tránsito humano de Martín Morúa Delgado,” 33-34.

transformed by exile. In 1887, he married Elvira Granados, a woman of Afro-Cuban
descent living in Tampa. The couple had two children by the time that they returned to
Cuba in 1890. For the next eight years, Morúa Delgado divided his time between politics
and literary pursuits.

He published two important novels between 1891 and 1900. The first, *Sofía*, was
his response to Villaverde’s *Cecila Valdés*, in which Morúa questioned the period’s racial
norms. He painted the portrait of the difficulties faced by the white, female title character
as she was inadvertently forced to live as a *parda* because her family background was
unclear. With these novels, Morúa became the first Cuban of color to achieve success
with the genre. He was accepted into white intellectual spheres and was invited to join
the exclusive *Real Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País*, a major intellectual and
civic improvement society, in the early 1890s, as one its first nonwhite members. He
also continued his deep involvement with revolutionary activities, culminating with his
military participation in the final war of independence.

The end of Spanish rule brought Morúa Delgado even more into political life. He
served as a representative to the constitutional convention for the province of Las Villas.
Shortly afterwards, he served as an official assistant to José Miguel Gómez in the
governorship of that province, before winning its senate seat. This made him the most
prominent member of the Afro-Cuban leadership. Despite the disruption to Cuban

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120 Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 32.

121 Baeza Flores, “Tránsito humano de Martín Morúa Delgado,” 35-36.
political life caused by the United States military intervention between 1906 and 1909, Morúa Delgado was still a member of the Senate at the time of his death in 1910. Yet, these successes did not remove the impact of the concept of race in his life. Despite the importance of his senate position, Morúa Delgado was not immune from racial insults. On one occasion in 1905, his wife was excluded because of her color from a reception of other congressional wives given by president Estrada Palma.

Morúa Delgado’s most controversial political act was to sponsor legislation to prohibit the organizing of political parties on the basis of race. The law contained one key passage.

El Senador que suscribe considera contraria a la Constitución y a la práctica del régimen republicano la existencia de agrupaciones o partidos políticos exclusivo por motivos de raza, nacimiento, riqueza o título profesional... (The Senator who subscribes considers it opposite to the Constitution and the practice of the republican regime the political existence of groupings or parties that exclusive by reasons of race, birth, wealth or professional title)

He was motivated to action based on two considerations. First was what he saw as the problems created by the Afro-Cuban political party, the Partido Independiente de Color. He believed it threatened the gradual development of racial harmony with the demands their placed on the government. He also perceived a danger of greater racial division if the more established political parties also began to define their membership on the basis

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122 Baeza Flores, “Tránsito humano de Martín Morúa Delgado,” 37-38; and Helg, Our Rightful Share, 122.

123 De la Fuente, A Nation for All, 62.

124 “Enmienda adicional al artículo 17 de la ley electoral,” Boletín de divulgación de la vida y la obra de don Martín Morúa Delgado 6 (1957) 239-240.
of race. A second motivator of Morúa Delgado’s efforts to criminalize racially-oriented political organizing was his friendship with then president José Miguel Gómez. Gómez had given Morúa his first political position in the republic, mentioned above. In 1910, Gómez may not have been able to maintain the presidency in the upcoming if Cubans of color collectively organized against him. In this way, Morúa Delgado occupied what might initially appear as a contradictory position with regard to race. He was a successful Afro-Cuban leader who sought to minimize the value of race while receiving the support of a constituency largely defined by race. Such a position is less problematic if one accepts that Afro-Cuban leadership and more general Cuban leadership did not have to be at odds.

Juan Gualberto Gómez

The life of Juan Gualberto Gómez held many of the patterns seen with Martín Morúa Delgado. Both were mulattoes, for whom slavery was not in the far distance past for their families. Each had some limited access to education. Both first made names for themselves directing newspapers directed toward other people of color. Participation in revolutionary politics and subsequent exile were central components of their personal development. And both became political leaders in the emergent Cuban republic.

Juan Gualberto Gómez y Ferrer was born 1854 in a rural area of the province of Matanzas on the Vellocino sugar plantation. His legitimate parents, the mulattoes Fermin

\[\text{\footnotesize{125}Martin Morúa Delgado, “Discurso al presentar la enmienda al artículo 17 de la ley electoral,” Boletín de divulgación de la vida y la obra de Don Martín Morúa Delgado (1957) 241-242; Helg, Our Rightful Share, 165.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{126}On that appointment see, Helg, Our Rightful Share, 122.}\]
Gómez and Serafina Ferrer, held valued positions within the slave system. Instead of laboring in the fields, both worked in the master’s house as personal servants. The fact that both of his parents were enslaved did not prevent Gómez from being born into freedom. His parents had accumulated the twenty-five pesos needed to purchase this condition for him even before his birth. This was only the first exceptional act in an exceptional life. His parents also purchased their own freedom the following year. The family’s enslavement had ended.127

Education also made Juan Gualberto Gómez exceptional. This son of once-enslaved people received basic lessons in the former master’s home. His intellect impressed his parents so much that after they obtained their own freedom, they moved with him to Havana in order to further his education. By age ten, Gómez was enrolled in the school run by Antonio Medina y Céspedes mentioned above, Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados. But like many free children of color, economic concerns outweighed educational pursuits. Gómez began to apprentice in the construction of luxury coaches. His parents sent him to France in 1869 to perfect these skills. It was at this point that Gómez’s life underwent dramatic change. The master craftsman with whom he apprenticed recognized that his intelligent exceeded those required for this profession and encouraged him to seek additional education. Although neither Gómez nor his parents could afford such possibilities, Gómez continued to educate himself. During his residence in Paris, he made contact with sons of the Cuban elite who spent considerable

time there. With their aid, he found himself working as a foreign journalist for Cuban newspapers. It was at this point that Gómez began to establish a positive reputation for himself within both the white and Afro-Cuban literate populations. This work kept him out of Cuba during the Ten Years War. At the time of the Peace of Zanjón, Gómez was living in Mexico.128

Gómez had returned to Cuba by 1879. He soon began to publish *La Faternidad*. Like Morúa, Gómez was deeply committed to creating greater academic access for children of color. He saw the necessary first step as the elimination of the social distance between Cuban whites and people of color. He recognized that in the wake of abolition, the majority of the newly freed population was not adequately prepared for equal interaction with whites.129 Gómez used the *Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color* to unify Afro-Cuban mutual-aid and social organizations for this purpose and for the additional mission of fighting more generalized racist discrimination.130 The *Directorio* had a degree of success in both arenas. It supported successful suits against

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130There is some disagreement as to Juan Gualberto Gómez’s participation in the founding of the *Directorio* and the date of its establishment. Montejo Arrechea, *Sociedades de instrucción y recreo*, 80-81 indicates a 1887 founding, while Gómez was imprisoned in Spain. Fernández Robaina, *El Negro en Cuba*, 23-24 and Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 129 reveal Gómez’s direct involvement for establishing the organization in 1892.
discrimination in public accommodations and in 1893 forced the Governor General Emilio Calleja to enforce existing policies on non-segregated public schools.\textsuperscript{131}

Apart from his service directly to the Afro-Cuban population, Gómez was active in the separatist movement. His support for the “Guerra Chiquita” led to his arrest in 1880 and imprisonment, first in Africa and then Spain. He was not to return to Cuba until 1891. Through these situations, he created lasting contacts with those who rejected the loyalist approach and with a few Spanish liberals, like Rafael Labra.\textsuperscript{132} As of 1892, Gómez took a leading role in fomenting separatist sentiments on the island, while working closely with exiled revolutionaries. In this manner, he forged a friendship and political relationship with José Martí, the later hero of independence. His conduct again earned him another expulsion and imprisonment first in Spain’s African colony of Cueta and then Madrid, where he would serve out the war.\textsuperscript{133} Like other exiles, Gomez’s time away from home was not all misery. After gaining his freedom, he continued to reside in Madrid. In 1885, he met and married a Spanish women, Erundina Morales, who eventually returned with him to Cuba.\textsuperscript{134}

After the war, Gómez was one of the few Afro-Cubans to receive personal recompense for his efforts. There were some suggestions that he was “José Martí’s

\textsuperscript{131} Helg, Our Rightful Share, 37-38.


\textsuperscript{133} Helg, Our Rightful Share, 82.

\textsuperscript{134} “Apuntes Sociales,” Aurora (Jan 1, 1915) 9.
chosen heir.” He received an appointment to Havana’s Board of Education in 1899. In 1901, he was supported by the Liberal party to serve as a delegate to the Constituent Assembly. Martín Morúa and war veteran General Agustín Cebrero were the only other men of color to participate in constructing the foundational document of the Cuban Republic.

Juan Gualberto Gómez’s political star was briefly diminished when he backed the defeated candidate in what were to have been the 1901 presidential elections. Bartolomé Masó, the former president of the republic at arms, withdrew from the process in objection to its lack of impartiality. This left Gómez without strong backers in the presidential administration of Tómas Estrada Palma (1902-1906). Thereafter his political fortunes were alternately tied to the miguelist and zayista wings of the Liberal Party. The former was named for later president José Miguel Gómez (1909-1912) and the latter for future president Alfredo Zaya (1921-1924). The depth of these ties were demonstrated with Juan Gualberto Gómez’s involvement in the 1906 Liberal revolt. It was not until 1914 that he was eventually elected to national office, becoming a representative from Havana. And in 1917, he won a seat in the Senate.

135 Thomas, Cuba, 473.
136 Castellanos and Castellanos, Cultura afrocubana, 2:301.
137 Thomas, Cuba, 459-460.
138 Thomas, Cuba, 473-475.
139 Mario Riera Hernández, Cuba política, 1899-1955 (Havana: n.p. 1955) 8, 15, 37, 63, 96, and 167; De la Fuente, A Nation for All, 89.
Juan Gualberto continued as an important figure in early republican, Afro-Cuban politics. His value was not defined so much by his defense of Afro-Cuban interests, rather he served as a symbol to white politicians that Afro-Cuban voters could not be ignored. Gómez’s leadership was executed primarily through his ability to deliver a significant number of Afro-Cuban votes to any candidate he endorsed.¹⁴⁰

**Rafael Serra y Montalvo**

Rafael Serra y Montalvo gained prominence from his political writings, similar to the path taken by Martín Morúa Delgado and Juan Gualberto Gómez. His background differed only slightly from theirs. Unlike these two figures, he was black, not mulatto. However, his family’s distance from slavery was greater than that of the two earlier figures. Serra was born in Havana in 1858, into the marriage of a free black creole couple, Rafael Serra and Marcelina Montalvo. There are indications that both sets of his grandparents were also legitimately married, black creoles. The younger Serra attended primary school in Havana, although his instruction was limited by a colonial regulation which “for blacks, prohibited the teaching of history, drawing, grammar, and geography.” He remained in school only up to the age of thirteen, when his father’s death then made it necessary of him to end his formal education and seek gainful employment. He began training as a tobacco worker.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 62-64.

Working in tobacco brought Serra a better than average income. He used part of this to open two schools for children of color. The first was established in Matanzas, and the second in Havana. Serra continued to educated himself and also taught in these institutions. Like Morúa and Gómez, Serra shifted his career from craftsman to journalist. He created the weekly newspaper, *La Armonias*, the organ for the mutual-aid society of the same name. Serra’s friendship with Martín Morúa Delgado was reinforced through the assistance each provided in the formation of that organization. Although the newspaper was short lived, Serra used it as a platform for his political concerns that were becoming truly separatist. By the end of the Ten Years War, he fully supported the efforts of Maxímo Gómez and Antonio Maceo.\(^{142}\)

Like Morúa and Gómez, exile was the next stage in Serra’s life. His was a self-imposed choice. By 1885, he and his wife, Gertudis Heredia, a free black women from Matanzas, were living in Key West. They also temporarily resided in Kingston, Jamaica, before settling in New York.\(^{143}\) He began to form strong political links to whites in the exile community. His school for working-class Cuban immigrants, La Liga, was especially well-respected. José Martí’s later involvement in that project gave Serra even greater prominence. That he also assisted in the creation of Martí’s Cuban Revolutionary

\(^{142}\)Domínguez, *Figuras y figuritas*, xiv.

\(^{143}\)Domínguez, *Figuras y figuritas*, xvi; and Deschamps Chapeaux, *Rafael Serra*, 45.
Party (PRC) and contributed to its newspaper, *Patria*, only deepened his political connections.\(^{144}\)

The end of the independence struggles also brought Serra rewards. They initially arrived in small measure but gradually he grew in importance. In 1904, he gained a significant position in the postal department, which he claimed to have owed “gracias á la influencia poderosa de nuestro ilustre Presidente, el Honorable Tomás Estrada Palma.”\(^{145}\)

Also in 1904, he was elected as a congressional representative for Oriente. He still held that seat through re-election, until his death in 1909.\(^{146}\) Similar to the actions of Morúa Delgado and Gómez, as a national representative, Serra did not specifically defend Afro-Cuban issues.

**Lino D’Ou**

Lino D’Ou’s path to prominence revealed some of the same patterns as those above. However, there were some important differences also. Like Morúa, D’Ou was the mulatto son of a Spanish father, Don Lorenzo D’Ou, a overseer on a sugar plantation in Guantánamo. His mother was a black woman, Bárbara Ayllón. It is not clear how slavery had touched her life. Similar to Morúa, it is unlikely that Lino was legitimate


\(^{146}\)Riera Hernández, *Cuba Política*, 133.
given the restrictions on interracial marriages. However, his parents maintained their relationship at least well into Lino’s adulthood.\textsuperscript{147}

D’Ou was born free in 1871, making him a dozen years younger than Gómez, Morúa, and Serra. The extent of his formal education was also considerably greater than the others. He completed both primary and secondary schools in his hometown of Santiago, culminating with a bachelor’s degree in science and letters. By 1891, he went to Havana with the intention of entering the university to study law.\textsuperscript{148} Although he did not achieve that goal, the intention itself speaks to a belief that the even the highest levels of Cuba’s educational system offered new opportunities for students of color, many resulting from the desegregation efforts of the 1880s.

D’Ou was instead received into the community of other journalists of color. There he began his political life. He joined Juan Gualberto Gómez in publishing the newspaper, \textit{La Faternidad}. In this environment, he became fully involved with the separatist cause. As of 1895, his next step was a determination to join the Liberation Army. The fact that he was close to his Spanish father was a consideration in this decision. However, both of his parents supported their son’s desire to fight for his country’s liberty. Lino initially joined the army under the command of General José

\textsuperscript{147}José G. Castellanos, \textit{La casa dónde nacio Antonio Maceo, José Maceo Grajales, Lino D’Ou Allyón, Datos Biográficos} (Santiago: Poligrafica, 1957) 25-27.

\textsuperscript{148}Castellanos, \textit{La dasa dónde nacio Antonio Maceo}, 25-27.
Maceo. Before the end of the war, D’Ou eventually achieved the rank of lieutenant coronel.149

After the war, D’Ou’s initial rewards for the hardships he had endured on the battlefield were modest. He was appointed secretary to Governor Castillo Duany of Oriente. In 1902, he was given charge of a small government office in Guantanamo. There he married one of Antonio Maceo’s goddaughters, Francisca Arce Fernández.150 D’Ou aligned himself with the Conservative Party and failed at his attempted election to the congressional seat from Oriente in 1904.151 However, he did achieve a brief amount of electoral success in 1908, winning that seat.152 That accomplishment was not repeated. In 1912, D’Ou returned to his first career in journalism. He directed the journal El Resumen between 1912 and 1913.153 He became more polemical with his contributions to the Afro-Cuban oriented newspaper column, “Palpitaciones de la Raza de Color” (1915-1916), the 1916 journal El Labor Nuevo and its 1917 replacement, La Antorcha.154 In all these arenas, D’Ou strongly advocated for improved Afro-Cuban political participation and social acceptance. Yet, he differed from Morúa and Gómez in that he did not reject

149Castellanos, La Casa donde nacio Antonio Maceo, 27.

150Ibid.


152De la Fuente, A Nation for All, 38 and 52.

153Regino Boti, Cartas a los orientales (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1990) 343 and 368.

154Morrison, “Race, Nation, and Culture,” 16, 17, 26 and 28.
the possibility of using exclusively Afro-Cuban political organizations to achieve this goal. As a side note, American officials charged that D’Ou hated Whites. Other sources alleged that he also belonged to the secret Abakua, an African-derived fraternal order.155 This would suggest a sense of cultural identity that did not conform fully with Euro-Cuban norms.

Morúa, Gómez, Serra, and D’Ou exhibited several commonalities of background and achievement. But it is in the realm of the political that they shared their most significant behavior. The general political strategy of these leaders was one of articulating agendas that they each believed to be in the best interest of the Afro-Cuban masses and not concentrating on a direct confrontation with white racism. Instead they worked within the bounds of a system that was based less on a particular political philosophy, than it was based on the expedience of political patronage. They were the authorities through which Afro-Cuban political potential was placed in service to the larger political machines.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the continuity between Cuba’s late colonial and early national periods with respect to the creation and importance of the Afro-Cuban leadership. Maintaining the historiographic separation between the two periods ignores the factors that allowed a few Afro-Cubans to become leading political figures in the early republic. That separation also makes it impossible to explain important shifts in concepts of race and nation. This chapter addressed these concerns by outlining the paths

155De la Fuente, A Nation for All, 38; and Helg, Our Rightful Share, 150.
available to people of color for greater inclusion in the broader society, generally, and more specifically for a few of their key political figures. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, later, more broad, articulations of Cuban identity would draw on these origins.

Most critical to both the formation of Afro-Cuban leadership and their quest for greater inclusion was the acquisition of freedom. The chapter began by outlining the various practices Afro-Cubans utilized, many of which relied on the input of family. It then went on to describe the mechanisms that created distinction within the free Afro-Cuban population itself. Education, occupation, and nationalist political activity were key. The chapter continued by tracing transformations in the lives of a few central figures: Martín Morúa Delgado, Juan Gualberto Gómez, Rafael Serra, and Lino D’Ou, and revealed the similar strategies and circumstances that led to their successes. Their own experiences reflected the transition from the envisioning of Afro-Cubans solely as labor to the acceptance of some as spokesmen for both their race and their nation. They shared one life feature from the start. All were born into freedom, despite various family connections to slavery.

The emergence of a free class of Afro-Cubans was an important aspect of Cuba's colonial history. They made significant contributions to the cultural, economic, and political life of the society. Despite the severe limitations, a number achieved success in education, the trades, the colonial militia, and in their own social organizations and cabildos. Theses successes distinguished those who would eventually become part of the Afro-Cuban leadership and distanced them from the more impoverished masses. Some of this emergent “class” even managed to ensure that their social distinction and successes
were passed from generation to generation. While, as the previous chapter suggests, women of color had the opportunities to whiten their offspring to the point of "passing," this was not an option available to men of color. Their families would have continued to be marginalized by race if the colonial system did not change. They could not escape the fact that they lived in a society shaped by slavery. It was this population that became a major source of unrest against Spanish colonial authority.

The presence of significant populations of free people of color forced Whites to react to it. That reaction was often a negative one. By the middle of the nineteenth century, colonial policy attempted new controls on their numbers and movements. Especially after 1844, new restrictions further oppressed a population that grown accustomed to a degree of social mobility. Yet, the free Afro-Cuban class survived to become an unmistakable force in subsequent Cuban history.

Within this group, an even more limited number emerged as leaders who pushed the borders of late colonial society. They questioned both Spain's colonial authority and the racial hierarchy maintained by peninsulares and creoles alike. But this questioning did not take place in racial isolation. In fact, the connection between patriots of all colors would prove to be a considerable force in achieving the objectives of both. The fight for independence could not have been a racially exclusive project. Both groups needed each other. The same was true for prospects for the abolition of slavery. Whites viewed it as a means of limiting the island's protective dependency on Spain. People of color saw it as the necessary first step in their full integration into Cuban society. Examining the career trajectories of Martín Morúa Delgado, Juan Gualberto Gómez, Rafael Serra, and Lino D'Ou, one sees Afro-Cuban men who had been born into freedom in the midst of a slave
society. Each managed to receive an exceptional degree of education, entered the trades, and then became swept up in national politics..

A growing sense of Cuban nationalism moved these men into new political directions. Separately, each turned to journalism and began to advocate for change from within Afro-Cuban outlets. They reacted to Cuba’s gradual process of abolition by committing themselves to the social integration of the newly freed. They did so with a certain degree of conservatism. Educational achievements and a generalized socialization directed toward Euro-Cuban norms were the methods in which they placed greatest faith. They also called upon Cuba’s Whites to end racial discrimination. Although they managed some significant reforms in this arena, racist practices were not eliminated.

Their attention to Cuba’s relation with Spain also ran parallel to their attention to race. Each became increasingly separatist and publicly expressed views seen by colonial authorities as seditious. With the failure of the Ten Years’ War, many chose exile as preferable to living under the colonial regime or the constant danger of imprisonment. Exile proved to be formative. There they formed alliances with white, Cuban patriots that would well serve them in the future. Each gained a renown for supporting Cuban independence. These alliances and their positive reputations were valuable after Spanish rule ended, in providing rewards for themselves and creating platforms from which to demonstrate a restrained leadership of the Afro-Cuban community. They accepted for themselves the task of articulating the Afro-Cuban role in the new Cuban nation. The next chapter will reveal how another set of Afro-Cuban leaders followed similar patterns in their efforts to redefine the image and structure of Afro-Cuban families.
INTRODUCTION

As a young black woman living in Cuba in 1920, María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, "Reyita," prayed to the patron saint of Cuba, la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, for a white husband. Many years later, she explained to her daughter the material motives behind this desire.

I didn't want a black husband, not out of contempt for my race, but because black men had almost no possibilities of getting ahead and the certainty of facing a lot of discrimination. Their best chance was in sports: being a boxer... But anyway, apart from that, if a black man dreamed of getting away from poverty, back then, he had to set himself up as a huckster or a thug, and in the end, what? The penitentiary or death, and the reformatory for the younger ones... That's why I asked my Virgencita for a white husband. I wouldn't have been able to put up with seeing my children humiliated, harassed, mistreated, and much less living a life of vice. That's why I married a white man.¹

In 1920, Reyita met and “married” Antonio Amador Rubiera Gómez, a white Cuban of working-class origin. As the couple shared a life together and their family grew, she believed her prayers had been answered. Only many years later did Reyita learn of the false nature of her marriage. Although her union with Antonio would last

until his death in 1975, he never formally registered the marriage, as she had believed.\textsuperscript{2} Therefore, the couple’s relationship was legally “illegitimate,” much like many other interracial unions formed during the same period.

Despite this status of illegitimacy, the social image of relationships of this type did not remain constant. Over the course of the republic, families formed by consensual unions gained greater recognition from Cuba’s political and cultural leaders as they constructed new images of national identity. This chapter examines some of the critical moments in the transition of interracial families from the social margins in late colonial thought to acceptance, if not respect, by 1940. By that year, Cuban sovereignty was consolidated with a new populist constitution.\textsuperscript{3}

While Reyita’s admission of the value of race in her choice of a mate is amongst the few autobiographical testimonies of its kind,\textsuperscript{4} it is not difficult to accept that many others followed similar motivations. A good number of Cuban women of color also chose to establish non-marital relations with white men, in preference to marriage within their race, to black or mulatto men. As we shall see below and with the awareness that it must be viewed with caution, a body of anecdotal evidence from both the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries describe such patterns. The statement “mejor querida de un

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Daisy Rubiera Castillo, ed., \textit{Reyita, sencillamente} (Havana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1997) 161-162.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Pérez, \textit{Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution},281, and Instituto de Historia de Cuba, \textit{Historia de Cuba, la Neocolonia}, 379-381.
\item \textsuperscript{4} For a similar presentation of a Brazilian woman, see Carolina de Jesús María, \textit{Child of the Dark, the Diary of Carolina de Jesús María}. trans. David St. Clair (New York: Signet Books, 1962).
\end{itemize}
blanco que mujer de un negro” (better the lover of a white man than the wife of a black) has often been attributed to such beliefs. ⁵

Yet, consensual unions and other non-marital, conjugal relationships were not exclusive to interracial couples or Afro-Cubans. These practices produced significant rates of illegitimacy amongst all racially-defined segments of the Cuban population through the republican period. Census data recorded in 1919, the year before Reyita’s “marriage”, indicated that approximately an eighth of whites and half of all people of color had been born out of wedlock. Interestingly, the statistics suggest that the rate was increasing for whites, while declining for people of color (see Table 8-1). And for all races, between the 1899 and 1953 census years, the percentage of persons admittedly involved in consensual unions increased from 12.6 to 18.2 amongst men and from 13.9 to 21.3 amongst women. ⁶

⁵Juan and Verena Martínez-Alier, Cuba: economía y sociedad (n.a: Ruedo Ibérico, 1972) 53.

⁶Centro de Estudios Demograficos, La población de Cuba (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976) 93. No numeric statistics on the frequency of interracial relationships are available for any period of Cuban history.
Table 8-1: Proportion of Illegitimacy by Age and Race, 1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage of Illegitimacy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Races</td>
<td>Native Whites</td>
<td>Colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 14 years</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and over</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite their frequency, relationships of this type did not remain unproblematic to the late colonial and republican-era Cuban intellectuals and political leaders who concerned themselves with the improvement of the national image. The families formed by non-marital, consensual unions became significant points of debate in emerging social visions of the nation. Cuban social theorists, thinking in collective, nationalist terms, often discussed these families by asking how their presence either contributed to or detracted from national progress. As Cubans sought the consolidation of their independence, some amongst them emphasized the manner in which non-marital families were incompatible with notions of morality and modernity. Suggestions to curtail their prevalence were not infrequent. It is not surprising that this position was initially supported by the majority of Afro-Cuban and female commentators, in their commitment to a more inclusive nationalism. Such conservatism controlled much of the debate over the significance of the family to the nation until the 1920s, when increasingly active concerns for social justice and equity in economic opportunities began to transform
Cuban political culture. New political ideals fostered changes to the role of the Cuban family as one of the sites for the creation of racial meaning, just as organic changes within Cuban family life, in turn, also influenced the public politics of race.

Images of Race and Family in the Nationalist Projects

By the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant Euro-Cuban nationalist vision represented Cuba's cultural identity as essentially European in origin, but distinguished by geographic uniqueness, Spanish colonialism and the unfortunate experience of slavery.7 This emphasis on a European cultural origin provided Cuban nationalists with a means to justify Cuba's membership in the family of modern, civilized nations, as opposed to possibly grouping it amongst the barbarous, uncivilized tribes of the world, who did not have the right of or ability for political sovereignty. Most of these nationalists accepted the prevailing modernist ideology and its close association between whiteness and national progress.8 Therefore, they chose not to recognize any African-based cultural components to Cuba's ethnic identity, despite their continuation within the demographically significant Afro-Cuban population. These nationalists believed that any


residue of African cultures in Cuba eventually would disappear in light of their incompatibility with the nation's modernizing destiny.⁹

Those Afro-Cubans who did not subscribe to Euro-Cuban cultural values were perceived as child-like or criminal, without an understanding of civilized behavior, and continuing in the "primitive" lifestyles of their African ancestors.¹⁰ The best-known examples of such views are in the early sociological and criminological works of noted Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969). In his Los negros brujos (1906) and "Los negros curros" (1913), he repeatedly lamented the unsuitable nature of Afro-Cubans and their culture.¹¹ Ortiz and others viewed them as limiting the potential for national progress along an imagined evolutionary scale and as offering the nation only a degenerate component, which if not properly constrained could corrupt the whole.¹² These pervasive views suggested that the only possibility for social vindication for Afro-Cubans was the adoption of Euro-Cuban standards of civility. However, the proponents

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⁹Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba..."


¹¹Fernando Ortiz, Hampa afrocubana, los negros brujos (Apuntes para un estudio de etnologia criminal, (Madrid: Editorial América, 1917) and "Los negros curros" in his Entre cubanos (psicologia tropical) (Havana: Liberia P. Ollendorff, 1913).

of this suggestion generally accepted such a possibility was very limited, given the genetic limitations they assumed Afro-Cubans faced.

Despite this rejection of African-based cultural components, it is important to distinguish this position as a monocultural, and yet multiracial, view of Cuban identity. Instead of a potentially racially homogeneous view of Cuban ethnicity, based on biological descent (comparable to what occurred in the United States), Cuban intellectuals acknowledged that their nation could contain several races, with sufficiently acculturated blacks, whites, mulattoes, and Asians peacefully coexisting. In the 1880s and 1890s, Cuban national hero, José Martí (1853-1893) provided the most articulate formulation of this position. For him, “Lo cubano es más que blanco, más que mulato, más que negro.”

Also, a segment of the white leadership accepted that the on-going miscegenation common in Cuban society was largely unproblematic since it would eventually whiten the darker components beyond recognition.

In association with the independence movement, Cuban nationalists have continued to profess multiracial nationalism and rejected racism as anti-Cuban. Yet, these turn-of-the-century nationalists did not recognize the viability of several cultures

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13 Martí’s calls for multiracial definition of Cuban and Hispanic-American identity are well-documented. This quote appears in the essay “Mi raza” (April 16, 1893) Obras completas (Havana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba, 1963) 1: 299. For indication that his project was truly a monocultural view, see Anuario Martiano, (1978) 30-33.

14 For detailed review of these views, see Bronfman, “Reforming Race in Cuba.” passim.

15 See Helg, Our Rightful Share; Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba; and de la Fuente, A Nation for All.
within one nation. Martí, for example, did not consider that *cubanidad* might embrace an Afro-Cuban mentalité and a national image presented to the community of modern nations that included Afro-Cuban culture. Some authors went even further to suggest that those who were perceived as incapable of the appropriate level of cultural assimilation were deemed as doomed for racial extinction and the Afro-Cuban masses designated the likely victims of that process.\(^{16}\) Afro-Cuban forces, who represented the majority of the independence army, experienced a stream of discrimination from the white leadership as a result of similar sentiments. The white leadership often could not accept that soldiers of color were their cultural peers. Moreover, the former feared that if Afro-Cubans exercised unchecked military strength, a version of the Haiti Revolution would occur in Cuba. A number of white Cubans imagined that they could not share power, nor control of the nation’s destiny, with people of color. Euro-Cuban civilization would have to dominate.\(^{17}\)

Demographic statistics appeared to have supported the Darwinist claims of the most pernicious racists. The Afro-Cuban proportion of the Cuban population had been steadily decreasing since the true cessation of the slave trade in the 1860’s. In 1827, free and enslaved people of color represented fifty-eight percent of the island’s total.\(^{18}\) Almost a century later, by 1919, that proportion had dramatically fallen to twenty-eight

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\(^{17}\)Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, chapter 2, *passim*.

percent. While it was obvious that large waves of Spanish immigration and the independence wars were contributing factors, some wondered if the Afro-Cuban behaviors or culture did not also speed this decline. Whatever the perceptions of a decreasing Afro-Cuban presence, through the remainder of the first half of the twentieth century, the racial proportions of the Cuban population held fairly constant. Any slight increase in the proportion of whites within the population was due to higher natural growth and migration (see Table 8-2).

Table 8-2 Percentage of Cuban Population by Race, 1899-1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1899</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulatto</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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</tbody>
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In addition to the attention given to race and ethnicity, nationalist intellectuals also considered family organization and gender identities in creating their social and political visions. They attempted to define the normative gender roles and sexual

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practices by which the legitimate members of the nation were to be characterized.\(^\text{22}\) They hoped to reform the local sexual economy (or social relations based on sexual and reproductive behavior) in a manner that they regarded to be more nationally appropriate, more in line with other presumed national characteristics. The liberalism predominant in this period could not fully displace traditionalism with respect to the family. Instead, its adherents remained committed to patriarchal social models.

Among middle-class and elite Cubans, before the 1930s, the Spanish phrase, "Men are made for life in the streets, women for life within the home," succinctly captured the separate nature of male and female spheres of activity.\(^\text{23}\) Men led both their families and their communities, demonstrating a masculinity which embodied intellectual ability, physical prowess, and civic responsibility. In contrast, women existed solely under men's authority as daughters, wives, and mothers. They were to be selfless and sentimental, nurturing and pious, "the perfect counterpoints to materialistic and competitive man, whose strength and rationality suited him for the rough and violent public world."\(^\text{24}\) If women possessed any social power it was to be found solely in their


moral superiority, which was demonstrated by a religious piety that held no potential challenge to men's authority.25

Again, marriage provided the linkages between these very distinct social entities of man and woman, and, in so doing provides the site at which many of the aspects of the sexual economy can be analyzed. The dominant classes believed marriage offered couples a mutually satisfying and sustaining relationship, as it also served societal functions that extended beyond the individual. For women, marriage would liberate them from the risks of working outside the home as domestic servants, street vendors, or prostitutes. Married women also gained a socially sanctioned entry into the "vocation" of motherhood, considered "the culmination of a woman's life."26 Men gained authority over the next generation as they also gained access to potentially powerful social networks with "appropriate" marriages.27 Marriage became the institution through which the family existed as the base that "preserved class and familial authority."28

parallel development in the U.S. experience.


28Stoner, From the House to the Streets, 14.
In a racially stratified society such as Cuba, appropriate marriages amongst the
white elite ensured "the genetic transmission of racial purity and the legal and economic
perpetuation of social privilege and rank."29 Despite the existence of other, socially
accepted methods of family formation, legitimate marriage remained an important site for
the construction of social difference. The colonial restrictions on the marriage of social
unequals continued to inform the social patterns of the republic, perpetuating the
racialized distinction between the elite and the popular classes. The members of the
dominant classes disparaged the high rates of illegitimacy and consensual unions amongst
people of color and used them to rationalize the continued marginalization of the latter.

Family and Race Amongst Afro-Cuban Intellectuals

The above concerns about the Cuban family were not exclusive to white leaders.
Afro-Cubans were actively involved themselves with these issues. They fully participated
in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attempts to delineate the ideological
characteristics of the emergent nation, which employed the concepts of masculinity,
femininity, race, and style of family formation as integral components of this nationalist
project. Afro-Cuban nationalism, unlike its Euro-Cuban counterpart, however, was
informed by the obvious need to minimize the negative perceptions of Afro-Cuban racial
identity. As Afro-Cubans sought to shape themselves into individuals and communities
with positive social valuation, they attempted to separate the trope of "civilization" from
its close association with European racial identity. They pursued a policy that
emphasized racial "regeneración," or "racial uplift." This philosophy argued that

29Martínez-Alíer, Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba, xiii.
through education and moral reform under middle-class guidance, the Afro-Cuban masses would renounce their “primitive” lifestyles and embrace the “civilized” norms of the Euro-Cuban elite.\textsuperscript{30}

In disapproving of consensual and interracial relationships Afro-Cuban nationalist intellectuals often found themselves in a difficult position. How were they to provide a new moral compass for racial and national advancement when faced with a stark contradiction between what many perceived as the immoral nature of these consensual unions and a public belief that these relationships were essential to the process of cultural assimilation and economic progress for people of color? Addressing this contradiction was part of their greater concern for how to present a national vision that legitimated the Afro-Cuban right to participate in the political and social project of Cuban nation-building while minimizing the importance of “race,” in its definition of immutable, collective identity and behavior based on biological heritage and a narrowly-drawn concept of “family.” These problems were multifaceted in that these intellectuals had both to reject the racist assumptions of many of their white compatriots and to minimize internal conflicts within their own racially-defined community. In other words, the internal divisions of the Afro-Cuban community (especially those based on gender and class) would challenge its intellectual leadership to provide models of citizenship that were relevant to all members of the community and were also capable of extending beyond imagined racial boundaries.

\textsuperscript{30}Morrison, “Civilization and Citizenship.”
In this drive toward racially-inclusive nation building, Afro-Cuban intellectuals developed a prescriptive agenda that focused on the mission of demonstrating Afro-Cuban suitability for full participation into both dominant visions of "civilization" and the progressive, modernizing Cuban nation. The elements of this discourse were developed in a variety of sites, especially in social clubs and periodicals. Within the pages of Afro-Cuban newspapers and columns, the gender and class conflicts within their community are easily revealed, as middle-class Afro-Cuban intellectuals attempted to fit elite Euro-Cuban models of gender roles and family relations to the Afro-Cuban community.

The imitation of European patriarchal notions of sexuality and family formation was a central feature in their efforts to present suitable models of Cuban social and political relations. However, this study reveals that the Afro-Cuban imitation of patriarchal models failed to address Cuba's racial reality. They tended to minimize discussion of the racist social restrictions experienced by Afro-Cuban men and women and the relative economic and socio-sexual "freedom" of Afro-Cuban women. Ultimately, instead of questioning the nature of the Euro-Cuban patriarchy and realizing its inappropriate fit for their community, late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Afro-Cuban writers explained the Afro-Cuban masses' nonconformity to these models in terms of their lack of education and morality which continued as legacies of slavery. Through this strategy, these writers could avoid direct confrontations with racist

31For a more general introduction to this theme, see Morrison, "Civilization and Citizenship;" Helg, Our Rightful Share; Ada Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba; and Alejandro de la Fuente, A Nation for All.
claims that Afro-Cuban cultural inferiority was a permanent, inescapable state. Instead, they would portray themselves as models for Afro-Cuban racial uplift or \textit{regeneración}.\footnote{For studies of the comparable sentiment expressed by African-Americans in the United States see Harold Cruse, \textit{The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual} (New York: Quill Publishers, 1984) and, more recently, Kevin Gaines, \textit{Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).}

As shall been seen below, the Afro-Cuban publications [such as the magazine \textit{Minerva: Revista Quincenal Dedicada a la Mujer de Color} (Minerva: The Biweekly Magazine for the Woman of Color) and the column “Palpitaciones de la Raza de Color” (Heartbeats of the Colored Race)] provide especially useful insights into the place of the family in Afro-Cuban nationalist ideology. Continuing a long established tradition of Afro-Cuban public polemics, \textit{Minerva} and “Palpitaciones” strove toward constructing a positive image of Afro-Cuban identity and for social and political inclusion. \textit{Minerva} was founded by middle-class Afro-Cubans in 1888, shortly after the final abolition of Cuban slavery in 1886. From its pages, female authors suggested the appropriate intellectual and social orientation of their compatriots.\footnote{Carmen Montejo Arrechea, “\textit{Minerva, A Magazine for Women (and Men) of Color},” in \textit{Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution}, Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998) 33-48.} A similar project appeared in the column “Palpitaciones de la Raza de Color” in the Havana daily newspaper \textit{La Prensa} between August 1915 and September 1916. While \textit{Minerva} was directed almost exclusively towards Cuban women of color, “Palpitaciones’” location as a column in the mainstream periodical \textit{La Prensa} made it accessible to a wider audience. Its editor, Ramón Vasconcelos, intended to present Afro-Cuban issues and concerns before Cubans
of all races. In its subtitle, Vasconcelos described his column as "Crónica escrita para negros sin taparrabos, mestizos no arrepentidos y blancos de sentido común" (chronicle written for blacks without loincloths, unrepentant mulattoes, and whites with common sense).

While surviving biographical data on people involved in Minerva and "Palpitaciones" are minimal, reviews of them suggest that their contributors were typically from families which had lived for a significant period as free people of color under slavery and many were racially mixed to some degree. They represented a numerically small, but organized and educated Afro-Cuban sector that constructed and presented their visions of the proper relation between Afro-Cuban people and the nation. For example, one of Minerva's agents in Havana was Angela Rodríguez de Edreira. Records of the Catholic Church in Havana reveal that she was the illegitimate daughter of a black mother and white father. Although her father never officially recognized established his legal paternity, before her marriage Angela had publically carried his last name. Her husband, Nicolás Edreira, was a tailor and also biracial. Unlike his wife's situation, his white father had publically claimed him as a "hijo natural reconocido." When the couple married in 1880, both were listed as free pardos and there was no indication that either had ever been enslaved. Another of Minerva's Havana agents,

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35More details on this category are provided in chapter 4 above.

36Reconocimientos, Leg. 65, exp. 81.
Modesta Álvarez de O’Farrill was also a mulatta and her husband a mulatto. Both were themselves the children of mulatto parents. When one of their children was born in 1879, the records revealed no hint of an experience with enslavement for either.  

Ramón Vasconcelos, the editor of “Palpitaciones” came from a similar background. Born in 1890, he himself was a fair-skinned mestizo, the illegitimate son of a wealthy white father and mulatta mother. Their relationship was short lived. His father followed custom by marrying and beginning a legitimate family with a white woman. But he maintained a close bond with his racially-mixed, first son. In fact, he had hoped to raise his son within the new household and encouraged him to live as white. Vasconcelos’ mother, however, would not tolerate her son’s separation from her family. As a compromise of the two positions, Vasconcelos enjoyed his father’s wealth and connections, while maintaining strong links to the Afro-Cuban community.

Vasconcelos began his professional life as a teacher. He traveled to Mexico and much of southern Europe in 1910. He founded the Cuban newspapers El Liberal, El Cuarto Poder, and Universal. He contributed to several others, including La Prensa. He was a correspondent in Spain during the Civil War. He was the Historian of Havana from 1920 to 1924. Between 1927 and 1933, he was a businessman in Europe, but he maintained a political association with President Machado. He was president of the Liberal Party between 1933 and 1940 and he served as a senator from Havana for two years.

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37 AES, Libro 55 de bautismos de pardos y morenos, entry 419.

38 Vasconcelos supplied a brief autobiographical sketch in T[ristán] [pseudo. Ramón Vasconcelos], "El que con niño se acuesta...," La Prensa (Sept. 16, 1915) 6-8.
separate terms, one beginning in 1936 and the other in 1944. He also served as a cabinet minister to President Fulgencio Batista on two separate occasions: Minister of Public Education in 1942 and Minister of Communications in 1954.39

The contributors to *Minerva* and "Palpitaciones" supported the belief that the Afro-Cuban masses would gain respectability and minimize racial discrimination by educating themselves. One editorial letter to "Palpitaciones" clearly outlined the project of Afro-Cuban social acceptance as one of gaining honor through imitation of Euro-Cuban, or European, social contentions. It stated, "We should work with the necessary morals in all our actions and we should try to imitate what is honored and extolled."40 Contributors to *Minerva* frequently highlighted the themes of morality, virtue, and civilized action. They never explicitly delineated which qualities composed this morality and virtue, except in discussion of stable, legitimate families.

They advocated a vigorous struggle against the ignorance left in the wake of slavery. One woman writing in *Minerva* explained how despite the fact that for four hundred years Cuban women of color...

...hemos sido objeto del capricho, el entretenimiento, el juguete del hombre azás, fementido y cruel, hoy es fuerza, que siguiendo las señales de los tiempos...levantemos nuestra frente y hagamos titánicos esfuerzos para reconquistar la dignidad que plugo al cielo concederle á todas nuestras congéneras

39 *Libro de Cuba; una enciclopedia ilustrada que abarca las artes, las letras, las ciencias, la economía, la política, la historia, la docencia y el progreso general de la Nación Cubana. Edición conmemorativa del cincuentenario de la independencia, 1902-1952, y del centenario del nacimiento de José Martí, 1853-1953.* (Havana: Publicaciones Unidas, 1954) 693; also K. Lynn Stoner, personal communication November 3, 2000.

40 Ana Hidalgo Vidal, "Dos palabras," *La Prensa*, (Sept. 9, 1915): 8
(...have been the objects of caprice and amusement, the toys of cruel men, but today following the signs of the time...we lift ourselves up and make the heroic effort to reconquer the dignity that I ask the heavens to concede to our sisters).41

For most the major concern was to end consensual unions and create families formed solely through legitimate marriage. Slavery had taught people of color to live immorally and not provide their children with respectable names. In the words of one woman, “verdad es que la esclavitud jamás ha producido esposas, sino concubinas; más ya que pasó la sevidumbre, pase también la degradación” (the truth is that the period of slavery never produced marital partners, only concubines. But now that it has ended, the degradation also ends). She continued:

Si la raza de color desea cordialmente dignificarse y ocupar en las funciones publicas el lugar á que están llamados todos los elementos componentes de la sociedad, empiece por formar la familia dentro de los preceptos dictados por la moral, y exijidos por las leyes, tenga presente que sin familia no hay organización sociológica posible, medite que es irrealizable la familia sin el matrimonio, reflexione que sin respeto propio, sin amor ni estimación á los demás individuos de la propia raza, no hay matrimonio; que sin este vínculo sagrado no existe el amor á la gloria, ni hay interés en conservar un nombre limpio que trasmitir á los hijos, ni razón para acumular riquezas que representan privaciones sin cuento, sacrificios supremos esfuerzos increíbles, pues que no hay á quien dejarlas con amor, ni quien las pida con dolor y con justicia. No hay en fin esa consoladora prolongación de la vida que conocemos con el nombre de sucesión legitima. (If the colored race sincerely wishes to dignify itself and occupy in public functions a place to which are called all the component elements of the society, [it must] begin to form the family within the rules dictated by morality, and demanded by the laws. It must remember that without the family, sociological organization is not possible. It must recognize that the family without the marriage is unrealizable and reflect that without self-respect, without love, nor esteem for other individuals of the same race, there is no marriage. That without this sacred bond, there is no love for greatness, nor is there interest in conserving a clean name that to can be transmitted to children. There is no reason to accumulate wealth that represents supreme, untold sacrifice and incredible efforts, since there is no one with whom to leave such wealth lovingly nor who request them with pain and justice. In the

end, there is not that consolatory prolongation of the life that we know with the name of legitimate succession.) 42

For her, group respectability could only be achieved if legitimate families provided the base for all other social development. It is also important to note the emphasis she placed on phrase “sin respeto propio, sin amor ni estimación á las demás individuos de la propia raza, no hay matrimonio” (without self-respect, without love or esteem for other individuals of the same race, there is no marriage). Here, she offers a suggestion that marriage should be restricted to partners of the same race. Was she advocating that belief or simply acquiescing to local custom? In either case, she denies interracial consensual unions any positive social value.

With such belief in the social necessity of marriage, these Afro-Cuban intellectuals generally displayed a tacit patriarchal vision. Although the discussion of gender roles contained in “Palpitaciones” was still linked to a communal emergence from slavery, it also occurred within the context of an emergent Cuban debate over the social value of marriage and divorce mentioned above. Contributors to “Palpitaciones” suggested that Afro-Cuban men “gallantly” take their “rightful” place as the heads of their households as they also became involved in the leadership of their communities. For example, Vasconcelos called upon them to “renovate or die,...and accept their responsibilities. For now was the time to enter true manhood.”43

Another reader added, "With hard-working Black men, virtuous and unassuming families, happy homes, and decent customs, this completely shows progress, civic aptitudes, and competence for a life of liberty, and above all,...we can and should establish the racial pride, naturally favorable for the enjoyment of democracy and knowledge."\(^{44}\) We see here the suggestion that the Afro-Cuban men assume the role of the patriarchy within the family. Also, he should become its chief breadwinner, freeing his wife from the necessity of work outside the home. A female reader seconds these opinions, suggesting that in society and marriage "el hombre es el más fuerte, el que impone leyes y costumbres" (the man is the strongest, he who makes laws and customs).\(^{45}\) His role as father was to be confirmed as he conceived children solely with a wife in official wedlock. Children born to illegitimate relationships only demonstrated that he had not recognized his responsibility for civilized behavior and continuation in a barbarous state.

Additionally, the discussion of the need for Afro-Cuban self-development, education, and cultural up-lift also emphasized the important role of Afro-Cuban women. Like the expectations ascribed to the elite, Euro-Cuban woman, the Afro-Cuban woman was to assume responsibility for domestic life. Generally, a wife should be affectionate, faithful, discrete, thrifty, and modest. She was "el ángel del hogar, la reina de las sociedades, la gloria de su patria" (the angel of the home, the queen of society, and the


glory of the nation). Although she may lack "una vasta cultura" (extensive education or culture), her responsibility is to utilize her knowledge in the creation of a suitable home and in the moral education of her children. One contributor offered, "El deber de la mujer es educar y guiar a la familia en el hogar por la senda del deber" (the woman's duty is to educate and guide the family from the home). As a decent woman, she was to instill virtue, morality, and proper culture in the next generation by living an exemplary life. Vasconcelos would describe the Afro-Cuban woman as "the critical element of regeneration, she is the true touchstone," thus, placing much of the responsibility for overall Afro-Cuban regeneration with her. Several letters from Minerva and "Palpitaciones" readers, praising such expressions, indicated a great degree of acceptance of these gendered views of Afro-Cuban social relations.

This tendency toward a strong patriarchal model was not without some qualification. National debates regarding changes in marriage law and the implementation of divorce that were occurring between 1914 and 1918 and Afro-Cubans addressed these issues as they related to their community. In a reprinted article, from the journal Albores from Camagüey, an Afro-Cuban woman and man, Inocencia Silveira and Mariano Castillo del Pozo, were asked to comment on a set of questions related to marriage,


47"Como se piensa" "Palpitaciones" La Prensa (May 12, 1916) 4.

48Indiana, "Reflecciones Femeninas,"

49Hidalgo Vidal, "Dos palabras."

divorce, and sexual definitions of responsibility and honor. Silveira responds that female fidelity to the marriage depends on the needs and desires of her mate. Thereby she rejects the unequivocal position expressed by Vasconcelos. For her, husband and wife shared the responsibility of protecting the honor of the family and neither was more powerful than the other.

En el matrimonio, guardador del honor debe ser el marido, como guardadora del mismo deber ser la mujer, y que por tanto ambos lo son igualmente...ambos tienen iguales derechos e iguales deberes...(In marriage, the guardian of honor should be the husband, but the woman should also be the guardian of honor...) 51

On the indisolvability of marriage, Silveira demonstrates some ambiguity, but suggests that rigidity of the law is overridden by the level of spousal commitment.

Yo entiendo que la indisolubility del lazo matrimonial está cimentado en el afecto mutuo entre marido y mujer, y no en un precepto legal escrito: porque lo primero es la base de la verdadera moral y de la felicidad conyugal, mientras que lo segundo viene a ser simplemente la codificación-socialmente respetada-de una ley natural. Por eso vemos, con dolor, casos en que, rotos los vínculos de la voluntad mutua, los forjados por las leyes humanas solo sirven para producir perturbaciones e inmoralidades (It is my opinion that the bonds of mutual affection between husband and wife are what form unbreakable marital bonds, not in the structure of the law: because the first is the true foundation of morality and the marital happiness and the second is simply a social codification of natural law. We view with pain cases in which [marriage] without voluntary and mutual bonds are formed only with respect to the law, causing disturbances and immorality). 52

Castillo del Pozo responded to the question of male marital obligation by also noting it depends on the circumstances, "el ambiente social" (the social environment) and "la idiosincracia del hombre" (man’s idiosyncracy). Therefore, a man should choose a wife who will be content with his attitudes. As to the permanence of marriage, he


52Ibid.
suggested that it depends on the compatibility and love of the partners. Castillo makes no
direct reference to legal divorce, but comparable to Silveira, indicated that martial
stability rests within a specific couple.  

Despite the small qualifications to their social outlook, most the writers for both
Minerva and "Palpitaciones" committed themselves to the correction of what they
perceived as deviance amongst Cuban people of color. The obvious standard to follow
was that espoused by the Euro-Cuban, or European, elite. When editor Vasconcelos
reaffirmed, "What constitutes modern nations is the solidarity of the peoples' moral and
material interest," he was not proposing the blending of Euro-Cuban and Afro-Cuban
standards, but the demise of the latter. Given the hegemony of Euro-centric values, he
was denying the possibility of socio-cultural variation within the boundaries of the Cuban
state and also denying any potential validity to Afro-Cuban culture. Indeed, what Afro-
Cuban intellectuals hoped to demonstrate was that their racial difference in no way
prohibited their acquisition of appropriate cultural standards of the nation. Generally,
they felt the majority of Afro-Cuban people were living in a dishonorable manner. These
sentiments were not only implied but, at times, stated as fact. Those who maintained
African-based practices were frequently described as "barbaric," "filthy," and "ignorant."

Disjuncture with Afro-Cuban History and Contemporary Reality

Their acceptance of patriarchal gender ideologies did not insulate the readers of
Minerva and "Palpitaciones" from the realization that the Afro-Cuban masses did not

\(^{53}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{54}\text{Citation missing}\)
conform to these behaviors. The contributors to “Palpitaciones” suggested that neither the majority of Afro-Cuban men or women were not acting responsibly towards their families and communities. However, most criticism was directed towards Afro-Cuban women, reprimanding them for not demonstrating sufficient virtue and morality. That many Afro-Cuban women also entered into non-marital sexual relations with white men was especially troublesome for many contributors. Vasconcelos was very critical of this situation, seeing Afro-Cuban women as more immoral than Afro-Cuban men. He stated, “...el mayor obstáculo para alcanzar la regeneración del negro, es la mujer” (the mayor obstacle to the achievement of the uplift of the black is the woman). And “...la mujer de color hé el mayor coeficiente de matrimonios naturales y de prostitución” (the woman of color is the greater coefficient in consensual unions and in prostitution).\(^{55}\)

Despite their intentions of providing a model that fostered the social acceptance of Afro-Cubans, in the presentation of a patriarchal vision, middle-class intellectuals failed by not addressing the specifics of the Afro-Cuban reality in both labor relations and the sexual economy. Their accusations did not match with the official observations. The 1919 Cuban census suggests that such harsh criticism may have been undeserved since marriage rates for Afro-Cuban women were slightly higher than those of Afro-Cuban men. Several explanations for this difference can be suggested: a greater tendency for interracial marriage amongst the Afro-Cuban women or a general tendency for men to marry much later. Additionally, the elevated social status and relative wealth of white men in comparison to that of blacks and mulattoes may often have made men of color

less preferable partners in the eyes of many women of color, as we see in Reyita’s statement above. With limited access to relationships with white women, these men stood at a competitive disadvantage in the sexual domain.

The Afro-Cuban nationalists also failed to incorporate into their gender philosophy an acknowledgment of the racial divisions of labor, that continued a salient feature of Cuban society and of which they were all too well aware. Except for a few successful, middle-class individuals, the majority of Afro-Cubans held only the most menial and under-paid jobs. Afro-Cubans were greatly over-represented in the lowest levels of agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic service and greatly under represented in the professions. Even those few in the professions did not receive salaries comparable to their white counterparts. This situation only worsened early in the republic, with the ever-increasing Spanish immigration and continuing employers preference for white workers. Therefore, most Afro-Cuban men found it difficult to support themselves and their families, and they could not provide Afro-Cuban women an escape from outside employment.

Likewise, Afro-Cuban men found it difficult to achieve the community leadership aspect of patriarchy. Beyond perpetuating a supposition of Afro-Cuban intellectual and cultural inferiority, racist ideology hindered Afro-Cuban male leadership in two additional ways. First, few achieved the educational prerequisites or the sponsorship of a strong patron that success in the Cuban political arena necessitated. According to the

56De la Fuente, "Race and Inequality," 152-153.

57Helg, Our Rightful Share, 99, 128 and de la Fuente, A Nation for All, 46-47.
1919 census, the literacy rate for Afro-Cuban youths to age 19 was only 51.2%, compared with 60.6% for white youths.\textsuperscript{58} Second, as Afro-Cuban leadership of non-race-specific constituencies was hindered, so too was their leadership within solely Afro-Cuban organizations hindered. Again, both the formation of the Partido Independiente de Color and the 1912 Afro-Cuban revolt had been surrounded by charges of anti-white racism. The Cuban government brutally crushed both and, as of 1910, race-based political organizing was criminalized.\textsuperscript{59} Without the possibility of Afro-Cuban political self-determination, in at least a minimal area of political life, Afro-Cuban men could not develop the authority over subordinate men that was another necessary element of patriarchy. Overall, Afro-Cuban patriarchy did not have the necessary foundation of male authority with which to sustain itself.

Comparable limitations affected Afro-Cuban female adherence to the patriarchal model. Again, the economic reality of Afro-Cuban life necessitated that the majority of women worked outside the home. This was a well-established tradition among Afro-Cubans. During the early republican era, labor-force participation for Afro-Cuban women was at least three to five times that of Euro-Cuban women.\textsuperscript{60} However, they worked most frequently in low-wage occupations, such as laundresses, servants, seamstresses, peasant farmers, tobacco workers, dressmakers, midwives, and healers.

\textsuperscript{58}Cuba, Direcci6n General del Censo, \textit{Censo de la República de Cuba} (Havana: Maza, Arroyo, y Cuso, 1920) 568.

\textsuperscript{59}Helg, \textit{Our Rightful Share}.

\textsuperscript{60}De la Fuente, "Race and Inequality," 158.
Only a few secured reliable occupations as nurses, merchants, teachers, and clerical workers. And until the 1930s, Afro-Cuban women were continually displaced from meaningful occupations by immigrating Spanish women, as had occurred the male case.61 Therefore, Afro-Cuban women did not have the time needed to cultivate the domesticity recommended by the intellectuals. Labor outside the home was incompatible with the image of the virtuous, generous, and humble homemaker.

Just as the Afro-Cuban gendered division of labor was distinct from that of their Euro-Cuban peers, so too was their sexual economy.62 The patriarchal vision suggested for Afro-Cuban women also failed to account for a certain "sexual freedom" that they possessed. Instead, in the intellectual effort to bring "honor" to their community, the reproductive potential of Afro-Cuban women was subjected to the same forms of male control as were imposed on Euro-Cuban women. Children were to be born only within the legitimate bonds of matrimony. The difficulty in achieving these results was complicated by the fact that significant numbers of Afro-Cuban women were involved in consensual unions with Euro-Cuban or Spanish men which produced illegitimate, mulatto (or mestizo) children. A possible explanation for this phenomenon could be based on the imbalanced sex ratio between white women and men. Since the colonial period, the population of white men had always outnumbered white women. However, for Afro-

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61Helg, Our Rightful Share, 102.

62For discussion of sexual economy, as a mode of production and reproduction, see Roger Lancaster, Life is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 18-20 and 280-282, although he does not explicitly label the term.
Cubans the sex ratio was more closely balanced. It would lean towards women after the War of 1895, as a result of the deaths of large numbers of Afro-Cuban men.

Additionally, interracial unions, but not marriages, between white men and Afro-Cuban women were encouraged by what Vera Kutzinski has demonstrated to be the positioning of mulatto women as the height of sensual beauty images within Cuba in the late nineteenth century. While Afro-Cuban women were desirable sexual partners for white males, they were not equally imagined to be desirable marital partners. Similar to other post-emancipation societies of Latin American and the Caribbean, Cuba exhibited what one scholar has labeled a "dual marriage system." Legal marriage occurred amongst middle and upper-class social equals, but consensual unions were prevalent amongst the poor and between social unequals.

From these relationships arose a debate over the presumed problematic existence of large numbers of illegitimate mulatto children that reveals another conflict between racial ideology and gender ideology. Some interpreters of Latin-American race relations have read from the racial/color stratification of these societies a desire to whiten on the part of members of the lower segments. This is an aspect of the sexual economy which is unique to societies structured by racial difference expressed in phenotype. The same is

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63Cuba, *Censo de la república de Cuba*, 298.


often believed true in the Cuban case. Many Afro-Cubans are believed to have hoped that lighter-skinned offspring would have greater chances for successful integration into the existing power structure. Therefore, both Afro-Cuban women and men aspired to unions with light partners to ensure such a possibility. However, unions between Afro-Cuban men and Euro-Cuban women were considered socially unacceptable by the dominant class.\textsuperscript{66} Euro-Cuban women lost any claim to honor by such an association.

In contrast, consensual unions between Euro-Cuban men and Afro-Cuban women were socially accepted, although marriage of this type met with less social approval. From the point of view of the dominant class, Afro-Cuban women lost little from consensual unions with Euro-Cuban men since \textit{a priori} the race of these women prevented any designation of honor. Moreover, neither was the social status of white men threatened by engaging in such consensual unions. Thus, Afro-Cuban women had greater access than did Afro-Cuban men to the presumed benefits of producing lighter children. An implication of this observation is that \textit{blanqueamiento} for Afro-Cuban families proceeded most often through women of color. Social taboo prohibited the men of color from open sexual relations with white women and this would then suggest the possibility that \textit{blanqueamiento} on a national level probably occurred at a much slower rate had such restrictions not existed.\textsuperscript{67} What would hinder such a conclusion is the realization that the occurrence and rate of \textit{blanqueamiento} also depends on further considerations. One was a higher proportion of whites than blacks in population. This was true for early republican

\textsuperscript{66}\textit{Helg, Our Rightful Share}, 99, 150.

\textsuperscript{67}\textit{See Wright, Café con leche} for the example of early republican Venezuela.
Cuba as a result of the large loss of Afro-Cubans in the wars of independence, continuing Spanish immigration, and restrictions on black immigration. Therefore, members of the minority population would have had a smaller pool of potential partners, if their choice was limited to that group. That restriction was actually what the Afro-Cuban emphasis on legitimate marriage proposed.

The contributors to _Minerva_ and “Palpitaciones” expressed their fear that a large proportion of illegitimate unions would eventually cause the extinction of people of color. This fear was reflected in the manner in which Vasconcelos and others consistently spoke of the prostitution, ignorance, and lack of mortality of the Afro-Cuban women who involved themselves in these types of relationships. Vasconcelos claimed these interracial consensual unions were encouraged by Afro-Cuban mothers, who typically told their daughters,

> Oye quiero que no seas boba y busques un hombre que te dé dinero, aunque no te guste, y antes que esposa legítima de un negro, prefiero que seas la querida de un blanco (Listen, I don't want you to be a fool, look for a man who gives you money even though you don't like him and before you marry a black man, I prefer that you become a sweetheart [lover] of a white). 68

Vasconcelos continued to lament,

> La mestiza y aun la negra pura, apenas llegan a la pubertad empiezan a soñar con el noviecito blanco... ¿A qué obedece ese desdén hacia el hombre de color? ¿a razones de orden estético? ¿de orden espiritual? ¿de orden económico? ¿de orden social? Quizás a todo ello junto, pero más que nada lo último (The mulatta and even the black woman, has just reached puberty when she begins to dream of a white lover... what controls this disdain towards men of color? Are there aesthetic

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reasons? Are there spiritual reasons or economic ones, or is it in the social order? Perhaps all of these combine, but more than the others it is the social). 69

This statement stands as an open challenge to the process of race mixture and whitening. Despite his own personal history as the product of such a relationship, Vasconcelos questioned their significance for the Afro-Cuban community. He had not yet arrived at what literary critic Vera Kutzinski has noted as an appreciation of race mixture suggested by leaders of the vanguardista period, for its ability to distinguish a “true” Cuban identity vis-à-vis cultural intrusions from the U.S. 70

The desire of intellectuals like Vasconcelos to limit the formation of relationships between white men and women of color extended beyond the discursive arena. Afro-Cuba social clubs and mutual aid societies also attempted to minimize encounters between their female members and white men. When asked about interracial relations in the early republican period, two female informants indicated that their clubs warned them against association with white men. One related the story of an incident from the 1940s illustrative of such pressure on women of color. As a young woman she had been walking home when she encountered her white employer. They innocently stopped to talk. The next day one of the leaders of Unión Fraternal, an Afro-Cuban mutual-aid society, threatened her with expulsion if she were to continue such inappropriate behavior. 71

69 Ibid.

70 Kutzinski, Sugar’s Secrets, 143. For a thorough discussion of U.S. cultural influences in Cuba, see Pérez, On Becoming Cuban.

However, the critique of the sexual behavior of Cuban women of color did not stand without challenge. Other writers rose to the defense of Afro-Cuban women. Both men and women claimed that, indeed, Afro-Cuban women were better educated and more pious than Afro-Cuban men, as seen in the existence of many Afro-Cuban female teachers and Catholic worshipers. One male reader from the eastern part of the island observed, “In Oriente and Camagüey, the mulatta is almost always superior in culture to the man, she is dignified, moral, and virtuous. The black women is on the same plane...These women know how to be ladies and young ladies in the same proportion as those of the white class.”

This observation is confirmed by census data that indicate higher literacy rates for Afro-Cuban women than for men. From Havana, a young woman, “Indiana,” explained both martial separation and the high incidence of consensual unions as the results of both the educational and moral superiority of Afro-Cuban women in comparison to Afro-Cuban men. She also added that Afro-Cuban men were often abusive in the relations toward women. Even Vasconcelos had to admit that...

...por regla general, el negro no se casa para amar a su mujer; se casa para someterla con brutalidad musulmana...De ahí resulta que la mujer, ingénitamente más delicada, más tierna, se asocie a quien la trata con menos despotismo” (As a general rule, the black man does not marry for the love of his woman, he marries to submit her to brutality...This has as its result that the fragile woman associates whomever treats her with less despotism).

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72 Jeronimo A. Guerra, "¡A Cucharetear!", *La Prensa* (Sept. 1, 1915) 7.

73 Tristan, "Reflecciones Femeninas."
He even accepted that if in fact black, mulatto, and white men all had treated the Afro-Cuban woman solely as an object of pleasure and acted abusively toward her, this would indeed have obstructed her ability to create a "proper" home. All men who preferred consensual unions to marriage were implicated in the decline of the community of color. One woman harshly castigated such a man as “no es digno de ser hombre; es un desdichado esclavo de la materia que desconoce las satisfacciones espirituales, mil veces más dulces que los goces fisicos” (unworthy of being a man, he is a slave to the basic instinct who does not know that the spiritual satisfactions are much sweeter than physical pleasures).74

While these accusations focused on the contemporary gender conflicts, others reexamined the historical basis for these tensions. Several Minerva and “Palpitaciones” contributors suggested that the Afro-Cuban inability to establish stable homes was, at least in part, a legacy of slavery. As was noted above, they noted that under its destructive force Afro-Cuban women had learned to behave sexually only as instruments through which to reproduce human capital for their owners. Previous chapters of this study examined the historical evidence for this point and found it limited. Some eighteenth-century slaveowners seemed to have encouraged marriage and reproduction amongst the charges. And after the end of the slave trade, pronatal strategies reappeared in some circles.75 Therefore, it was only in the period of open, legal trade, 1790-1820 that


75See chapters 2 and 3 of this study.
slave owners were certain in their estimates that the replacement costs of slave purchase were less than the costs associated with raising children.\textsuperscript{76}

The same uncertainty surrounds the assertions by contributors to Minerva and “Palpitaciones” that Afro-Cuban women had been subjected to the sexual advances of their owners. This was probably true in many cases, but it can not be substantiated from the available evidence. Historian Franklin Knight has suggest that rapid rise in the mulatto population of the nineteenth century indicates that possibility.\textsuperscript{77} Again, however, the evidence presented above in this study reveal most births of pardo children occurred outside the institution of slavery. It also would be unjust to accept that all interracial relationships in the slave-holding period were the results of sexual coercion from white men or some calculus of social and economic benefit on the part of Afro-Cuban women.

The Afro-Cuban writers discussed here did not reserve their indictment of slavery solely to its corruption of Afro-Cuban women. They also suggested that under the degenerate moral values of slavery, Afro-Cuban men also had learned to disregard the social value of marriage and enjoy sexual relations outside wedlock.\textsuperscript{78} While this opinion reveals an obvious gender bias that assumes men controlled sexual expression and women were passive actors, the sentiments it expresses may have been just as likely for Afro-Cuban women. They too could have questioned the value of marriage and saw no

\textsuperscript{76}Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba* and Herbert Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America.*

\textsuperscript{77}Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba,* and “Cuba.”

need to limit their sexual experiences to its confines. In either case, to address this perceived problem, "Palpitaciones'" contributors expressed an obligation to reverse these tendencies and projected onto the Afro-Cuban the need for community conformity with the dominant patriarchal model, despite its improper fit with the unique aspects of Afro-Cuban life.

**Transforming the Legal Status of the Cuban Family**

The Afro-Cuban intellectual concern for the legitimacy of Afro-Cuban families was set within the context of a changing legal status of marriage within Cuban society. As will be demonstrated below, the legal nature of the Cuban family did continue unchanged in the transition from colony to republic, or within the republic alone. As a succession of less traditional political ideologies, such as liberalism, socialism, and feminism, gained currency, each influenced reforms to the legal definitions of the family.

The ascendance of a liberal political culture in Cuba occurred well after it had in continental Latin America. The latter occurred throughout the nineteenth century. Only towards the century's end, did the ascendance of liberal politics in the metropolitan, Spanish government affect the first significant changes on the island. Liberal politicians were inspired by a commitment to liberate the individual from the strictures of the ancien régime. They perceived the Church as the center of such control. Moreover, liberals

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attempted to consolidate their own power by undercutting the authority and wealth of the Church.\textsuperscript{80}

One of the points of their attack was the Church’s then exclusive right to verify civil status through the registries of baptism, marriage, and death. Although these registries were mainly used by the Church to mark the fulfillment of the related sacraments, they also generated a small income and influenced marital practices. In limiting these possibilities, a liberal Spanish government created civil registries in the peninsula for the first time in 1870 and extended them to Cuba in 1883.\textsuperscript{81} The establishment of the civil registries also marked one of the more radical transformations of legality of the family since the requirement for the clerical sanction of marriage created during the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century. Thus, with the coexistence of both secular and ecclesiastic forms of family recognition, the previously-obligatory religious dimension of family formation was eliminated for those Cubans who chose to accept it solely as a social contract with economic implications.


\textsuperscript{81}The implementation date of the civil registry is variably states in several sources. \textit{Ley Provisional de Registro Civil Para las Islas de Cuba y Puerto Rico} (Havana: Imprenta del Gobierno y Captania General, por S. M., 1884) lists 1883; see José Guerra López, \textit{Derecho de Familia}, (Manuscript, Havana, 1936): 24-25 suggests 1888; and Decreto Presidencial 99 de 26 mayo de 1925, cited in José Machado, \textit{Los Hijos Ilegítimos} (Habana: Cultural, S.A., 1941): 23, indicates 1895.
The establishment of the civil registry also brought the termination of official racial designators. Markers of race and color no longer had jural standing. As was demonstrated earlier, Cuban church registries had been separated according to race since the middle of the seventeenth century. The Pragmatic of 1776 and the Real cédula on marriage of 1803 only fostered the continuation of such separation, by allowing for the almost effortless identification of social inequality of potential spouses. With the removal of racial designators from the state’s vital registries, race was no longer officially imposed. Or, for the first time, Cubans did not have to carry official labels of racial distinction. This is not to suggest, of course, that the value of race disappeared from Cuban society. Race continued to shape many of the interactions amongst Cubans. What remained, however, were socially constructed, non-governmental and self-selected forms of racial identification, instead of categories derived from a long-standing legal template. One can imagine that the subsequent beneficiaries of this policy would have been those ambitious men of color whose phenotype and ambiguous ancestry would allow them to “pass” as white once state documentation to the contrary no longer existed. By the same token, lower-class Whites lost one of the superior, legal distinctions between themselves and people of color. Another aspect of this policy is significant as well. Even before independence, the island’s inhabitants were not civilly registered at birth as white, black, or mulatto, but as Cubans (albeit, still as Spanish subjects). Baptismal records for the

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82 Ley provisional de registro civil, 13, indicates that no racial labels of either parents or children were required for the registration of birth.
Cuban Catholic Church made similar changes within the first decade of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{83}

In addition to the civil registry, Spanish liberals also transformed centuries of royal dictates into more comprehensive statutes with the Civil Code of 1889. This legislation altered many of the Spanish government's earlier social policies. On the one hand it placed new economic restrictions on the illegitimate family, by discontinuing a previous legal requirement for the parental support of those "recognized" children born and raised outside of wedlock. It also removed the inheritance rights of surviving partners from consensual unions. Both practices had existed as part of Spanish law since the Siete Partidas and the Leyes de Toro. However, some of the inheritance rights lost to women in consensual unions were slightly regained by their offspring. The Partidas had established that recognized illegitimate children could inherit a maximum of one-fifth of their fathers' estates. The newer civil law replaced this proportion with one half of the amount promised to legitimate children, or a maximum of one fourth of the estates.\textsuperscript{84}

The reforms to family law implemented by late nineteenth-century Spanish legislators remained largely stable in the transition into the republic. The Civil Code of 1889 continued in use through the initial period of United States intervention with few changes. The occupying American military government, present in Cuba from 1899 to 1902, attempted to limit the social importance of the Church by ending the parallel

\textsuperscript{83} Baptismal registers at the parish of Espíritu Santo ended color classification as of 1904, AES, \textit{Libro de bautismos general 1}, 1904.

\textsuperscript{84} José Portuondo de Castro, \textit{La filiación} (Havana: n.p., 1947) 7.
existence of both ecclesiastical and secular vital registries and to deny the legitimacy of Catholic marriage in favor of solely the civil one. Only the latter were to possess legal validity.\(^{85}\) Cubans, however, did not rapidly conform to this policy. By 1901, the military government made modifications and accepted the validity of both civil and religious marriages, if in the latter the clergy filed the certificates with civil authorities. And the filing cost of secular marriage was set to a nominal level, one U.S. dollar, in an era when the annual average worker’s wage was $175 (in U.S. dollars).\(^{86}\) All births were also to be registered civilly.\(^{87}\)

Judicial changes to the nature of the Cuban family also appeared in later, post-independence politics. Especially in the period between 1914 and 1918, debates over the rights of married women and divorce furthered earlier questions about the distribution of social authority between the Cuban state and the Church, between the state and the family, and, ultimately, between men and women. Previously, married women had no legal personality apart from their husbands, divorce had not been permitted, and spouses


only had the option of legal separation in a limited set of circumstances.\textsuperscript{88} Again, the motivations to change these practices came from contemporary, liberal political currents, which suggested that a nation progressed as its individual members were liberated from long standing, corporate obligations and privileges, such as those of the Church, and that the demise of colonial controls left the national state with the responsibility for balancing social order against individual rights.\textsuperscript{89}

Feminist views also joined the liberal mission, by extending the vision of the responsible citizen beyond its male archetype to women. Early in the republic, Cuban women’s political involvement was steadily increasing. Initially, they organized themselves into women’s groups that supported a number of social welfare causes. Within these ranks, small numbers of feminists dedicated themselves to promoting female empowerment. One example of this activity came from within Afro-Cuban circles. The professor of education, Dr. Angelina Edreira Rodríguez, the daughter of the \textit{Minerva} contributor Angela Rodríguez de Edreira mentioned above, asked other Cuban women to become more involved in challenging the rule of President Machado.\textsuperscript{90} As a group, Cuban feminists suggested that women would make more meaningful

\textsuperscript{88}Stoner, \textit{From the House to the Streets}, 46-52.

\textsuperscript{89}Within the very rich literature on this topic, see David Bushnell and Neil Macaulay, \textit{The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) chapter 2; and E. Bradford Burns. \textit{The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

\textsuperscript{90}Angelina Edreira Rodríguez de Caballero, "Cooperación de las Mujeres Cubanas en Nuestras Luchas Emancipadoras y de Hacer más Eficáz su Participación en los Momentos Actuales." \textit{Diario de la Marina (DM).} "Ideales..." (Nov. 11, 1928): sec. 3, 10.
contributions to the nation if the home were freed from the sole domination of husbands, some of whom were unfit for such roles. Yet, initially many of these feminists sought a women’s liberation consistent with some of the more conservative, Catholic beliefs and accepted that politically active women make better mothers for a progressive nation. By 1918, the union of classic liberalism and a feminism that centered on a liberated form of motherhood combined to legalize divorce and allow for female control of the property a woman brought to a marriage.  

The next, major changes to the legal status of Cuban family had to await the revolutionary upheaval of the 1930s. By 1930, mobilization against both the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado and the stagnant politics entrenched in Cuba since independence brought a younger generation into the political arena. And with them came a shift away from both the individualism of liberalism and the traditional hierarchies of Cuban society. They were to be replaced with a less elite, more democratic leadership that responded to the popular classes and their needs.

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91Stoner, *From the House to the Streets*, 6.

92One exception was the 1930 revocation of the Spanish colonial adultery law, which allowed a husband to murder an adulterous wife or her lover, if he caught them in the act. Stoner, *From the House to the Streets*, 154-155.

Although the family was addressed in little of the new reformist legislation emerging after 1933, a few items were very significant. In 1934, new legislation forced employers to contribute to national maternity insurance for all working women, with the exception of domestics. As one of the more progressive acts of its type, this policy provided a six-week leave, at a subsistence income, for new mothers, regardless of marital status.\textsuperscript{94} It was a small acknowledgment of the economic difficulties faced by working families, where women’s incomes were essential for survival. It also recognized that men were often absent from these families or that their economic contributions were often insufficient. Unfortunately, many women of all races remained unprotected by the legislation, with the exclusion of the domestics who represented forty-two percent of female employment.\textsuperscript{95}

Reformist fervor also prompted reconsideration of the relationship between the state and the family through constitutional changes. The constitutional assembly of 1939 provided the platform for generating and achieving reforms. Representatives to the convention ran the gamut of Cuban political positions from conservative to left-liberal. However, the liberal and left-leaning forces dominated. Under their auspices, the new constitution would become known for its transformative elements. It answered several

\textsuperscript{94}Stoner, \textit{From the House to the Streets}, 177-178.

\textsuperscript{95}For women’s percentage participation in various occupational categories see Stoner, \textit{From the House to the Streets}, 167.
political and social questions with a progressive outlook reminiscent of the Mexican Constitution of 1917.\textsuperscript{96}

With respect to the legal status of the Cuban family, the reformist 1940 Constitution fostered such change in important two articles. Quoted at length, Article 43 stated:

The family, motherhood, and marriage are under the protection of the State.

Only marriages authorized by officials having legal capacity to effect them are valid. Civil marriage is gratuitous and shall be recognized by the law...

The tribunals shall determine the cases in which, for reasons of justice, the union between persons with legal capacity to contract marriage shall be deemed comparable, in stability and special status, to civil marriage.

Allowances for support in favor of the woman and the children shall enjoy preference with respect to all other obligations, and this preference may not be derogated by any condition of unattachability of property, salary, pension, or economic investment of any kind whatever... \textsuperscript{97}

These clauses demonstrated a compromise between progressive views of marriage and those from the nineteenth-century liberal tradition. The state remained the central agent in

\textsuperscript{96}To date, scholarly analysis of the impact of the 1940 Cuban Constitution has been very limited and marginalized by the view that Fulgencio Batista's control of government did not allow for meaningful reform. While this may be true in the domain of formal politics, the political value of social reforms remains an area for greater research. For discussion of formal politics between 1940 and 1959, see Hugh Thomas, \textit{Cuba}, 716-802; and Marifeli Pérez Stable, \textit{The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For investigation of the events leading to 1940, see Instituto de Historia de Cuba, \textit{Historia de Cuba, La Neocolonia: Organización y crisis, desde 1899 hasta 1940} (Havana: Editora Politica, 1998) 336-381 and Robert Whitney, \textit{State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920-1940} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 149-176.

\textsuperscript{97}Translated from \textit{Constitución de la República de Cuba firmada en la ciudad de Guáimaro el día primero de julio de 1940} (Miami: Judicatura Cubana Democratica, 1993) 20-23.
the process and common law marriage remained unrecognized. And yet the words "the union between persons with the legal capacity to contract marriage shall be deemed comparable . . . to civil marriage" opened possibilities for the legal comparison between formal marriage and enduring, stable consensual unions. Without establishing firm guarantees, the above passage indicates an effort to give consensual unions some level of legal standing and acknowledge that the many Cuban families existing without it would benefit economically from such change. Towards this end, the last paragraph of the article refers not to the wife and legitimate children, but to "the woman and the children," leaving the issue of legitimacy open.

The constitution's next article approached the issue of the legal comparison between the legitimate and illegitimate family more directly. It is quoted here in its entirety.

ART. 44. Parents are obliged to support, tend, educate, and instruct their children, and the latter to respect and assist their parents. The law shall assure the fulfillment of these duties with guarantees and adequate penalties.

Children born out of wedlock to a person who at the time of conception may have been able to contract marriage, have the same rights and duties as are stipulated in the preceding paragraph, except for what the law prescribes in regard to inheritance. For this purpose, children born out of wedlock, of married persons, when the latter acknowledge the children, or when the filiation is established by declaration, shall also have equal rights. The law shall regulate the investigation of paternity.

All qualifications on the nature of filiation are abolished. No statement may be made differentiating between births, either upon the civil status of the parents in the written records of the latter, or in any registry of baptism or certificate referring to the filiation.98

98Translated from Constitución de la República de Cuba firmada en la ciudad de Guáimaro el día primero de julio de 1940 (Miami: Judicatura Cubana Democratica, 1993) 23-24.
Legislation requiring the parents of illegitimate children to provide the latter with equal economic consideration as those born in wedlock also impacted the legal nature of the Cuban family.

With these changes, the 1940 Constitution reformulated the contours of Cuban family law that were to remain in use until the changes brought by the 1959 Revolution. While it did not remove the social distinction between legitimate and illegitimate families, it did permit the latter to sue for economic support. Earlier in the republic, support for the illegitimate had been left to the discretion of the male partner. With the establishment of the right to investigate paternity, men potentially lost some of this liberty. As Afro-Cuban families demonstrated higher rates of illegitimacy, they also potentially stood to gain in greater proportion from the new legislation. Minimally, Afro-Cuban families formed in consensual unions were made legally comparable to those formed by marriage, as predominated amongst white Cubans.

Such changes had implications for real Cuban families. If one compares the legal status of families like Reyitá’s as of 1940 to the typical interracial family from the late nineteenth century, the former possessed greater standing. Although Reyitá and her partner, Antonio Amador, never married, no law prevented them from doing so. Their children would also have enjoyed this ability to marry partners from any racial group. The stigma of racial labeling no longer carried official, legal value; and therefore, their children were not baptized or registered as mulatto or white. Instead, they were legally recognized solely as Cuban. Regardless of their parent’s marital status, the children
received their father's surname and guarantees of his economic responsibility towards them. In these ways, illegitimacy had lost much of its former meaning.

One has to be careful, however, to distinguish between these legal changes and the complete elimination of racial discrimination within the context of the Cuban family. The most obvious example of such discrimination is illustrated by the experience of President Fulgencio Batista (1940-1944, 1952-1958). He came from an impoverished, mulatto background and rose through the ranks of the military to become the most dominant person in Cuban politics in the three decades prior to 1959. He first appeared on the Cuban political scene with the 1933 revolution, organizing the army's lower ranks against the officials linked to the unpopular President Machado. After betraying the Revolution of 1933, and repressing its more radical objectives, he undertook his own political rehabilitation by constructing a reformist political image. He sided with the progressive political elements of the 1930s and 1940s to support a new interest in the popular classes. In fact, he called the 1939 constitutional convention and ensured the representation of all political sectors.\(^9\) He was also noted for including mulattoes and blacks, like Ramón Vasconcelos, in higher political circles.\(^10\)

Yet, Batista's family life did not reflect the progressive image of his post-1934 politics. He attempted to hide his mulatto identity and "pass for white." Despite these efforts, Batista could not erase his popular nickname, "el mulatto lindo." He was still not

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\(^10\)De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 249; *Libro de Cuba*, 693.
permitted to enter Cuba's most exclusive social settings that remained reserved for whites.\textsuperscript{101} This is evidence that, even in this progressive era of Cuban politics and even for the most important politician of the era, Afro-Cuban advances had their limits. And race mixture, in and of itself, did not result in social mobility.

**Conclusion**

Concern about the prevalence of consensual unions straddled various political interest groups during the early years of the Cuban republic. White and Afro-Cuban nationalists were united in their desire to shape Cuban families into models of civility and modernity. They imagined the patriarchal family as the height of that achievement. Both saw the Afro-Cuban family falling well short of the ideal. However, they differed on a few key points. The first perceived families of color as irredeemable, while most of the latter accepted the possibility for reform. Afro-Cuban intellectuals in this period also recognized slavery, and not some innate cultural trait, as the cause of the problem. In their view, bondage had destroyed all familial structures, emasculated black and mulatto men, and used women of color as breeding stock. Moreover, they saw it as creating a situation in which women of color were not interested in mating amongst their own kind and, instead, sought white partners. For Afro-Cuban intellectuals, the unchecked continuation of such a practice would only contribute to the decline of Cuba's population of color. Thus, they placed the greatest responsibility for familial reform squarely on the shoulders of women of color.

\textsuperscript{101}Carlos Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California (Los Angeles) Center for Afro-American Studies, 1988) x, 5; De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 17 and 135-136.
Segments of the feminist and socialist political forces were also galvanized by the issue. Early in the republic, Cuban women’s political involvement was steadily increasing. Initially they organized themselves into women’s groups that supported a number of social welfare causes. Within these ranks, small group of feminists dedicated themselves to promoting female empowerment. From this perspective, they sought the improvement of the legal rights of illegitimate children and increased state responsibility toward unwed mothers. At the second, national congress of Cuban women, they brought these questions into public debate.

Feminist discussion of illegitimacy differed from the Afro-Cuban discourse reviewed above in two crucial ways. Amongst the feminists, race played only a limited role in their presentation of the issued of family reform. For these women, the illegitimacy could not be neatly segregated into white and black communities. It affected Cubans of all colors and placed women and children at extreme socio-economic disadvantage. This perspective existed in stark contrast to the Afro-Cuban emphasis on the moral dimensions of the issue and the isolation of the problem exclusively to women of the same race. Additionally, the feminists took an activist stance on the problem and agitated for increased government involvement in readdressing it.

Feminists continued to reform official construction of gender roles and family in direct political action. With the 1933 revolution, Cuba witnessed a major change in its political culture. The legitimacy of the oligarchic patterns of governance established at the creation of the republic came under increasing attack beginning in the late 1920s. Young, political radicals, informed by socialist and feminist ideals, began to question the continuation of Cuba’s social hierarchy and the conservatism that supported it. Based on
this new political vision, they were able to mobilize the previously ignored masses, remove the corrupt Machado government, and embark on the road to political reform.

Among the important social reforms emerging from this foundational document, legal recognition of the families formed by consensual union was one of the more important. In debating this point, conservatives sought to include government protection of families as the base for their social vision. This opened a discussion of what type of families were subject to the recognition and protection of the state. Conservatives argued that only those families created by legitimate marriage deserved such rights. They believed the creation of consensual unions was a moral corruption that frequently plagued Cuban society. Governmental recognition of these families would only increase this perceived cancer.

It is with respect to this issue that the dilemma faced by Afro-Cuban nationalists is best understood. They were faced with the choice of assimilating into white Cuban culture or projecting Afro-Cuban experiences into the national design. An acceptance of Cuban cultural unity required both their discussion of the supposed cultural deficiencies of the Afro-Cuban masses and the development of corrective strategies. Family organization and gender roles became two of the important areas upon which Afro-Cuban nationalists concentrated their activities. In this regard, they asked themselves what role interracial relationships would have for their mode of inclusion. Moreover, would the sexual unions between white men and women of color lead to the rise of valuable population or the eventual disappearance of the Afro-Cuban population? As we shall see in the next chapter, the next generation of Cuban intellectuals (both Whites and those of
color) reconsidered this question, resolved it in favor of the former, and embraced the ideal of a mulatto Cuba.
CHAPTER 9
THE AFRO-CUBAN MOVEMENT’S NEW PERSPECTIVES ON \textit{MESTIZAJE} AND THE REALITY OF FAMILY FORMATION

Introduction

In June, 1928 an anonymous reader of “Ideales de la Raza de Color,” the Afro-Cuban column of the leading Havana paper, \textit{Diario de la Marina}, offered an interesting definition of “the Cuban race.” For this person, biological and cultural race mixture were amongst its essential components.

Nuestros elementos se han ido mezclando espontáneamente y naturalmente, y de los blancos españoles y criollos, y de los negros africanos o nativos ha ido surgiendo una raza intermedia que no es blanca ni negra, que llegará a ser la RAZA CUBANA, la raza ideal, uniforme, con cuyo adventamiento desaparecerán todos las diferencias todos los pequeños antagonismos que hoy nos preocupan todavía, pero que antes de un siglo, con el cruce constante de los dos razas, no tendrán razón de ser. (Our elements have been mixed spontaneously and naturally. And from Spanish and creole whites, African blacks, or Indians, there has been created an intermediate race that is not white nor black. It has come to be the Cuban race, an ideal and uniform race. Fortunately, all differences, all the small antagonisms that bother us today will disappear with it. Within a century, with the constantly blending of races, these problems will not have a reason to exist.)

This view of race mixture was new, in terms of its explicit articulation of Cuban historical practices. It did not contain a sense that whitening was its ultimate goal, unlike what had been common in mid-nineteenth century views. It also differed from the image

\footnote{“La Raza Cubana,” \textit{Diario de la Marina}, (June 26, 1928) 8.}
of the Cuban people associated with the independence movement. There whites, blacks, and mulattoes were politically and socially joined in creating the emergent nation. But in this new image of *mestizaje*, Cubans were to be defined by biological and cultural fusion.

The above quote was not an isolated statement. It was just one of similar redefinitions of Cuban identity that began to appear in the late 1920s. Like similar *negritude* movements of the period, the Afro-Cuban movement brought new acceptance of the African-derived elements of Cuban life. The vogue was to present Afro-Cuban voices, art, and religion to the mainstream, but not in the shameful way they had been discussed previously. Instead they were seen as positive, if not essential, components of *Cubanidad*. But with respect to the new visions of race, family, and nation, this new movement contained more variation than has been previously explored. This chapter examines these subtleties and suggests that these new notions of Cuban identity were not confined to the literary and artistic domain. They reflected the realities of Cuban life that had previously been repressed in mainstream thought. This chapter first discusses literary notions of *mestizaje* before presenting family histories that show how this issue played out in the Cuban reality.

**Visions of Mestizaje within the Afro-Cuban Movement**

As Cubans sought to consolidate both sovereignty and a positive sense of national identity, the concept of race mixture did not remain static, but underwent important transformation at the ideological level. The late 1920s and 1930s saw in Cuba a new intellectual and artistic openness to the inclusion of Afro-Cuban identity in nationalist thought. This trend has been labeled by some commentators as *afrocubanismo*, or the Afro-Cuban Movement. One commentator has distinguished it from other Cuban
intellectual moments based on several characteristics: elements of universalism; allusions to the history of slavery and the continuing situation of racial discrimination; acknowledgment of race mixture; sensuality, especially in reference to black and mulatto women; and engagement with Afro-Cuban rhythms and religious ritual.²

Although critics have charged many of the contributors to this movement with ambivalence toward true racial politics and with ultimately trivializing Afro-Cuban life through an over-glorification of its exotic and sensual elements, its significance should not be underestimated.³ It represented one of the seminal moments in the evolution of Cuban identity, as several major intellectuals and artists from all colors and classes created new images of Afro-Cuban forms. Authors and artists, such as Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), Ramón Guirao (1908-?), José Zacarías Tallet (1893-1989), Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), projected their more inclusive perspectives on Afro-Cuban life and aesthetics to the public who previously either ignored it or amused themselves with portrayals of the black buffoon or the misguided tragic hero. These writers brought a new sensibility to Cuban literature. They were of a generation that had never experienced Spanish colonialism nor slavery. They saw Cuba with fresh eyes and novel possibilities. According to one leading literary scholar, the movement differed from earlier allusions to Afro-Cuban forms as it “contained and defused potential ethnic threats to national


unification by turning them into original (and ordinary) contributions to Cuban culture.”

This was a new form of nationalist expression. It presented an anti-imperialism in blackface, using Afro-Cuban references to oppose the penetration of U.S. culture in Cuban life.4

In terms of a discussion of the role of the family in transforming the meaning of race, the Afro-Cuban Movement was an invaluable step in consolidating the theme of mestizaje at the center of Cuban consciousness.5 In her review of the sexual politics and imagery associated with Cuban nationalism of this period, Kutzinski has demonstrated that many leading Cuban intellectuals, of all racial categories, proclaimed race mixture as a counter-hegemonic trope or “antidote to Wall Street.” It provided the basis for a new positive evaluation of Cuban identity in the confrontation with U.S. economic and cultural imperialism. This position was comparable with advancement of the ideal of the “raza cósmica” other contemporary Latin American nationalists, especially in Mexico.6

4Kutzinski, Sugar’s Secrets, 143.

5De la Fuente addresses this question at the level of political culture, A Nation for All, 185, passim. Again, this present study demonstrates how the Cuban family and images of it were involved in this transformation.

concept of *mestizaje* to "celebrate racial diversity while disavowing troubling social realities...and nourishing Cuban nationalism....""7

Although Kutzinski offers important insights, a more subtle reading of the emerging appreciation of race mixture associated with the movement is also warranted. This study does so, not as a form of literary critique. Instead it reveals an intellectual history of the differing perspective on race within the Afro-Cuban movement. The newer articulations of *mestizaje* were not the same for all proponents of *afrocubanismo*. Instead, it appeared in at least two forms. One offered an acceptance of the combination of European, African, and, at times, Asian elements in Cuba’s cultural terrain, or the realm of social behavior. The other emphasized the biological interaction of races, which were once presumed as distinct, to provide the foundations of a new Cuban race.

Often the expression of one form or the other was associated with the race of the author. The dissimilar styles of addressing racial issues provides one means of distinguishing white writers of the movement from their black and mulatto counterparts.8 Several differences appeared between the two groups. White writers largely treated cultural themes and tended to limit the range of behaviors and values permitted to their

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7Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets*, 172.

8Richard L. Jackson has long argued for recognition of a distinct Afro-Hispanic literary tradition created by black and mulatto authors. See his *Black Writers and the Hispanic Canon*. Twayne's World Author Series, no. 867. (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1997), and *Black Writers in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979). The following critique applies his perspectives more specifically to writers of the Afro-Cuban movement.
fictional Afro-Cuban personages. Afro-Cuban musicians, dancers, and expressive, religious ceremonies became their favored subjects. In these works, people of color could sing, dance, and shake with religious fervor, but few other actions were expressed.

As we will see below, the works of white writers of the *afrocubanismo* also differed from their black and mulatto peers in that the former’s lack of engagement with the on-going difficulties of Afro-Cuban life equated with an absence of any political considerations for that group. As people of color were presented as existing in a perpetual state of musical or sensual contentment, these writers avoided the thornier questions of improving Afro-Cuban social welfare. They did not have to consider an Afro-Cuban future, for its history of slave labor and continuing aesthetic contributions were perceived as the most meaningful and transformative contributions to the broader national life.

These reasons also explain the manner in which white writers minimized the sociological importance of the Afro-Cuban presence and the process of race mixture. The characters of color found in their works were constructed with little social context. They did not have social rights and responsibilities, including families. They existed in the moment. In addition to the denial of their future, they appeared without ancestry accept for an inexorable connection to Africa. People of color remained distinctive, if not problematic, Cubans. White writers largely continued to envision them as permanent links to Africa’s dark skin and dark cultures, on the margins of truly Cuban identity. These writers positioned themselves at center of a world still perceived in largely Hispanic terms and formed themselves into literary anthologists or voyeurs within their own country. They gave themselves the responsibility for reporting back to the center
those lifestyles that, although they occupied the same geographic terrain, had previously gone unacknowledged. Many of these white writers could offer seductive snapshots of an imagined Afro-Cuba from the outside. Yet, they did not display a true understanding of the depths of coexistence amongst whites and people of color. In other words, the majority of white writers within the Afro-Cuban Movement imagined the legacy of African descent in Cuba as existing parallel to a separate white space, without real integration. Race mixture was understood only at the superficial level.

The white poet Ramón Guirao’s *Orbita de la poesía afrocubana, 1928-1937* (1938) provided a summation of the movement that both affirmed this new acceptance of Afro-Cuba culture and critiqued its lack of attention to political reform. For him, *afronegrista* poetry, that is poetry about black themes, is the most genuine manifestation of our insular sensibility...This vigilant passion for blackness made us believe...in the possibility that the Negro could achieve equality of opportunities, the right to coexist [with whites] on a harmonious plane of mutual comprehension and understanding. We have seen that these incursions into the rich veins of the black quarry have not changed the social destiny of black people. The reality is different. A careful distance from that [European] spell of negrophilia makes it necessary to confess that its objective was very cruel. It was a matter of adding another string to the bow of the Western artist to give his art a little luster...If one invited the blacks to share the bread, if one seated them at the table for just a few moments, it was with the expectation that they would leave something original on the starched white tablecloth.⁹

He recognized that Cuban *afronegrismo* did not live up to its potential to be something much more profound. Yet, his own poetry also emphasized the more limited, exotic notion of Afro-Cuban culture. “Bailadora de Rumba” (Rumba Dancer) is typical.

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⁹Quoted in Kutzinski, *Sugar’s Secrets*, 144 [her translation].
Baildora de guaguancó
piel negra
tersura de bongo.
Agita la maraca
de su risa
con los dedos de leche
de sus dientes.
Pañuelo rojo
sedad
bata blanca
almidón
recorren el trayecto
de una cuerda
de un ritmo afrocubano
de
guitarra
clave
y cajón:
"Arriba, María Antonia,
alabao sea Dios,"
Las serpientes
de sus brazos
van soltando las cuentas
de un collar de jabón.\textsuperscript{10}

Guaguancó dancer
Black skin
smoothed by the bongo.
Shake the maracas
of your smile
with the milky fingers
of your white teeth.
Your scarf
silky red,
your white starched
wrap
run the path
of a cord
of an Afro-Cuban rhythm
of
the guitar
the clave
and the drum.
"Get up, María Antonia,
Alabao is God."
The serpents
Of his arms
are loosening the beads
of your necklace.

Here, the black female dancer appears in sensual form, lost in the musical rhythms. But she is nothing more than a caricature of primitive freedoms. The harsh realities of contemporary Cuba do not enter her world. She has no existence or concerns beyond the moment. While Guirao alluded to her African past, he denied her any other social presence, and certainly no future.

Despite its limitations, Guirao’s representation of black female sensuality highlights another shift in racial thought. Previously, late nineteenth-century allusions to sensuality amongst women of color were almost exclusive to mulattas. They were

described as sensual temptresses who were born to beguile all men, especially whites. By contrast, pure black women remained trapped in the images of laborers and haggard broodmares. They were not imagined as objects of desire; instead they were depicted solely as objects of both labor-related and sexual brutality. Yet, in literary and iconographic imagery, both types of women were imprisoned by the same male oppression centered on the use of their bodies. What differentiated them was the suggestion of several authors and artists that the mulattas participated in the fulfillment of their own oppression. These mixed race women were often represented as self-confident of their desirability and willing to use it for social gains, even if ultimately their sexual intrigues brought tragic results, in a manner reminiscent of *Cecilia Válides*.\[11\] A Spanish officer visiting the island in the 1860's expressed a common interpretation of the behavior of mixed-race women,

Las mulatas forman aquí en la Habana un tipo especial, pues son muy graciosas en sus conversaciones y movimientos, y gozan de muchas simpatías entre los europeos, a quienes ellas prefieren casi siempre por el interés...Son en general indolentes y no piensan más que en colocarse para gozar de las diversiones y el lujo...por un impulso natural e impaciente de la animación y el fuego de su sangre. (Mulattas here in Havana are a special type. Their conversation and movement are very gracious. They enjoy many friendships with Europeans, who they prefer almost always for some ulterior motive....In general, they are lazy and don’t think of anything more than diversion and luxury...[driven] by natural impulse, impatient character and the fire of their blood).\[12\]

\[11\] Kutzinski, *Sugar’s Secrets*, 61-67 demonstrates these distinct representations. However, she does not discuss the reinterpretation of the black female in the hands of twentieth-century afrocubanist writers.

These late nineteenth-century tropes continued to have a largely unchanged depiction in Cuban literature and art into the twentieth century, until the reconsideration of the Afro-Cuban presence in the late 1920s. At this point, depictions of the black woman were cast in a new light. For the first time she entered the iconographic stage as an exotic, yet strangely nationalist, symbol, a place previously held solely her mulatta sister. She embodied an extreme sense of distance and purity in the face of the corrupting, imperialist presence of the U.S. that Cuban nationalists struggled to reject.

For white authors, the mulatta, with her racially mixed ancestry, became less useful for such a task. Instead white writers, like Guirao, turned with new interest to a sensual, black female form. For Alfonso Hernández Cata, “¡Negra, de tu carne se venga del alma de los demás” (Black woman, from your flesh comes from the soul of the rest). Emilio Ballagas collapsed mulata and negra into the same category and pleaded, “Morena, ¡ven a mis brazos” (Morena, come into my arms). And in José Antonio Portuondo, “la negra Pancha,” is nothing but sexual energy.

¡Negra Pancha, qué pimienta...!
¡Negra Pancha, qué lujuria...!
De mañana en la batea
y de noche en la cumbancha...13

That Black Francesca, How Hot...!
That Black Francesca How Luxurious...!
In the morning in the hut
And at night in the dance.

This almost-exclusive attention to the black woman marked another distinction between white afrocubanists and their counterparts of color, who, in addition to new attention to

the black woman, continued to uphold the mulatta icon in their own self-interested fashion, as we shall see below.

The limitation found in Guirao's *afrocubanist* poetry were found elsewhere in the movement. The well-known poetry collection by Agustín Acosta, *La Zafra*, has often been cited as one of the finest examples of the nationalist literature produced in this period. It too included a new awareness of a parallel Afro-Cuban cultural presence and history, as it introduced a sympathetic picture of enslaved people from Cuba's not too distant past. Instead of negative images of the cultural barrenness typically thought to derive from the brutality of slavery, Acosta permitted the slaves in his poem to survive their oppression while retaining both traditions and memories from their homelands:

Bajo el cubano sol—canícula perpetua—
dog days
Immune to the fever of its hot waves
Under the Cuban sun—the continual

inmunes a la fiebre de las insolaciones
bajo el cubano sol que aduerme y emborracha
Under the Cuban sun, that soothes and intoxicates
Go the black, slave women

iban las negras dotaciones

Their eyes carry a far-off mystery:
The illogical fetishism of their native lands
The perpetual sun of the Congo and Mozambique
And the nights of Senegal

Llevaban en los ojos un lejano misterio:
el fetichismo ilógico de su país natal;
y las noches del Senegal...
Vieron allí leones, serpientes, elefantes:
toda la fauna del terror...!
Y aquí los esperaba una fiebre increíble:

el mayoral omnímodo por gracia del señor..\textsuperscript{14}

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\textsuperscript{14}Agustín Acosta, *La zafra* (Havana: Editorial Minerva, 1926) 69-70.
Despite a desire to create a more positive image of African heritage, the Africa remembered here remains a harsh, mysterious, and illogical place. But the slaves drawn by Acosta have managed to bring it forward into their Cuban existence. It is not something that was to become lost in the experience of slavery. And by writing them in this way, Acosta was asking all Cubans to recognize African manifestations in their own land.

Likewise, Alejo Carpentier’s early excursions into *afrocubanismo* produced similar images. His *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* (God Be Praised) was once labeled the “only novel Afro-Cubanism produced.” It explores the experiences of the rural black population as it traces the life of its protagonist, Menegildo Cué. His life provides literary testimony of Afro-Cuban distinctiveness. Although the novel’s temporal setting remains vague, it suggests that Menegildo’s family had barely escaped the practices of the slave plantation. They continued to live and labor according to the rhythms of sugar production. Their days were spent either in the fields or in the mills, but their nights were left to the worship of their African gods and the love and other worldly pleasures that they believed this worship might bring. But for Carpentier, Cuba’s salvation lay in these acts.

Solo los negros...conservaban celosamente un carácter y una tradición antillana. ¡El bongó, antidoto de Wall Street! ¡Espíritu Santo, venerado por los Cué, no admitía salchichas yanquis dentro de sus panecillos votivos...! ¡Nada de hot-dogs con los santos de Mayeya! (Only the blacks...fervently preserved an Antillean character and tradition. The bongo drum, antidote to Wall Street! The Holy Spirit

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venerated by the Cué family did not allow Yankee sausages between pieces of his votive bread...! No hotdogs for the saints of Mayeya!).\textsuperscript{16}

As Menegildo was forced into an urban environment his links to Afro-Cuban ritual became even more profound. People of color continue in their lives, physically closer to whites, but still separated into a parallel plane of mystery and magic. Looking into this world from the other side creates the magico-realism that Carpentier made famous. Yet, Carpentier would later admit that just how inaccurate his descriptions of Afro-Cuban life were.

Pues bien: al cabo de veinte años de investigaciones acerca de las realidades sincréticas de Cuba, me di cuenta de que todo lo hondo, lo verdadero, lo universal, del mundo que había pretendido pintar en mi novela había permanecido fuera del alcance de mi observación. Por ejemplo: el animismo del negro campesino de entonces; las relaciones del negro con el bosque; ciertas prácticas iniciacas que me habían sido disimuladas por los oficiantes con una desconcertante habilidad.\textsuperscript{17} (Well then: after twenty years of investigation into the syncreticisms of Cuba, I have concluded that all the depth, truth, and fullness that I have pretended to paint in my novel was actually outside of my reach. For example, the animism of the rural black; the lives of the black in the forest; certain initiating practices that were faked for me by the practitioners with a disconcerting ability).

One segment of contemporary, Cuban anthropology provided social scientific parallels to the literary productions of the \textit{afrocubanismo}. From its late nineteenth-century beginnings, Cuban anthropology had been rooted in a racially-oriented understanding of criminology that linked African-derived physical features and cultural

\textsuperscript{16}Kutzinski, \textit{Sugar’s Secrets}, 141, [her translation].

elements to illicit activity. This approach to the study of race continued through the 1930s in the studies of Cuban scholars Israel Castellanos and Julio Morales Coello.

The well-respected Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) began his scholarly career informed by the same perspectives. In his earliest works, from the turn of the century, he expressed views that the “primitive” African elements, especially African-derived religions, were largely responsible for anti-social behaviors amongst the Cuban lower classes. A 1906 work clearly indicates this interpretation.

La raza negra es la que bajo muchos aspectos ha conseguido marcar característicamente la mala vida cubana, comunicándole sus supersticiones, sus organizaciones, sus lenguajes, sus danzas, etc., y son hijos legítimos suyos la brujería y el ñañiguismo, que tanto significan en el hampa de Cuba18 (The black race is the one that under many aspects has been able to mark the bad Cuban life characteristically, communicating its superstitions, their organizations, their languages, their dances, etc. to him, and his legitimate children are the witchcraft and the ñañiguismo, that means so much in the Cuban underworld).

Ortiz demonstrated a slight remnant of this view even as he asserts in 1924 the importance of African-derived elements in the formation of Cuban culture.

Era imposible que fuesen tan pronto olvidadas las costumbres y lenguas nacionales del Africa, y aun hoy encontramos abundantes supervivencias de primitividad indudable, que asoman a la superficie a través de las superiores estratificaciones de la cultura. Entre éstas son muy curiosas las palabras que los africanos han logrado incrustar en el lenguaje vernáculo de Cuba... Y es interesante observar cómo nuestro pueblo en esos vulgarismo reproduce inconscientemente ciertas ideas, conceptos y juicios que fueron propios de los africanos hace muchas décadas...19 (It was impossible that the customs and national languages of Africa were so soon forgotten, and even today we find abundant survivals of this undeniable primitiveness, that rise to the surface

18Fernando Ortiz, Los negros brujos (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1973 [original 1906]) 19.

through the superstructures of the culture. Amongst these are the very peculiar words that the African have managed to inlay in the vernacular of Cuba... and is interesting to observe how our people in those vulgarism unconsciously reproduce certain ideas, concepts and judgments that solely belonged to Africans many decades ago...)

Yet, this work and his government-requested revision to the criminal code, *Proyecto de Código Criminal Cubano* (1926), also mark his transition away from a theory of Cuba’s racial atavism to the proposal of transculturation. He began to reject the idea of the bounded link between race and culture. Ultimately, by 1943 Ortiz would proclaim, “Without the black, Cuba would not be Cuba.”

In the 1930s, Ortiz launched a new ethnographic approach to the study of Cuban race relations. He, Romulo Lachatañere, and later Lydia Cabrera (1899-1991) attempted to methodically document the more positive aspects of the African presence within Cuban culture. These influences in the areas of music, language, religion, and folktales began to receive significant attention. However, many of these studies again tended to

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20 For a more complete review of Ortiz’s *Proyecto*, see Bronfman, “Reforming Race,” 166-172.


22 For discussion of the tensions between these two approaches, see Alejandra Bronfman, “Reforming Race in Cuba, 1902-1940,” Ph.D. dissertation Princeton University, 2000, 166-183.

separate whites and people of color into distinct cultural domains. So in their analysis, African influences continued to be something found only among the latter. White involvement with these practices remained largely undiscussed. Instead, in a style that paralleled occurrences in the literary domain, the social observers influenced by afrocubanismo assigned themselves the task of promoting awareness of the elements of color to culturally dominant whites who previously had been ignorant or dismissive of it. Again, what was new to afrocubanismo was the sense that once distinct cultural traditions were combined to create a new sense of Cuban identity. Both its literary and social scientific components united in a recognition of Cuba’s cultural mestizaje. From the point of view of those involved in the movement, Cuban identity was no longer to be perceived in exclusively Hispanic terms. Afro-Cuban “contributions” were to valued for the first time. Again, the regard for these contributions would was not uniform, but differed amongst those participating in the movement.

As his interest in race evolved, Fernando Ortiz differed significantly from the approach taken by most white proponents of afrocubanismo. Instead of the discussing African and European cultural elements as separately existing within the same national terrain, those like Ortiz drew a more integrationist model. Here, the African and the European cultural elements did not solely coexist, but they merged into something new and originally Cuban. By 1940, Ortiz had coined the phrase “transculturation” to denote the mutual exchange between Cuba’s ethnic groups. He chose the word transculturación to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either
in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.24 Here again was a newly articulated theory of cultural *mestizaje* that stood in stark contrast to earlier anthropological theories that had emphasized the unidirectional cultural flow from the presumably superior to the inferior. For Ortiz, on the other hand, modern Cuba was born from and would could continue to survive based the “integration of the races.”25

It is important to note that these important transformations in Ortiz’s outlook on race were not created in a vacuum. It drew on similar currents found among Afro-Cuban intellectuals. Their treatment of race and race mixture varied greatly from the majority of white participants in the Afro-Cuban movement. Obviously, the inclusion of Afro-Cuban elements into visions of the national identity was not something that they proposed solely from an external point of view. It was their lived experience. They felt themselves to be equally as Cuban as their white counterparts imagined themselves. They also realized that this conviction would only become more generalized if Cuba was no longer thought of solely in Hispanic terms. Earlier efforts for racial inclusion based primarily on cultural

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25On this point, Ortiz demonstrates similarities with the work of his Brazilian contemporary, Gilberto Freyre. Both scholars accepted that their respective national cultures arose from the interaction of the European with the African elements (and indigenous in the case of Brazil). They differed in that Freyre also gave greater attention to the themes of the biological and sexual interactions. These themes appear only minimally in Ortiz’s works. See for example, his “Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros” (1942). However, as we shall see below other writers of the Afro Cubanism era explored these themes more directly.
assimilation had had limited success, leaving the masses behind. With the greater interest in things Afro-Cuban, Cubans of color also changed their approach. Previously, Afro-Cuban intellectuals had rarely discussed Afro-Cuban manifestations in a positive light. By the 1920s, this had changed. They, too, began to demonstrate a new appreciation for African-derived practices. In one of the aspects of this movement that has received a limited level of scholarly attention, in conjunction with this new cultural direction, these Afro-Cuban intellectuals also began to openly discuss what they perceived to by the positive, sociological effects of mestizaje.

Social and physical mestizaje in their hands was no longer the tragic event it had represented for earlier Cuban writers. Instead, Afro-Cuban writers now reclaimed it as their own proud history. This was especially true for writers who were themselves of racially mixed backgrounds. A good example of this orientation comes from Felipe Moya Portoundo. His “Filosofía del Bronce” (1925) transforms the mulatta “Virgencita del Bronce” from Villaverde’s Cecila Valdés into the heroic mother of a new Cuba, rescuing her from the image of the unfortunate soul formerly drawn in the latter.

¡Tendrás de tus antepasados sabe Dios cuanta gente! Que forman tu modo presente!
¡Cuántos pedigríes ignorados por bendición de la siniestra mano, son luz en tus miradas!...
Quizás tuviste un ascendiente que fue de sangre real, y en el negrero algún marino, bajo el puente

You have all those ancestors, That only God knows how many! Form who you are today!
The barbarous blood and our blood Have mixed under the assistance of With the blessing of its sinister hand, They are the light in your eyes!
Perhaps you had an ancestor With royal blood And in the slave ship, some sailor, under the staff,
unió a su sangre el porte rubio de boreal.

¡O el abuelo noble y español,
cedió al impulso que le daba,
en una siesta ebria de sol,
sun
la carne negra de la esclava!

Idilio monstruo entre los cortes de las cañas,
concepción contra las leyes...
¡Visiones de cosas extrañas
exacerbando las nostalgias de los bueyes!...

Y así llegaste hasta nosotros,
hermana nuestra y de los otros,
suprema flor de la injusticia,
que conviertes en bravos potros
las palomas de la caricia
en un anhelo vengativo
que tu grupa conserva vivo,
porque tu impulso pasional
eleva, sobre los abrazos,
el furor de los latigazos
del inclemente mayoral! 26

The mulatta becomes the sensual representation of the nation for her ability to
dually bear historical memory and future national creation that seamlessly combined both
the African and the European. It is especially in Moya Portuondo’s last stanza that one
reads the suggestion that her painful past gave her the strength to rise and unite her
brothers of all races. With this, Moya Portuondo put forth a new way of using Cuba’s
past into in the nation-building process. Slavery, in his reflection, is no longer solely a

shameful facet of Spanish colonialism. For all its horrors, it also provided the setting for
the sexual processes that forged a new Cuba, or better yet, a new Cuban race, destined for
greatness based on its unique cultural and biological origins.

No one embraced the theme of Cuban race mixture better, or as famously as, than
Nicolás Guillén. While many other commentators have reviewed this element of his
work, it is useful here to place it in the context of other writers and define the role of the
family within it. It is also important to realize that although he did not initiate a
transformed projection of mestizaje, he did bring it to new heights.27 Like Moya
Portuondo, Guillén was of mixed-race background. He was a member of a mulatto
middle class, which had advanced through education and acquired some social
prominence by the end of the nineteenth century. His father had been a journalist and
publisher of a small newspaper, who eventually became a national senator during the
second decade of the Cuban republic. Much later, Guillén explained his background
with, “Si se me preguntara a qué clase social pertenecía mi familia en aquella época, yo
diría con toda seguridad que a la pequeña burguesía negra.” (If one were to ask me to
what class my family belonged, I would say with confidence the small, black
bourgeoisie).28 Thus, he shared a similar background to that of the Afro-Cuban leaders
outlined in chapter seven of this study. By the time that afrocubanismo was gaining

27Nancy Morejón, Nación y Mestizaje en Nicolás Guillén (Havana: Unión de
Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1982) 43-57 discusses how Guillén treatment of race
mixture closely paralleled that of Fernando Ortiz.

28Nicolás Guillén, Paginas vueltas, memorias (Havana: Unión de Escritores y
Artistas de Cuba, 1982).
currency, the younger Guillén had only just begun to establish himself as a journalist and a minor poet. By 1929, he had begun to provide social commentary for the Afro-Cuban column “Ideales de la raza de color,” edited by his friend Gustavo Urrutia. Guillén was an outspoken opponent of racial discrimination, who challenged his white compatriots to reevaluate their assumptions of black cultural deficiency and to make a greater effort against their own racist behavior.29

His early poetry followed the modernist styles then popular in Spanish-American literature and an African-descended element was not apparent.30 However, his 1930 “Motivos de son” collection marked a major transformation for him and for Cuban poetry more generally. These “poemas mulatos,” as he labeled them, brought afrocubanismo away from voyeuristic stereotypes to offer more intimate entry into the issues and rhythms of Afro-Cuban urban life. The music of the solar, or tenement house, is ever present. But, it is only one aspect of the lives there. Guillén also raised concerns about racial discrimination, as well the stress on color distinctions amongst Afro-Cubans themselves. He also glorified the continuing struggle to overcome the difficulties of poverty, as he challenged the penetration of U.S. culture into Cuban life. The poems were “mulattoes,” not only because they drew attention to mulattoes and blacks, but

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because they demonstrated how integrated these lives were to larger Cuban social and cultural patterns.\textsuperscript{31}

For Guillén, whites and people of color shared more than earlier authors had been willing to indicate. This intention is most evident in his "La Canción del Bongo."

...Pero mi profunda voz, convoca al negro y al blanco, que bailan el mismo son, cueripardos y almiaprietos, más de sangre que de sol...En esta tierra, mulata de africano y español, Santa Barbara de un lado, del otro lado, Chango, siempre falta algún abuelo...(...But my profound voice convokes the black and the white, that dance to the same son, bodies brown, souls black, more blood that sun...In that land, blending African and Spanish, Saint Barbara on one side and Chango on the other, there is always a grandfather missing...)\textsuperscript{32}

He saw the absence or genealogical dismissal of one grandfather as the explanation for Cuba's racial divisiveness. Whites were relegated to one side and blacks to the other, as each group had forgotten its common ancestry. Guillén assigned himself the task of lessening this divide.

Opino por tanto que una poesía criolla entre nosotros no lo será de un modo cabal con olvido del negro. El negro—a mi juicio—aporta esencias muy firmes a nuestro coctel...Por lo pronto, el espíritu de Cuba es mestizo. Y del espíritu hacia la piel nos vendrá el color definitivo. Algun día se dirá: "color cubano." Estos poemas quieren adelantar ese día. (I think that our creole poetry will not be thorough if it forgets the black. The black—from my point of view—supports the very essence of our cocktail... As of now, the spirit of Cuba is racially mixed. And from the spirit to the skin, the definitive color will come to us. Someday it will be called 'Cuban color.' These poems attempt to advance that day.)\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31}An alternate reading of Guillen's "poemas mulatos" based on the infusion of Spanish literary styles with African rhythms, instead of cultural or sociological concerns is found in Gustavo Pérez Firmat, \textit{The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 28.

\textsuperscript{32}Quoted in Kutzinski, \textit{Sugar's Secrets}, 169.

\textsuperscript{33}Nicolás Guillén, "Prologo" \textit{Sóngoro Cosongo} (Havana: Úcar, García y Cía, 1931).
While the proposal of “Cuban color” might initially appear to parallel the nineteenth-century suggestion of whitening, the two were very distinct. The ideal of “Cuban color” was not the belief that a future based solely on biological race mixture would solve Cuba’s racial problems. Instead, it placed greater emphasis on the creation of a new history, a history that noted the points at which Cuba’s races and families were integrated. Guillén reiterated the familial aspect of this objective in his famous “Balada de Los Dos Abuelos” (Ballad of the Two Grandfathers). The recollection of the two grandfathers heralded the proud heritage created as two once separate paths became intertwined in their descendants. “Sombras que sólo yo veo, me escoltan mis dos abuelos” ([In] shadows that only I see, my two grandfathers follow me).34

Interestingly, Guillén’s highlighting of two forefathers is a notable contrast to the more typical, older image of Cuban race mixture in which the haggard black woman bore the mulatta as a result of either sexual brutality or the sexual intrigues linked with a desire for racial “advancement.” Previously, the entire notion of race mixture had been a highly feminized one. Males were not imagined as actively involved progenitors nor as offspring. Guillén attempted to correct these untenable omissions and to demonstrate the inclusion of men in the project of race mixture, both as initiators and in the outcome.

Guillén’s own family history fostered the recall of such memories and the acknowledgment of such heritage. Both of his parents were mulattoes. His paternal grandmother came from a white family whose members did not distance themselves from

her after her marriage to a mulatto. As an adult, Guillén recalled fondly that during his childhood one of her brothers would frequently visit his family, even after her death.\textsuperscript{35}

From this foundation it is easy to understand how Guillén could develop a sense of Cuban identity associated with a more positive history of the multiracial family.

The multiracial vision of Cuban identity and history was supported by other Afro-Cuban intellectuals of Guillén's generation. For example, when the black, former congressional representative Primitivo Ros Ramírez, publicly stated that most Afro-Cubans were purely descended from Africans with the description, "los descendientes de aquellos africanos que vinieron a Cuba a enriquecerla con el sudor de su frente, y cuyos descendientes poseían escasa sangre española" (the descendents of those Africans who came to Cuba to enrich her with the sweat of their brows and whose descendents hardly possess Spanish blood), he was vehemently challenged. Benjamin Muñoz Ginarte submitted the correction that the majority of Afro-Cubans were mulatto, having at least half Spanish blood.\textsuperscript{36} In this way he could minimize the often suggested biological and cultural distance between Afro-Cubans and Euro-Cubans. Muñoz wanted both elements included in a new Cuban consciousness. Yet, he also called on all the descendants of Cuba's mythical "Mama Inés" to never forget the contributions of this symbolic black

\textsuperscript{35}Guillén, Paginas vueltas, 28-29.

\textsuperscript{36}Benjamin Muñoz Ginarte, "Comentos sin Comentarios: No, Primitivo, No...!" Diario de la Marina (June 2, 1929): Sec 3:11.
grandmother, regardless of how light their skin color or culturally integrated into Hispanic norms.\textsuperscript{37}

Returning to the quotation that stated this chapter ("Our elements have been mixed spontaneously and naturally... It has come to be the Cuban race, an ideal and uniform race...")\textsuperscript{37}, this sense of a new Cuban race was also found within the larger Afro-Cuban population. It a unique entity that was worthy of preservation. In providing this definition, the unidentified Afro-Cuban reader to the "Ideales de la raza de color" also called for limits to immigration from Afro-Caribbean nation in order to protect the characteristics of the "Cuban race."\textsuperscript{38} Interestingly, the author’s desire to maintain this race makes no mention of possible limits to white immigration, which at that point continued to be much larger than the Afro-Caribbean one. Therefore, although the author did not promote whitening, he or she did not appear disturbed by that potential, as with further darkening or the infusion of the presumably more primitive aspects of other Afro-Caribbean people.

The column’s editor, Gustavo Urrutia, a black architect, addressed this contradiction and clarified what he believed to be a more appropriate form for creating the new "Cuban race."

Nosotros no aspirábamos ni anhelamos ahora dejar ser negros, porque el color no nos impide ser cubanos, pero esta idea feliz de crear la "Raza Cubana" como tipo especial étnico, con todos sus carácter intermedios, con todos sus transacciones, nos encanta y nos obliga. (We do not now aspire nor desire to stop being blacks,}

\textsuperscript{37}B. Muñoz Ginarte, “¡Pobre Mama Inés!," \textit{Diario de la Marina}, "Ideales de la raza de color," Sec 3, p. 6, December 9, 1928.

\textsuperscript{38}"La Raza Cubana," \textit{Diario de la Marina}, (June 26, 1928) 8.
because color does not prevent us from being Cuban. However, We are enchanted by and committed to the noble idea of creating the Cuba Race, as a special ethnic identity, with all its intermediate character, with all its interactions).  

Urrutia lived this philosophy to such a degree that when his granddaughter was to be register by school officials as white, he objected. He had no desire for members of his family to view lightness of skin color as an opportunity to “escape” from the race nor as confirmation of white racial superiority. He preferred to emphasize for all Cubans the “salutary goal of uniting humanity with dignity and justice.”

The quotes recalled here from this variety of Cuban authors indicate the existence of different notions about what constituted this concept of the “Cuban race.” For some, the process was one of the biological mixture of races, which would continue until the original white and black inputs were eliminated and only the resulting mulattoes remained. For others, it was mainly the cultural fusion of constituent backgrounds, where biological race mixture was insignificant. Both Ortiz and Urrutia proposed this model. Yet, the two differed in that Urrutia was suspicious that the persistence of the biological process of race mixture would be dangerous to the survival of blacks. And for others, following Guillén’s examples, both the biological and cultural processes of race mixture were ongoing. However, these processes could help eliminate racial problems only if they were restated as a new, familial Cuban history. In this new history would be gone the


earlier recriminations normally associated with the illegitimate status of *mestizaje*. There were to be none of the venomous attacks seen with early in the century in the writings of Ramón Vasconcelos, which challenged the involvement of women of color in the process of race mixture. The past is reconfigured with pride and the future with great possibility.

**Family Histories of Race Mixture**

The attention given to the intellectual and polemical discussions of *mestizaje* was paralleled by the experiences of many Cuban families. The previous chapters demonstrated that *mestizaje* was not a new experience. It had been an integral part of Cuban society from the beginning. And just like its discursive presentation, its reality had not been unproblematic. Some embraced it. Others attempted to prevent it. And still others simply did not participate, for whatever reason. This was just as true in the republican era as it had been in the colonial period. But as described in the last section, by the 1930s, race mixture was being repositioned as a respectable force in Cuban life. But was this new intellectual respectability accompanied by changes in the practice of *mestizaje*?

One alteration seen in the previous chapter was the legal acceptance of the consensual family. The marital status of one’s parents at birth was no longer to be used as an important marker of social difference, at least as determined by the law. With this, the distinction between Afro-Cuban and Euro-Cuban styles of family formation was minimized. The legal recognition of consensual unions also suggested that female honor was no longer as closely bound to the acceptance of paternal and espousal authority as it than been previously. Cuban women could publically choose to construct family outside of wedlock and still receive legal recognition for such families.
We have seen both intellectual and legal reforms to then notions of *mestizaje* and appropriate styles of family formation. This, in turn, raises the question of what were the real experiences of racialized family formation in the republican era? Documentary evidence of change in the domain of the family is difficult to encounter for Cuba’s national period (after 1902), given the removal of markers of color from the vital registries. Thus, an examination of the practices associated with race mixture in this period cannot rely the same type of vital records utilized to analyze the practices of the colonial period. In the same vein, legal cases that review challenges to the notion of family cannot be used to clarify the connections between race and family formation since Cuban court records are not accessible to foreign researchers. However, change in the value of race in the construction of Cuban families can be explored through family oral histories.

Reyita’s story that opened the previous chapter gives an example of the utility of oral history in tracing the evolution of Afro-Cuban families. In her nineties, Reyita recounted to her daughter her family history and her own life experiences. However, with few exceptions, similar experiences for other Afro-Cubans have generally not captured the attention of Cubanist scholars.\(^{41}\) In introducing Reyita’s story to an English-speaking audience, the feminist scholar Elizabeth Dore even suggests that, “*Reyita* is the story of a woman who did not (her emphasis) make history because of the conditions she

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\(^{41}\)One important exception has been highlighted earlier. Miguel Barnet’s capturing Esteban Montejo’s transition to freedom, Barnet, ed. *Biografía de un cimarrón*. 
inherited from the past. For Dore, this view is seemingly justified by Reyita’s lack of participation in overt political activities. Attention to Afro-Cuban social history has suffered for much the same reason. The academic emphasis on the social and political marginalization of Afro-Cubans makes it difficult to undertake a sustained analysis of their more integral value.

These limited perspectives are broadened when Reyita and other Afro-Cubans speak of their own history and reveal the ways in which race affected their lives, even at the most personal levels. That potential has been explored within this study by collecting twenty-two such oral histories. With a few exceptions, subjects were chosen from amongst Cubans over the age of seventy-five who attended three elder-care centers in Havana. These centers serve retired persons older than 55 for women and 65 for men. Each serves approximately 40 people, providing breakfast and lunch during the week. The clients of the centers were in various stages of physical and mental health.

The directors of these centers were told of this project’s concern with the conjunction between race and family relations prior to the Revolution and asked to solicit voluntary participation from their healthy clients. Involvement was limited to those above age 75, so as to select those who reach adulthood well before the Revolution. It was also hoped that persons of this age might be able to recall family histories that extended into the late nineteenth century. Another restriction was that subjects had to

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have at least one Cuban parent. This allowed for the collection of multi-generational histories that were specific to Cuba and did not speak exclusively of immigrant experiences. No other restriction was placed on participation. Color was not used as a selection criterion, except that participants had to acknowledge some degree of African descent.

Each interview consisted of two ninety-minute sessions in which the author of this study and a Cuban assistant asked subjects to trace as much of their genealogy as they could recall. They were also asked to discuss the social background of their families. Many, but not all of the interviews were tape recorded. If time permitted, a second interview session was also done. A standard question set was used to guide each interview. (See Appendix A).

The family histories collected can best be classified according to the degree of race mixture acknowledged. The information they provide is not meant to be scientifically representative. They only outline a constellation of racial practices that existed beyond those evident in the documentary sources. These histories reveal lives in which racial differences were always present, but not lived in consistent ways. A few of these stories are presented here.

*Los mestizos*43

**Juan**

The interview with Juan was one of the first we formally conducted. My Cuban assistant, Julian, describes Juan as a *mestizo claro*. He described himself simply

43 All the names of the people in this segment have been changed to protect their identities. All associated tapes and notes are in the author’s possession.
as a *mestizo*, the son of a white Cuban and a woman he described as “una mulata linda.”

He was born in Havana in 1915. Juan indicated that his parents had been married, not by the Church, but listed in the civil registry. He was aware that he could not prove that. His maternal grandparents had a similar relationship. Their relationship also was one formed between a white man and the black woman. If this was some type of secret relationship, his response was

no, no, no escondido, pero tampoco se casaron, se unieron, se unieron ellos y ahí, ahí empezaron. El la mantuvo, la mantenía, y demás tendría su cosa por ahí, pero la mantenía y tuvo tres hijas con ella. (no, no, not hidden, but neither did they marry. They lived together. And that’s where they began. He kept her and he also had his “thing” over there. But he kept her and had three daughters with her).

Kym - “¿Entonces él tenia otra familia? (So, he had another family?)

Juan - Si, si, como no. El tenía en Guira de Melena, un pueblo de aquí, tenía su señora. (Yes, of course. He had one in Guira de Melena, a provincial town over there. He had his wife).

Kym - ¿Conociste a ese lado de tu familia o no, a la familia blanca? (Did you know this family, this white family?)

Juan - Bueno lo conocí, así a la distancia. (Yes, I knew them, at a distance).

Here was a relationship that was not secret, but neither was it legitimate. This white grandfather maintained two families, the white one in the rural setting and one of color in Havana. Juan described his grandfather as a white politician, who eventually became a governor of provincial Havana. This was not a lower class white without the means to support a respectable white family. Nor was this grandfather someone for whom, the shortage of white women had forced him into the arms of a woman of color. This was a
man who had made an apparent choice to create dual families. This history of dual families and race mixture has obvious parallels with the fictional one in *Cecilia Valdés*. Both were nineteenth-century stories of race mixture. In both cases, the white man took financial responsibility for his mixed-race offspring. But Juan’s grandfather also had one important difference from the fictional Candido Gamboa. He did not attempt to hide paternity from his mixed-race offspring. However, he probably was not as forthright with his white wife.

Juan’s family was the product of a long line of women of color, many of whom had relationships with white men. He described his great grandmother as “una negra de nación.” She had arrived in Cuba at some point in the mid-nineteenth century. That he describes his grandmother also as black suggests that she was not born of an interracial relationship, unlike his mother and her siblings. Also Juan’s mother and one of his aunts married white men.

Juan gained a certain degree of social advancement because of these relationships. Since that aunt had no children of her own, he was raised more in her home than in his parents’. She was “married” to an Asturian shoemaker. Because Juan’s father was a tobacco worker, he and Juan’s mother lived in Tampa for at least four years, sometime during Juan’s childhood. On such occasions he stayed in his aunt’s home and often visited his father’s family. He eventually received his primary education at a school in which one of his father’s sister was teaching.

Juan’s entry into a career was another area influenced by his white family members. After primary school, Juan learned the printing trade. One of his father’s brothers was associated with a shop that printed the famous journal *Bohemia*. After a
time in printing, Juan returned to his studies and completed secondary school.

Eventually, with his uncle’s help, he was able to enter the University at some point immediately after the fall of Machado. Juan explained that he was able to achieve entrance only because his uncle “estaba muy relacionado” (was well connected). He acknowledged that racism had prevented many good students of color from obtaining similar success. He was amongst the lucky few that had bypassed prejudice and lack of opportunity.

Juan’s university career began like so many at the time. He wanted to study law. However, he was not successful and he eventually left without completing a degree. By the late 1930s, Juan had married and started a family with a young black woman. At that point he also turned to a career in acting. He achieved much more success in this area. This allowed him to travel throughout Latin America and live for a time in Mexico after his first marriage fell apart in the early 1950s. He returned to Cuba in the late 1950s and became recurring actor on the Cuban soap operas of the 1960s and 1970s. In his personal life, at separate times he established relationships with women of different racial backgrounds. His second wife was white and together they had two children, both of whom eventually settled in Miami. Juan also had children in a third long-term relationship, this time with a mulatta. So Juan’s children covered a broad spectrum, from dark to white. However, the extent of their involvement in their father’s life is questionable. At the time of his interview, Juan was living in one squalid, flea-infested room in a solar, or tenement house in la Habana vieja. At minimum, he was not benefitting from any remittances sent by his children in Miami.
Before ending this description of the role of race in Juan’s family and his life, one final moment during the interview deserves attention. My assistant was prompted by Juan’s near white features to ask if he had ever “passed” or pretended to be white. He responded,

Bueno, no creía que yo pasaba mucho, porque nunca me gustó. Yo no soy, nunca fui racista, nunca, nunca, nunca. Aquí era un delirio antes. El mulato echarse mucho polvo y eso, para ser más blanco. Yo nunca tuve ningún defecto de esos no, no, no...pero nunca me gustó el asunto de que tú eres blanco, tú eres negro, tú eres...eso nunca estuve en eso. Empieza que mi padre, que era blando, no permitía que en mi caso se hablará de raza ni de eso (Well, I don’t suppose that I passed much, because I never liked that. I am not, never was a racist, never, never, never. Here it was a delirium before. The mulatto would put on a lot of powder and such, to be whiter. I never had no this defect of those no, no, no... but I never liked this problem that you are white, you are black, and you are... I never was into that. This [sentiment] began with my father, who was white, did not allow that in my case, to speak of race nor any of that)

Here was a family that was trying to erase the racial differences in which they were deeply embedded. But this attempted erasure should not be interpreted as the equivalent of whitening or passing. To this family, this erasure of racial differences appeared to be the common Cuban condition.

Carmen and Julia

We were fortunate to conduct separate interviews with two sisters, Carmen and Julia. This gave a much more detailed image of one family. They were originally from the eastern city of Manzanillo. Carmen was born in 1912 and Julia in 1916, two of the youngest in a family of twelve children. Like Juan above, they were fair-skinned people who described themselves as mestizas. However, their family’s history of race mixture was a bit more complex. Both of their parents were also mestizos. Both were the children of mulattos and white women.
Julia and Carmen could not recall much about their father’s family except that they were impoverished *colonos*, or sharecroppers. They had never known their maternal grandparents, but they knew that their grandmother had died at a relatively young age. They recalled the history of their maternal side much better. Their grandfather, Fernando, was a rich mulatto, with French and African ancestry. He owned a great deal of property in Manzanillo. He was also a carrier of rural produce, who ran his own mule train. In an era before mechanized transportation, this was an important source of wealth. He had married twice. His first wife, a mulatta, had died after the couple had a large number of children. Julia and Carmen could not remember how many.

Fernando’s second wife, Rafaela, was Julia and Carmen’s grandmother. She was from a poor white family. She also was a widow. Her first husband, a white man, had died when she was only seventeen. At that time, Rafaela already had one daughter and had no opportunity to support herself. When Julia was asked if she had been told how the couple met, she responded with the cliche, “Esta fue una verdadera, triste historia de amor y dolor” (This was a sad, true story of love and pain). She told us how her grandmother had a good friend, a poor black woman, that she used to visit frequently. Their grandparents met when the grandfather also visited this woman. Once their relationship developed, Rafaela’s family objected. However, the couple married. At that point, Rafaela’s mother disowned her and declared her dead. She never again acknowledged her daughter’s existence. The couple eventually moved from the town they were initially from and settled in Manzanillo. However, their relationship was short lived. Rafaela died when their only child, Paula, Julia and Carmen’s mother, was only two years old.
Carmen and Julia indicated that much was this occurred during the Ten Year War (1868-1878). However, other information they give suggest that it was probably toward the end of the war, if not during the Guerra Chiquita (1879-1880). They suggest that at some point during the war, their grandfather moved to Costa Rica. His oldest son stayed and fought. Paula, Carmen and Julia’s mother remained in Cuba and was raised by an older sister. Her father left money to provide for her maintenance and her education at the hands of private tutors. Her family’s position and wealth was confirmed by the fact that she never worked before she married.

Carmen and Julia were less clearly about the circumstances under which their parents met. Carmen only would say vaguely that, “era una cosa de raza, en ese tiempo la gente fue bien vanidosa” (it was a thing of race, at that time the people were very vain). It is unfortunate that we do not have a clear picture of what drew these two people from different class backgrounds together. Here was the peasant boy marrying a young woman of some means. The pair married some time around Cuba’s second war of independence, which began 1895. The first of their twelve children was born in approximately 1897. Carmen stated that her oldest brother, Rafael, was about fifteen years older than she.

The sisters did not seem to emphasize the value of national independence for their family’s history. But, the independence struggle did engender some strong sentiment. For Carmen, “tengo orgullo de ser de la raza de Maceo” (I am proud to be of the race of Maceo). Their father, Joaquín, had been a veteran of the war. He received no personal benefit for his effort. He returned to the life of a simple farmer. Carmen and Julia did not comment on the American presence on the island after the war, except to say that the Americans often believed that their mother was white. They did not clarify in what
capacity Paula would have had encounters with Americans. After her marriage, she had begun to work at as a seamstress and concentrated the rest of her time to raising her children. Julia recalled that although her mother was fair enough to pass for white, the family was socially embedded in a black and mulatto context. The family participated in the local “Maceo” social club for people of color and were excluded from the white clubs. For Julia, not even “una meztiza blanconaza como yo pudiera entrar” (Not even a very fair woman, like me, could enter).

The next generation continued to live relatively undistinguished lives. The boys farmed with their father and the girls became seamstresses, like their mother. One by one, they married and began their own families. Their spouses covered the spectrum of Cuban color categories. Four married persons described as mulattoes. Two of the sisters married white men and one married a black architect. Paula and her four youngest girls moved to Habana Vieja in 1928, initially settling with second daughter Clementina and her Spanish husband. Carmen married in 1940 to a white Cuban, Tomás, a warehouse worker. After her wedding, she never worked on a regular basis again, although she took the occasional sewing job at home. Carmen and Tomás seemed to define themselves, not so much in racial terms, but according to class. The social clubs defined by Spanish ethnicity was not for them, nor were the Afro-Cuban social organizations. Their greatest participation was in “la logia y el sindicato” (the lodge and the union). Carmen noted with pride Tomás’s political allegiance to the activities of black labor leader Lázaro Peña.

Julia married for the first time at a very young age. She was sixteen when she married Ernesto, a mulatto plantation supervisor. He had been a long time friend of the family. Together the couple had two children before he died. Shortly after his death,
Julia relocated her family to Havana, where they briefly lived with Carmen and her husband. She was a widow for five years before she remarried. This marriage was to a white friend of Carmen and Tomás. They remained together until his death in 1986. They never had children. As the interview was ended and the recorder stopped, Julia was asked why she did not have children with her second husband. She responded, “no quería crear confusión racial para mis hijos (I did not want to create racial confusion for my children).” Unfortunately, this interviewer was too shocked by that response to know what to ask next. However, this response could lead one to wonder about the limits of the force of whitening and racial integration.

Gilberta

Gilberta was the oldest of the female subjects interviewed. She was 92, a woman labeled by my Cuban assistant as mestiza. Although she was as fair as the two sisters described above, Gilberta described herself as a “mora,” a term that is presently used to describe a dark person with straight hair. She was born in Havana, the daughter of a “negro prieto” (dark-skinned black) and a woman she variably described as mestiza or blanca. She also indicated that her maternal grandfather was a mulatto claro while her grandmother was white. She explained that for this reason her mother “salio blanca, blanca, blanca” (turned out white, white, white). Both her parents were from the small town of Manacas, in the province of Villa Clara. Her mother, Josefa, had run away with Gilberta’s father, Pedro, in order to escape her own abusive, drunken father. According to Gilberta, her grandfather then asked the police to pursue the matter and the young couple were forced to marry after knowing each other only very briefly. Together they
settled in Havana, before separating after a short time. Their relationship lasted only three or four years, just enough time to bear two daughters.

Josefa and Pedro were from two different worlds. Josefa was from an economically stable family. Her father was a public works inspector. Oddly, Josefa’s mother also worked. She ran a small fruit stand. This picture of the family is inconsistent with the general image of white Cuban women. That image paints them as not entering relationships with men of color and not working in such an undignified occupation as fruit vendor. Gilberta’s description of her father’s background is more consistent with the general image of Afro-Cuban men. She does not remember her father having any stable employment. He often did not have any money, “ni para café” (not even for coffee). It was difficult for Josefa to have a black husband and mestiza children. She was often called “cochina” (dirty slut) when she walked in the streets with them. All of these pressures may have contributed to their separation, but one does not know with certainty.

Gilberta remembers that although her parents separated, they were not able to divorce for a long time. This was an era prior to legalized divorce in Cuba, and in any case, Pedro did not want to lose Josefa. Gilberta recalled that on one occasion the couple was caught in a massive fight. It actually involved three people: Pedro, Josefa, and Josefa’s Spanish lover. All were arrested.

Mi padre como no tenía dinero se quedaba preso; y el gallego salía porque tenía para poner la finaza. Así estuvieron una pila de años. Y mi mamá estaba depositada en casa de una tía mía, porque cuando aquello las leyes eran muy severas respecto a eso. Si la encontraban ella con un hombre o en una posada le echaban cuatro años de prisión, en aquella época. Batista fue el que quitó eso y puso el divorcio (As my father did not have money, he was kept in prison. The Spaniard was released because he could pay the bond. And there it went on for a
few years. And my mother was under house arrest at the home of one of my aunts. At that time, the laws were severe in this respect. And if a woman was found with a man other than her husband or in a inn [brothel?] she received four years in prison. It was Batista who ended this and allowed for divorce).

So, the couple were only able to divorce many years after their separation. However, after her time of confinement, Josefa lived with the Spaniard, first in Manacas and later in Havana. He bought her homes in each case. Despite this financial assistance, Josef worked outside the home, to a limited extent. At some point after Gilberta was grown, Josefa trained and practiced as a midwife. She attempted to regain a level of social respectability. Gilberta declares that her mother treated her and her sister Martina as maids and did not tell people they were her children.

The Spaniard was a person of some means, a plantation owner, who sold sugar to Americans. He never married Josefa, for he also had another legitimate family. Although Gilberta did not know the family personally since they did not live in Havana, she had been told that the wife was ill with tuberculosis. There did not appear to have been much love between the two. They had married despite her rich family’s objections, when she had become pregnant. The Spaniard frequently told Josefa, “Si yo pubiera encontrar a quien me daría el certificado yo la mato” (If I could find a doctor to write the [death] certificate I would kill her). That never occurred.

As an adult, Gilberta’s own life contained some of the turbulence of her parents. She received only a limited education and became pregnant at a young age for a white friend of one her cousins. At the time, she had not known that he was already married with two children. Her mother and “stepfather” were somewhat supportive when they learned this news. They would have allowed Gilberta to stay in their home, but her pride
would not permit it, especially since her mother continued to treat her as a maid. Gilberta went to live with various friends. For a short time she stayed with a girlfriend. She then found another man to take care of her. He even provided a furnished apartment for her. She stayed with him until just after her son was born. She explained her next move.

Cuando pari, el era un hombre blanco, viejo ya. Yo, no me gustaba ya, porque era un hombre viejo y me fuí a vivir con otro y estuve con el otro un tiempo, hasta que el chiquito creció y así, así la pasé (When my son was born, this man was already old. I didn’t like that and I went to live with someone else. I stayed with him for a time, until my son was older. That is how I spent my life).

At that time Gilberta moved on to her third partner. This time it was a black man that she recalled as “era jubilado de los cigarros y todavía cogí buena pensión” (already retired from the tobacco industry and receiving a good pension).

Gilberta and her family reveal much the darker side of relationships in general. For Josefa, men seemed to have been the means of escaping the limitation of her existence. And Gilbert followed the same pattern. Their survival depended on their abilities to hold economically viable men. Therefore, in and of itself, color did not appear to be foremost in their selection of partners. It existed in the background, shaping economic possibilities. However, race/color played a direct role in shaping the shame projected onto Josefa for having first a black husband and then mestiza daughters.

Los mulatos

Elba

Elba was 87 when she sat down for our interviews. Her family was from the central, provincial capital, Cienfuegos. She is described by my assistant as mulatta. She, on the other hand, would not place herself in any color category, except to say “clarita” (a little clear). She spoke of very little race mixture in her family. She seemed a bit
perplexed and irritated for us even asking. Again, Elba would only describe her family as “eran de color, así como de mi color, claritos” (they were of color, just like my color, a little clear). She recalls growing up in a big house with her parents, both sets of grandparents, and her five brothers and sisters. The family lived a simple, stable, and economically adequate life.

The gender roles within the family seemed relatively straightforward. The men worked at agricultural labor and the women managed the home. Since the family lived in the city, the men would leave every morning for the countryside. Elba’s mother took in sewing and her father, Ernesto, supplemented their income by playing clarinet in a municipal band. Her father exercised a great deal of freedom with respect to his marriage. Elba labels him “un diablito...era un poco mujeriego” (a little devil...he was a bit of a womanizer). Her father even had three children from other relationships, who were accepted by all.

Socially, the family was well integrated into the Afro-Cuban social organizations. Ernesto was a founding member of the club “La Minerva de Cienfuegos.” It is not possible to determine if that club was directly connected to the magazine “Minerva” discussed in the previous chapter. That magazine first appeared in 1888 and reappeared in 1913 under new management and broader focus. Elba depicts Ernesto’s Minerva as a club reserved for “lo mejorcito” (the best families). It had dances and excursions exclusive for its members of color. Elba suggests that the members were especially

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44Montejo Arrechea, “Minerva,”
protective of the young female members. They were constantly chaperoned and not allowed to leave the house alone.

Eramos un grupo de muchachas que todos los padres y las madres estaban siempre con nosotros y nos llevaban a los bailes, nosotros no íbamos solas. No con las familias respetables, no como ahora que vienen a las cuatro de la mañana (We were a group of young girls whose parents were always with us. They brought us to the dances and we did not go alone. [That is how it was] with respectable families, not like it is today with young women coming home at four in the morning.

Kym - ¿Y cuando una muchacha tenía un novio como arreglaba esa cosa? (And when a young girl had a boyfriend how was that arranged?)

Elba - Tenía que salir con toda...y si no, con una persona respetada, no sola con el novio, aquello no se usaba eso (She had to go out with everyone, or if not, with a respected person, no solely with the boyfriend. That was not done).

Kym - ¿Y para los varones, cómo era el proceso para conseguir una novia? (And for the young men, how was the process of obtaining a girlfriend?)

Elba - Había que hablar con el último viejo de la casa, de eso si me acuerdo yo. No salir sola con el novio, tenía que salir con la mamá. (They had to speak with the oldest person in the house, I agree with this. A [young girl] could not go out solely with the boyfriend. Her mother had to accompany them).

Kym - ¿Y una muchacha quien andaba con un blanquito, si tenía algún enamorado así? (And what of a young girl who went out with a young white man, what if she had a boyfriend like that?)

Elba - Se echaba a un lado. (They rejected her).

Kym - ¿Aunque el muchacho fuera bueno? (Even if he was a good person?)

Elba - Aunque fuera bueno, no. (Even if he was a good person, no).
Kym - ¿Entonces, si una muchacha tenía un novio blanco, cómo pensaba la gente de ella?
(Therefore, if a young girl had a white boyfriend, what did the people think of her?)
Elba - Bueno, no se usaba eso que una muchacha respetada andando con un blanquito por ahí. No, no, cuando aquello, no. (It simply was not done that a respectable girl went out with a young white man. Not in that era, no).

Elba’s own marriage had been to a young teacher whose family was from the same social group. They met at a dance. They then began a two-year courtship under the supervision of her mother. They married and eventually moved to Havana. There their lives continued in much the same way it had in Cienfuegos. The couple belonged to Masons and attended events at the well-known Afro-Cuban club Unión Fraternal.

Elba’s image of the lives of her family members is very distinct from the ones drawn for the mestizo families above. For the former, respect within the bounds of their racially defined group valued more than material benefits of race mixture. They reflected the beliefs of the generations of prominent Afro-Cuban intellectuals who emerged immediately after slavery and independence. They did not confront racism directly but looked to the internal betterment of their community.

Ana

Ana’s background was very similar to that Elba’s. She was 79 at the time of our interview. She was born in the small town of Cartagena, in the province of Santa Clara. She labeled herself mulatta, born into a family of mulattoes. She described her father as a mulatto claro, born of a mulatto jabao (fair-skinned person with black features, especially coarse hair) and an Spanish woman. Ana’s representation of her paternal grandfather was pieced together from family stories. He had died before her birth. But her paternal
grandmother was a central force in her life. The family visited her home on a regular basis. In fact, Ana had been named for her. On her mother’s side, the family were again mulattoes. One of the great-grandparents was from the Spanish province of Viscaya. Ana believed that it was her great-grandmother, but could not say with certainty. She was more sure of her maternal grandmother was the descendant of local Indians. This grandmother was an “india alta.”

The entire family were agricultural workers, mostly cane cutters. The family lived mostly from the income of her brothers. Ana was the youngest and her father died when she was four. Although the family were economically very humble, they belonged to one of the Afro-Cuban societies that guarded the integrity of the group. One year, Ana even became “the queen” of the Sociedad Maceo de Santa Clara. She was quick to point out that the queens in the black and mulatto societies were distinct from those in the white societies. The former chose their queen according to personality, while the latter chose beauty queens. However, this statement has to be taken with a grain of salt, since even near eighty, it was obvious that Ana was once a stunning woman. As the club’s queen, she was expected to comport herself with the dignity. This was tested once as she happened upon her mother’s employer. He was a white businessman and politician. He was sitting in the park with a few friends and, upon seeing Ana, called her over. In a warm greeting, he kissed her on the cheek and embraced her. This was well outside the norms of decency for respectable women. Normally, Ana would not have spoken to a man on the street, but since he was her mother’s employer, she felt it necessary. The town gossips ran back to her family with this news. Some even wanted to remove her as
the Society's queen. Fortunately, one of her brothers defended her honor, explaining the
choice she had had to make.

Like Elba above, Ana also met her husband through the society. She was 18
when they met at a dance. He was a cane cutter like her brothers. Their relationship
lasted for ten years, before ending in divorce. Ana could not bear his continued infidelity.
During their marriage, she also worked at home as a seamstress and after her divorce, she
supported herself in the same manner. She remarried after her son was grown. She faced
many economic difficulties and barely managed at times. For this reason, she admitted to
having had 8 abortions. "Precisamente por no pasar necesidad y porque mis hijos no
pasaran necesidades; eso es un delito, pero hasta cierto punto a mi entender fue
necesario" (This was precisely so as to not live in poverty and that my children would not
suffer. It is a crime, but I understood it to be necessary). One has to wonder how many
other Cuban women faced similar choices.

After she was asked about the issue of blanqueamiento (whitening), Ana also
spoke about the choices made in that realm. She indicated that idea had been very
prevalent and still existed.

Eso abunda, abunda todavía, con toda la Revolución y todavía hay quien tenga su
pedacito de cosa de esa, pero no lo he vivido, se que existe ese rezago, me
entiende. Esto aquí en ese aspecto fue duro, fue muy duro. Sabes lo que es tratar
con una persona y por ser esa persona más blanca se crea superior, [pero] como se
dice en la historia aquí: "el que no tiene de congo, tiene de carabali." Aquí todos
somos negros y eso si perdonándme la forma, pero Fidel habla muy claro, en ese
aspecto. Y la prueba la tenemos ahí, nuestra raza viene mas a Cuba.: negros como
nosotros (That idea abounds here, it still abounds here, even with the Revolution. Even
today there are those who have their little sin of this behavior. Although I
have not lived it, I know that this legacy existed. This was something very
difficult here, very difficult. Do you know what it is like to deal with a person,
and just because they are white, they believe themselves to be superior. [But] as
our history says, “He who does no have something from the Congo, has
something from the Carabali.” Here we are all blacks and forgive me this expression, but Fidel speaks very clearly on this point...and we have the proof. Our race came most to Cuba: blacks such as ourselves.

Ana speaks passionately on this point and chastises those who have considered its possibility. None the less, she also rejects the idea that all race mixture is whitening. She points to her own sister’s marriage to a white man and its this was formed by love on both sides. However, there is a slight contradiction with the image she painted earlier of restrictions placed on the interaction of respectable women of color with white men. She qualifies that point by saying that her brother-in-law was not really white but “trigueño, ultimamente se decían blancos” (wheat colored, that ultimately have been called white). The Society’s attempts to restrict the sexual choices of women of color may have worked in Ana’s case, but it did not work with her sister.

**Los negros**

**Fernando, Estella, Marcos, and Gloria**

Fernando, Estella, Marcos, and Gloria also sat down for separate interviews and shared very similar family histories. Each were initially described by my Cuban assistant as *negros*. In sharing their separate stories, it became clear that Marcos and Gloria also possessed some Chinese ancestry. Marcos was 78 and born in Güines. Gloria was 82, and a Havana native. Estella was 76, and also from Havana. Fernando was the oldest, at 92. He had been born and raised in Matanzas.

Their testimonies are grouped together here, not because their experiences were less valuable, but because the single, more common factor in their lives was labor. Their experiences and that of their ancestors were remembered largely in terms of work. Each had little or nothing to say about the processes of racial mixture in their families. Marcos
spoke about his experiences as a dock worker on the Havana wharf. Fernando had originally been a cane cutter, but he eventually settled in Havana and became a elevator operator in the Capitol Building. Estella and Gloria had been maids. Each of them had begun their work lives at very young ages. Many of them remembers working outside their homes by age eight.

Of their families, each said very little. The separation of their parents seemed to be a common theme. Gloria was the only one whose parents had not separated or divorced. The others spoke of being raised by their mothers, with occasional visits from their fathers. For this reason, they had to enter the labor force at such young ages. Their own experiences with their partners had been similar. Marcos spoke about the two mothers of his three children, but he never married. Fernando had married late in life, in this late forties. He then divorced after a few years. Estella had married at a young age and divorced a short time later. Although she and her ex-husband had a daughter together, she had been solely responsible for her economic support. For this reason, she did not bother with most men afterward. They did not seem worth the trouble.

This group represented those for whom mestizaje had minimal significance in their lives. However, none of them attributed this experience to any specific reason. As with all of the cases presented, one can not distinguish between the possibilities and limitations created by personal choices and those imposed by structural constraints. However, in these final four cases, extremely demanding working conditions and the difficult family situation may have been factors that limited the interaction with partners of other races.
Conclusion

There is no doubt that in the hands of writers and artists involved with the Afro-Cuban movement of the 1930s the idea of *mestizaje* underwent important transformations. Whites began to display images of Afro-Cuban life as central to the nation. It was to lend an exotic national character that distinguished Cuba from its Spanish origins and from the encroachment of American materialism. For intellectuals of color, the task was difference. They desired self-insertion into the image of Cuba and greater unity with their white compatriots. They could not just rest with revelations of exotic images of blackness. They wanted to demonstrate that Euro-Cubans and Afro-Cubans shared similarities and even shared bloodlines. For them, the mulatta became the perfect trope through which to perform this essential task. Her seductive presence enraptured all. Her birth united once distinct elements. She encapsulated both Cuba’s past and future in a more racially unified form.

Transformations in the lived experience of race mixture were not as pronounced. Again, some families were dramatically shaped by its force and others were not. The family histories recounted above reveal both the extent and the limitations of interracial relationships. It continued to be largely an experience permitted between white men and women of color. However, this was not a situation welcomed by all. Some Afro-Cuban social organizations appeared to have discouraged it. Instead they encouraged racial pride and respectability. Some people of color simply seemed not to have desired to or have had the possibility of participating in these types of relationships. A segment of the lower class remained less racial mixed and more defined by dark skin.
On the other hand, relationships between men of color and white women also existed, but in much lower numbers. Gilberta’s story seems to indicate that the “white” family with some history of race mixture was more open to this possibility. And as was the case in the colonial period, it was also a much more public experience within segments of lower classes. Here one sees an odd contradiction. Lower classes demonstrated both greater possibilities for interracial intimacy and racial exclusion. This contradiction is more readily understood when one does not lose sight of gender. Sexual relations are sites of upward mobility for women, but not for men. The next, concluding chapter will discuss how the post-1959 Revolution utilized race and gender policies to redefine these familial experiences of *mestizaje* into a more common image of the Cuban nation.
CHAPTER 10
EPILOGUE: FAMILY, RACE, AND REVOLUTION

Introduction

In 1970, three Cubans sat down with a Jamaican interviewer to speak of the personal transformations brought by the 1959 Revolution. The first was Sylvia, a black physician. She spoke of the changes largely in positive terms. The Revolution had defined her professional opportunities. Previously, the goal of becoming a physician would have been unobtainable for someone like herself. As a teenager, she had been barely literate. She had lived and worked in her family’s small bar. Now she was a respected doctor with a decent Havana apartment.¹

Yet, Sylvia was ambivalent about one aspect of the Revolution. That was her relationship with her son, Miguel.² He was a young man with whom she had little contact. He had been born in 1953, before the Revolution, of her brief relationship with a white neighbor, George.

He [George] was a soft white man and I would do anything for him—work for him, lie down for him, have a baby for him, but I didn't dare hold him. I loved him. He

²Reckord does not provide the son’s name. “Miguel” is used here for readability.
wasn't the kind of young white Cuban who would pass and put his hand on your front. That kind of brute I could [not] deal with. But George would hang around feeling very romantic—till the sperm was out of his sack of course, and then he was off. Days he would pass the shop and forget I was there. Then he'd way-lay me at night, push me up against a tree, then down on the ground, and curl up on my body like a baby. I am a woman who feels her rights, from very young; for example I knew where black men stood with me. I was reserved for white. Then when I was pregnant and never saw George.³

After their son Miguel was born, George had kidnapped the baby from her home. Sylvia was distraught over this situation and desperate for Miguel’s return. But her pleas to the government were ignored. She believed racism was at the base of the inaction of the Batista-era government. Most assumed a white father would have been better for the child than a presumably ignorant, black mother. She only saw the child at a distance as George had cut off all access. However, change occurred at some point after 1959, when the new revolutionary authorities stepped into the situation. Miguel was taken from George and sent to government boarding schools. After that time, he had little contact with either parent.⁴

The continuation of Sylvia’s story revealed her new, post-revolutionary outlook on racialized sexual relations. Prior to the Revolution, she had been exclusively interested in white men. Afterward, she reconsidered the basis of that interest.

When I entered medical school I went out with a white boy who kept telling me how to behave, and whose father, a revolutionary, approved of me because the coupling would ‘improve the race.’ Our children would be whiter than me. He mentioned that old shit in my hearing, in a sadistic sort of way, and the fellow revolutionary he said it to winked at him. Right in my face. It was on that business I broke with the son. He saw what happened same as me, and would not admit it.

³Ibid, 126-127.

⁴Ibid, 126.
Would not admit, because really at bottom he wasn’t al that upset about it. He didn’t hate it.

She went on to marry a black man and she continued to regret the minimal connection she had with her son.\(^5\)

George told the story of his connection to Sylvia somewhat differently. She had been nothing more than a cheap sexual diversion for him. When she borne his only child, George believed it necessary and honorable to save Miguel from the miserable life Sylvia presumably would have offered him. George took his son one day when Sylvia was away from her home. While he wanted no further contact with Sylvia, George had nothing but love and concern for his son. Speaking of the situation just before Miguel was taken from him, George indicated,

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\text{I was very well assured that I could look after my son and my mother. The boy is colored but his grandmother had no doubts about how her friends up there would react. I had doubts. You never can tell—strangers, you understand—the boy is colored, would that put gum in the works, ha, ha, now I wasn’t sure, but the grandmother had no doubts, and she of course knew substantial people.}\(^6\)
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There were obvious racial tensions in this statement. George was not sure what his mother’s friends “up there” (possibly Miami) would have thought of his mulatto son. George had attempted to get the child out of the country, but that plan failed when the authorities had Miguel sent away to boarding school. George commented on Sylvia further,

The boy was mine, had no dealings with his mother, none whatsoever, a little black girl in a bar—he didn’t even know that. There were many times I thought of

\(^5\)Ibid, 127.

\(^6\)Ibid, 128.
moving because I believed people around her would shame him with that, but they respect us too much. They say nothing about the mother. There have been one or two damn careless remarks, and the boy is alert, but nothing much. He never knew her. That class of person could never be in his life, till this government exposed him.7

Miguel’s interview revealed complete disinterest in both parents. At seventeen, he was a “new revolutionary man,” despite the fact his white grandmother had initially taught him to reject these ideals and programs. Years in communist boarding school and other life experiences had changed him.

In these stories, three distinct visions of the connections between the concepts of race, family, and revolution are demonstrated. Sylvia before the revolution, allowed herself to be sexually exploited by the white George. After the Revolution, she no longer permitted white racial superiority to define a relationship. George before the Revolution saw no problem in having a fleeting sexual relationship with the black Sylvia. He did not contemplate anything more. However, he received their mixed-race child into his home, loving his son fully. He would have continued to shield his son from the black side of his heritage if the government had not stepped into the situation. And for Miguel, ideals of the Revolution mattered more than his family. He had been taught to reject the white dimension of his ancestry. He was mulatto and black. Nothing else mattered.

The testimonies also reveal just how much Cuban notions of race had changed from those images projected in the nineteenth century. Here we have the black woman filled with new racial pride, the white father who lamented the distance between himself and his racially-mixed son, and the teenage who defined himself less in familial terms...
and more in revolutionary ones. Yet, one has to be careful in considering the new perspectives revealed by these stories. What was the agent of change? It is too easy to assume that the Revolution was exclusively responsible for these notions of race and family. Such a view of transformation would fail to acknowledge the various, interlinked constructions of race and family that existed prior to the Revolution. These were not simply created anew afterwards. Despite, its intention of complete social transformation, the Revolution was built on the foundation of the older social practices and beliefs. Prior to 1959, many had been subaltern, in that they existed as unexamined practices below the standard discourse. But with the revolution, they became more apparent and incorporated into the official image of the nation. This study concludes with a discussion of that process. However, before doing so, we first revisit the conclusions related to Cuba’s pre-revolutionary history of race in the domain of the family presented in the chapters above.

**Reproducing Race: Values and Practices Prior to 1959**

The central goal of this study has been to open an exploration of the links between the meaning of race and the modes of family formation in Cuba. This objective has been developed around the premise that race is not solely an abstract concept. Races, like nations, need the presumed characteristics that define them and the bodies to populate them. Selective reproductive acts provide the mechanisms through which both these elements are achieved. To demonstrate the specific details of these processes, this study began by questioning the ideological and demographic factors in Afro-Cuban reproduction. Their modes of reproduction were inextricably bound to the ways race was imagined and lived. They defined how one specifically came to occupy a racial category. While some reproductive behaviors had expected results, some were less obvious. The
fact of the matter was that enslaved Africans did not exclusively reproduce themselves as such. They became free Cubans through a variety of familial and political acts.

This study also indicated the need to examine the reproductive potential of Cuba’s people of color in line with other transformations within Cuban slavery. Therefore, Afro-Cuban reproduction was examined according to several temporal divisions. Chapter 2 concentrated on the period before 1762. The seventeenth century saw frequent marriage within Cuba’s enslaved population. In fact, the marriage rates for this mostly African population favorable compared with those of whites. On the other hand, enslaved creoles and free people of color seemed to marry at much lower rates. These findings support the conclusions of other scholars that African cultural elements did not proscribe Christian marriage, even during enslavement, and that decreased regard for marriage seemed to have emerged with the American-born people of color. Some still-undetermined ideological factor operated in this arena and existed above demographic explanations.

The next chapters moved away from the analysis of official mating patterns seen almost exclusively through marriage records. They instead shifted to the broader approach to reproduction found by examining baptismal records. Baptismal records revealed the presence of alternative forms of family construction, which included both legal and illegal variants. For the period between 1762 and 1820, chapter 3 revealed initially high rates of legitimacy followed by an abrupt increase in illegitimacy that paralleled the intensification of plantation slavery. This chapter also indicated the increasing distinction between rural and urban slavery, despite the continued interaction between the two.
After 1820, reproduction and family formation within Cuban slavery were shaped by several additional factors. Primary amongst them was the criminalization of the slave trade. Although the illegal trade continued to be sizeable, the promotion of more protective and even pro-natal policies was seen in some quarters. However, because of the limitations in existing documentary and demographic data, it is difficult to assess the extent to which such policies had any impact. Additionally, the fact that slave reproduction did not occur within a closed system (i.e. slaves reproducing only slaves) only increases the analytical challenge. The new groups of *emancipados* and Asians transformed the borders of that system.

The data indicate that marriage rates decreased significantly from what they had been in the eighteenth century. Again, it is unclear whether this resulted from decreased interest from the enslaved people themselves or from reduced owner promotion of marriage. In either case, the reduced numbers of priests present in Cuba also limited availability of Catholic education and fulfilment of the sacraments. Their concentration in urban areas restricted their connection to an increasingly rural slave population.

Chapter 5 considered how the gradual abolition of Cuban slavery affected the modes of family formation for people of color. This question was framed in relation to similar situations in other slaveholding regions of the Americas. Whereas initial increases in marriage rates were seen in other African-American populations, the Cuban case was the exception. Cuban mulattoes and blacks there seemed less likely to marry as freedom approached. On the other hand, as slavery waned, some re-established family bonds through the continued practice of recognizing children born out of wedlock. This intermediate stage between legitimate and illegitimate children was a legal mode of
family formation that was not seen elsewhere in the Americas. Ultimately, when compared to other slaveholding societies, marriage was a less novel experience for Cuban blacks and mulattoes, for whom the practice had been available beyond the difficulties of slavery. Additionally, Afro-Cuban also had options beyond marriage for the legal recognition of non-marital families.

Chapter 6 moved away from the emphasis on slavery and more fully addresses the issue of interracial reproduction that had been glimpsed in the earlier chapters. It demonstrated the ways in which nineteenth-century Cuban escaped the image of mestizaje as only a shameful occurrence, in which white fathers wanted little connection with their mixed-race offspring and women of color solely used it as a whitening strategy. Instead, this chapter revealed the important connections white and Asian men made with their mixed-race children. At times these connections were created through the simple legal acts of recognizing paternity. This practice marked a significant distinction in the Cuban experience of race mixture from those found in other areas of the Americas, where such paternal bonds were often not reinforced in the law. In other cases, Cuban fathers illegally manipulated the jural identities for themselves, the mulatto or black mothers, or the children. And these manipulations went beyond just the immediate families. At times, larger institutions such as the Church and Church-controlled orphanages participated in racial reclassification. Thus, late nineteenth century, Cuban racial classifications demonstrated even more flexibility than a more simple social whitening according to wealth, seen elsewhere in Latin America.

Chapter 7 served as a bridge between the colonial and national experiences of Cuban race relations. It explained the rise of the Afro-Cuban leadership, first within the
context of a slave society and then within the nationalist quest for sovereignty and national stability. Here, the acquisition of freedom was obviously a key element of the advancement of leaders. In considering some of the methods through which freedom was obtained, the intervention of family appeared to have been valuable. While masters often contributed to the paths towards freedom, it was Afro-Cubans themselves who pursued freedom for themselves and their family members.

Once emancipated, people of color occupied a variety of socio-economic positions within Cuban society. Many barely managed to sustain a living through their physical labor. Others managed to acquire wealth and prestige. Education and the command of a marketable skill distinguished the men in the latter group from the former. Thus, for people of color, economic and other social distinctions that approximated class existed alongside the color distinctions that were so prominent within Cuban society.

To emphasize the links between the creation of social status and reproductive processes that begin with the family and then extend in more public discourses, the chapter ended with an examination of the lives of a four leading Afro-Cubans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although the types of families into which they were born varied, these families were critical in providing the initial steps through which these men distinguished themselves from the Afro-Cuban masses. Their ascent into positions of respect and leadership began with those familial forms of obtaining freedom. Formal education and the involvement with nationalist politics furthered their public prominence. In the process, they connected with white politicians in the systems of patronage and clientelism that defined early republican politics. In their public positions, these were men for whom the meaning of race appeared contradictory. They became
Afro-Cuban political leaders who did not actively champion Afro-Cuban causes in the general political arena. They avoided direct confrontation with white racism. Instead, they asked people of color to minimize the cultural differences from which race was presumably constructed. The promoted the collective mission of Afro-Cuban self-improvement, defining in terms of the dominant social forms.

The structure and mode of formation of the Afro-Cuban family were two of the more important sites toward which this self-improvement mission was directed. Its essential role in the creation of the republic was the central topic of chapter 8. This chapter demonstrated how themes of illegitimacy and race mixture were private issues that became part of larger public debates on the nature of Cuban society. Many Afro-Cuban intellectuals joined others in measuring the nation’s level of civilized behavior from the perspective of the patriarchal family. Their perceptions of Afro-Cuban failures in this area generated angry critiques of the sexual freedom of the lower classes and the ability of women of color to engage in interracial, consensual relationships.

Despite the strength of these perceptions of non-marital families, more liberal views gained in political importance. By 1940, Cuban feminists had established an important political space for themselves. They advocated for and won reforms to marriage laws, including right of divorce and the legal acceptance of illegitimate families. This in turn minimized the legal distance between legitimate and illegitimate families and the distance between Afro-Cuban and white styles of family formation. In a parallel situation, the removal of jural markers of race within Cuban vital registries also revealed a major shift in racial distinctions in family formation. It was only in other social practices and economic possibilities that important racial distinctions remained.
Chapter 9 returned more firmly to the theme of *mestizaje*. Again the distinctions between practice and discourse in the interaction between the creation of racial meaning and the formation of families were central themes. This chapter examined the ways in which race and race mixture was presented by a new generation of Cuban intellectuals, those who had never known either slavery or Spanish domination. For many participants in the Afro-Cuban movement, Cuba’s racial diversity and uniqueness became a new point of pride and nationalism. The African-derived elements were brought to the fore in literature and the arts. Yet, it was not a uniform movement. Some emphasized *mestizaje* as a cultural process and others concerned themselves with its familial or biological aspects. Only rarely were there any efforts to unite these two perspectives.

Racial differences amongst the proponents of *afrocubanismo* were also present. While Whites emphasized the Afro-Cuban exotic, writers of color highlighted racial integration. They drew upon a sense of family genealogy in which once divergent racial identities merged. In doing so, they walked a fine line between a vision of *mestizaje* that promoted a homogeneous Cuban identity that removed the black and white extremes and one that allowed for continued racial diversity.

The second segment of the chapter considered the ways in which race played a role in the realities of family formation during the pre-revolutionary republic. It demonstrated that race was an ever-present factor. Very personal family histories revealed that some selected partners because of it. Others did so despite the social value of race in other arenas. The chapter also revealed one previously undiscussed factor in race relations. That was the protectiveness of the Afro-Cuban societies toward mating women of color. A few of this study’s informants indicated these societies attempted to
prevent relationships between white men and women of color. In doing so, these societies attempted to ensure that the mulatto and black presence in Cuba did not disappear with the continued practices of *mestizaje*. Such practices demonstrate that the realities of race and race mixture remained even more complex than their intellectual manifestations.

**Revolutionary Promises and Programs**

If we return to the family whose stories began this chapter, it is easy to see that many of the old tensions surrounding the value of race in family formation continued in the revolutionary era. Again, race was central in the white George’s decision to disavow any connection to the black Sylvia despite the fact that she was the mother of his child. On the other hand, his love for his son and his desire to connect with him appeared much less affected by race. In this way, he acted in a manner similar to those white fathers of the nineteenth century who established a legal connection to their mixed-race children. New meanings of race were demonstrated as Sylvia rejected her previous exclusive preference for white men and Miguel defined himself as a revolutionary and man of color and distanced himself from any association with his white ancestry. Yet, although the Revolution gave these sentiments a new public space, from the above review of the earlier chapters, one sees that these views also had earlier foundations.

The Revolution built on these foundations to provide an opening for the ongoing re-articulation of Cuba’s racial identity. As early as 1959, Fidel Castro proclaimed the revolution’s new official position on race. “We all have lighter or darker skin color...lighter skin implies descent from Spaniards who themselves were colonized by Moors that came from Africa. Those who are more or less dark-skinned came directly
from Africa. Moreover, nobody can consider himself as being of pure, much less superior race." Such a statement would have been unimaginable under Batista, despite his own racially-mixed heritage. In Castro’s words was a new governmental reiteration of the themes seen earlier in Guillén’s works, that all Cubans shared a common African heritage. The superficial differences were minimized as relatively unimportant questions of distance. Later, in association with the military intervention of Angola in 1975, Castro furthered this notion of national identity by declaring Cubans to be a “Latin-African people.”

It is important to note the distinction between such statements and the nineteenth-century calls for racial harmony. Both were nationalistic, but in slightly differing forms. When José Martí spoke of Cuba as more than white, more than black, more than mulatto, he was not referring to a common history and a common genealogy. He spoke of a social and political future, not of a familial past or potential. By contrast, Castro squarely called upon a common history to create a unified Cuban future. He could do so based on the commonality generated by the earlier transcendence of racial boundaries found in the histories of many Cuban families. In addition to the projection of Afro-Latin identity, the 1959 campaign for racial equality that drew upon an image of a young black boy pleading for respect and expressing the hope that one day his son would not hear “there goes a ‘negrito,’” but would instead here “there goes a child,” reinforced the Revolution’s

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egalitarian mission. It was paralleled by the 1968 call to "Produce as Much as Your Slave Grandfather" associated with that year's ten ton harvest proposal.\textsuperscript{10} This is a slave grandfather who was to be found often in Cuban family trees, despite the skin color of his descendants and the previous lack of public recognition.

As the Revolution focused on the elimination of class-based differences, the social value of the racial differences between Cubans also decreased. Educational reforms were amongst the more important mechanisms utilized. The exclusive private schools of the republican era were eliminated in favor of more inclusive public schools. At least through the junior-high school level, Cubans of various backgrounds received similar instruction. Based on this success, people of color increasingly entered those professional occupations that earlier had been more racially selective. Black and mulatto families were relocated into neighborhoods where they previously had not been welcomed. Social organizations that had been segregated by race were completely eliminated. This last change affected not only white clubs, but the Afro-Cuban ones as well. All of these sites had formerly been important areas through which race difference had been reinforced.

All of these changes do not suggest, however, that improved race relations have been an important objective or success of the Revolution. Although a number of studies have demonstrated the achievements of revolutionary programs in decreasing racial inequality, many also highlight the continuation of discrimination. Cuban blacks and mulattoes also are under represented in every prominent sphere of public life. Some

would even suggest that the Revolution’s goal was simply to coopt support from these groups, without truly reforming the basis beliefs in racial difference.11

Leaving these valuable cautions aside for a moment, the revolutionary government’s attention to issues of class and racial inequality had unintended consequences in another area. Changes in the relationship between the meaning of race and modes of family formation developed out of two other factors: the demographic shifts associated with the exodus of an important sector of Cuban society; and the new policies that reformed both the nature of the family and women’s social roles. In the first of these factors, the most conservative and racially bounded social elements were minimized with the post-1959 emigration of the nation’s upper classes, the vast majority of whom were white.12 This situation not only had demographic value, it also removed much of the ideological opposition to the new rhetoric of racial unity.

The Revolution’s consideration of gender and family as important sites of social reform also impacted the racialized visions of Cuban identity and modes of reproducing social difference. First with the Fundamental Law of 1959 and later with the 1975

11On the socio-economic gains of Cubans of color under the Revolution, see Marianne Masferrer and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "The Gradual Integration of the Black in Cuba." in Robert B. Toplin, ed. Slavery and Race Relations in Latin America (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974) 348-84 and de la Fuente, “Race and Inequality,” 131-167 and A Nation for All, 307-316. These authors point to continued but decreasing inequality, but also note the continuation of racism. On contemporary manifestations of Cuban racism also see, for example, Moore, Castro, The Blacks, and Africa; and Pérez Sarduy and Stubbs, Afro-Cuban Voices.

Family Code the Cuban government committed to women’s equality in both public and private spheres. Women were encouraged to work and their labor force participation rates increased from 13 percent in 1955 to 34 percent in 1990. In the process, women also gained greater acceptance in occupations once dominated by men. At the same time, their domestic duties gained greater regard and the government encouraged fathers to accept a greater share of responsibility. The government also supplied additional daycare for the children of working women. While there have been severe shortages in this area, it did allow a proportion of women to be less attached to the home. Additionally, the meaning of marriage and divorce were liberalized to allow for greater flexibility by both partners.

These attempted reforms of gender inequality reduced the need for Cuban women to conform to older systems of patriarchal control. Educational opportunities and youth work brigades away from home lessened the force of parental authority. With newly available employment opportunities, women became less economically dependent on both their families of origin and their marital families. The public idea of white female honor was shifted away from sexual purity to the projection of revolutionary nationalism and egalitarianism. Just as the revolution envisioned the “new man,” it suggested the

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creation of the new liberated woman. This new Cuban woman could choose to form her family in a variety of styles with partners from a variety of backgrounds. Her reproductive capacity was to be less dedicated to the maintenance of class and racial boundaries.

Admittedly, the assessment of such outcomes is difficult without access to the type of documentation available from the colonial period. However, we can refer to two studies from the 1990s for additional insights and support for the interpretation above. Anthropologist Nadine Fernández conducted her doctoral research on interracial relationships in Havana during the early 1990s and found these types of relationships to be very common, but not unproblematic. Her interviews of eight such couples detailed the tensions between the older traditions and the revolutionary ideals that influenced their general acceptance or lack thereof.

One of the stories captured by Fernández was that of Yanet and Victor. At that time (1993), Yanet was a 22 year old, white female psychology student at the University of Havana. Victor was a 23 year old black, recent university graduate. The couple met as they did compulsory agricultural work one summer. They married in December 1993, despite the intense objection of Yanet’s father and maternal grandparents. In fact, Yanet

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felt forced to choose between her grandparents and her fiancé. Her mother was much more accepting of the relationship, due in part to the fact that she had herself remarried to an Afro-Cuban man.

The objections of Yanet’s grandparents, and even those of her young friends, were clearly based on racial difference. With the exception of color, Victor’s family possessed many of the markers of higher class status. Fernández noted that, “there is a notable class difference between the families with Victor’s family more educated and Yanet’s more firmly working class.”16 Victor owned a car, lived in a nice neighborhood, and possessed a university degree. His mother was a physician and his late father had been an airforce combat pilot. All of this was insignificant in assuaging the objections to the couple. It is worth quoting at length Yanet’s comments on the negative reactions to her relationship.

With my grandparents, I can understand [their rejection], but I have a sister with whom I was very close, but she has not been able to deal with [my relationship] She’s young, 26 years old. She...and her husband won’t even speak to me...My case is a reflection of many cases. [A reflection] of a latent prejudice [that shows itself] in the extreme reactions like in my case, in other cases maybe [the prejudice] is underlying, but it seems to me that it is a problem among many people. I’ve been with people who haven’t said anything to me [about my relationship] but they didn’t like the idea and that’s a form of prejudice too. Or when people meet Victor they say, “Ah, this boy is almost white!” and they start to joke with me. I myself had never really thought about it...And sometimes people look at us in the street or on the bus and I hear them say, “Oh, that poor white girl look at who she’s ended up with,’ At first I used to feel ashamed, but now it doesn’t bother me.17

When asked of her decision to marry, Yanet remarked further.

16Fernández, “Race, Romance, and Revolution,” 207.

Everything I’ve always needed I have now. I am going to graduate. He [Victor] is already working and we want to start a family. We’re going to be independent because his mother is giving us half of her house so we can live alone. I am going to marry because I have left everyone else behind. I had to break with many things for this [relationship]. But time will tell...I tell you, if we break-up, we’ll break-up because of me or him, not because of any other person or some prejudice. The only thing that I’ve gotten out of this experience is that I know I won’t forget this when I have a child. I will never make him go through what I did. And this child and his generation will have less pressure, and I imagine that [this will happen] in each successive [generation]. I don’t know, I think that time this will be overcome, because this is dragged from the past....Because I’m not the only one who breaks with all of this. Each time there will be more people that are able to, and age has a lot to do with it. I wasn’t able to do it at 17, but I’m almost an independent woman. I’ve had other relationships, and I know what I want.18

On the one hand, one sees in Yanet’s comments just how strongly the force of racial prejudice continued in Cuban society. Negative public reaction to interracial couples was not infrequent. On the other hand, one also sees how central the liberation of white women was to the transformation of racialized reproduction. She could make choices that received disapproval from her intimates because she was an “independent woman.” Without that liberating force, even the rhetoric of racial equality would not have removed the sexual boundaries of race and allowed white women to more openly participate in interracial relationships, if they chose. Revolutionary ideals allowed women like Yanet to believe that their choices were at least compatible with contemporary Cuban politics.19 And she looked forward to the less discriminatory environment her mixed-race children would face.


19Fernández, “Race, Romance, and Revolution,” interviewed three additional couples composed of black male and white female partners, 179-222.
In turn, the sexual element of white women's liberation fostered a similar sexual liberation of men of color. Under the revolution, both groups were allowed a new social maturity that they once had been denied. They could more openly choose partners who had been previously restricted. They could participate in reproducing the nation in a manner that had been previously restricted to white men and women of color. Similarly, for women of color, the material motives for preferring white partners were lessened. The rationale described by Reyita in chapter eight above became less likely in the revolutionary environment. The increased economic opportunities for mulatto and black men made them more viable partners for all categories of Cuban women.

One has to be careful to see in these examples both the continuation of reproductive racism and increased possibilities of interracial coupling. These themes are noted in a 1999 interview with another young, black physician. Dr. Nuria Pérez Sesma responded to the question, “How is it for blacks in terms of relationships among the young?”

That's a hard one right now, especially [with] mulattos. When mulattos get somewhere, they discriminate against blacks. They look for another mulatto or white, to whiten the race. That exists especially among my generation, both in men and women, but more so in the men. That's to say, it's more frequent to see a mulatto man discriminating against black women than it is to see a mulatto woman discriminating against black men. Of course, this is not the finding of any scientific study, it's only a view based on my observations.20

Pérez Sesma interprets the access of mulatto men to interracial relationships as a preference and suggests that whitening is still the goal. She continued, by noting her reaction.

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I imagine this very situation in which we are discriminated against, and which values the white race over the black, is the cause of this kind of whitening. . . . Maybe the mulatto man thinks that if he marries a white woman his children will benefit more, will stand a better chance. As a black woman, this touches me close up, it hurts. I'm affected by this kind of situation, I feel it a lot, it's hurtful and damaging to me. I have felt rejection from people of my own race and that makes me depressed. I'm twenty-six years old and at this age a woman needs a stable relationship with a man, a stable home.21

This comment makes clear that in contemporary Cuba, not everyone perceived race mixture as benign or beneficial. In Pérez Sesma's view, it still held the potential for a whitening that minimized the value of the mulatto and black segments of the population. Race mixture does so when intended as the process of erasing their existence. Since the late nineteenth century, that possibility has coexisted with the potential of race mixture to serve as a unifying national discourse. As one becomes aware of contest between these views, it is more apparent that the meaning of race mixture and all other acts of racialized reproduction are not simply measured in terms of the demographic results they generate. Their importance is also determined by the ideological framework that they are given. Only as they are up held as natural and historical elements of the Cuban national identity is their transformative value appreciated. One sees in the above testimonies that some Cubans do not acknowledge the historical moments at which Cuban families were racial united. They prefer to highlight distinction, or to view race mixture as beneficial whitening. Others, however, take an alternate position and embrace the histories of mestizaje, noting their commonalities.

21Ibid.
Conclusion

So where does this leave our study of the familial and reproductive dimensions of race in Cuban history? There can be no doubt that racism continues to exist in Cuba. However, Cuban notions of race have not simply equate phenotype and behavior in a permanent manner. Like the meanings of race in most societies, Cuban notions have evolved under their own particular set of historical circumstances, many of which also relate to notions of family. The extended view of Cuban history undertaken in this study allows one to appreciate that these factors have included:

1) The expressed value of racial purity for many white families;
2) The frequent recognition of mixed-race children by white men;
3) The tenuous survival of families of color;
4) A form of slavery that allowed for the acquisition of freedom, under a limited set of circumstances.
4) The elimination of restrictions on interracial marriage in the late nineteenth-century;
5) The elimination of official markers of racial identity with the emergence of the republic, at the beginning of the twentieth century;
6) The elevation of the legal status of consensual unions;
7) The development of intellectual and political discourses that attributed positive value to the history of race mixture;
8) The elimination of institutional advocacy of and support for racial segmentation;
9) The improvement to the socio-economic positions of people of color;
10) The social liberation of white women, beginning with the feminist movements of the early republic and continuing with the 1959 Revolution.

Many of these factors may appear to contradict each other. However they reflect the specifically Cuban configurations in which the inextricable concepts of “family,” “race” and “nation” were constructed. They often competed against one another at any given moment. It is in this context that, as some have promoted the white family as the socio-political ideal, other white men sought public recognition of their mixed-race children. Similarly, that families of color survived the difficulties of slavery, racial discrimination, and pervasive notions of “whitening” to also affect the meanings of race and nation. All
of these experiences drove the question of whether Cuba would be articulated as a white, mulatto, or black nation.

To note the force with which that question remains unresolved, this study concludes with the 1998 observations of Cuban writer Eliseo Altunaga. Continuing in the tradition of the *afrocubanismists*, he suggests that the on-going quest for Cuban national unity would reach successful conclusion only when the long-standing, intimate interracial connections of ancestry and culture became more fully articulated and accepted. For him, history had created a truly *mestizo* Cuba, the profundity of which is still unrecognized.

I think that the negation of any of the components of Cuban culture and the obstinate desire to marginalize a component that has been forged, wishing only to select four or five features—music, poetry, Santería, rhythm—as what is black in Cuban culture, weakens that culture terribly. I think they have no alternative but to look at themselves in the mirror; if they want to perpetuate themselves as a nation, the members of that nation must recognize themselves as black as much as white.

What is black in Cuba resides in the spirituality of Cubans and is expressed in their food and clothing, in their way of seeing the world, speaking Spanish, using music. I think the black is what makes Cuba different from Spain and from Europe. It's what the black put in the pot, it's what the black changed. I think that the Cuban black is not African, nor is the Cuban white European. I think the Cuban white is black and that the Cuban black is white, and the idea of a mestizo society is the only one that can save the nation. I think the Cuban has a white aesthetic and a black ethic. This is where the struggle lies. There is the idea that a man who looks in the mirror and won't recognize himself for what he is, is weakened by that. I honestly think that one of the ways Cuba can be salvaged as a nation—when all economies are the same, money is the same, commercial values and cultural cosmopolitanism are the same—is recognizing it is black. 

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22 Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, *Afro-Cuban Voices*, 96.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Spanish Version

1. ¿Cómo se llama usted?
2. ¿Dónde nació y qué fecha? ¿Fue bautizado por la Iglesia? ¿En qué parroquia?
3. ¿Cuando se trasladó usted para aquí a la Habana?
4. ¿Cómo se llamaban sus padres?
5. ¿Estaban casados o vivieron en unión libre? ¿Se casaron por la Iglesia o lo civil?
6. ¿Qué tipos de trabajo tenían ellos?
7. ¿De qué colores de piel eran?
8. ¿Y, de sus antepasados, sus abuelos o bisabuelos conoce usted mucho sobre ellos?
9. ¿Alguno de ellos había sido esclavo?
10. ¿De dónde eran y en qué trabajaban?
11. ¿Algun otro miembro de tu familia procedía de otra parte de Cuba? ¿Del extranjero? ¿Unos eran inmigrantes de Europa, el Caribe, Asia, u otra parte de América?
12. ¿Tenía usted mucho contacto con los hermanos de sus padres, sus tíos? ¿Cuántos eran?

13. ¿Sabes qué nivel social tuvieron tus abuelos? ¿Ganaba dinero en un tipo de empleo su abuela?

14. ¿Sabes cómo se conocieron tus padres?

15. ¿Era aceptado socialmente la relación de tus padres? ¿Cómo eran las relaciones entre las dos familias?

16. ¿Cuántos niños tenían tus padres juntos?

17. ¿Uno de tus padres tenía otra familia antes o después de la tuya? ¿Sabes algo de la persona, de qué clase o color era?

18. ¿Cómo eran las relaciones entre ustedes, los hermanos [de padre o de madre]?

19. ¿Recuerdas si tu familia tenía algún crisis económica o personal, cómo fue resuelto?

20. ¿Algún pariente les ayudó en esos momentos?

21. Hábleme un poco sobre su juventud. ¿Cómo era la vida suya de niño o niña? ¿Tenía oportunidad a educarse?

22. ¿Cuando comenzó a trabajar usted? ¿Qué tipos de trabajos ha tenido?

23. ¿Tuvo usted experiencias con discriminación racial?

24. ¿Tiene usted hijos? Cuando se nacieron?

25. ¿Usted se casó? Cómo conoció su pareja?

26. ¿Y de tus hermanos, con quienes se unieron? ¿Tienen hijos quienes ya son blancos?

27. ¿Cuál es tu recuerdo más importante de tu familia?
English Translation

1. What is your name?

2. Where were you born and on what date? Were you baptized in the Church? In which parish?

3. When did you move here to Havana?

4. What were the names of your parents?

5. Were they married or were they a consensual union? Did they marry by the Church or the civil registry?

6. What type of work did they do?

7. What colors were they?

8. And of your ancestors, your grandparents and great grandparents, do you know much about them?

9. Had they been slaves?

10. Where were they from and what type of work did they do?

11. Were any of your relatives from a different part of Cuba, or from abroad? Were some immigrants from Europe, the Caribbean, Asia, or the rest of America?

12. Did you have much contact with your aunts and uncles? How many were there?

13. Do you recall the social position of your grandparents? Did your grandmother work?

14. Do you know how your parents met?

15. Was your parents’ relationship socially accepted? How were the relations between the two families?

16. How many children did they have together?
17. Did either of your parents have children either before or after your family? And this person, do you know what was the class or color?

18. How were the relations between the siblings of the same father or mother?

19. Do you remember that if your family had an economic or financial crisis, how was it resolved?

20. Did one of your relatives help in these moments?

21. Talk to me a little about your youth. How was your life as a child? Did you have the opportunity to educate yourself?

22. When did you begin to work? What types of work have you had?

23. Have you had experiences of racial discrimination?

24. Do you have children? When were they born?

25. Did you marry? How did you meet your mate?

26. With your sibling, with what type of people did they mate? Do they have children who are white?

27. What is the most important memory of your family?
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen Y. Morrison, “Kym,” was born in Jamaica and raised in Prince George’s county, Maryland. This makes her a proud first generation Jamaican-American, who experienced the contradictions of school desegregation and white flight from the West Indian perspectives of her household. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from Duke University in 1988 and worked in the defense industry for a few years before committing to her love of history.

Ms. Morrison returned to post-baccalaureate studies in history at Howard University in 1992 and entered graduate school at the University of Florida in 1993. Personal and professional interests led her to the study of Cuban race relations. The intellectual aspects of that issue were the basis for the master’s thesis that she completed in 1996. The same interest led her to the eleven months of archival and oral history research in Havana in 1999 that provided the core of the present project.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jeffrey D. Needell, Chair
Associate Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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